UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA

Edmond, Oklahoma

Jackson College of Graduate Studies & Research

Communion Concepts: Confession, Conversion, and Redemption in *The Sun Also Rises*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *The Poisonwood Bible*

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

By

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Edmond, Oklahoma

2010

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APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

21 April 2010

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE OF THESIS: Communion Concepts: Confession, Conversion, and Redemption in *The Sun Also Rises*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *The Poisonwood Bible*

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PAGES: 71

The elements and themes of Protestant communion are evident in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), and *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998). The elements of wine and bread are ubiquitous in these novels and illuminate the spiritual hunger and renewal the characters experience. Along with the physical aspects of communion, the characters of Jake Barnes, Tom Joad, and Orleanna Price participate in and personify the process of communion through confession, conversion, and redemption. The rhetorical and stylistic structures of the novels allude to the rhetoric and style of the Bible. In doing so, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, and Barbara Kingsolver shape Biblical themes, in the form of communion, to treat the wounds of personal and social turmoil.

for Zack

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Gladys Lewis, Dr. Deborah Israel, and Dr. Wayne Stein for their suggestions and guidance throughout this process. All was appreciated.

My grandparents, Milton and Patricia Baker: Thank you for the spiritual guidance you both have shown throughout my childhood and beyond.

My mother, Vicki Hartquist: Thank you for encouraging my love of literature and helping me pursue my education.

My husband, Zack: Thank you for filling our home with music, brewing cups of tea, tolerating the bedroom lamp in the late hours of the night, giving me a shoulder to cry on, and supporting me during this period in my life. I love you dearly.

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Introduction

Lord's Supper, Communion, Eucharist

My grandfather was in Christian ministry for more than forty years. As a part of that ministry during my childhood and youth, I was exposed to Biblical teaching and practice, being raised on the pew, so to speak. Looking back on my childhood, I remember certain artifacts that aided my grandfather in serving his church and community. King James Bibles, bound chapters of the book of Psalms, vials containing oil – these are fixtures in my memory, items synonymous with his work and passion. He has since retired, and now he looks on as the next generation of his family continues to live the faith. Whenever I am in his home, I gaze upon the artifacts that actively decorated his existence. Although these materials have been relegated to shelves and desk drawers, they have meaning and significance in that these items brought hope for salvation to the people in my grandfather's life.

One day, I noticed in his study a red leather box on his bookshelf. Perusing my grandfather's library reached professional levels for me some time ago, as I entered the world of academic study with a focus on literature. This box had completely escaped my attention. The attraction, the mystery of this object became more than I could bear. Taking the maroon-colored box off the shelf, I was ecstatic to see its contents for myself. The box contains a traveling communion set, complete with wafer plates, juice container, and individual cups used to administer the Lord's Supper to those unable to attend the Sunday morning service. The idea of communion exemplified in American literature had been stirring in my thinking prior to this discovery. So I took the red leather communion box as a good omen. My grandfather kindly gave the box to me, and it acts as a reminder of our connected life experience. What drove his passion is now finding its way into mine.

Communion is the memorial of Christ's death on the cross. In the Christian faith, communion is another form of worship. Encompassed in the ritual is the foundation of Christianity, salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ. Two elements comprise the communion service, bread and wine. In the book of Matthew, chapter twenty-six, in the New Testament, Jesus dines with his followers for the last time before he is taken to be crucified. This dinner is referred to as the Lord's Supper. During the commemorative meal, Christ provides an activity to remember the sacrifice He is about to make. Establishing the elements, He takes the bread and proclaims, "This is my body" (Matthew 26:26 *OSB*). As He breaks the bread, He references the torture that will occur to his body. By the end of the crucifixion, His body will be literally broken. He endures brokenness, so that the communicant might be whole and experience redemption. Likewise He treats the wine; He takes the cup and says, "This is my blood" (Matthew 26:27 *OSB*). The blood he sheds on the cross is the atonement for sin. In the Old Testament, the children of Israel, God's chosen people, performed blood sacrifice to cover iniquity. In the New Testament, Christ fulfills Old Testament prophecy in becoming a blood sacrifice, not only for Israel, but for all of humanity. The wine brings to remembrance the blood that was shed to purify body and soul.

The elements take on various forms depending upon the religious group. For instance, loaves, crackers, wafers, or flatbreads are all acceptable in fulfilling the bread requirement. In the case of wine, red wine is most commonly used or red grape juice for some Protestant groups. Robert C. Fuller explains, in *Religion and Wine: A Cultural History of Wine Drinking in the United States*, "Religion, particularly Protestantism, has had an influence upon American culture and for this reason has also had particular effects upon Americans' understanding of the significance of wine drinking" (2). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many Protestant groups promoted the temperance movement, feeling that the removal of alcohol bettered their spiritual lives. Fuller goes on to say, "Because the ascetic style emphasizes self-denial and disciplining the will, this approach to religion has typically advocated complete abstinence from alcohol" (57). The ascetic style Fuller refers to contains the values and principles of the evangelical denominations. The scriptures do not disqualify one form over the other; rather the ceremony focuses on the commemoration of the death of Christ. When the elements are ingested, the communicant, or person receiving them, is aware of the enormous sacrifice Christ made, and is thankful for that sacrifice. And, this thankfulness is shared with the congregation. Therefore, the many labels which exist for this one event are interchangeable. The supper quality coincides with the communal quality, resulting in gratefulness. That is not to say the theology surrounding communion is flexible. For the analysis in this thesis, the essence of what these terms mean is used fluidly.

Whether the ceremony is labeled the Lord’s Supper, communion, or the Eucharist, the overall meaning is the same. The ritual celebrates the grace God bestowed on human kind. While the terms themselves may be simplistic in nature, the doctrine associated with communion is more complex. There are two branches of Christianity, Catholicism and Protestantism. The main difference between the two, concerning communion, revolves around the doctrine of transubstantiation, meaning, “the whole substance of the bread and wine turn into the whole substance of the body and blood of Christ although the accidents of the bread and wine—their taste, color, and appearance—remain unchanged” (Flinn 607). The Catholic tradition adheres to the doctrine of transubstantiation, which draws from the Aristotelian philosophy of matter and accident, where the essence of the thing exists alongside its non-essential being. In terms of the communion, the senses identify the bread and wine *as* bread and wine, but the elements represent also the literal blood and body of Christ. So, the ritual is literal in two ways. During the service, the priest recites the prayer of transubstantiation. The prayer then transforms the elements into the physical presence of Christ. For this reason, ordained priests are the sole administers of the communion. Likewise, in order to receive communion, the parishioner must undergo a time of preparation facilitated through the Catholic Church.

The structure of the Protestant ritual is similar but relies on a different liturgy. Protestantism is considerably more diverse than the Catholic community, and so, too, are the approaches to the communion service. Communion can be a symbolic act or literal consumption. During the time of the Reformation, the Reformers broke ties with Rome on many issues, one being the Eucharist. However, among the reformers, dissention spread as to the amount and type of “real presence” that would be involved with the service (Benedict 32). Sects of Protestantism, such as Lutheranism and Anglicanism, subscribe to the physical presence of Christ in the elements, but this is not universally held. The evangelical community, comprised of Methodists, Baptists, and Assemblies of God, adheres to the representational doctrine, where the elements remain bread and wine, and symbolize the body and blood of Christ (Fuller 55). Despite numerous interpretations, all denominations celebrate the stratified custom with similar intent.

Three interpretations came out of the Reformation and can be seen in Protestantism today. These teachings are classified by the Reformers that standardized these views in Protestant liturgy. The first is the Lutheran view, named after the person who became the catalyst for the Reformation, Martin Luther. Luther subscribed to the idea of the real presence of Christ in the elements. In his interpretation, also known as the doctrine of ubiquity, “human nature [is] linked to the divine nature by sharing of properties in the One person of Christ, and therefore the human nature could be everywhere the divine nature could be, especially in the supper" (Hendrix 52). According to Luther, Christ's physical presence in the bread and wine simultaneously exists with his physical presence in heaven. Therefore the doctrine of ubiquity does not limit his humanity as in the doctrine of transubstantiation, but, rather, Christ is everywhere and in all things.

While Luther made modifications to the Catholic tradition in returning to the essence of the Bible, Reformers like Huldrych Zwingli believed Luther's teachings were still hinged to Rome. Zwingli taught that the elements of bread and wine were strictly representational. For Zwingli, "Christ's body is not bodily present, nor is he eaten bodily" (Stephens 90). Christ's physical presence in the bread and wine, in effect, limits his divinity. Zwingli's teachings are the most distinct from the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. The representational view acknowledges the sacrifice Christ made and the holiness behind that act, but does not advocate for the physical presence of Christ in the bread and wine.

Another Reformer, John Calvin, put into practice the idea of the spiritual real presence of Christ. According to Calvin, "the substance of Christ's humanity was not […] in bones and sinews and veins, but in the power and effect of his crucified and risen humanity for human salvation. Christ is therefore substantially present wherever the power and effect of his life, death, and resurrection are present" (Steinmetz 126-127). The Calvinist view takes on more significance than the Zwinglian teachings by promoting the spirit of Christ in the elements, but differs from Luther in the absence of the doctrine of ubiquity. Christ's power is present in the bread and wine, emphasizing his sacrifice and humanity's need for salvation. All three views are practiced for the same reason, to remember the death and resurrection of Christ, and to have the hope that comes with remembrance. Though Protestantism is divided on the doctrinal practices, the foundation of the service unites the members under it.

American literature is steeped in the language of the Reformation. The rhetoric of our founding ancestors still pervades the cultural climate. Beginning with Cotton Mather, to the signers of Declaration of Independence, to Harriet Beecher Stowe, to modern innovators like William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor, the ideas of the Reformation continue to influence American writers. Biblical allusion is woven into the fabric of American literature. Didactic cadence and Protestant motif creates the nuances of this genre. Our Puritan forefathers continue to influence our perceptions of the world. This influence shines through the canonic dialogue of American literature.

Authors like Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, and Barbara Kingsolver fuse Biblical allusions with contemporary issues. All three novelists interject scripture and Biblical iconography when dealing with their current social happenings. Hemingway prefaces *The Sun Also Rises* with a verse from the book of Ecclesiastes, setting the tone for the work and supplying contrast for his morally deficient characters. Steinbeck employs Biblical allusion in the form of aridity to describe the devastation of the Oklahoma landscape in the *The Grapes of Wrath*. Kingsolver constructs a modern Eden in *The Poisonwood Bible* referencing Old Testament origins to recount the fall of the Price family. Biblical allusions to the elements of bread and wine are present in all three of the novels, and the theme of redemption in the works displays the aspects of communion. The ceremony of communion highlights the turmoil within the American psyche and its struggle for reconciliation. For communion is not a singular act, but a process. The communicant confesses, converts, and finds restoration.

