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The University of Oklahoma, Ph.D., 1960
Language and Literature, modern

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan

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1961

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE THEME OF DESTRUCTIVE INNOCENCE IN THE MODERN NOVEL: GREENE, JAMES, CARY, PORTER

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

DOROTHY JEANNE WALTERS

Norman, Oklahoma

1960

THE THEME OF DESTRUCTIVE INNOCENCE IN THE MODERN NOVEL:

GREENE, JAMES, CARY, PORTER

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to Professors Victor A. Elconin and A. J. Fritz, the co-directors of this dissertation. Professor Elconin, through his stimulating classroom lectures, aroused my early interest in the American novel, and has since contributed immeasurably to my growth as student and critic. Professor Fritz introduced me to the modern British novel. He has given generously of his time and attention in the direction of this dissertation, and his comments have been of extreme value.

I also wish to thank Professors Roy R. Male, Calvin G. Thayer, and John S. Ezell for their many helpful suggestions.

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THE THEME OF DESTRUCTIVE INNOCENCE IN THE MODERN NOVEL: GREENE, JAMES, CARY, PORTER

CHAPTER I

OF INNOCENCE AND ITS VARIETIES

It is always a challenge to locate and define the major themes of the literature of an age. In our own time, the problem is complicated by the prevalence of chaos on every level of the social frame and in every area of human experience. Ours is an age of reversed values. The social upheaval subsequent to the Industrial Revolution and the turbulent shiftings brought on by the discoveries of the technological age have brought not merely a revaluation but a revolution in every area. Our notions of the cosmos have been violently revised. Our political structures, periodically wrenched apart by war, are constantly rebuilt in new and radical patterns (radical, that is, as opposed to the traditions they supersede). Social units--family, church, schools--deprived of traditional roles of authority, adapt as best they can to the diminished roles assigned them by the New Society. Our age is characterized not only by

anxiety, but by paradox, complexity, ambiguity, and a pervasive sense of imminent destruction. Except for the last category, our specific attributes discover immediate parallels in the age of the Renaissance. At that time, the old structures were breaking up, and new and complex systems were rising to supplant them. The poetry of the metaphysicals conspicuously demonstrates the awareness of the age of its own essentially ambivalent nature. (The fact that the New Critics, recently fallen out of favor in many quarters, have used many of the above terms to characterize the poetry of that age in no way negates the validity of their application.) The primary distinction between the tenor of the Renaissance and that of our own age, however, is that the former reflected a necessary dissolution of previously held structures as a preparation for the emergence of new intellectual syntheses, the creation of fresh social configurations, and the introduction of untried political and economic systems in a pattern of continuing reintegration and rebirth; whereas in our own age the various break-downs appear to represent not so much a preliminary disintegration leading to a re-combining of forms and values in a more meaningful system, but a frightening prelude to a total cultural collapse.

The twentieth century is thus characterized by a movement into chaos and the adoption of a highly complex worldview to accommodate and account for the shifting, un-

stable nature of the times. The breaking of the old forms and the substitution of fresh concepts of reality and new codes of conduct have led to a universal rejection of absolutes in every area. With the knowledge that any fact or system stands ready to be supplanted by its opposite at any time, we hesitate to admit more than a momentary validity for any concept or theory. Having rejected both the Puritan affirmation of and the transcendental denial of the fact of Evil, we are left in a world of total relativity, where everything is mixed, nothing pure. The religious interpretation of human behavior in terms of its rightness or wrongness according to a divinely ordered code has been seriously shaken by the revelations of modern psychology, sociology, anthropology, and biology. The family unit appears to be fading as the fixed center of the social structure. The wars which have regularly swept over Europe and Asia have brought the periodic collapse of established political systems. Thus the individual, lacking reliable external structures to shape and support his life, discovers himself in a highly unstable, bafflingly complex universe. The discarding of absolute standards and the revaluating of previously accepted notions of reality have led to the acceptance of an irresolvable ambiguity as the only tenable "reality principle." It is, I believe, this sense of the basic ambiguity which underlies the universe and the realm

of human experience within that universe which most obviously characterizes the literature of our time.

The problem of guilt and innocence, good and evil, always a major concern of those who attempt to render the human experience meaningful in terms of art, is especially complex for the twentieth century writer. Formerly, in less sophisticated societies with stable moral and ethical codes, it was a relatively simple process to evaluate human conduct, to fix liability and assign blame. In our own age of dislocated values and increasingly intricate moral frames, it has become progressively more difficult to set up a clear line of demarcation between "good" and "evil" in the sphere of human conduct. We are constantly reminded by the psychologist and sociologist of the mitigating circumstance, of the unfortunate heredity or unhappy childhood environment which produces the antisocial behavior in the adult. Faced with the social transgressor, our tendency is not to condemn but to explain, not to fix guilt but to seek for motives. Along with our recognition that the "guilty" agent may not be fully culpable for his misdeeds has come the concurrent realization that "innocence" itself may produce destructive consequences, may indeed be more damaging in its effects than the expression of undisguised malice. Our awareness of the destructive potential of innocence has come as an inevitable corollary of our overall discovery of the basic-

ally paradoxical and ambivalent nature of the world we live in. The theme of "destructive innocence" thus emerges as a major means for expressing the basic irony which the writers of our time find at the center of all human experience in the contemporary world.

The term "destructive innocence," admittedly paradoxical, can be best understood through a further consideration of its meaning and applicability. The term innocence implies most immediately the condition of being "not guilty." But, one may ask, on what grounds is "guilt" itself ever to be established? The most common basis for affixing blame is probably the test of intention. If one intends no harm, he is judged on different grounds than is the deliberate malefactor. Hence the laws recognize the distinction between the plotted murder and the accidental slaying, though the consequent loss of human life is the same. However, in one sense, the performer of the destructive act is henceforth forever "guilty," for the commission of the act itself precludes his re-entry into his prior state of relative moral purity, regardless of his own motives. A further distinction must be recognized here. "Innocence" applies not only to the commitment of or abstinence from the destructive, or evil, deed, but to the degree of the agent's acquaintance with the nature of evil itself. Thus Goodman Brown, who was basically "innocent" before his

journey into the forest, was ever after unable to recapture the purity of his moral vision, even though he himself had committed no evil act. Henceforth he carried with him a knowledge of the potential for corruption of the human heart, and this knowledge of evil was sufficient to deprive him forever of his belief in the goodness of mankind. Thus we may set up as two primary categories of innocents those unacquainted with the nature of evil, and those who recognize its essential attributes but who abstain from its performance. (Children and Henry James' heroines would fall into the first category; saints and artists like James himself would be assigned to the latter.)

In most of the works included in this study, the central figures are persons "innocent" in the fullest meaning of the term. That is, they are not only innocent in motive, but are free from a previous performance of evil or knowledge of its nature. All of them are (or become) "guilty," in that each effects or becomes the agent of some form of destruction; and they further have in common that the destructive act is itself in some way a direct consequence of the state of "innocence" of the agent. Hence the applicability of the paradoxical description "destructive innocence" to the subject of this study.

Before going on to a more extended categorization of the various kinds of innocence, I would like to discuss

briefly man's changing awareness of the complex nature of good and evil and their interrelationships as this is reflected in his literature. The early myth maker of primitive society tends to resolve the problem by setting up a simple dichotomy. Good is represented by the hero--noble, fierce, and pure. His external prowess is clearly related to his inward nobility. His antagonist--evil--is described clearly in terms which make recognition of his basic identity and inherent ignobility inescapable. Often he is depicted as a monster, dragon, or serpent. When the noble Beowulf goes forth to slay the horrid monster of the fen, there is no doubt as to the identity of the parties involved. It is clear that Beowulf represents an ideal who embodies the highest virtues of his society (virtually unmixed good) just as his opponent, the horrid inhabitant of the bog, represents unmitigated evil in all its repugnance and terror. The audience has no doubt as to where its allegiance should lie. The victory is applauded by all, since it is clear that the manly champion is acting in defense of all human kind against the evil spirits that lurk in the unseen world of darkness that rings man in, and that, indeed, it is by virtue of his own nobility and purity of heart that Beowulf wins his victory.

A somewhat more subtle view, reflecting the increased sophistication of the society, is set forth in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Gawain is a flawed hero (being unable

to resist temptation fully) and his powers of dealing with his enemy are proportionately reduced. Gawain's efficacy in withstanding the blows of the giant is directly related to his own state of moral purity. That compromised, he can never attain total victory. In the story of Gawain are revealed both the medieval affirmation of moral purity as a spiritual weapon with which to combat evil, and a recognition of the inescapable fact that human vulnerability to moral temptation makes spiritual perfection extremely rare in the world of actuality.

Beowulf, then, represents a kind of pure heroic ideal of nobility, and Gawain a more realistic portrayal of an imperfect purity. (The emphasis has also shifted from a primitive, active aggression to the Christian mode of passive submission as a means of dealing with "evil.") Yet, in both narratives, the lines between good and evil are clearly drawn. The problem is more complex in the depiction of an Othello, for here we are asked to evaluate the actions of one whose own essential nature is honorable, but who becomes the agent or dupe of the malefactor. Though Othello arouses our condemnation for his rash and disastrous action, still we cannot totally withhold all sympathy from him. His intention was not to murder an innocent creature but to destroy one who, if guilty of the crime attributed to her, would, by his code, be fully deserving of the penalty he administered. Othello himself is not an evil man, but he becomes the agent

of evil. Because of his state of ignorance, he can be classed as a kind of "innocent." His intent is to exact a retribution for misconduct in a way that his society would fully comprehend and perhaps sanction. Instead, he becomes the "innocent" murderer of an exemplar of human purity, the pathetic Desdemona.

