Rethinking Remorse:

Guilt, Shame and

Modern Identity

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Abstract

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by David Tenenbaum

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Though human beings have always experienced self-doubt, my dissertation *Rethinking Remorse: Guilt, Shame and Modern Identity* attempts to show the changes in the nature of this phenomenon fostered by Modernist Literature's examination of traditional ethical standards. As the skepticism toward communally-held beliefs grew during the early part of the twentieth century, the process of introspection became focal to the most enduring work of this period. Modern writers attempted to evaluate the traditionally accepted principles of their society by reconsidering the emotional consequences of the decision to bypass these accepted norms.

In addressing such issues, these twentieth century novelists reexamined conventional ideals in light of certain historical events and intellectual developments within the High Modern Period. Their portrayals reflected the challenges faced by people who began to question their social responsibility in a world ostensibly governed by self-interest and violence. In searching for a source of ethical judgments more in keeping with wo(man's) natural fallability, these writers began to look beyond the ideas of nineteenth century philosophers like Jeremy Bentham, who posited innate altruism as the source of human impulses.

As both religious and non-religious writers began to recognize a potential contradiction between man's instincts and past standards of moral conduct, they looked more closely at the emotional consequences of the breach of social responsibility. The

guilt over moral failure and the shame at the exposure of personal weakness so prevalent in modern literature appear as a reaction to behavior that characters believe themselves, validly or invalidly, unable to control. My analysis of literary depictions of feelings of guilt and shame focuses on modern characters' vulnerability to the influence of conventions and institutions. I examine these figures' responses to such authority in the absence of a realization of the potential for ethical conduct not motivated by traditional mores. My study of these authors illustrates that their characters' awareness of the source of these emotions will both ensure their characters' acceptance of their social responsibility and prevent their subjection to the arbitrary dictates of authority.

To Adrian, Bob and Dave, for lighting a path for me to follow.

To Jessie, Elena and my father, for their love and support.

To my mother, for her help and enduring wisdom.

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Introduction

Many writers in Victorian England took great pains to confirm an innate goodness within members of society that was the result of their divine origin. Out of Jeremy Bentham's philosophy of Utilitarianism, itself a fairly secular mode of thought, rose a branch of theological Utilitarianism that propounded that the origin of man's innate impulse towards happiness was the benevolence of the creator of this proclivity. Bentham's claim for man's instinctive goodness reiterated assertions made by an eighteenth century philosopher, David Hume. Hume argued that while there was no absolutely empirical proof of man's inherent altruism, it was nonsensical to formulate any hypothesis of morality based solely on people's self-interest. Such a theory, he claimed, was clearly inconsistent with the majority of human interactions. While no theory proposed in the early twentieth-century directly contradicted the assumptions of Bentham and Hume, the work of Charles Darwin had an enormous impact on the way that modern authors conceptualized the foundation of man's ethical inclinations. Darwin's theories of evolution challenged basic moral assumptions by positing self-interest as the cornerstone of man's altruistic motivations.

The Victorian period contains two novelists whose work raises questions about the importance of this innate morality in the absence of an omnipotent deity – George Eliot and Thomas Hardy. In her early letters, George Eliot writes that in the absence of a God, people must have a responsibility for each other (*Letters* July 1848). The void created by religious doubt is felt in Eliot's novels in the way that characters' concern for

others is based not on a sense of religious devotion but on a genuine sense of communal obligation. Eliot's many selfless characters such as Dorothea Brooke and Maggie Tulliver illustrate this assumption, especially insofar as they are willing to suffer for those who are not always entirely deserving of their altruism. The capacity to feel guilt for the breach of this social duty is what redeems characters such as Gwendolyn Harleth or Silas Marner. In contrast to Eliot, Thomas Hardy condemns the Victorian emphasis on the importance of selflessness as one of the many ideals that the church had traditionally used to ensure religious obedience in its congregants. The experience of characters such as Sue Bridehead and Tess D'Urbeyfield embodies the dangers inherent in giving oneself entirely to the demands of another and the irrational guilt that occurs as a result of such an obligation.

Modernist writers often demonstrate the discrepancy between Eliot's belief in man's innate sense of social responsibility and Hardy's belief that such an idea is merely an outmoded example of religious propaganda. While many modern authors recognize man's increased social burden in the absence of religion, they also appreciate the sometimes-overbearing anxiety created by mankind's idea of the fall from grace that burdens the modern individual. Camus and Kafka are both wary of the inherent weakness that religion attributes to human beings. Camus, in particular, demonstrates the struggle that a character like Clamence faces who believes that his selfish indifference to the cries of a drowning woman is evidence of his inherent spiritual corruption. Conrad also shows the underlying weakness of the modern individual in characters like Jim, a man who represents the vices of men who are no longer emboldened by an "ancient faith."

Twentieth century writers such as Conrad, Ford, and Joyce were attempting to show that the modern period does not represent a disintegration of values dictated by the past standards of religious morality as much a shift in focus away from the community as the moral center of society. This change is reflected in the introspective nature of the literature of the period. "For the modern writer the self is sui generis, and is to be discovered by looking inward" (Kennedy 7). Razumov, in Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* symbolizes the impulse towards isolation that we also see in Joyce's Stephen Dedalus' use of silence, cunning, and exile. Razumov and Stephen, as well as characters like Lawrence's Rupert Birkin, demonstrate how the decline of religious authority, and developments in science, and the First World War, led individuals to question their own communal responsibility in a world ostensibly governed by self-interest and violence.

In light of the modern period's emphasis on the significance of self-consciousness, individuals became progressively more responsible for shaping the moral tenor of society through their own determination of the nature of social obligation. Stephen's rejection of Bloom's companionship at the end of *Ulysses* or Clarissa Dalloway's self-defined sense of duty are suggestive of a new form of morality, one that gives the individual the authority to determine his own obligation to the "Other."

As a result of this growing autonomy, literature of this period shows the importance of preventing the modern individual from becoming further alienated from his society by social codes devised to repress these socially divisive impulses. In order to show that individuals were not as corrupt as they may appear in relation to traditional standards of morality, writers of the high modern period began to eschew the above-mentioned Victorian conceptions that posited the individual's innate altruism as the

source of man's ethical impulses. Both religious and non-religious writers reexamined the impulse for guilt and shame based on the cultural transitions that occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the impact of these emotions on people's understanding of their own social obligations. In the modern period, the source of these emotions sometimes lay in the inherent contradiction between man's innate impulses and the pre-modern standards of moral conduct that were brought into question.

According to Freud, the inability to satisfy the super-ego is the source of guilt, yet in addition to the punitive nature of one's super-ego, there is the sense of self-worth that is controlled by the ego-ideal, and this is what leads to shame. Shame can often derive from guilt when characters not only perceive their behavior as unethical, but also feel that they have revealed something highly blameworthy within their own nature. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud shows us that "since civilization obeys an internal erotic impulsion which causes human beings to unite in a closely-knit group, it can only achieve this aim through an ever increasing reinforcement of guilt" (96). In Freud's view, the stability of society is based on its ability to ensure each individual's adherence to certain prescribed social codes. In the modern period, the increasing independence of the individual undermines the authority maintained by many of exactly these traditional communal values.

In addition to the work of Levinas and Freud, I would like to examine the theories of Kant, Lacan, and Foucault, as well as other more recent clinical psychological studies to investigate the relationship between guilt and the origins of our sense of morality. Carroll explains the difference between two kinds of guilt, moral and dispositional. Moral guilt is the result of an act that goes against the developed conscience, forcing it to

turn aggressive feelings back against the self. Dispositional guilt is guilt that is an original and essential part of someone's character, and precedes the development of morality. This distinction is at the heart of the conflict in works that seek to clarify the difference between guilt that has a legitimate foundation and guilt that is simply an unavoidable part of our nature.

A good deal of the regret and frustration that we see in modernist literature also revolves around the very question that Kant and Lacan deal with in *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* and *Ethics of Psychoanalysis* respectively. The essence of both of these men's works is the assumption that morality is based on our drive to ensure a correspondence between our desire and the demands of our super-ego. To achieve this end, we ascribe our actions to a causal necessity, or an "Other," that actually compels us to behave exactly as we would have wished were we given the choice. As we shall see in the work of multiple modernist writers, characters often wish to believe that they acted as they did because they were driven by to do so by circumstances or by their allegiance to an external authority (the state or God, for example). Finally, we also see resonance in this literature of Foucault's theory that guilt is produced through a system of control known as "panopticism," in which institutions are able to influence people's behavior through a repressive moral or penal code. [1]

Glicksberg notes, "In the drama or fiction of the twentieth century the negative hero looks within his own ambivalent nature and discovers there painful reality of which he had not been aware or which he refused to recognize" (3). Many modernist authors illustrate in their work that such a discovery need not limit the good that man is capable

[1] Foucault's argument is that governments control citizens by convincing them that they are always being watched, much like the criminals in the model of Bentham's Panopticon.

of achieving, and also that these "realities" are not something that one should always see as evidence of their failure. As mentioned above, much of the literature in the modern period struggles to determine whether guilt is justified by the circumstances that surround a perceived wrongdoing or whether a character's sense of remorse is largely based on a questionable societal premise. Within the modern period, it becomes crucial for people to recognize the source of their guilt or shame in order that they can both appreciate their communal responsibility and remain free from the dictates of overbearing social convention and institutional control.

Some of Conrad's best-known novels present a set of characters who are incapable of acting in accordance with certain ideals of the past. In spite of the moral void that appears to permeate the lives of his characters, these men nevertheless cling to a set of conventional beliefs that they believe will in some way exonerate them for their wrongdoing. The inability of Conrad's characters to live according to these traditional standards of conduct fills each with a remorse that distracts him from the actual consequence of his selfishness.

Jim and Razumov pursue exile to escape from the their respective forms of shame and guilt and cannot appreciate the root of these emotions. Where Jim is burdened by shame over his unwillingness to risk his life for other passengers aboard the Patna, he is unable to recognize the source of his humiliation that ultimately disguises his true responsibility. A character like Marlow, in *Heart of Darkness*, is driven by a blind faith first in the value of progress and then in the vision of a madman, failing to recognize that in respecting Kurtz's intentions he has only chosen a more extreme form of the imperialist agenda he rejects. It is only through the guilt that he believes he sees in

Kurtz that he recognizes the burden placed on each individual to compensate for the lies of a nation. Finally, in *Nostromo,* Dr. Monygham's self-inflicted punishment, a commitment to the success of Charles and Emilia Gould's silver that he hopes will compensate for his previous disloyalty, prevents him from recognizing that his true obligation is not to the ideals themselves but to the individuals that he continues to harm out of the self-serving motivations.

Conrad tries to show that these men are not unethical in the way that Victorian standards of morality would consider them to be, but rather that they are driven by an inherently human motivation. Conrad portrays characters who are ultimately drawn towards communal obligation not by convention but by their own "desire." Conrad's characters exhibit responsibility, not because of their inherently altruistic impulses, but because they ultimately realize that the legitimacy of their own ambition is contingent on others' recognition of their right to their own autonomy. Razumov must earn Haldin's sister's forgiveness before he has any right to defend the potential achievements that Haldin threatened to deprive him of. Kurtz, one of the most egotistical characters in literature, recognizes that to enjoy his own success he must hear Marlow's consent that his claim to the ivory he mined was fully justified.

Ford Madox Ford gives us a keen insight into the way that members of England's aristocratic elite were incapable of sustaining the standards of behavior that were originally a staple of their position as feudal masters. Ford depicts the weakening ties among members of the aristocracy who had once been part of the fraternity of English nobility. In spite of their efforts, his protagonists are often themselves influenced by instincts that prove too powerful to repress without the motivation of their class's

universal devotion to past social codes. We have seen in Conrad's portraits, men whose pursuit of ideals prevents them from recognizing the personal element of their remorse. Ford Madox Ford depicts the frustration of the English gentlemen who attempt to follow those same traditional rules of behavior that have all but disappeared among their peers. Where Conrad has seen these concepts of courage and honor distorted by modernism, Ford shows us how such codes have been replaced by shallow pretenses of social decorum.

The efforts of characters like Robert Grimshaw and Edward Ashburnham reflect the class's fervent efforts to deny their own misdeeds that only redouble the oppressive guilt that they must ultimately face as a result of their hypocrisy. It becomes essential for a character like Christopher Tietjens to recognize his remorse to escape the temptation for the dishonesty that Ford's other character feel driven towards. In light of the aristocracy's breached obligation to England's working poor during the First World War, Tietjens' guilt represents the last possibility for the redemption of his class. Christopher's gestures become heroic only insofar as he is willing to acknowledge his moral weakness and thus reject the values that others attempt to maintain through facades of social propriety.

The changes in the Catholic Church represent another important shift in the moral ideology of the twentieth century. Writers such as Graham Greene and François Mauriac reflect the influence of the modernist movement within the Church and the impact that the challenges to traditional Church doctrine had on Catholic writers' conception of sin and damnation. In the work of both Greene and Mauriac, we see depictions of the deleterious effect of the harsh demands on those who stray too far from the fold of

Catholic piety to consider the hope of redemption. Religious reformers accused the Church of unwillingness to adapt its teachings to the needs of the twentieth century. Novels such as *The Power and The Glory* and *Thérèse Desqueyroux* portray the inclination of pious characters to reject the possibility of salvation out of a fear that their crimes render them unworthy of God's mercy.

In *Brighton Rock* and *The Power and the Glory*, Greene attempts to illustrate how the Catholic Church is out of touch with the needs of the modern parishioner. The settings of Greene's novels represent the pervasive squalor of the modern condition. Greene contrasts characters like Rose and Pinkie with Ida Arnold of the Brighton middle class, whose pagan beliefs and naïve optimism only demonstrate the harsh reality of Rose and Pinkie's degraded existences. Rose, Pinkie, and the whiskey priest are so terrified of the potential retribution for their moral failure that they prefer to assume that their damnation is an inevitable consequence of their iniquity. As in Conrad and Ford, it is important for these characters to recognize that the source of their guilt is doctrine (here religious rather than social) that creates demands that the circumstances of their existence make it difficult to satisfy.

In a set of four novels devoted to the life of Thérèse Desqueyroux, Mauriac takes us through the sorrowful existence of a woman who lives in a constant sense of guilt for her attempt to take her husband's life. Banished from her husband's rural home to the foreign world of Paris, she struggles for some explanation a crime that she never wished to commit. She is so overwhelmed by her guilt that, rather than attempt to seek God's mercy, she hides from her past through lustful intimacies that only increase her self-loathing. The only contrition that her pride will allow her to show is a tremendous

concern for the daughter whom she fears she has condemned to share in her own damnation. The expectations that she has for her own selflessness prove unrealistic and her jealousy over her daughter's intended marriage almost destroys the girl's betrothal. Like Greene's characters, Thérèse is overwhelmed by what she believes the Church expects of her and feels that her failed obligations reflect her own inherent iniquity.

In the existential writing of Franz Kafka and Albert Camus, the individual is driven to a sense of isolation in defense against that metaphysical anxiety that he experiences as a result of a common sense of universal guilt. In both authors, the social and political changes of modernism pose certain threats to the stability of the authority, be it familial or societal. Characters like Kafka's George Bendemann and Joseph K., tormented by this mysterious sense of guilt, believe in their confusion, that the source of their overbearing remorse is their disobedience of these figures of authority who utilize their pre-existing guilt to ensure their submission.

In Kafka's work, the individual feels this dread because of his constant awareness of his potential for evil. The court is able to convince K. that he is guilty of a crime that he has not committed because he ultimately recognizes his egotism as a transgression in itself. Just like Georg Bendemann, whose father drives him to suicide by accusing him of disloyalty, K. is driven into believing that he is a worthy of the punishment he receives because he is never willing to embrace the fear that drives him further inside his protective shell. In the story "In the Penal Colony," the officer in charge of the execution process finds himself in a similar relationship to the powers of his island's old regime. Acting as both judge, and then finally as a condemned criminal, he believes that the only way to defend himself against the existential guilt that he shares with other members of

his society, is to subject himself to the same purgative execution process that they had endured.

Where in Kaka the defensive arrogance that we see in his characters stems from an assumption of their own iniquity, the same self-protective isolation in Camus' work derives from a Sartrean fear of life's absurdity. In *The Stranger*, Meursault kills an Arab and his trial becomes a mockery of a legal system that is far more concerned with the lack of Christian values among the French citizens of Algeria than with the man who has been murdered. Not anxiety-ridden like Joseph K. or Georg Bendemann, Meursault is nevertheless easily convinced that his indifference to anything outside of himself is a symbol of his guilt. In *The Fall*, Clamence is also convinced of his depravity by his indifference to the cries of a drowning woman, something that undermines his inflated image of his pure selflessness. As a lawyer, Clamence recognizes the same extraordinary measures taken by his nation's legal system to control its citizens in a time of growing disobedience. Both Kafka and Camus demonstrate the necessity for the individual to recognize their internal guilt in order to distinguish between personal anxiety and the manipulative accusations of authorial figures and institutions.

Finally, in moving across the Atlantic, we witness the contradictory impact that the European struggle against social convention and political oppression has engendered in the American mind. Where characters in the British, French, and Austrian works mentioned above felt guilt because they were unable to conform to moral standards, the American people were, relatively speaking, much less held back by the limitations of repressive traditions or political control. Few American authors view the government as

a totalitarian entity in the way that Kafka portrayed it to be or in the way that George Orwell later suggests in *1984*. Rarely do we see in the fiction of Updike, Bellow, Styron, or Mailer the kind of concern for a lost sense of honor that Conrad or Ford describe. Where the dissipation of religious authority and the devastating impact of the First and Second World Wars created in Europe a feeling of general unease, Americans were consumed by a different form of angst.

Twentieth century American authors appear, to some extent, to celebrate all citizens' opportunity to cultivate their own garden. Unfortunately, such pursuits at each at certain stages of the nation's development engendered in the modern American pioneer a regret for rejecting the community that had once sustained him. We see this most clearly as a result of the conflict between racial or familial solidarity and the individual's pursuit of autonomy inherent to this elusive dream.

Authors such as John Updike and Joyce Carol Oates show us characters whose wanderlust sends them in search of unattainable goals that they believe will free them from the stasis of their current existence. The shame that drives them away from those traditional domestic structures ultimately leads to guilt for their cruelty to those whom they have left behind. Ralph Ellison and Philip Roth present characters who see their race or religion as a stigma that prevents them from succeeding in the way that they believe they are readily capable.

What unites the guilt experienced by modern characters on both sides of the Atlantic are the expectations upon which standards of both moral conduct and social success are based. All of these authors attempt to show, in one way or another, that the purpose of literature was to debunk myths of the past, ethical or social standards created

not on the basis of reality but on idealistic visions of what man should achieve. The Catholic Church and European legal institutions were able to control Scobie, Thérèse, Joseph K., Meursault and others by instilling in them a sense of their moral failure that that came to define their identity. In the same way, Americans invented benchmarks by which to measure their own achievement. Characters like Rabbit Angstrom, Clara Walpole, and Coleman Silk prove that the ideals of wealth, domestic harmony and social equality that they were striving for represented the pinnacle of man's capabilities rather than the reality of American life.

Chapter 1

Survivor Guilt: Conrad's Anti-heroes

Daniel Melnick calls "the contradiction between pessimism and affirmation" a "complex and integral part" of our engagement with the work of Joseph Conrad (113). Perhaps nowhere is this tension more clear than in Conrad's attempt to question the hope of moral stability in light of "the Copernican vision of a vast and indifferent cosmos" that governed his view of existence (Erdinast-Vulcan 2). According to Conrad, knowledge of this reality destroys any illusions that human beings may harbor about the possibility of an ordered universe.

> What makes mankind tragic is not that they are the victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it…There is no morality, no knowledge and no hope; there is only consciousness of ourselves which drives us about a world that whether seen in a convex or concave mirror is always but a vain and fleeting appearance. (LCG 70-71)

Given such an outlook, Conrad's novels embody a version of George Eliot's epistolary expression of the necessity of mutual human understanding. In a letter written to Mrs. Henry Houghton she discusses the urgency of man's responsibility for his fellows in the absence of a supreme deity (*Letters* July 1848). Conrad too believes that man shares this communal obligation and that in light of an "indifferent cosmos," man must find the inspiration for this human affinity through the power of art. He writes in his preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* that art "shall awaken in the hearts of the beholders that feeling of unavoidable solidarity; of the solidarity in mysterious origin, in toil, in joy, in hope, in uncertain fate, which binds mankind to each other and all mankind to the visible

world" (Preface ii). Given such a premise, Conrad's work teaches by negative example depicting characters who suffer from an inability to reconcile their drives for self-preservation with certain prescribed social responsibilities.

Erdinast-Vulcan argues that the dedication to social cohesion that Conrad espouses is particularly absent in the modern age. She cites an argument made by Lukacs and also developed in the work of a contemporary philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre: modernity has dislodged a traditional Western ethos in which "'every individual has…a given role and status within a well defined and highly determinate system of roles and statuses" which identifies "the survival of the community as the supreme criterion for defining virtues" (24). To this she contrasts the modern view of society "which places a high premium on individual freedom of choice" (24). The very idea of the precedence of individual will over rigid social structure is what opens up the tremendous room for moral relativism that we see throughout Conrad's work. She goes on to note that

> [i]t is not surprising...that with the collapse of transcendental sanctions and a priori ethical distinctions, brought about by the secularization and individualization which underlie the evolution of modernity, there emerges a sense of nostalgia for that very distant cultural past perceived as an age of cohesion and moral certainty. (24)

While a longing for the values of the Victorian period does characterize some of Conrad's work, his novels can also be seen as skeptical of certain traditional principles of conduct as well as the unrealistic ideals fostered by these customs. Along with writers such as Thomas Hardy, Conrad believes that past conventions prescribe certain guidelines that are inconsistent with contemporary scientific discoveries on the nature of human instincts.

Conrad claims to have not been particularly fond of Freud, and according to Martin, Conrad felt that modern psychoanalysis turned the interpretation of literature into a fruitless dissection of the human consciousness (232). Yet, as Martin also points out, one can hardly miss Conrad's treatment of the role played by the superego in the moral dilemmas he creates. In Conrad's work, the idea of guilt, which is the primary focus of this study, embodies a combination of the Freudian and the modern clinical definition of the term: respectively, an emotion denotative of our "moral failure" and an event-specific reaction not necessarily prompted by a perceived breach of an ethical standard.[2] The superego, which according to Freud represents the parental influence on the human psyche, ultimately determines this standard within each individual consciousness. [3]

The distinction between guilt and shame plays an important role in Conrad's work and the potential ambiguity of the protagonist's emotions in his novels asks us to compare wrongdoing that reflects moral failure and an error that exposes certain personal inadequacy. The difference between shame and guilt is not entirely agreed upon by psychologists nor is it always made clear in Conrad's work. Freud defined guilt as a feeling of conflict between the ego and the superego and shame as a feeling of public humiliation (*Lectures* 61, 132). Tangney and Dearing consider shame a sense of personal failure, and guilt as the feelings resultant from an act that one regrets. In this respect, their views are similar to Freud who defined shame not as the result of a breach of a moral code, but as the consequence of one's feeling of exposure. Where guilt for

[2] This element of guilt would appear very similar to the notion of regret, but as Barbara Landman points out, "personal responsibility and the sense of self-recrimination are not the defining element of regret" (38).
[3] Though psychologists such as Tangney and Dearing view elements of Freud's work as outdated, the concept of the superego has survived in the work of men like Lacan. Lacan's theories of psychoanalysis do not consider parental influence the only factor in the formation of the superego but his conception of the superego as the determining source of a moral standard within the individual is similar to Freud's definition of the term.

Tangney and Dearing carries the same self-accusatory association, it is the result of a conscious choice that may be viewed as a mistake, i.e. a guilty act, rather than a symbol of a fundamental character flaw. This distinction is particularly important in a work like *Lord Jim* in which the moral question of Jim's behavior focuses as much on Jim's knowledge of right and wrong as the question of his own capacity for selfless courage.

In the novels that I will be discussing, Conrad's heroes find themselves faced with situations where the safety of others demands a potential sacrifice of their own life or, as in the case of Kurtz or Charles Gould, where the temptations of wealth and power threaten to destroy their psychological constitution. Conrad's work embodies the dissolution of instinctive bravery within the modern period that fosters his characters' cowardly and shame-inducing struggles for survival against the demands of conscience. I have chosen to begin my discussion with *Lord Jim* and *Under Western Eyes* because of the similarity in their respective patterns of betrayal, remorse, and the struggle for redemption from a sense of moral failure. Both novels present characters who understand very little of the forces driving them towards similarly ill-advised decisions and who suffer from guilt that they can never completely acknowledge. *Heart of Darkness* and *Nostromo* exemplify a common theme outlined by Walter Houghton. Both Kurtz and Gould are driven by the spirit of Victorian capitalism that emphasizes the importance of the individual's success on the society as a whole. Kurtz's arrogance stems, in part, from his conviction in the importance of his contributions to the colonial mission just as Charles Gould is driven by the fervent belief that the success of his family's mine will revitalize every element of Costaguana's crumbling infrastructure. Yet, both novels offer similar depictions of the way individuals are unhindered by guilt

when they weigh the marginal human costs against the potential social benefits of their rapacious endeavors.

One unifying theme that can be seen throughout these four novels is Conrad's unwillingness to condemn the impulsive decisions made under perilous circumstances that foster his characters' various acts of greed, betrayal, and treachery. Conrad recognizes that such decisions cannot be judged by the standards of traditional morality and that it is up to the characters themselves to recognize how their behavior prevents them from attaining their "desire," [4] as defined by Kant, Lacan, and Levinas. In weighing his own safety or success against that of another or group, Conrad's characters demonstrate the relationship between morality and an individual's own claims of autonomy. In attempting to rationalize the consequences of his ambition, each character demonstrates a morality based not simply on traditional ethical guidelines but on his innate response to the psychological conflict that results from his behavior. In all four of these novels, Conrad's protagonist recognize that their "desire," can be satisfied only through their commitment to other individuals and not simply through their dedication to an abstract ideal.

In his discussion of the influences of Darwin on Conrad's novel *Lord Jim*, O'Hanlon gives us a keen insight into the expectations demanded by Jim's heritage of "blessed stiffness before the outward and inward terrors" that the protagonist finds himself unable to fulfill (68-70). It is likely that Jim's feeling of inadequacy at his failure

[4] [4] In the work of Kant and Lacan, "desire" is generally denotative of the subject's efforts to align his ambition with the demands of the superego.

to maintain such courage, which (according to Darwin) has in modern man "atrophied as a result of disuse" (in O'Hanlon 79), contributes to his selfish preoccupation with honor. Yet the disgrace he feels as a result of his ancestors' unswerving dedication to responsibility does not translate into guilt for his decision to abandon a boatful of passengers on what he believed was a sinking ship. In considering the issue of Jim's culpability, we must question the power of a conventional ethical ideal to hold an individual to a moral demand even at the possible cost of his life.

Jim's failure to take responsibility for his decision reflects a Kantian/Lacanian account of the grounding of ostensible choice, one that demonstrates the instinctual impulses that a subject attempts to integrate with the demands of the superego. Kant/Lacan's theory is instantiated in Conrad's portrayal of Jim's feelings of shame rather than guilt for a decision that he feared he lacked the capacity to understand in the time available. Unwilling to consider the idea that his behavior has been prompted by drives that he cannot accept, he strives to convince himself that it has in fact been an event-specific reaction. Jim's cowardly impulse for survival against the demands of conscience embody the dissolution of his ancestors' bravery once embodied in a selfless concern for a social community. In the absence of the "ancient faith" that prevented exactly the kind of doubt that Jim experiences as he looks into the maws of death, the protagonist proves unable to abide by the traditional rules of conduct that are the mark of his noble lineage.

The two men who appear as versions of Jim's alter-ego in the second half of the novel offer important insights into the young sailor's pursuit of redemption. Stein, the man responsible for sending Jim to the island of Patusan, encourages the protagonist's

pursuit of an existence that may ultimately provide him with the validation that he seeks after his humiliating desertion of the Patna. Gentleman Brown inspires in Jim an unfounded sense of guilt that mires him in an arrangement that could hardly avoid compounding the young sailor's sense of personal failure. In convincing Jim that he deserves trust in spite of his past failures, Brown leads Jim to the tempting recognition of a self-justification that the protagonist dearly covets. In *Lord Jim*, Jim's continual need to affirm his honor in spite of his past failure demonstrates Modernism's revision of our perception of the barriers to moral action.

Marlow's description of Jim's cowardice reflects Darwin's assessment of the basic compulsion towards self-preservation that undermines the protagonist's instinctive courage. Marlow's initial confidence in Jim illustrates the pressures imposed on him by the strength of his lineage.

> He stood there for all the parentage of his kind, for men and women, no means clever or amusing, but whose very existence is based on honest faith, and upon the instinct of courage. (44)

Whatever hereditary courage Jim might believe he possesses increases his sense of failure at his inability to meet his father's expectations. While the impulse to survive in the face of danger has increased the "fitness" [5] of Jim's ancestry, this strong constitution, Conrad suggests is easily compromised by a potential for weakness in even the bravest individuals.

> The commonest sort of fortitude prevents us from becoming criminals in the legal sense; it is from weakness unknown, but perhaps suspected, as in some parts of the world you suspect a deadly snake in every bush -- from weakness that may lie hidden,

[5] In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin explains that fitness is the ability of certain traits to ensure their own survival and be passed on to the next generation (Darwin 115).

> watched or unwatched, prayed against or manfully scorned, that not one of us is safe. (44)

As O'Hanlon and Hunter point out, the novel's focus on the strength of Jim's heritage reflects Conrad's larger concern with the processes of human evolution. Where the vigor of his bloodline may come from evolutionary mechanisms that have bolstered this hereditary courage, the spineless impulses (in the face of outward and inward terrors) that Marlow alludes to appear to derive from the same process that had ensured the endurance of these genes. Darwin's theory of natural selection[6] is embodied in Jim's struggle for survival and enables us to understand his sense of compulsion to act in a manner inconsistent with his father's values and fundamentally incomprehensible to him.

Marlow's eagerness to excuse Jim's behavior stems from his fearful recognition of the potential implications of Jim's mistake. For Marlow, the fact that Jim is "one of us" fosters in his mind an urgent demand that he excuse the young sailor's reputation. The narrator feels connected to Jim insofar as he perceives that they are both men whose common occupation makes them beholden to the seaman's standard of conduct. Yet, the circumstances surrounding Jim's case make it very difficult to find what he ultimately searches for in his loyalty to the code.

> I see well enough now that I hoped for the impossible--for the laying of what is the most obstinate ghost of man's creation, of the uneasy doubt uprising like a mist, secret and gnawing like a worm and more chilling than the certitude of death—the doubt of the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct. (53)

[6] In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin describes the "[struggle for existence] in a large and metaphorical sense including dependence of one being on another, and including (which is more important) not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny" (115).

Najder points out that such a statement is emblematic of the text's larger doubt about the legitimate foundation for morality in the absence of the religious values that Jim appears to hide from. He calls Marlow's sentiment a "characterization of the modern crisis of secular moral norms – those rules which make "humanity" a normative concept, as they impose on human beings certain mutual obligations" (89). Such a reading oversimplifies Marlow's view in its implication that Conrad bemoans the loss of past religious values that have been undermined by the moral decay endemic to Modernism. While the "honest faith and courage" that served as the basis of bygone "standards of conduct," might be what Marlow sets out to find, the text suggests that in the absence of an "ancient faith," the moral foundation grounded by such devotion might also come under suspicion.

In a character like Brierly, Conrad appears to question precisely those moral ideals that maritime rules of conduct are intended to represent. Marlow's conversation with Brierly, one of the nautical assessors in Jim's case, exemplifies the discrepancies between his (Marlow's) perception of the seaman's code and the superficial commitment to the honor demanded by their common occupation. For abandoning the ship, the Patna's crew is brought to trial and Brierly asks Marlow to encourage Jim to escape rather than tarnish his professions' reputation further with details of his cowardice. Brierly believes fundamentally in the importance of the code and looks down on Jim for having jeopardized the reputation of his fellow seamen. Brierly's fundamental commitment to the welfare of a community is almost mocked by his manifest racism and dedication to this code even in the absence of any human beings who might benefit from the selfless courage that it demands.

> This is a disgrace. We've got all kinds amongst us – some anointed scoundrels in the lot. But hang it we must preserve decency or we become no better than tinkers that go

> about loose. We are trusted. Do you understand? Trusted! I don't care a snap for all the pilgrims that come out of Asia but a decent man would not have behaved like this to a full cargo of old rags in bales. (73)

In spite of Marlow's fear that a man like Jim may be unable to live up to this "hallowed" moral standard, the narrator recognizes Jim's decision to attend the trial, in the face of Brierly's wish that he escape, as a testimony of the young sailor's subscription to the essence of the code.

An important element in Jim's inability to feel remorse is the fact that the demands of traditional morality blind him to the difficulty of exerting control over his own instincts. In *The Origin of the Species* Darwin remarks that the "instinct of self-preservation is not felt except in the presence of danger" (531). Because the individual only realizes the limitations of his capacity to uphold conscious beliefs when a threat is clear, "many a coward has thought himself brave until he has met his enemy face to face" (531). Marlow explains early in *Lord Jim* that it is conventional beliefs about the human capacity for self-control that permit the individual to meet certain expected measures of restraint.

> It was solemn, and a little ridiculous too, as they always are, those struggles of the individual trying to save from the fire his idea of what his moral identity should be, this precious notion of a convention, only one of the rules of the game, nothing more, but all the same so terribly effective by its assumption of unlimited power over natural instincts, by the awful penalties of its failure. (88)

This abstruse analysis can be taken to suggest that the convention of justifying one's behavior must require people to believe that at no point previously were they ever moved by only their instincts. The assumption, believing that people have control over their impulses, is made necessary "by the awful penalties of its failure" to convince the

individual of such a conviction. Jim's need to rationalize his actions stems from the "Evolved 'Standards of Conduct'" that are the legacy of his ancestry (O'Hanlon 79). Such demands, as Marlow points out, demonstrate once again the gap between Jim's natural instincts and the "constraints of bourgeois morality" (Stape 119).

The transition from the Victorian moral theories that posit altruistic inclinations as the source of morality[7] to modernist challenges to these beliefs [8] resulted, at least in part, from the influence of evolutionary science on the understanding of human motivation. The publication of Darwin's work *The Origin of Species* prompted a generation of writers to reject pre-modern conceptions of innate human benevolence in light of man's basic impulse to ensure the survival of his genes. The work of Lacan is indebted to Kant, a man whose writing on the basis of moral intuition long preceded *The Origin of Species.* Nevertheless, their theories on the association between "desire" and morality seem an appropriate starting point through which to view characters who often confute ethical impulses and desire.

In *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals,* Kant claims that our actions should be guided by the assumption, or maxim, that we should always behave in a way that we would also like to see all others act. According to the system of ethics that both Kant and Lacan espouse, sometimes referred to as the Ethics of the Real (or the Impossible), man is not bound by any force outside himself, but in his freedom his chosen actions are partly determined by his instinctive drives. All actions are free because, by virtue of our reason, we know that we cannot be influenced by external forces unless we choose to be.

[7] The writers who espouse these theories would include Thomas Carlyle, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. For a detailed explanation this element of Victorian morality, see Stephan Collini's work *The Public Moralists*.

[8] Fredrick Olafson is one of the many social theorists who question interpretations of morality based on a belief in the existence of divine authority or intrinsically altruistic inclinations.

Our goal is to integrate our instincts with our drives, and we can only do this if we feel these drives are the result of a necessity that is beyond our control. Yet we are also at the same time influenced by internal predispositions or external forces, and our behavior is always controlled by causal necessity or, the "Other." Though we are free to choose our behavior, there could be no other reason to act the way we do except the fact that we are motivated to do so by this causal necessity. Therefore we can claim that we are always, in fact, compelled by the Other. Yet we are the ones who have chosen the Other as the cause of our behavior, and therefore we are the sole authors of our own actions.

Lacan refers to the source of our desire as "l'object-petit" (1998: 126). The object-petit can be any "pathological" goal such as fame, honor, wealth and the aim is to make the drive for this goal part of one's maxim. However, it is not merely the external end that the subject seeks but rather the assurance that the pathological goal he attempts to attain is something that he is compelled to achieve by the demands of the superego. For Lacan, whatever a subject considers worth acquiring is the "desire of the 'Other,'" or the drive for those things that are already demanded by the superego. In Conrad's work, characters often believe that their conscience motivates them to compromise the safety of another in order to ensure their own. In both *Lord Jim* and of *Under Western Eyes*, Conrad depicts protagonists whose perception of their own behavior would seem closely analogous to the theories of desire ascribed to Kant and Lacan above.

In order to justify his leap from the ship, Jim must convince himself that his jump was based not only on extenuating circumstances but also on the demands of his conscience. In his work *The Expression of Emotion*, Darwin explains that "When movements, associated through habit with certain states of mind, are partially repressed

by the will, the strictly involuntary muscles, as well as those which are at least under separate control of the will, are liable still to act; and their action is often highly expressive" (48). According to one critic of Conrad, there is no doubt that Jim "specifically recognizes that his jump was an instinctive reflex, an unconscious physical reaction to danger and death" (Kim 84). Yet, if we are to take Jim at his word that being saved "was more than [he] meant when he…jumped" (141) -- and given his resignation to die we have no reason not to -- then we must avoid seeing Jim's jump as a something wholly antithetical to his sense of responsibility.

The single most important challenge facing the protagonist throughout this novel is preserving an image of himself consistent with values that he accepts at the same time he acknowledges having committed an action that would ostensibly be incompatible with the dictates of his conscience. To reconcile his desire and his moral impulse, Jim ascribes his action to an "Other" that actually compels him to behave exactly as he would have wished were he given the choice. The code to which he was committed would have unquestionably required a member of a ship's crew to remain on board when a vessel appeared in danger of foundering. And, in light of this fact, Jim could not have maintained his self-respect had he perceived himself to have deliberately jumped from the Patna in the hope of saving his own life by abandoning his responsibility. That he succeeded in avoiding this recognition is confirmed by his insistence that being saved was "more than he meant when he jumped," a claim that finds support in Marlow's apparent readiness to accept his insistence that he felt in every way resigned to die.