The dynamic structure of *The Sun Also Rises*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *The Poisonwood Bible* is conducive for the eucharistic paradigm. In each, Jake Barnes, Tom Joad, and Orleanna Price personify the stages of the communion. So, in analyzing these novels, the symbolic nature of communion coincides with the metaphoric themes working in the novels. Jake, Tom, and Orleanna experience movement and in their travels come to fulfill an aspect of the Lord's Supper. Not only do the characters enact the facets of confession, conversion, and redemption, but also, the elements of bread and wine infiltrate the texts, rendering spirituality. Gian-Paolo Biasin states in his work, *The Flavors of Modernity*, "As a cognitive pretext, food is used to stage the search for meaning that is carried out every time one reflects on the relationship among the self, the world, and others […] " (17). Food saturates the texts, bringing to the surface the spiritual battles taking place within the main characters' bodies. Jake, Tom, and Orleanna confront their own deficiencies and seek a remedy to soothe the wounds of war, relocation, and death. The metaphor of communion, in the elements of bread and wine, in *The Sun Also Rises*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *The Poisonwood Bible* displays the brokenness of the characters, the need to recovery their own humanity, and the journey to their redemption.

The chapters of this study will analyze the connections between the three works of fiction and the three steps in the communion process.

Chapter one presents a focus on *The Sun Also Rises* and the theme of confession. In *The Sun Also Rises*, the image of wine signifies a deeper hunger among Jake Barnes and his companions. The ubiquity of wine spurs the first step in the communion process, which is confession. However this type of confession does not alleviate tension, but, rather, confession further divides the group. What initially brings the characters together, in abundance, splinters their relationships. Wine takes on both the literal and representational aspects of blood in its association and presence in religious festivities and bull fighting. Wine saturates the group, soaking into their personal turmoil and forcing them to confront their pain.

Chapter two presents a focus on *The Grapes of Wrath* and the theme of conversion. Moving past the wine allusions shows the Joad family's search for bread, which becomes a literal and spiritual one. John Steinbeck juxtaposes the social plights of the 1930s with the spiritual yearnings of the Joad family. The brokenness the family experiences, in labor and in their structure, harkens to the brokenness of Christ's body. The link between bread and the body is pervasive in the novel and propels the family to seek out a better life and justice for the downtrodden. The family, especially Tom, undergoes a conversion, finding hope and dignity in helping others.

In the last chapter, Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* displays the theme of redemption against the backdrop of a flawed Eden. The Price family travels to Africa in the Lord’s service but soon finds the exotic country to be a poor façade for their burdens. Orleanna Price, in particular, is exposed to the raw environment and her husband’s relentless tyranny. In an effort to save her children from the stringency of her husband, Nathan, and the harshness of the African landscape, she finds redemption. Her story completes the communion ritual. The purpose of communion is to remember, and in remembering, the communicant finds peace and renewal. These novels fulfill the aspects of the communion ceremony in their portrayal of human weakness and restoration, and use the symbols of bread and wine to illustrate that story.

Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, and Barbara Kingsolver employ Biblical iconography, in the elements of bread and wine, to examine individual and group conflicts, and how the results of these conflicts mirror the stages of communion. Communion is both an individual and a communal act that involves preparation. Each of the novels concentrates on an aspect of the communion process while continuing the religious dialogue of American literature.

Chapter One

Wine and Social Confession in *The Sun Also Rises*

The years following World War I proved to be a time of disillusionment for several artists; Ernest Hemingway is in that group. The tragedy and decimation of war propelled writers from their usual surroundings and placed them on a quest for healing. The characters in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*[1] portray the movement that occurred in the early twenties. Brokenness and spiritual emptiness become the unifying factor. The shattered pieces form a mosaic of sorts exhibiting the dichotomy of unification and dissention within the group. For Jake Barnes and his friends, the element of wine acts as a social binder and also causes them to self destruct later in the novel. Wine saturates their conversations and motivations, simultaneously promoting honesty and alienation. The ancient liquid feeds the attractive energy of the social dynamic. Their relationships are built upon the bottle, and its contents suffuse their present frustrations, yet its abundance sharpens, rather than dulls, anxieties within the group. Jake clings to the vat of his existence, hoping the submersion will be cleansing, instead of destructive. The wine imagery does not merely serve as decoration but it also takes on the feelings of an age.

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[1] All the novels will be referenced by the first letters in their titles when used in citations: *The Sun Also Rises – SAR*, *The Grapes of Wrath – GW*, and *The Poisonwood Bible – PB*.

Peppered throughout the novel are scenes of consumption. Food and drink reflect each European community's nuances and designate the transitions occurring in the narrative. The first introduction of dialogue takes place at Café Versailles in Paris where Jake and Robert meet and plan the next stage of their European journey. The narrative begins with coffee, a simple multi-cultural beverage: "We had dined at L'Avenue's and afterward went to the Café de Versailles for coffee" (*SAR* 6). The sobriety of coffee creates a platform on which the symbolism of the other beverages is built. Throughout the novel, Robert Cohn is associated with sobriety, and thus he chooses coffee. The characters graduate to stronger concoctions as the story progresses and eventually unite with the drinking of wine; however, Robert abstains from drink. Hemingway employs these beverages, particularly the alcoholic kinds, as a mode of communication. Where coffee is present in chapter one, whiskey is introduced in chapter two, whiskey and soda more precisely. Coffee and whiskey harken to American sensibility and symbolize the American migration to Europe. Initially, American ideals and notions characterize Jake and Robert and their drink selections. As Jake assimilates French and Spanish culture in his life style, he partakes of the local offerings in lieu of whiskey. In chapter three, Jake orders Pernod at a Parisian café; this signifies his participation in the Parisian community and his openness to other cultures. Pernod is a kind of absinthe, an exotic and mysterious liquor. Jake partakes of the Pernod while in the company of a *poule* or prostitute. His adventurous and somewhat reckless behavior is mirrored in his beverage choice. Alcohol, in *The Sun Also Rises*, serves not merely as linguistic filler, but becomes an unspoken dialogue between the characters and their internal and external communities.

Socialization centers on wine and other liquors, and in turn creates a mode of entrance. One evening, Jake and Robert seek the night life and encounter Brett Ashley. Jake spurs the conversation by asking, “Why aren’t you tight?” Brett replies, “Never going to get tight any more. I say, give a chap a brandy and soda” (22). Brandy enters the discourse immediately, allowing her to participate in their social function. In the same sense, Jake initiates discourse by questioning Brett’s sobriety. Characterization derives from the types of and attitudes towards alcohol, eventually unifying under the banner of wine. Jake’s friendship with Bill is one based on and strengthened by the inclusion of wine; likewise, Jake and Robert’s friendship is strained or lacking in disclosure, yet exists because of the presence of wine and other liquors. Alcohol brings them together and solidifies relationships, regardless if the relationships are healthy or not. The underlying factor in their social construction is the presence of wine. In the first few chapters, alcoholic dissonance serves to highlight the many personalities and cultures colliding in the novel. The mentioning of the other beverages acts as a means of reference; each character embodies what he or she drinks. Jake and his friends are joined in their experiences and alienations, thus the ubiquitous nature of wine. The characters have this mutual love of drink and therefore find themselves in proximity. Local cafes and bars become their designated meeting places. The access to wine and other liquors draws them together and provides a foundation for their interaction.

The comfort of familiarity associated with wine and spirits creates a secure environment for the characters. Later, in Jake and Brett's conversation, he comments, "You're wonderfully sober." Brett reveals the protective nature of drink and the bond it constructs in her response: "Yes. Aren't I? And when one's with the crowd I'm with, one can drink in such safety, too" (22). There is a liberty in social drinking; the fear of judgment or retribution is removed, leaving a sense of community generated by the sharing of alcohol. The liquid translates unspoken longings saturating their friendships. For Jake and Brett, the question of sobriety, or lack thereof in other instances, has deeper significance in their relationship. Brett's continual socializing creates distance between her and Jake, yet she cannot suppress her natural urges. Jake's disfigurement, which has left him unable to express his physical love for Brett, and Brett's sexual appetite, which she cannot control, inhibit an intimate union. Thus they interact based on social drinking, where Jake and Brett express the complications of their togetherness over a whiskey and soda. This element survives from their broken connection and demonstrates the power of familiarity within alcohol. Though the other components of the relationship are gone or not regularly exercised, yet the act of sharing a drink remains a consistent facet. The tragic lovers find security in the exchange of bourbon, maintaining the last component of their bond. The ease of the experience perpetuates the need to gather and converse over food and beverage.

Not only does alcohol act as a connector within Jake's circle, but it also acts as a connector between cultures. Through the consumption of local spirits, Jake engages in a particular culture. Wine, with its universal quality, allows Jake and the other characters to transcend country borders. The assimilation into each community is made easier through the partaking of wine. This concept is best illustrated in the bus scene in chapter eleven. Bill and Jake are traveling to the Irati River to fish. On the bus to their destination, Jake notices a Basque man with a leather wine bag. Prior to getting on the vehicle, Jake purchases two bottles of wine. Hemingway creates equilibrium, as both Jake and the Basque man are bringing wine for the journey. The motivation behind the action seems to be similar for both men. The weather is rather hot, so the bearing of such cargo would be logical. Wine creates common ground between the Americans and Europeans. While cultural differences emerge in their communication, the essence of their beings emerges in the consuming of wine. The passengers are reminded of their shared humanity; so wine becomes a symbol of remembrance.

On the journey to the river, Jake and Bill interact with the Basque men through the sharing of wine. While they may not be able to engage with the Basque men on every cultural level, their mutual feelings towards wine opens up dialogue. Offering wine to his fellow passengers, Bill bridges the cultural gap and in return, the Basques attempt to teach Bill how to drink from the leather wine bag. To the Basque men, drinking wine does not merely serve a physiological purpose, but a social one as well. The drinking itself becomes a skill, as one of the young men demonstrates.

> He was a young fellow and he held the wine bottle at full arm's length and raised it high up, squeezing the leather bag with his hand so the stream of wine hissed into his mouth. He held the bag out there, the wine making a flat, hard trajectory into his mouth, and he kept on swallowing smoothly and regularly. (*SAR* 105)

The technique involved is a matter of prowess and cultural significance. Bill, humorously, cannot replicate the wine bag technique. Of course, this is not offensive to the other members on the bus, but, rather, the comedic relief puts everyone at ease. The differences in their communities do not hinder the Basques from engaging with Jake and Bill. On that journey, they are not differentiated, but united through wine. The sharing of wine spurs dialogue which leads to connection outside of the bus, as Jake says, "Two of our Basques came in and insisted on buying us a drink" (106). Just as the Americans extend their graciousness to the Basques, the Basques in return complete the act. The cloud of foreignness lifts, and they can sit as friends. The universality of wine evokes a sense of fraternity, therefore making it possible for cultural understanding to take place. Jake and Bill do not seek a lesson in cultural studies, but they do take advantage of an opportunity to show hospitality. The disillusionment of the post-war generation finds hope in the communal experiences along the Irati River.

In the process of communion, confession must be made before the elements are consumed. As the Apostle Paul states in the eleventh chapter of I Corinthians, "Everyone must test himself before eating from the bread and drinking from the cup" (*OSB*). The act of communion begins with the confession of sin. This not a ceremony to be taken lightly, as the scripture suggests. The enormity of Christ's sacrifice is represented in communion, so the attitude of the partaker must be sincere. In the Catholic structure, the parishioner goes to the priest to make confession with the priest acting as the mediator between the parishioner and God. Without the priest's absolution, the parishioner cannot partake of the elements. Likewise, the priest must initiate the receiving of the bread and wine. The priest recites prayer of transubstantiation over the elements transforming the ordinary into the supernatural; the elements become the actual body and blood of Christ. Only the priesthood can facilitate this process due to the level of sacredness involved.