In Oedipus we have yet another variant of the "destructive innocent," again with a hero who is deprived of the knowledge which is essential to the avoidance of his crime. Here the difficulty of assessing guilt is even greater than with Othello.[1] For though Othello is deceived by a cunning human agent (and hence wins sympathy if not approval) Oedipus appears somehow to be the dupe of the gods themselves. Although foreknowledge is not to be equated with predetermination, and though Oedipus' ultimate fate is clearly the outcome of a sequence of rash and mistaken actions on his own part, yet in some undeniable manner the course of his life appears to bear a close relation to the operation of "Fate." True, the Greek audience holds him responsible for his crime. Yet, despite his evident culpability, no one will deny him at least partial justification

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[1]I am considering both Oedipus and Othello as works which reflect complex views held by mature societies. Naturally, since civilization itself does not develop in a straight linear progression, neither do man's views of the complexity of the good-evil relation. Also, the particular vision of the individual artist must always be taken into account. In general, however, the more mature the society, the more subtle its perception of the interrelation of good and evil.

for his actions. His intent (in leaving Corinth) was honorable. His actions in removing the earlier curse and in marrying the queen (thus giving the kingdom a responsible head) were admirable. Yet he brings not blessing but disaster to Thebes. Too late he discovers the extent of his violation. Othello wins from us a partial sympathy because of the very innocence and trust of his own basically simple nature. Essentially an honest and forthright man, he was unprepared, by a lack of intellectual acumen and moral insight, to deal effectively with the treachery of his cunning deceiver. Oedipus, however, can claim no such simplicity of intellect or soul. He is both shrewd and wise, solving the riddle which no other man could answer, governing the country with wisdom and intelligence. His mental stature is greater than that of Othello, his offense is more outrageous, and the problem of assessing his guilt is infinitely more complex. Othello's is the simple mind gulled by a clever villain. Oedipus appears to be the victim of the gods. In ignorance of his plight, he commits the most serious of crimes against man and nature. Of course, as a mythic figure he represents at once the objectification of basic human desires, together with the sense of guilt that such desires inevitably arouse as a corollary. Oedipus' punishment is severe. (The fact that he inflicts it on himself is evidence that man feels guilty for these forbidden urges.) Yet the fact that his fate seems in some way to be directed or shaped by super-

natural forces is a recognition of man's feeling that he himself is not fully to blame for his experiencing these unacceptable inner impulses. They are implanted in him by some outside agent, so that his destiny is set from birth, yet he himself is still accountable for his performance of the abhorrent action. Of course, the Greeks did not exonerate Oedipus on these grounds (it remained for modern psychology to point out the universal basis for Oedipus' behavior). Instead, the Greeks provided the frame of "ignorance" to mitigate his crime. Ignorant of his situation, Oedipus performs the ignoble action, and thus realizes one of the deepest--but generally viewed as one of the most unacceptable--of human motives. He is trapped by his own nature (fate) whose true character he himself is ignorant of until it is too late. Out of the innocence of his "ignorance" he brings ruin not only to himself and his own household, but to the entire land (the punishment of Oedipus, a "universal" figure, reflects the universal sense of guilt). From the noblest of men, he must fall to the position of the basest of men. From his position of symbolic unity (his kingship is a symbol of the unity of the land), he must be outcast as a scapegoat (a symbol of total isolation which yet still carries the burden of universal guilt). Oedipus must suffer for the sins of all society. Society says in effect "we" are innocent, yet "we" have sinned. We have brought ruin and corruption to ourselves

and the land. Though our deed were done in darkness (ignorance), once brought to light (known and recognized) it must be punished. Thus Oedipus must suffer for the "innate depravity" of all.

The above examples illustrate two basic categories of destructive innocence. Beowulf and Gawain are the projections of comparatively simple societies which see the conflict between good and evil as a relatively uncomplicated one in which the hero's power to destroy or withstand evil is directly related to his own inner spiritual worth. The outcome of the struggle is one desirable in the eyes of society, being the necessary elimination of the evil which besets man, or the preservation of the pure soul which is threatened by a corrupt external agent. The view becomes more complex with an Othello or an Oedipus. In these stories we have a recognition that the issues are not easily resolved, that good and evil are often hopelessly intermingled within a particular set of circumstances, and that the destructive force of innocence is often to be feared more than the threats of open malevolence. A still more complex consideration of the problem occurs when the destruction arises not out of the efforts of an active agent, but as the consequence of a passive innocent whose very presence serves to call forth or provoke the operation of evil. The primary source for this version of the good-evil relationship is the archetypal myth of man's fall into knowledge and subsequent

ejection from the Garden of Eden, particularly as the myth is rendered by Milton in Paradise Lost. Here Satan is explicitly attracted to the Garden in order to corrupt Adam and Eve as the manifestations of unmixed good. The mere discovery of the existence of the pure beings is sufficient to arouse in Satan a perverse desire to corrupt them as an expression of his own innate malice. Melville's Billy Budd is a later expression of this theme, since Claggart's attitude is that of a Satan who cannot tolerate the spectacle of Billy existing in his Edenic state of unsullied innocence. Thus Billy operates as a kind of destructive agent when he arouses in Claggart the malevolent impulse. Later manifestations of this theme occur whenever the presence of an innocent serves to arouse the corrupt motive on the part of an unscrupulous exploiter, whether the latter has an immediate selfish motive, or is acting out of pure malice. By providing the opportunity for the immoral act, the innocent becomes the unconscious instigator of evil.

This brief survey of some of the possibilities inherent in the good-evil relationship suggests that man's view of that relationship tends to become more intricate and complex as a society matures. The theme of destructive innocence which characterizes much of modern literature is a reflection of contemporary awareness of the paradoxical nature of the relationship between innocence and guilt, right and wrong. Before turning to an examination of the

way in which this theme operates in current literature, I would like to define it more precisely and to consider some of the premises which underlie its manifestations.

It is comparatively easy to define the first member of the term. That is destructive which demolishes or impairs the structure or essence of a specific being or operation. The ultimate result may be either beneficial or harmful, according to the nature of the entity which is destroyed. The destructive act may or may not be classed as "evil," according to the intent of the actor and the nature of the essence destroyed. In this study, I am interested in examining destructive action which is deleterious in its consequences, and which is produced either by an active agent by his own efforts or by a passive agent who arouses the destructive impulse in others in response to his own attitudes, or situation, or essential nature.

The term "innocence" is more complicated. I have already suggested the distinction between its applicability in the realm of experience and its reference to the realm of knowledge. It is, of course, possible to "know evil" (in the sense of comprehending its essential nature and attributes) without oneself being guilty of the evil act. Thus the saint and the artist are aware of the basic qualities of evil, though they themselves are not practitioners of its arts. They may be said to retain a basic "innocence" as long as they themselves are not participants in the

operations of evil. Ordinarily, the performance of the act of evil intention is sufficient to establish a "loss of innocence." (The obvious exception here would be the harmful actions of children and madmen, since they are by tradition and law recognized as morally nonaccountable.) In this study, the term "innocence" will (with one exception) denote freedom from previous commission of the destructive act. (The lunatic in "Noon Wine" is, of course, a murderer, but he is a special case.) Further, the innocents here considered (in the four major analyses) are lacking in a basic perception of the essential nature and attributes of evil, with the exception of Gulley Jimson, whose knowledge of evil is an integral part of his artistic vision. All produce or evoke actions which are destructive in their consequences, but none of the agents are themselves evil, by virtue of the innocence of their intentions.

The innocents here treated are, for the most part, innocent in both knowledge and experience, and all are guiltless in their basic intention. But still further distinctions must be made in considering the historic applications of the term "innocence." In the realm of knowledge, there is the difference between innocence which arises out of "ignorance of the special fact" and "ignorance of the essential nature" of evil. Thus Oedipus may be assumed to know evil, but his good intentions toward his countrymen are thwarted by his ignorance of the particular facts of his own

situation. Because he does not know the special facts of his own origin and destiny, he achieves, in his attempts to benefit his country, only ruin and devastation. Oedipus represents, then, a type of innocence (innocent in intention) which produces ruinous consequences because it is acting on incomplete evidence or false assumptions.

The Ververs in The Golden Bowl (as well as most of James' American innocents) are also examples of those innocent by virtue of "ignorance of the special fact." (The Ververs have no way of discovering the prior relation of the Prince and Charlotte, and thus are unable to avoid the complications ensuing from the placing of these two in the intimate association of a common household. Likewise, Isabel, in The Portrait of a Lady, and Milly, in The Wings of the Dove, are victims of concealed information.) The Ververs, of course, are also innocent in the second, and more important, sense, in that they are initially unable to recognize the face of evil in the world. They do not know its nature, are barely aware of its existence, and their experience is an indoctrination into the fact of its presence and the nature of its qualities.

In addition to the innocence which arises out of ignorance, either of the special fact or of the essential nature of evil, there is the innocent destruction wrought by the agent who appears to be a "victim of fate," in which the agent may or may not be possessed of a prior knowledge

or experience of evil. Included in this category of destruction are the accidental slayings, all the disastrous consequences which can be attributed only to an unfortunate combination of circumstance and chance. A classical example of this type of unintended catastrophe is the ill-fated slaying of Hyacinth by the misguided disc of Apollo. The fact that in some versions of the legend, the blame is laid on Aeolus, who supposedly deflected Apollo's aim out of jealousy, suggests that the ancients recognized that it was impossible to account for such "innocent catastrophes" except by attributing them to the intervention of malevolent gods. This particular type of "innocent catastrophe" is not particularly frequent as a literary subject (its limitations are obvious) but modern examples do occur now and then. One such example would be the auto wreck in The Great Gatsby, where Myrtle Wilson rushes onto the highway at the precise moment of the approach of the oncoming "death car." Another illustration of this type of unpremeditated disaster would be the innocent transmission of the fatal influenza germ by Laura to her lover Adam in Katherine Anne Porter's Pale Horse, Pale Rider.