In order to account for his presence on the lifeboat without acknowledging it to

be the outome of a desire for self-preservation, he ascribes his action to an Other that compelled him to behave exactly as he would have wished were he morally free to act upon his choice. In retrospect Jim has no recollection of having made a decision to jump that entailed the fear of death or the hope of self preservation. Rather, he ascribes this jump entirely to a sense of compulsion to comply with the demands of a group of men whom he had previously despised and with whom he later refuses to associate. In explaining to Marlow the reason for his jump, he implausibly blames his action entirely upon the shouts of the other members of the crew. "It was their doing as plainly as if they had reached up with a boat-hook and pulled me over" (134). As we have already seen, Jim refuses to believe that he was more concerned with his own life than the lives of others aboard the ship. However, when urged by the voices of the men on the ship, he jumps, but then claims that he was coerced into doing so. Jim is not disingenuous in acknowledging that he felt somehow obligated to abandon the ship, but he does misidentify the source of this emotion, ascribing his desertion to an external demand heightened in authority by an internal need that Lacan would refer to as Jim's "anxiety." [9]

The association between Darwin and Lacan here is particularly important insofar as both men perceive an important connection between the superego and the survival instinct. In the case of Darwin, it is the instinctive need to pass on one's genes that ensures the individual's interest in his own survival (see footnote pg. 5), while in Kantian/Lacanian terms, what makes Jim feel justified in jumping from the ship is "the

[9] This is similar to Kant's notion of "respect." It is presence of the moral law within us that determines our will. For further discussion of this point see Kant's Critique of Practical Reason, p. 75.

lack in the Other," [10] i.e., that sense of breached duty at failing to satisfy what in this case is an instinctual drive for self-preservation. This counters the idea of what Jim did to rights that would have been advocated by this jump. In other words, Jim unconsciously believes that his responsibility for his own survival is equal to or greater than his commitment to the passengers that he abandons. Yet, the only way for him to explain the instinctual "anxiety" he feels is to attribute it to an external influence, to an object of representation [11] outside of his own desire.

Marlow wavers in his sympathy for Jim when he begins to doubt that Jim felt any true remorse for what he has done. Rather than providing the narrator with any moral certainty, Jim's case makes Marlow feel "blinded and decoyed…into a dispute impossible of decision" (100). He recognizes the role their common career has played in Jim's undoing. As Marlow says at the end of Jim's account, "In no other kind of life is the illusion more wide of reality -- in no other is the beginning *all* illusion -- the disenchantment more swift -- the subjugation more complete" (139). While Marlow displays an almost continual capacity to empathize with Jim, his pity is largely conditional on the belief that the protagonist ultimately recognized his responsibility as one of the ship's crewmembers. When Jim's seems patently indifferent towards the welfare of those he was employed to protect, Marlow grows wearisome and caustic.

> "I wasn't going to be frightened of what I had done. And anyhow if I'd stuck to the ship I'd have done my best to be saved. Men have been known to float for hours – in the open sea – and be picked up not too much

[10] The subject's desire is not to fill this lack but rather to ensure that that empty space is never filled. The super-ego ensures that the lack will continue, and that the anxiety due to the elusive nature of the object will perpetually motivate the subject to feel satisfaction at the fulfillment of the drive.

[11] An object of representation is any goal such as honor, fame or wealth that constitutes the object of a drive.

> for the worse for it." "A hair's breath" he muttered. Not the breadth of a hair between this and that. And at that time…'
>
> " 'It is difficult to see a hair at midnight,' I put in a little viciously I fear." (142)

In this context, Marlow's uncharacteristic cynicism is based not on the fact that Jim abandoned the ship but that he felt no guilt for doing so.

The character of Stein plays an important role in introducing Jim to a life in which he may have the opportunity to live out his boyhood fantasy of glory unfettered by the memory of his shameful past. Stein believes that man can never be satisfied with the image he has of himself. "This magnificent butterfly finds a little heap of dirt and lands on it, but man can never on his heap of mud keep still…and every time he shuts his eyes he sees himself as a very fine fellow -- so fine as he can never be in a dream" (235). His butterfly metaphor makes apparent the long-contested meaning of the following quotation.

> Yes! Very funny this terrible thing is. A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavor to do -- he drowns. No! I tell you. The way is to the destructive element submit yourself and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep sea keep you up. (235)

Without this submission you face a form of reality that is tantamount to death. Unless you are a German romantic like Stein appears to be, much in the spirit of the Schlegels in *Howard's End*, nothing but the battle for an unattainable goal can reveal life's true meaning. "And do you know how many opportunities I let escape; how many dreams I had lost that had come in my way" (233)?

Jim's identification with Gentleman Brown illuminates the dichotomy in his self-doubt: the overwhelming sense of shame that inspires his ill-advised sympathy for the

trader and the guilt that dictates his imprudent decision to grant him aid. Gentleman Brown, a pirate of sorts, comes to the island to plunder whatever booty he and his half-starved crew can get hold of. Out of a sense of identification with Brown, Jim decides to allow him safe passage off the island, a decision that costs the life of the son of Patusan's native chief, Doramin. Brown has also suffered from the traumatic death of his Malayan wife, for which he feels responsible. Certain similarities that exist between Brown and Jim inspire Jim's sense of a mutual obligation between them.

> And there ran through the rough talk a vein of subtle reference to their common blood, an assumption of common experience; a sickening suggestion of common guilt, of secret knowledge that was like a bond of their minds and their hearts. (428)

As Martin points out, "The dysfunctional behavior of Jim and Brown elucidates well the direct interdependency between a material trauma and the agonizing masochistic shame often following it" (234). However, while Martin's assumption that these two men feel "humiliated in front of each other" (234) may be true, though more so for Jim than Brown, his assessment of Jim's sympathy towards Brown contradicts other contemporary clinical studies on the adaptive nature of shame. Jim's sympathy towards Brown is not, like his surrender to Doramin, a self-glorifying effort to overshadow personal failure but a heartfelt appreciation of another individual's suffering. Tangney and Dearing conclude that shame differs from guilt in the way that it is less likely to encourage the subject to seek out an alternative to shame-inducing behavior (126). According to Tangney and Dearing, "Shame is an acutely painful experience, involving marked self-focus that is incompatible with other-oriented empathy reactions" (83). If Tangney and Dearing's findings are correct, then it is Jim's repressed guilt, not his shame that forces him to give safe passage to Brown.

By trusting Brown, Jim becomes vulnerable to the charge of taking the side of a man who has been undeniably criminal in his actions. Jim desires the vindication of the self who jumped and by risking the lives that had become most precious to him, he symbolically passes on himself the innocent verdict that loomed large in his desire. However, the cost of buying this verdict was to associate his own pursuit of "the destructive element" with a criminal identity. Faced with shame that threatens to return by Dain Waris' death, and to deny the possibility of further disgrace, he swears his devotion to every soul on the island of Patusan except the one who needs him most.

Jim's final sacrifice personifies the struggle that Stein describes, but unlike Stein, Jim cannot appreciate what his dream has cost him. Gekoski believes that "Jim has successfully managed to unite what had previously been felt to be the incompatible demands of his fierce egoism and social responsibility" (106). Jim's surrender to Doramin may represent such a union, but the ultimate message of Jim's decision is far less optimistic than it would appear based on such a reading. Jim believes that his self-sacrifice will expiate his sins and lift the veil of shame that fosters his self-doubt. "'Nothing can touch me' he said in a last flicker of superb egoism" (455). In this statement to his beloved, Jewel, Jim reveals that he feels no obligation to compensate for what he has done. What he views as his unquestionably valid decisions and behaviors have ostensibly exposed him to a series of misunderstandings in which he has been perceived as a coward and a traitor. Doramin would have seen his permission for Brown's escape as an act to privilege the greed of a white man above the lives of his people. Jim knows that he entered into this agreement with Brown not because of racial identity but because of guilt that could never have been explained to the people of

Patusan. In this case, the dream of Stein's was one that entailed only a succession of achievements attesting to his personal superiority. Had he denied what Brown had asked, he would have had to ascribe implicitly to himself a past that would have deprived him of the rights to be trusted in this way. Death is seen as the opportunity to preserve himself from exposure, freeing him from both shame and guilt and enabling him to place out of reach of any challenge the superb egoism affirmed in his last assertion.

Jim's final act, rather than achieving the redemption that he seeks throughout the novel, actually denies him the fulfillment of the "dream" for which he dies. Jim, aware that life must entail en engagement with an unending series of challenges, feels that Jewel's love is a small price to pay for the only escape from the shameful outcome of a fate grounded on his having twice succeeded in confuting obligation and desire. [12] For Conrad, Jim's execution is a far less stringent punishment than acknowledging a responsibility to an actual human being rather than an abstract goal. In going "away from a living woman to celebrate his pitiless wedding to an ideal of conduct" (459), Jim demonstrates to Marlow the failure of his (Jim's) effort to transcend his own ambition in the pursuit of moral perfection. Unlike his jump from the Patna, Jim's final desertion, in this case an escape, rather than a cause of his further pain, was taken at the cost of a woman who is destroyed by his fate. Both acts are committed by a man who in death was as unaware as he had been in life that "it was the guilt alone that mattered."

[12] He struggles to meet a "standard of conduct" rather than, as Stein might have advocated, to perpetuate the self-doubt that would demand his obedience to the idea of an ethical action. In this respect, Stein's philosophy actually follows closely the belief expressed in the Marquis De Sade's "fantasy of infinite suffering" (Zupancic 81). When Stein argues that Jim should "to the destructive element submit" he advocates the Sadean form of ethics: a belief in the importance of a struggle that will perpetuate one's sense of guilt for never achieving the ideal.

Under Western Eyes

In *Under Western Eyes,* Razumov, like Jim, finds himself as much the victim of untoward circumstances as a callous betrayer of someone in need. Haldin's visit to Razumov is equivalent to the driving rains that threaten the Patna's buoyancy, a chance event that demands of the forlorn hero a degree of composure that a momentary panic deprives him of. Yet, where Jim is confident in the strength of his convictions, if not the rightness of his decision, the protagonist of *Under Western Eyes* cowers in self-pity and self-doubt. As opposed to Jim, Razumov experiences what Miller refers to as "shame-free" guilt in which the subject may feel regret unrelated to the ego-ideal.[13] His remorse stems from a feeling of loss rather than a sense of personal shortcoming.

We also find an important distinction in the roles played by the stories' two narrators. Unlike Marlow, whose search for a "standard of conduct" denotes the underlying difficulty in attaining such an ideal, the Professor of Languages imposes on us a rigid moral structure that "shackles us, his readers, to an absolute single point of view" (Cooper 66). In relation to the Marlow character in both *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, the Language Instructor's unsympathetic comments and obtuse rhetoric have led to a great deal of harsh criticism of his role in Conrad's novel.

Razumov's guilt throughout the first section of the novel is based not on his feelings of moral responsibility but on a psychological predisposition for fear and doubt. This form of contrition, referred to by Carroll as "Dispositional Guilt" (28) derives from Razumov's desperate need for an absent parental affection. The government's suspicion of him turns his remorse into a defensive revulsion that manifests itself in his callous

[13] Piers and Singer define shame as the conflict between the ego and the ego-ideal. (in Miller 4).

disdain of the revolutionary ideal. Razumov's ultimate appreciation of the value of morality comes not through a recognition of his "conventional conscience" but through his ability to respect the revolutionary cause while maintaining his faith in his own political ideals. Razumov's eventual confession to Haldin's sister stems not only from a sense of guilt but also from the demand of a transcendence[14] that he recognizes in her weakness. The protagonist can only feel a sense of moral guilt for his betrayal when he realizes that the understanding he seeks is contingent on his own capacity for sympathy.

In his criticism of Haldin's ideals, Razumov defends not only a political system but also the source of his identity. Everything that gives meaning to the young scholar's life is dependent on the preservation of institutional form.

> The word Razumov was the very label of solitary individuality. There were no Razumovs belonging to him anywhere. His closest parentage was defined in the statement that he was a Russian. Whatever good he expected in life would be given to or withheld from his hopes by that connection alone. (18)

Prince K.'s momentary squeeze of his hand, "a light pressure like a secret sign" (15), represents the only sign of familial affection Razumov has ever received. The prince's unwillingness to acknowledge his illegitimate child only inspires Razumov to work harder to be recognized as a patriot and a devotee of his father's corrupt regime.

Arguments that Razumov's obsession with his own success is evidence of a strong egoism appear to ignore the importance of his father's missing affection. Moser sees Razumov as a character whose "deepest impulses and longings are directed not toward a dutiful place in the ranks but toward self-aggrandizement" (31). It is important to recognize that the yearning for recognition that Moser and others see as Razumov's

[14] "Transcendence" in Levinas' work should be distinguished from the idea of a religious transcendence. It is a metaphysical desire for what is absolutely other that can never be attained (Levinas 34).

selfishness is the only way that he believes he may experience the human kindness commonly exchanged among his countrymen.

> But a celebrated professor was somebody. Distinction would convert the label Razumov into an honored name. There was nothing strange in the student Razumov's wish for distinction. A man's life is that accorded to him by the thoughts of other men by reason of respect or natural love. (17)

The narrator places the terms "respect" and "natural love" together as if they were almost synonyms. Yet, however naïve he, and by extension, Razumov, may appear from the overly optimistic nature of this passage, it does not seem to suggest that Razumov is driven purely by egoism. If "respect" is the sole basis of Razumov's pursuit of distinction, then a case can certainly be made that Razumov indeed seeks self-aggrandizement alone through his work. However, it is clearly not only a selfish regard for his own advancement that motivates his dedication to intellectual achievement. The only reason for the incongruous association of "natural love," a phrase denotative of familial affection, with "respect," presumably for one's professional achievements, would seem to be the integral relationship that Razumov perceives between the two ideals.

Razumov's remorse for a crime that he did not commit suggests that he suffers from a form of dispositional guilt known as "persecution anxiety." The protagonist's political beliefs are firmly grounded in his erroneous faith in social cohesion. "Better that thousands should suffer than that a people should become a disintegrated mass, helpless like dust in the wind" (34). He views his betrayal of Haldin as something that "could hardly be called a decision. He simply discovered what he meant to do all along" (41). If this is the case, which at this point it seems likely to be, then where does Razumov's need for "another mind's sanction" come from?" Shortly after Haldin is captured, Razumov

exclaims " 'I confess' as a person might do on the rack. 'I am on the rack,' he thought" (67). The deepest irony in this statement is that his guilt is not over the betrayal of Haldin but over the fact that he perceives himself as an accomplice in Haldin's crime. Ash gives an important insight into the possible explanation of Razumov's intense guilt for a crime that he has not committed. "[I]t is if in betraying the revolutionary Haldin to the father Prince K.-- , Razumov were ridding himself of the intolerable patricidal wish that Haldin embodies…" (267). Whether Razumov unconsciously feels himself an accomplice in Haldin's crime, he clearly believes that his actions are motivated by subversive desires that might deprive him of the approval that he cannot live without.

Any sense of moral responsibility for Haldin is outweighed by Razumov's concern for the physical threat presented by the revolutionary's visit. When he leaves his apartment, he is seized by a "terrible fury – the blind rage of self-preservation (32)." He considers that the best choice of action would be to eliminate Haldin rather than face the risk of sharing in his punishment.

> 'I'll kill him when I get home.' But he knew well that that was of no use. The corpse hanging round his neck would be nearly as fatal as the living man. Nothing short of complete annihilation would do. And that was impossible. What then? Must one kill oneself to escape this visitation? (35)

He views Haldin as what Dawkins would call a "survival machine," an entity that thrives by "making the best use of other survival machines…" (66).[15] Razumov perceives Haldin as opportunistic and parasitic, taking advantage of his anonymity and coercing him into his own self-destruction. "[A]m I to have my future, perhaps my usefulness, ruined by this sanguinary fanatic?"(34) He cannot kill him, because then he would be no

[15] Dawkins' argument is based on the idea of survival machines as anything that utilizes its environment to increase its own chances of reproducing its genes.

less guilty than the revolutionary whose life he had taken. However, to let him live makes Razumov complicit in the crime of murder. The only possible solution would be "complete annihilation," or in other words, the destruction not only of Haldin but of the moral challenge that he poses to Razumov. Razumov contemplates suicide but then decides that his "despair [is] too tinged with hate to accept that possibility [of suicide]" (35). Such a statement suggests that Razumov feels himself too exploited by Haldin's selfish decision to capitalize on his own lack of familial ties to acknowledge any responsibility for the young revolutionary.

Razumov's social isolation prevents him from envisioning moral imperatives that exist outside of the demands of his own super-ego. He is unable to appreciate a form of responsibility born out of a naturally altruistic impulse. "Betray. A great word. What is betrayal? They talk of man betraying his country, his friends, his sweetheart. There must be a moral bond first" (39). We are here reminded of Marlow's line in *Lord Jim*: "The real significance of a crime is in its breach of faith with the community of mankind" (170). Razumov is not aware that betraying Haldin is an example of this breach, because "all a man can betray is his own conscience" (39). His value system is mistakenly inspired by a belief in certain irrefutable postulates of social progression. He cannot envision a form of morality that is based not on self-referential logic but on the values of communal solidarity. He attempts to rationalize his behavior by explaining to Haldin his sorrowful isolation.

> Did it ever occur to you how a man who had never heard a word of warm affection or praise in his life would think on matters on which you would think first with or against your class, your domestic tradition – your fireside prejudices? (63)

It is because he has never felt these things that he is blind to the "moral bond" that binds him to Haldin. Gekoski notes that Razumov's "crime has not been a betrayal of public duty, but of that humanity enacted in our capacity to love" (161). Guérard feels similarly, stating that Razumov's crime has "violated the deepest human bond" (243). Yet if "love" can form the basis of a moral imperative as it appears to for Gekoski and Guérard, we must later consider "how" and "why" this is the case. At this point in the novel, we can at least see how the threat of social isolation is an important factor in Razumov's remorse.

While Razumov may hold his own lack of parentage as an excuse for his indifference to Haldin's cause (as well as to Haldin's life), Razumov's desperate fear of loneliness, rooted in his father's missing affection, constitutes another crucial basis for his dispositional guilt. When Conrad refers directly to the moral component of Razumov's betrayal it is associated not with the validity of his decision but simply with his need for human fellowship.

> Razumov longed desperately for a word of advice, for moral support. Who knows what true loneliness is—not the conventional word, but the naked terror? To the lonely themselves it wears a mask…No human being could bear a steady view of moral solitude without going mad. (42)

"Moral solitude" seems paradoxically to de-emphasize the idea of moral guilt in the respect that it subordinates the moral question of Razumov's decision to his oppressive fear of ostracism. Does the terrifying, maddening nature of this solitude imply that conformity is far more important than any convictions which may cost one the respect of one's peers? Refusing to compromise his principles and throw himself into "the fellowship of souls" he remains determined to stand by his decision. A "passing grey

whisker" sends him in search of the safety, reassurance, and affection that he cannot find in "80 million of his kith and kin" (39).

The government's mistrust of Razumov not only destroys his faith in his decision but threatens the fabric of his existence. When Razumov goes to his father in the hope of finding some reassurance for his decision, he is met with biting assumptions of his involvement in Haldin's plot. Leading up to his return to the palace, Razumov feels his confidence in his convictions disintegrate as he begins to doubt Mikulkin's promises: "Razumov felt a distinct sense of his very existence being undermined in some mysterious manner, of his moral supports falling away from him one by one" (78). When he returns to Mikulkin, he feels the foundation of his identity crumble under the weight of Mikulkin's suspicious innuendo. His disillusionment turns to bitter scorn when he perceives that he himself is persecuted and manipulated by Counselor Mikulkin. " 'The service you have rendered is appreciated…' 'Is it?' interrupted Razumov ironically" (84). Ressler notes that "Razumov assumes mistakenly, out of vanity, unworldliness, a notion of limits, the concentrated need of winning reputation, perhaps even because of his very deprivation that officialdom will honor his privacy, will exempt him because his scholarly work is responsible and to him, everything (120). Mikulkin's insinuations deprive Razumov of his dignity, his sense of purpose, and even his physical security. The counselor's statement that Prince K. had "approved his intention of becoming personally acquainted with [Razumov]" leaves him with a feeling of "immense disappointment" (99), driving him in search of an abstract paternal authority who will not only recognize his nationalistic devotion but also fill the emotional void left by his father's subtle cruelty.

Razumov responds to Mikulkin's mistrust with an invigorated conviction in his "absolutist principles" that he believes will both defend him from the government's suspicion and justify his betrayal of Haldin. His disgust at the "lawlessness" of both autocracy and revolution inspires his bitter tirade against Haldin.

> He was a wretch from my point of view, because to keep alive a false idea is a greater crime than to kill a man. I suppose you will not deny that? I hated him! Visionaries work everlasting evil on earth. Their Utopias inspire in the mass of mediocre minds a disgust of reality and a contempt for the secular logic of human development. (100)

Razumov's argument here for absolutism accentuates his conviction that his betrayal of Haldin was a political necessity. He condemns the utopian visions of naïve revolutionaries when he in fact, lives in his own fantasy of a supreme leader who will ensure the progress of Russian society. More important for the fragile conscience of the young scholar, such a form of social control will replace the solace once provided by a dim faith in his father's distant authority. What was once a desperate longing "to be understood" has transformed into a pride in his own "independent thinking." He leaves his interview with Mikulkin convinced of his own "patriotic instincts" and with a firm faith in a political philosophy that he believes will sustain him in the deepest "moral solitude."

Razumov's disdain for the infamous revolutionary Peter Ivanovitch demonstrates the challenge that he faces in overcoming his inflated sense of moral pride. Following his interview with Mikulkin, Razumov is drawn to Geneva by an unconscious sense of obligation to Haldin's family as well as by his desire to undermine the insurgency. The protagonist's criticism of the revolutionaries appears to embody what Tangney and Dearing consider the defensive nature of guilt (68). Razumov wishes to give himself up

to Peter Ivanovitch and Madame S., but he believes unconsciously that he can justify his callous indifference to Haldin's life if he can dehumanize them as well. In an author's note, Conrad remarks that "Peter Ivanovitch and Madame S. are fair game. They are the apes of a sinister jungle and are treated as their grimaces deserve" (Author's Note i). Razumov feels a degree of "satanic enjoyment of scorn" in deceiving Peter. Yet, the fact that his confession places him at the mercy of these apish visionaries makes his derision of these characters an important irony in the text. He considers his struggle to lie to Peter a form of "moral resistance" believing himself so morally superior to the revolutionist that to resist his ideology is a form of political duty. He says to the famed revolutionary, "Peter Ivanovitch, if only you knew the force which drew–no, which drove me towards you" (227). While Razumov mocks Peter by falsely implying a sense of devotion to him, the impetus that he "actually" alludes to is his responsibility to Mikulkin. Yet, the irony of the word "force" is sadly turned back on Razumov, whose actual motive is his impulse towards self-destruction (Guérard 235). Razumov continues his "secret derision" with the statement that he has been "sent towards [Peter] with work that no one but myself can do...Here I stand before you—confessed" (227)! Razumov mocks Peter Ivanovitch by falsely swearing to a confession that he has not yet made. However, this assertion foreshadows the fact that despite his hatred of Peter, his remorse will overpower his "moral endurance" leaving him beholden not only to the noble Natalia Haldin but to each of Russia's foreign exiles.

Through a moment of self-awareness Razumov reveals that he had intentionally suppressed certain altruistic impulses out of a disdain for what he perceived as the constraints of conventional morality. His interactions with Natalia are not the first time

that we have seen a glimpse of Razumov's sense of social obligation. Before going to the palace he exclaims to Haldin, "And you tell me Victor Victorovitch, not to be anxious. Why! I am responsible for you." (61). When he is asked by Laspara to record his experiences he feels an instantaneous sense of personal doubt.

> "Is it that I am shrinking? It can't be! It's impossible. To shrink now would be worse than moral suicide; it would be nothing less than moral damnation." He thought, "Is it possible that I have a conventional conscience?" (285)

Joseph Cox is accurate in pointing out that such a question exhibits Razumov's discovery of a fundamental truth behind his caustic nature.

> The answer [to Razumov's question] is yes; he is the victim of remorse. In *Under Western Eyes* the conventional moral conscience proves to be a natural phenomenon, an essential part of a human being. (114)

The danger of such a straightforward reading of this line is in its failing to consider the substance of Razumov's fear. He disdains the idea of a "conventional conscience" because he associates it with a conformity to the maudlin ideals of human sympathy that make "blind tools" of men. The challenge for Razumov is to recognize that ethical responsibility need not automatically compromise his capacity for "independent thinking" or the value of his own ideals.

Razumov's need to reconcile his political passions with the growing sympathy that he feels for the revolutionists reflects Levinas' perception of the demands presented by our own egotism. For Levinas, "desire" is a desire for the "Other", or a transcendence that derives from one's relationship with alterity. According to Levinas, our enjoyment of personal achievement is contingent on our acceptance of a moral code that requires our recognition of the challenges posed by others to our own ambition. His work begins with

the postulate that all men in their "primary existence," prior to their interactions with the "other" (an individual rather than an ideal) is "definitely biased and egocentric" (12). It is our desire for the infinite[16] that inspires us to seek out in the other what we cannot experience alone thereby forcing us to defend our own our autonomy against the challenges presented by perspectives alternative to our own. Both Jim and, as we shall see, Kurtz, find their own drive for self-aggrandizement compromised by the need to defend their behavior to Marlow. In *Under Western Eyes* it is not the narrator but Natalia Haldin who elicits from Razumov the defense of his own ambition. Only when Razumov feels his faith in his political position is threatened by Natalia's innocent faith in her brother's ideals does he realize what he denies himself through his own selfishness.

In his interactions with Natalia, Razumov discovers through his appreciation of her weakness can he recognize why his decision to surrender Haldin was actually a "betrayal of himself." Following his declaration of sympathy for the revolutionary cause, Razumov writes to Natalia to confess that his feelings for her made it impossible to suppress his guilt for the betrayal of her brother. In his letter he states wistfully that Haldin's physical description of his sister had engendered in him an affection for her innocence. "'Yes, he himself, by talking of her trustful eyes has delivered her into my hands'" (353). However, this instant affinity carries with it an obligation to Haldin himself, who "boasted of living on through you [Natalia]" (353). What leads to his pity for Haldin is his view of what Levinas would term the "Other." Through Natalia

[16] Levinas' conception of desire is similar to Kant's understanding of the term in the respect that it is need that motivates ethical behavior by remaining unfulfilled. For Levinas, desire is the aim for the infinite or a religious ideal that we can only achieve through a compassion for the needs of the other that justifies our own worthiness of mutual respect.

Razumov is able to appreciate a form of transcendence that is "dependent on a reality that is other" (Levinas 37).

> I remember the shadow of your eyelashes over your grey trustful eyes. And your pure forehead. It is low like the foreheads of statues – calm, unstained. It was as if your pure brow bore a light which fell on me, searched my heart and saved me from ignominy, from ultimate undoing. (354)

What is seen here is what Levinas would refer to as the relationship between ethics and the human face.

> Infinity presents itself as a face in the ethical resistance that paralyzes my powers and from the depth of defenseless eyes rises firm and absolute in its nudity and destitution… In Desire are conjoined the movements unto the Height and Humility of the Other. (200) [17]

In her weakness, Natalia commands his obedience to her authority, to that in her face which is symbolic of all those that he betrayed with his surrender of her brother. Razumov "desires" not only Natalia's forgiveness but her appreciation of his own motivations. "He, this man, had robbed me of my hard-working purposeful existence. I, too, had my guiding idea…" (351). Only in his concern for Natalia does Razumov become deserving of a reciprocal form of understanding. Throughout the novel, he has sought out "another mind's sanction" that will validate his position. Natalia illuminates for him the fact that the validation that he seeks cannot come from a higher authority but only from his acknowledgement of his moral responsibility for a man who threatened Razumov's political ambition. In this respect, it is only through the recognition of

[17]Levinas defines the word "face" as "the way that the other presents himself, exceeding the idea of the other in me" (Levinas 50). The relationship between ethics and the human face is a connection established through the dimension of the infinite. To think of the infinite is not to think of an object but the one *ideatum* that we cannot have accounted for by ourselves. The face of the Other represents the infinite because I can only understand him through a framework that is beyond my own knowledge of external reality.

another's infirmity and his participation in "the fellowship of souls" that he can confirm, in his mind, his own moral integrity.

Though Razumov may refuse to acknowledge the validity of the revolutionaries' cause, he discovers that only through a submission to their "illogical" ethical principles can he pacify the demands of his "conventional conscience." He realizes that his disdain for the utopian vision was based on convictions that ignored the indefinable essence of human solidarity. "After all it is they and not I who have the right on their side!—theirs is the strength of invisible power. So be it. Only don't be deceived, Natalia Victorovna, I am not converted—and thus perdition is my lot" (356). While he refuses to give himself over to their cause, he knows that in his cowardice he has betrayed them along with Haldin. However, it is not the demands of conventional morality but the power of their "invisible strength," the authority of the transcendent "Other" that requires his contrition.

In much the same way that Razumov is beholden to Natalia, he himself commands the pity of the revolutionists not only in his abjection as a deaf cripple but as a symbol of the cowardice in every individual.

> There are evil moments in every life. A false suggestion enters one's brain, and then fear is born – fear of oneself, fear for oneself. Or else a false courage—who knows? Well, call it what you like; but tell me, how many of deliberately to perdition (as he himself says in that book) rather than go on living secretly debased in their own eyes? (372)

Like Jim, Razumov ultimately surrenders himself in the name of a moral ideal. Yet, where Jim is driven primarily by an underlying sense of dishonor, Razumov does not "give himself over to perdition" simply to assuage his feeling of remorse. "Natalia Victorovna, I am not converted. Have I the soul of a slave? No! I am independent – and

therefore perdition is my lot" (356). Razumov's final line of his letter to Natalia confirms his respect for those he has betrayed because it reveals that it is not only his moral but his political principles as well that have denied him his first and only hope of "natural love."

Heart of Darkness

Heart of Darkness has been read by critics such as Leavis and Cox as an epitome of colonialist guilt. Kurtz's final words supposedly touch the deepest human regret and self-castigation for unconscionable acts perpetrated "under the cover of brotherhood and philanthropy" (Singh 269). Parry is perhaps overly scathing in her remark that the novel's "political protest is crucially muffled and the grace of the visionary aspirations invested in imperialism triumphs over representations of the disgrace attending its historical practice" (21). Yet Conrad's moral critique of the colonialist enterprise is rendered ambiguous by what is apparently Marlow's persistent respect for the Kurtz and his vision of justice. Watt points out that Kurtz is the icon of the "Romantic Individualism" that "had set up the idea of absolute liberation from religious, social and ethical norms" (163).

While the prevailing view has always perceived Kurtz as a renegade, someone who has "thrown off" the restraints of societal expectations of behavior, his ambition is surprisingly congruous with the Victorian valuation of self-interest. Houghton points out that the prevailing theory of economics in England in the late Victorian period was that "to do the best for yourself was to do the best for society" (188). In this respect *Heart of Darkness* demonstrates the danger of a form of morality that is based on a utilitarian

vision of social progress. According to Batchelor, the readers of *Blackwood's Magazine*, where *Heart of Darkness* was first published, "tended to be army and navy officers and administrators of the empire, ex-public school middleclass Englishmen who liked to have their self-esteem reinforced by people like themselves: men of action doing good jobs in hazardous circumstances" (Batchelor 94). The pursuit of ivory in depths of Africa may be a fitting setting for a tale of man's courageous battle with such adversity, but Kurtz is the symbol of this rugged individualism gone one step too far.

Irving Howe writes, "Nihilism…lies at the center of all that we mean by modernist literature, a demon overcome and a demon victorious" (72). Marlow's observation of the colonialists' greed and Kurtz's despair forces him to question the value of an existence in which self-knowledge always appears to come too late. Marlow believes, along with Guérard, Watt, and Stewart, that Kurtz's final cry recognizes this hopelessness and the guilt that ultimately redeems him. Yet it appears that this assumption is largely based on Marlow's tendency to project his own feelings onto a man who appears incapable of such introspection. In spite of his belief that he and Kurtz are united in their common embrace of the jungle's dangers, he finds himself unable to comprehend the degree to which Kurtz identifies with the natives he controls. Kurtz may, in fact, feel some guilt for his actions but his conscious feelings appear more akin to shame than remorse. Marlow rejects the conventional idealism that actually inspires Kurtz's brutality, but he ultimately must "atone" metaphorically for Kurtz's sins and for those of the culture Kurtz has rejected.

A fundamental belief in the importance of the Protestant work ethic[18] prevents the Europeans in the novel from feeling any sense of wrongdoing for pillaging the resources of a foreign land. As Marlow explains, "What saves us is efficiency – the devotion to efficiency" (69). The Europeans' moral system is reinforced by "a blind devotion to immediate practical tasks" (Cox 53) that theoretically motivates the urgency of their efforts to rectify the lassitude of the African people. Ressler notes the naiveté of the narrator's perceptions, claiming that despite his "knowledge of the "ugly facts inherent in colonization" he "still maintains a steadfast belief that the modern version of progress and subjugation is redeemed by an informing moral purpose" (13). Marlow soon realizes the flaws in such idealism when he recognizes that the men whom he observes participating in this endeavor mock the very idea of productivity that is the supposed foundation of their labor. "There was not an atom of foresight or of serious intention in the whole batch of them, and they did not seem aware these things are wanted for the work of the world" (99). Marlow's expectations of what is required for the "work of the world" highlight the distinction between Europe and the Congo where such standards cease to apply. His firsthand observation of the pointlessly blasted cliffs and worn-out natives left to die ultimately undermines his hope in the vaunted ideals of "progress."

In both *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow holds desperately to a moral vision that appears to evade his grasp. Yet, in the jungles of the Congo there appears more at stake in Marlow's "devotion to efficiency" than in his above-mentioned belief in a "standard of conduct." In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow feels a degree of guilt for the atrocities that he witnesses that he does not feel for either Brierly's hypocrisy or Jim's

[18] Ian Watt explains the prevailing Victorian association of work and religion: "[W]ork was a defense against the powers of evil; renunciation saved man from the self-absorbed despair which resulted from the vain pursuit of happiness…" (150).

arrogance. When his helmsman dies at Marlow's feet, the narrator struggles to avoid meeting his eyes out of a sense of responsibility for the dying man. "He looked at me anxiously, gripping the spear like something precious, with an air of being afraid I would try to steal it away from him. I had to free my eyes from his gaze and attend to the steering" (127). As F.R. Leavis has pointed out, Marlow's compassion is slightly undermined by the fact that the man's death refocuses his attention immediately back to Kurtz. Nevertheless, the event is a symbolic turning point in the novel after which Marlow is far more cognizant of the "moral bond" that can exist even with "a savage who was of no more account than a grain of sand" (255).

For Marlow, Kurtz is symbolic of the Europeans' inability to reconcile their egoistic motivations with the moral obligation that they feel for the Africans. Taylor defines the inherently problematic nature of social responsibility that is born out of a conviction of cultural superiority. "Altruism and egoism are divergent developments from the common psychological root of primitive sentiment. Both developments are alike unavoidable, and each is ultimately irreconcilable with the other" (227). Nowhere is this statement more evident than in Kurtz' report to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs:

> He began with the argument that we whites must necessarily appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings. 'By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded.' It was very simple and at the end of that moving appeal to every altruistic sentiment it blazed at you luminous and terrifying like a flash of lightning in a serene sky: 'Exterminate all the Brutes!' (134)

Kurtz, here, apparently shows a violent contradiction between the Europeans' superiority and their willingness to work for "unbounded" good. His attitude is consistent

with what J.A. Hobson refers to as "psychic departmentalism." As Hobson says in his discussion of colonialism,

> It is, I repeat, not hypocrisy: a consciousness of inconsistency would spoil the play: it is a condition of this conduct that it should be unconscious for such inconsistency has its uses. Much of the brutality and injustice of Imperialism would be impossible without this inconsistency. (Hobson 222-3)

Kurtz actually forgets about "this valuable postcriptum" and entreats Marlow to preserve the pamphlet in the hope of advancing his career. Such a gesture suggests Kurtz is so conditioned by the categorical denial of such motivations that he is scarcely conscious of the underlying hate that undermines his benevolent intentions.

Even while recognizing Kurtz's contradictory motives, Marlow sympathizes with Kurtz's inability to censure his own behavior because of (what Kurtz perceives as) the necessity of his mission. Kurtz's trancelike isolation is similar to Jim's delusional perception of his experience aboard the Patna. Both men are forced to hide from a reality that their hollow self-assurance cannot sustain. Even in his role as one of the "devils of the jungle," Kurtz can feel the fragile nature of his authority. His infantile declarations of power and ownership, "My ivory, my intended," reflect his fear of the challenge posed by the moral talismans of the society he has rejected. Marlow describes to us how Kurtz is unwittingly seduced by the forces of nature, recounting how "[t]he wilderness had taken him in, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh [and the] powers of darkness…claimed him for their own" (245). Where Marlow appears to fault Jim for his selfishness, in *Heart of Darkness* he appears convinced that Kurtz is trapped by circumstances against his will. "That man suffered too much. He hated all this and somehow he couldn't get away" (280). In fact, Kurtz clearly has no

desire to get away: "When I (Marlow) had a chance I begged him to leave while there was still time. He would say yes and then he would remain – go off on another ivory hunt – disappear for weeks" (280). Kurtz's comfort among the Africans disturbs Marlow, and the above passage is an important example of the narrator's tendency to project his own discomfort onto a man whom he fears is incapable of such an emotion.

Marlow himself is seduced into an admiration for Kurtz's egoism that becomes the basis for their "common guilt." Marshall Alcorn asserts that Marlow's uneasy relation to Kurtz "follows a seesaw course of narcissistic attraction and repulsion similar to the course of transference which operates in psychoanalysis." (107). Marlow sees reflected in Kurtz's indulgence in "savage rites" his own dangerous voyage into the depths of the jungle and feels drawn to Kurtz by the same forces that drove Kurtz into his own abyss. "It is strange how I accepted this unforeseen partnership, this choice of nightmares forced upon me in the tenebrous land invaded by these mean and greedy phantoms" (335). Marlow particularly admires the way that Kurtz has descended to a level of depravity that challenges the authority of the colonialist morality. "I had even like the niggers to invoke him – his own exalted and incredible degradation. There was nothing above him or below him and I knew it" (325). In this respect, Kurtz clearly undermines Edward Said's assessment of the totality of Western power depicted in the novel. [19] For Marlow, Kurtz's "pure savagery [is] a relief" precisely because it exposes the contradictions of the European effort. Yet, it is also clear that Marlow, as a Westerner, can only stomach this "savagery" as he experiences it vicariously through

[19] Said believes that in Conrad's work "all opposition to the West only confirms the West's *wicked* power" (emphasis mine) (Said xviii). Whether Said considered opposition from the West itself when he wrote this I do not know. However, the statement is a vast overgeneralization that is disproved in *Heart of Darkness* as well as in *Nostromo*.

Kurtz's renunciation of this identity. When he goes to Kurtz's hut and finds him not there, he is struck with panic.

> The fact is I was completely unnerved by a sheer blank fright, pure abstract terror…what made this emotion so overpowering was the moral shock I received, as if something altogether monstrous… had been thrust upon me unexpectedly. (351)

When he recognizes that Kurtz has gone back into the jungle he is overwhelmed not because of his fright of the natives but because he had somehow believed that Kurtz had rejected his current existence. When he sees that Kurtz has re-chosen his barbaric quest for ivory, he cannot help but question his devotion to the initial choice that Kurtz has made.