However, in the Protestant paradigm, a parishioner is not required to make confession to the pastor. While both forms of Christianity emphasize the teachings of Paul, the structure and role of the pastor varies. The Protestant makes confession to God without a mediator. Responsibility falls on the parishioners to examine themselves in preparation for the elements. Both Catholicism and Protestantism hold the ceremony to be dear and essential to the Christian experience. Yet the Protestant community, generally, does not believe in transubstantiation, that the bread and wine transform into the physical body and blood of Christ. Protestants interpret the phrase Christ states in the twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew, "This is my body," as a metaphor. Nevertheless the solemnity associated with communion remains to be recognized. With confession, the process of restoration begins.

In *The Sun Also Rises*, confession follows the Protestant paradigm, albeit in an unconventional way. Julanne Isabelle states,

> Hemingway was a religiously oriented man whose tempered faith was forged within the framework of an American Protestant tradition, hardened by the disillusionment of war and the 1920s, and annealed within the framework of a broad, ancient Catholic

> tradition, constantly being tested for its tenacity and possessing the properties essential to a universal belief. (17)

The novel portrays Hemingway's knowledge of the Christian faith and how external forces coincide with religion. As Jake and his fellow wanderers convene, alcohol shifts from a social binder to a vehicle for confession. They consume wine and other alcohols then proceed to confess their true feelings about themselves and one another. Hemingway gives a nod to the American Puritan past by presenting confession in a dual nature. Confession is both public and private, even further, the private becomes public. According to Sacvan Bercovitch, in his work *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*, Puritanism centered in the dynamic between the individual and the group. While the act of confessing one's sin is often a private matter, the private indiscretions would be publicized as a means of edifying the congregation. The Puritans thought of themselves as examples for the rest of the world, as a compelling story of triumph over evil. Through their model, the grace of God pours out to sinners to encourage the church as a whole. This type of narrative can be seen in the genre of spiritual autobiography or sermons. Both forms serve the same purpose, to make confession and edify the church. Yet as Sacvan Bercovitch points out, confession in the confines of spiritual autobiography had selfish motives. Ministers would publish autobiographies for self-glorification and did not consider their congregations whatsoever. Restoration was not sought after or even deemed necessary. This does not demean the genre but, rather, demonstrates the excessive concentration on the self, an idea certainly portrayed in Hemingway's characters. For Jake and the others, confession does not restore the group; rather, confession leads to the degeneration of the group. The characters in *The Sun Also Rises* mimic the lack of consideration some Puritan leaders possessed. Wine fuels the fire within, igniting conflict among the members. Self-glorification and dominance are the products of their wine soaked confessions. Honesty overflows at the consumption of alcohol; pretension and insincerity are joined with sobriety, thus creating explosions once mixed with the fruit of the vine. Their community is one built upon dysfunction and disillusionment, wine being the unifying factor. Yet the abundance of wine leads to an eventual disbandment of the characters.

As a Catholic, Jake struggles with his own sense of religion. In fact, he labels himself a “rotten Catholic.” In Pamplona, Jake enters a cathedral and is transported into a mysterious world:

> At the end of the street I saw a cathedral and walked up toward it. The first time I ever saw it I thought the façade was ugly but I liked it now. I went inside. It was dim and dark and the pillars went high up, and there were people praying, and it smelt of incense, and there were some wonderful big windows. I knelt and started to pray and prayed for everybody I thought of […]. (*SAR* 97)

Jake remarks on his feelings towards the aesthetics of the building. He disliked the cathedral initially, but now he appreciates the structure for what it is. Like his feelings towards the building, his attitudes towards religion are changing. Though he is not completely comfortable with ritual, this does not prevent him from exercising his faith. As he is kneeling he prays for “everybody,” which seems like a selfless act, but the content of his prayer includes the bull fighters he wants to win, the fish he wants to catch, and the money he would like to have.

In his prayer for “everybody,” he actually prays for himself. Individuality colors his time of prayer, yet he does pray. While fishing, Bill calls Jake an “expatriate.” This label certainly applies to Jake; however, his participation in religious ritual indicates his hope in larger institutions. Whether he is a good Catholic or a bad Catholic, he is Catholic, nonetheless, a Catholic, who at times, adheres to the Protestant paradigm of confession. Jake’s journey begins with restrained confession; by the end of the work he is able to release his burden and express the frustrations holding him back.

At the beginning of the novel, wine and liquor comprise the unspoken language between Jake and the others, but by the time they arrive in Spain wine enables them to converse openly. The biting dialogue, in the times of saturation, reflects the internal conflicts raging. Jake makes confession internally and externally. As alcohol becomes a permanent fixture of the group, the interior monologues surface in tense conversations. Readers see the first of Jake’s confessions take place in his Paris apartment; the Count and Brett have dropped in unexpectedly. In Brett’s presence, Jake is vulnerable and feels the need to express his true feelings about their relationship. As a defense mechanism, Brett never allows herself to be truly honest with Jake. He asks her to go away with him, and, of course, Brett refuses, citing her nature as the reason for dismissal: “It wouldn’t be any good. I’ll go if you like. But I couldn’t live quietly in the country. Not with my own true love.” She goes on to say, “Isn’t it rotten? There isn’t any use my telling you I love you,” to which Jake replies, “You know I love you”. The feelings of love and passion Jake has harbored are now explicit. Jake displays them in the interior of his heart, only to be reminded of Brett's prior obligations as she says, "Let's not talk. Talking's all bilge. I'm going away from you, and then Michael's coming back" (55). The confession of love does not create restoration for Jake and Brett; instead, confession reiterates Brett's lack of commitment and Jake's pursuit of the unattainable.

In Madrid, Jake visits the local church to maintain the Catholicism he has left. Jake's confession is of interest to Brett. Her being privy to his inner struggles might somehow bring understanding to their relationship. Jake practices restraint with his emotions, whereas Brett practices restraint in her display of vulnerability. Fascinated with his religious practices, Brett wants to observe the ritual:

> I went to church a couple of times, one with Brett. She wanted to hear me go to confession, but I told her that not only was it impossible but it was not as interesting as it sounded, and, besides it would be in a language she did not know. (151)

In this passage, Jake references the "language" of confession and how this language would be foreign to Lady Brett Ashley. Yet the linguistic structure of confession is not so bound to liturgy as to be incomprehensible. The ritual of confession is the dissonance to which Jake is referring. Confession, more so than contrition, is woven throughout the work and is manifested in every character, but least of all to Brett. She does not engage in confession as often as the others. Unfamiliarity, for Brett, stems from her infrequent desire to confess. In Jake's estimate, Brett will not understand the language of confession because of its content and delivery. The impossibility of Brett's participation alludes to the Catholic structure of confession (between priest and parishioner).

Public confession is not as prevalent as in the Protestant community. Lady Ashley is operating in the Protestant scheme of public admission; though she is certainly not religious, she is attracted to the evocative nature of confession.

Before the party leaves for San Sebastian, Brett makes a confession of her own, further alienating Jake. The two are walking along together and Brett asks if Robert Cohen will be joining them in Spain:

> Brett looked at me. “I say,” she said, “is Robert Cohen going on this trip?”
> “Yes. Why?”
> “Don’t you think it will be a bit rough on him?”
> “Why should it?”
> “Who do you think I went down to San Sebastian with?”
> “Congratulations,” I said. (83)

Brett’s actions have obviously wounded him. Although Jake is fully cognizant of Brett’s behavior, he cannot set aside his love for her. Brett does not amend her life; she understands her nature and makes half-hearted apologies, but ultimately her confession is an attempt to exert her dominance over Jake.

Confession comes easily for some of the characters. Mike, Brett’s fiancé, speaks his thoughts whenever he is intoxicated. Embarrassed, Brett attempts to quiet his outbursts and excuses his behavior. Mike, himself, excuses his actions by making wine his scapegoat. Though Mike does not issue any type of sincere apology, the group accepts the wine rationale. Alcohol, for Mike, covers his sin of candor and allows him to retain his placement in the group. But Mike is not alone in his confessions. Every character makes confession in some way while under the influence of liquor. Prior to Mike’s joining the group, confession was more subtle, a bit more poignant, as with Jake and Brett. However, Mike’s biting confessions serve his own pride and selfishness, alienating those who threaten him. Upon arriving in Pamplona, the group is assembled and ready to participate in the festivities. Stopping at a café for refreshment after their first bull fight, Mike fulfills his role as confessor. Discussion of the bulls fills the air, giving Mike the opportunity to direct his frustrations to Robert Cohn:

> "Did you see that steer?" Mike asked "That was extraordinary."
> "It's no life being a steer," Robert Cohn said.
> "Don't you think so?" Mike said. "I would have thought you'd loved being a steer, Robert."
> "What do you mean, Mike?"
> "They lead such a quiet life. They never say anything and they're always hanging about so." (141)

Addressing the annoyance that Robert has created, Mike makes himself clear. Robert's visit to San Sebastian is unwelcomed and Mike chooses to voice his disgust openly. The café setting, where drink is shared, gives Mike confidence to release his thoughts. He goes on to tell Robert, "What if Brett did sleep with you? She's slept with lots of better people than you." At the expense of shaming his fiancé, Mike divulges his own pride. His confessions do not edify the group, but rather they add to the developing tension. Brett, in an attempt to extinguish the argument, blames alcohol for Mike's candid expressions. Drunkenness, however, is not problematic to Brett's betrothed. The sobriety of others creates even more conflict as Mike says, "Perhaps I am drunk. Why aren't you drunk? Why don't you ever get drunk, Robert?" (142). Again, Robert's lack of alcohol separates him from the group. Likewise, Mike makes note of it in order to further detach him from their circle. Confession in this sense is destructive, not only for

Mike, but for the entire group also. Wine does not carry a healing quality in this instance. The excess of wine initiates the time of confession for Mike.

In the same scene, Mike furthers his confession by disclosing Brett's affairs with other men. While in Jake's company, Mike discusses his fiancé's sanctioned indiscretions by saying, "Mark you. Brett's had affairs with men before. She tells me all about everything. She gave me the chap Cohn's letters to read. I wouldn't read them" (143). He boasts of the openness of his relationship with Brett, yet finds Robert's interest in her very disturbing. Readers assume that Mike is aware of Jake's feelings for Brett because of Brett's openness about her affairs outside of their relationship. However, Jake's affection for Brett does not threaten Mike; Jake is very much a part of the group. Although his priorities are somewhat more responsible, he does participate in the sharing of alcohol and the attending of the various festival events. On the other hand, Robert keeps himself at a distance, remaining close only for Brett. His abstinence of alcohol spurs animosity from the others whose functionality depends on consumption.