Akin to the accidental disaster which is effected through the unwitting "agent of fate," is the destructive consequence produced by the action of the "victim of passion." Conrad, for example, is fond of the theme of betrayal enacted by the man who, in the moment of crisis, re-

sponds to instinct rather than conscience. Lord Jim was in no sense evil ("He was one of us"), yet at the moment of choice he deserted his charge and leaped to safety. Arsat, the Malay warrior in "The Lagoon," left his brother to be slain by the pursuers while he escaped with his captured bride to the false paradise of the lagoon. The question of the relative guilt or innocence of the victim of instinct is obviously a highly complicated one, but it is clear at least that such a man does not consciously intend a harmful result to follow his act. Thus he is innocent in intention, if not in consequence. And his culpability would appear to be mitigated by the fact that his weakness emerges when he is put in a situation of stress where he does not have time to think his way to a solution. His is the flaw of weakness rather than perversity; he is, I think, more a victim than a culprit.

The final category of innocents is one I have mentioned already. It is that of children and madmen, those who obviously are not capable of making the moral choice (and hence are "innocent" in the eyes of society) though they are quite capable of performing the destructive act. The type of the dangerous child-innocent is well illustrated by the demonic infants in James' The Turn of the Screw. A more recent study of the yoking of evil with childish innocence occurs in William March's The Bad Seed. The lunatic in Katherine Anne Porter's "Noon Wine" illustrates what Porter

calls "the dubious innocence of madness."

In summary, it may be said that the term "innocence" must include purity of motive and absence of knowing participation in evil. Purity of intention may be established on any one of the following grounds: innocence arising out of ignorance of the specific fact; innocence arising out of ignorance of the nature of evil; innocence of the "agent of fate"; innocence of the "victim of instinct"; innocence of those lacking normal adult intelligence. A "destructive innocent" is thus one who is innocent by the above criteria and whose actions or presence result in a harmful consequence.

Although a breakdown of the various types and modes of innocence is revealing in showing the complexity of its meaning and applications, I have made no attempt in this study to illustrate each of the various categories in the above classification. I am interested, rather, in showing the operation of two basic types of destructive innocence, which may best be described simply as "active" and "passive." The active agents are those committed to some cause or purpose whose ends they promote at the cost of the society about them. The principal examples of this type are presented in the critiques of The Quiet American (the political visionary) and The Horse's Mouth (the artist who is destructive in that he is "disruptive" to normal society). The second type, that of the passive destructive innocent, in-

cludes those innocents who, by their very presence, serve to provoke the destructive act. By providing the occasion for the expression of the evil gesture, they themselves act as agents of destruction. The fullest studies of this type occur in the sections on The Golden Bowl (which shows the innocence-evil dialectic operating on the domestic level) and "Noon Wine" (the type of the madman).

In addition to these four central studies, I have taken note of the theme of innocent destruction as it appears elsewhere in the work of the authors considered. My aim has been simply to show that the theme of destructive innocence is a major one in the contemporary novel, and to reveal through a close study of typical examples, some of its characteristic thematic applications.

CHAPTER II

GRAHAM GREENE AND THE LEPER WITHOUT A BELL

"Innocence is like a dumb leper who has lost his bell, wandering the world, meaning no harm."

Fowler, in The Quiet American

The work of Graham Greene consists of a continuous probing of the nature of good and evil, their interrelationships, and their impact upon the human soul as it becomes the agent now of innocence, now of its antithesis, evil. The relationship, for Greene, is never a simple one. For in his universe good is always tainted with the stain of evil, may, indeed, become the agent performing the destructive action, and evil is not content to operate in isolation but must invariably seek out its counter-manifestation which will both complement and complete it. Thus one of Greene's basic themes, if not the major theme of his work, becomes that of the destructive nature of innocence, a study which culminates in the portrait of The Quiet American (published 1956). In fact, the image of the "Quiet American" stands as probably the clearest, most explicit depiction of the "destructive innocent" in this century.

A look at some of the predecessors of The Quiet American will show how Greene was exploring and experimenting with the theme long before he gave it such emphatic expression in this novel. In Brighton Rock, for example (published 1938), he offers an early and convincing study of the innocent who through her efforts to achieve a divine justice and punish the perpetrators of evil, becomes herself the agency of a destruction much more inclusive and damning than was the original wrong she seeks to set right.[1]

The situation of Brighton Rock contains all those elements of murder, intrigue, and pursuit of which Greene is so fond. Fred Hale, a second rate, nondescript newsman, is pursued and apparently slain by mobsters in revenge for his part in the killing of their leader Kite. Because Fred actually dies of a heart attack moments before the assassins lay hands on him, the police rule that his death is due to natural causes and refuse to search for a murderer or a motive. However, Ida Arnold, a jovial seaside habitué who was Fred's companion on the day of his death, senses that something is amiss, and takes it upon herself to apprehend

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[1]Sean O'Faolain points out: "People are so caught in the net that even when they would do good they do harm--it is the theme of The Quiet American--and if they are godless, must do harm: as when Ida in Brighton Rock by her pity for Hale starts a chain of circumstances that brings disaster all round, or when Rose by her human pity for Pinkie drives him still deeper into evil." The Vanishing Hero: Studies of the Hero in the Modern Novel (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1957), p. 62.

and punish the murderers of Fred. In her relentless pursuit of "justice," Ida unwittingly instigates a series of murders, the slaughter ending only with the suicide (and final damnation) of her victim.[2]

Ida herself is a study of primal innocence in the guise of the archetypal earth-mother who retains her gusto for all the "natural" pleasures of life:

> She wasn't old--somewhere in the late thirties or the early forties--and she was only a little drunk in a friendly accommodating way. You thought of sucking babies when you looked at her, but if she'd borne them she hadn't let them pull her down . . .[3]

Though by no means a harlot, Ida is, still, fond of an occasional romantic seaside interlude, considering such excursions not "bad" but simply "fun" as a part of what is "natural" in "human nature" (though inevitably she is disappointed by their outcome). Ida is innocent in that she is unaware of the essential nature or pervasive presence of evil in the universe. She knows "right" from "wrong" but is uncomprehending of the true qualities of "good" and "evil." And it is for the purpose of righting a wrong, of

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[2]R. W. B. Lewis observes that the book is actually a fusion of the techniques of the "entertainment" and those of the "tragedy." The entertainment is Ida's, the tragedy Pinkie's. The Picaresque Saint: Representative Figures in Contemporary Fiction (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1959), p. 243.

[3]Graham Greene, Brighton Rock (Library ed.; London: Heinemann, 1938), p. 6. All future references to Brighton Rock will refer to this edition.

exacting an eye for an eye, of inflicting her own, personal, intuitive brand of justice that she searches out her hapless culprit, driving him on to compound his initial transgression with murder after murder, until victim after victim falls in a sequence of continuing destruction, and Pinkie himself protests that he is being forced to commit a massacre. For Ida the issues are simply drawn: poor Fred has been killed and somebody will have to pay. The consequence for Pinkie is that her actions drive him into damnation, despair, and, finally, the ultimate, unforgivable act of self-destruction.

Pinkie, the seventeen-year-old villain-victim of the novel, is a unique admixture of innocence and evil. Outwardly, Pinkie has the smooth cheek and baby features of a child. (His name inevitably suggests a state of infancy. And much of the time he is simply referred to as "the Boy.") He is so slight and unprepossessing that he has difficulty getting waited on in restaurants and is refused accommodations at a swank hotel. Yet this downy-faced boy has plotted at least one murder, does not hesitate to employ a razor to impress a lesson on a "client," and carries in his pocket a bottle of vitriol which he lovingly fingers in a kind of secret ecstasy in anticipation of its use at the proper moment.[4] After the death of Kite, it is Pinkie who takes

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[4]Lewis points out that Pinkie's career is a kind of "saint's life in reverse." He also notes that the seven sections of the book represent an inversion of the seven sacraments. Op. cit., p. 246.

over the leadership of the mob.

Although Pinkie is in one sense steeped in the knowledge and experience of evil, he is at the same time a type of "innocent" in that he has not participated in certain basic human experiences which will complete him as a mature person. At the beginning of the novel, Pinkie neither smokes nor drinks.[5] And he has never known a woman. Indeed he has a horror of all sexual relations, a dread developed out of his childhood observations of the loathsome Saturday night rituals of his parents, for them a debt to nature paid with dutiful regularity. When Pinkie is finally forced into marriage (to insure that Rose, as his wife, cannot be forced to testify against him in court), he feels that something basic in his nature has been insulted and defiled. Pinkie's thoughts on sex might well be extended to express his attitude toward many areas of experience where he is yet untried: "He knew the traditional actions as a man may know the principles of gunnery in chalk on a blackboard, but to translate the knowledge to action, to the smashed village and the ravaged woman, one needed help from the nerves" (177). Thus, though Pinkie has in one sense lost his primal innocence, he has not yet entered fully

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[5]Lewis observes that Greene, like Conrad, is fond of ". . . characters--especially wicked characters--whose energy is created by a sort of purity in their evil intention: the boy, Pinkie, in Brighton Rock reveals an intense austerity in his satanism . . ." Ibid., p. 226.

into the adult world of human experience. The false Edenic garden of his youth (he hails from a section of London called Paradise Piece) is long since spoiled, but he has not yet found a substitute. He thus is a kind of wanderer between the two worlds of childhood and adulthood. His great ambition is to escape his beginnings--the world of narrow tenements, swarming brats, and indifferent parents performing animalistic actions in the dark--and to enter the world of sophistication, wisdom, and affluence represented by Colleoni, the successful racketeer who lives in plush hotels surrounded by a retinue of deferent underlings, sends perfumed letters, and carries a gold cigarette lighter. When Pinkie discovers that his child-bride hails from his own section of London, he realizes that life has trapped him back into the world of his origins. When he calls at Rose's home to bargain for her hand he realizes that he can never escape his beginnings: ". . . when the man opened his mouth he heard his father speaking; that figure in the corner was his mother; he bargained for his sister and felt no desire . . ." (191).