Marlow believes that Kurtz's final words not only confirm the futility of his (Marlow's) own existence but reflect his disillusionment at the pathos of man's ultimate corruption. After tremendous denial of his mental affliction, Kurtz finally loses the strength to resist Marlow's insistence that he return to the station. While sailing back up the river with Kurtz, Marlow discovers what he believes to be Kurtz's' buried compassion for the Congo's exploited natives. The narrator believes that Kurtz has experienced in his final conversion a "dark truth" that others have never seen. ""[H]is soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself and, by Heavens, I tell you it had gone mad. I had – for my sins—to go through the ordeal of looking into it myself" (326). Marlow himself feels edified by Kurtz's dying words but acknowledges the ominous implications of his chilling self-discovery. "Perhaps no eloquence was as withering to one's belief in mankind as Kurtz's final burst of sincerity" (332). Kurtz's

statement confirms for Marlow the fact that life holds little promise because a true understanding of the self comes after the opportunity to rectify one's mistakes has past. "Droll thing life is—that mysterious arrangement of logic for a futile purpose. The most one can hope for is some knowledge of yourself—that comes too late—a crop of inextinguishable regrets" (347). Marlow admires the fact that Kurtz not only seems to share such a pessimistic view but also has acknowledged this bleak reality in a way that he (Marlow) is incapable of. Once again, the narrator assumes a sensitivity in Kurtz that his behavior clearly denies. At no point does Kurtz appear to have been distracted in his "scramble for loot" by a concern for the "meaning" behind the wealth he pursues.

It is clear from Marlow's actual description of Kurtz's final words that what Kurtz feels is not guilt but anger at the men who have unjustly prevented him from fulfilling his duty. Critical understanding of Kurtz's final statement has traditionally accepted Marlow's interpretation of "The horror! The horror!" at face value. Stewart argues that Kurtz's words are symbolic of "the only sense of himself that man can bring back from a wholly inward journey: that into the immense darkness, the unmeaning anarchy, of his own psyche" (84). Watt believes that "the main objective of Kurtz's condemnation is surely himself, and what he has done; his dying whisper pronounces rejection of Faustian compact with the wilderness which had sealed his soul to its own" (236). Such readings of Kurtz's words are certainly not inaccurate but seem to overstate the level of self-consciousness that Kurtz is capable of. Batchelor, in his biography of Conrad, questions the traditional interpretation of Kurtz's final statement, arguing that Marlow's perception of Kurtz's statement is largely colored by his own moral compunction (Batchelor 91). Considering the words that Marlow himself uses to describe Kurtz's prophetic statement,

a reader may think that Kurtz's words are largely an expression of frustrated greed. "Did he live again in every detail of *desire, temptation* and surrender during that supreme moment of complete self-knowledge" (339). "After all this was the expression of some sort of belief; it had candor, it had conviction, it had a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper – the strange commingling of *desire and hate*" (Emphasis mine) (340). And finally, Marlow hears another iteration of the phrase after Kurtz selfishly declares his right to the ivory he has gathered.

> 'This lot of ivory now is really mine. The Company did not pay for it. I collected it myself at a very great personal risk. What do you think I ought to do-resist?… I want no more than justice'…He wanted no more than justice. I rang the bell before a mahogany door on the first floor and while I waited he seemed to stare at me out of the glassy panel—stare with that wide and immense stare embracing, condemning, loathing all the universe. I seemed to hear the whispered cry, 'The horror! The horror!' (359)

If what prompts Kurtz's stare is hatred of the universe, then it appears he feels as much a victim, like Jim, of a malevolent forces as he is a participant in whatever unspeakable evil he feels compelled to renounce. If there is guilt in Kurtz's final statement then it is up to Marlow to dissociate it from the depths of anger that Kurtz feels for being taken out of the Congo. "Sick. Sick. Not so sick as you would like to believe. Never mind. I'll carry out my ideas yet – I'll return" (307). Such a statement when joined with Kurtz's declaration of his desire for justice clearly indicate an emotion in addition to remorse. While there is an insecurity at the heart of these assertions, it appears that Kurtz is as much concerned with the challenge of his ability than with the harm that he has caused.

Kurtz does, in fact, express doubt in the legitimacy of his "various lusts," but the regret that Kurtz feels appears much closer to a sense of shame over his failure than guilt for the consequences of his greed. Marlow recalls late in the novel Kurtz's didactic

explanation of the importance of hard work. “You show them you have something in you that is really profitable, and then there will be no limits to the recognition of your ability. Of course you must take care of the motives—right motives—always” (334). Kurtz’s statement reminds us of the “altruistic sentiments” in his initial report that were apparently forgotten before his completion of the document. While he obviously feels the need to show respect for the “humanitarian” aims of the company’s mission, his primary incentive has all along been the glory in his own success.

The source of the anger that Marlow associates with Kurtz’s final words appears to be twofold: Kurtz expresses a frustration at the company for depriving him of the right to prove his ability, and for exposing an element of his character that he refuses to acknowledge. In the very act of defending his right to the ivory, Kurtz demonstrates a significant loss of his inflated self-assurance. His emphatic speech to Marlow suggests that he associates the company’s false claim to the ivory with their unfounded doubt of his motives. The phrases “I want no more than justice” and “What do you think I should do -- resist?”(361) imply that he is clearly supplicating Marlow not only for encouragement but for an acknowledgement of the injustice that has been done to him. Because Marlow knows the extent of Kurtz’s greed and avarice, he takes Kurtz’s phrase as a true sign of Kurtz’s buried integrity. “He wanted no more than justice—no more than justice!” (72). Like Razumov, Kurtz may demonstrate the “need to be understood,” but unlike the young Russian, he never feels a sense of moral guilt for his actions. While Kurtz may have recognized the tenuous nature of his selfish pride, it is Marlow who must ultimately “compensate for Kurtz’s hollowness with his own moral fullness” (Batchelor 92).

Marlow ultimately questions his decision to sanction Kurtz's "unsound methods" and recognizes that he himself must carry a burden unknown by Kurtz himself. The narrator had overlooked Kurtz's participation in cannibalism or his headhunting because he was initially hesitant to fault Kurtz for treating the Africans exactly as they treated each other. Marlow's delusional sense of "moral relativity" (Batchelor 93) gives way to a stark realization in which he comes face to face with Kurtz's "vile desires" in a "terrifying simplicity." However, it also appears that the "savage customs" that Marlow believes have inspired Kurtz's lust do not begin to compare with the barbarity of Kurtz's own wanton desires. Garrett Stewart asserts that "Kurtz as *soul*…represents the buried anguish and guilt of Marlow's own soul, as the Helmsman had stood for earlier" (366). Marlow's helplessness in the presence of his dying assistant finds an echo in his inability to "keep back the [wilderness] for the salvation of [Kurtz's] soul" (361). He comes to see that where Kurtz had stood between him and treacheries of the "darkness," he alone had stood between Kurtz and the "darkness of his own heart."

Marlow's growing anger during his conversation with Kurtz's fiancé and his lie to her reveals a considerable doubt in the figure he had once looked up to as "a remarkable man." Following his return to Europe, Marlow feels compelled to visit Kurtz's intended to share with her with the vague traces of humanity that he had discovered in Kurtz. Marlow's ironic responses to the Intended's saccharine praise forces him to reconsider his own veneration of Kurtz's honor. " ' Men looked up to him – his goodness shone in every act.' His example..' 'True' I said, 'his example too. Yes, his example. I forgot that'" (375). His image of Kurtz crumbles when he is forced to see in the Intended's words the naiveté of his own adulation of the man and Kurtz's cleansing despair. Marlow

recognizes two competing responsibilities, one to render Kurtz "the justice that was his due" and one to protect the Intended from a truth that was "simply too dark." Yet, it is possible that Marlow's lie may have shown his respect for both unfortunate lovers, sheltering her from the nihilism of his dying words and not exposing Kurtz for the failure he had become.

Nostromo

Like *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad's novel *Nostromo* is an indictment of the conventional morality of capitalism, and the difficulties that arise when such ideals are forced onto the lives of those previously unaffected by colonial greed and avarice. The sense of futility that accompanies the failed efforts at political reform and an economy fueled by the deaths of the San Tome mine workers fosters the moral nihilism that in some way affects each of the novel's central protagonists. Charles Gould must struggle against the hopelessness of Costaguana's doomed economy as well as the curse of his father's legacy. To overcome these obstacles to his own ambitions, Gould holds fast to an idealism that ultimately destroys the lives he has hoped to improve. Like Kurtz, Gould's ambitions embody the flawed ideology that the pursuit of personal gain will benefit the intended recipients of that wealth. Even as the threats against him mount, he is bound by his greed to ignore his father's urging not to challenge the fates that have doomed the Gould Concession.

Martin Decoud is another character who uses the ultimate hopelessness of the nation's economic and social instability as an excuse to pursue his own selfish ambitions.

Finally, Dr. Monygham is himself overwhelmed by the same nihilism that haunts Decoud and responds with a naive idealism comparable to Gould's. Monygham is plagued by the unrealistic demands that he places on himself and, like Razumov, his defensive self-righteousness increases because of the remorse he feels. Monygham's guilt drives him to selfish idealism rather than towards an understanding of his moral responsibility. Yet, he symbolically conquers his debilitating self-disdain when he both rejects Gould's form of conventional idealism and overcomes the need to prove his own moral superiority.

Both Charles and Emilia feel a commitment to fight against the tides of futility that haunt the family's legacy. "The very prohibition [from Gould's father] imposed the necessity of success. It was as if they had been morally bound to make good their vigorous views of life against the unnatural error of weariness and despair" (97). Gould naïvely conceptualizes the San Tome mine as an instrument for the social and economic improvement of Costaguana. His entrepreneurial endeavor is permeated by his dangerous expectation that because "the mine had been the cause of an absurd moral disaster, its workings must be made a serious moral success" (88). In this respect, Gould's enthusiasm resembles the aspirations of the American financier Hollyrod, who feels the need to bring not only "justice, industry, peace to the benighted continents but also that pet dream of a purer form of Christianity" (199). Emilia Gould reinforces her husband's misguided religious idealism with her own dedication to the mine's humanitarian purpose. When Gould describes the San Tome gorge as "[a] paradise of snakes" that he and his wife have "brought mankind into," he betrays the hidden corruption that underlies their salutary efforts. Like Eve freshly nourished with the

knowledge of life, Emilia Gould returns her husband's confidence with a "brave assumption of fearlessness" (203).

Charles Gould's idealism reveals itself as little more than a mask for the same frustrated ambition and greed that plagued his father's efforts. From an outsider's perspective, Gould's belief in the illustrious purpose of the mine is clearly an illusion. Martin Decoud, the Parisian journalist, asks Emilia, "Mrs. Gould, are you aware to what point he [Charles] has idealized the existence, the worth, the meaning of the San Tome mine?" (279) Benita Parry points out that

> [t]he text takes a devious route in revealing Gould's moral error by conceding his honorable commitment to an idea detached from mercenary ambitions, while showing him to be a man with a mind, and heart of a prototypal capitalist, one whose loyalty is not to nation, community or cause but to that which he owns (Parry 116).

Parry's point is supported in Gould's bribery of the corrupt Ribreirist regime, whose mandate he had once "countenanced" because it was "the first public act that promised him safety on other than venal grounds" (382). By the time he finally recognizes that he has fallen into the same trap as his father, Gould has invested too much of himself into the mine to shut it down.

> For a moment he felt as if the silver in the mine had decoyed him further than he meant to go; and with the roundabout logic of emotions, he felt that the worthiness of his life was bound up with its success. There was no going back. (108)

Charles Gould's noble dedication to the mine is ultimately undermined by his indifference to the human cost of his ambition and his failure. Despite his awareness of the mine's inefficiency, he feels no remorse for the lives that are lost in the name of his vision. The narrator describes the hopelessness of the mine's rushed operation in terms of "the cruel futility of lives and of deaths thrown away in the vain endeavor to attain an

enduring solution of the problem" (315). His awareness of this "tragic farce" only strengthens his resolve to block out any concern for the obstacles to its ultimate success.

> To him, as to all of us, the compromises with his conscience appeared uglier than ever in the light of failure. His taciturnity, assumed with purpose, had prevented him from tampering openly with his thoughts… (435)

As indifferent as he is to the lives lost working on the mine, he is equally unconcerned with the impact of its loss on the nation. When the rebel troops under Montero approach Sulaco, Charles Gould fears that, if taken, the mine will be used to undermine the social structure that he has tried to build. Gould compromises his vaunted ideals when he threatens to destroy the mine rather than allowing it to fall into the hands of his enemies.

> For all his uprightness of character, he had something of an adventurer's easy morality which takes count of personal risk in the ethical appraising of his action. He was prepared, if need be, to blow up the whole San Tome mountain sky high out of the territory of the Republic. (435)

Jeffrey Meyers rightfully criticizes Gould for such a decision because while the excessive speed of the mine's operation has taken its toll on the lives of his workers, his decision fails to take into account the republic's dependence on the mine's operation. "Though exploding the mine (which he threatens to do) might suit his own interests, it would certainly harm the lives of the workers under his protection as well as the economic future of the country" (217).

As in *Lord Jim*, Conrad criticizes Gould's selfless devotion to an entire nation when it means the abandonment of a single individual. Though he is willing to give up "the air of impenetrability" that accompanied his initial idealism, he is incapable of remorse for the effect of his ambition on his relationship with Emilia. "A man haunted by

a fixed idea is insane. He is dangerous even if that idea is an idea of justice, for may he not bring down the heavens pitilessly upon a loved head" (451). Though Emilia loses her husband to his faith "in the triumph of order and justice," she can at least convince herself that their love was only "a short moment of forgetfulness" in the face of his "colossal success" (603).

Martin Decoud is a spiritually and morally bankrupt character, whose rejection of Gould's romantic idealism leads to an equally destructive form of nihilistic skepticism. The French journalist's sense of moral superiority is largely based on what he considers a supreme devotion to his beloved and the exalted virtue of intelligence. In his disdain for the zealous piety of men like Gould and Hollyrod, he becomes the antithesis of bourgeois morality that defines the novel's representations of the West. Yet, he appears to find a devotion to his brilliance alone an equally vacuous form of religious idolatry. Decoud almost mockingly acknowledges Father Corbelan's criticism when he admits his own atheism. To the priest's criticism of Decoud as a "sort of Frenchman – godless – a materialist," Decoud responds mockingly under his breath, "Scarcely human in fact" (260). Like the narrator in Joyce's "Araby" who carries his love for Mangan's sister like a chalice, he feels himself elevated above the common pursuits of man through his passionate devotion to Antonia. Unfortunately, on the lonely island of the Great Isabel, even this undying love is not enough to maintain his faith in this element of his success.

Decoud's skepticism, when it is turned inward, reveals an emptiness that highlights the fallacies in his own egotism. Unlike characters such as Jim or Gould whose attempt to conform to traditional morality leads to a self-inflating idealism, Decoud represents the danger recognizing no authority besides the self. He symbolizes

the potential for despair that threatens other characters such as Razumov and Marlow who also scorn their nation's hypocritical efforts at social reform. Yet, while Decoud's cynicism seems to be the antithesis of Gould's idealism, the two men share a determined conviction in the rightness of their own actions. Hunter notes that his desire to divide Costaguana in order to be with his beloved is evidence that he is "quite prepared to follow his egotistic inclinations and manipulate policy to fit" (136). Decoud condemns the idealism of men like Gould and Hollyrod. He refers to the "sentimentalism of the people that will never do anything for the sake of their passionate desire unless it comes to them clothed in the fair robes of an idea" (225). While Conrad poses the dangers of idealism in men like Gould, his intention was not to advocate pessimism as the proper form of response to the mishaps that plague the men of Costaguana. Some critics have seen Decoud's skepticism as a portrayal of Conrad's own search for "resources of self-affirmation (Ressler 61). Guérard believes that through Decoud Conrad "attempts to separate out and demolish a fact of himself by proxy" (199). In an effort to save the silver from Gould's mine, Decoud and Nostromo sail to an island and hide the treasure. Nostromo sails back to Costaguana to warn the loyalist government of the imminent threat of revolution, leaving Decoud alone and exposed to his own arrogant cynicism. The tenuous nature of his confidence is exposed during his isolation on the Great Isabel:

> The brilliant "Son Decoud," the spoiled darling of the family, the lover of Antonia, and journalist of Sulaco, was not fit to grapple with himself single-handed. Solitude from mere outward condition of existence becomes very swiftly a state of soul in which the affections of irony and skepticism have no place. (578)

In this respect, Decoud needs society even if it is only to reinforce his belief in his own superiority. He is driven to despair by the loss of his "individuality" because his sense of

purpose is based on distinguishing himself from "the whole scheme of things of which we form a helpless part" (578).

The journalist's ultimate death can be attributed to what Guérard refers to as Decoud's "distortion of reality and unconscious moralistic self-deception" (192). Decoud's belief that one's passions should be the foundation of one's duties is, in itself the foundation of Lacanian ethics, yet Decoud's outlook excludes Lacan's crucial emphasis on "moral law." While his "objet-petit" in this case, his passion for Antonia, is the foundation of duty, his commitment to her resides only in identifying his own superiority. What Decoud's moral philosophy fails to recognize is the importance of what Kant would refer to as "respect."[20] It is this "respect" or what Lacan would refer to as "anxiety" that renders an action ethical because it is how a subject recognizes moral law. For Conrad, as well as Kant, morality must be based on the awareness of "a lack."[21] The journalist's egotism denies "the lack" that creates one's sense of moral duty. Love is not an ethical action for Decoud but a "purely subjective" commitment and one that "carr[ies] the risk of nihilism when passion loses its force" (Ressler 49) Alone on the island,

> [h]e resolved not to give himself up to these people in Sulaco, who had beset him, unreal and terrible like gibbering and obscene specters. He saw himself struggling feebly in their midst, and Antonia, gigantic and lovely like an allegorical statue, looking on with scornful eyes at his weakness (578).

Because he has lost faith in his own superiority, he feels himself a disgrace to Antonia and an object of derision to those whom he had once looked down on. In his

[20] "Respect" indicates that the moral law is present. It is the effect of the subject's ability to convert the moral law into a drive.
[21] See footnote 6.

hopelessness and self-doubt, Decoud finally displays the Lacanian "lack," and in this respect, "the vague consciousness of a misdirected life… was the first moral sentiment of his manhood" (578).

Dr. Monygham is forced into the same nihilism that Decoud experiences and responds with a materialistic idealism similar to that which we see in Gould. The difference between these men is that Monygham's sense of shame[22] prohibits any confidence in his own convictions or in the ideals that drive Gould and Decoud. His devotion to the mine is based solely on his respect for Emilia Gould to whom he ascribes the authority of the Lacanian Other. [23] Monygham is more sensitive than Conrad's other guilt-ridden or shame-ridden characters and hence less prone to instinctual self-defenses. Dr. Monygham shares many of the same sentiments that haunt Decoud, but in contrast with the journalist, he is ultimately able to conquer his skepticism. The doctor lives in self-hatred as a result of having betrayed his fellow conspirators under the evil Benton. Batchelor makes the important point that the guilt that Monygham's suffers so acutely throughout the novel was actually an element of the doctor's imagination. "His confessions, when they came at least, were actually invented. The general belief that he betrayed a conspiracy is in fact mistaken, he betrayed nobody" (Batchelor 139). Monygham is tormented by the "crushing, paralyzing sense of human littleness, which…defeats a man struggling with natural forces, alone, far from the eyes of his fellows" (508). It is this isolation and this sense of human insignificance that he believes has destroyed his will to protect his fellow conspirators. His imagined inability to

[22] Monygham feels a great deal of shame that, like Jim, reflects his fear that he was unable to act differently than he had even in spite of his awareness of his moral failure.
[23] Emilia becomes a version of Monygham's superego, and his devotion grows out of a respect for her nobility but also a conviction that her admiration can assuage his guilty conscience.

maintain faith in the value of human solidarity in the face of these malign forces becomes the essence of his remorse. He remains "disillusioned as to mankind in general because of the instance in which his own manhood had failed" (508). His only sense of loyalty is to Emilia Gould, whom he sees as the one person to whom he can confide his bitter misanthropy. "Only Mrs. Gould could keep his unbelief in men's motives within due bounds. But even to her…he had once said, " 'It is unreasonable to demand that a man should think of other people so much better than he is able to think of himself'" (97).

While condemning other men for their self-confidence, Monygham himself inflates the importance of his own suffering and idealizes his commitment to the San Tome mine. While the doctor denounces the "self-flattery" that he sees in others claiming haughtily "I put no spiritual value into my desires, or my opinions or my actions" (385), he is accused by the narrator of making "an ideal conception of his disgrace" (447). Jackson Heimer believes that Monygham "craves more of the burden of guilt than he is responsible for – he after all, is less responsible for his act than Gould and Decoud are for theirs" (571). [24] The only way to overcome his feeling of "littleness" and to absolve his guilt is to devote himself to what he perceives as a glorious cause.

> The doctor was loyal to the mine. It presented itself to his fifty-year-old eyes in the shape of a little woman in a soft dress with a long train, with a head attractively overweighed by a great mass of fair hair and the delicate preciousness of her inner worth, partaking of a gem and a flower, revealed in every attitude of her person. As the dangers thickened round the San Tome mine this illusion acquired force, permanency, and authority. This claim, exalted by the hope of spiritual detachment from the usual sanctions of hope and reward, made Dr. Monygham's thinking, acting, and individuality, extremely dangerous to himself and others, all his scruples vanishing in the proud feeling that his devotion was the only thing that stood between an admirable woman and frightful disaster. (507)

[24] Heimer's point is crucial, because the novel depicts Monygham as similar to Gould and Decoud, but lacking their confidence. He makes the point that betrayal, for which Monygham feels responsible, is a tricky concept in the novel.

Conrad's synecdoche suggests that Monygham's devotion to the mine is symbolic of the woman whom he idolizes, yet the draw of the silver overwhelms his sense of honorable compassion. His faith in materialism may afford him a relief from "the shame of moral disgrace," but the ultimate cost of such idolatry outweighs the benefits that may be gained for himself or the woman he esteems.

Monygham cannot see that his compulsion to earn Emilia's gratitude and assuage his feelings of guilt actually fuels his own self-hatred. In Lacanian terms, Monygham is driven by his guilt into something called a "Sadean trap." According to Kant's logic, the subject attributes his actions to the Other and thereby relieves himself of burden of guilt for what harm he may cause others by his behavior. In this case, the doctor's self-loathing makes him less sympathetic to the shortcomings of others, i.e., Gould and later Nostromo, which feed his "disillusionment" with the rest of mankind and further justifies his selfishness. Upon hearing of Nostromo's dangerous brush with Sotillo, Monygham says "I could almost wish you had shouted and shown a light," which to Nostromo was "as much to say 'I wish you had shown yourself a coward; I wish you had had your throat cut' " (510). In this respect, he shares with Gould the fundamental misconception that one's personal sense of duty can sanction a selfish indifference to the lives that are affected in the pursuit of that ideal. Rather than ameliorate his oppressive sense of personal failure, Monygham's fanatical drive to assuage his guilt by saving the silver leads him to further self-castigation.

> He was not a callous man. But the necessity, the magnitude, the importance of the task he had taken upon himself dwarfed all merely humane considerations. He had undertaken it in a fanatical spirit. He did not like it. To lie, to deceive, to circumvent even the basest of human beings was odious to him. (515)

Both Gould and Monygham are driven to this sense of purpose by the necessity of their aims. Yet where Gould believes that his efforts will ultimately benefit others, Monygham's actions simply reinforce his preconceived awareness of his depravity.

Following his heroic effort to rescue the silver mine, Monygham appears to have overcome a degree of his selfish idealism, but his self-righteous scorn for Gould's interest in material wealth is undermined by his own vindictive jealousy. After having heroically arranged for Nostromo's train ride to warn the loyalists of the incursion, Monygham is taken captive aboard the ship of the revolutionist Sotillo. He is about to be hanged when Sotillo's ship is attacked by a loyalist steamer, and Monygham is freed. Feeling empowered by the recognition that he receives, Monygham can now, like Decoud, condemn the naïve idealism that fosters public belief in the mine's utilitarian value.

> There is no peace and no rest in the development of material Interests. They have their law and their justice. But it is founded on expediency and it is inhuman; it is without rectitude, without the continuity and the force that can only be found only in a moral principle. (592)

Yet, his enlightened attitude towards the silver mine is largely prompted by his scorn for Gould. "Was it for this that her life had been robbed of all the intimate felicities of daily affection which her tenderness needed as the human body needs air to breathe?" (592) While his speech represents a change in Monygham's character, his own conduct remains severely lacking in the "moral principle" that he speaks of with such conviction. Though his fervor suggests the doctor's increased self-confidence, his jealousy of Nostromo exposes his continued disdain for anyone who threatens to steal Emilia's respect. In his description of Nostromo's feats of bravery, there is a subtle sarcasm that accompanies the

doctor's reactions to Emilia's admiration. As he describes Viola's disdain for Ramirez, the unworthy suitor who looks for his daughter, he suggests sarcastically that Viola's disdain for him is a result of his inferiority in comparison to Nostromo. "Perhaps because he is not a model of perfection like his Gian Battista, the incarnation of courage, the fidelity, the honor of 'the people.' " (596). Monygham's sarcastic statement demonstrates the fragility of his newfound confidence exemplifying how another's honor can only illustrate the illusory nature of his own self-respect.

Monygham's final redemption occurs only when he overcomes the pessimism that leads to both his self-hatred and his misanthropy. We find late in the novel that Nostromo, too, has fallen victim to the lure that has destroyed the soul of Charles Gould. "He was not afraid of being refused the girl he loved – no mere refusal could stand between him and a woman he desired – but the shining spectre of the treasure rose before him, claiming his allegiance in a silence that could not be gain-said" (613). Monygham is overjoyed that the dying man has a dark secret to reveal, claiming exultingly "I've always felt there was a mystery about our Nostromo…" (626). When Emilia denies Dr. Monygham's suspicion about the theft, "The light of his temperamental enmity to Nostromo went out of Dr. Monygham's eyes." Though he does not believe her, "…her word is law. He accepted her denial like an inexplicable fatality affirming the victory of Nostromo's genius over his own" (626). Monygham's capitulation to Nostromo represents an escape from the Sadean trap that he lives in throughout the novel. Though Monygham's mistrust of others is validated by the fact that even the impeccable Nostromo is capable of dishonesty and greed, his acceptance of this reality represents a triumph over the "paralyzing sense of human littleness" that feeds his persistent

pessimism. The end of his "enmity to Nostromo" represents the conclusion of his perennial struggle to prove his merit in the hope of redeeming himself from "unforgivable" transgressions he has never committed.

Though Monygham recognizes that his guilt is actually the source of his selfishness rather than the result, he overcomes, like Razumov, the futile hope that proving his superiority to another may stanch his overwhelming sense of remorse. One slightly optimistic element that emerges from the miseries of Monygham and Conrad's other brooding protagonists is that the individual need for literal or metaphoric survival is not necessarily part of a zero-sum game. While man might find himself the victim of nature's capricious whims, he can take heart in the fact that another's success against such a powerful adversary does not necessitate his failure. Though his characters uniformly fail to exhibit the "courageous instinct" of a previous generation, they also manage to steer clear of the restrictive nature of traditional morality or exhibit the danger in subscribing to standards that they are incapable of meeting. Jim, Razumov, Kurtz (via Marlow), and Monygham do not recognize their fault simply as their own failure to meet an arbitrary standard of behavior. Rather, through an awareness that they may rectify their own self-image through their sympathy for others, they exhibit their commitment to an intuitive rather than culturally conditioned sense of morality.

Conrad's work makes it clear that selfishness can be as damaging to the perpetrator as it is to those whom he has mistreated or betrayed. The impact of one's moral choice raises important questions about the consequences of free will that disturbed many modernist writers, particular Conrad's religious contemporaries. Allott and Farris

point out that Graham Greene saw in Conrad's work the important recognition that choices have to be made and that people are responsible for them (40). Ford Madox Ford, despite his conviction of man's fallen nature, appears to hold his characters equally accountable for their transgressions. The difference in these men's philosophical outlooks actually highlights an important similarity between these authors. God or no God, man's integrity must come not from moral guidelines alone, but from the compunction of his own flawed character.

Chapter 2

Keeping Up Appearances:

Aristocratic Guilt in the Novels of Ford Madox Ford

Ford Madox Ford grew up with an inferiority complex inspired by his parents' consistent disappointment with his achievements. He was severely wounded by his father's reference to him as a "patient but extremely stupid donkey" (Memories 11). As he matured, he developed a streak of vanity that was a defense mechanism against his initial sense of failure. Mizener says that "[e]ven those who admired him found it hard not be irritated by it" (xvi). Ford's work also was characterized by posturing and inflated representations of his own merits. As Cassell states, "Ford's 'assumed personas and dramatized selves' may have been poses acquired in order to assert his personality or to reassure himself after the frustrations and admonitions of his youth" (5).

Ford Madox Ford grew up with a passionate admiration for the Pre-Raphaelite tradition. His reverence for the work of Renaissance painters such as Hans Holbein, as well as Pre-Raphaelites like Dante Gabriel Rossetti, inspired in his own work a flowery artistic technique. He valued the emotionalism and idealism embodied in the creations of such artists. While his collaboration with Conrad led to him to question certain elements of Pre-Raphaelite style, such as their failure "to focus or arrange [their] composition clearly for the viewer" (13), he was moved by their passion for the middle ages and often incorporated their medievalism into his own work.

Though Ford Madox Ford believed that mankind was divided between creative artists and "the stuff to fill was graveyards," he nevertheless had a high esteem for practical skills. "[Ford's] ideal man had the intelligence, the innocent sincerity, and the practical gifts that he divided between Christopher Tietjens and his brother Mark, in the greatest of his fictions, the tetralogy now called *Parade's End*" (Mizener 6). This combination of traits defined what the author imagined to be the quintessential English gentleman. For Ford, the gentleman was a symbol of those precious traditions that "we have to watch modern life sweeping away" (9 Ford 1911). This ideal plays an important role in Ford's fiction because it defines the pedestal from which many of his characters fall from in his novels.

In England, the nobility was made up of the first-born sons of some land-owning families. These men, who possessed most of their family's wealth while their brothers normally received only a small stipend, were also granted the right of a parliamentary seat. The English "Gentleman," conversely, was defined not by the status of his birth but by the grace of his manners. The Chevalier de Mere said that" 'the honnête homme" must observe "les bienséances," the fitting ways of doing things, and the essence of this is the consideration for others" (in Mason 62). This role was defined by the quality of "gentilesse," which referred predominantly, but not exclusively, to his courteous treatment of women. When legal actions demanded that some of those not granted the title of nobility desired to provide a designation for themselves, they would often refer to themselves simply as "gentlemen."

Though Ford was an observant Catholic, religion plays a far less significant role in his work than in that of other Catholic writers such as Graham Greene or Evelyn

Waugh. Goodheart does note, however, that like much of modern psychology, Ford's work demonstrates the profound antagonism between his character's sense of religious virtue and the dark impulses buried beneath the surface of their proper Edwardian demeanor. "Freud and Ford demonstrate the hostility of Christianity, the great guilt-inducer, to the life of the instincts" (621). In Ford's work, the demands of Christianity are most clearly embodied by the social conventions that his characters often find themselves at the mercy of. In this respect, Ford's work resembles the stories of Conrad, such as *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness*. This is less clear in novels that the two men co-wrote, such as *The Inheritors*, a work expressing the corruption of traditional ideals, or *Romance*, a book that expresses a wistful nostalgia for lost youth. The castigation of man's primal impulses is more evident in Ford's novels such as *A Call*, a book depicting the frustrations of a man torn between his altruistic intentions and his irrepressible jealousy, and *The Good Soldier*, the tale of Edward Ashburnham's bitter recognition of his illicit desires.

Ford's novels demonstrate the way that changes in the English government led to a dissipation of traditional values within the upper echelons of society. To counter growing civil discontent with Britain's ruling body, Lord Salisbury wanted to show that "[t]he House of Lords was not the bastion of exclusive, aristocratic privilege, which its enemies accused it of being; it was on the side of the people, not against them" (44). Unfortunately for the House's traditional constituency, public sentiment against their elitist authority led to changes in the assembly that included the influx of a new breed of politician. The increasing presence of the bourgeoisie in the English Parliament was for Ford one of the central causes of the society's moral decline. Ford detects "[a] change in

the national psychology" (Ford 1907) that is most manifest in novels such as *The Inheritors* that "depict allegorically the newly emergent forces of unprincipled opportunism in English politics" (Huntley 29). The author believed that where the privileged aristocracy had governed with the welfare of the entire society in mind, the nouveaux riches were bent on changing the government to accommodate their own interests. In his fiction, Ford attempts to illustrate the gradual disintegration of aristocratic solidarity that resulted from the transitions in parliament and the consequential guilt of certain members of this class, who found themselves influenced by the corrosive forces of materialism and individualism.

The growing autonomy of women in the Edwardian period represented another central threat to the foundations of aristocratic distinction. Where the virtue of the fair maiden in the eighteenth century theoretically inspired men to acts of chivalry, the wealthy, independent femme fatale of the twentieth century posed a significant threat to the reputation of the men of her class. Ford demonstrates how a combination of the faltering moral resolve of the English gentleman and the sexually liberated "new woman" led to an increase in instances of adultery among England's ruling class. Where marital fidelity was once the staple of the aristocratic reputation, Ford's novels detail the proclivity of the gentry to act on impulses no longer restrained by a respect for other members of their class. Even the noble Christopher Tietjens is tempted into adultery by the encouragement of his wife, Sylvia, who yearns to throw her husband off his moral high horse. The guilt of such characters is further increased by the growing printed publicity surrounding adultery cases in the latter nineteenth century. Newspaper accounts

of these indiscretions were notorious for exposing to the public the unseemly side of high society and further undermining the reputation of the class as a whole.

Though Ford's characters are driven by an underlying dedication to decency, their delusion about their own improprieties are emblematic of why the class failed to maintain its traditional standards of honor. The aristocratic ties that encouraged the individual to maintain these traditions for the good of the class were at the heart of such social codes. With the disintegration of these bonds came an increased propensity for the ruling class to follow instincts previously curtailed by a dedication to an abstract moral ideology. Ford believed that in place of the true dedication to such values, the aristocrats of the twentieth century developed convenient facades of social propriety to hide from both themselves and others the extent of their unchecked debauchery. In *A Call* and *The Good Soldier,* Ford shows that even characters with a strong dedication to the feudal values of the eighteenth century ultimately recognize the hypocrisy of their own ostensible selflessness. Only in *Parade's End* does Ford demonstrate the importance of overcoming the disguise of aristocratic propriety and living by a set of standards wholly incongruous with the privileges of one's birthright. In the above-mentioned novels, it becomes clear that the guilt of the aristocracy is the product of the individual's inability to stand alone in his moral convictions in light of modernism's corrosive impact on the principles of his class.

In Ford's novel *A Call,* Dudley Leicester and Robert Grimshaw are two members of the landed gentry who find that their efforts to maintain the standards of their class only increase their sense of guilt for their own inherent moral weakness. Leicester's guilt results from a mysterious phone call that locates him at the home of his ex-fiancée, Etta

Stackpole. His fear of the repercussions of his relationship with Etta had forced him to break off their engagement, and he is haunted many years later by the impact that his intended tryst might have not only on his marriage but on his already feeble self-respect.

Grimshaw's voyeuristic relationship with Pauline Leicester, whom he has introduced to Dudley, leads him to doubt his capacity to exhibit the self-restraint that appears to be lacking in the Englishmen that he proudly distinguishes himself from. However, his guilt is not simply over his failure to uphold these standards but over his inability to accept the consequences of his own actions. Though Grimshaw may be a collectivist[25] in spirit, he is an individualist in practice. His efforts to encourage others to consider the impact of their obligation to the society as a whole are ostensibly emblematic of the traditional values that Ford associated with feudalism. He is essentially hypocritical in his effort to facilitate the marriage between Dudley and Pauline, because he lacks the restraint associated with the kind of selflessness that he aspires to.

Ford presents female protagonists in the novel whose dual roles as victims and aggressors contribute to Dudley and Robert's emasculating guilt. Etta Stackpole is the sexually threatening, yet ultimately wronged woman, and Dudley's rejection of her comes back symbolically to haunt him. Pauline Leicester, Dudley's wife, must endure the threat of infidelity that is the staple of her social position but also tempts Grimshaw with the possibility of adulterous intimacy. Finally, Katya Lascarides' recent loss of her mother in the novel earns her Grimshaw's undying devotion, and yet her refusal to marry

[25] Ford's idea of collectivism was based on the ideal of the feudal estate. Unlike the socialistic form of collectivism that he parodied in his novels *The Simple Life Limite*d and *The New Humpty-Dumpty*, Ford believed in a hierarchic element of financial interdependence. Ford disdained the individualist mentality of the twentieth century that he felt created a greater divide in social welfare as well as socialist practices that gave the state increased power over the individual citizen (Green 14).

Robert out of her own disdain for the principles of matrimony contributes to his own frustration and jealousy.

Leicester's fear of his own idleness and his decision to leave Etta are symbolic of the responsibility that he feels as a member of the English gentry. He is depicted as a fool who has never actually accomplished anything and is incapable of managing his own estates. Dudley is iconic of that lack of legitimate activity that Ford implies has always threatened the moral stature of his class. "Standing in front of his mantelshelf in a not too large dining-room of Curzon Street, he surveyed his breakfast-table with an air of immense indifference, of immense solitude and of immense want of occupation. He had nothing in the world to do! Nothing whatever" (48)! Several years prior to his marriage with Pauline, he had been engaged to the coquettish Etta Stackpole. He decided to leave Etta because she was reputed to flirt with bootblacks, feeling that a continuation of their relationship would be a betrayal of the decorum he felt obligated to uphold. Ford mockingly describes the way that even in the act of breaking off their engagement, Dudley undermines his social position.

> That very afternoon – it had been six years before – Dudley Leicester announced his departure. He had indeed, announced it to the maid Agnes first of all. It broke out of him, such a hot rage overcoming him that he, too, very tall and quivering, forgot the limits of his class. (55)

Six years later, Etta's aggressive behavior emasculates Dudley and once again drives him to behavior that he feels is unfitting for a man of his station. While attending a party with Ms. Stackpole, he agrees to accompany her home out of a sense of social propriety. Once they arrive at her door, he is led by her charms to follow her inside. While he is there, the phone rings and Dudley picks it up and pretends that he is Etta's

servant. When the anonymous caller, who turns out to be Robert Grimshaw, identifies Dudley by name, Leicester hangs up in fear and remains tormented by the incident for the duration of the novel. The incident terrifies Dudley because he feels that being identified as Etta's visitor automatically implies certain illicit relations between them. Though we cannot help but feel sorry for Dudley, we recognize that his guilt is an appropriate comeuppance for his condescending dismissal of Ms. Stackpole. Etta remains justifiably unsympathetic to the grief of the traumatized Leicester.