As the confrontation comes to an end, Jake decides to persuade Robert to rejoin the circle. Mike gives Jake an ultimatum to relay: "You tell him, Jake. Tell him either he must behave or get out" (143). According to Mike, Robert is not behaving as he should, that is, abstaining from drink and showing unwarranted affection towards his lady. As Jake, Brett, and Mike leave the café to meet Bill and Robert, Mike asks, "How should I meet Cohn?" to which Brett replies, "Just act as though nothing has happened." Mike confesses, "It's quite all right with me […] I'm not embarrassed." In this case, confession does not lead to contrition. Once again Brett uses drunkenness as an excuse, "If he says anything, just say you were tight." Mike concurs with that alibi stating, "Quite and the funny thing is I think I was tight" (144). Intoxication becomes the scapegoat for their actions; wine pacifies transgression. Aptly describing the nature of wine for Mike, she says, "Are these poisonous things paid for?" (144). Wine and liquor are the "poisonous" substances infiltrating the closed off group causing dissention among its members. Confession, from Mike's point of view, elevates his stature, while demoting Robert's position. Confession is not employed to remove barriers and bring him closer to his friends, but rather admission dissects the group and builds partitions to keep people from coming in. As Jake explains,

> It was like a certain dinner I remember from the war. There was much wine, an ignored tension, and a feeling of things coming that you could not prevent happening. Under the wine I lost the disgusted feeling and was happy. It seemed they were all such nice people. (146)

Wine heightens the feeling of tension and ushers in the inevitable. Jake realizes that the confrontation has not fully subsided, yet wine's hypnotic effect prevents him from acknowledging what is to come. The duality of wine presents itself again; for Mike, disgust is voiced through wine, but for Jake, disgust is masked by the drinking of wine.

Confession, for Mike, becomes the perversion of the Augustinian model, which contains visceral, explicit confessions. Augustine wrote *Confessions* to encourage others to repent. Past indiscretions are highlighted out of a sincere desire to see people come to God and confront the habits that obstruct intimacy with Him. While Mike's confessions, too, are visceral and explicit, sincerity is completely lost on him; even less, his confession does not provide a respectable example for others to follow. Augustine's life experiences, as painful and shameful as they were to reveal, serve as a reminder of the grace and mercy God extended him. In Augustine's view, confession is the humbling catharsis that reconciles the sinner to God. Humiliation, rather than humility, is exhibited in the confessions of our characters. Pride and insecurity suffocate any attempt at reconciliation. Likewise, the giving of mercy does not occur among the members of Jake's circle. They cannot overcome the brokenness of their own lives to empathize with the struggles of others. Therefore, wine settles into the fractures of their souls, permeating to the underlying frustrations and causing those animosities to rise.

Consumption feeds the need for honesty, often creating alienation within the group. The anxieties associated with the cultural climate and with each other bubble to the surface. Their circle has no system of checks and balances, so inebriation occurs without retribution or counsel. Jake's party sanctions reckless behavior, allowing for the venting of irritations. The chemical properties of wine which cause drunkenness rush into the bloodstreams, becoming one with the body. The chemical nature then materializes in the characters' behavior; so wine becomes an extension of their psyches and movements. Motivation is generated with every sip, creating a foundation for confession.

As the novel progresses, alcohol becomes more prevalent, climaxing with the San Fermin festival. During the San Fermin festival, the characters take every alcoholic liberty. While the event calls for celebrating and revelry, San Fermin is also a religious festival. The running of the bulls in Pamplona commemorates Saint Fermin's death and veneration. The sacred and the profane collide on the streets of Pamplona. Hemingway constructs a dichotomy of passions in this scene. Religious fervor and secular inhibitions occupy the same space and partake of the wine, which serves both holy and fleshly purposes. The juxtaposition of the sacred recognition and the carnal festivities creates a surreal environment, an environment where Jake and the others are forced to confront themselves. Jake describes the throngs of people on the streets, dancing, singing, and drinking. The frenetic energy of the festival elicits candor. As Jake observes,

> The fiesta was really started. It kept up day and night for seven days. The dancing kept up, *the drinking kept up* (author's emphasis), the noise went on. The things that happened could only have happened during a fiesta. Everything became quite unreal finally and it seemed as though nothing could have any consequences. It seemed out of place to think of consequences during a fiesta. All during the fiesta you had the feeling, even when it was quiet, that you had to shout any remark to make it heard. (154-155)

Not only are the characters socially drinking, but the passage indicates an excessive consumption of alcohol. The surreal atmosphere condones the recklessness occurring. The festival marks a crossroads for them all. The drinking of wine takes on a more serious role in that wine resembles blood. The fruit of the vine as the symbol for blood refers to the scriptures of the New Testament and the symbolism is reflected in the festival. Jake and the others consume wine to recover their own humanity. The backdrop heightens a spiritual awareness and forces them to confront their brokenness. Reaction is displayed in drunkenness; spiritual depravity causes the characters to drench themselves in wine. The corollary experience brings about revelation and further alienation. Wine equates to blood, which equates to humanity, which equates to a sense of belonging. The Eucharist, in Protestantism, is often administered corporately; this public ceremony unites the congregation under one creed, the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice. The personalities of *The Sun Also Rises* are united in their brokenness through wine. Excessive behavior stems from the insatiable thirst for normalcy. The constant flow of wine demonstrates a fear of losing a connection with their own humanity; so they pour a libation to rescue themselves from obscurity.

The bull fighting in the novel also mirrors the Passion of the Christ. Jake's connection to the sport and its players is mentioned throughout. Arriving to Pamplona, Jake and Bill check into the Montoya Hotel, where the owner Montoya greets them. Jake and Montoya both have a passion for the art of bull fighting. The festival culminates in the running and fighting of the bulls. The celebration of wine ends with blood sacrifice. The cultural sport mimics the religious significance of the event. As Peter L. Hays explains, "Bull fighting, therefore, as Hemingway uses it in the novel, is not in opposition to the Catholic Church, but parallel to it, an altered mirror image" (47). At one of the bull fights, Jake is teaching Brett the dynamics of the fight. Brett noticing the blood stained on the matador's article of clothing muses, "I wonder if they ever launder them," to which Jake replies, "I don't think so. It might spoil the color." Brett concludes, “Funny”…“How one doesn’t mind the blood” (*SAR* 212). The matador’s blood soaked garment is a symbol of the animal sacrifice he performs. Blood marks his duty. Because the entire community is involved, the role of the matador is one of a priest or spiritual leader, performing ritual for the sake of the group. Just as the Catholic priest administers the Eucharist to his parish, the matador participates in this ritual on behalf of the community. In both cases, the covering of blood acts as a kind of atonement. The pageantry of the festival continues in the decorum of the bull fight. The matador, dressed in extravagant attire, spills the bull’s blood in remembrance of San Fermin, and on a larger scale the death of Christ. Wine and blood are linked in the San Fermin festival.

Their unrestrained actions are a method of preserving their humanity. Wine is the life force they devour in an effort to prevent a fading away. On some level, addiction plagues each one of them. Certainly alcohol can be seen as the vehicle for addiction, but it goes much deeper than that. The excessive behavior should not be dismissed as merely alcoholism, but a more personal spiritual struggle. In an effort to reconcile the spirit and the flesh, the consumption of wine negatively results for several of the characters as they attempt to repair disconnections. For Jake, the event brings awareness and allows him to overcome the hindrances the circle of friends has placed. Wine provides the cathartic experience Jake is seeking. Though the experience causes a few relationships to dissolve, with Robert and Brett for instance, wine purges the dross of Jake’s life. The focus on wine illuminates the fixation on blood and bull fighting. The killing of the bulls mimics the spilling of sacrificial blood for the removal of sin. These communal ritual – social drinking and bull fighting – allow the characters to participate in their atonement. Saturation is the method of cleansing, and in purging the soul, Jake finds peace. *The Sun Also Rises* initiates the dialogue in the recovery of humanness.

Chapter Two

Bread and Social Conversion in *The Grapes of Wrath*

The use of “grapes” in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* ushers in the next stage of communion. The Joads pursue employment in California, the land of grapes, in order to maintain and nourish the family. The opportunity to work in a vineyard brings a hope of bread to the family. Steinbeck dispays wine imagery to emphasize the need for bread.

The second element of the Lord’s Supper is bread; in a Christian context, the commonality of the element resonates a feeling of the sacred in the everyday. Food as a symbol of physical and spiritual hunger plays such an important role in the novel. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God," says the scripture in Matthew 4:4. The food substance represents the body of Christ. The act of breaking bread has a two-fold meaning: 1) It symbolizes the torture Christ endured on the cross as his body was broken; 2) It defines a time of fellowship or community. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, bread portrays this two part definition. In Christ’s comment, He is alluding to the dual nature of human existence, body and soul. Steinbeck’s characters experience want in natural and spiritual ways. The physical labor required to earn a loaf of bread was exhausting and demoralizing for the Joad family. The Dust Bowl era reminds and recalls the frailty of life. When a basic necessity, such as bread, is removed from daily functioning, the system fails and feelings of desperation set in. For the Joad family, their quest is one of forced renewal and forage. Starvation is a close presence due to the barrenness of the land. The Joads also seek a restoration of the soul.

In the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel, physical aridity becomes a spiritual metaphor for the Israelites. God shows Ezekiel a place of "dry bones," essentially a graveyard (Ezekiel 37:4 *OSB*). The image of vast desert with dry, uncovered bones represented the spiritual state of the children of Israel. For the people of the Dust Bowl, their fields became graveyards. The bones of the crops could be seen for acres. Likewise, the bones of children could be seen as hunger became a permanent fixture in their every day existence. John Steinbeck uses the Biblical description of the dust to illustrate the severity of the situation,

> The dawn came, but no day. In the gray sky a red sun appeared, a dim red circle gave a little light, like dusk; and as that day advanced, the dusk slipped back toward darkness, and the wind cried and whimpered over the fallen corn. Men and women huddled in their houses, and they tied handkerchiefs over their noses when they went out, and wore goggles to protect their eyes. (2-3)

This apocalyptic scene captures the helplessness of the farmers. The earth is fading, along with their ability to find strength in the dire reality. The decimation of their fields has stripped their dignity. Because most families share field responsibilities, the family structure is affected at every level; the inability to produce crops demeans the men, which in turn creates concern for the women and confusion for the children. All wait in the shadow of the sun watching their lives wither away.

As the lending companies and banks repossess the lands, families are dispersed and even broken. Survival becomes the main objective, and in the pursuit of a better life, community values are tested. In chapter five, Steinbeck displays the dissention within the community and the disconnection between the banking institutions and the people farming the land:

> The driver sat in his iron seat and he was proud of the straight lines he did not will, proud of the tractor he did not own or love, proud of the power he could not control. And when that crop grew, and was harvested, no man had crumbled a hot clod in his fingers and let the earth sift past his fingertips. No man had touched the seed, or lusted for the growth. Men ate what they had not raised, had no connection with the bread. (36)

The tractors come to demolish the homes on the property, tractors operated by members of the community, yet these men did not participate in the growth of the crops and had no right to tear them down. They “had no connection with the bread”; the fundamental structures of the community are concepts separate from the intentions of the bank employees (36). The need for money to purchase food overrides loyalty to group. Though the value to care for one another pervades their farming town, biological desires cannot be quelled with corporate values. However, this creates a disconnection in that the tractors that were intended for the advancement of the crop are now being employed to disperse households and abandon the field for a season.