Rose herself represents a kind of complete and vacuous innocence which has neither knowledge nor experience of anything outside her own drab, meaningless, restricted world. Though Pinkie resents her innocent state (lacking experience of love and the world, she thus lacks value), he yet perceives that in one sense they complement each other:

". . . she belonged to his life, like a room or a chair: she was something which completed him . . ." (167). "She was good . . . and he was damned: they were made for each other" (168).

Ida Arnold represents the good, generous, earth-mother whom Pinkie never had. Instead of giving him spiritual nourishment as a mother (Ida's large, friendly breasts are her prime insignia) she drives him to earth to exact vengeance for his crimes, and is satisfied only when he has annihilated himself in frantic despair. Likewise, Colleoni, the repulsive but elegant mobster, represents a kind of father-figure but he too rejects Pinkie, excluding him from the world of sheer, unadulterate evil (where he might at least have found a place for himself) just as the lack of a true mother-principle in his life forever bars him from the world of Edenic innocence and purity. His only acceptance is from Rose, a true innocent, but at the last minute Pinkie is ready to destroy her just as he destroys virtually everything he touches. Pinkie realizes, of course, that essentially he and Rose complement each other (even their names are the same). Presumably Greene is here saying that Good and Evil are but two parts of a whole, and that they can properly be seen only as two aspects of a single unity. Existing separately (as in Ida Arnold, who has no real knowledge of evil) or Colleoni (who knows nothing of good) they are totally lacking in significance or value. Only

when they are combined into unity (as by the mating of Pinkie and Rose) does the reality principle of the universe find expression.

In The Power and the Glory, Greene carries forward his theme of the ambivalent nature of good and evil, showing that in the world of actuality they operate both as antitheses and complements. Again, there is the figure of the innocent, representing false or partial good, intent on driving to ground the "guilty." In Brighton Rock the prey (Pinkie) was a true criminal, appearing in the guise of the innocent but already steeped in both the knowledge and experience of evil. In The Power and the Glory, Greene in an ironic reversal substitutes a priest for the true criminal in the role of the hunted man.[6] But criminal and priest share a basic affinity in that each carries a knowledge of

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[6]Lewis notes that in the 'trilogy' (Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory, and The Heart of the Matter), are presented the principal dramatic personae--the murderer, the priest, and the policeman--of Greene's recurring drama. "All three figures, in different embodiments, appear in all three novels; and they tend more and more to resemble each other. The murderer, Pinkie, is knowingly a hideously inverted priest; the policeman, Scobie, becomes involved with crimes and criminals; the officer in The Power and the Glory has 'something of a priest in his intent observant walk,' while the priest in turn has queer points of resemblance with the Yankee killer whose photograph faces his in the police station. The three figures represent, of course, the shifting and interwoven attributes of the Greenean man: a being capable of imitating both Christ and Judas; a person who is at once the pursuer and the man pursued: a creature with the splendid potentiality of either damnation or salvation." Ibid., pp. 241-242.

the true nature of evil and its essential position with respect to both salvation and damnation. In each book, the knowing man is pursued by an "innocent" agent bent on enforcing an ideal of justice which is partial and incomplete, for each pursuer is deficient in his own comprehension of the full scope of the operation of evil in a dualistic universe.

The lieutenant (who is the active agent of pursuit) is himself the victim of a savior complex.[7] He is intent on bringing to his countrymen a salvation consistent with the type of social order he envisions as essential. He desires to save his fellows, but the salvation he strives for is that of the economic and political realms. He not only refuses to recognize the demands of the human soul which the priest strives to provide for, but to achieve his aims will destroy whatever stands in the way of accomplishment. To him the priest is a relic of an outworn era, a vestige of an age of superstition and tyranny which is to be replaced by the new order of social reform and economic betterment.

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[7]The lieutenant's dedication is comparable to that of a priest. This resemblance (already noted) is apparent even in his outward manner: "There was something of a priest in his intent observant walk--a theologian going back over the errors of the past to destroy them again." His room is described as being "as comfortless as a prison or a monastic cell." Graham Greene, The Power and the Glory (Uniform ed.; London: Heinemann, 1940), p. 25. All future references to The Power and the Glory will refer to this edition.

The setting of the story (a Mexican state which retains certain primitive, stone age features) suggests the contrast of old and new time. (Actually, three levels of time are present. One is represented by the natural setting, the Mexican state with its many reminders of a pre-civilization era; the second stage is the immediate past which to the priest represents the now faded world of his old life, the lost civilization of books, order, respect, cleanliness, comfort, knowledge, and spirituality; the third level is that of the new order brought in by the advanced age, which has destroyed the known past world of the priest.) The priest, for whom there is no place in the new time, is in the course of his journey in effect thrust backward in time to a more primitive, desperate era. The chase becomes a kind of primeval drama played out by primitive allegorical figures arising out of and struggling for the soul of the human race.[8] The lieutenant, although basically "innocent"

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[8]Morton Zabel observes of Greene's use of the conventions of the detective form, "In fiction of this kind, action itself becomes less real or representative than symbolic. Disbelief is suspended in acceptance of the typical or the potential; incredulity yields to imaginative recognition . . . If a writer like David Cecil could say, to the charge that John Webster's plays are 'extravagant, irrational, and melodramatic,' that 'the battle of heaven and hell cannot be convincingly conveyed in a mode of humdrum everyday realism' and that 'the wild and bloody conventions of Elizabethan melodrama provided a most appropriate vehicle for carrying his hell-haunted vision of human existence,' a similar defense could be argued for Greene's melodrama . . ." Craft and Character: Texts, Method, and Vocation in Modern Fiction (New York: Viking, 1957), pp. 287-288.

in intention, represents a partial principle of reality. He wishes to remold the world into his own rigid but incomplete vision of Jerusalem. He is the pragmatic crusader seeking to impose his own will on external reality. The priest is not concerned with setting up his own structure to embody what is "good for man," but is instead intent on preserving what is good in man. He is striving to sustain the divine particle which resides beneath the human surface of evil, corruption, pettiness, and sorrow. He recognizes (and in his person symbolizes) the truth that man is both good and evil, flesh and spirit, human and divine.

The flight of the priest--around which much of the book is structured--is itself both a Dantean descent into hell and a journey backward in time. The priest, presumably, represents what is most valuable out of the tradition of the recent past. He is the visible symbol of the agency (the Church) which attempts to preserve through the forms of civilization--tradition, ritual, pattern, order--the inherent spiritual values of man. Thus the lieutenant--although he sincerely believes that he is acting under necessity, that it is essential to free society from the restrictions of superstition and the confinements of formalized belief to prepare the way for the New Order--is, in effect, destroying what is most valuable in the social milieu. Instead of carrying society forward, he is forcing it back into ancient, corrupt codes and patterns. The priest's

journey is a discovery of what the world was before it was elevated by the application of the spiritual principle. It is a journey backward in time not only in a temporal but a cosmic sense. It is a going back into the world of chaos and Old Night. The lieutenant--in his pursuit of the priest --casts him into the world of limbo, where he must suffer total loss of dignity and reduction of human value. Presumably, the hellish experience of the priest is a warning of what may happen in a world where the forces represented by the lieutenant achieve control. In effect, the lieutenant, attempting to act as the agent of "good," is thrusting the world back into a state of pure "evil."

In the opening scene the priest is at the verge of the sea, in a decaying but fairly civilized port, about to make his escape (itself a recognition of failure in his immediate world). By answering a call to the side of a dying woman, he is once more trapped back into the world of jungle, filth, and hiding. In the scenes of the native villages which follow, the priest is shown as having lost both the vestments and outward respect due his office. The revelation that he has fathered a child by one of the Indian women shows the extent of his fusion with the native patterns. When he stands in the line of peasants being inspected by the lieutenant, who is searching for the fugitive priest, he is passed over because his outward appearance and manner so resemble those of the natives who surround him.

The priest undergoes a further reduction in dignity in the city where he first suffers the defeat of losing the all-important sacramental wine he has managed to acquire (the authority from whom he makes his purchase then proceeds to drink it up) and then endures the humiliation of capture as a common criminal. In the jail, his status is reduced still further when he is forced to perform the repugnant task of emptying the slops of the prison cells.

The city itself is a kind of nightmare world of Dis, but in his flight into the jungle he descends into even lower levels of Hell. One of the most intense scenes occurs when, starving, he reaches a deserted banana station, and there must struggle with a crippled dog for the meat on a discarded bone. In the house he discovers among the debris reminders of the world of civilization and peace he has been forced to flee--a broken shoe horn (his own shoes are long since ruined), medicine bottles (he has suffered with fever so long he no longer pays it any heed), a book of English poetry.

Now the priest experiences a sense of desertion, a fear that he has been abandoned to wander perpetually in the desolate limbo of the spirit: "It was the oddest thing that ever since that hot and crowded night in the cell he had passed into a region of abandonment--almost as if he had died there with the old man's head on his shoulder and now wandered in a kind of limbo, because he wasn't good or bad

enough" (191). Wandering among the empty huts of a deserted Indian village, he is tormented with the knowledge of his isolation from the human community: "[it was] just as if all human life were receding before him, as if Somebody had determined that from now on he was to be left alone--altogether alone" (192).