In the *Saturday Review* in 1868, Mrs. Lynn Linton published a famous article entitled "The Girl of the Period" that described the indulgent behavior that characterized the modern woman. "The girl of the period is a creature who dyes her hair and paints her face; her inordinate regard for fashion leads her to 'strong, bold talk and freshness; to the love of pleasure and indifference to duty' " (in Cunningham 8). Like many of his female protagonists, Etta is symbolic of the new woman, whose assertive behavior threatens the social order that Dudley feels he has betrayed in being caught with Etta. Yet like Dowell in *The Good Soldier*, Dudley's dismissal of Etta is actually the result not of his concern for a standard of decency but for his own image. Etta emulates the wicked witch straight from the pages of *Sleeping Beauty*, placing a metaphorical spell on Dudley that will punish him for leaving her. "You're a hypochondriac, Dudley Leicester. You had a panic. One day you will have a panic, and it will pay you out for dropping me. It'll do more than pay you out" (68)! Dudley's association of what he considers Etta's vulgar sensuality with her class status redoubles his guilt for his association with her in the past and in the present. Etta's prophetic warning reminds us that it was in fact Dudley's lack of honor to begin with that motivated his fear of social humiliation. Leicester's extreme

self-doubt is accentuated by the paralyzing trauma that he experiences at the exposure of a betrayal that never occurred.

Leicester's consternation, however, about the potential publicity of his infidelity would not have been unfounded. The morning after the incident, he asks Grimshaw, "How long does it take things to get in the newspaper" (83)? The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 made the print interest of divorce cases a thoroughly fascinating topic for the English public. Up to the middle of the 19th century, the sexual indiscretions of the upper classes were merely a matter of speculation for the curious newspaper readers. Leckie points out that Ford's fiction was thoroughly influenced by certain divorce trials involving vicars and other high society individuals (206). Dudley is symbolic of this class of men who feared that their reputations would be sullied by these sensationalized trials. By the Edwardian period, such cases only contributed to scandalmongering perpetuated by the "plutocratic press" that posed a threat to authority of the landed gentry. As Cannadine points out, the traditional territorial aristocracy defensively labeled such newspapers "the symbol …for all corrupting forces which were at work in British society" (328).

Pauline's jaded acknowledgement of her husband's dishonesty also reflects the naiveté of Dudley's assumptions of his own patrician decency. Leicester believes that he must keep his tryst a secret from his wife lest he destroy her image of his character. Pauline remains supportive of her husband in spite of his apparent transgression. She seeks ways to cure him of his affliction and even goes to far as to solicit the help of Katya Lascarides, who herself does research in psychological cases. The folly of his assumptions is reflected in Pauline's statement to Grimshaw: "It's sad that a man can't

be true to you even when he adores you, but he can't" (129). Pauline's attitude reflects the reality of her class's contemporary expectations about the nature of sexual indiscretion. As opposed to the privileged role that a woman traditionally possessed in the courtly love affair, Pauline, like Ford's other aristocratic women, is aware that aristocratic women can no longer expect such undying loyalty from their suitor. Pauline confides to Grimshaw that it is actually her status that precludes this form of devotion. As she says to Grimshaw, "I'm a woman of our class. Don't you see the two things I've learned? One is that we can't have what we want. I may have wanted…" (128). She follows this uncompleted thought with a recollection of other men who have been disloyal to her, and later suggests that it is simply a duplicitous façade that hides the pervasive infidelity that marks both men and women of their collective status. "That is our day and our class…We haven't learned wisdom, only how to behave" (274).

Robert Grimshaw is incapable of fulfilling his own dedication to the needs of his social group because he himself is prone to the same temptation to suppress evidence of his illicit desires by feigning the appearance of propriety. Green speaks to this issue in his statement that "*A Call* successfully renders the dislocations that result when genuine emotions intrude into a society whose existence depends on their being repressed or ignored" (59). Grimshaw is Greek by birth, and he feels that the English have been corrupted by pervasive influence of their nation's moral lassitude. He tells Etta Stackpole:

> Englishmen haven't got any sense of responsibility. They're individualists. But there is a class that's got the sense of duty to the whole. They've got a rudimentary sense of it – a tradition, at least, if not a sense. And Leicester comes of that class. But the tradition's dying out. (178)

Grimshaw's demonstration of responsibility for his class bears a close resemblance to findings of twentieth century psychology regarding children's communal understanding of morality. In experiments where a mother has instructed her toddler not to play with certain toys, the child invariably scolds the experimenter when he intentionally disobeys the parental directive (Knapp 86). Like Ford's other characters, Robert is discouraged that others do not respond to these dying traditions with the same anxiety that he experiences. Yet he himself lacks the integrity to maintain these obligations when those around have found happiness of which his own virtue has deprived him.

While Grimshaw arranges the marriage between Dudley and Pauline in a symbolic gesture to restore the spirit of aristocratic solidarity, he is unable to suppress the jealousy that betrays his noble motivations. He was in love with Pauline Leicester, but he gave her up because of a sense of personal obligation to other members of his class. After passing Dudley and Etta, he cannot give up the opportunity to vent his own jealousy with a childish and cowardly display of his own paternalistic supervision. His envy of Dudley inspires his malicious phone call and leads not only to Dudley's self-loathing but also to his own. Grimshaw's own unconscious individualism is symbolic of why this tradition is dying out, yet like Edward Ashburnham he is incapable of recognizing his guilt because he hides his own selfishness behind the façade of a feudal collectivism. He believes firmly that his heritage, "belonging to a clan," makes him unable to bear "to see chaps of [his] class -- of [his] clan and [his] country -- going wrong" (163). As in Conrad's *Lord Jim*, Grimshaw's secretive cruelty to his unstable friend reflects his inability to live by a set of conventions that he believes are the "legacy of his ancestry." Following his anonymous call to Dudley, Grimshaw quite shamelessly

lectures the shell-shocked Leicester as to the value of honesty. Such hypocrisy represents his cowardly refusal to face the "awful penalty of his failure" to control those selfish impulses that he feels his ethnic background has taught him to despise.

Grimshaw's remorse stems not only from his semi-adulterous relationship with Pauline, but his arrogance for believing that he is brave enough to accept the consequences of his actions. At one point, Grimshaw says to his sister Elida "What have we arrived at in our day and our class if we haven't learnt to do what we want, to do what seems proper and expedient – and to take what we get for it" (30)? This sentiment, repeated throughout this novel and *Parade's End* marks the essence of Ford's aristocratic code of honor. While Grimshaw may intend well, his attempt at selflessness is undermined precisely because he lacks the discipline to accept the results of his self-proclaimed social duty. Though his possessive attitude towards Pauline may be immoral, Ford does not rebuke Grimshaw for his adulterous desire as much as for his overconfidence, calling him a "conceited fool" in the novel's epilogue. As we shall see in the case of Ashburnham, Ford is angered not by his characters' passion but by their dishonesty with themselves and those whom they harm through the denial of their true nature.

Like Etta Stackpole, Katya Lascarides challenges Grimshaw's capacity to maintain the traditions of his class by eliciting from him a false sense of honor. Robert feels an irrational sense of dedication to Katya after her mother dies that forces him to arrange the marriage between Leicester and Pauline in order to "keep [himself] for Katya" (26). Yet, his engagement to Katya is curtailed by her decision that the religious, rather than an emotional commitment involved in the institution of marriage is not

sufficient for her. Ford presents Katya's desire for a purer form of emotional intimacy as questionable in itself. Though she expresses compassion for Dudley's lost sense of honor, she is unsympathetic to Grimshaw's loyalty to the same set of principles. As in the tradition of the chivalric code, Katya plays the aloof maiden who presents a challenge to the vassal that he cannot always fulfill. As Cassell says of the gentleman of honor, "Towards women, in particular, even to those who most injure him, the gentleman of honor shows an almost finicky deference; he is usually willing to make any sacrifice for any woman, because womankind is to be respected and honored at all costs…" (117). Pauline spells out for him the fact that the obsequious devotion that he shows Katya stems from the sense honor that hides the guilt he feels for loving her (Pauline).

> Just because we've slackened old ties, just because marriage is a weaker thing than it used to be – in our day and in our class – we've strengthened immensely the other kind of ties…If you'd been married to Miss Lascarides you'd probably not have been faithful to her. (276)

In trying to right the wrongs of his class through a powerful show of honor, he is only driven further towards an adulterous love for Pauline. Furthermore, he is forced to deny his true feelings out of deference for a purity that Cassell suggests Katya herself betrays through her refusal of matrimony (112).

In the end, Grimshaw recognizes that he lacks the strength to deny Katya's offer in spite of the illicit nature of her proposed union. He confronts his guilt for interfering in Dudley's marriage only when he is willing to acknowledge certain needs that contradict the demands he has placed on himself. Katya's request proves too strong a challenge for Robert, and he realizes that he is incapable of enduring his isolation until he has broken her spirit of independence. When he agrees to live with Katya in an unholy union, he

says to her, “I’m very tired and I’m very lonely. I’ve discovered that there are things one can’t do – that I’m not the man I thought I was” (290). In recognizing that he cannot resist Katya’s offer, he demonstrates not only a capitulation to the modern values inherent in her proposition, but his inability to sustain his hallowed ideals when the temptation of Pauline’s love draws him constantly towards infidelity. Ford wrote in his epilogue that in succumbing to Katya’s demands Grimshaw was “committing the final folly of this particular affair” (302). Katya finally agrees to marry him because she knows that his feelings for Pauline are too powerful for her to be able to live with him in a state of romantic limbo. Such a decision suggests that Katya is aware that promises are only as strong as the values upon which they are grounded. Where the gentleman’s word of honor might have once represented a binding commitment, she chooses to stake her claim to Grimshaw’s love on vows that might prove to be somewhat less transitory in her “day and class.”

The *Good Soldier* continues to portray the themes of adultery and betrayal discussed in *A Call* but does so with a much less conclusive determination of what standards have been transgressed through these indiscretions. The novel is less moralistic in its censure of the aristocracy’s fading social dedication and instead asks its readers to develop their own understanding of the relative culpability of its major protagonists. The book aims to create an atmosphere of moral indeterminacy not only through the inscrutable nature of its main character, Edward Ashburnham, but also through the highly complex motivation behind the narrative voice of John Dowell.

As an unreliable narrator even of his own experience, Dowell fails to recognize his indifference towards his wife or the strained measures through which he sustains the fallacious image of his conjugal dedication. Schorer was the first critic to question whether Dowell intentionally tries to mislead us in his narration of the story. [26] Thornton points out that most discussions of Dowell's character subsequent to this either align themselves with or against Schorer's argument (Thornton 64). Regardless of how much faith we can put into Dowell's words, few critics would disagree that he is a rather obtuse character and this is precisely where our understanding of him should begin.

Dowell's questionable reliability as a narrator complicates our understanding not only of his character but also of the behavior of others that he describes to us. His admiration for the Ashburnhams actually raises our suspicion about the motivations behind the couple's questionable humanitarian impulses. McCarthy ascribes this obfuscating element of Dowell's narration to the confusion that he experiences as a result of the changes within the period in which the novel takes place. He describes the narrator as a man "whose qualities are those of the twentieth-century European taken to an extreme: he wrestles with the breakdown of his traditional social order and attempts to understand his new position without that familiar guidepost" (319).

Dowell is so in awe of Edward Ashburnham that his narration is often colored by his own jealousy and feeling of inadequacy. The narrator's own self-doubt becomes manifest once he begins to question his assumption that his primary duty as a gentleman was to preserve the lies perpetuated by his wife Florence and her family. "Dowell reacts negatively to what he perceives as a rise in female power" (Hoffman 31) and this may

[26] In his discussion of *The Good Soldier*, Schorer suggests that in reading the novel "We are forced, at every point, to look back at this narrator, to scan his beguiling surprise, to measure the angle of refraction at which that veiled glance penetrates experience" (46).

also explain some of his distance from his wife. He is unwilling to confront her even when he suspects her infidelity because he prefers to live as a naïve cuckold, rather then disturb the precious tranquility of their relationship with the Ashburnhams.

Like Dowell, Edward aspires to a feudal ideal that he is encouraged by others to believe he adheres to successfully. His wife Leonora's attempt to satisfy his passions with women leads to his further corruption, because whatever strength he may possess to resist his adulterous desires is undermined by her implicit assurance that his affairs are morally justified. It is Leonora's effort to coerce the young Nancy Rufford into her husband's arms that finally awakens Edward to the disastrous self-deception that he has lived under. His remorse, like Dowell's, is perceptible only in his denial of the impact of his behavior. Neither man possesses the self-awareness necessary to see through the false pretenses of the other members of their social class. Consequently, they both suffer once the veneer of their self-deception ceases to shelter them from their own instinctive weakness.

Where he believes that his behavior is that of a true Philadelphia gentleman, Dowell is actually using the demeanor of chivalry to hide his utter lack of feeling. Like Dudley, his sense of righteous indignation at not being appreciated by a flirtatious woman is merely a façade for his own impotence and cowardice. During Florence's escape from the Hurlibird cottage, he remarks that that he may have earned his wife's love with even a small amount of affection. When the two lovers have successfully descended a ladder from Florence's bedroom, his wife- to-be holds him in a long embrace. Dowell reflects that "I fancy that, if I had shown warmth then, she would have acted the proper wife to me…" (92). The narrator's indifference to Florence's initial affection characterizes his

attitude towards her throughout the novel. His relationship with Florence is based on a prepossessing dedication to the values of the Hurlibird family and the code of ethics implicit in their prescription of the marriage. In order to prevent Dowell from taking Florence to Europe, "a sink of iniquity," Florence's aunts imply the adverse affect such a journey might have on her fragile heart condition. Though this advice does not impede their departure, the Hurlibird conspiracy along with the ship doctor's instructions that Dowell "refrain from manifestations of his affection," allows Dowell what he views as the same prerogative for self-involvement that Grimshaw is guilty of. Dowell's remorse increases as he recognizes what he can only construe as his indifference to his wife's needs. After making a spectacle in attacking the Negro servant who accidentally drops Florence's medicine, he decides that his temper is a threat to his wife's health, and increases the distance between them further. Dowell takes a certain pride in his utter dissociation from her affairs, noting that he "would have as soon thought of entering her room without permission as of burgling a church" (97).

The narrator's hypersensitivity to his wife's desire for privacy becomes the opposite of the chivalrous behavior that he imagines himself to practice. He prefers to remain sheltered by the blissful ignorance of his own antiseptic world rather than to address evidence that might force him to question the virtue of his vacuous, gold-digging bride. Though Florence may be immoral, Dowell is partly responsible for his wife's adultery insofar as his utter lack of passion appears to inspire her impulses. He remains utterly oblivious to his wife's affair both with Edward and with "the boy named Jimmy" and assumes that her death was not a suicide but the result of her heart failure. He is actually relieved to discover that she took her own life because it assuages his concerns

that it was his own failure as a husband that precipitated her demise. Ohmann points out that Dowell repeatedly downplays his wife's passions to prove that "if Florence was a cold woman, then Dowell himself can hardly have failed her as a husband" (86). Like Dudley, the narrator is emasculated by a woman who has ignored his gentlemanly patience and consideration. Even in light of the aggressive nature of Etta and Florence, both men must accept that their fear of sullying their own reputation has superseded any concern for these women's emotional needs. Dowell is not enough of a vital character to consider his own happiness as of equal importance to that of his wife. He appears to shun the emotional involvement that might obstruct what he perceives as his purely objective rendering of the events he describes. Though the narrator denies his responsibility his wife's demise, his rhetorical question "What had I had to regret?" reflects his unconscious knowledge that the "rarified atmosphere" he took such pride in sustaining for Florence has ultimately "denied life itself" (Hoffman 1967 85).

Like all other issues concerning Dowell's character, his guilt becomes a question of epistemology. In considering he and his wife's relationship with the Ashburnhams, Dowell asks rhetorically,

> If for nine years I have possessed a goodly apple that is rotten at the core and discover its rottenness only in nine years and six months less four days, isn't it true to say that for nine years I possessed a goodly apple? (9)

Dowell's feeling of remorse stems from exactly the same fallacious logic. He expresses a great sigh of relief after Florence's death when he discovers that she has been unfaithful. His belief that her corruption has lightened "the immensely heavy – [the]unbearably heavy knapsack" (133) of responsibility that he felt for his failure as a husband is unwarranted for precisely the same reason that the "goodly apple" was still rotten

whether he knew it to be or not. The relationship between the two couples cannot, in retrospect, be characterized by tranquillity when Dowell recognizes the deception at the heart of their elegant "minuet." In the same way, Dowell's indifference to his wife becomes no less reprehensible because she, in fact, turned out to be an adulteress.

Though Leonora Ashburnham appears to contrast with Ford's more sexually aggressive female characters, she too encourages her husband's disregard of his own exalted values. Dowell comments on the unreasonable assumptions to which her strong Catholic upbringing has led her. "She quite seriously and naively imagined that her church could be such a monstrous and imbecile institution as to expect her to take on the impossible job of making Edward Ashburnham a faithful husband" (65). Though her sexual frigidity and fierce piety render her the opposite of the "new woman," she nevertheless tolerates her husband's infidelities in the hopes that he will ultimately come back to her. Dowell reminds us that for Leonora "getting [Edward] back represented to her not only a victory for herself. It would, as it appeared to her, have been a victory for all wives and a victory for her church" (205).

Leonora's religious devotion inspires her with a naïve vision of her role as a martyr. Her vanity is bolstered by her ability to avoid the threat of a scandal that her husband's behavior invites. Her egotism sets her in further opposition to her husband, who feels magnanimous even in his extramarital affairs. Dowell observes that "[Edward] was beginning to perceive dimly that, whereas his own traditions were entirely collective, his wife was a sheer individualist" (160). When Edward's affairs leave the Ashburnhams in difficulties, Leonora takes it upon herself to manage their financial affairs. Yet she does this in a manner that shows no concern for the families that have been loyal to the

Ashburnhams for generations. Her fervent religious pride, in addition to her efforts to ensure the greatest possible profit from their estate, associate her with the self-interested social contemporaries that Ashburnham theoretically stands in opposition to. In order to preserve her dedication to the semblance of propriety, she effectively encourages her husband to share her sense of vanity. As we shall see, particularly in the Kilsyte affair, she actually reinforces her husband's self-assurance in his many attempts at philanthropic lechery.

Though he strives towards values that many of his class have abandoned, Edward's lack of self-consciousness makes him unable to anticipate or face the impact of his own actions. Ford's repeated stress of his innocence makes his dedication to "puppies, children, the disadvantaged" (30) a symbol of his ignorance to the general implications of his infantile compassion. Like Dudley, he believes not only that his wife is unaware of his transgressions but also that they do not exist as long as she remains in ignorance of his affairs. "You may not believe it, but he really had such a sort of respect for the chastity of Leonora's imagination that he hated – he was positively revolted – at the thought that she should know that the sort of thing he did existed in the world" (62).

Ford does not fault Edward for his passion; the author sees something truly chivalrous in Ashburnham's devotion to these women. Huntley reminds us that Edward represents "the feudal heritage of passion, idealism and aristocratic responsibility" (171). If Ashburnham represents the medieval troubadour, as critics like Huntley have argued, there is no inconsistency in the fact that his behavior should appear lascivious by nineteenth century standards. Boase explains that the troubadours were originally a secret heretical organization, and that according to an article by Gaston Paris in 1883, the

tradition of courtly love itself was “illicit, furtive, and extra-conjugal” (23). If this is so, it is clear that Ford’s depiction of Edward must, in some way, reflect those contradictions to marital fidelity within the tradition of chivalrous devotion that the author valued so highly.

We see this moral uncertainty in the novel depicted in Dowell’s defense of Edward’s character in spite of his rhetoric about the decline of English values and the scandal of his class’s debauchery. “There is no priest that has the right to tell me that I may not ask pity for him…from the world, or from God who created in him those desires, those madnesses” (54). It appears that Ford himself does not censure Ashburnham as much for his adultery as for his inability to do “what is right and proper and take what he gets for it.” As in the case of Grimshaw, it is Edward’s refusal to accept the consequences of his actions for which he suffers most profoundly. Where Grimshaw was unwilling to give up Pauline, Edward is either unwilling or unable to recognize the harm that is caused by his many indiscretions.

Edward becomes involved in a series of affairs, all of which end disastrously. His tryst with the wife of a fellow officer leads to years of costly blackmail, and he voluntarily offers thousand of pounds to prolong his relationship with a Spanish courtesan from whom he cannot bear to be parted. In addition to the financial ruin produced by his relationships, Edward remains unaware of the devastating consequences of his intimacies with young women, such as the death of Maisie Maiden, a young woman whom the Ashurnhams have supposedly rescued from an unkind husband. To defray some of the impact of Edward’s costly adventures, the Ashburnhams rent out their estate and travel to India. There they meet Maisie Maidan, another woman who becomes

a bargaining piece in Leonora's efforts to keep her husband at satisfied in their loveless marriage. When they plan to return to England, Leonora goes so far as to suggest that they offer Ms. Maidan and her husband a trip back to Europe. Maisie subsequently suffers from a heart attack upon her discovery of Leonora's intentions. Edward is somewhat saddened but utterly oblivious of the reasons for the young girl's death.

Where the medieval tradition stresses the great risk involved in adulterous passion, Edward's child-like indifference to the impact of his affairs undermines the ostensible selflessness of his extra-marital devotions. Edward's lack of accountability for the consequences of his behavior appears to distinguish him from the troubadour who was willing to follow his heart whatever the cost.[27] It is perhaps the false self-assurance inherent in Ashburnham's irresponsibility that represents the loss of the aristocratic claim to the privilege of their social role.

Ashburnham's failed attempts to help women whom he believes will appreciate his chivalrous compassion are symbolic of his class's diminished capacity to aid lower the lower classes through their generosity. Where Edward believes that his love for his many mistresses is based on a sense of mutual responsibility, his proclivity for sidestepping the duty of his social position represents the abuse of authority that Ford recognized in the new bourgeois parliament members who would utilize their power for personal gain. In contrast to the government's new policies,[28] which Ford saw as motivated by self-interest, were the steadfast beliefs of traditional elite whose economic position gave them the leisure to rule for the good of the society (Green 13). Edward's

[27] Regarding this form of courtly love, Stevens comments, "Loyalty raises it above the vicissitudes of fortune" (163).
[28] Cannadine writes: "New forms of wealth, new people in power, demanded (and received) status recognition that profoundly affected the whole ethos of public life " (172).

delusional sense of the virtue of his adultery is evident in his conviction that the love between him and these young women is based on a mutual sense of obligation.

> At that time, he says, he went about deliberately looking for some woman who could help him. He found several – for there were quite a number of ladies in his set who were capable of agreeing with his handsome and fine fellow that the duties of a feudal gentleman were feudal. (172)

Edward's romantic goals were consistent with his conviction in "the feudal theory of an overlord doing best by his dependents, [and] the dependents meanwhile doing best for the overlord" (160).

Though Ashburnham may symbolize all that is supposedly noble about his class's sympathetic exercise of its financial responsibility, his efforts to save the young woman with whom he is engaged are wholly undermined by the lower class's distrust of his motivations. We have already seen his dangerous misperception of the young Maisie's unspoken yearning for him. In the Kilsyte affair, we see another example of Edward's hopeless efforts to aid a young girl, who is only frightened by his unwarranted affection. Edward kisses a young girl on a train out of what he feels is a sense of compassion for her broken heart. Edward's decision to ride in a third-class carriage demonstrates that he has begun to take to heart his wife's growing consternation over their financial troubles. Such a gesture reflects Edward's efforts to foster a sense of equality between himself and those men and women who are dependent on him for their livelihood. Unfortunately, the forlorn young woman is anything but comforted by Edward's affection.

> All her life, by her mother, by other girls, by schoolteachers, by the whole tradition of her class she had been warned against gentlemen. She was being kissed by a gentleman. She screamed, tore herself away; sprang up and pulled a communication cord. (165)

Ford suggests that whereas such an advance by a wealthy gentleman might have been commonplace in the feudal period, in the modern age such behavior was highly suspect. Where the girl's reaction may be unwarranted based on Edward's character, Ashburnham's denial of his impropriety is typical of the inability of his class to recognize the fundamental loss of respect for their paternalistic control. Once again, this affair demonstrates the way that Edward is reassured of the rightness of his actions by other members of his class, who believe that a display of class solidarity is crucial for sustaining their social authority. We can hardly fail to perceive the irony in Dowell's statement that the "whole world that knew Edward and Leonora – believed that his conviction in the Kilsyte affair had been a miscarriage of justice…" (106). The cohesion of Edward's social supporters in this case is set against the Kilsyte family's unwillingness to tolerate their patrician assumption of traditional privileges such as the one described below.

Edward's assumption that his advances to this young woman would be welcomed is symbolic of the feudal tradition of the "droit de seigneur." [29] The assumption of Edward's innocence by other members of the aristocracy suggests that this tradition may have disappeared but that the right of sexual privilege among society's ruling class had not vanished altogether. Once again, Edward's behavior is not a moral disgrace as much as another example of his naiveté in regard to the way that values had changed between the feudal and the modern period. The Kilsyte affair represents the underclass' modern disdain for any assumption of such a gross entitlement on the part of the upper classes. Though it is hard to imagine that Ford would have championed the tradition itself, he

[29] The "droit du seigneur" was the "mythical" right of the feudal lord to deflower the wife of one of his vassals on their wedding night. (Mylne 4).

does appear nostalgic of a period in which the aristocracy's devotion to the peasant class was such that it would warrant such a right. In *Parade's End* we will see how the expectation that adultery was to be practiced only with obscure seamstresses and shopgirls further undermines the spirit of social interdependence between lord and vassal once enforced by this tradition

Like Dowell, Edward ultimately pays the price when he recognizes that the "goodly apple" of his amorous affection was, in fact, "rotten at the core." Ashburnham shows signs of this awareness throughout the novel, in attempting to keep his wife in ignorance of his noble passions, and also in recognizing Leonora's claim to his love in spite of her coldness. In describing Edward's costly affair with the Spanish courtesan, Dowell remarks, "I daresay that nine tenths of what he took to be his passion for La Dolciquita was really discomfort at the thought that he had been unfaithful to Leonora" (176).

Yet it is only in his affair with Nancy Rufford that he truly comes to see the disgrace of his actions. Nancy is the daughter of the Leonora's only friend, who has lived with the Ashburnhams since her mother had committed suicide "owing to the brutalities of her father" (104) when Nancy was thirteen. Nancy is very young and totally ignorant of the true meaning of adultery. "She knew that one was commanded not to commit adultery – but why, she thought, should one? It was probably like catching salmon out of season – a thing one did not do" (239). Nancy soon learns the duplicitous nature of Edward's affection, and is shocked at first that Ashburnham could betray his wife in such a way. "I thought you were married or not married as you are alive or dead" (240). In spite of her consternation, Nancy eventually succumbs to Leonora's pleas for her

consideration of Edward's desperate longing. When she incestuously offers herself to the man who had become a surrogate father to her, Edward repeats three times the phrase "I don't want it" as if he is not talking to Nancy, but rather attempting to deny to himself his interest in accepting her advances. His repetition of the phrase suggests a profound recognition not only of the licentious element of his passion for Nancy but of the fiendish impulse behind he and his wife's efforts to nurture the young women who trust them. This recognition is evident in his immediate dismissal of Nancy after her declaration that, rather than the ethereal love of Edward's fantasies, she was offering herself only to satisfy his physical urge and thus to save his life.

Though Edward's suicide is itself an act of passion inspired by unrequited love it is also quite clear to many critics that Edward's death is equally the product of his remorse. After the Ashburnhams have sent Nancy back to India to live with her father, they receive a telegram stating flippantly, "Safe Brindisi. Having a rattling good time. Nancy" (277). Upon recognizing Nancy's utter indifference to his feelings, Edward bids farewell to Dowell and cuts his own throat with a penknife. "So long old man, I must have a bit of rest you know" (278). Ohmann writes that it is "the laconic manner of his suicide which emphasizes its self-accusing nature" (110). In addition to the pain of Nancy's childish cruelty, Edward's recognition that his unrequited love for another makes him incapable of the kind of selflessness that his vaunted self-image demands also precipitates his own death. "In the end, Edward's refusal to break out of [his] self-imposed prison of duty and convention, a refusal to become fully human, does indeed destroy him" (Radell 21).

Edward's remorse is a product of the inevitable corruption that occurs when the noblest of a society cease to recognize the tenuous constraints upon their immense social authority. Grimshaw is willing to concede his own failure in shouldering the burden that comes with such responsibility. Ashburnham represents the dangers of attempting to adhere to standards that neither his wife nor other members of his class are able to remind him no longer exist outside of his own conscience.

Parade's End represents the end of Ford's hopes that England's upper classes may ever regain the standing that they once possessed. The tetralogy is fatalistic in its conviction that a complete retrenchment of England's post World War I government is needed in order to oust the corruption that had taken hold of its ruling body. Christopher Tietjens represents one of the last of the Tory gentlemen attempting to maintain their dedication to feudal values in the face of this rampant moral decay, "a man of honour in a fallen world who gains in conviction the more he becomes victim" (Judd 378).

The novel places Tietjens and Valentine Wannop, the object of his affection, in opposition to those who have completely capitulated to the corrosive forces of the twentieth century. Tietjens finds himself incapable of standing by the traditions of the gentry in the light of the dishonesty and hypocrisy that had come to define the officer class during the war. Radell uses Tietjens as an example of those protagonists whom "Ford and Greene create…who, for the most part, refuse to succumb to this paralyzed world" and who are "saved from moral decay, ultimately, by action" (4). In contrast to Ford's other characters, his guilt typifies the futility of his earnest efforts to right the wrongs of an entire generation and maintain the standards that are crumbling around him.

Like Dowell, Tietjens is emasculated by his wife's promiscuity, a reality that he accepts as punishment for his premarital sexual relations. His remorse is compounded by his near-adultery with the earnest suffragette Valentine Wannop and by his wife's subsequent slander of his character. His life on the battlefield proves just as challenging, and the remorse caused by his personal predicaments translates into his failure to protect from harm the men under his charge.

Tietjens feels a tremendous dedication to those soldiers whom he feels are victims of government exploitation. In this respect there are close parallels between Christopher's sense of responsibility and the compulsion towards the feudal values that inspired Ashburnham's dedication to the unfortunate and the dispossessed. He is actually impeded by his commanders in his efforts to help his troops, yet continues to regret his inability to sustain his nation's military ideals. Though incapable of overcoming his sense of responsibility for the failures of his class, he ultimately comes to recognize the importance of personal morality in relation to the social façade that one must sustain in order to a bolster the image of honor both on and off the battlefield.

In spite of her efforts to sabotage his chivalrous consideration, Sylvia Tietjens is unable to shake her husband's passivity and even temper. When she searches for some sign of jealousy from her morally upright spouse, she is met by nothing but dignified civility from a man who has himself been tempted by adultery.

> I have always held that a woman who has been let down
> by one man has the right – has the duty for the sake of her child – to
> let down a man. It becomes woman against man. I happened to be
> that man: it was the will of God. But you were within your rights.
> (*Some Do Not* 174)

She continues to berate Tietjens, but he remains unmoved. The difference between Christopher's unflappable demeanor and his wife's hysterical exasperation reflects the contrast between the eighteenth and twentieth century values embodied respectively by Tietjens and Sylvia. The protagonist's compassion is, like Grimshaw's devotion to Katya, symbolic of the eighteenth century code of loyalty to an aloof woman whose love is a prize one must endure hardship to obtain. Yet, Sylvia's malignity is prompted not by a desire to test her husband but by the need to see him degrade himself to her level and betray his exalted reputation.

The contrast between Sylvia and Christopher is further accentuated in the way that Sylvia represents the competing political forces that distinguished Edward and Leonora Ashburnham. Sylvia is furious at the attention that Tietjens pays to the needs of the men that he commands.

> For the morality of these matters is this: If you have an incomparably beautiful woman on your hands you must occupy yourself solely with her…Nature exacts that of you…until you are unfaithful to her with a snub-nosed girl with freckles; that, of course being a reaction, is still in a way occupying yourself with your woman! But to betray her with a battalion…That is against decency, against Nature…And for him, Christopher, to come down to the level of the men you met here! (*A Man Could Stand Up* 399)

As the tetralogy progresses, Tietjens' sense of standards is further shown in his attempt to shoulder the responsibility for the infantry abandoned by the army's increasingly corrupt commanding officers. In this respect, Christopher is loyal to the same set of standards [30] that Edward subscribes to. Christopher is the feudal lord playing the role of the conscientious master to his dedicated vassals. Sylvia, in contrast, is very similar to Leonora, who countermands Edward's generous treatment of his servants. Like

[30] See footnote 1 above.

Leonora's haughtiness, Sylvia's snobbery towards the men that Tietjens consorts with is typical of the influence of individualistic materialism that had undermined the aristocracy's dedication to the society as a whole.[31]

Tietjens' exaggerated suffering for his own minor infractions stresses the debilitating nature of the guilt he does feel and the impossibility of reconciling his love for Valentine with his self-inflicted reprisals for his earlier mistakes. He has engaged in pre-marital sexual relations with Sylvia for which he is convinced his marriage to her is a punishment. "Who knows what sins of his own are heavily punishable in the eyes of God, for God is just? …Perhaps God then, after all, visits thus heavily sexual offenses" (*Some Do Not* 121). Tietjens' remorse for this crime of passion motivates his refusal to divorce his wife. In spite of his stern sense of honor, his natural impulses make his position difficult to maintain, and he begins to speculate about the proper way of dealing with his potential infidelity. "I stand for monogamy and chastity. And for no talking about it. Of course if a man who's a man wants to have a woman he has her. And again no talking about it" (*Some Do Not* 281).

Here Tietjens' sense of duty is compromised by his class's predilection for sustaining the appearance of social decorum. The significance of the book's title, *Some Do Not*, is that Tietjens is supposed to be among those who reject this moral double standard of those who "commit adultery with the name of Heaven on their lips" (*Some Do Not* 20). Tietjens tells Macmaster that he believes war is inevitable because England has lost the trust of other nations. Though Tietjens considers himself a Tory, he puts great faith in the lower classes, who he believes are "the only people in this country who

[31] In Ford's novels, materialism is synonymous with the commercialism that emerged out of the Industrial Revolution.

are sound in wind and limb" and who can "save the country if it's going to be saved" (18).

Yet, Tietjens finds himself defending the same hypocritical code of honor that Edward and Leonora Ashburnham have sworn to uphold. Mizener explains that for men like Tietjens there is a strong conflict between their conscious sense of duty and their unconscious impulses that cannot be suppressed completely without a resultant psychological disturbance.

> The only salvation for such people -- and the only way to preserve the essential principles of the society that has bred them -- is for them to become "Tory radicals," to adopt a new mode of life, a new set of social conventions that will allow them to continue to live by those principles and yet satisfy the demands of their unconscious selves. (*A Man Could Stand Up* 499)

Mizener's statement implies that a solution is certainly possible that neither denies Tietjens' initial sense of honor or capitulates to the repressive social customs aimed at replacing what was once the substantial valor of the English gentleman. Where *A Call* and *The Good Soldier* detailed the inability of the individual to sustain this honor without the support of their countrymen, *Parade's End* demonstrates the importance of the recognizing the aristocracy's hidden hypocrisy before one is corrupted by it.

Tietjens proves incapable of refuting his wife's accusations and his guilt is increased by the public humiliation he must endure as a result of her slander. Where the protagonist believes that any adulterous affair should be kept under wraps, his wife does not and she makes it very difficult for Tietjens to hide his impulse for indiscretion. Unlike Ford's other characters, Sylvia is not above being the subject the occasional scandal.

[She] had to have men at her feet; that was, as it were, the price of her –

> purely social – daily bread as it was the price of the daily bread of her intimates. She was, and had been for many years, absolutely continent. And so very likely were, and had been, all her Moiras, and Megs, and Lady Marjories – but she was perfectly aware that they had to have, above their assemblies as it were, a light vapour of the airs and habits of the brothel. The public demanded that…" (*Some Do Not* 150)

Sylvia's exposure of Tietjens' alleged affair is in keeping with this custom and her efforts to malign him create exactly the public spectacle that Christopher fears.

Sylvia slanders her husband by beginning the rumor that he has not only had an affair with Valentine but that she is pregnant with his child. To some extent the fault lies with Tietjens who has failed to follow the customary procedure of aristocratic indiscretion. General Campion explains to Tietjens that if he wishes to pursue an affair it should be with a working-class woman whom he may hide in a back parlor and not a woman of Valentine's status. Like Leicester's, Tietjens' affair is too enticing to the public to keep under wraps. Considering Sylvia's own well-recognized infidelity, very few are hesitant to believe her husband should react in kind. Though her fellow aristocrats look down at her behavior, Campion suggests the value of Sylvia's public exposition of adultery noting that "women like Sylvia" are needed to "preserve the reputation of virtuous women everywhere" (347). Campion's statements portray his class as all too willing to condemn publicized indiscretions in an attempt to shift suspicion away from their own private improprieties.

Valentine Wannop contrasts with Sylvia as well as many of the Ford's other female characters in that her newly awakened sense of sexual freedom is quenched by the lascivious infidelities of those around her. As both suffragette [32] and sexual innocent she

[32]Flanagan discusses the fact that while Ford was an ostensible supporter of the suffragette movement, his fiction demonstrates a deep-seated distrust of women's growing influence in society. "Ford's use of these

represents, at the same time, the forceful modern woman who tempts Tietjens into adultery and the Nancy Rufford-like creature who is largely unaware of the ethical significance of the indiscretions she bears witness to. Regarding the "moral incidence of sex," "she would probably …have declared that neither morality nor any ethical aspects were concerned in the matter" (*Some Do Not* 264). Though she may believe in "enlightened promiscuity," she is shocked back into her devotion to chastity by the disreputable associations between Ethel Duchemin and Vincent Macmaster. Her competing impulses mirror the moral confusion that Tietjens experiences as a result the temptations of the current age that challenge his ethical constitution. Where Tietjens must defend himself from those bent on undermining his honor, Valentine must herself battle similar threats to her steadfast probity from those who feel intimidated by her moral resolve.

In contrast to Tietjens and Valentine Wannop, Ethel Duchemin and Vincent Macmaster display none of the integrity that the protagonist and Valentine attempt to uphold. Stang says of these two character, "Having no principles, only instincts for self-advancement, they became excellent social climbers, appropriately representing a government that, in the same way has deserted the idea of virtue" (101). Macmaster is a Tory leader who has risen to a seat in parliament through his dishonesty while Tietjens is reprimanded for his bravery. Ethel is a friend of Valentine, who begins an illicit affair with Macmaster, a member of the rising bourgeoisie. Despite the clandestine relationship, Valentine feels a great respect for Ethel until she reveals her vulgarity in condemning Macmaster for his irresponsibility in nearly impregnating her.

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common attitudes and literary themes reflects the profound anxiety that he felt toward women. In spite of his ostensible support for women's causes, his writing reveals his tendency to contain and control the advancement of women" (239).