The invasive dust penetrates the landscape causing the community to splinter into two fragments: those who are forced to migrate and those who hire out to the landlords and banking institutions. The man on the tractor is connected to the community through familial relations, "Joe Davis' boy," is disconnected from the plight of the farmers, not out of antipathy or cynicism, but from his own need for bread to provide for his family. His choice is one of obligation to those nearest him. The few dollars earned in destroying another family's home allows him to purchase bread for his hungry children. The dust has blurred the line between community loyalty and individual survival. Unity and wholeness are traded for a small amount of money, yet that price wards off starvation for another day. The mire created from the dust of the land and the tears of the people confuses right and wrong. The wheels of the machines turn so that some may survive, but for families like the Joads, the machines remove dignity. For the Joads, migration is the only option. As a family, they must pursue the opportunity the West offers, despite the obvious risks. The tragedy of losing their home does not shatter any hope for the future; instead the loss strengthens the family. Packing what little pride remained in their distressed home, the family sets out for California for work. The quest for bread transforms into a journey that awakens their sense of humanity and begins the restoration of the body.

As the family ventures westward, the dynamic of the group changes Pa Joad is the head of the household, but in this new phase of the family, Tom assumes the role as leader. The patriarch's status is not being demoted, but rather this transition marks the beginning of a new life for them all. As the next generation, Tom will lead his family to California in search of work. Ma Joad fulfills the role of matriarch and the family's moral compass. The dynamic of the leader son and the strong, religious mother smacks of the Madonna image, yet Tom is certainly no saintly figure. Steinbeck gives us a modern interpretation of Biblical iconography. Though Tom does not mimic the Christic figure, the process of movement and social care can be seen. Defending family and community, Tom strives to repair a damaged reputation and to advocate for those less fortunate. The character of Jim Casey assists Tom during this itinerate process. Casey is welcomed to join the family, because it is seen as "good luck" to have a preacher on board. Ma Joad remains as the religious force in the familial structure, but Casey's presence creates confidence in their venture. The label of preacher is unsettling for Casey, because of his insecurity and uncertainty in his faith. Yet he fulfills the role of spiritual leader for the Joad family in that he promotes the idea of community and encourages the charitable behavior already functioning in the family.

The family is now operating under Casey's philosophy of communal assistance. The character of Jim Casey has a great influence on the family. Along with Jim in an effort to regain lost dignity, the family travels to the land of grapes but in search of bread. As the reverend for the community or the provider of spiritual bread, Casey sees the tremendous responsibility of spiritually guiding the people, yet he doubts the motivations behinds his guidance. Flaws surface, bringing a realization that prompts Casey to reevaluate his role as a preacher:

> Tell you what—I used ta get people jumpin' an' talkin' in tongues, an' glory-shoutin' till they just fell down an' passed out. An' some I'd baptize to bring 'em to. An' then—you know what I'd do? I'd take one of them girls out in the grass, an' I'd lay with her. Done it ever' time. Then I'd feel bad, an' I'd pray an' pray, but it didn't do no good. (21-22)

Like the crops on the field, Casey's faith withers and he forgoes the ministry. The collapse of the landscape has changed his perspective of what it means to help others; but the essence of his belief that remains is to love and care for people. Casey views this as separate from his prior teachings, yet the core of his convictions is rooted in the principles of the New Testament. Christ's ministry centered on advocating for those whom society had dismissed and mistreated. Steinbeck uses the character of Casey to champion the same cause. Likewise, the Joads recognize the benevolence in Casey and place him as their spiritual leader. In providing spiritual nourishment, Casey restores lost dignity and reintegrates into society.

As the family moves towards California, their structure is tested. The death of Grandpa Joad signifies the end of an era. The family has already begun a process of transition, and the death of the patriarch further manifests the changing times. The old ways cannot survive in the new atmosphere of the Great Depression, especially when obtaining food. Families search for work, manual work, because the land has died, leaving farm hands idle. Their livelihood, their trade, their best skills cannot revive the ground. Grandpa's generation saw the land thrive with endless harvests. The eternal life of the patriarch associated with the land has been stripped away. The land no longer represents heritage and stability; it is now a fading memory of the way it was. As

Charles J. Shindo says, “By settling the land, working it, and maintaining it the dust bowl migrants had developed a relationship to the land that was more than economic. The land was a part of them” (67). For a people of little revenue, land was the family’s prized possession, because without land the family had no identity. Soil, seed, and water activated a certain amount of pride, a pride withered by the immensity of the sun and destroyed by the machines of the modern world.

Grandpa’s passing also emphasizes the arduous nature of the journey itself. The open road, in this case, Route 66 was a relatively new phenomenon. Miles of vastness lay before them without much public assistance. Diners and gas stations were beginning to open along Route 66; however, drivers had to be cautious of the scarcity of such establishments. At the time of Grandpa’s death, the family has no other option but to bury him on the roadside. Lacking the appropriate funds necessary, they cannot conduct a proper burial. They must conserve their money to purchase bread. The embarrassment and shame of having to lay a loved one to rest in an inhospitable environment devastates the Joads. Yet in this heart-breaking scene, Casey eulogizes in such a way that retains the grandfather’s dignity:

> This here ol’ man jus’ lived a life an’ jus’ died out of it. I don’ know whether he was good or bad, but that don’t matter much. He was alive, an’ that’s what matters […] He got a job to do, but it’s all laid out for ‘im an’ there’s on’y one way to do it. But us, we got a job to do, an’ they’s a thousan’ ways, an’ we don’ know which way to turn. An’ if I was to pray, it’d be for the folks that don’ know which way to turn. Grandpa here, he got the easy straight. An’ now cover ‘im up and let him get to his work. (*GW* 144)

Even in death, Grandpa has important work to accomplish. Casey's tribute speaks to the heart of the novel. Fading crops have removed the dignity that was once thought permanent. But instead of shriveling like the corn rows on the field, the family is seeking dignity through the only method they have known—work. Again and again readers see the Joad family drawing from their own resources to achieve their goals. They take offense at the mention of any type of charity or handout. Just as the family worked the fields for bread, they will work the fields again for nourishment. Though the grape vines of California are not affiliated with their family, the Joads are retaining their unitary bond, which is more important.

The diner scene in chapter fifteen is the most powerful display of humanity in the novel. The philosophical exchange is so simple, yet the meaning resonates with the plight of the migrant worker. Steinbeck treats the lesson of dignity against an American institution, the diner. The diner is the Mecca of all things comforting, and Steinbeck capitalizes on this reputation and designates the diner as a place of compassion and generosity. As the truck drivers file in to rest and relax with a cup of coffee and a slice of pie, a migrant family enters the diner in search of sustenance. The man asks for a dime portion of bread to divide among his other family members. The waitress, Mae, refuses initially, not out of apathy, but fearing for her own livelihood. The dwindling stock of bread might put the diner at risk of running out. The cook, Al, senses the urgent need of the family and agrees to sell the fifteen-cent loaf for ten cents. The family man is not asking for a handout, nor does he want pity. The man's dignity is at stake in his five cent deficit. In order to retain his self-respect, he uses his abilities to provide a meal for his loved ones with the resources he possesses. When Mae offers the loaf for ten cents, the man replies, “That’d be robbin’ you, ma’am.” He understands Mae’s perspective and does not wish to inconvenience the diner by cutting into the establishment’s supplies. Yet at the insistence of the cook and Mae, the father purchases the sandwich bread at the discounted price. A glimpse of light comes in the kindness of this scene. The desolation of the land has not completely depleted the energy to show compassion.

Later on in the scene, the man notices his children gazing fondly at some striped candies. When he asks Mae the price of the sugary treats, she replies, “Them’s two for a penny.” The actual cost of the candy is a nickel a piece, but Mae sees an opportunity for a father to indulge his children. The candy’s significance lies in the joy the children have in receiving such a luxury. One penny buys a moment of happiness and a feeling of normalcy. Though funds are scarce, the harshness of the road and the anxiety of what is to come once they reach their destination prompts the man to display tenderness. The man’s pride is retained in that he can purchase food for his family members and delight for his little ones. That loaf of bread eases their existence for a few hours. A product of such common grace rises to the forefront as a means of survival. Ten cents fills the stomach, barely satiating the instinctual urge. Just as in the case of Joads, migrant families fully understood the direness of their situation, but they would not allow lack to sanction any kind of deplorable behavior. That is not to say that every family exacted decisions based on ethical standards, but

Steinbeck is dispelling the myth that the poor have no regard for seemliness. The remarkable ingenuity, determination, and self-sufficiency necessary to carry out the journey is exhibited in the Joad family; because of these factors, the family recognizes their own humanity.

A constant threat to the Joads is brokenness: brokenness in their familial structure and in their spirits. A united structure provides assurance in the uncertain atmosphere. Ma Joad is especially concerned with the breaking down of everything she holds dear. Her wish is to carry over the legacy birthed in Oklahoma soil to the land of prosperity. As one body, survival is dependent on the wholeness of their existence. Without pecuniary advancement, the entire family must work in order to achieve even a meager status of living. The former generation has passed away, and Ma recognizes this as prophetic for the remaining members. They are entering an unknown world, a world filled with promise, yet uncharted. Unity is the physical, moral, and spiritual fiber that binds, a salve on the wounds of poverty.

The *Grapes of Wrath* exemplifies the type of unity present in the communion ritual. Paradoxically, the breaking of bread is the representation of Christ’s body which was done so to create unity among Christ’s believers. As stated in chapter one, the Protestant view of communion does not include transubstantiation, so the emphasis falls on sacred metaphor. At the Last Supper in the twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew, Jesus shares a loaf of bread with his disciples and explains to his companions the significance of the unleavened food. The breaking was to symbolize the bodily torture Christ would endure and the restoration that would follow. The Last Supper takes place prior to the crucifixion, so Christ establishes a sense of unity, comradeship before his gruesome death, and this unity is reiterated at the time of his ascension. Partaking of the bread created a bond, not only with Christ, but also with each other. The bread is a reminder of the corporate aspect of communion. This is a personal act taken corporately, unifying the members of the body. The quest for bread has threatened the unity of the Joad family, and it is the quest for bread that strengthens their bond.

The character of Ma is closely associated with bread and bread making, more specifically, biscuit making. As the matriarch, she operates in the domestic sphere, and food preparation is a part of that realm. She is concerned with the well-being of her spouse, children, and relatives. With a little flour and water, she transforms humble ingredients into nourishment, ensuring the survival of her family. Bread is simple, yet necessary. Alluding to nineteenth-century domesticity, Ma takes on the responsibility of feeding her family. Mark McWilliams, in his essay “Moral Fiber: Bread in the Nineteenth-Century America,” explains that “bread, described in increasingly explicit moral terms, became the symbol of a housewife’s care for her family” (184). Bread making, in the Victorian era, takes on religious fervor in that a woman’s moral obligation was to exhibit skills in cookery, especially in the art of bread making. Because Ma is connected to bread, she is also linked to the idea of her being a moral influence. Her biscuits sustain the family, therefore maintaining a sense of unity. Bread is always with the Joad family, usually in small amounts, but present nonetheless.

Although Ma's domestic sphere has been demolished by machinery, she can function in that capacity, using the most available resources. Scarcity does not demote her status as the matriarch, but rather she demonstrates resilience as the lady of the house. The high brown biscuits remind her family of what they lack and motivate their travel west.