At this moment he is joined by a human companion--an Indian woman carrying a dying child. She is like a creature out of the Stone Age. No real communication is possible between them, since they cannot even understand the words of each other's language. Finally he makes out that the child has been shot by the American murderer who is at large in the province (and whose picture hangs in the lieutenant's office side by side with that of the priest). The Indian woman obviously wants the priest to perform a miracle, to restore the child to life. (She expects him to function in the role of shaman, to apply the magic formulas and drive out the evil demons.) The priest attempts to revive the child, but in vain. Together, they start out to carry the dead child to a burial ground: "They might have been the only survivors of a world which was dying out--they carried the visible marks of the dying with them" (200). When they reach the cemetery, the priest realizes that, though it contains Christian symbols, it is not a true Catholic burial ground: "No priest could have been concerned in the strange rough group; it was the work of Indians and had nothing in

common with the tidy vestments of the Mass and the elaborately worked out symbols of the liturgy. It was like a short cut to the dark and magical heart of the faith--to the night when graves opened and the dead walked" (200).

Delirious with fever and exhaustion, the priest struggles on. Now he is convinced that he has "escaped too completely from the world of men" (204). Even the world of nature seems to withdraw before him: ". . . he could feel life retreating from him all the time. It wasn't only people who were going: even the animals and the reptiles moved away: presently he would be left alone with nothing but his own breath" (205).[9] He becomes convinced that "he was in a mine shaft, going down into the earth to bury himself. Presently he would find his grave" (205).

At this point, when he has reached the utmost depth in his journey into the dark pit of hell, he encounters another man. This time it is a friend, a member of a nearby village. Frightened, the priest promises to give no trouble,

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[9]The Priest's experience is in many ways a journey into what the lieutenant views as essential reality: "It infuriated him [the lieutenant] to think that there were still people who believed in a loving and merciful God. There are mystics who are said to have experienced God directly. He was a mystic, too, and what he had experienced was vacancy--a complete certainty in the existence of a dying, cooling world, of human beings who had evolved from animals for no purpose at all" (25). Greene seems to be saying that when the principle of grace is withheld from the world, all that remains is the indifferent, materialistic universe, hostile or oblivious to the presence and needs of man.

vows that he will go on, finally attempts to run away. Suddenly he is out of the forest facing a group of huts with a big whitewashed building at the edge, which he takes for a barracks. The stranger gently informs him that it is not a barracks, but a church. He has reached civilization and freedom at last. It is as if, without knowing it, he has journeyed down and passed through the opening in the leg of Dis which is the exit out of hell and the means of access to the terrestial paradise.

For the priest, the village proves to be a specious Eden. For his hosts, the gentle Lutheran and his sister, have converted the forms of the church into meaningless ritual and empty pattern. For them, the cycle of fall, suffering, and atonement is a myth empty of meaning. The priest feels like a traitor here, as if he had deliberately abandoned his post in time of stress. Thus, he cannot refuse the half-caste Judas (with his serpentine fangs) who lures him back into the jungle on the pretext that he is needed to administer last rites to the dying American murderer. The priest goes, realizing fully that the wounded criminal is but bait for a trap set by the cunning lieutenant. Inevitably, the priest is captured, tried (in his absence), and shot (the actual circumstances of his death are contrasted with the romanticized version of the death of a martyr as depicted in a child's story book). The priest is denied even the comfort of final absolution, and at the

moment of death, is unable to form the appropriate words for a dying martyr.

Greene's study, then, is the depiction of the destruction wrought upon one man by the "innocent" blindness of the political visionary. (The lieutenant complains that because of the priest, he has lost two of his own men and been forced to shoot three hostages.) The pursuit and capture of the priest have, of course, an extended significance. For the lieutenant represents all those forces of political power and social action which, in their blind attempts to purify man's economic and social patterns, succeed in destroying the basic spiritual attributes which are essential to man's ultimate redemption.

In his next three fictions (The Ministry of Fear, 1943; The Heart of the Matter, 1948; and The End of the Affair, 1951), Greene explores the destructive aspects of an innocence which evolves into an excess of human pity. The hero of The Ministry of Fear instigates his own pattern of destruction when he kills his wife to relieve her of the pain of an incurable disease. (Even as a child, he broke a rat's back rather than watch it suffer.) The guilt for his act subsequently drives him insane (the second destructive consequence). Because the jury which tries him pities his innocence, they acquit him of the murder, and thus damn him to a lifetime of suffering. Innocence (in the sense of "ignorance") again becomes a destructive threat when he

accidentally comes into possession of a film of important state documents which a spy ring is after. Arthur is not familiar with the "type" of the spy (only Scotland yard, the corps of experts, can readily detect the spies and cope with their methods). Arthur is saved from inadvertently "betraying" his country only by the adventitious exploding of a bomb at the crucial moment.[10]

The theme of the danger of innocent pity is again reflected in the action of the young hospital aid, who kills his superior rather than see him subjected to questioning and torment. Arthur's fiancée is willing to let her traitorous brother escape with the secret film rather than risk his divulging to Arthur the supposedly forgotten murder of his former wife. (The shock, presumably, might throw Arthur back into insanity.) The sister insists on preserving the "appearance" of innocence and ignorance. Her ostensible motive is to spare Arthur pain. It seems more likely that it is she who cannot accept the fact of murder, because she is unwilling to admit Arthur's fallen state. Thus, by pretending that the murder did not occur, she preserves the myth of innocence. She can accept Arthur only on these terms. She, too, longs for a return to the lost world of innocence. Arthur's deed appears to link him to the world

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[10]Joseph M. Duffy, Jr., points out: "Like that other innocent, Alden Pyle, Rowe is dangerous because the case urgently concerns national security and is not a matter for individual action." "The Lost World of Graham Greene," Thought, XXXIII (Summer, 1958), p. 244.

of murder and corruption of her associates. But she will not admit such a tie between Arthur and the "others." Both have killed, but their motives were very different. Arthur, realizing her necessity to preserve the lie of innocence, pretends that he has experienced no return of memory. Also, he conceals from her his knowledge of her role as a spy. Thus, out of their mutual desire to spare each other's feelings, their marriage is set up on a false basis from the beginning.

Arthur achieves a kind of triumph (in the fact that he has at least discovered an effective basis for survival), but it is not the innocent Arthur who finally wins a victory. He succeeds because he is able to make the transition into maturity. He no longer sees himself the hero of a romantic child's novel. He knows now that the business of catching spies is dull and dirty work. He now feels no pity for those who are slain because he has lost his own memory of suffering.

Arthur the Innocent could only be destroyed by the world of Evil. Further, he himself would represent a constant menace (in his mercy killings, his inability to cope with spies). Only when he is relieved of the memory of the experience of pain can he defeat Evil. He now feels no pity. He captures the film, but in the process allows the brother to kill himself.

The moral of the work is that innocence cannot adapt

itself to the world of reality. The "Justice of Innocence" is to stop suffering, even at the cost of life itself. But within the real world, suffering does exist and man must reconcile himself to the fact of its existence.

Scobie, in The Heart of the Matter, is also a victim of an excess of pity. His exaggerated concern for others leads him, first, to compromise himself by borrowing money from Yusef, the treacherous Syrian dealer in smuggled goods, in order to obtain passage money for his wife, and then to sleep with Helen Rolt, the childlike shipwreck victim whose pathetic innocence Scobie cannot resist. In the complications which follow, Scobie himself becomes Yusef's agent in passing forbidden diamonds, and damns himself by partaking of communion while in a state of sin (he cannot face the consequences of either breaking with Helen or confessing his unfaithfulness to his wife). After the death of Ali, his servant of many years, for which he (Scobie) is at least indirectly responsible, Scobie chooses suicide as the only solution to his problem.[11]

Thus the innocent intention of Scobie leads him into an ever more entangled path of deceit, duplicity, and

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[11]George Orwell, however, observes in his review of The Heart of the Matter that "if he [Scobie] were capable of getting into the kind of mess that is described, he would have got into it earlier . . . if he believes in Hell, he would not risk going there merely to spare the feelings of a couple of neurotic women." The New Yorker, XXIV (July 17, 1948), pp. 61-63.

death. In his attempts to spare others, he hopelessly enmeshes all of their lives in a net of pretension and falseness. It might be more accurate, however, to say that the real "destructive innocent" in this book is not Scobie (who, though pure in intention, has a very real grasp of the existence and nature of good and evil) but Helen Rolt, the child-widow from Angel Hill in Bury St. Edmunds. Helen is but one year out of school. The most exciting events of her life, prior to her marriage and the subsequent shipwreck, were the triumphs of her school team at netball. When Scobie first sees her, she is clutching in her hands a stamp album, which contains stamps decorated with pictures of parakeets --"the kind of picture stamps a child collects" (112). At first Scobie fancies that the difference in their ages affords him a kind of security in their relationship. Inevitably, however, Scobie accepts the responsibility of comforting Helen's lonely position. Unable either to confess his violation to his wife or to terminate his relation with Helen (it has quickly degenerated into the familiar loveless pattern of his marriage with Louise), Scobie concludes that to save the situation he will have to kill himself. Thus he calls down upon himself the threat of eternal damnation. Scobie accurately sums up Helen's part in his destruction when he muses, "Innocence must die young if it isn't to kill

the souls of men."[12]

It would be a wrenched reading of The End of the Affair to see as a major theme in it the operation of "destructive innocence." True, the character of the "ignorant innocent" does appear in Henry Miles, the husband who is so easily cuckolded by Bendrix (the narrator) and Sarah. Bendrix says of Henry: "His question reminded me of how easy he had been to deceive, so easy that he seemed to me almost a conniver at his wife's unfaithfulness, as the man who leaves loose banknotes in a hotel bedroom connives at theft . . ."[13] The consequence of Henry's innocent complacency is, of course, the adultery of his wife Sarah. But the book is not about the deleterious effects of adultery, but about the redemption of Sarah, who vows to God to break off her affair with Bendrix if He will restore him to life (Bendrix has been apparently killed during an air raid). It is Sarah who, in her long struggle to purify her soul of all carnal imperfections, finally recaptures something like an original state of innocence and grace. That Sarah has reached a point of sanctity comparable to that of the saint is revealed in the series of miracles which occur after her death (culminating in the healing of the scar on the face

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[12]Graham Greene, The Heart of the Matter (Uniform ed.; London: Heinemann, 1948), p. 271.