Ethel Duchemin is symbolic of the difference in outlook between those making military decisions and those men actually fighting in the war. Mrs. Duchemin lowers herself further in Valentine's esteem when she explains to Valentine that the English military command should not consider the preservation of a few lives a reason to set dangerous precedents in military strategy. At this Valentine becomes furious with Ethel, but Ethel merely responds with the statement, "[I]f you moved in higher circles you would look at these things with more aloofness" (258). Valentine responds in kind with "For Heaven's sake – for your own – remember that you are a woman, not for ever and for always a snob. You were a good woman once. You stuck to your husband for a long time…" (258). Ethel's flippancy over the consequence of war and of her adultery proves to Valentine the moral bankruptcy of society's elite. As we shall see, Ethel's attitude embodies the novel's repeated emphasis on the link between modern aristocracy's sexual indiscretions and the social indifference that destroys their credibility as military leaders.

The war represents a turning point in Tietjens' dedication to the values that he recognizes he is no longer capable of believing in. He has seen firsthand that the dangerous impulse to be "more altruistic than those around him" (207) has led him to suffer unnecessarily for his wife's cruelty. Sylvia's constant accusations and other "homeworries" make the protagonist's position in the war even more unbearable. The inactivity of trench warfare contributes to the enervation of Tietjens' sense of honor: "This critical inability to act, with which Ford, as well as others of his generation, labored and fought, could also be seen to attain its height in the enforced passivity of the trenches" (Aslam, 30-31). In his frustration, Tietjens rejects the hypocrisy of his class and decides to give up his position as the leader of the Groby estate. "Reprehensible!" He

snorted. “If you don’t obey the rules of your club you get hoofed out, and that’s that! If you retire from the post of Second-in-Command of Groby, you don’t have to, oh, attend battalion parades” (*No More Parades* 634)! This he feels as the Germans are beginning a massive assault and as he recognizes the futility of the patriotic pomp that has led him and those under him to imminent destruction. “Reprehensible!” He said, “for God’s sake let us be reprehensible and be done with it” (*No More Parades* 636)!

Where he feels antagonistic to the ideals of his fellow officers he develops a greater sympathy for the men who are forced to fight in the war against their will to recapture the crumbling glory of their nation’s leadership. Tietjens’ fellow officers are depicted as universally corrupt, and Christopher’s efforts to help his men are set in contrast to the dishonesty of men like Vincent Macmaster and General Campion. Macmaster has risen through the ranks by falsifying statistics in order to downplay the loss of the French troops. General Campion sends Christopher to a much more dangerous area of combat, using the excuse that Tietjens’ men “think that a man who’s a wrong ‘un over women isn’t the man they can trust their lives in the hands of” (478). His actual reason for making this movement order is simply to evacuate Tietjens so that he may himself carry on an adulterous affair with Sylvia. The behavior of these officers emphasizes Ford’s disgust with the leadership of a nation who had involved its working-class men in a war that was, as Auden concluded “a retribution visited upon Western Europe for the sins of its ruling class” (in Harvey 467). In contrast, Ford creates a character like Tietjens, who himself feels an obligation to those men who suffer most for a cause from which they have little to gain. “But for his men he always felt a certain

greater responsibility; they seemed to him to be there infinitely less of their own volition" (*No More Parades* 642).

Tietjens' sense of responsibility for the men that her commands is apparent in the recurrent guilt that he feels for both O Nine Morgan and the young Spanish soldier whom he attempts to save. In an incident that becomes a source of recurring guilt for Tietjens, a soldier referred to as O Nine Morgan wants to be granted leave to see his wife. Tietjens knows that this man's wife is having an affair with another man and denies him leave in order to save him from knowledge of his wife's disloyalty. As Radell states, "One of the most intolerable aspects of the war is that the men, despite their distance from home, are never free from the heartaches of their personal lives." (104). Morgan dies in combat, and Tietjens is haunted by the soldier's death.

Tietjens' guilt for Morgan's death appears to stem not only from his denial of the man's due leave but from the unjust projection of his own concerns onto Morgan. As hard as he might try to distance himself from the memory of Morgan, he feels connected to him by the very nature of his authority.

> Suddenly the light goes out…In this case it was because of one fellow, a dirty enough man, not even very willing, not in the least endearing, certainly contemplating desertion…But your dead…yours….your own. (356)

In this respect, Tietjens' guilt most closely resembles the failed endeavors of the character Moffat from Ford's novel *The Benefactors,* whose efforts to help those in need only cause them further harm. Tietjens' remorse is also symbolic of the mistake that he makes in projecting onto a working-class soldier his own humiliation at the idea of cuckoldry. Like Dowell's vehement denial of his possible role in Florence's death, Tietjens' exaggerated denial of his responsibility for Morgan confirms his culpability.

> Was he, he said to himself, to regard himself as responsible for the fellow's death? That would be absurd. The end of the earth! The absurd end of the earth…yet that insignificant ass Levin had that evening asserted the claim to go into his, Tietjens of Groby's, relations with his wife. (*A Man Could Stand Up* 356)

Where Tietjens is plagued by the scourge of his wife's adultery while attempting to fight a war, he forgets that the shame of marital infidelity may not have the same impact on a man of Morgan's class as it has had on him. Hence, Colonel Levin's comment induces others, and Tietjens himself, to recognize that Tietjens' concern for his reputation had, in fact, affected his judgment as a military leader.

Tietjens' failure as an officer is particularly crucial insofar as it represents the breach of the aristocracy's responsibility for the vassals that depend on them. Aranjuez is a young Spanish soldier who worships Tietjens like a god. He is buried in a shower of dirt after an explosion, and when he asks Tietjens to help him, Christopher replies "I must save myself first" (*A Man Could Stand Up* 637). His statement is symbolic of the inability to protect his men that exemplifies the emasculation that he experiences as a result of his wife's treachery. As Tietjens picks up Aranjuez and tries to carry him away, the man is shot. Tietjens is haunted by the memory of this event and repeatedly castigates himself for the man's injury. "If I had left him where he was his eye would not have been knocked out" (*No More Parades* 659). Tietjens recognizes that it is once again his commitment to his heroic ideals that has led to the injury of another. His sense of responsibility echoes both Grimshaw's dedication to Dudley or Ashburnham's masterly devotion to his tenants and his concubines. Yet the sense of paternal responsibility that Tietjens feels for Morgan epitomizes the true selflessness that neither Grimshaw as the self-proclaimed role model and savior of his class, or Ashburnham as the lecherous father

figure, can match. The overbearing guilt that he feels is clearly suggests the unrealistic nature of his valorous determination. He hopes, in vain, to compensate single-handed for the rest of his class's abandonment of the commitment that England's ruling class has made to masses of disillusioned men dying for the reputation of a distant leadership.

In *The Last Post*, Tietjens' decision to abandon his wife without a divorce, to refuse leadership of the Groby estate, and to live in an agrarian existence with Valentine all symbolize his rejection of English society as he finds it following the war. Sylvia has decided to feign both cancer and a broken arm in order to win back her husband. When such duplicity fails to achieve its goal, she seeks her revenge by allowing for the destruction of the symbol of the honor of her husband's family. She gives permission for the Groby tree to be cut down by Americans interested in transforming the Groby estate into a memorial of feudal England. The destruction of the tree represents the end of the tradition upon which Christopher's values rested and contributes to his dawning recognition that the world had changed and that he must adjust along with it. At the end of *No More Parades* he says to himself that "Feudalism was finished; its last vestiges were gone. It held no place for him. He was going -- he was damn well going ! -- to make a place in it…" (*No More Parades* 668). Though Tietjens recognizes the need to adapt to the society as it stands, he does not, as he believes, abandon his precious feudal principles altogether.

Parade's End implies that unlike adultery in *The Good Soldier*, Tietjens' relationship with Valentine is legitimized by the purity of their love. Christopher's brother Mark suggest to him that by facing the disapproval that he receives for his associations with Valentine he demonstrates the elemental devotion that a marriage

contract supposedly signifies. Such a decision represents Tietjens' willingness to "do what he thinks is right and take what he gets for it." Ford's other characters remain incapable of this.

In a class of society where each is prepared to cast the first stone, Christopher frees himself from the burden of tradition by refusing to sacrifice his love for the sake of standards that others have violated on a much deeper level. In this way, Tietjens symbolically replaces the fallen Groby tree by accepting his own moral weakness as self-proclaimed adulterer and exile from the English aristocracy. In light of his class' efforts to camouflage their own moral decline, Christopher's honest humility sustains the spirit of his ancestry and carries on the legacy of his family's timeworn integrity.

The only honor that appears to exist among the English aristocracy following the disappearance of a communally recognized set of values is a willingness to follow one's heart in spite of the consequences. Grimshaw gives up the woman he loves because of his dedication to ideals that he alone had held on to and Ashburnham takes his own life for feelings that are unconscionable even amidst the debauchery of other members of his class. Ford's novels demonstrate that it is important for characters like Ashburnham and Grimshaw to maintain the integrity that has, as Ford believed, dissipated as a result of the materialism that had infected England's entire society. Conversely, he shows us that it is important for these characters as well as Tietjens not to attempt to bury their moral shortcomings behind the façade of social decorum. Like Jim or Razumov, Ford's characters show us that the commitment to the ideals of the past cannot derive from an adherence to behavioral conventions, but from the integrity of the individuals themselves.

Chapter 3

The Modern Confessional: Catholic Guilt in the Novels of Graham Greene and François Mauriac

Around the turn of the twentieth century, two priests, Alfred Loisy and George Tyrell, began to question what they perceived as the Catholic Church's unwillingness to adjust its teachings in light of contemporary scientific thought. Their challenge to traditional religious doctrine began what was to become known as the Modernist movement within the Catholic Church. Whereas developments in the fields of geology and evolution softened the Anglican Church's harsh rebuke of man's moral shortcomings, the Catholic Church was unwilling to concede the significance of nature's role within a larger theological framework. The movement eventually failed and Loisy was excommunicated in 1908, but the Church was not to remain unchallenged by other religious and literary movements within the twentieth century.

Both Graham Greene and François Mauriac exemplify the impact of Catholic modernism on twentieth century literature. These two writers have traditionally been referred to as Catholic novelists, a term originally applied to French writers but also relevant to English and American authors such as Greene, Evelyn Waugh, and Walker Percy, whose themes sometimes reflect elements of Catholic doctrine. The Catholic novel has never been an expression of an "ideal of Christian literature" (Swift 113). Yet only after the modernist movement within the Church did the Catholic novel begin to reflect

controversies over the social impact of Catholic liturgy. Though the modern Catholic novel certainly questions the Church's ability to accommodate the needs of a post-industrialized society, only according to the most conservative critics such as Michael Shelden do these works actually attempt to subvert the values of Catholicism. Both Greene and Mauriac were highly influenced by the work of John Henry Newman, who himself felt that the role of literature was to reflect those elements of human nature that do not conform the tenets of the Church. "Man will never continue in a mere state of innocence: he is sure to sin, and literature will be an expression of his sin, and this whether he be heathen or Christian" (in Swift 113). It is little wonder that in light of Newman's influence, both Greene and Mauriac have both been accused of "conspiring with the devil" (Devitis 114). Both writers attempt to demonstrate the inevitable conflicts that occur when man is urged by his faith to seek forgiveness for those elements of his own corruption that he refuses to accept. They attempt to illustrate the way that the Church has traditionally misunderstood the irrepressible piety that can be found even in the darkest sinner. Their novels portray characters whose guilt, rather than bringing them closer to God, actually forces them to renounce the hope of grace either out of fear of retribution or out of a disdain for hypocrisy.

Graham Greene was born on the eighth of October, 1904. His family was Anglican and he did not convert to Catholicism until later in life when he fell in love with Vivienne Dayrell-Browning. His conversion was not an instantaneous discovery of the virtues of the Roman faith. He was actually fairly disappointed with the priest from whom he sought out instruction in his new religion. His fascination with Catholicism did not truly begin until after he found in this faith an element of his own fascination with the

darker elements of human nature. It was after attending an Anglican Church service that he recognized his preference for a religion with a firm belief in Hell: "It gives something hard, non-sentimental and exciting" (Sherry 260).

"The Sinner is at the Heart of Christianity" is a line that Greene borrows from Charles Péguy in his epigraph to *The Heart of the Matter*. Nowhere is this more clear than in the whiskey priests, juvenile delinquents, and corrupt police officers of three of Greene's Catholic novels, *Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory,* and *The Heart of the Matter*, sometimes referred to as the "Trilogy." Greene probes his religion's obsession with damnation to illuminate realms of evil bypassed by the strict tenets of Catholic Orthodoxy. And yet in doing so, he also shows us that the strength of these moral restraints can produce, even in the most devout, a subversive impulse that ultimately undermines the intentions of the Catholic faith. In this respect, Greene's work emphasizes the importance of Ecumenism, the movement within the Church during the early twentieth century towards tolerance and understanding (Devitis 80). Greene's novels do not criticize the Church as much as point out that Catholicism's traditional efforts to stanch the impulses of man's corrupt nature, a mission made more necessary by the moral lassitude of the modern period [33], may simply increase man's assurance of his own iniquity.

The reactions to Greene's novels were fairly mixed with some members of the Catholic community feeling that the author was a champion of Catholic values in a

[33] Greene's *Essais Catholiques* outline the disturbing social and political developments in the post WWI period, including the communists' rise to power in Mexico that had jeopardized man's faith in the value of religion.

slightly untraditional manner and some feeling that his work was blasphemy. To some critics such as Couto,

> Greene's vision of fallen man is not pessimistic – faith is made to trascened despair in a complex and ambiguous way and his novels offers something better than symbol or allegory. They offer life itself where trangressions of protagonists bring them face to face with God. (66)

Other critics feel that the sinner's direct confrontation with God in Greene's work is somewhat problematic and fosters an unhealthy temptation towards harsh self-judgment. Evelyn Waugh's critique of *Heart of the Matter* published in *Commonweal* is representative of critics who see the Jansenist God portrayed in Greene's work as distant and unforgiving. "To me the idea of willing my own damnation for the love of God is either a very loose poetical expression or mad blasphemy, for the God who accepted the sacrifice could be neither just nor lovable" (in Devits 84). While Greene stands by much of his theological symbolism, he accepts criticism of certain elements of pessimism in his work that revealed more than he had perhaps intended of the "anguish that [he] was enduring both as man and novelist" (92).

Greene's Catholic novels are almost uniformly set in squalid surroundings that reflect the corruption and hopelessness of a world where God appears to have abandoned "the sinner to his own devices" (Conversations with Greene 59). Though Greene has often been seen as Augustinian or Jansenist, [34] his novels do not discount the role that free will plays in the process of man's redemption, nor do they ignore the dangers inherent in the individual's presumptions of his own grace or damnation. In the work of

[34] According to Jansenius, man was created in a state of justice that was lost through the fall. Redemptive grace restored all believers but this was no longer enough for salvation. Certain individuals were chosen for salvation, and those not chosen could receive grace only through the performance of good works.

Graham Greene, the understanding of original sin as a "Felix Culpa" is problematized by his characters' tendency to embrace their own flawed nature rather than struggle against its potentially corrosive influence. While he believes that man becomes "less fallible" by accepting his own moral failure, his protagonists often feel that they have rejected the hope of God's mercy through their blatant disregard for the Church's values. They believe that once they have proven themselves to be among the damned, there is little hope that their actions may have any salutary affect on their ultimate destiny. The guilt that Greene's characters experience as a result of their "devotion"[35] often deprives them of the will to struggle against what they perceive as their inevitable damnation.

In *Brighton Rock*, Greene presents characters who feel themselves faced with decisions that they believe Catholicism has made for them already. The squalid conditions of Brighton we witness are iconic of a modern "No-man's land" created by the economic disparity between rich and poor, where religious values have been undermined by the corroding forces of poverty. Greene sees a part of this despair as the result of the corrosive forces of industrialization. The Church's waning influence in the lives of characters like Pinkie and Rose is a result not only of its inability to adapt to the changes that accompanied modernism but also of such characters's tendency to misunderstand the intended message that resonated with a previous generation of believers. Both Rose and Pinkie are far more comfortable with the idea of hopelessness, misery, and sin than with the bourgeois morality of their counterpart, Ida Arnold. The two ill-fated children find the prospect of damnation an appealing alternative to the strenuous effort required to overcome their supposed moral weakness. It is her love for Pinkie that compels Rose to

[2] By this word I mean a commitment towards good or an equally passionate dedication to forces of evil as in *Brighton Rock*, where the sense of religious obligation is reversed as a result of the characters' commitment to accept the punishment that they believe is their due.

sin, but it is her fear of retribution for her iniquity that locks her into a total submission to his will. Pinkie, driven by shame rather than guilt, is equally bound by his own asceticism and sexual disgusts, and acts in a way that denies an essential element of his nature.

Rose can free herself from regret only by believing that she is bound to Pinkie by the same dark impulses that cause him to betray her. Rose is a waitress at a Brighton restaurant who does not need to look hard to convince herself that she is cut from the same cloth as Pinkie. "In her hole were murder, copulation, poverty, fidelity" (123). Rose is a devout Catholic and yet she takes pride in abandoning the tradition that would value her piety and condemn Pinkie's wickedness. "She had committed a sin? that was the answer: she was having her cake in this world, not in the next, and she didn't care" (175). Pinkie and Rose have very different ideas about the implications of their romantic involvement. Pinkie has married Rose to prevent her from testifying about a murder that he and his gang had commited. Rose has accepted Pinkie's proposal because she believes that her destiny lies in escaping the stifling morality of her Brighton childhood. She takes comfort only in the knowledge that she is, like Pinkie, bound to iniquity as others are bound to piety. As she embraces Pinkie on the night after their wedding she makes "her vow again, holding him in her arms, 'Nothing to choose'" (186). She does not envy the parishioners leaving Mass but merely thinks to herself, "They had their salvation and she had Pinkie and damnation" (195). She is saved from the painful pangs of remorse by the comfort of moral determinism, a solace she would lose were she to ever acknowledge that she had actually chosen a path she was never required to follow.

Though she believes that she has freed herself from obligation in her marriage to Pinkie, Rose's commitment to evil proves no less constraining than her religious devotion. The young woman feels a misleading sense of security over her newfound freedom that foreshadows the painful denouement of her marriage.

> Pride swelled up in her breast as she came up from the basement. She was accepted. She had experienced as much as any woman…she wasn't hungry; she was sensible of an immense freedom – no timetable to keep, no work which had to be done. You suffered a little pain and then came out on the other side to this amazing liberty. (193)

Rose believes that her decision liberates her from her hapless existence as well as her burdensome devotion to her faith. Yet, in reality, she has done little more than replace her loyalty to God with a commitment to the devil, only to learn that the devil is an equally demanding authority. When she goes to Snow's to visit Maisie, she feels that she has violated her commitment to iniquity because she has no pain to show for her sacrifice. "The door opened and Maisie was there. 'Rose, what's wrong?' She ought to have had wounds to show: she felt guilty at having only happiness" (194). Rose feels guilt for her marriage not simply because she recognizes that she has committed a crime against God but because she assumes fallaciously that the act of exulting in her sin is a true sign of her damnation. Like Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter*, Rose assumes a knowledge of what God expects or what God is willing to forgive, and judges herself accordingly. Rather than looking towards her faith as an means of redemption she is driven by the tenets of her repressed piety towards a self-perpetuating cycle of transgression. Once she accepts that her decision is simply a reflection of her innate corruption, she never questions the truth of Pinkie's ironic and hypocritical assertion that her marriage to him has sentenced her to an eternity of hellfire.

Many critics have pointed out that Ida Arnold, in spite of her commitment to avenge injustice and rescue Rose from Pinkie's cruelty, is a far less sympathetic character than either of the two adolescents. Unlike Pinkie and Rose, she is not a Catholic, and her spiritual philosophy is based on mysticism and Ouija boards. Ida's credo -- "camaraderie, good nature…an eye for an eye" (45) -- is typical of the vacuous principles of the Brighton middle class, whose values are inapplicable to the wretched existence of the Brighton poor. Though she is "right" where Pinkie and Rose are "wrong," she is not "good" where they are "evil." In Rose's self-sacrifice and Pinkie's asceticism there is wickedness, but there is also a respect for something beyond simple pleasure and "cheeriness."

Devitis points out that "as the action progresses Ida's 'humanity' seems somehow to diminish as the reality of good and evil, a consideration [she] is not competent to understand, becomes infinitely more meaningful" (Devitis 57). Ida's sense of duty is off-putting to Rose, and Ida's efforts to lead her away from potential danger only increase the young Catholic's esteem for the wickedness of Pinkie, Ida's adversary. While Rose comes close to damning herself, and Pinkie quite possibly manages to do so, Ida is morally upstanding at the same time that her own salvation is put into question by her ultimate rejection of Christianity. Kunkel points out that this Jansenist assumption "casts a gratuitous slur on God's mercy" (1967: 51). The idea that it is Ida and not Pinkie, who may be damned casts a particularly harsh light on the demands of such a form of Jansenist Catholicism. Such a bizarre concept of religious justice appears to emphasize the strange clemency that Jansenism may grant to those believers who consciously defy the will of God.

Pinkie's faith in his damnation, like Rose in hers, is a relief from repressed emotions that threaten to overwhelm him. Ironically, Pinkie is one of the most outspokenly Catholic characters in the novel. "These Atheists don't know nothing. Of course there's a hell. Flames and Damnation" (52). As R.H. Miller points out, "One cannot conceive of Pinkie Brown as anything but a religious figure from the moment he enters the story" (48). While Pinkie's religious devotion makes him more irrationally cognizant of petty sins, he remains blind to the true monstrosity of his moral rationalizations. Pinkie continually takes comfort in the possibility of a deathbed conversion "between the stirrup and the ground, " he knows unconsciously that this idea of salvation is incongruent with his nature. "He wasn't really deceiving himself -- He wasn't made for peace, he couldn't believe in it" (228). His fear of eternal pain remains only at the unconscious level until he is attacked, at which point he gains a visceral understanding of the meaning of suffering. "Eternal pain had not meant much to him. Now it meant the slash of blades eternally prolonged" (109). Yet, such pain ultimately seems to reinforce his appreciation of the physical reality of damnation. "Heaven was a word. Hell was something he could trust" (228).

Where Rose continues to follow Pinkie out of a sense of responsibility, Pinkie chooses eternal punishment because he is unwilling to confront the shame of his past. Pinkie is disgusted by the idea of trivial pleasures such as drinking, gambling, and sex, because of his associations of his parent's coition with his painful childhood. Pinkie is plagued by painful memories of the act of his parent's love-making that he was forced to witness in their one-room apartment. " 'Saturday,' he thought, 'today's Saturday,'

remembering the room at home, the frightening weekly exercise of his parents which he watched from his single bed" (90). Kunkel points out that Pinkie's attitude is typical of the "marriage of Catholicism and abnormal psychology that raises a problem concerning the ultimate freedom of Greene's characters" (1959: 103). Pinkie may want to believe that he is compelled towards mortal sin by the same forces that provoke his hatred of alcohol and physical intimacy. Yet he remains unable to hold back the fear of the memories that might expose the role that his pride plays in such a certain conviction.

His shameful visions of sexuality convince Pinkie that Rose is among the many factors that have motivated his transgressions. To avoid confronting his repressed past, he distances himself from the threat posed by human contact, "holding back intimacy back as long as he could at the end of a razor blade" (133). Tangey and Dearing claim that while guilt serves what they refer to as an adaptive function that "opens the door for guilt-inducing behavior and making amends for its consequences," shame does not usually inspire an equally powerful reaction. Pinkie´s denial of those elements of his past that he is not willing to face represents the essence of such a conclusion. His shame is particularly evident in the association he feels between music and both his Catholic upbringing and sexuality. Pinkie's visceral response to the sound of the orchestra playing on the Brighton pier suggests that he is easily reminded of the religious sentimentality that he hides beneath a hard exterior. "The orchestra began to play: he felt the music as a movement in his belly: the violins wailed in his guts" (105). Alternatively, music, which reminds him of the potential happiness that he has abandoned, is also symbolic of lustful desire. "The news was over and the music had begun again -- it wailed upwards like a dog over a grave, and the huge darkness pressed a wet mouth over the panes" (231).

What damns Pinkie is his inability to separate true sins from the disgrace that he believes condemns him to evil.

> An enormous emotion beat on him; it was like something trying to get in; the pressure of gigantic wings against the glass. Dona nobis pacem. He withstood it, with all the bitter force of the school bench, the cement playground, the St. Pancras waiting room, Dallow and Judy's secret lust, and the cold unhappy moment on the pier. If the glass broke, if the beast whatever it was got in God knows what it would do. (239)

Unable to overcome his pride and face his childhood ghosts, Pinkie struggles to deny the existence of the self-inflicted punishment that has all along denied him a "glimpse of heaven between the Brighton walls" (150).

Following his thwarted attempt to murder Rose, Pinkie's fatal fall, the results of another botched act of violence seems a fitting end to a life dominated by self-destructive arrogance. Yet, even in light of his pitiful demise, Rose would rather share in Pinkie's fate than return to the existence that she had abandoned. Greene does not appear to fault Rose for her lack of repentance, for she has no reason to believe that, in her state of mortal sin, anything can be accomplished through her confession. Some critics have claimed that Pinkie's phonograph recording is a form of punishment for Rose's sins, but as Boardman accurately points out, Greene is unlikely to have felt such a castigating impulse towards someone who has already "suffered an earthly punishment in her sense of loss" (49). Rose has a romanticized view of her relationship with Pinkie has from the start been influenced by a naïve faith in the possibility of an easy escape from her despondent existence. Refusing to believe that Pinkie tried to trick her into killing herself, Rose has not "felt the slash of blades" that had crystallized for Pinkie the idea of suffering. She refuses to relinquish her belief in the value of Pinkie's love and will only learn the truth about her beloved husband from his malicious epitaph.

The priest points out that Rose's Catholicism allows her a special understanding of Pinkie´s character. "I think perhaps -- because we believe in Him -- we are more in touch with the devil than other people" (246). Such a belief is perhaps what has been the root of Rose's confusion throughout the novel. In believing in the safety and comfort of evil, she has willfully committed herself to uphold it against the impulses of her nature. Thus, in learning how little she really "knew the devil," Rose will perhaps be forced not only to recognize but also to embrace the alternatives to her intended self-sacrifice.

In *The Power and the Glory*, Greene portrays a nation that has been morally corrupted by the influence of a tyrannical Communist authority. As one of the epigraphs for *The Lawless Roads*, Greene quotes a phrase by Cardinal Newman in which he claims that "since there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity" (Lawless Roads ii). The Church's modern loss of authority is typical of the degradation of modern values that Greene mentions in his *Essais Catholiques*, a work in which the author attempts to defend Catholicism from the influence of Communism.[36] The lieutenant's efforts to destroy the corrupt clerical system merely increase the hopelessness of the peasants that he tries to save. Padre José remains in the country as a testament to the spiritual corruption that has affected the Catholic clergy who have abandoned their faith as a result of persecution. The whiskey priest himself embodies the last hope of spiritual guidance for the peasants of Mexico, but his weakness ultimately undermines his ability to restore their crumbling faith. Like Rose and Pinkie, the guilt that he feels for his sins convinces him that he is beyond salvation, rendering him unable to provide the spiritual strength needed to guide the Church's forgotten parishioners.

[36] See footnote 1

Like England in *Brighton Rock*, Mexico is depicted as a forgotten wasteland of sin and corruption. Greene himself is no stranger to the forms of suffering depicted in his work. His words "Anyone who lives is conscious of life's despair" (Sherry 86) seem to resound particularly in *The Power and the Glory*. The author's attempt to create such a spirit of hopelessness is made easier by the physical landscape that he describes. It is a land where all that can be found is "the swamp and vultures and no children anywhere except a few in the village with bellies swollen by worms who ate dirt from the bank inhumanly" (45). Frederick Karl notes that it is ultimately the priest's "attempt to embrace faith in a seemingly Godless universe [that] is the measure of his heroism" (49).

The lieutenant, a symbol of the state's Communist authority, intends to destroy the old order in the hopes that he might bring hope and renewal in the place of corruption and despair. He wishes to erase the memory of Mexico's blighted past, and yet he offers nothing in place of what the Church once provided. Padre José's cowardice, which in some ways reflects that of the whiskey priest, is a symbol of the spiritual bankruptcy that has taken over Mexico in the absence of the Church's influence. His decision to marry and abandon his responsibility to God condemns him to mockery as the servant of his wife who is a far less forgiving authority than the church. These two characters along with Tench, a man whose cynical mockery of the priest's decision to save a dying a woman is emblematic of the apathy that looms over the nation, establish the need for a moral counterbalance that anticipates the priest's introduction in Chapter three. The priest's inner "goodness" serves to mitigate some of the corruption of these and other characters, but his failed efforts to protect those members of his parish from harm fills him with the same hopelessness and despair that he tries to combat in others.

Rather than serve as a beacon to the men and women wrecked by the loss of the Church's authority, the whiskey priest becomes a victim of the corruption that he is witness to. If the charge of Manicheism[37] is at all valid for Greene's work, it would seem to be proven by the way that the priest's behavior reflects the enfeebled moral structure left in the wake of the Church's collapse. On his journey towards the Mexican border, the priest reaches a town and is tempted into drinking away his last remaining pesos. As the priest sits in the bar and waits out a passing downpour, he thinks to himself, "This was the atmosphere of the whole state -- the storm outside and the talk just going on -- words like mystery and 'soul' and 'source of life' came in over and over again, as they sat on the bed talking, with nothing to do and nothing to believe in an nowhere better to go" (114).

The priest's position as the last hope of spiritual guidance for the peasants of Mexico makes his dedication to his faith all the more important, and even his more innocuous sins place into question his role as a wholly sympathetic character. The priest's piety is not enough to overcome the overwhelming social depravity that brings out his many weaknesses. Atkins writes that "Greene is at great pains to put God in the hands of a worthless drunkard. While we say, 'What a magnificent conception! How ironic! Glory be!' we forgot to ask if it was true" (184-5). The priest's consumption of the wine that he had intended to save for communion does not appear tremendously significant until he confronted with the impact of his moral lassitude. When he attempts to grant absolution to the Indian boy who has been shot by the police, he feels the hopelessness of his

[37] Manicheism is a form of dualism that posits the basic existence of good and evil in the universe. One of the primary tenets of Manicheism is that man wickedness is merely a reflection of evil forces of society.

supplication for God's mercy. "Why should anyone listen to *his* prayers? Sin was a constriction that prevented their escape; he could feel his prayers weigh him down like undigested food" (151).

Though the priest can see the hope of God's mercy for others, his deep self-disgust blinds him to the same possibility for himself. In a small town on his way towards the Mexican border, the priest gives a sermon on the importance of suffering. "Pray that you will suffer more and more. Never get tired of suffering" (69). The night he spends in a jail cell provides the priest a unique opportunity for him to witness God's mercy among his fellow inmates. When the priest is jailed for the possession of brandy, he recognizes in the collective misery of his fellow prisoners the beauty in sin that is "visible only to the saints" (131). To the woman, these wretched, tattered criminals show only the absence of God, and the priest's compassion shows his own depravity. "I can see now that you are a bad priest… You sympathize with these animals" (131) to which the priest later replies,

> When you visualized a man or a woman carefully, you could always begin to feel pity -- that was a quality God's image carried with it. When you saw the lines at the corners of the eyes, the shape of the mouth, how the hair grew, it was impossible to hate. (131)

The priest's sentiment here reflects a theory about the relationship between divinity and human face presented by Levinas. He writes that

> [i]nfinity presents itself as a face in the ethical resistance that paralyzes my powers and from the depth of defenseless eyes rises firm and absolute in its nudity and destitution… In Desire are conjoined the movements unto the Height and Humility of the Other. (200) [38]

[38] Levinas defines the word "face" as "the way that the Other presents himself, exceeding the idea of the Other in me" (50). The relationship between ethics and the human face is a connection established through the dimension of the infinite. To think of the infinite is not to think of an object but the one *ideatum* that

The criminals' wretchedness renews the priest's faith in the importance of his responsibility for those who are equally burdened by their transgressions. While such an epiphany would ostensibly contradict his Jansenist belief in his own assured damnation, he remains unable to accept his own rhetoric. Rather than being freed by this knowledge of the faith that exists in his fellow sinners, he is unable to appreciate this how devotion in himself may overcome the impulse towards sin that he feels drawn by. Even though he recognizes that he may still be worthy of redemption, he lacks the strength to overcome his failures or the requisite faith to expect such unconditional pity.

It is only in condemning his own mortal sin that he recognizes the potentially deleterious impact of Catholic orthodoxy. As in *Brighton Rock* or *The Heart of the Matter*, the association of guilt and love represents a crucial theme in works that probe problematic relationships between religious values and human affection. The priest says that he once considered his venial sins such as impatience and pride as what kept him from his grace. "Then in his innocence, he had felt no love for anyone, now in his corruption he had learnt…" (139). We are left to complete the priest's half thought, but it is fairly clear what fundamental truth the priest has learned. The most dangerous sin is to love, for such an emotion can produce a child out of wedlock, a sin for any man, but an unthinkable transgression for a priest.

At one point in the novel, the priest asks himself rhetorically, "What was the good of confession when you loved the result of your sin?" (98). Such a statement defines the priest's conviction that he, like Rose, is damned not only because he has sinned but

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we cannot have accounted for by ourselves. The face of the Other represents the infinite because I can only understand him through a framework that is beyond my own knowledge of external reality.

because he cannot suppress his joy while being in a state of mortal sin. Later in the novel, the priest feels the compulsion to save others from torment that he has endured. He questions the power of confession to teach those other adulterers not already damned by a lack of contrition the value of God's mercy. As he waits to hear a woman's confession, the priest speculates about what he would like to explain to other men who have fallen prey to the vice of illicit desire.

> Love is not wrong. But love should be happy and open – it is only wrong when it is secret, unhappy…It can be more unhappy than anything but the loss of God. It is the loss of God (172)… Lust is not the worst thing. But one must take care because…anytime, any day, lust may turn into love...And when we love our sin then we are damned indeed. (172)

Though this is the sermon he would like to give, he knows that he cannot because he is tied to the "habit of the confessional." Yet, he recognizes that his words "mortal sin…danger…self-control…" (172) hardly "meant anything at all" because even God's mercy cannot ease the burden of moral degradation that the individual is not willing to excuse in himself. Straub points out the unreachable expectations assumed by the implicit structures of the confessional process that the priest questions. "By linking a person's 'predominant passion' with his sinful nature, the Church is suggesting that real feelings, and therefore the real self, must be buried in favor of the ideal" (196). Though the priest may believe that "loyalty to the Church is [his] first duty" he scorns his responsibility to force men to hide from God a sin that he himself cannot understand the need to forgive.

The Gringo that the priest tries to save represents the importance of the priest's efforts to see beyond his own weakness and accept the value of his piety regardless of the outcome. Like the priest, an outlaw wanted for murder is the object of a nationwide

manhunt. When the priest is arrested for possession of brandy, he notices his picture hanging side by side with the fugitive's image. The similarity that he sees between his picture and that of the outlaw becomes symbolic of his recognition of their common guilt. He views "the two faces -- his own and the gunman's -- hanging together on the police station wall as if they were portraits of brothers in a family portrait gallery" (156). The priest is easily deterred by the Gringo's unwillingness to accept absolution, and once again he views his lack of faith in himself as the source of his inability to "put God into the mouth of another." He considers his attempts to redeem the outlaw as "at best, only one criminal trying to aid the escape of another…" (190). The priest's doubt in the possibility of a deathbed conversion demonstrates his stubborn belief that guilt of any kind precludes the possibility of salvation. Nevertheless, he manages to bless the Gringo through his "good works,"[39] while still denying his ability to affect the man's redemption.

The novel's conclusion demonstrates the priest's ultimate humility not only in his acknowledgement of his sins but in his recognition of the role that he played in determining the course of his failure. At one point in the novel, the priest thinks to himself, "Five years ago he had given way to despair-- the unforgivable sin -- And he was going back to his despair with a curious lightening of heart. For he had gotten over despair too. He was a bad priest, he knew it" (60). Such a statement defines the complacent acceptance of damnation that had destroyed his faith in his capacity to aid

[39] "Good Works" were considered in Jansenist ideology a virtue through which those not necessarily chosen for grace may still receive redemption. In *A Treatise on Good Works,* Martin Luther cites the following passage from John 6:29. "Truly good works are not self-elected works of monastic or any that but such only as God has commanded, and as are comprehended "other holiness," within the bounds of one's particular calling, and all works, let their name be what it may, become good only when they flow from faith, the first, greatest, and noblest of good works."
(Luther, 7)

others. Yet Allott notes that the priest's "real martyrdom is his consciousness of weakness and sin" (175).

Allott is certainly correct that the priest's consciousness of his shortcomings is what ultimately redeems him. However, it is not an awareness alone that makes the priest worthy of redemption but rather his recognition that God's mercy was never, in fact, denied to him. "It seemed to him, at that moment, that it would have been quite easy to be a saint. All he would only have needed a little self-restraint and a little courage" (210). His final sense of regret qualifies the strict Jansenist leaning of Greene's novel by evoking the possible significance of one's belief in the role of free will. By recognizing that it is not his sins alone but his lack of will to change his behavior that has led him to damnation, he illustrates the equal importance of his virtuous acts that have, in fact, ensured his martyrdom.

In *The Heart of the Matter*, set in Sierra Leone, the war provides Greene with an appropriate background for a story about confused alliances and misdirected compassion. Scobie feels guilt more profoundly than other Greene characters because rather than simply accepting his moral failings he insists on the need to correct his mistakes. Scobie's remorse and feelings of inadequacy are fostered by his inability to recover from the loss of his daughter, whose death he blames on his extended absence. His adultery is not only the cause of his regret but the result as well, and his religious faith actually inspires his continued disloyalty. Like Greene's other characters, Scobie feels an unceasing desire to prove his piety that makes him all the more conscious of his spiritual weakness. His efforts to assuage his guilt by attempting to make others happy fail continuously, and he ends up increasing his own despair through his determination to

protect servants, spouses, soldiers and others from the same misery that he must endure. Rather than reject Catholicism outright or question its efficacy, Scobie uses his religious faith as an excuse for his prideful behavior, and the guilt that ensues as a justification for his suicide.

Scobie's inability to preserve the façade of love in his marriage shows the futility of his obligatory sense of compassion. He recalls the vow that he made at his wedding to Louise. "No man could guarantee love forever, but he had sworn fourteen years ago, at Ealing, that he would always make her happy" (60). Unfortunately, such an act is not possible, when all that he can give her is the illusion of his affection. She is obviously not fooled by his false promises, and when he reminds her of his kindness towards her she replies "That's your conscience…your sense of duty" (60). She plays upon his sense of obligation to increase his pity for her, suggesting that she leave him in order that he find peace. Her offer exposes the accuracy of her perception and Scobie answers caustically. "You haven't any idea what peace means" (61). Such a statement reveals a hidden aggression that undermines his assumptions of his own beneficence. His obligation to console Louise requires a level of compassion that he fears he may not be capable of leading to an ultimate sense of failure.