When the Joad family reaches their destination, they are enveloped in the sumptuous array of orchards, vineyards, and greenery. The dry, desolate images of the western Oklahoma landscape dissipate in the presence of such vibrancy. The tremendous amount of struggle and heart-ache roll from the back of the truck in light of the hope spanning across the hills. However, the Joads soon learn the true nature of their paradise. Upon arrival at the town of Hooverville, they discover the work they longed to have is nearly impossible to obtain. The vicious cycle of migrant work trapped thousands of families. The Joads are informed of the system and its complete lack of decency. For less than a dollar a day, families break their bodies in order to purchase food, inhabiting shoddy tents or dilapidated shacks because the entire household budget is relegated to the prevention of starvation. Emaciated children and unkempt men wander the camp site, whirling from their present reality. The shock and injustice of the dichotomy that California presents overwhelms the Joad family. The camp site is the doppelganger of their paradise. Field after field of ripe fruit waits to be plucked, yet too many hands drive the wages for picking down. Wage gouging leads to uprising, which is immediately subdued leaving little mobility for change. Refusing to succumb to the pressure of the working environment, the Joads adhere to their course and seek work wherever they can.

The Joads eventually settle in a government camp where rules and regulations occupy every aspect of life. This is an attempt, on the part of the workers, to recover the lost ordered life. Ma and Rose of Sharon bask in the modernity of running water and shower stalls. Ma especially regains a sense of self-worth in this environment when Jim Rawley, the camp manager, visits their assigned place. Ma is suspicious of Rawley's motives, when he enters, having experienced the malice of prior bosses. As Mrs. Joad prepares the morning meal, Rawley casually converses with her and partakes of a cup of coffee. She offers Mr. Rawley some of the biscuits she has baked. Ma has the chance to be hospitable and social, two areas denied her since the family crossed the California border. After Rawley leaves, Ma feels a resurgence of humanity, remarking to Rose of Sharon, "These folks is our folks—is our folks. An' that manager, he come an' set an' drank coffee, an' he says, 'Mrs. Joad this, an' Mrs. Joad that—an' 'How you getting' on, Mrs. Joad?' She stopped and sighed. 'Why I feel like people again," (*GW* 307). Dignity has returned to the Joad family. As Warren Motley points out, "The emotional impact of this simple act of kindness and decency after so much insult and brutality drives home the symbolic significance of the gesture…" (410). Though the setting is not what they imagined—the worker's camp is a far cry from the white house near the orange grove—the family has the opportunity to meet their basic necessities. In Oklahoma, the Joads had an established identity that stretched back several generations. Tractors demolished that identity earlier in the novel. The discourse between Jim Rawley and Ma Joad has reinstated her sense of identity and more importantly, her humanity. The matriarch recognizes the friendliness in Rawley and engages in a familiar and civilized act. The manager pays her respect and treats her as an individual, not merely another migrant worker. This experience energizes Ma and gives her the strength to pursue the goals the family has set. The breaking of bread serves as a reminder of hope in the midst of great travailing; that healing can be derived from such struggle.

This idea of brokenness as a vehicle for healing refers to the communion ceremony. In scripture, the body of Christ was beaten and broken not only for the remission of sin, but for bodily and spiritual healing as well. The novel focuses on the situation of the body, whether in terms of movement, physical labor, sickness, death, or birth. Nourishment of the body is the driving force in all of those factors. The correlation between bread and the body relates to the Eucharist paradigm. The health of the body is the outward expression of the soul. The two are interlocked not only in scripture, but also in the work. The Joads not only seek bread in their journey, but a restoration of the soul, a conversion. The family undergoes a reconciliatory process as they close the gap between the natural and spiritual worlds.

In chapter twenty-eight, Steinbeck emphasizes the idea of wholeness and reconciliation. After the death of Casey and Tom’s murder of Casey’s attacker, Tom resorts to hiding in order to evade arrest. Ruthie unintentionally advertises his crimes, which causes Ma to seek him out and warn him. As Ma is encouraging Tom to flee the camp area and establish roots in the big city, Tom divulges his plans for the future. He has decided to carry Casey's torch of advocacy and continue fighting for the needs of the less fortunate. Casey's "gospel" has influenced Tom to the point of risking his life for the cause. As Tom explains,

> But now I been thinkin' what he said, an' I can remember—all of it. Says one time he went out in the wilderness to find his own soul, an' he foun' he didn' have no soul that was his'n. Says he foun' he jus' got a little piece of a great big soul. Says a wilderness ain't no good, 'cause his little piece of a soul wasn't no good 'less it was with the rest, an' was whole. (418)

Tom is speaking of reconciliation between the "little soul" and the "great soul" and between the souls of the other people. The search for bread has transformed into a search for spiritual satisfaction, both being sufficed in Casey's blueprint for reconciliation. As a body of workers, they have the ability to rise up and claim their dignity, and as a group of souls they have the support structure to ensure the prevention of deprivation. Casey sacrifices his life for the betterment of humanity; his heroic act brings revelation to Tom and sparks a revolution of the spirit. Casey's Christ-like behavior propels his mission even in death. The camp site then becomes a refuge for lost souls, unifying under the banner of healing and restoration. Though the Joads have faced great adversity at every juncture in the relocation to California, they are instrumental in the changes implemented among the thinking of the people. Tom carries Casey's mantle and pursues a life devoted to helping others. Even in a time of endless suffering, the family manages to navigate in the mire under the guidance of Casey. As Ma says goodbye to her prodigal son, Tom announces the course for his life,

> I'll be ever'where-wherever you look. Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there. If Casey knowed, why, I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad an'-I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry an' they know supper's ready. An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build-why, I'll be there. (419)

This marks a new chapter for the Joad family. The passage summarizes the theme of the novel, feeding the hungry. Tom isn't referring to a welfare situation, though he does champion assistance. He's referring to the cyclical process halted earlier in the novel. The farmer plants and the ground yields the reaping and sowing effect which ties the family to the land. They are not merely on the land, but a part of the land. This relationship is not isolated to the farming family, but is, rather, inclusive of the community at large. The crops affect them all. The nourishment that adds strength builds the houses and makes productive living possible. Tom has undergone a conversion. He sees the truth in Casey's lessons and discovers the humanity and spirituality deprivation had smothered. John Seelye states that “[Casey] becomes a secular, even socialistic Christ, whose martyrdom at the hands of a brutal mob serves to convert Tom himself to the movement” (43). Determined to spread the gospel of Casey, Tom pursues a life of advocacy, a life steeped in the traditions of his heritage and the modernity of his time. He is mindful of the dual nature of man, flesh and spirit.

When Christ began his ministry on earth, he first met the physical needs of the people then he concentrated on their spiritual needs. Christ demonstrates this process in Matthew 14: 13-21. A large crowd gathered to hear Jesus teach and as time passes before he ministers, the crowd grows hungry. Jesus' disciples recommend that he send the people away to buy food, but Christ sees an opportunity to show his compassion. The only food stuffs available were five loaves and two fish. Taking the loaves and fish, Christ transforms this small meal into enough food to nourish over fifteen thousand people. After the people eat, Christ teaches the scriptures and ministers to them. Nourishment is for both body and soul. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Tom follows this model of nourishment. The motivation to help those at any cost drives his ambition. People have the right to obtain bread, work, and happiness. Tom's mission is not one of vengeance, but of sincere compassion.

Understanding that without proper nutrition, the soul cannot flourish, Tom and his followers will be ever present to ensure the physical well-being of the people. Ma views Tom's departure as another splinter in the already breaking familial unit. But as Edwin Moseley points out, "Earlier in the novel, Ma Joad feels and knows the survival of the Joads depends on her keeping the literal family together, but by the end of the book when the family of man has formulated in her awareness, she can let Tom go literally and still have him spiritually" (172). Ma releases her son to his ministry, where he can disperse bread and truth to satiate the broken-hearted.

Bread, in *The Grapes of Wrath*, symbolizes the body and soul of a generation. It's placement in the Eucharist demonstrates the connection between the earthly and the sacred; the common is elevated to the status of extraordinary. In regards to the migrant family, their humble spirits accomplish unbelievable feats, all while retaining their values. Ma feeds them as Casey teaches them; the Biblical narrative displayed in the novel evokes feelings of brotherhood. At His last supper, Christ broke bread with his companions as a family. The bread signified both the imminent harm of the crucifixion and the hope of reconciliation the sacrifice would bring. The Joads certainly confront hardship and degradation, yet the influence of Casey brings a hope that eventually inspires Tom to continue the movement. Bread becomes more than the ingredients themselves; bread encompasses the fullness, security, and peace the family sought to obtain when leaving the red dust of Oklahoma.

Chapter Three

Spiritual Redemption and Familial Restoration in *The Poisonwood Bible*

The process of communion as a circular structure is seen as a way to refresh and reflect upon the Christian's faith in God. The member partakes of the sacred to purify the fleshly or profane. The very act of communion acknowledges Christ's sacrifice and the believer's gratefulness for that behavior. Consuming the metaphoric representations of Christ's body creates a more intimate bond between the parishioners and their heavenly Father. The physical torment of the crucifixion that Christ endured and the restoration of that same body completes the Eucharistic cycle. The derivative of the sacrament is redemption. Just as Christ ascended to heaven to be with God, so too, the believer is joined to God through the consumption of the communion elements. By taking the wine and bread, not only are the communicants unified by the corporate ceremony, but they are also united with Christ. The act creates an awareness of sin and provides an opportunity for restoration.

As explored in *The Sun Also Rises* and *Grapes of Wrath*, the gnawing hunger present is a search for spiritual satisfaction. The ideas of hunger, brokenness, dignity, and unity converge in Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*. The novel concentrates on the final result of the communion process –

redemption. The Price women suffer greatly under the stringent authority of Nathan Price and the harsh, unfamiliar environment of the African landscape. This time of tribulation fosters an atmosphere of spiritual renewal. In all three novels of this study, a connection to the land is displayed. The Congo's strange and, at times, frightening environment is also lush and vibrant. The Price family find themselves in an Edenic environment, where they are dependent on the land for survival and where they can reflect upon the sins of the past. Just as the crucifixion of Christ allows believers to return to the lost Eden, indicating that the intimacy created between humans and God could be achieved through Christ's sacrifice, the Prices find spiritual reconciliation in this flawed Eden. The story of Africa is the family's communion; as they narrate their story, they remember the broken bodies, the horrific bloodshed, and the innocent vehicle that brought their redemption. For Orleanna and her daughters, the journey to and the exodus from the Congo engenders a sense of humility and strength allowing them to accept forgiveness and find redemption.