[13]Graham Greene, The End of the Affair (Library ed.; London: Heinemann, 1951), p. 12.

of the radical atheist Smythe). The only "destructive" consequence of Sarah's return to innocence and attainment of grace is in the unsettling effect her transformed state has on the life of Bendrix. Bendrix is left in a condition of extreme emotional disturbance at the end of the book. Reaffirming his hatred of God (who has robbed him of the thing he has loved most), Bendrix vows to get revenge by robbing God of what He most loves in him (Bendrix). However, Greene seems to be making the point here that Bendrix is actually thus moving closer toward acceptance. Presumably, some kind of belief is necessary even for hate (hate requires an object to focus on). And Bendrix's state of mental anguish seems to be the first stage in the process of suffering essential to the purgatorial experience which is necessary as a preliminary to ultimate redemption.

The Heart of the Matter and The End of the Affair thus may be seen as interyoking members of a dualistic approach to the same basic problem. Scobie, because he is more afraid of inflicting human suffering than hurting God, gives up his own soul to eternal damnation. Sarah Miles is willing to let another endure pain (for two years Bendrix is left with only jealous speculations to account for her disappearance), and as a consequence obtains her own salvation and points the way for others to achieve similar redemption if they are willing to "make the great leap."

Greene's study of the threat posed by the destruc-

tive innocent culminates in his portrait of Alden Pyle, the "Quiet American." The term American has traditionally been associated with the attributes of innocence, naiveté, and inexperience. (One thinks immediately of the Jamesian innocents caught in the entanglements of the cunning European intriguers, or of Mark Twain's international travelers, who are automatically categorized as Innocents abroad.) The adjective employed in Greene's title suggests, however, that here is to be introduced a somewhat different image of the American as viewed by the foreign spectator. The American abroad has, in the past, been distinguished for the foreign observer by the sheer attribute of noise which seems to accompany him inevitably in his progress across the world. This quality of noisiness has, apparently, been identified with the childish nature of the American abroad, and with the overall lack of refinement and sophistication in American culture. Thus, when Greene speaks of a "quiet" American, we are led to expect, and rightly, a variation on the traditional picture of the raucous, unsophisticated person who has been so frequently presented as the characteristic American. In the character of Alden Pyle, Greene in effect creates a new American stereotype[14] whose personality in many respects is a total contradiction of the accepted inter-

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[14]Ralph Freedman points out that Greene is actually drawing images from conventional European stock descriptions to construct his portrait, including "the mother attachment, the dedication to handbooks and slogans, malted milks, a

national image of the typical U. S. citizen. Alden Pyle has come to the Far East fresh from Harvard (Americans of the twentieth century go to college). Further, he is not the first member of his family to be introduced to learning and culture. His father before him was a scholar--a world authority on under-water erosion. (Americans who go abroad today are not necessarily all products of the midwestern business frontier. Pyle's father is a professor, and thus the family may assert some claim to an acquaintance with culture extending beyond the present generation.) Pyle thus may be said to represent a new type of American traveler whose primary divergence from his prototypes is epitomized in his essential attribute of quietness. This quietness is a reflection of his background of culture and refinement (acquired on native shores). He is literate (although he is somewhat onesided in his reading habits), he is refined, he is "proper" in his deportment, and, far from being grossly self-assertive, he is, at times, almost self-effacing. Yet, beneath the superficial refinements of civilization he retains the one essential flaw which betrays his inescapable Americanism: it is the flaw of innocence, born out of a background void of any real experience in the world of reality, cunning, and deceit. And this new American, along

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thin sentimental veneer covering ruthless and selfish egoism, the crew cut and the monotonous and unbelievable naiveté, the covetous virginity." "Novel of Contention: 'The Quiet American,'" Western Review, XXI (Autumn, 1956), p. 77.

with his polish and recently acquired appearance of sophistication, carries within him a potential for destruction which far transcends that of his boisterous ancestor, who was more apt to be offensive in his manners than dangerous in his actions.

Alden Pyle is a man filled with a sense of mission.[15] He is totally devoted to an Ideal, and the world of ideal constructs. He is victimized by a savior complex; that is, he is intent on rescuing at least a part of the world from its degradation, and to achieve this end he is prepared to sacrifice whatever may be required to serve the cause of Democracy. He is determined "to do good, not to any individual person, but to a country, a continent, a world."[16] He does not pause to inquire whether the recipients of his well-intentioned program desire the salvation he offers them. He is sublimely unaware of the dangers inherent in his mis-

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[15]Philip Rahv comments that "with his [Pyle's] good intentions and ignorance of political realities, a built-in ignorance as it were, he is recognizably a late and rather genteel version of the type that in former days we used to characterize as the 'lib-lab' do-gooder." "Wicked American Innocence," Commentary, XXI (May, 1956), p. 489.

[16]Pyle's attitude is, of course, intended to reflect the typical American enthusiasm for the international political crusade in the cause of democracy. Nathan A. Scott comments, "For the Americans, with their vast power and their vast program of good will, are, as Fowler sees them . . . irrevocably--and innocently--'committed' to the cause of the angels, and their faith in the goodness of their own intentions induces them to a policy of meddling on a global scale. . . ." "Christian Novelist's Dilemma," Christian Century, LXXIII (August 1, 1956), p. 901.

sion. He is unquestioningly committed to the righteousness of his cause and thus rushes blindly to his own (and others') destruction.[17]

Pyle has come to Indo-China in the midst of the war, ostensibly as a part of the American mission for economic aid. Secretly, he intends to reconcile the warring factions through the creation of what he calls a Third Force, a group he expects to form from the followers of General Thé, an elusive commander of one of the numerous struggling factions. Pyle has conceived his plan of liberation from an idea suggested in the works of York Harding, a foreign commentator who once spent three weeks in Indo-China on his way somewhere else, and whom Pyle now adulates as an incontrovertible authority on Eastern affairs. Pyle is totally blind to the superficial nature of Harding's analysis of the Eastern situation, just as he is blithely unaware of the dangers implicit in his own proposed scheme of liberation. What Pyle fails to realize is that he is now immersed in the harsh actuality of war, a situation characterized by all the gory particulars of conflict, including treacherous connivings of ego-prompted native leaders, senseless mass slayings of civilians, and blood-spattered sidewalks. Indeed, when Pyle

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[17]Rahv notes that "Actually, what Greene has done is to turn the Jamesian theme of innocence vs. experience inside out. Where James sees this innocence as a redemptive quality that will save the Old World, Greene sees it as positively ruinous in the world of today, a kind of insanity." Op. cit., p. 489.

inadvertently steps in the blood of the victims of his own "well-intentioned bombing," he does not even recognize the dark stain for what it is. Pyle responds only to the catch-words of Honor, Freedom, Democracy, Liberty. He is unmoved by the sobs of mothers weeping for their slain children. He justifies the slaughter by the complacent observation that they have died in the cause of democracy.

Indeed, Pyle does not seem to know anything that he has not gotten from books. He has a great respect for what he calls the "serious writer."[18] But this term does not include novelists, poets, or dramatists unless they have what he calls a "contemporary theme." He systematically expels from his world-view all things overtly related to poetic fancy, "unrealistic" romantic idealism, or the world of sense and emotion. And yet he is trapped in a romantic fantasy of his own which is totally divorced from reality. He is possessed of an ideal which will ultimately subvert his humanity and turn him into a kind of moral monster blindly sacrificing untold human victims on the altar of his one truth.

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[18]In his failure to grasp the specifics involved in the political realities of war, Pyle bears a marked resemblance to the type described by Wyndham Lewis as the "revolutionary simpleton." This is the man who is dangerously romantic in that "he is sick for the things he has never experienced, or which he is incapable of experiencing--as the schoolboy, or the curate, or the spinster of stage tradition, is sick for highly-flavored, 'wicked,' or blood-curdling exploits and adventures." Time and Western Man (Boston: Beacon Hill Press, 1957), p. 27.

The countertype of Pyle is the man of "experience," Thomas Fowler, the British foreign correspondent who relates the narrative.[19] Though he is himself a dealer in words, Fowler has long since rejected the validity of "mental concepts," which for him are analagous to "what doesn't exist." He prefers "facts" to "isms and ocracies." And the facts of the oriental world are for Fowler those ever-present minutiae of basic experience which "held you as a smell does" and which must be lived, not read about, to be understood. After his arrival Pyle eagerly presses Fowler for "background information" on Indo-China. Fowler muses that the "real background" consists of "the gold of the rice fields under a flat late sun; the fishers' fragile cranes hovering over the fields like mosquitoes; the cups of tea on an old abbot's platform, with his bed and his commercial calendars, his buckets and broken cups, and the junk of a lifetime washed up around his chair; the mollusc hats of the girls repairing the road where a mine had burst . . ."[20] As to the natives caught up in the war, Fowler realistically asserts that they

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[19]G. L. Arnold, in his review of the novel, remarks that Fowler is a "Humphrey Bogart type" descended from the "tough guy" American (quoted in Rahv, op. cit., p. 488). This comparison hardly seems apt, since the American tough guy is generally a criminal, and thus, by definition, committed to action of some sort.