> He had always been prepared to accept the responsibility for his actions, and he had always been half aware too, from the time he made his terrible private vow that she should be happy, how far this action might carry him. Despair isthe price one pays for setting oneself an impossible aim. (62)

Rather than accepting Scobie's devotion to two women as a symbol of his commitment to the happiness of others, Helen Rolt flippantly challenges the hypocrisy inherent in his overbearing religious devotion. Helen is a young woman who was among

a group of survivors rescued from a shipwreck. Following his wife's departure for a trip to South Africa, Scobie enters into an adulterous affair with Helen, whose husband's recent death increases his sense of obligation to her. One of the largest ironies in the story is Scobie's insistence that Catholics are damned because they have "all the answers." In his relationship with Helen, Scobie appears to be the one living in "invisible ignorance" as Helen proves the only source of logical thought. His mistress points out to Scobie the contradiction in the fact that he can compromise his Catholicism enough to sleep with her but never divorce Louise. Evelyn Waugh addresses a similar strain of guilt produced by the Catholic prohibition of divorce. Julia Flyte also suffers tremendously when her religious devotion is insufficient to overcome her love for Charles Ryder. "Living in sin, with sin, by sin, for sin, every hour, every day, year in year out." (Brideshead Revisited 287). Allott and Farris note that *The Heart of the Matter* was banned by the Catholic Church because it appeared to condone extramarital relations among its Catholic readers (34). Such a charge appears ironic, considering that Scobie would likely give up every sexual urge in his body to be free of the guilt he feels for loving Helen.

Yet, in challenging Scobie's twisted logic, Helen forces him to sound out just such contradictions in his own philosophy. "Against all the teaching of the Church, one has the conviction that love – any kind of love – does deserves a bit of mercy. One will pay, of course, pay terribly, but I don't believe one will pay for ever" (246). Though Scobie refuses to follow his own advice, this statement is important because it demonstrates that in spite of his bitter self-castigation, his love for Helen is not the true source of his guilt. However, the confusion in the protagonist's thinking is not however,

accidental, and it becomes clear that Scobie uses the guilt that he knows he should feel as an excuse to avoid facing his true failing.

Scobie's inherent fault is not his illicit desire but his inability to separate his religious devotion from an overwhelming sense of pride. Frustrated by the many critical interpretations that pitied Scobie, Greene finally wrote, "[T]he character of Scobie is intended to show that pity can be the expression of an almost monstrous pride" (1971: 89). Unlike Pinkie or the Whiskey priest whose moral failings are quite manifest, Scobie's ardent piety becomes a clever disguise for the selfishness at the root of his altruism. The protagonist's deflated pride is evident from the beginning of the novel in the respect that his guilt over his daughter's death is primarily motivated by the assumption that he should never have trusted Louise with their daughter's life. His occupation as a police officer is symbolic of the role that he sees himself playing in the lives of those in some way affected by the difficult circumstances of the war. Besides the sense of responsibility that he feels for characters such as his servant Ali and a ship captain whom he must save from court martial, he arrogantly assumes that neither Louise nor Helen can survive without his undying affection. Scobie is driven by his obsessive pity not because he feels "constrained by any kind of religious imposition as much as he is a victim of his own conscience, which includes but is not limited to traditional elements of Catholicism" (Bierman 65). Bawer also recognizes that Scobie's mental instability leaves him extremely vulnerable to the powerful influence of his faith. "If *The Heart of the Matter* is effective, it is largely a demonstration of the ability of emotionally disturbed individuals to twist religion into a tool of destruction" (29). Once again we see Greene's depiction of the modern Catholic's tendency to misunderstand the message of

his faith as a result of his own pathologies. Rather than appreciate his overly stringent interpretation of the tenets of Catholicism, he chooses to believe that it is a breach of anyone's religious obligation not to respond to suffering at the cost of one's own happiness. His attempt to think rationally about the situation is replaced by another irrational solution.

> One must be reasonable he told himself, and recognize that despair doesn't last (but isn't that the very reason that despair does?) that in a few weeks or months she'll be all right again. She has survived forty days in an open boat and the death of her husband and can't she survive the death of love? As I can, as I know I can. (257)

Unable to keep such a promise to himself, he attempts to justify his responsibility for Helen by elevating his love for her above his sense of religious duty. "I love you more than myself, more than my wife, more than God I think" (209). Here Scobie assumes that misplaced religious devotion will exonerate him from the guilt that he feels and his increased commitment to Helen only drives him towards an "impasse."

Scobie goes to the confession in the hope that he may be made to feel guilt for a sin that he does not wholly regret. His intention in seeking Father Rank's advice is to be rebuked to the point that he will realize the inevitability of his own damnation. Though his pride will not allow him to abandon Louise or Helen, he believes that if he can be convinced that his behavior is beyond forgiveness, then his suicide will at least assuage the torment that he arrogantly assumes that God suffers at his sins. However, he feels no such sense of reverence for Father Rank's words, believing that his statements of absolution were "nothing more than a formula: the Latin words hustled together – a hocus pocus" (123). Scobie's guilt actually adds to the sense of pride that he takes in the pain of his self-sacrifice, and he is angry at not being recognized by a God "who, like a

popular demagogue was open to the least of his followers at any hour" (177). Scobie's later refusal to continue to insult God at the altar is very similar to Pinkie's conviction that his marriage to Rose is a mortal sin. Both statements serve as excuses for characters to heap castigation upon themselves to avoid the far less convenient solution of seeking God's mercy for their ostensible transgressions.

Scobie takes comfort in the belief that he, like Rose, was driven to damnation by God's will rather than by the actions for which he cannot forgive himself. In this respect *The Heart of the Matter* is more Jansenist than *The Power and the Glory* because where the priest finally comes to acknowledge not only his corrupted nature but also his capacity to alter his fate, Scobie is convinced that God has endowed him with his burdensome sense of pity that has insured his inevitable damnation. As in the all three novels, the role that the protagonist ascribes to the forces determining his fate can be viewed in terms of the Lacanian "Other." Scobie can only justify his ultimate sin with the knowledge that God plays such a role in his existence.

In the absence of this influence, Scobie has no recourse from the guilt that derives from his rejection of God's mercy. In one of Scobie's imaginary dialogues, the voice of God says,

> It's not repentance you lack but just a few simple actions: to go to the Nissen hut and say good-bye. Or if you must, continue rejecting me but without lies any more. Go to your house and say goodbye to your wife and live with your mistress. One of them will suffer, but can't you trust me to see that the suffering isn't too great? (305)

Such a statement falls on deaf ears, because Scobie is determined to believe that such a decision would demand more of him than he is capable of. Where Sara Miles in *The Heart of the Matter* stubbornly explains to God her free will to defy God at any time,

Scobie appears even more childlike in holding God accountable for the acts he has committed. "No. I don't trust you. I've never trusted you. If you made me, you made this feeling of responsibility that I've carried about like a sack of bricks. I cannot save myself and let others suffer" (305). As Lacan would most likely say upon hearing such a statement, "There is no Other of the Other."

Scobie has brought such guilt upon himself and blames God because he is unwilling to acknowledge the overwhelming pride that drives him towards his ruinous compassion. Yet, rather than overcoming his guilt for acts that were ostensibly out of his control, he condemns himself to self-sacrifice because he believes that God is another victim of his vice that only his death can save.

Francois Mauriac was born on October 11th, 1885. While growing up in rural Bordeaux he rebelled against many of the Catholic values that his parents attempted to instill in him. As Caspary states, "If he kept his faith it was in spite of his upbringing, not because of it" (19). Both his fictional and personal writing reflects his feelings of dissolution with the Church for what he perceived as its capacity to alienate its followers from Catholicism. As he writes in "This is What I Think,"

> I can only speak for myself and it may be that others, many others, do not find what I have myself experienced throughout my life within the Visible Church – the feeling of increased human solitariness. (34)

Yet, like Greene, Mauriac was tremendously influenced by the threats to traditional Catholicism around the turn of the twentieth century. As a result of the challenges to the

Church's authority he began searching outside of theology for the foundation of his faith.

There was an enormous controversy concerning Mauriac's works with some critics such as René Doumic awarding him the French Literary Academy's prize for his fiction and others finding his novels sacrilegious. Jenkins feels that a large problem with the reception of Mauriac's work was the fact that many critics criticized the religious message of his novels without taking the artistry into consideration, "treating works of imagination as commodities in being concerned only with their immediate impact upon a particular readership" (16). Yet, even when the debate shifted away from the social impact of Mauriac's work to its aesthetic merit, critics such as Jean-Paul Sartre were still dissatisfied with Mauriac's portrayal of characters as mere figures of religious allegory. Mauriac himself was not terribly affronted by Sartre's article or by other censure that condemned his literary personification of his faith, and responded with accusations his critics' own philistinism in *God and Mammon* and other personal writing.

The series of novels composed as *Thérèse*: *A Novel in Four Parts* present a character whose struggle to suppress the dissolute elements of her nature drives her further towards isolation and despair. Though Mauriac denies that *The End of the Night* was intended as a sequel to *Thérèse Desqueyroux*, the first novel remains incomplete without the closure that the author brings to his heroine's suffering in the latter work. In both novels, Thérèse's desperate need for affection brings to the surface emotions that she can only ascribe to her innate iniquity. Part of Mauriac's intention in writing what he considered a protest against certain elements of his own past was to define the subtle distinction that had traditionally been denied by the Church between human passion and the deepest wickedness that man is capable of. In this respect, Srinivasa feels that

Mauriac "senses that that this tale of a poisoner is less a story of sin, or even guilt, than the story—in the very shadow of an inscrutable destiny – of a pathetic kind of human innocence" (Moloney 76). In *The Inner Presence* Mauriac writes,

> The devil finds no better aid than the scruples of a Christian. Their very absurdity incites the person affected to throw everything overboard and sin with a vengeance in order to reassure himself that he is not worrying over nothing and has reason to torment himself. (114).

Much like Rose or Pinkie, characters like Thérèse and Louis in *The Knot of Vipers* find the prospect of their inevitable damnation a relief from the harsh demands of their faith. It is her deep-seated piety that prevents her from allowing herself the indulgence of confession. Yet, where Thérèse finds a certain comfort in the knowledge of her innate depravity, she also denies the existence of a fixed self that exists independently of her actions. This contradiction appears to embody the strict Jansenist belief that "humans may remain free from external compulsion but not from the necessary drive towards evil" (Dupre 122). While the novel acknowledges the element of free will in Thérèse's "motiveless malignity," it also suggests that there is more to her character than can be seen in her deeds alone.

Thérèse's desire to free herself from the confines of life amongst the Desqueyroux family is a symbol of the novelist's own rebellious impulses. Her capacity for destruction demonstrates the danger of indulging the passions that Mauriac felt compelled to repress. He said in an interview that "*Thérèse Desqueyroux* was indeed a novel of revolt. Thérèse's story was my whole story, it was my cry of protest" (in Smith 100). Mauriac saw his novels as an outlet for a passionate element of his nature that he felt was hemmed in both by his "Jansenist consciousness of weakness and sin" (Smith 101) and the spiritually stifling confines of his life in rural Bordeaux. O'Connell notes that "Mauriac's

particular stroke of genius in creating this novel was to present in a credible female character the clash between the search for individual freedom and bourgeois society's policy of channeling and controlling such desires." (78).

From the beginning the yearning of Thérèse to see others suffering is an attempt to escape from the image of purity that her teachers had envisioned for her. "No matter what my mistresses might say, I suffered and made others suffer too. I delighted in the pain I caused – and felt at the hands of my friends." (19). As Mauriac says in *God and Mammon*, "A secret instinct turned me aside from people who might have helped me to a vision of blessed joy – a secret instinct, or rather my perverted will…" (21). Mauriac early on rejects the path of virtue, in part, because he feels that his self-knowledge gives him an insight into realms of evil from which others remain sheltered. In Thérèse he creates a character whose awareness of these temptations makes her a far more interesting character than those whose purity, as she arrogantly points out, comes only from ignorance (20).

Thérèse is initially inspired by the advice of the young Jewish intellectual Azevedo, whose ideals symbolize Mauriac's firm conviction in the distinction between a natural and supernatural realm. The protagonist attempts in vain to save the marriage between her intimate friend, Ann, and Azevedo, a man whose ambition drives him away from his betrothed and from the workaday existence of Argelouse. To Bernard, Azevedo represents the "cosmopolitan, one of the race of 'degeneres' attempting to insinuate his way into, and thus contaminate, an otherwise healthy Christian family" (Solomon 17). In considering the reasons why she might have decided to commit such an act, she recalls the young revolutionary's advice to recognize the baser instincts that motivate elements

of behavior not governed by divine law. "If one is to find God one must transcend one's limitations. Accepting ourselves for what we are forces each one of us to come to grips with our real nature, to see it clearly and engage it in mortal combat" (70).

Azevedo's statement recalls the influence of other French Catholic modernists such as Hebert, who felt that the Catholic Church was far too static to allow for the changing intellectual environment of the twentieth century. "Human beliefs, like everything else, are subject to evolution; they advance…Religion, must necessarily be adapted to present understanding" (Vidler 173). In this respect, the Thérèse stories represents two forms of rebellion. They are not only a protest against the intellectually restrictive confines of the author's youth but also a religious complaint against a faith that refused to acknowledge man's nature independent of its divine origin.

Though Thérèse recognizes the strength of her passion, her firm conviction in her own free will leads her to reject the solace she might find in the contradictory impulses that inspired her crime. Unable to bear the prospect of remaining trapped in her marriage to Bernard, Thérèse unsuccessfully attempts to poison her husband. While her inability to explain her crime appears disingenuous to her husband, it reflects her persistent disbelief in her capacity to harm a man for whom she retains a subtle affection. In considering her behavior she asks herself, "How do those act who *know* the crimes they are committing? I didn't know. I never wanted to do that with which I am charged" (16). In determining whether or not she was, in fact, inspired by Azevedo's progressive idealism, she reflects on an early grammar-school lesson instructing her to "Be Herself." Unlike Rose or Scobie, Thérèse's Jansenist faith in her own iniquity is not palliated by the assumption of

causal necessity. [40] She doubts Azevedo's advice to accept herself because she feels that "we are what we are only in so far as we make our own character" (69). Though Thérèse may recognize certain inconsistencies in her behavior, she is incapable of understanding her impulses independently of the crime they inspire. She believes and continues to believe throughout the stories about her that all of her behavior subsequent to her attempt on her husband's life must be viewed in terms of that act.

Thérèse spends the duration of her life in Paris attempting to rationalize the decision she has made, unable to escape from the persistent assumption of her own naiveté. She later alludes to the fact that her apparent motivation for her act, the need to escape a future of stifling routine, was nothing more than an excuse to protect herself from an unconscionable reality. "She had always believed that the crimes and vices of mankind are due to the undisciplined power which leads people to imagine the impossible, to create a chimera which they feel impelled, at all costs to embrace." (282). Feeling that the self is only who we fashion ourselves to be, she believes that any motivations that we may ascribe to a Lacanian Other[41] are simply the byproduct of our inability to acknowledge who we really are. Yet, as we shall see in *The End of the Night*, she is forced to recognize the conflicting elements of her personality that undermine the stability of such a fixed moral identity.

In "Thérèse at the Hotel," one of two short stories written six years after *Thérèse Desqueyroux*, we learn that Thérèse's crime is played out metaphorically in affairs ruined by her own self-loathing. She feels both guilt for her selfish cruelty but also shame over

[40] Where Rose and Scobie believed that they were compelled towards sin by some instinct within themselves, Thérèse recognizes that she has attempted to murder her husband solely out of her own volition.

[41] As discussed in chapter one, the Lacanian Other is that element of desire that convinces the subject that her behavior was influenced by a motivation external to her own natural impulse.

what she perceives as the largely physical nature of her desire. Those whom she had allowed "a brief glimpse of herself" needed "no long time…to discover the power she wielded for destruction" (200). She recognizes that her emotional needs were merely an excuse for her wanton lust. "Your heart was always involved even in your most sordid adventures. Only if that lure is present can you advance along the path of sin…" (169). As she sits eating in a hotel in Paris thinking over her romantic transgressions, she notices a young boy dining with his family. After an initial exchange of glances, the boy approaches her later as she reads in the hotel lobby. They take a walk together in which the young man expresses his pity for the now forty year old heroine who he feels has wasted her best years and now shall live her remaining years in spinsterhood. Though she expresses disgust at his presumptuous assertions and declaration of love for her, her brief tryst with a young man in a hotel in Paris awakens her to the fact that she is far more capable of love than she had believed. Their conversation also reveals to her that her fear of her own lustful desires has forced her to stifle any hope of emotional fulfillment. "I have had my life. She repeated the words. But there was a sob in [her] voice. It was a lie. [She] had not even begun it" (186). She leaves the boy with an overwhelming sense of pathos that foreshadows the traumatic denouement of *The End of the Night:*

> I know nothing of love save that it is the constant object of my desire, a desire that possess me and blinds me, setting my feet on the ways of the waste land…stretching me exhausted in the muddy ditches of life. (186)

The End of the Night presents a noticeable shift in Mauriac's conception of Jansenist ideology. In 1929 Mauriac admits to his own religious conversion in his work *The Suffering and Happiness of the Christian* when he criticizes Jansenism for "assign[ing] limits to Divine compassion" (Mein 150). Mauriac's struggle to come to

terms with the harsher elements of Jansenism is manifest in Thérèse's continued self-denial in light of her inevitable fate. The author presents an obvious challenge to the Jansenist idea of predestination by demonstrating that if Thérèse has been, in fact, chosen for damnation, then her life can hold little purpose besides the possible succor she may provide others. Such an attitude dominates Thérèse throughout the novel and drives her to suppress the totality of her own needs and desires in the hope of undoing the harm she has caused. Like Rose and Pinkie and in some ways like Scobie as well, Therese's religious devotion leads her to a form of asceticism that makes her ashamed of her hope of absolution. Because she is too disgusted with the idea of her own hypocrisy to seek God's forgiveness for her crime, Therese assumes the burden of compensating for her wrongdoing through an exaggerated devotion to the needs of others. Out of a debilitating sense of remorse she condemns herself to responsibilities that she is incapable of fulfilling and only when she lacks the strength to deny God's mercy can she overcome her incapacitating impulse for self-hatred.

While living most of her life in Paris under the shadow of her past, she understands that the woman she has become living away from Argelouse bears little relation to the person who attempted to poison her husband. Such an appreciation represents the incipience of Mauriac's gradual conversion from strict Jansenism to a form of dualism[42] that recognized the binary of good and evil that existed within each individual. Unfortunately, as in other Mauriac novels, the proximity between generosity and selfishness make it difficult for Thérèse to appreciate the side of herself that is capable of affecting good in the lives of those she attempts to help. As Mein states, "Self-

[42] Mauriac does not actually condemn Jansenism even after his conversion but searches for a middle ground between the indulgence of passion and the harsh censure of man's desires.

denial and self-indulgence, love and hatred, these so-called opposites are closely allied and the slightest chiquenaude suffices to impel any individual in either direction" (152). Throughout the novel, such a dichotomy is manifest in the way that Thérèse's efforts at altruism are undermined by what she perceives as the sinful temptation caused by her innate hubris.

Rather than seeking absolution for her iniquity, Thérèse shows contrition for her crime through a passionate devotion to Marie. Thérèse's daughter is engaged to Georges Filhoat, who does return the passion felt by his betrothed. Thérèse renounces her entire estate and beseeches Georges to proceed with his engagement to Marie in spite of his obvious attraction to her (Thérèse). Even in her selflessness she finds grounds to detest the pride she takes in denying her own needs for her daughter's happiness. "I loathe that little feeling of complacent self-satisfaction that comes over me when I think that I seemed, last night, to be sacrificing myself for Marie" (236). In making such a statement, Thérèse illustrates the point cited earlier that whatever altruistic impulses she may show come dangerously close to the idea of selfish conceit. Yet it is not the proximity of these emotions alone that makes her question the authenticity of her compassion. Part of Thérèse's sense of guilt stems from the fact that she has set unrealistic expectations of her own capacity for selflessness. It is clear from her consistent longing for "companionship in despair" that she is not entirely capable of watching Marie live in blissful ignorance of Georges' true feelings. She asks herself, "Is it mere viciousness on my part that makes me want to shout at Marie, 'You must know that he doesn't love you, that he never will love you…' " (259). As hard as Thérèse tries to help her daughter's marriage to Georges

succeed, her efforts at martyrdom are persistently undermined by the jealousy and frustration that are the inevitable result of her suffocating self-denial.

Though Mauriac disdained the idea of religious hypocrisy, Thérèse as well as other characters from his Catholic novels embody the destructive fear of the sin of false piety. On the one hand, Mauriac creates a character like Brigitte Pian in *Woman of the Pharisees*, who ends up destroying the lives of those she believes she is helping through an undying faith in her own benevolence. Yet in *The Knot of Vipers*, Mauriac presents a character who resembles Thérèse in his disdain for the gratification that one derives from humility. Louis is a jealous and possessive miser who despises his mercenary children only slightly more than he hates himself. He acknowledges that his true failure is evident not in his greed but in his inability to resist a "Christian temptation." "If I succeeded in being satisfied with myself, I could combat this demand upon me better. If I could despise myself unreservedly, the issue would be decided once and for all" (104). Like Thérèse, Louis feels that his expectation of God's clemency reflects only his unwillingness to accept the burden of his sins. In this regard, he believes that the mere assumption that his kindness may not go unrecognized represents an arrogance that "demeans…a countenance, that Countenance, that face" (105).

Despite her efforts to stem her tremendous guilt by discouraging George's love, Thérèse's jealous need for love only reminds her how she thrives on the misery of others. Eustis explains to us that Thérèse's predestination for evil is tested by the strength of her feelings for her daughter's fiancé (540). Though she tries to discourage Georges' affection for her, she knows unconsciously that her attempt to deter his love for her only inflames his passion. By showing him the naiveté of his affection, she actually elucidates

the similarity melancholic traits that draw them together. She describes to Georges the weakness of people whose romantic concerns destroy their capacity to engage with the world around them. Yet, in attempting to emphasize the cost of these obsessive passions, she demonstrates for him as well as herself the paltry substitutes that life can provide for those who are moved by love in this way. When he tells her that he does not want to marry her daughter, she feels a tremendous pleasure, but is horrified at the idea that she should rejoice in this knowledge. O'Connell's comment that such delight represents Thérèse's instinctive cruelty appears to ignore the suffering that she undergoes as a result of this momentary satisfaction (105). Thérèse is devastated by the anxiety that results from this brief glimpse of happiness and is driven to madness by the circumstances that ensue. Such an outcome demonstrates the inevitable effect of her effort to suppress her true nature in the name of a self-imposed moral servitude.

Thérèse desperate prayer for Georges' life compounds the moral weakness she feels over her affection for him. When Georges goes missing subsequent to their conversation, she believes that he has taken his life out of unrequited love. Thérèse prays in the hope that God may forgive her for her selfish jealousy and spare the young man's life. Throughout the *Thérèse* stories, the heroine eschews God's mercy because it demands the painful task of self-revelation. "How do people manage to go to confession after so many years? In their place I should feel that one single forgotten misdeed would invalidate the absolution, that one tiny scrap omitted from the mass would start to crystallize all my infamy about me" (169). Like Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter*, Thérèse feels that the only true atonement for her sins is suicide. In *The End of the Night*, she is overcome by a tremendous shame for "having voiced her weakness in a prayer"

(322). For characters like Scobie and Thérèse who would rather die than seek divine forgiveness, the act of penance reflects not only an acknowledgment of wrongdoing but a crucial expression of humility. Her willingness to supplicate God on behalf of George but not herself represents that element of her selflessness that she must first be willing to expose her sins in order to recognize.

It is only through her final emotional breakdown that Thérèse is released from the torture of her growing anxiety and is able to appreciate her own courage in the face of her tremendous despair. Following Georges' disappearance, the protagonist becomes convinced that she is the victim of the Desqueyroux family's plot to frame her for Georges' death. "They wanted Georges to kill himself, so that they might lay his suicide at my door. But, all unaided, I stopped the murder from taking place" (345). Following this traumatic agitation, Thérèse is brought back from Paris to Argelouse, where she remains under the care of her servant Anna. In *God and Mammon*, Mauriac recognizes that man is "a slave when confronted with an occasion of sin, but is free when confronted with Someone who demands that he shall be weak, that he shall show acceptance and abandonment" (73). At the conclusion of *The End of the Night*, Thérèse must surrender to the demands of her own subconscious faith in exactly this way.

Overwhelmed by her remorse and suspicion, the novel's heroine finds solace in the prospect of a natural end to her battle with her unsettled conscience. "She was certain that she had nothing more to fear…The figure of death stood between her exhausted frame and the hue and cry that had haunted her imagination" (356). In a final delusional image, she imagines that she has been poisoned by her jealous daughter. As she waits for the arsenic to take effect she "cross[es] her left foot over her right, and slowly spread[s]

and open[s] her hands" (369). The Christ imagery involved in this scene reflects the crucial conclusion of Thérèse's struggle to exorcize demons that have destroyed her and the lives of those around her. As Srinivasa remarks, "The conspiracy has doubtless been a figment of her imagination: yet it had helped her phoenix-like to rise again in her childhood-innocence from the ashes of her wretched past" (52).

The capacity for acceptance becomes an important virtue not only for Thérèse but for Louis as well. In the conclusion to *The Knot of Vipers* he gives up his struggle against his own iniquity after recognizing that he has been trapped by impulses over which he believed he had no control. "I have been a prisoner all [my] life to a passion that did not possess me" (169). Yet, it is not only his temptation towards sin that he feels free to abandon;[43] he also recognizes that many would share his sense of guilt if they would ever actually recognize the dishonesty in their character.

> Most people ape high-mindedness, nobility. Unknown to themselves they are conforming to types, literary or otherwise. The saints know this: they hate and despise themselves because they see themselves as they really are. (169)

Only through an appreciation of man's moral fallibility can he appreciate that element of his character that transcends his jealousy and greed. Like Thérèse, it is this subtle pride in his own humility that ultimately allows him to "arrogate to himself the name of Christian" (104).

Thérèse is not given absolution at the novel's conclusion; Mauriac says in the book's introduction, "I could not see the priest who would have possessed the qualifications necessary if he was to hear her confessions with understanding" (190). Though she may not receive grace, she has proved her worthiness for redemption, and her

[43] This sentiment represents Mauriac's emphasis on the need for "society as a whole to become aware of its failings by facing up to and analyzing them" (Flower 13).

role as a martyr is accentuated by her final denial of Georges' gesture of affection. When he begins to play a record that he had mentioned during his passionate avowal of love for her, she screams in a final gesture of self-denial, "NO!" In refusing to be moved by his affection, she asserts her own dedication to the daughter whose marriage she has nearly destroyed. More important, she acknowledges, like Louis, her ability to control the passion that has tormented her and in so doing, stems her imagined course towards an assured damnation.

Like the whiskey priest, Thérèse's inherent corruption is tempered by unintentional "good works" that demonstrates her worthiness of salvation. To the scornful comments of Scobie's widow, Father Rank replies that neither he nor anyone can truly understand God's mercy. While the thread of Jansenism may run throughout the work of both Greene and Mauriac, it is clear that human beings' true guilt come from the conflict between his moral deviancy and these signs of their irrepressible faith. It is apparent especially in works such as *The Heart of the Matter* and *The Knot of Vipers* that man's devotion can very easily distort certain tenets of the Catholic faith.[44] In *The Kiss to the Leper*, Jean Pelouyre sets out to write a book entitled *The Will to Power and Sainthood* that presents a challenge to the Nietzschean notion that the Christian is a slave to the Catholic Church. Such a sentiment is one that Greene appears to share with Mauriac, that man is only paralyzed by the commandment's of his faith insofar as he is incapable of recognizing the mystery of God's clemency. In this respect, though Greene and Mauriac may be incendiary in their tone, in their works there is as much censure in of

[44] I mention these two novels specifically because of Scobie's and Louis' perceived assumption of God's sensitivity to the insult of man's iniquity.

modernism's dilution of Catholicism's true message as of the Church's unwillingness to recognize its altered role as a result of social and political changes within society.

Chapter 4

Elders, Institutions and Existential Guilt

In the Fiction of

Franz Kafka and Albert Camus

One of the basic tenets of Existentialism is the basic assumption that any attempt at rational decision-making is undermined by the universe's irrational nature. Philosophers such as Søren Kierkegaard believed that the individual must act without the aid of customary moral guidelines. This is necessitated by the fact there may be no absolutely objective standards by which to judge ethical conduct. In this respect, the basic philosophy of existentialism rests on the assumption that individuals are responsible for making decisions based on their own intuition. Both religious and non-religious existential philosophers such as Kierkegaard and Sartre, respectively, believed that individuals were responsible for establishing their own sense of meaning in the universe. For Kierkegaard, such a task entailed assuming a basic postulate that God challenged all individuals by asking them to find purpose in their own lives that they could not find in the world around them. For philosophers like Sartre, the emptiness of existence was a simple truism that rendered the search for meaning nothing but a futile endeavor that compromised the personal freedom of individuals.

Though the work of Kafka and Camus strongly brings to mind the work of existentialist thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Sartre, neither author

subscribes consistently to the philosophy of any of their predecessors. Though Kafka shared many personal experiences and fundamental beliefs with Kierkegaard, he could not make the leap of faith that was the core of the Danish philosopher's mode of thought. While elements of Nietzschean and Sartrean nihilism can be found in Kafka's and Camus' denial of divine transcendence, certain elements of their work can be considered far more life affirming than that of their forerunners.

In *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov adheres to a belief in the Nietzschean concept of the will to power. [45] However, Raskolnikov's determination to prove himself the superman who transcends traditional moral sanctions ultimately conflicts with the young Russian's essential nature. Where Dostoevsky was highly focused on Raskolnikov's internal psychological battle, Kafka and Camus represent the important relationship that authority plays in adding to guilt already experienced by their protagonists. Where the Russian novelist's emphasis is on the guilt that Raskolnikov feels for his own reckless indifference to ethical principles, the remorse that characters experience in Kafka and Camus is a product of the protagonist's own inability to overcome those elements of internalized self-doubt that manifest themselves as the breach of external moral codes.

The idea of existential guilt is somewhat different in these two novelists. In Kafka's work, the author's own self-accusation inspired him to create protagonists who ascribed power to certain authorities that was largely the result of their insecurities. Believing that they are responsible for an actual misdeed rather than the fear only that they are capable of this wrongdoing, characters like Georg Bendemann and Joseph K. are

[45] Though *Crime and Punishment* was published before Nietzsche wrote *The Will to Power*, the ideas expressed in Dostoyevsky's novel resemble the ideas presented in Nietzsche's philosophy.

tormented by the punishments that stem from the shortcomings that they perceive in their own characters. Franz Kafka and Albert Camus both address in their work aspects of the control that fictional authority figures exercise over characters and how this dynamic shapes characters' perception of their own integrity. In both authors, guilt becomes an important tool that establishes the terms of these relationships. The role of the institution in Camus' fiction is far less an abstract projection of his protagonists' self-doubt. In Camus, political or legal authority plays on the same anxieties experienced by Kafka's protagonists but does so with a far more direct purpose. In a novel like *The Stranger*, the court asserts that Meursault's blatant disregard for human life was a consequence of his lack of Christian faith, the foundation of those religious values that the French government in Algiers saw crumbling under the threats posed by modernism.

Where the two authors offer similar ideas of existential guilt is in their portrayals of the egotism that their characters use as a defense against those aspects of their anxiety that they are afraid to face. Both authors show ways that their characters' internalized sense of guilt stems from the original sin that all men exhibit in some aspect of moral weakness. In the work of Kafka, characters like Georg Bendemann and Joseph K. demonstrate self-centered tendencies that provide a defense against metaphysical anxiety. In Camus, Meursault and Clamence exhibit similar forms of egocentric behavior where they are unwilling to face those certain perceived elements of their guilt. In both cases, these protagonists confuse this universal conception of sin with an actual sense of moral depravity, and their lack of self-knowledge leads to oppressive self-doubt and vulnerability to domineering authority. Both authors demonstrate that only through an

acceptance of the inherently flawed elements in one's nature can the individual can come to terms with the pervasive angst that leads to oppressive fear and self-absorption.

Kafka was born on July 3, 1883 in Germany but lived most of his life in Prague. Hayman notes that while growing up in Czechoslovakia, Kafka "felt was an extreme form of what most Prague Jews felt, knowing themselves to be aliens among the Czechs both as Jews and Germans, and to be better off financially, socially and culturally" (13). As a result of these distinctions, the Jewish population in Prague encountered a great deal of anti-Semitism from a Czech population that was struggling to maintain its own cultural pride amidst a rapid increase in the city's population.

There is much debate among Kafka critics such as Greenberg over the actual source of guilt in stories where Kafka appears to condemn both the protagonist and the authorities who impose their will on him. In "The Judgment," *The Trial,* and "In the Penal Colony," Kafka shows us the power that institutions and superior figures can hold when they appear to punish the protagonist for precisely those moral shortcomings that he feels most ashamed of. Such a pattern suggests that, as some of the above mentioned critics have noted, these authority figures are figments of Georg Bendemann's or Joseph K.'s own neurosis. Yet, insofar as Kafka depicts the perils of existential guilt in his fiction, he exposes the danger of his protagonist's attempts to challenge in these figures elements of the anxiety within himself that he is attempting to overcome.

Nowhere does Kafka demonstrate more clearly the individual's capacity to affirm the influence of arbitrary authority than in his accounts of his relationship with his father. Kafka's explains that much of his fear of his father resided in the seemingly unprovoked

punishments that he received as a child. In his "Letter to His Father," Kafka describes the punishment that he received for requesting a glass of water in the middle of the night. In describing the incident, Kafka reflects upon both his childish self-assertion but also the extreme nature of his powerful father's retaliation for the behavior of his defenseless child.

> Once in the night I kept on whimpering for water, not, I am certain, because I was thirsty, but probably partly to be annoying, partly to amuse myself… What was for me a matter of course, that senseless asking for water, and the extraordinary terror of being carried outside were two things that I, my nature being what it was, could never properly connect with each other. (Letter 143)

In highlighting this example from his childhood, Kafka illustrates the disconnect between even his own mischief, itself a punishable offense, and the cruelty of the retribution that his father thought fit to levy. It is clear in the case of Georg and Joseph K. that Kafka's characters find a strange comfort in their acceptance and accommodation of their torementor's aggression.

The relationship of Kafka with Felice Bauer represents another important aspect of young Kafka's struggle between the hope of escaping his own emotional isolation and the potentially damaging impact of marriage and physical intimacy on his career as a writer. According to Speirs, "Marriage was to be feared because he believed it would prove incompatible with the isolation and self-absorption he considered essential to his writing" (12). Though very much in love with Felice, Kafka decided to end their first engagement after six weeks. His obsession with writing not only destroyed the hopes of their future together but led to a degree of self-conscious uneasiness that severely impeded his other personal relationships as well.

In addition to the existential influences on Kafka's work, it is important to consider the other theories that resonate in his novels. The impact of Freud's writings on the ego and the superego clearly influence the young author's depiction of the unconscious mind. The patient-psychoanalyst relationship itself appears to have influenced the dynamics between Kafka's protagonists and their literal or metaphoric judges. "The Judgment" and *The Trial,* in particular, portray protagonists who accept the premise that an authority figure is constructively guiding them to a discovery of their own (the protagonist's) wrongdoing. This methodology appears to parallel Foucault's discussion of panopticism, a theory which itself becomes another important tool in our understanding of the methodologies of Kafka's disciplinary characters and institutions.

The dichotomy between the individual's sense of responsibility and the institution's measures of control can be most accurately seen in Kafka's novel *The Trial* and his short stories "The Judgment" and "In the Penal Colony." In both *The Trial* and "The Judgment," Kafka depicts a protagonist whose anxiety prevents him from a fundamental understanding of his own egotism, rendering him vulnerable to the punishing pressures of authority. In "In The Penal Colony," emotional turmoil torments the officer assigned to conduct executions. Where George Bendemann's father is able to convince him that to make amends for his selfishness he must take his own life, the officer in "In The Penal Colony" feels the same obligation for self-sacrifice after losing faith in a system of torture. It is imperative for these characters as well as for Joseph K. to recognize the source of feelings of remorse, so that they may appreciate the basic value of their existence, regardless of the crimes they may believe they have committed.

In Kafka's story "The Judgment," Georg Bendemann suffers from the assumption that his responsibility for his family and his friend in St. Petersburg somehow precludes the possibility of his own happiness. Knowing that his lonely friend's return from isolation will only increase his own sense of guilt, Georg formulates reasons why he should not advise his friend to return home. Similarly, because he fears that his mother's death will give him further responsibility for an aging father that he is not prepared to care for, his father is able to convince him that he has shut him out rather than face his obligation towards the increasingly despondent old man.

The anxiety that afflicts Georg as well as Kafka's other characters can be traced back to the sin of man's metaphorical fall from grace. Kafka locates this debilitating capacity for remorse in the weakness of the individual, and not simply the injustice of Christianity alone. The author advocates a Nietzschean quest for self-knowledge to recognize one's human liabilities and overcome oppressive self-doubt instilled by Western civilization's fixation with original sin. Kafka's depiction of Georg's remorse is consistent with his understanding of man's original fall from grace. According to Greenberg, Kafka believes that the

> Fall of Man can be traced back, not to man's disobeying God and eating the apple of knowledge, but to a thoroughly naturalistic origin: to the fear man feels when he confronts the necessity of acting in accordance with his knowledge of good and evil, because he lacks the strength for such action… . (117)

According to Bridgwater, Kafka finds man's inherent fallibility not in his innate iniquity but with a "preoccupation with the self [that] is a product of uncertainty and doubt" (32). Bridgwater finds in this assessment a direct parallel with Nietzsche, who wrote in his work *Human, All Too Human* "Wickedness is rare – Most people are much

too occupied with themselves to be wicked" (in Bridgwater 32). Georg's father is able to control him through the illumination of those elements of his son's anxious self-absorption that he persuades Georg are evidence of his (Georg's) egotism. Apropos of the dispositional guilt that we have seen addressed particularly in *Under Western Eyes*, Kafka and Camus show the importance of the distinction between guilt that is felt because of what characters have actually done wrong, and the guilt that is experienced because of the blame that authority figures assign to the protagonists of these two authors' fiction. The distinction between these two forms of guilt is at the basis of the "existential guilt" depicted in the work of these two writers. Because of the irrational guilt that he feels for his own desire for happiness, Georg remains vulnerable to his father's command that he take his own life and thereby ratify his father's paternal authority.

In this respect, the self-involvement that we see in a number of Kafka's characters is a defense mechanism against the internal anxiety or "metaphysical guilt" that his protagonists experience as a result of the personal responsibility that they are not always prepared to accept. It is clear not only in Nietzsche but in other existentialist writing that the need to attain a not always achievable ethical standard can often imbue the pursuit of virtue with a dangerous degree of arrogance. Kuma explains that "Kierkegaard's writings clearly reveal the moral ambiguity of early existentialism. The quest for individual truth was experienced as moral triumph, the narcissistic aspects of the quest as guilt" (25).