The Congo becomes a place of life and death, a recognition of frailty and a foundation for redemption. As the circle of women adapts to the environment of the Congo, they function together and separately, all dealing with their own guilt and forgiveness. This type of forgiveness is present in communion. When ingesting the elements of bread and wine, the participant remembers the divine forgiveness imparted by the art of the Eucharistic ceremony. *The Poisonwood Bible* is a book of memories, a chronicle of the delicate balance between life and death and how that interplay leads to absolution. Though the Christian community's view on the practice and significance of communion is faceted, the ideas of confession, conversion, and redemption are repeated themes in all the liturgy. *The Poisonwood Bible* provides a backdrop for the theme of redemption in an unconventional way. In order for Orleanna to recover any amount of dignity and to retain what little strength she possesses, she will break from her husband so that she might redeem herself and her children. Like Brett Ashley of *The Sun Also Rises* and Ma Joad of *The Grapes of Wrath*, Oreanna Price represents a flawed variation of the mother goddess or Virgin Mary figure. Although Orleanna is quite flawed, her determination leads the young women out of Africa. The Edenic atmosphere proves to be too overwhelming for the children of God. The Congo acts as a two-edged sword, cutting away the unnecessary American mindset Orleanna carried to Africa and cutting into her soul because of the tragedy she experiences. Africa resides in her memory, her history. Orleanna recalls the power of the African experience:

> You've played some trick on the dividing of my cells so my body can never be free of the small parts of Africa it consumed. Africa, where one of my children remains in the dank red earth. It's the scent of accusation. It seems I only know myself, anymore, by your attendance in my soul. (*PB* 87)

The "sins" of the past occupy her body and spirit. As a descendent of the motherline, Orleanna is "haunted by ghosts…The unredeemed grief and suffering of generations of women" (Lowinsky 234). In Naomi Lowinsky's essay, "Mother of Mothers, Daughter of Daughters: Reflections on the Motherline," she discusses the unique relationship between mothers and daughters, and the immense trials they face in these roles. For Orleanna, the beginning of the

Congo journey marks a time of confession about her strained marriage and eventual reconciliation with her daughters, a time that will carry her through the tragedy of losing her daughter. The structures that were neglected in the States, such as her marriage, crumble under the African sun, exposing her flaws and misjudgments. The struggles of the Price women mirror the social struggles of the Congolese. The family witnesses the terrible atrocities inflicted upon those who sought social equality. Both the Price women and the Congolese fight to overcome tyranny, and experience tragedy in that battle. However, the exodus does end with hope, the hope of returning to the Eden of memory and finding solace there. *The Poisonwood Bible* illustrates the redemptive quality of communion through the journey of the Price family.

The character of Orleanna demonstrates the believer's journey from brokenness to spiritual unity through forgiveness. Readers are introduced to the lives of the Price family in Orleanna's narrative. Orleanna, Rachel, Leah, Adah, and Ruth May collectively tell the Price story. Orleanna's narratives, more so than the others, focus on the idea of guilt and forgiveness. The Price family comes to Africa as American missionaries. The Georgian clan soon discovers the challenges hinged to missionary work. Nathan Price, the husband and father of the family, is passionate about spreading the gospel to the non-Christian Congolese. Nathan's fervor and lack of compassion become problematic as the family transitions into their new roles as missionaries. Orleanna's estrangement from Nathan further emphasizes the crumbling bond of their marriage, as she confesses, "I married a man who could never love me, probably. It would have trespassed on his devotion to all mankind. I remained his wife because it was the one thing I was able to do each day" (8). Orleanna and Nathan do not share the same religious desires. In fact, Orleanna labels herself as "Southern Baptist by marriage" (8). But that is not to say that she completely lacks faith. Rather, her faith is rooted in an organic realm and challenged under the weight of Nathan Price's authority. She attempts to fulfill her role as the preacher's wife and show hospitality through food to the village interpreter. She displays the best serving platters and dishes they have and uses her skills to prepare a delicious meal with unfamiliar ingredients. After the interpreter leaves, having relayed a message that Nathan did not like, Orleanna and Nathan begin arguing. As punishment for her defiance, Nathan destroys her favorite serving plate on the table:

> He raised it up over his head and slammed it down hard on the table, cracking it right in two. The smaller half flipped upside down as it broke, and lay there dribbling black plantain juice like blood onto the tablecloth. Mother stood helplessly, holding her hands out to the plate like she wished she could mend its hurt feelings.
>
> "You were getting too fond of that plate. Don't you think I've noticed?"
>
> She didn't answer him.
>
> "I had hoped you might know better than to waste your devotion on the things of this world, but apparently I was mistaken. I am ashamed of you."
>
> "You're right," she said quietly. "I *was* too fond of that plate." (134)

This scene portrays Nathan's malicious and vindictive personality. As a person who is relegated to the home, Orleanna's "fondness" of the plate is not a concentration on material objects, but a representation of her abilities and pride as a home maker. Preparing food gives Orleanna an opportunity to engage with people from the village. Unlike her children, Orleanna will not have opportunities outside of the home. Her inner sanctum is the house that she has created and her husband is aware of this pride and deems it useless. But even in the times of humiliation, Orleanna is able to care for her children and retain her position as the mother of the home. She struggles to protect them from his abusive manner, but realizes the emotional and verbal brutality Nathan bestows upon his family will eventually destroy them all. The atmosphere of the Congo, with its untraditional customs and communal behavior, allows Orleanna to separate from her dogmatic husband and give her daughters the opportunity to exert their independence outside of the household.

The verdant landscape of Africa exposes the pallor of Orleanna's marriage. The Georgian hues which camouflaged her desperation fade into the tall grass, forcing Orleanna to care for old wounds. At first glance, Orleanna's brokenness appears as an indomitable weakness, but a closer reading reveals the undying strength she possesses; she is broken before she is made whole. As in *The Sun Also Rises* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, brokenness allows her character to undergo a process of renewal. The process of spiritual rejuvenation, for Orleanna, builds strength, a strength that she then imparts to her daughters. As Elaine R. Ognibene points outs, "The longer she lives in Kilanga, the clearer Orleanna's vision becomes" (22). Her presence as a flawed mother goddess serves as instruction for the Price girls, providing a point of reference or source of redemption.

Orleanna's skills as a mother display a combination of societal traditions and environmental adaptations. The duties and obligations of motherhood become increasingly difficult to carry out in the exotic Congo. Providing basic necessities, such as water, fires, and food, becomes daunting tasks that she cannot avoid. Food preparation, especially, becomes a tedious ordeal. As Orleanna explains, "Food, that was another song and dance. Finding it, learning its name, cutting or pounding or dashing its brains to make it into something my family would tolerate" (92). The food available, a root-like vegetable called manioc, is by no means nutritious, but it does quell hunger. The manioc must be peeled, boiled, and mashed, and after the long cooking process the vegetable lacks flavor, according to the American palates consuming it. The family has no other choice but to eat off the land, and the harvest proves to be challenging. Water and manioc are the elements of their communion, a daily reminder of the brokenness and redemption they all need. Planting manioc creates a connection to the Congo, and as a result, the family is connected to the Kilanga. William F. Purcell in his article, "The Gospel According to Kingsolver," sees the planting of manioc as connecting to God, "Performing the daily tasks of planting and harvesting, reaping the fruits of the earth…is in itself a form of communion with and participation in the divine" (100). However, the family's taste buds have become so accustomed to American comforts that they are unable to enjoy the native fare. The family yearns for the familiar comfort of Betty Crocker cake mixes, smooth peanut butter, and coffee. Orleanna finds herself "[dreaming] of coffee." She says, "I'm afraid I didn't miss the physical presence of my husband in his absences as much as I missed coffee" (91). The Prices must learn to adapt to Africa's pantry and modify their idea of what food is. Kristin Jacobson points out, "The Price home emphasizes domesticity's 'expansionist logic' by destabilizing conventional dichotomies between the domestic and the foreign" (108). For the Kilanga, food comes from the earth and fills the belly; it is simple, natural food, requiring no embellishments though the preparation is labor intensive. Yet through the planting of native foods, Orleanna understands the beauty of the Congo and provides nourishment for her family. Orleanna's goal is to stave off hunger for her family and in doing so preserves their fragile well-being. Preparing food becomes a way for Orleanna to initiate the redemptive process.

Not only is the cooking process time-consuming, but also Orleanna must devote attention to her children's education and etiquette. In the United States, the young Price women received their academic instruction at public school, but in the Congo, they perform their studies in the home under their mother's tutelage. Mrs. Price takes on the role of the children's educator with little classroom experience, yet she takes on every part of the educational process to ensure her children have a balanced life. She also gives them sewing projects that will eventually go in the girls' hope chests. The hope chest represents more than an acceptance of patriarchy; rather, the hope chest is a symbol of heritage. The skills Orleanna passes on to her children enable them to manufacture the items of their future homes. The stitching on the table cloth is motherly tradition woven. The variation of the pattern styles becomes another way for Orleanna to connect to her daughters and their equally varied personalities. As Adah remarks, “Mother had the foresight to give me the botanical motif, knowing how I love green and growing things” (152). Adah, the silent daughter, finds significance in the verdant pattern:

> Bunches of pansies and roses were meant to bloom in the four corners, all connected by a border of twining green vines. And in the very same way the Spirit long ago became manifest in the Body of Christ, the first cabbage rose began to materialize on my tablecloth. From there, I could envision the whole garden. (152)

The ordinary task of sewing becomes a beautiful metaphor for the connection between the sacred and the secular and the relationship between Orleanna and her daughters. Adah, in this passage, is comparing vegetation to the body of Christ. The table cloth symbolizes the connection between physical nourishment and spiritual nourishment. The daughters use a piece of fabric to prepare their supper rituals and pay homage to the source of their meals. The sewing project transcends an afternoon hobby. Heritage and spirituality intertwine, encompassing their existence and providing life.

Orleanna embraces the organic; her connection to the land is consistent. As Nathan rules “heaven,” Orleanna remains close to the earth. Her children thrive on, profit from, and are forever joined with the land. Adah recalls her mother’s easiness and light-heartedness when in nature: “My earliest Mother memories lie laughing blue-eyed in the grass, child herself, rolling side to side as Rachel and Leah decorated her all over with purple-clover jewelry” (56). Orleanna has the ability to suffuse heaven and earth, to find God in purple blossoms. She takes the form of a mother goddess in that she acts as a bridge between the sacred and the profane. Like the venerated Mary, she is entirely of this earth, yet she becomes the vessel of redemption. Mary, the mother of Christ, in the Protestant scheme, is honored, but thought entirely human. She experiences the divine through her children, specifically Jesus. Mary's role did not dominate the family, but she used her influence nonetheless. As the encourager and the nurturer, she witnessed the miraculous and tragic events of her child's life. Orleanna shares these characteristics as a mother. Nathan's dictatorship has suffocated the joy out of the Price matriarch, but she remains influential. Her daughters gaze upon the woman she is, remember the woman she was, and contemplate the kind of women they will be. While Orleanna does not save them eternally, she is the vehicle of their redemption, carrying the young women out of Africa and into safety. As children, Rachel, Leah, Adah, and Ruth May are an extension of Orleanna; the preservation of their bodies is a preservation of hers. Likewise, the loss of one of the bodies is a removal of part of her soul. Despite her fragile state, Orleanna strives to maintain the family, drawing from her organic spirit.

This urge to keep the family intact is prompted by the death of the youngest daughter, Ruth May. As retaliation for Nathan's pride and blasphemies, Tata Kuvudundu, the village priest, places a green mamba snake in the Price's chicken coup. The slithering reptile attacks Ruth May, giving her a fatal bite. As her body absorbs the poisonous wound, life as the Price daughters knew it to be is vanishing. The last to be born is the first to die. As Rachel expounds,

> It was *our* life, the only one we were going to have. The only Ruth May…We thought we could freeze time for just one moment, and

> one more after that. That if none of us confessed it, we could hold back the curse that was going to be our history. (*PB* 367)

The hope that Ruth May embodied is now gone, yet from her death the others are able to retain life. Again, the idea of confession as a precursor to salvation confronts the reader. Here, the act of confession does not necessarily pertain to sin, but the recognition of a desperate situation. The tragedy of losing her child motivates the frail mother to escape. Ruth May's death has a Christic quality; she dies from the attack of a Satanic symbol. Not only does her death allude to the crucifixion of Christ, but also to the fall of man. The serpent enters the garden of their life and forever changes the trajectory of the family's path. Just as Christ's sacrifice reconciles humanity's marred relationship with God, Ruth May's innocent death reconciles Orleanna to her daughters. Moved by the need to repair her family, Orleanna baptizes Ruth May and prepares her tiny body for burial.