[20]Graham Greene, The Quiet American (New York: Viking, 1956), p. 23. All future references to The Quiet American will refer to this edition.

want neither communism nor democracy: "'They want enough rice . . . They don't want to be shot at . . . They want one day to be much the same as another . . . They don't want our white skins around telling them what they want . . . in five hundred years there may be no New York or London, but they'll be growing paddy in these fields, they'll be carrying their produce to market on long poles wearing their pointed hats . . ." (119).[21] Fowler outwardly rejects all but the most basic levels of human experience, including all abstractions such as God, Love, Honor, Justice. He prefers to think of himself as a man without opinions, and thus calls himself a reporter, rather than a correspondent. The reporter is obligated merely to write what he sees, but the correspondent is expected to have opinions.

Unlike Pyle, Fowler has as his primary aim to avoid commitment of any kind.[22] He prides himself that he is degagé from all involvement in human affairs. He does not

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[21]Nathan Scott points out that it is the Americans' ignorance of these concrete political realities that makes their course of action so brutal in its issue: "That is what the American innocence comes to as Fowler sees it in Indo-China: it is an insensibility, an ignorance of concrete political realities, that makes every action brutal, despite the humanitarian idealism by which it is inspired, because it is irrelevant to actual human need." Scott, op. cit., p. 901.

[22]Robert O. Evans has done an interesting analysis of the novel as a study in existentialist ethic, particularly as it bears on the problem of choice-making. "Existentialism in Greene's "The Quiet American,'" Modern Fiction Studies, III (Autumn, 1957), pp. 241-248.

allow himself the luxury--nor the pain--of opinions. He is (or tries to be) not involved: "It had been an article of my creed. The human condition being what it was, let them fight, let them lose, let them murder, I would not be involved" (27). Hence his refusal to consider himself a correspondent; . . . for him, "even an opinion is a kind of action" (27).

Thus Fowler's position as reporter and his studied pose of detachment are contrasted with Pyle's role as active political emissary and his eagerness to be a determining agent in the shaping of events about him. Their basic divergence of attitude is reflected on every level.[23] It is the inescapable antagonism of youth and age, romanticist and realist, innocence and experience. The relation between Fowler and Pyle resembles that of father and son, the father wearied of involvement with life and now withdrawn into passive observation taking as his fixed purpose not to change the order of events but to detach himself from them so that he may endure as little pain as possible. The son, on the

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[23]Joseph M. Duffy, Jr., points out that at the same time the two men are attracted toward each other's point of view: "At the same time, Fowler, who eventually betrays Pyle and who is ideologically indifferent, cynical, and corrupt, is half-drawn toward Pyle's innocent idealism (Pyle is much more strongly attracted to Fowler--the inclination, familiar as a theme in American literature, of innocence to experience)." Op. cit., p. 232. Duffy also notes that ". . . the importance of The Quiet American is in its portrayal of powerfully motivated innocence as a dangerous form of madness that needs to be controlled or eliminated." Ibid., p. 230.

other hand, is impatient with the indifference of age, sees life as a personal challenge, a battlefield laid out for his own imminent triumph over the forces of treachery, lust, death, all that is dark and terrible in the world. Fowler, watching Pyle, recognizes in him many of the traits of his own youthful period of initiation. In part, Pyle's initiation is not only that of youth into age but also that of any westerner seeking to comprehend and accommodate himself to the unfamiliar ways of the East. Fowler, remembering his first days in Indo-China, reminisces: ". . . Hadn't I on my first walk up the rue Catinat noticed first the shop with the Guerlain perfume and comforted myself with the thought that after all Europe was only distant thirty hours?" (21). Now, of course, Fowler has long since completed his period of indoctrination and adjustment. In fact, the foreign land no longer seems foreign; he now thinks of it, rather than England, as home:

> When I first came I counted the days of my assignment like a schoolboy marking off the days of the term; I thought I was tied to what was left of Bloomsbury Square and the 73 bus passing the portico of Euston and springtime in the local in Torrington Place. Now the bulbs would be out in the square garden, and I didn't care a damn. I wanted a day punctuated by those quick reports that might be car exhausts or might be grenades, I wanted to keep the sight of those silk-trousered figures moving with grace through the humid noon, I wanted Phuong, and my home had shifted its ground eight thousand miles (24).

The initiation process is, of course, much more than an acclimatization experience. It is the traditional

ritual of the first encounter of youth with pure evil (for the effects of war as presented here can be described only as the visible consequence of the evil forces which have produced them). The uninitiate American might be called a latter day Young Goodman Brown, lost in a foreign wood of dark intrigue. Unlike his predecessor, however, he has committed himself to the forces of "evil," without even being aware that he is lost in the forest; he becomes an active agent of the destruction of others,[24] and must eventually himself be destroyed, for he is unable to recognize the true nature of the forces he is dealing with and refuses to assume guilt for the consequences of his acts.

Pyle and Fowler thus represent two contrary attitudes toward life and the circumstances which immediately surround them. Each reflects, to some extent, an attitude more or less typical of the country he represents. That is, Fowler, as a kind of British colonial agent, has long since learned to accept the ways of the country where he is stationed. He has adapted himself to the pace of life there. He has established himself comfortably with an oriental mistress, and even smokes opium after the fashion of the natives. (He is not an addict, he merely finds it a pleas-

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[24]Camus points out that there is always some question as to whether "innocence, the moment it becomes involved in action, can avoid committing murder." The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt (New York: Vintage, 1958), p. 4.

ant local custom.) He has no desire to interfere with local affairs, but chooses rather to adapt himself to them. Pyle, however, as the "typical" American, is filled with a passion for doing something. What he lacks in understanding he compensates for in his desire for achievement. The two men emerge as semi-allegorical figures who serve as symbols in an international triangle of Britain, America, and the meeting ground of the two, Indo-China. Here are the familiar British colonial type, who understands and accepts the eastern milieu for what it is; the aggressive western American, eager to "free" the subject people; and the hapless oriental, wishing vainly that both would leave him to settle his affairs in private.

This international triangle is mirrored explicitly in the novel by the relationship that develops when Pyle falls in love with Phuong, Fowler's native mistress. Fowler has achieved a highly satisfactory relationship with Phuong. The daughter of a mandarin, she bestows on Fowler all the customary slavish attention of the typical oriental woman. In the evening, she makes tea and prepares his opium pipe. When he desires physical intercourse, she quickly assents, since she considers it her proper function simply to fulfill her master's desires in all things. Phuong cannot, however, supply Fowler's need for intellectual communication. Early in their relationship, Fowler had attempted to talk with Phuong, but he quickly discovered that intellectual communion

was not possible between them. At that time, he had been disturbed by the realization that he could possess only her body, not her mind, but ultimately he had come to accept their mental separation as part of the barrier that always separates one human from another, and finally he had come to take a certain pleasure in Phuong's ignorance and incommunicativeness:

> Phuong was . . . wonderfully ignorant: if Hitler had come into the conversation she would have interrupted to ask who he was. The explanation would be made more difficult because she had never met a German or a Pole and had only the vaguest knowledge of European geography, though about Princess Margaret, of course, she knew more than I (5).

(Princess Margaret was a special ideal of Phuong, and she spent much time studying her scrapbook of the activities of the royal family.) Fowler accepts the fact that love in the western sense is not the basis of their relationship. Indeed, Phuong (like many of her countrywomen) probably would not comprehend the meaning of love as such. But Phuong is content with her relation with Fowler. He provides shelter, money for trips to the ice cream parlor each morning and frequent visits to the movies in the afternoon, a bright new scarf occasionally. Pyle imagines that he understands Phuong and expresses a desire to "protect her," but Fowler harshly tells him to "'leave Phuong alone. Like any other woman, she'd rather have a good--'" (And a mortar crashing at this point saves Boston ears from the harsh Anglo-Saxon word.) (71) Fowler cannot, however, marry

Phuong. His British wife is High Church, and he knows it is futile to ask her for a divorce. (They have been separated for many years and Fowler has had other companions before Phuong. His wife is especially bitter about this point.) Fowler knows that if he loses Phuong, it will be difficult for him to find another mistress. Above all, he dreads the loneliness of a companionless old age, and thus hates Pyle for his intention of robbing him of Phuong. Fowler has reached the age when he values the familiar, undisturbed pattern of life. For him, his relation with Phuong is not an exciting romantic adventure, but a comfortable, familiar routine of existence: ". . . she was the hiss of steam, the clink of a cup; she was a certain hour of the night and the promise of rest" (5).