Georg feels unduly committed to a friend who has left Prague to seek his fortune in Russia. To suppress his anxiety over what he perceives as his failed responsibility to

this man, Georg attempts to bury his initial indifference to his friend's fate by ignoring any further sense of obligation to him. Feeling guilty for not having initially advised his friend to return to Prague, Georg invents a series of reasons why it would not be prudent to advise him to do so at the time of his (Georg's) wedding. He feels first that such advice would appear as a pedantic insinuation "that all his efforts so far had failed, that he should finally abandon them, come back home, and be gaped at on all sides as a prodigal who has returned for good" (2). In addition to this excuse, Georg ostensibly feels that if his friend did follow his advice to return, he might "only to find himself driven under on his return – not as the result of any malice, of course, but through force of circumstance" (2).

The protagonist creates these obstacles to his friend's successful return both because of the exaggerated guilt that he feels for not having initially anticipated the lonely existence that his friend would lead, and because he is convinced of the jealousy that his friend would experience over his betrothal. His projection of the friend's envy, of course, symbolizes a debilitating complex that dictates the mutual exclusivity of his own happiness and his friend's contentment. What might have been a selfless expression of compassion for an unfortunate friend escalates into a draining guilt that increases Georg's desire to eschew any further obligations.

Georg's neglect of his father exhibits the kind of self-absorption that prevents him from attempting to save his friend from the loneliness of permanent bachelorhood. As Georg fallaciously believes he has condemned his friend through his hesitancy, he believes that he has also maliciously attempted to escape from the shadow of his father's dark, hovering presence through his own ambition. When his mother dies, we learn that

he “applied himself to the business with greater determination” (3). The fact that the business becomes far more successful after Georg takes control paints his father as a kind of financial dead weight that Georg has thrown off. Georg’s father wishes to show Georg that he is trying to suppress his father’s authority but that his father will not allow him to. The burden of his father’s helplessness is reinforced by the image of Georg carrying his father from his chair to his bed. Yet, in spite of Georg' growing self-esteem, his father demands that his son recognize his authority. As Hayman says, “The old man won’t be put down; he clutches firmly at his son’s watch-chain, as if to interfere with the natural time-process which changes the balance of power between the generations” (138).

Georg recognizes that his laughter at his father’s anger represents the very indifference to his father’s concerns that he is being accused of. His father’s accusations might be considered comical and even absurd in nature.

> [B]ecause she lifted her skirts like so and like so, you made your pass at her, and so as to take pleasure with her undisturbed you have besmirched your mother’s memory, betrayed your friend, and stuck your father into bed so that he can’t move. (10)

George’s reaction demonstrates that he is incapable of ignoring the purely fantastic element of his father’s accusations. As in *The Trial*, Georg is easily convinced that his romantic interests are merely a distraction from more pertinent obligations. As he assumes that his friend’s sorrowful fate is the result of his disloyalty, Georg believes that his father’s soiled underwear and ill-health are supposedly signs that his own happiness has been possible only through his neglect of others. For this reason, George sees “at once the harm done” in his statement “You comedian!” (10) because his attempt to make light of the situation merely validates his father’s accusations. In rejecting his father’s

preposterous charges, he demonstrates his indifference to those petty concerns that he realizes actually symbolize his father's fragility.

When George says that he is sure that he must be cautious of his father's warnings about his behavior, he is revealing what Hawes compares to a Nietzschean suspicion of religious superstition.

> In Kafka, there are no natural facts about the world – hence the significance of urban settings. In the absence of metaphysical (that is, 'natural') truth, what matters is not 'rightness' or 'wrongness' but strength of interpretation: truth is a social entity…The quest [for truth] thus has an inherent radicalism. But since it exists within the interpreted world it is necessarily implicated in the very structures it seeks to challenge. (134)

The protean nature of reality in "The Judgment" and *The Trial* necessitates a constant struggle for a form of hermeneutic sovereignty. In *The Trial*, Joseph K. cannot separate his understanding of what he believes from what he has been told by the court. Georg attempts to deny his father's increasing authority over him by reviewing the factual element of the accusations levied against him. "A long time ago he had firmly resolved to observe everything with the utmost attention, so that he should not somehow be surprised, outflanked, taken from the rear or from above" (10). In this case, Georg's only hope of eclipsing his father's power is contingent on his ability to redefine the fundamental ontology that his father establishes through his anger.

Georg's perception of his own selfishness is only revealed as such in what his father alleges to be his son's intentional duplicity, a charge that also stresses the story's focus on the significance of interpretation. Not wanting to tempt his friend to return to Prague, Georg had withheld any enticing gossip from the letters in order "not to disturb

the picture of the home town which his friend had built up" (3). When Georg walks into his father's room and puts him to bed, he says to his son, "You wanted to cover me up, I know that my young scoundrel, but I'm not covered up yet" (9). In stressing the element of deception involved in Georg's letters to his friend, Georg's father alludes to the statements of fact that become lies because his son had secretly written his letters while "lock[ed] up" in "the master's office" (9). In such accusations, his father can convince Georg that his ostensibly innocuous intention to present an uninspiring image of his old town was an egregious falsehood, constructed merely to disguise his profound sense of guilt.

In waiting until Georg himself had confessed his own culpability in finally relaying his insecurities, Georg's father takes on the persona of a metaphorical psychiatrist. Georg envisions his father in the role of a psychiatrist who illuminates in his son a dormant awareness of certain aspects of himself that he is unwilling to face. Georg's perception of this element of the father's character appears extremely similar to the attitude that Kafka appears to have had towards the practice of psychiatry that we see exhibited even more strongly in *The Trial*. In both of these Freudian situations, the author portrays figures of authority in the role of therapists who illuminate for the patient the obvious self-deception that they might never recognize independently. In his diary, Kafka makes the following statement about the presumptuous advice given to him by the director of the insurance company at which he was employed. In mocking his supervisor for passing judgment on his (Kafka's) psychological stability, he says in derision, "Urged me to take the three weeks' vacation at once. Made incidental remarks in the role of a lay psychiatrist, *as does everyone*" (Italics mine) (May 11, 1916).

In showing Georg that he was not aware that he had even intended to keep his letters secret from his father, he demonstrates to his son what he believes to be an obvious truth that Georg could had never have acknowledged. He accentuates this suggestion in the fact that he had patiently countered all of his son's lies with his own letters that he felt contained the truth. His father's truthfulness in contrast to his selective descriptions brings out what Georg thus perceives as the "awful deception" in the intentional banality of his letters to his friend.

Georg finally accedes to his father's vengeful command because he knows that he is no longer capable of sustaining his defense against his father's will. The verbs describing his dash outside to the bridge all appear to be in the passive, [46] suggesting that Georg is the object of an overwhelming outside force. Georg felt himself driven out of the room" (Georg fühlte sich aus dem Zimmer gejagt) and "Across the roadway and towards the water he was driven" (über die Fahrbahn zum Wasser trieb es ihn) (12). The fact that Georg's death is described in this way suggests that he has been compelled towards his untimely demise by forces that he was not even aware of, but which he was powerless to oppose. The final image of the story -- "At that moment the traffic was passing over the bridge in a positively endless stream" (12) -- has an apparently ulterior implication: "Kafka is reported by his friend Max Brod as saying that he had sexual ejaculation in mind when writing the last sentence of his story" (Johae 45). Though this may be a symbol of Georg's symbolic freedom in death, as Johae contends, [47] it appears significant that the metaphor referring to sexual orgasm does not describe Georg's

[46] These verbs are translated passively in two different English versions of the story. See also *The Metamorphosis, In the Penal Colony and Other Stories*.
[47] Johae believes that as a paradigm of "existential awareness…it may be possible to regard the suicide of Kafka's protagonist, Georg Bendemann, as a sentence not to death, but to life – albeit an arduous one" (48).

experience but the flow of life that goes on after his fall. Kafka might actually be implying that Georg's death deprives him of the pleasure of physical intimacy that the rest of the world enjoys but that he himself had never fully known.

In *The Trial*, Kafka portrays a character whose only defense against those against the accusations that a mysterious court has charged him with is the arrogance that shields him from his own self-doubt. Joseph K. believes that he is guilty of a crime because, like George Bendemann, he experiences certain metaphysical guilt-feelings that he believes are associated with the charges levied against him. The court is able to utilize his fear of the unknown to fuel his own futile search for the external source of his guilt. In this respect, his invisible accusers play the role of the lay psychiatrist, who is, like George's father, able to induce feelings of guilt for a specific offense merely by alerting him to elements of his unconscious that he had never before considered.

K. is coerced by the court into the realization that he must depend on its guidance to find a way to solve his case and prove his innocence. The protagonist makes the mistake of believing that he can find something legitimate in the court's accusations that he can argue against and which can palliate his internal sense of anxiety. In this respect, Kafka portrays ways that bureaucracy poses as a legitimate authority through which angst ridden individuals may placate their own anxiety. In *The Trial*, characters related to the court are obviously symbolic of elements of tyrannical authority that Kafka witnessed both within his family and within the occupational and political associations of his society. Though it is difficult to glean from Kafka's work exactly what personal or public allusion he makes in the novel, there are certain characterizations that strongly resemble particular elements of the writer's own experience. Perhaps the most noticeable instance

of Kafka's symbolism is the influence of Czech nationalism that Karl names as "a looming presence in *The Trial*" (61). Karl claims that rapid industrialization led to a large influx of Jews coming into Prague in search of increasing economic opportunity. We see at times Kafka's' possible hints at both the tyranny as well as the insecurity of the Czech nationalists who were using their solidarity in order to stem the rising influence of this burgeoning section of the city's population.

We also see another parallel between the Janus-faced members of Kafka's community and the lower court officials depicted in *The Trial*. In the novel, Kafka depicts a generation of Jews similar to his father, who, though critical of his son's generation for their ostensible lack of traditional values, were themselves attempting to assimilate to the gentile Czech culture. There are distinct similarities between this part of Kafka's experience and the lower officials in the court who were expected to uphold the values of the institution while also doubting the very foundation on which their legal authority rested.

In both his conversation with the warders and in his initial inquiry, K.'s arrogance prevents him from examining the emotions that incite his tremendous outcry against his accusation. K.'s egotism initially involves none of the self-consciousness that leads to Georg Bendemann's self-involvement. The beginning of the novel stresses the many ways that K. is made to believe that he sabotages his already precarious position. When he complains to the warders, the inspector informs him that he should not "make such an outcry about [his] feeling innocent, it spoils the not unfavorable impression [he] makes in other respects" (17). In intentionally referring to those elements of his character that might appear incongruous with the accusation, the inspector actually demonstrates to K.

that his elegant clothes and polite demeanor do not invalidate the charge against him. In fact, he shows K. that his arrogance actually contradicts everything that the protagonist believes is represented by his social position.

The court officials then continue to accentuate K.'s confident assurance of his own innocence to reveal the hostility that leads to his presumptions of malice in others. The court officials echo the inspector's statements to K. by reminding him that in declaring his innocence he has "flung away with his own hand all the advantages which an interrogation invariably confers upon an accused man" (60). In such an assertion, the court further demonstrates its invisibility in a process that K. has himself initiated in anticipation of the persecution that he expects to receive.

K.'s assumption of his innocence is grounded, in part, on his assurance of his sense of intellectual superiority to his accusers. He feels that because he is ignorant of the law it "probably exists nowhere but in [the warder's] head" (11). The protagonist's reactions to the charge against him might easily be construed as perfectly normal were it not for other hints that he considers himself immune from any challenge of his behavior. When considering what harm his missing a day of work might cause him, he reassures himself with the thought that his absence would be "easily overlooked, considering the comparatively high post he held there" (12). In demonstrating to him that he is, in fact, creating his own guilt through his narcissism, the inspector and the officials incite those guilt-feelings that lay dormant in the unsuspecting protagonist yet which he is unwilling to face. This claim on behalf of the court is particularly Freudian in that "the premise on which psychoanalytic therapy proceeds is that self-knowledge, however painful, is a necessary condition for the overcoming of neurosis" (Olafson 74). In this respect, K.'s

attitude towards the officials also presupposes a fundamental resistance to this metaphorically psychoanalytic process in which the

> most valuable contribution that a patient can make is to relax his powers of critical judgment, which are almost certain to be in the service of the pathological state in which he finds himself and can therefore be expected to offer resistance to the probings of the analyst. (Olafson 75)

The role of the court is to set the process of K.'s self-discovery in motion. Though his anger at the court's inscrutability is justified, K. wastes a great deal of energy condemning the court's methods and distracting himself from the task at hand.

K.'s refusal to escape his own constraining self-conceit is most clear in the nature of his jilted romantic interludes. A number of parallels between K. and George Bendemann demonstrate the association between women and the breach of responsibility that they represent. Like Georg, K.'s relationship with his intimate companions suggests that he is unable to escape the isolation that keeps him locked inside himself and indifferent to the needs of his parents: K. neglects "his aged and lonely mother [whom K.] finds petty excuses not to see…even when she is becoming blind" (Marson 26).

K.'s relationships with women in *The Trial* are symbolic of either his sexual predation or his relentless pursuit of his case, both of which parallel Kafka's own relationship with Felice Bauer. Critics such as Corngold have made it clear that Kafka felt tremendous guilt both because of the threat that his potential marriage to Felice would have on his success as a writer, and then later because he had dismissed their relationship. There appears to be a connection between Kafka's obsession with writing and K.'s painfully drawn-out trial. Though Kafka saw the commitment of marriage as a potential distraction from his writing, Corngold points out that the writer also saw the

"voluminous correspondence he carried on with Felice Bauer" as a potential source material for his fiction" (53). In the novel, women are either sexual objects, symbolic of the obstacles to K.'s success in his case, or they are potential tools in his contest with the legal system that pursues him.

We know, first of all, that K.'s only relationship as of the novel's beginning, is with a prostitute. His interest in Fraulein Burstner is depicted as predatory in nature.

> [He] rushed out, seized her, and kissed her first on the lips, then all over her face, like some thirsty animal lapping greedily at a spring of long-sought fresh water. Finally he kissed her on the neck, right on the throat, and kept his lips there for a long time. (38)

Her future job in a law office, like the legal associations of Leni, another woman whose brief intimacy with K. is purely physical, represents a possible advantage for K. In these situations, K. appears to use female companionship to satisfy either his physical lust, a vice that Georg was also accused of, or his voracious search to escape the misery of his legal ordeal. Yet, in none of these cases in the novel does K. appear either willing or able to feel any heartfelt affection for women who come to symbolize the only possible escape from his emotional shell.

Just as K. will not allow himself to care for anyone who might provide relief from his constricting ordeal, he shows nothing but frustration towards an individual who freely concedes his (K.'s) innocence. We see the protagonist's increasing metaphysical guilt through K.'s violent aggression towards a man who refuses to contest the protagonist's claims of innocence. When an unsuspecting individual awaiting information about his case obligingly accepts K.'s assertion that he has been wrongfully accused, the protagonist throws him down into the chair on which he had been sitting. Where K. adamantly maintains that he is the victim of the court's error, he is nevertheless infuriated

by the man's refusal to challenge his claim. In Kantian terms, [48] K. may claim his innocence, but he is traumatized by the "respect" [49] that the court's accusations have instilled in him. In these terms, it is the "is not a pathological but a practical feeling…not of empirical origin but… known a priori" (in Zupancic 141) that drives K. to seek solace in the accusations of the court. This interpretation brings us back to Kierkegaard's assessment of the fallacy of guilt that is determined by an institution. "Whoever learns to know his guilt only by analogy to judgments of the police court and the supreme court never really understands that he is guilty, for if a man is guilty, he is infinitely guilty" (Kierkegaard 207). The existential guilt that K. faces is a byproduct of precisely the anxiety that there may exist no actual charge that he may find to refute. "To exist, for Kierkegaard and Kafka, means to live in relation to guilt. Joseph K. knows that he is guilty" (Goth 58). Yet, for both Kafka and Kierkegaard, a legal charge is far less daunting than the perpetual fear of the sin that their fallen nature tempts them towards.[50]

In revealing their sympathy for the client's confusion, the court merely reinforces K.'s foreboding sense of guilt largely through his own pathology. In the same way that he becomes furious at the man he shoves for doubting the charge against him, he becomes ill at the idea that the court itself might actually offer no element of legitimacy against which he may argue his innocence. He is disappointed in this hope when he discovers that the interior of the court actually matches what he had been hoping to find. As we saw in the opening two chapters of *The Trial*, K.'s confidence in his own

[48] Bridgwater's assessment of the trial ascribes a great deal of the framework of the novel to theories established in Kant's *Groundwork for Metaphysical Morals*. Bridgwater writes, "The basic conception of the conscience as inner court of justice, personified in the unseen inner judge, provides the legal fiction on which the novel is based" (68).
[49] Respect, for Kant, is more accurately conceived of as the anxiety that someone feels for that goal that cannot be found in any external achievement but only in satisfying an internalized demand of the superego.
[50] In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard argues that man is tormented by the inevitability of his choosing evil when faced with the same choice that Adam was forced to make.

innocence stems in part from the condition of the court that has accused him of an unknown crime. He feels his enemy is itself a feeble organization maintained in decrepit attics by men whose legal education is characterized by the pornography that he finds in the courtroom. When he goes into the offices of the court, he expects to find only further evidence of the incompetence of those who are persecuting him. Yet while K. enters the court with the intention of assuring "himself that the inside of this legal system was just as loathsome as its external aspect," he loses interest in seeing more than the smallest portion of the office because he is "dejected enough by what he had already seen" (83).

The jovial demeanor of the court clerks whom he encounters actually destroys his hope of finding an adversary whose accusations he might challenge. Having been encouraged unknowingly to express his complaints directly to the officials whom he was condemning, K. has some grounds for perceiving the court as a manipulative institution. Yet, in encountering clerks who appear willing to help K. with his case, he feels physically ill as if he has been sickened by the lack of opposition or ill-will that he now faces. "Perhaps none of us is hardhearted, we should be glad to help everybody, yet as Law Court Officials we easily take on the appearance of being hardhearted and not willing to help" (88). The clerk's cheerful behavior also suggests that the tremendous frustration that K. feels is simply an element of his own stubborn resistance to the court's eagerness to provide assistance. The distinction in affect between the two clerks and K. himself suggests that it is unlikely that any advice he may receive from either one of them may assuage the severity of his personal despair. Yet, once more before he leaves, another court official encourages K.'s quest for answers with the reassuring commendation that his devotion to his case is admirable. "Your solicitude is entirely to

be commended…I shan't hinder you at all from following the progress of your case as closely as you please" (89). Though ostensibly compassionate, the court once again misleads K. by encouraging his search for answers that do not exist in the tangled bureaucratic morass that they direct him towards.

In pushing one of the warders who has been sentenced to whipping for mistreating K., the protagonist expresses his anger at the exposure of his feelings of guilt. In accusing K. of harming the warders, the court intends to show him that its officials are only acting on behalf of the principles of justice that all decent citizens would have them uphold. The two arresting warders have been sentenced to punishment for mistreating K. and for stealing his linens. Once again, the court plays on K.'s inflated sense of self-importance. It demonstrates that if he expects to be treated in the way his station in life demands, he must not take for granted the government's efforts to ensure the protection of his precious dignity. The court's ability to convince K. that he has caused them to punish these men rests on K's recognition that he would not have objected to their being reprimanded for their behavior at the time of his arrest. In fact, as Sandberg points out, "his desire to punish [the guards] was no less real than his avowed intention to punish the high officials" (81). In exaggerating the punishment that these warders should receive for rudely treating K. and stealing his linens, the court reminds K. of what harm might result from his egotism.

K. attempts to save the warders from their intended sentence, but he finds himself disgusted at the weakness of one of the men for his cries of pain and shoves him as he rushes out of the room. However, K. feels remorse for having done this and attempts to rationalize his action. "It was a pity that he had given Franz a push at the last moment, the

state of agitation he was in was his only excuse" (110). While K. realizes initially that it is not the warders but the state that is at fault, he falls into a trap: he becomes guilty for what he is not guilty of, the desire to punish the warders. Here it becomes vital to remember that the source of the state of his "agitation" is the other officials coming in from the courtyard. Yet because the court has instilled in him the feeling that he, in fact, unconsciously yearned to be revenged for this man's insolence, he pushes the warder precisely because the warder's screams have indicated to the approaching officials that K. has condoned the whipping that is taking place. Here, once again, K. believes that his culpability becomes manifest simply through the revelation of the immorality already present within his character. K. really has no desire to see these men whipped but the fact that others will believe that he might be pleased with such an outcome is enough to instill in K. the fear that he might harbor such a violent impulse.

The court's ability to control its clients is similar in some respects to the method that they use to direct their lower officials. The court is bent on instilling self-doubt in every level of its hierarchy. According to Titorelli, a court painter whom K. goes to see at the suggestion of a customer in his bank, the court is only mildly interested in actually convicting a client. The client goes through an extensive series of partial acquittals, ostensible acquittals, and indefinite postponements, all of which demonstrate that the court's main objective is simply to ensure that the client remains in a perpetual state of trepidation. In this respect, the authority of the court can be associated with Foucault's idea of panopticism. According to Foucault's model, which is based on Bentham's

model of the Panopticon, individuals are made responsible for guarding themselves through an awareness that they are being watched by an unseen higher authority.[51]

The enforcement of self-surveillance is instrumental in the higher officials' capacity to control their subordinate officials. Once again we see that the court that K. has imagined has this power over him rally has none and must rely on the client's guilt to ensure that justice is actually achieved. Titorelli explains that the court's higher officials are "utterly at a loss when" when "confronted with quite simple or particularly difficult cases" (148). Just as we shall see in "In The Penal Colony," the process of justice only runs without disruption when guilt is an irrefutable assumption. Because of this fact, the higher officials must rely on the lower officials' own assurance that whatever doubt they (the lower officials) may have of a client's guilt could be attributed to their own questionable legal knowledge and not to the system itself.

Titorelli relates to K. the story of an official who had locked himself in a room for twenty-four hours in frustration at his inability to understand the way to proceed with a specific case. Such a difficulty the painter ascribes to the judges' collective inability to understand "human nature." When such problems occur, the lower officials often consult the lawyers in order to determine the outcome of the case. In this way, these officials can rely on the guilt of the client themselves supposedly to ensure the legitimacy of the charge in situations where their own knowledge proves insufficient.

The court's panoptic control is increased by the self-preservatory impulses of both lower officials and the clients. The parallel between the court's invisible control of

[51] Foucault's theory bears a significant relation to the court's mode of punishment insofar as the Panopticon "assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary" (Foucault 201).

the lower officials and the clients is striking. Titorelli describes the way that clients never dare to argue about their case for fear of the impact that their recalcitrance might have on those who preside over them.

> Even if it were possible to alter a detail for the better here or there – it was simple madness to think of it – any benefit arising from that would profit clients in the future only, while one's own interests would be immeasurably injured by attracting the attention of the ever-vengeful officials. (151)

The lawyers are themselves far too indifferent to the welfare of the clients to jeopardize their own careers with efforts for legal reform. "Although the pettiest lawyer might be to some extent capable of analyzing the state of things in the Court, it never occurred to the lawyers that they should suggest or insist on any improvements in the system" (151). In this respect, the court relies on the same self-absorption in its officials as it expects in its clients. In spite of K.'s bold speech denouncing the court's practices at the beginning of the novel, his increasing obedience testifies to the power of the court to reduce K's confidence until he has relinquished any ambitions of political agitation.

The parallels between the behavior of the lower officials and Kafka's father add to the image of the uncertainty of the officials' stature as moral arbiters. Karl explains to us that while Kafka feared his father's iron will, he was also repulsed by Herman Kafka's obsequious toadying to gentiles. "[W]e can assume while quite young [Kafka] saw his father's half-hearted attempts to remain what he was while climbing socially and economically" (63). It is quite likely that Kafka viewed his father's arbitrary authority as the byproduct of his father's own fragile self-respect. In Kafka's depiction of the constant flux within the court's hierarchy, we see a distinct echo of this form of

sycophancy in the lower officials and the impact of such a practice on the benighted victims of the legal system.

As we have seen, the court's control is largely a projection of K.'s unconscious fears, yet certain characters in the novel reinforce the challenge that K. faces in his search for self-knowledge. These figures, indirectly related to the court, embody Kafka's disdain for his city's ostensibly corrupt bureaucracy. K.'s insecurity not only about his trial but also about his status at the bank where he works represents the impact of the collusion between the court and other forms of institutional control. He says of the fact that he was expected to maintain his concentration while being persecuted by the court, "It looked like a kind of torture sanctioned by the court and concomitant with it" (167). Kafka's position as a clerk in the Worker's Accident Insurance Institute fostered his disgust with the society he lived in and the spiritually stifling bureaucracy according to which that society functioned. We learn from Frederick Karl's biography of Kafka that the writer wanted to "position himself outside of all social bureaucratization, outside a culture in which individual striving became frustrated and meaningless" (63).

Additionally, Kafka felt alienated from his society by the rampant anti-Semitism that he experienced as a German-speaking Jew living in Prague. As a result of industrialization and the heavy influx of immigrants, especially Jews, into Prague, a fervent Czech nationalism emerged out of the frustration at the jobs that seemed to have been taken from city's native citizens. We see Kafka's alienation as a result of both bureaucracy and anti-Semitism embodied in the attempts of the manager at the bank where K. works to utilize the protagonist's mental debilitation to destroy his professional

credibility. In diminishing K.'s faith in himself, the court successfully undermines K.'s ability to function in the role on which he bases his entire self-esteem.

K. knows that he is a threat and that because of this, the bank manager must be attempting to use K.'s strange behavior as a way to destroy his sense of confidence in himself further. The manager is possibly symbolic of the Czech frustration with those German-speaking Jews whom they felt arrogantly considered themselves more qualified for certain professional jobs than the Czechs themselves. Attempting to bolster his self-confidence, K. reminds himself of the threat that he poses to his superior's position. K. knew that "[h]e was still in full career and rapidly becoming a rival even to the assistant manager" (161). K. knows that his case has not reached the ears of the assistant manager, because he is convinced that, if it had, "the man would have exploited his knowledge without any scruples as a colleague or as a human being" (167). Even without knowing the cause of K.'s strange behavior, the assistant manager seeks ways to use it to his advantage. He further demoralizes K. by using K.'s unavoidable absence as an excuse to search through his personal files, looking for evidence that might further undermine K.'s faltering prestige.

On a visit to his lawyer, K. meets a man who represents what he might become if he loses the capacity to distinguish his growing self-doubt from the amorphous accusations levied by the court. When K. bravely decides to dismiss his lawyer, Huld, he goes to his office where he encounters Block, a man who has hired five lawyers in the hope of defending him from the oppressive guilt that has rendered him little more than a craven animal. Dodd tells us that according to Brod,

> whole chapters of *The Trial* and *The Castle* derive their outer covers, their realistic wrappings, from the atmosphere Kafka breathed in the

> Worker's Accident Institute. He recalls Kafka's anger at the meekness of workers mutilated in avoidable industrial accidents, who approached the Institute as supplicants instead of storming it and smashing it to bits. (138)

This frustration is certainly reflected in Block's obsequious demeanor towards the lawyer, Huld. Block's behavior is typical of these workers insofar as he believes that he may find some hope in his case rather than facing what personal challenges are presented by a case that appears to become more hopeless as he attempts to solicit help for it. In the same vein, Huld's insulting treatment of Block clearly represents the resistance of mediators such as lawyers or insurance companies to take the side of the plaintiff rather than the organization in legal confrontations. The parallel between the workers mentioned by Kafka and Block's character suggests another important element of the modern industrialized bureaucracy. In both the court of *The Trial* and in Kafka's vision of Prague, the injured laborer's or client's unfounded sense of guilt increases as legal and corporate procedures become more mechanized and as their errors become less traceable to human error. Where industrialization leads to the possibility of devastating consequences for corporate negligence, Block's fear represents the most substantial buffer against the injured worker's potentially costly threat of legal reparations.

Titorelli's advice leads K. to a church where K. believes he will finally learn the truth behind his case. While there, K. is confronted by a prison chaplain who describes his trial in terms of a parable. A man from the country comes to a door behind which he is told by the doorkeeper he will find "the Law." The man waits his whole life to be allowed to go through the door and on his deathbed asks why he was the only supplicant to attempt admittance. The doorkeeper replies that this Law was intended for no one but

him. The parable that the priest narrates to K. is symbolic of the court's disingenuous sympathy for the client's metaphysical anxiety.

Though it is potentially dangerous to limit the symbolism of the doorkeeper, or the court itself, to anything more specific than Kafka's general angst, it seems at least likely that we can see an image of the false hope offered by the court echoed in the figure of the doorkeeper. Insofar as this is also typical of the court to which K. attempts to gain access, the parable redoubles the suggestion that the court's power is largely based on the false premise that it offers something to the clients that may help them solve their case. In this case, the parable depicts the guardian's ostensible generosity, which, like the false promises of the court clerks, offers the faint hope that through his adherence to a prescribed set of actions, the man from the country may increase the possibility of gaining access to the Law.

The intention of the parable may be to show that K. is creating the authority of the guardian through his own fear. The guardian gains his power simply because of the authority that he receives from the man from the country's assurance of the importance of his entry into the law. Yet one of the most important symbols of the parable is the guard's careful illumination of the parameters of the man's responsibility, an obligation that he in no way intends to help him fulfill. In the novel as a whole, the authority of the court derives from the basic reciprocity of the relationship between supplicant and authority. We have already seen that the court officials, when unsure of the validity of a particular suit, would search out lawyers who will provide them with evidence of the client's guilt in order to reassure these lawyers of their legal duty. In the same way, the guard, though he cannot see the Law himself, derives his confidence in the validity of the

Law from the supplicant's devotion to its prophetic message. In accepting this man's gifts, the guard demonstrates to both the supplicant and himself his own sense of compassion and thereby the obvious legitimacy of his role as the guard of moral truth. Hence, Kafka reconfirms the way that K. creates the authority of the guard, showing that he can never guide the man from the country to a law that was "made for him alone."

K. makes a final plea for his case by attempting to defend himself on the basis of the universal guilt that the priest refuses to acknowledge.

> "But I am not guilty" said K.; "it's a mistake. And if it comes to that, how can any man be called guilty? We are simply men here, one as much as the other" "That is true" said the priest, "but that's how guilty men talk." (264)

The fact that this interview takes place in a cathedral and that the priest denies K. the hope of redemption alludes to the corrupting interference of religion in K.'s struggle with his own personal fallibility. According to Goth, Kafka's vision of man's pervasive guilt is based not on the absence of an omnipotent deity but a "nothingness that corrodes and caricatures the image of God so that God becomes an ambiguous force, half God, half demon" (56). Golomb explains that "Kafka lives in a morbid anxiety following the Death of God. Like Nietzsche, Kafka, in a defensive reaction to this traumatic event, seeks to adopt an ethic stemming from the wholly autonomous resources of mankind and not from any shaky and unreliable transcendent principle" (279).

In ultimately conceding to this divine entity prior to his execution, K. acknowledges a universal weakness from which none can escape. In this respect, K. would do well to heed the warning in the priest's parable that, not only is the law inacessible, i.e. one can never satisfy the demands of this demon, but that one's only

responsibility must be to the Law that is meant for him alone. In reducing his angst to a single fear of introspection, K. echoes Marlow's assertion in *Heart of Darkness* that in light of life's absurdity, the most we can hope for is some knowledge of ourselves.

Though K. ultimately acknowledges his rapacious desire "to snatch the world with twenty hands," (282) he is nevertheless condemned to die by a system that appears to have never, in fact, concerned itself with lawyers, pardons, or any of the bureaucratic obstacles that K. had once pinned his hopes to. The end of *The Trial* presents a final fleeting hope that K. may recognize some positive element in his relationship with Fraulein Burstner that might bring him out his selfish shell. K. is determined to resist his arrest until "Fraulein Burstner appeared, mounting a small flight of steps leading into the square from a low-lying side-street." K. recognizes that "whether it were really Fraulein Burstner or not did not really matter; the important thing was that he suddenly realized the futility of existence" (282). His final glimpse of the woman who might have changed his fate demonstrates the challenge he has already lost as a result of his self-absorption. Brod reminds us that " K. had not married, remained a bachelor, had allowed himself to be terrified by the reality of life, had not defended himself against it — that is his secret guilt, which had already, before his condemnation, shut him out from the circle of life" (179).

Certain critics have seen K.'s death as a kind of Barthian vision of K.'s redemption. Barth was an existentialist theologian who believed that "every man at the time of [spiritual] crisis is free to take another turn, free to reject the struggle at any point" (in Kelly 166). Kelly believes that at the novel's conclusion, K. is left with the hope of overcoming this crisis through his death. Kelly claims that "The Absolute has

come to Joseph K.; it has come, as usual on its own terms, thwarting all his efforts to uncover its secrets, and careless of all his values, destroying his life, but offering its own peculiar salvation" (178). The problem with considering the conclusion a religious epiphany is that it is clear in spite of what he has learned about himself, that there is nothing glorious in his death. The fact that he dies, like a dog, "as if the shame must outlive him," (286) rejects any hope that there was in fact something noble in his demise. Rather, he has recognized that the trial has degraded him to such a level that his presumptions of self-importance in life are wholly undermined by the humiliation of his execution. If any redemption can be found in his pitiful death, it is assuredly in his appreciation of what he has given up in this life, and not to be found in the life to come. As we shall see, K. dies like Meursault in *The Stranger,* not with any glorious redemption but with a recognition of the potential value of his existence that sustains "in both men…the urge to live" (Rhein 87).

"In the Penal Colony" cleverly combines the tenuous authority of a tyrannical yet unstable government and the anxiety-ridden victim of such control in the figure of a single character. The officer in charge of the penal system mourns the loss of his nation's respect for its once revered penal codes at the same time that he is overwhelmed by his failure to uphold its principles. He remains trapped inside himself by the fear of that anxiety that might never be resolved if he repudiates, along with the rest of his society, the wisdom of the old regime.

In Kafka's story, an explorer who comes to observe the correctional methodologies of an island nation learns of the modern decadence that has undermined the power of the once dominant old regime. The decay of the old regime's authority is

perhaps symbolic of twentieth century Europe's disillusionment by the First World War and the breakdown of religious authority. In this respect, the island society's corruption is symbolic of a recognition of the torture that they have unnecessarily levied against themselves. The story paints religion as a mechanical process that is based on the collective guilt of the island society, embodying a Nietzschean code of ritualized torture that Kafka labels as a staple of Western society. Nietzsche explains that the imprinting of punishment in order to ensure its lasting impression is a cornerstone of Western civilization. "Whenever man has thought it necessary to create a memory for himself, his effort has been attended with torture, blood [and] sacrifice" (1956 192-93).

The failure of the cruel executions depicted in the story to achieve their aim is illustrated by the case of a guard who is rendered more disobedient by the brutality of the island's penal system. According to the nation's legal code, those convicted of a crime should be shown the error of their behavior by having their wrongdoing inscribed into their skin until they bleed to death. A guard who is caught sleeping at his post is threatened by his superior officer with a whip. He says to the officer, "Throw that whip away or I'll eat you alive" (199). The central irony of this man's statement is that the collective guilt of the men on the island has created a penal system that punishes this guard for responding to threats as the animal that they have instructed him to be. Rather than fearing the cruel threat of execution, the guard is no longer human enough even to heed the far greater punishment that he faces for his recalcitrance. Such dehumanization is accentuated by the image we have of the condemned man as he awaits his punishment. "In any case, the condemned man looked so much like a submissive dog that one might

have thought that he could be left to run free on the surrounding hills and would only need to be whistled for when his execution was due to begin" (191).

Kafka's depiction of the execution process appears symbolic of Western religion's capacity to purge the sinner of his corruption through a process of self-denial and repentance. As in "The Judgment" and *The Trial*, the accused elevates the level of control possessed by the authorial figure because of the cathartic relief from a metaphysical guilt that he may find in enduring retribution for his sins. The transformation of the criminal during his sentence is clearly suggestive of a form of religious epiphany.

> It was impossible to grant all the requests to watch it from near by. The commandant in his wisdom ordained that the children should have the preference…How we all absorbed the look of transfiguration on the face of the sufferer, how we bathed our cheeks in the radiance of that justice, achieved at last and fading so quickly. (209)

We see in this process a panopticistic element of control in the assumption that pain is equivalent to the discovery of true enlightenment. Once again, Kafka shows us how individuals are driven by their inability to appreciate the distinction between this universal guilt, in this context the guilt of original sin,[52] and guilt that is worthy of the brutal punishment described in the story. The ritualistic nature of this process is clearly indicative not only of the expected enlightenment of the condemned man but also that of the crowd of spectators who watched the execution "and all knew: Justice was being done" (209). [53] In this respect, the island's purgative execution process implies that

[52] Though we saw earlier that Kafka did believe in man's fall, though based not on the Biblical conception but on "his inability to act in accordance with a knowledge of good and evil," the religious connotations of this passage would suggest that Kafka is partially ridiculing the islanders' belief in their fallen nature.
[53] Ryan points out that the word used to describe the process of the machine's inscription might also have had religious significance. "[A]s other critics have pointed out, when Kafka describes the process of inscribing the infraction in the condemned man's flesh, he repeatedly uses the term 'Schrift.' Undoubtedly

religion as an institution derives its power from man's collective metaphysical guilt. Where the recognition of a priori, internalized guilt in Kafka's earlier stories was a safeguard against certain harsher accusations, the discovery of religious remorse depicted here becomes associated with the charges of the court or Georg's father. The highly purgative nature of this man's death suggests that his punishment, like the crucifixion, cleanses the viewers from their own sins. Yet, as Ryan points out, by "industrializing" religion in the form of the instrument of torture, Kafka is attempting to convey that in the twentieth century "religion" is cold and mechanical" (233).

The new regime is symbolic of the destruction of mechanisms of power within the modern period. The explorer condemns the execution process, which symbolically marks the end of the old regime and the conquest of the decadence that has beset the island. Where the island society is poised to move out of the nightmare of its own self-hatred, the officer alone remains unable to let go of the comfort he takes in the direction of an antiquated leadership. Karl explains that

> Kafka digs into all the contradictions of a society confronting change and yet insisting on the customs that are no longer meaningful except as forms of support for individual (and twisted) belief, the willingness to sacrifice oneself for ideals that are no longer viable. (504)

The end of the old regime represents the emergence of a certain element of reason that particular individuals, especially those who took comfort in the guidance of powerful leadership, did not accept welcomingly.

The role of the officer is reversed from the symbol of the tyrannical regime to that of a victim of the internal anxiety that fueled the system. In a desperate attempt to purge

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Kafka was aware of the fact that "Schrift" can also mean 'Scripture.' The use of "Schrift" is a literary play, not merely on Kafka's Judaic heritage, nor the Christian heritage of most Czechs in Prague: the production of "scripture," the very thing that most world religions produce, could be interpreted as indicting 'religion' in general, be it Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, or Hinduism" (225).

himself of unbearable fear instilled that along with his fellow citizens fueled the power of the old regime, the officer offers himself to the machine as a human sacrifice. In accusing himself of injustice by dying with the words "Be Just" inscribed on his skin, the officer expresses not the iniquity of the machine itself, but his own culpability for orchestrating the executions. Yet, in taking his own life in order to make this point, he dies not for the sake of his own injustice but to defend the integrity of the system that he preferred to believe he had somehow failed to uphold. Because he so fears the internal anxiety that, along with that of the rest of his society, had motivated such an unconscionable system, he dies condemning his own crimes rather than the institution that motivated them. Rather than executing him through the formal inscription process, the machine fails in the act of administering this punishment and brutally murders him. The apparatus proves ultimately incapable of teaching him the essence of that justice that he believes had finally been discovered by so many other fortunate men.