Across Protestantism, two public ceremonies comprise the foundation for the believer's faith, and depending upon the sect, preface the other. These rituals are referred to as the sacraments – communion and baptism. Baptism can act as a public recognition of salvation, or it can serve as a way to welcome people into the church, as in the case of infant baptism. In either case, water baptism publicly acknowledges a personal commitment. In the gospels, John, Jesus' cousin, baptizes him prior to the commencement of Jesus' journey throughout Judea. This event marks the beginning of his ministry as a healer and a teacher of the scripture. For most Protestants, the meaning remains the same. Baptism signifies a cleansing of the spirit, thus the importance of water.

Blood and water are the life forces of the human existence. For the Christian, these elements hold powerful connotations. They become so much more than ritual, but an integral part of the access to the divine.

For Orleanna, baptism cleanses her youngest child and brings about closure. Just as Christ is baptized before his sacrifice on the cross, Ruth May's passing and baptism instills strength into the Price women, removing them from danger and the authoritarianism of Nathan. Wearing a "dark scarf," Orleanna bathes the remnants of Ruth May's earthly existence. The mother's heartache spills from the page:

> Mother bathed Ruth May with a washcloth as if she were a baby. I stood with my back to the wall, remembering too much of another time, as I watched her rub carefully under the chin and in the folds at the backs the elbows and knees…Mother spread a small, soft hand onto hers and washed the fingers one at a time. She cradled and lifted the head to rinse it, taking great care not to get the soapy water in Ruth May's eyes. As she dried the limp blond hair with a towel, she leaned in close, inhaling the scent of my sister's scalp. (369)

She treats Ruth May's body as though she were living, knowing that a part of her would always survive. Wrapping the precious child in mosquito netting, Orleanna has "finally let her go" (370). Like Mary, Orleanna cannot intervene for her child and prevent what is fated to be; she can only grasp to the hope that is to come. Her flesh is connected to the African soil through the burial of Ruth May. Redemption comes at a high cost, a cost that will haunt Orleanna: "a mother's body remembers her babies" (381). Nathan is completely absent from this process. A rain is coming and he sees an opportunity to baptize the village. He is more concerned with proving his validity as a preacher than with the tragedy unfolding at his home. The loss of Ruth May will continue to haunt Orleanna long after the family flees Africa. Part of her flesh remains in the clay-red soil: “My baby, my blood, my honest truth: entreat me not to leave thee, for whither thou goest I will go. Where I lodge, we lodge together. Where I die, you’ll be buried at last” (382). By paraphrasing Ruth 1:16, “Wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God,” Orleanna pacifies her grief with spirituality (*OSB*). For Ruth May, the chapter of her life has ended too soon. Her mother continues the journey, in spite of the flesh and blood she is leaving behind.

The loss of innocence prompts the family to confront the gravity of their situation. The baptism of Ruth May symbolizes the transformation of the family. They are no longer trapped by the rule of Nathan Price. Ruth May’s death releases the women to pursue a life once deemed unattainable. As darkness looms over the Price home, Orleanna plans their departure. Elaine R. Ognibene goes on to say, “Free of Nathan’s control, [Orleanna] chooses to speak and in voice comes redemption” (23). Like the children of Israel, Orleanna and her children travel across a precarious landscape to find solace.

The Price women experience their own baptism en route to Bulungu. Their journey of redemption begins with the rainy season; determined to save her daughters, Orleanna leads them through muddy, flooded roads. Mosquitoes surround their frail bodies like fog, as they desperately try to reach the plane that will bring salvation. Rachel and Leah stay behind, Rachel for entrepreneurial reasons and Leah for love. Orleanna boards the plane with one daughter, Adah, because Africa has won over the other three. Mrs. Price will never be able to sever the tie that connects her to the Congo; too much of her past and future is bound to the clay-red soil. As Leah reflects on the sacrifices her mother made she says, “But it dawns on me now that, in the end, Mother carried every last one of our possessions outside as a farewell gift to Kilanga. There are wives, and then there are wives. My pagan mother alone among us understood redemption” (*PB* 456). Orleanna’s refusal to continue the missionary way brought life back to the family. She buried her child and her pain in search of hope. Orleanna is, indeed, the bridge connecting the Price family to Africa. The baptism acknowledges the redemption the women now freely accept.

The twins, Leah and Adah, are physically separated by an ocean, and their relationship represents the distance between pride and humility and the roles they play in the act of redemption. As a symbol for Eden, the Congo elicits feelings of humility and pride. In the Price family, Leah and Adah take on those roles and depending on their place in life, those roles are inverted. Leah and Adah are truly opposites, both physically and metaphorically: Leah is the, hopeful, strapping athlete and bright academic, and Adah the quiet, cynical, deformed genius. While Leah hunts with bow and arrow, Adah remains home with pen and paper, both subverting social restraints. Like most twins they share a unique perspective of the world. Against the backdrop of Africa, Leah’s pride and Adah’s humility become exaggerated, illuminating the conflict of those spheres. For the believer or Christian, pride and humility are in constant struggle. Pride cannot recognize the deterioration of the soul; humility cannot escape it.

Both Leah and Adah at moments possess humility, at other times, pride. The twins are incredibly intelligent and have an insight unlike Rachel and Ruth May, and are constantly struggling to maintain a balance between humility and pride. The dichotomy of pride and humility is a persistent expression of humanity. The Christian reflects upon the conflict between pride and humility during the communion ceremony, searching for balance. Reflecting on the past, Adah is humbled by her opportunity to leave the turmoil of Africa and her mother’s sacrifice in accomplishing this task: “It has taken me so long to believe I am saved. Not from crookedness; I am still to some extent crooked and always too slow. But saved from the abandonment I deserved” (440). Adah has overcome the physical handicap of her childhood but continues to grapple with the safety of her spirit. With appreciation and humility, Adah acknowledges the redemption her mother longed for and achieved.

Likewise, Leah makes an association between her body and redemption when she says, “I rock back and forth on my chair like a baby, craving so many impossible things: justice, forgiveness, redemption. I crave to stop bearing all the wounds of this place on my own narrow body” (474). The physical state of the body is connected to the process of redemption. Just as Christ’s body was the vehicle for salvation, the scars, wounds, and deformities of their childhood are folded into the grace they now accept. They can never escape the darkness that shrouded the missionary parish, but peace does find them, occupying the crevices left empty from guilt and shame. For Leah and Adah, the balance between pride and humility is an ongoing battle in their quest for redemption. Pride often stokes the fire of their bitterness, and they are unable to heal. Humility, like a comforting salve, relieves the pain from years of sorrow.

Through tragedy, the Price women find redemption. Whatever mistakes or transgressions occurred in the Congo, forgiveness covers them all. Leah and Adah are able to recognize their father's humanity and forgive him for the harshness he exacted. Orleanna finally learns to accept forgiveness for the passing of Ruth May; she finds catharsis in tragedy. The last chapter is told through the voice of Ruth May. She encourages her mother to release the past and to move forward. Although Orleanna can never forget the atrocity of Ruth May's death, she can allow grace to dissolve the invisible barriers around her soul. As Ruth May tells her,

> Slide the weight from your shoulders and move forward. You are afraid you might forget, but you never will. You will forgive and remember. Think of the vine that curls from the small square plot that was once my heart. That is the only marker you need. Move on. Walk forward into the light. (*PB* 543)

The Price women pursue the light, reminded of the redemption they were given. After receiving the bread and wine, the gravity of Christ's sacrifice resonates with the participant. The communicant walks away from the bread and wine, and walks toward the light of God. During times of great suffering, forgiveness is incomprehensible. Yet, even in their brokenness, the Price women ask for and give freely the forgiveness that reconciles their experience in Africa.

Conclusion

Speak, Believe, Accept

Confession, conversion, redemption: the cycle of communion transcends beyond the elements of bread and wine. The ingestion of the holy reminds of the purity imparted to the believer. The tangible becomes the symbolic, fusing the sacred and profane. The parishioner participates in the communion service in spite of flaws and frailty. Because the parishioner acknowledges those flaws and short-comings, he/she finds peace in the Eucharist. Communion is a time of remembrance, of recognition, of refreshment. *The Sun Also Rises*, *Grapes of Wrath*, and *The Poisonwood Bible* demonstrate the process of communion through the journeys of Jake Barnes and Brett Ashley, Ma and Tom Joad, and Orleanna Price. The physical and metaphoric representations of the communion elements depict the themes of hunger and restoration in American literature. Hemingway, Steinbeck, and Kingsolver draw from religious rhetoric, producing thoughtful examinations of the human soul. Brokenness can be beautiful and treasured, a reminder of what has taken place and a prediction of what is to come. Shards of clay can, indeed, return to the pottery unified and whole.

For Jake and Brett, the streets of Paris and San Fermin are saturated with wine, and the journey to see the bull fights becomes a quest for their humanity and the recovery of blood. Wine is the tool of catharsis, which removes the dross of Jake's burden. All of the characters search for a remedy to their emptiness. This hunger is expressed through confession, confronting the deficiency haunting their existence. The ancient, fermented liquid stands in place of the blood they desperately seek.

Likewise for the Joads, the quest for food is a metaphor for spiritual hunger. The presence of bread, or the lack thereof, changes the dynamics of the family. Working their bodies to exhaustion, they value bread as a precious commodity. On the road to California, the Joads, especially Tom, go through a conversion, making a connection between their physical hunger and their spiritual lack. Dignity is the focal point in this activity. The ability to provide food for a hungry family and the feeling of dignity derived from salvation converge, satiating both types of need. Tom is inspired to spread the gospel of dignity in the place of his fallen friend. Banal food is elevated to a level of distinction for the void that it fills; bread joins the body to heaven and earth.

The Prices understand the despair and frustration that comes with a lack of food, yet they find grace in a flawed Eden. The unfamiliar landscape of Africa tears down the walls separating them from redemption. Orleanna overcomes the inequality in her marriage and finds forgiveness for sins as a mother. The novel also acts as a metaphor for the Christian journey. The barriers of pride and transgression dissolve, allowing the believer to experience grace. The Price family cannot forget the tragedies which occurred during their time in the Congo. That moment in their collective history is used as a catalyst to continue “walking in the light” (*PB* 543). Memory propels action, giving hope for the future.

Communion unites these characters and exposes the lack they so long to satiate. In the Christian experience, communion is a reminder of the past, a reconciliation of the present, and a restoration for the future. Bread and wine, when ingested, commemorates the sacrifice of Christ and the humanity that was redeemed. Hemingway, Steinbeck, and Kingsolver artfully display the recovery of humanity and, as a result, the spirit that is renewed.

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