In all three of the stories discussed above, the protagonist is systematically demoralized until he is unable to recognize whatever merits had given him confidence in the first place. Just as the old regime is able to convince the officer that he has betrayed some greater force, Georg and K. struggle until they recognizes the futility of their efforts. Both Georg and the officer in “In the Penal Colony” give up hope knowing that whatever redemption they may receive through their death will far outweigh the shame that they would otherwise be forced to endure. In *The Trial*, we at least see the importance of that self-knowledge, expressed in Kierkegaard’s contention that man is challenged with the discovery, not simply of God’s purpose, but of the value of his own life, something far more valuable than any abstract redemption that death may promise.

Camus was born in Algeria on November 7, 1913. His childhood in the French colony was difficult: a combination of a bed-ridden mother and an absent father left his family with little money. Yet the physical beauty of his native country gave him a passion for the simple pleasures of life that became the staple of his philosophy. Though not religious, he felt an animistic conception of the spirit of the world around him that he believed imbued existence with as much meaning as any God could offer.

Camus has been labeled by critics, particularly English philosophers, as an existentialist primarily because of his work's affinity with the writing of Nietzsche and Sartre. Though he followed their fundamental belief in the withering of divine purpose, he very much disagreed with their arguments for the virtue of man's ascetic isolation. Camus actually believed that such a form of existentialism "bears a profound witness to the withering of the basic value of love, fraternity, and loyalty" (Sprintzen 204). He shared some of Nietzsche's belief that individuals are limited by their essential egotism and must strive to get outside of their own belief in their self-importance. Yet, the very Nietzschean anxiety and defensive arrogance that we see in Kafka's novels stemming from the individual's exaggerated assumptions of his own iniquity, in Camus derives from a more Sartrean fear of life's absurdity.

In *Negative Dialetics*, Adorno writes, "The idealistic component of Existentialism is a political function" (78). The recognition of guilt that is, for Camus, part of the human condition becomes a crucial defense against the government's capacity to control its citizens through the castigation of impulses that the individual is afraid to face. Unlike

the fiction of Dostoyevsky, in which guilt was a seen as the fundamental burden that the individual must struggle against, modern existentialist authors like Camus question man's assumed impulse towards evil. Certain aspects of the modern era such as industrialization and the atrocities of global conflict created a power vacuum that undermined the authority of Europe's governing institutions. Such changes led these controlling entities to rely on the anxiety of the individual in this environment to increase their own political control.

Both *The Stranger* and *The Fall* demonstrate the impact of the faltering mandate of religious authority within the state's penal institutions. In *The Stranger*, the declining strength of Christianity in Algeria is reflected in the threat that Meursault's apathy poses to the underlying morality of the legal process. Not only Islam but Judaism as well posed a significant threat within the French colony. McCarthy explains that the Dreyfus case had enormous repercussions in Algeria because "Anti-Semitism…was the cement of the new Mediterranean nation" (49). Through the prosecutor's apparent indifference to the Algerian victim of Meursault's crime, we learn that the court's only real concern in the case is with the religious, moral and civil values that the protagonist has violated in refusing to cry at his mother's funeral. *The Fall* represents a similar insecurity on behalf of a European legal authority that had begun to fabricate laws in the wake of the chaos in Europe after two world wars. Thody adds that the France's failing efforts to fight a colonialist war in the 1950's was a tremendous source of the bourgeois guilt that Clamence sybolizes.

Camus' novels illustrate the attempts of the government in France, as well as in other parts of Europe, to increase civil obedience not only illuminating their citizen's

reprehensible indifference to religious ideology but also their failure to exhibit the virtues of their fellow citizens. Where guilt in Kafka's fiction **harms** the individual, Camus' fiction demonstrates the destructive impact that remorse or the lack of remorse can have on the social and political relations among nations. Camus' novels show us that it is only the universal recognition of a collective guilt that can eliminate both social antagonism and the government's overbearing control of the individual citizen.

As Parker reminds us, the Algerian setting for *The Stranger* is wholly appropriate for "[n]owhere did the absurd manifest itself more clearly than in Algeria" (40). We must, however, examine the novel's philosophic concern with Camus' sympathy for the plight of the Algerian Arabs. Camus was an ambivalent sympathizer with the Arab cause in Algeria, and the Arab who is mentioned only tangentially in the trial is as important as any of the statements that Camus makes about the awareness of life's basic absurdity. In the spirit of his novel *The Plague*, *The Stranger* presents the crime committed against the Arab as little but a façade for a far more serious transgression, which is Meursault's lack of Christian feeling.

Where Meursault is incapable of feeling any remorse for the crime he has committed, and the court is able to paint his apathy as a sign of his basic iniquity. Though he felt no malice towards the man he had killed, he simply accepts the court's presumption because of a basic sense that his emotional isolation is symptomatic of the selfish cruelty that he is accused of. Only through an appreciation of the morality inherent in the existential valuation of moderation can he escape from the nihilism that renders him incapable of self-consciousness. He is able to emerge from his own emotional, if not physical, incarceration through a recognition of the simple pleasures that

define, for him, the meaning of existence. He ultimately realizes that the jury has as much obligation to respect *his* life as he has to regret his violent murder of the Arab, simply because of the potential pleasure that both men have been, and will be, deprived of through their untimely deaths.

While the premise of *The Stranger* is that Meursault kills the Arab for no reason, the motivation that he does give for his crime should not be overlooked. In the novel, Meursault is a French-Algerian, who shows little sorrow over the death of his mother. His friend Raymond beats a woman and Meursault testifies that the woman has cheated on Raymond. Raymond and Meursault are later confronted on a beach by the brother of this woman. The Arab wounds Raymond, and later Meursault goes back and without conscious thought shoots the Arab and is sentenced to death. As Bronner notes, “Camus takes great pains to show that there is no objective answer for *why* Meursault killed the Arab” (38). Yet, there is something significant in the apparent meaninglessness of the murder.

In the universe that Meursault inhabits, the oppressive sun represents as reasonable a motive for murder as the dirty hand-towels that he complains of in his office's bathroom. In this respect, Meursault's behavior is characteristic of Camus' challenge to Sartrean existentialism. As Camus wrote in an article in the Alger-Républicain, "To assert the absurdity of life cannot be an end in itself, but only a beginning" (in Parker 110). Meursault's blissful yet destructive indifference suggests that without a recognition of "the rules and consequences that one draws from [nihilism]" the sun’s brutal glare presents as much reason to kill a man as self-defense or revenge.

Though Meursault lacks the capacity to experience guilt in the same way as Kafka's characters, he is equally susceptible to his court's capacity to create a picture of him that he lacks the self-awareness to contradict. Feeling that his indifference to the case renders him unworthy to judge his own morality, he accepts his apathy as evidence of his guilt. Sprintzen notes that his "egoic individualism" is not very different "from Sartre's doctrine of the absolute freedom of the 'For Itself'" (206). Yet where Sartre would argue for the value of personal liberty, Meursault recognizes his egotistic ennui as the motivation for the crime that he has been accused of. However, both the heat of the courtroom and the court's insistence on referring to him in the third person add to the self-absorption that the protagonist is already consumed by. He remains incapable of distinguishing between his lack of interest in the ranting of the self-righteous prosecuting attorney, and the fundamental malice that the court accuses him of.

Meursault's unwillingness to defend himself, aside from his basic indifference to the outcome of the trial, comes from his inability to communicate his emotions. This difficulty, which we see not only in Meursault, but in other characters who try to defend him, appears to convey one of the novel's criticisms of modernism. Though the reader knows that a human side of Meursault exists, the protagonist's efforts to show any appreciation for the individuals he feels warmly towards is quenched by his failure to express his feelings. His lawyer feels tremendous aggravation towards him, and Meursault feels frustrated that he cannot explain to him that "[he] wanted things between [them] to be good, not so that he'd defend [him] better…but good in a natural way" (66). When his friend Celeste looks sorrowfully at him after heartfelt testimony on his, Meursault remains paralyzed by the inability to express any sense of the gratitude that he

feels: “I said nothing, I made no gesture of any kind though it was the first time in my life I ever wanted to kiss a man” (93).

Meursault’s inability to communicate reflects the fragmentary and isolating nature of his existence and prevents him from countering the pre-conceived assumptions of others that sit in judgment over him. We also see witness this form of discursive difficulty in Marie’s urging that “she was being made to say that opposite of what she was thinking” (94). In her frustration we hear distinct echoes of Eliot’s Prufrock, “That is not it at all/ That is not what I meant, at all” (109-110). Meursault feels that he would like to explain to the court his inability to feel remorse.

> I would have liked to have tried explaining to him cordially, almost affectionately, that I had never been able to feel remorse for anything. But naturally, given the position I’d been put in, I couldn’t talk to anyone in that way. I didn’t have the right to show any feeling or goodwill. (100)

Unable to express the reason for his apparent indifference, he remains shut up inside the confused self-perception that others have defined for him

An argument made by many critics is that Meursault is not on trial for killing the Arab but for not crying at his mother’s funeral. Masters points out that “in Algeria before the war it was inconceivable that a European, however poor, should be punished for the murder of an Arab, especially if he could plead self-defense” (25). Both the prosecuting attorney’s failure to mention the Arab and the associations he draws between Meursault’s trial and the patricide trial to follow Meursault’s further detract from the actual charge against the him. In this respect, the novel alludes to the threat that Meursault’s atheism, and its correlation with Algeria’s non-Christian religion, posed to the values of the nation’s imperialist French culture. Meursault’s inability to feel remorse is not only

symbolic of an existential void that challenges the underlying morality behind the French legal system. The influence of Islam works synergistically with France's growing loss of trust in the authority of the Catholic Church to undermine the faith that underlies the court's moral justice. This uncertainty, embodied in the magistrate's extreme frustration at Meursault's religious indifference -- "Do you want my life to be meaningless?" (69) -- becomes symbolic of French Algerians' enervated faith.

Given Meursault's apathetic view of human life and equally uninterested acceptance of his guilt, the novel suggests that justice must be determined by the moderation of both the individual's unchecked autonomy and the impulse of the state to exercise its alleged authority. Camus considered "The Rebel," *The Stranger*, and "The Myth of Sisyphus" as three depictions of absurdity. Though "The Rebel" was written some fifteen years after *The Stranger*, some of the central ideas in it were evident in his first major work. In "The Rebel" Camus writes that

> Man is the only creature who refuses to be what he is. The problem is to know whether this refusal can only lead to the destruction of himself and of others, whether all rebellion must end in the justification of universal murder, or whether, on the contrary, without laying claim to an innocence that is impossible, it can discover the principle of reasonable culpability. (7)

Camus does not intend to defend Meursault's murder but to show that he faces the challenge, much like Conrad's characters, to understand his moral obligation in the absence of a transcendent morality. According to Camus' philosophy, the only way that a character like Meursault can recognize his obligation without capitulating to the prosecuting lawyer's assurance of his depravity is through a balance between his own recalcitrance and the Christian morality that he ignores. As Royal writes,

> the problem is a question of moderation, or a balance between an absolute freedom and an absolute justice. From the moment the existential man –or the rebel, to use Camus' term -- finds his own voice, he must constantly safeguard against the overwhelming desire to judge, and do so with a full awareness of his position between these two poles. (193)

Where the post- WW II rebel might be tempted to judge those who condemn him, Meursault himself certainly has no inclinations to criticize those who pass judgment on him. In fact, the freedom that empowers the rebel is actually the source of anxiety for Meursault. Because he is so overwhelmed by the liberty that inspires his crime, he allows himself to be judged according to the absolute justice that defines his iniquity. Only by recognizing this compromise between these two extremes is the protagonist ultimately able to defend himself against the attack of those who condemn him with no recognition of the limits to their right to pass "absolute" judgment.

In his jail cell as he awaits his execution, Meursault escapes his internalized sense of guilt through a recognition of the basic worth of human existence at any level. The jury condemns Meursault to death because his moral depravity has denied him whatever value accompanies any life granted by a divine creator. Though Meursault never acknowledges the value of human life based on Christian morality, he recognizes another morality that derives legitimacy solely from the pleasure of existence. In his final soliloquy, Meursault sees that we are all equal, in spite of our altruism or our crimes, because of the inevitability of death and the potential pleasure of life.

> What did other people's deaths or a mother's love matter to me; what did [the Chaplain's] God or the lives people choose or the fate they think they elect matter to me when we're all elected by the same fate, me and millions and billions of privileged people like him who also called themselves my brothers? Couldn't he see, couldn't he see that? Everybody was privileged. There were only privileged people. (121)

In the true spirit of Camus' pagan philosophy, Meursault recognizes a basic meaning to existence that was hidden from him in his guilt-inspired isolation. In this respect, he appreciates that he is no more or less guilty than any of the jury that had condemned him simply because no one is more or less worthy to experience life's pleasure than another. "Salamano's dog was worth just as much as his wife. The little robot woman was just as guilty as the Parisian woman Mason married, or as Marie…" (121). Though guilt and innocence are meaningless for Meursault in the way they are defined by the court, he recognizes that he had no right to take the life of another that was worth just as much as his own. In rejecting both the imprecations of the court and his own nihilistic self-involvement, he rejoices in the knowledge of his mistake, dying like K. with anguish and longing for the life he must leave behind.

The protagonist in Camus' novel *The Fall* provides perhaps the most obvious example in modern existential literature of the insecurity that underlies the impulse towards monomania. In this novel, Clamence, an example of overblown bourgeois egotism, is captivated by the wonders of his own beneficence. His apparent sense of devotion to the poor and dispossessed stems squarely from an exaggerated self-assurance that comes crashing down when he fails to answer the cries for help from a drowning woman. His self-loathing following his "fall" exemplifies the latent guilt-feelings at the heart of his self-aggrandizing altruism.

The novel begins in post-World War II Amsterdam, but Clamence's criticism of political authority appear to apply equally to all of the European nations ravaged by the

violence of two world wars. The protagonist explains his social views to an unnamed listener as they share a drink together in a local pub. Clamence claims that legal institutions are able to use this general anarchy to create laws that increase their authority. In order to restore the stability that has been shaken by the impact of these conflicts, the governments effectively instill in citizens such as Clamence the responsibility for maintaining the moral fabric of their nation. He is an example of the bourgeois class whose concern with their own compassion is based squarely on their ability to outshine their fellow citizen. Only through the equalizing nature of people's moral depravity can Clamence conceive of reconciliation among those citizens and nations besieged by mutual suspicion and hostility.

As in *The Stranger*, *The Fall* portrays the inclination of modern bureaucracy to increase the level of the populace's social consciousness in order to defend against the threat to its social or political authority. In an ironic gesture, Clamence explains his preference for a thorough indifference of one European nation for another.

> For instance, you must have noticed that old Europe at last philosophizes in the right way. We no longer say as in simple times. This is the way I think. What are your objections? We have become lucid. For the dialogue we have substituted the communiqué: "This is the truth" we say. "You can discuss it as much as you want; we aren't interested. But in a few years there'll be police who will show you we are right." (45)

This statement suggests, as Fitch points out, that in this new political climate "social life and organization appear to lack any redeeming features whatsoever" (41). The decline of any civility between those of opposing political perspectives can be traced back to what Camus views as the inherent struggle between governments unwilling to accept responsibility for their individual role in Europe's social turmoil.

In describing the volatile state of European society, Camus quotes an adage referring to the parallel position of Chinese dynasties before they fell, "Governments that are in danger of collapse make the most laws" (*Notebooks* March 5, 1950). We see this reflected in Clamence's critical assertion that the government has begun to create legislation in order to stem the chaos that has resulted in the disintegration of legal authority.

> The keenest of human torments is to be judged without a law. Yet we are in that torment. Deprived of their natural curb, judges, loosed at random, are racing through their jobs. It's a real madhouse. (117)

The speed with which these judges must operate forces them to fabricate laws where there are none that apply. Clamence's comment alludes to the fact that where law courts were once beholden to other branches of the government for their authority, social turmoil has unified executive and legislative powers into a single corrupt institution.

Camus shows us that in order to defend against from the guilt that they fear in themselves, members of this society have sadistically condemned criminals with the hope of expiating their own anxiety. Clamence describes a device known as "the little ease," which is a medieval torture chamber in which a criminal could neither lie down, sit, or stand up. "One could live in those cells and still be innocent? Improbable! Highly improbable" (110). In exactly the same mocking derision, Camus condemns the government's unchallenged assumption of an iniquity that would demand such torture. It is only the mutual distrust created by their fear of their own unknown depravities that could inspire such treatment of others. "We don't need God to create guilt. Our fellow men suffice, aided by ourselves" (110).

For Clamence, such metaphysical anxiety increased by the fear of its possible consequences, urges us to dominate others in order to ensure our own security. The protagonist notes that the potential of such brutal retribution only stoke our desire to deflect to others the blame for our own misdeeds "Each of us insists on being innocent at all costs, even if he has to accuse the whole human race and heaven itself" (81). It is a power struggle in which each man is incapable of existing without someone whom he may condemn. "I am well aware that one can't get along without domineering or being served. The lowest man in the world has a wife. If not a dog" (44). Sprintzen notes, "Here is an ontology of the absolute or atomic individual whose relations with others are essentially power struggles for domination – efforts to reduce The Other to objects in my world before they can do the same to me" (206).

Clamence's egotism is actually symbolic of the government's efforts to maintain its authority by pitting its citizens against one another. In what becomes a zero-sum game of moral consciousness, the governments of these nations are able to sustain themselves by encouraging in each individual the same fraudulent and hollow self-assurance that Clamence feels. Clamence's "fall" symbolizes a rupture of the inflated self-conception that each man and woman has clung to partly as a form of self-defense. In walking along the banks of the Seine, Clamence sees a young women standing by a bridge. After walking past her, he hears a splash and then a cry for help that grows fainter and fainter. He ignores the cries and then rationalizes his indifference with the thought "too late, too far" (70). His lack of action destroys his exalted image of himself and forces him to come to terms with the weakness at the center of his foolish arrogance.

Thody sees Clamence's conceit as a product of the guilt that the French had inspired particularly in the middle class, people who comprised the backbone of the nation's moral fiber. We learn from his self-disgust the degree to which his exalted sense of responsibility derives primarily from his ability to outshine each of his fellow citizens. "My true desire was not to be the most intelligent or most generous creature on earth, but only to beat anyone I wanted, to be the stronger, in short, and in the most elementary way" (55). In addition to their sense of obligation to uphold the standards of their nation that others might ignore, Clamence's guilt also parallels the responsibility that France's middle class felt for their efforts to incite a war that the government had entered into before it had suppressed all of the opposition. Because it was mainly the middle class that demanded that their government wage a war in Algeria, it became obvious the scapegoat on whom the nation's leader were able to blame their losses.

Clamence's sense of failure derives from an unrealistic view of his own altruism that he perceives as evidence of his own basic dishonesty. The protagonist believes that he has discovered a basic truth about the people's nature through his metaphoric fall from grace. "After prolonged research on myself, I brought out the basic duplicity of the human being" (68). Fitch points out that "Camus depicts the scandal of self-consciousness, the dilemma brought about by excessive self-awareness." Fitch is certainly accurate in arguing that "Clamence is far too hard on himself in his self-condemnation, setting out systematically to blacken his own self-image." (52). Clamence appears to use such a method because, like Kafka's characters, he is driven by an underlying need to accept a far greater degree of culpability than he in fact deserves. Camus seems to share with both Nietzsche and Kafka the belief that "the path to self-

knowledge lies through truthfulness, and this knowledge, if achieved, may prove unbearable" (Bridgwater 40). Yet, where Kafka's characters attempt to deny that element of themselves that they are incapable of accepting, Clamence faces it head on. In this respect, he is better able to evade the impulse to slough off his guilt through an obsequious devotion to whatever authority may appear to offer him reassurance of his moral consistency.

The novel suggests that only through all people's recognition of their own personal shortcomings may the citizens of Europe cease to live with the fear that fuels their collective nations' political contention. Clamence asserts that in his newfound freedom as the judge penitent he is able to show others that they are, in fact, cheating themselves of the happiness that they might feel if they were to accept their own faults. For Clamence, social equality is dependent on the recognition of those faults that one shares with others that might reduce the dictatorial nature of the government's political authority. "Only when everyone is guilty will there be democracy" (113). As we have seen, the penitent narrator believes that the hostilities among citizens that are fostered by their own insecurities appear to parallel the latent aggression among Europe's belligerent nations. In this respect, the assurance of political détente is contingent on two equally parallel elements of self-recognition, the individual's appreciation of his faults before he blames his neighbor for his unhappiness as well as each nation's acknowledgment for its own culpability for the contentious post-war environment of the mid-twentieth century.

Kafka and Camus present different versions of the exceedingly complex implications of individual remorse within the changing power dynamics of the war-torn

and politically unstable modern period. Both authors are interested in demonstrating the inherent difficulty that the individual faces in his attempt to live within the confines of order that derives its authority from human self-doubt. Where Kafka's characters struggle to understand the value of their existence when wracked by such persistent challenges to their self-esteem, Camus' protagonists only hesitantly concede a larger purpose behind their "hedonistic" pursuits and anxiety-driven isolation.

Afterword:

The Great Escape:

The Reverence and Regret of the American Dream

As we have seen, the demands of conventional moral ideals drove the characters of European modernist literature into a limbo of insecurity, never sure where to bow down to the expectations placed upon them and where to rage against the oppressive demands of their society. Across the Atlantic, American writers intended to capture in their fiction both the liberty offered by their nation as well as the new emotional conflicts that arose in the absence of these social and political restraints. In their poetry and prose, these writers portray the promise of freedom from the repressive European moral codes as well as the economic opportunity that allowed individuals to transcend the barriers to social mobility.

The ideal of personal autonomy was nothing new to American society. In the nineteenth century, writers such as Emerson championed the virtues of Individualism. Along with Emerson, writers such as Thoreau and Whitman wrote of the importance of people's self-discovery through their intimate relationship with the natural world. In the modern period, this pursuit of personal freedom, strengthened by the influence of industrialization, filled many American citizens with a yearning for an existence outside the community of their birth. In "Big Two Hearted River," Nick Adams has seen too much of the world while fighting in the First World War to be satisfied with life in his

rural hometown. Jack Kerouac, author of *On the Road,* created a cult phenomenon around the notion of exploration and escape, echoed in the beat poetry of Allan Ginsberg and Dean Moriarty. While such a romantic pursuit of adventure has long been a signature of America's image, the rewards of such pioneerism did not always come without an emotional price. In *The Pursuit of Loneliness*, Slater showed that "American society's emphasis on untrammeled individualism "increasingly frustrates and aggravates" three basic human desires: the desire for community, the desire for engagement and the desire for dependence" (in Campbell 36). In *The Lonely Crowd*, Riesman shows the new challenge created by the increasing competition between ambitious individuals no longer held back by the restraints of social stratification.

> A society in which many people are internally driven – and are driven towards values, such as wealth and power, which are by their nature limited – contains in itself a dynamic of change by the very competitive forces it sets up. Even those who do not care to compete for higher places must do so in order not to descend in the social system, which has become a more open and less age-graded and birth-graded one (41).

Where the characters in the previously mentioned European fiction experienced guilt as the result of a breach of communal ideals or political mandates, characters in modern American fiction appear to be burdened more by shame at their failure to achieve the level of prosperity that they considered a part of their birthright. The literature of this period reflects the importance of characters' recognition that the source of this shame lay, in part, in the often unrealistic hopes created by such opportunity. As opposed to the value attributed to social solidarity that Conrad or Camus espouse, Americans in twentieth century literature often perceived their commitment to their community as an

impediment to this personal ambition. In the work of writers like John Updike and Joyce Carol Oates, the stability of the nuclear family is jeopardized by the wanderlust of individuals searching for larger slice of the excitement promised by the abundant opportunities of post-war America. As many of these characters abandon their commitment to the family unit, their sense of inadequacy is compounded by feelings of guilt. They often recognize not only that they are incapable of fulfilling the expectations that they have for themselves, but also that in their struggle for personal satisfaction they ignore the needs of those who depend on them.

Additionally, in a nation where so many races recognize the same goal, certain individuals have associated their automatic affiliation with a particular cultural group as a severe obstacle to their personal achievement. In the work of Ralph Ellison and Philip Roth, we see examples of the shame that drives people to ignore their ethnic roots and the guilt that often accompanies such isolation. In the following examples of these phenomena, the characters portrayed often recognize that their failure to attain their goals lies not in the community that holds them back, but in their inclinations to measure their own achievement by the standards of an elusive dream.

Updike, who was a true believer in the spirit of America's vitality, has been criticized by writers such as Gore Vidal for his patriotism (Pritchard 4). Growing up in the small town of Shillington, Pennsylvania, he saw art as "a method of riding a thin line out of Shillington into an infinity of unseen and even unborn hearts" (Updike 25). Updike's attitude here mirrors the experience of his character Harry Angstrom, who travels out of his hometown of Mt. Judge, Pennsylvania in search of those aspects of his

nation's promise he has yet to discover. Updike's Rabbit novels capture many aspects of America's growth as a nation as they narrate the life of "the former high school basketball star Harry Angstrom" tracing "over four decades of volatile change in American life" (Broer 1).

Rabbit's aimless journey, like his disappointing adulterous affair, is symbolic of his inability to transcend his passionless marriage. The tragic death of his baby, the result of his impatience and his wife's alcoholism, becomes a metaphoric retribution for his insatiable wanderlust. Even after his daughter dies, Harry remains incapable of actually facing the obligations that curtail his personal liberty. Angry that his wife's grief keeps them mired in a collective guilt, he callously rebukes Janice for her despair while they bury their child.

> It is as if he as been crawling in a cave and now at last beyond the dark recession of crowding rocks he has seen a patch of light; he turns, and Janice's face, dumb with grief, blocks the light. 'Don't look at me' he says, 'I didn't kill her.' (293)

Having shocked the entire procession with his statement, Harry he runs away from the funeral, rambling through the woods behind the cemetery as he did when he was a boy. Like Conrad's Razumov, Rabbit dismisses his "moral bond" that he feels results from the failures of another that he considers himself unjustly burdened by. As in the case of Razumov as well as Jim, his temptation is to escape the circumstances surrounding his wrongdoing. His flight is once again the consequence of expectations that the former high-school champion has failed to realize. As Jim must accept his cowardice and Razumov must acknowledge his fear of social anonymity, Harry must

come to terms with a life that fails to offer what he believes his former glory has entitled him to.

In *Rabbit Redux*, Rabbit believes that his fellow Americans have turned against their nation out of selfishness and spite. When his wife leaves him to go live with her lover, a man who opposes Harry's support of the Vietnam War, Rabbit decides to indulge in the free love inherent to this phase of American life. Though he softens in his fierce chauvinism, he unable to submit fully to this new freedom because he recognizes the corrosive impact of his new life on his son. To avoid the guilt created by his new existence, he remains distant from those individuals he has taken into his care and contributes to another tragedy through his unsuccessful attempts at paternity. Like *Rabbit Run*, the novel reveals the challenge that Harry faces as he tries to reconcile his pursuit of personal liberty with the principles that he believes define the moral fiber of his country. And as in Ford's account of World War I, the novel reflects the capacity of war to alienate even those stalwart modern patriots once committed to these vaunted ideals at the heart of their nation's value system.

Joyce Carol Oates was a professor at a small college in Windsor, Canada, a city directly across the Detroit River from the city of Detroit. She used her experience in this urban environment to capture what she saw as "a symbol of everything with which contemporary American civilization bombards our sensibilities" (Kazin 199). Writing about the turbulent period of the 60's and 70's, Waller notes that while "most Americans remain stubbornly caught up in dreams of identity and place, for Oates, ours remains a generation which still seeks 'the absolute dream'" (28). For Waller, Oates' work

displayed the tension between this idealism and the selfish materialism at fundamental to American prosperity that threatened to narrow the concerns of the individual to a single tangible goal.

In *A Garden of Earthly Delights*, Oates portrays a young woman's effort to break away from her family in search of a better existence. This novel echoes many of the frustrations that we have seen depicted in Rabbit's escape and other stories addressing this common American dilemma. Clara's rejection of her father's protection represents Oates' feminist depiction of this pursuit of freedom. Oates' fiction positions the failed obligations of American women against the paternalistic assumptions of control by her male protagonists. Carleton Walpole, Clara's father, is himself caught in his own demand for prosperity to which he believes his hard work as a migrant laborer has entitled him. Clara ignores his meager efforts to provide for his family, and she follows a drifter to a community where she remains a symbol of the nation's financial ruin. Throughout the novel, she thinks only of what she can receive and little of what is denied to her through her own greed. As Johnson writes, "[A]s the novel progresses, she becomes not an outcast from the American garden but its embodiment, an emblem of its rampant excesses, its spiritual emptiness" (37).

In Oates' novel *With Shuddering Fall*, Karen Herz rejects her father's restrictive authority and leaves her hometown, symbolically labeled "Eden," with a sultry racecar driver. Her experience with the world not only destroys her emotionally, but throws her into a violent confrontation that nearly ends her life. Clara's experience mirrors that of Karen Herz, as well as other of Oates' female characters who are searching for a way to escape what they see as a constraining existence. Ann Cassity, a woman in Oates' short

story “Extraordinary Popular Delusions” replays in her mind the rapture of her adulterous affair as her husband visits his aging father. Like Paul Cassity’s delusions about his wife’s fidelity, Carleton Walpole condemns his daughter for leaving as did his ex-wife, who had died in childbirth. These women’s push for freedom symbolizes a loss of that fundamental element of familial structure that was once ensured by a respect for paternal authority. In stories where motherhood is portrayed as a deadend that traps young girls in a pit of boredom or poverty, the husband’s/father’s pride in creating and supporting his household rests on a tenuous claim to his wife’s/daughter’s obedience. Carleton Walpole, like Paul Cassity, harbors the naïve assumptions that his role as the family breadwinner will ensure the respect that he takes for granted.

Oates describes the pangs of remorse that these women encounter as they attempt to justify their indifference to the familial existence that stanches their desires. As her husband searches for ways that his father might come to live with them, Ann Cassity looks for excuses that might justify her departure from their home. Though she hesitates to abandon her family, she feels smothered by the finality of her position, by the expected duty of her role as wife and mother. In questioning her assumed responsibility to sons from whom she feels distanced emotionally, she asks rhetorically “Why should she be expected to love her sons?” (189) Each of these female characters wrestle against their own consciences like sparring fighters, looking for a way to reject the obligation that draws them towards an arbitrary domestic commitment.

Oates’ characters’ yearning to escape from what they perceive as their stultifying roles as wives and mothers in twentieth century America closely resembles the suffocation experienced by a character such as Mauriac’s Thérèse Desqueyroux. Yet,

where Mauriac's novel celebrates the self-assertion that his heroine demonstrates in her attempt on her husband's life, Oates portrays her heroines' rejection of the familial patriarchy as the consequence of their own feelings of inadequacy. These emotions are reflected in their yearning to carve a new identity for themselves more consistent with America's promise of personal freedom and social mobility. The unfounded shame that drives Ann or Clara to divorce or opportunism had fifty years earlier motivated a character like Thérèse to see her moral failure in terms of those societal expectations of her sex that she had failed to uphold.

Therese's banishment from her family's community reflects what Mauriac perceives as a necessary subversion of the domestic obligation demanded by Catholic morality. Conversely, Oates sees her characters' need for such freedom, to partake in *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, as the result of fallacious assumption that familial obligation once under-girded by religious values, and self-fulfillment are in some ways mutually exclusive. Grant notes that in Oates' work "characters 'get through' life, merely survive, there is no functioning community, and man is destroyed in the wasteland, yet the ultimate effect of the fiction is to underline the ineluctable necessity of establishing community" (10).

As Updike and Oates' restless characters feel that they are hemmed in by familial commitments, characters in the work of Ralph Ellison and Philip Roth often feel that they are restrained by the social parameters defined by race or religion. These characters experience degrees of regretful longing for the identity that they have dismissed in pursuit of what they perceive as social equality. Certain African American characters in

Ellison's work lack sufficient faith that they will ever achieve the success they aspire to through their commitment to the advancement of their race as a whole. Similarly, Roth portrays characters who search for something in the temerity of the cultural "Other" that they believe will help them transcend the racial or religious identities stigmas that impede their advancement.

In the works of Ralph Ellison, characters are often driven by shame to transcend their ethnic identity through their own achievements. Such ambition to succeed in mainstream society often results in guilt when they recognize the diminished respect for other members of their race left in the wake of their personal dreams. In *Invisible Man*, the narrator is an advocate for black rights who embraces a series of vacuous ideologies. In dismissing members of his race for whom he purports to be fighting on behalf, he finds satisfaction only in the duplicitous rhetoric of the Brotherhood, a civil rights group, who use his own thirst for recognition to draw him into their organization. He recognizes in his embarrassment at his own naiveté that his aims for self-promotion allowed others to sell him the vision of racial justice dictated by the very hegemony he intends to subvert. In "Flying Home," Todd is a black aviator who must prove his ability to his fellow pilots. He believes that respect from his white peers is the only meaningful recognition of his achievements, dismissing the respect that he received from his own people. He disdains what he perceives as the ignorance of his race and attempts to distance himself from any associations with the "shiftlessness" that be believes characterizes his race.

Through a somewhat different lens, Philip Roth portrays in many of his novels his own frustration with the social divisions created by religious antagonism. Though claiming to be proud of his Jewish heritage, his fiction has earned him the label of anti-

Semite for his criticism of what he viewed as the spiritually stifling aspects of his own culture's values. Many of Roth's characters share the attitude expressed by the protagonist in Saul Bellow's *The Dangling Man*,[54] who feels like a failure for his social conformity. In *Portnoy's Complaint*, Alex Portnoy hopes to free himself from what he perceives as the repressive nature of Judaism's emasculating control over the male libido. In this novel as well as in *My Life as a Man* and *The Professor of Desire*, each inspired in part by Roth's relationship with his ex-wife, Margaret Martinson Williams, Roth depicts the challenges faced by men who seek out in the religious Other some confirmation of their own merit. Each protagonist believes that he is in some way held back by his ethnicity from the mysterious thrills offered by an untrammeled gentile landscape. These characters attempt to escape some element of their shameful sense of emasculation through their affiliation with the racial Other, someone whose bravado ostensibly reflects their own repressed courage.

Similarly, in *The Human Stain*, Roth believes that he has escaped from the stigma he believes is associated with his racial group through the Other, whom he perceives as incapable of succumbing to the shameful insecurity that fosters his obsession with success. Coleman Silk shares a number of traits with the protagonists in Roth's earlier novels who define themselves in relation to the cultural Other. Like Portnoy, Tarnopol and Kepesh, Coleman's attempt to eradicate the significance of race merely brings his ethnicity to the forefront of his personal and professional existence. Coleman is a black Classics professor at a small college in Georgia who has spent his life passing as white. He is accused of prejudice and quits his job at the College where he is employed. Once

[54] In Bellow's novel, the main character is waiting to enter the army and detests the idea of fighting for a cause that will render him identical to his fellow citizens.

he recognizes the destruction caused by his attempt to deny his race, he seeks out in Faunia Farley, a janitor at the college where he is a professor, the stubborn resilience to the social stigmas that have inspired him to pass for a white Jewish man.

The righteous indignation that Coleman feels is undermined by his pursuit of an impoverished and ignorant woman like Faunia, a woman who embodies those characteristics that *he feels* are the true mark of the racial origin with which he hopes to reclaim solidarity (sarcasm mine). Faunia Farley is not only the sexual object through which Coleman is able to exhibit his Viagra-induced physical prowess, but both the class-Other and the racial-Other that illuminates for the protagonist his misdirected energies. Faunia comes from a wealthy background, but her status as part of the white majority gives her the freedom to degrade herself without the stigma by which Coleman is hounded. Unlike characters from Roth's other novels and the works by Updike and Oates mentioned above, Coleman is driven towards Faunia out of a passionate admiration for her pursuit of failure that assuages his lifelong guilt, but ultimately reifies the negative racial associations that he has sought to escape.

In the work of Kafka and Camus we saw the threat posed by a minority culture to the dominant culture's economic welfare or religious morality through the influx of Jews into Prague or the influence of Algerian Paganism. Authors such as Ellison and Roth portray in their work characters who reject the self-pity and cultural identification of other members of their ethnic group. Todd, the Invisible Man, Alex Portnoy et al. believe that the determination of blacks or Jews to resist integration out of a sense of moral superiority to the white Christian majority that has historically oppressed them only impedes their race or religion's social progress. Yet, in their efforts to deny their

heritage in order to separate themselves from a preconceived identity and assimilate to mainstream culture, many of these characters become further alienated from the self that they had initially sought to realize.

Roth's ironic look at the anti-American dream embodied by *The Human Stain* asks us to question the validity of the ideal world that Camus' Clamence imagines in *The Fall,* one in which the universal recognition of failure ensures happiness and social harmony. In *The Human Stain,* Roth warns us of the "drama that underlies America's story, the high drama that is upping and leaving – and the energy and cruelty that rapturous drive demands" (342). Yet to cower in fear at such competition is to capitulate to the same anxiety that motivated Coleman's duplicity and Faunia's despair. If Faunia was not the slightest bit tempted by America's mythical promise of opportunity, she would likely not have created such an elaborate philosophy to subvert the possibility of failure. Though America and Europe are very different in many respects, the shame [55] that we see embodied in America's inability to live up to its moral and economic ideal parallels the guilt that we have seen in many European authors. In the previously discussed works, the definition of proper conduct is set according to the fears of the creators of such standards. Greene and Mauriac showed us how prescient the Catholic Church was in designing doctrine to restrain modern society's manifest corruption. Kafka and Camus illuminated the way that standards of behavior were often established by laws intended to control what were perceived as people's inherently rebellious impulses.

[55] The distinction here is that the shame experienced by American characters is motivated by what they perceive as a lack of ability rather than a moral failure.

In the same way, the American dream in the twentieth century reflected those shortcomings in their culture that Americans wanted to see amended. As we have seen at every level, the definition of that dream was based on the sense of financial prosperity and social accord that betrayed the reality of the period. During the Great Depression, this vision was based on the hope of prosperity unknown to a majority of the nation. [56] In the Eisenhower era, the vision of post-war familial harmony was seriously undermined by women's increasing independence and growing divorce rates. Finally, the political correctness that supposedly marks our nation's commitment to racial equality is well represented in Roth's portrayl of the Athena administration. Thus, the ideals that were defined for a nation were based not on standards that actually existed but that society believed should be met. Hence, the literature of the modern era asks us to recognize the anxiety or wishful thinking of those who defined the benchmarks by which we have traditionally defined our disastrous social failures.

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[56] In addition to *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* speaks to the materialistic ambitions that a woman had to aspire to in order to escape the shame of indigence.

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