Pyle, however, is not so prosaic in his attitude toward Phuong. For him, she represents idealized womanhood, a fitting Eastern recipient of the adulation which the Western male traditionally bestows upon his love-object. Pyle's defense of his desire to take Phuong from her present patron is that he wishes to "protect" her. He wants to give her marriage, respectability, children--all the things Fowler cannot offer. He wants to save her from the potential danger of life in a brothel. Indeed, Pyle's visit to the "House of Five Hundred Girls" is indicative of the extent of his sexual naiveté. Pyle has gone there in the company of Bill Granger, the noisy, drunken American reporter

who fulfills in every way the stereotype of the boisterous American. Granger is crude in his every thought and action. Seeing Fowler with Phuong, and discovering that he (Granger) cannot get a date with her, he announces that he wants a "'piece of tail'" and with this in mind, he rushes off to the House of Five Hundred Girls. Pyle accompanies him with the innocent intention of providing the protection which Granger, in his drunken state, seems to need. However, when Fowler arrives, shortly afterwards, he discovers that it is Pyle who is in need of protection. The eager ladies of the House are swarming about the two men, pulling at their persons, pleading for their attentions. Bill Granger is delighted by his popularity, apparently assuming that the flattering attention is somehow a tribute to his own masculinity. (Actually, the two Americans are the only customers that afternoon, since the local militia has been confined to quarters to await orders to action.) Pyle, on the contrary, is terrified, and is frantically trying to extricate himself from the hysterical women. Fowler mercifully rescues him from the embarrassing situation, and they leave Granger to enjoy the attentions, presumably, of the entire contingent of five hundred women.

When Fowler sees the look of frantic dismay on Pyle's face in the brothel, he suddenly realizes that Pyle is probably a virgin. This suspicion is later reinforced by the manner in which Pyle dances with Phuong, holding her

at arm's length, as if he were about to sever contact at any moment. Pyle is quite interested, however, when Phuong's sister (who joins the group briefly) discusses Phuong's need of children, and he agrees fervently that all parents deserve to be presented with grandchildren at some point. Later, when a group of female impersonators appear as part of the floor show, Pyle insists that the group leave, protesting that such a demonstration is unsuitable for Phuong. At this time Fowler, unaware of the danger Pyle represents, wishes merely to protect him. Looking back later, he perceives that it was he who needed protection:

> That was my first instinct--to protect him. It never occurred to me that there was greater need to protect myself. Innocence always calls mutely for protection, when we would be so much wiser to guard ourselves against it; innocence is like a dumb leper who has lost his bell, wandering the world, meaning no harm (40).

Fowler's next encounter with Pyle is at the front. Fowler has made one of his periodic trips north and is staying with a French detachment, when Pyle appears in his tent in the middle of the night. Pyle, in the apparent invulnerability of his youth and innocence, has survived a river journey (alone) which no sane man would even have considered undertaking. He has come to the front to see Fowler, to announce to him (in accord with his own stiff notions of honor) that he, Pyle, has fallen in love with Phuong. Fowler is at once irritated by Pyle's smug air of having done the right thing, by his complacent attitude that Phuong will

choose him as the fitter of the two men, and by his bland assumption that Fowler will act in accordance with his own youthful notions of honor and right conduct. Pyle keeps insisting that he knows that Fowler is "absolutely straight" and affirms that, after all, "'we both have her interests at heart'" (71). Finally Fowler, goaded beyond the point of containment, blurts out in protest: "'I don't care that for her interests. You can have her interests. I only want her body. I want her in bed with me. I'd rather ruin her and sleep with her than, than--look after her damned interests'" (71).

Fowler now realizes that Pyle poses a real threat to his own comfortable pattern of life. Pyle insists that letting Phuong choose between them is "fair enough," but Fowler wonders: ". . . was it fair? I felt for the first time the premonitory chill of loneliness. It was all fantastic, and yet, and yet . . . He might be a poor lover, but I was the poor man. He had in his hand the infinite riches of respectability" (69-70). Pyle has inadvertently struck at the very heart of the older man's sense of insecurity:

> From childhood I had never believed in permanence, and yet I had longed for it. Always I was afraid of losing happiness. This month, next year, Phuong would leave me. If not next year, in three years. Death was the only absolute value in my world. Lose life and one would lose nothing again forever. I envied those would could believe in a God, and I distrusted them. I felt they were keeping their courage up with a fable of the changeless and permanent. Death was far more certain than God, and with death there would be no longer the daily possibility of

> love's dying. The nightmare of a future of boredom and indifference would lift (50).

Thus Alden Pyle, through his candid revelation of his intentions toward Phuong, commits his first overt act of destruction. He has seriously threatened Fowler's happiness, but, having eased his conscience through his confession, he is satisfied that he has done the "right thing" and obviously no longer "feels bad" about the situation.

The second triangle in which Pyle and Fowler are engaged has as its third member not an object of love but the condition of war. (As one of the French officers remarks, war and love have always been compared.) Neither man is, of course, an active participant in the fighting, just as the nation each represents is not ostensibly involved in the action. Fowler, by virtue of his profession, is stationed in Indo-China strictly in the capacity of observer, a recorder of events of a struggle waged (for him) on foreign soil. As remarked earlier, he carefully maintains his position of one degagé, refusing to take sides or even to hold opinions as to the merits of the issues involved. Pyle, although he has come in the guise of a civilian emissary with the avowed purpose of alleviating the economic ills of the country, secretly intends to take an active role in the struggle, apparently confident that he can instigate a political coup (through the operation of the mythical Third Force) that will bring peace to the warring factions and serve the best interests of all concerned.

Pyle, however, is unaware of the grim realities and terrible consequences of war, just as he is unable to comprehend the truth of the political issues involved (he thinks invariably in terms of the slogans and panaceas discovered in the works of his beloved York Harding). Fowler, although he claims to have no real interest in the underlying motives and principles involved in the conflict, has a clear knowledge of the meaning of war in terms of human experience. Unlike the other correspondents, whose knowledge of the war is based on the scant information gleaned from "staged" visits to the front (where the French dole out highly screened statistics), Fowler periodically visits the front lines, to seek out the grim truth behind the phony French press releases. In one memorable episode, Fowler goes with a French patrol operating out of the deserted city of Phat Diem. Moving through the empty streets, Fowler notes a dead body in the street, around whose head the flies are collecting. The repulsiveness of the scene is quickly eclipsed, however, by the sight of a canal glutted with innumerable bodies of civilians, the remains of a religious procession trapped in the cross-fire of the two armies four days earlier. The gruesome aspect of the experience is then intensified by the canal crossing, during which the boat becomes wedged among the corpses, and the boatman must sink his pole into a shoal of human clay to free the boat. Once on the other side, the patrol proceeds to a native farmhouse, where they spend most of their

time simply "waiting" for the war to resume, but finally succeed in killing a woman and child (probably the farmhouse was their home).

The point of Fowler's journey is that he thus shows his willingness to face the unpleasant truths of war, here experienced as a river of decaying bodies and a mother slain with her child. For most of the other reporters, the war is a kind of mythic abstraction, whose true nature they are either unwilling or unable to comprehend. For Granger and the other correspondents, their assignment consists of a period of drinking and whoring, interrupted by occasional safe visits to the front under the auspices of the French, who thoughtfully attempt to make their visits as safe and painless as possible, at the same time providing some semblance of the actual front line conference. Fowler is not satisfied to report the phony war. He moves into the front line, seeking out its reality in the grim facts of the specific devastation.

Fowler is aware of the difficulty of discovering the "reality" of war or any situation. Even on the front line, the fighting has certain unreal qualities. (Pyle, on the other hand, makes no attempt to collect empirical evidence in order to discover the concrete truth behind the abstract issues. For him, the war is inevitably fought in terms of the slogans of York Harding.) Even in the city of Phat Diem, where Fowler watches the battle from a cathedral tower

before going on the patrol, the war has a fixed, unreal quality, like a still shot of the Boer War seen in an old copy of the Illustrated London News. From the tower, Fowler observes an airplane dropping supplies in the distance, but because it always returns to the same place for its glide, it seems not to have moved. The parachute appears to hang always in the same spot, suspended halfway to earth. The mortar bursts above the plain are unchanging, the smoke as solid as stone. From this distance, the war "is very tidy and clean." Only in the muck and rubble of the street, in the Dantean journey across the sullied river, in the killing of a mother and child, is the real war discovered. This is the war that Pyle does not know. And here is poised a basic issue of Greene's book: the nature of experience and man's proper relation to it.

The action of this novel, like that of most of Greene's works, is played out against a background of religious considerations. (However, the religious element is not nearly so prominent here as in many of the other novels.) Fowler, the central viewpoint character, is himself an atheist, and he offers ironic atheistic commentary on many of the events of the novel. Viewing the frightened population of Phat Diem (including Catholics, Buddhists, and pagans) who have crowded into the temple in the belief that they will here be safe, he reflects (in answer to the priest's assertion "'we are neutral here. It is God's territory.'"):

". . . it's a strange population God has in his kingdom, frightened, cold, starving . . . You'd think a great king would do better than that" (56). Later, at the native farmhouse, he notes "two hideous oleographs of the Sacred Heart and the Mother and Child" on the living room walls. (The juxtaposition of this observation with the immediately following description of the slain mother and child provides an ironic and self-evident parallel.) Observing the holy medal worn by the lieutenant inspecting the body of the slain child, Fowler thinks, "The juju doesn't work" (63).

The religious element of the book is most pronounced, however, in the description of the curious Caodaist religious festival, a yearly phenomenon which all the local dignitaries attend as courtesy to the Caodaist group. Caodaism, a religion of recent origin, is a curious blend of three divergent religious philosophies--Buddhism, Confucianism, and Roman Catholicism. The Holy See of Caodaism is located at Tonyin. There the Caodaists are ruled by a pope and his female cardinals. In their temple Christ and Buddha look down on a "Walt Disney fantasia" of "snakes and dragons in technicolor" (103). Above the door the Eye of God keeps watch over Saint Victor Hugo in the uniform of the French Academy with a halo around his tricorn hat pointing at Sun Yat Sen who is inscribing noble sentiments on a tablet: "The dragons with lionlike heads climbed the pulpit; on the roof Christ exposed his bleeding heart. Buddha sat . . .

with his lap empty; Confucius' beard hung meagerly down, like a waterfall in the dry season" (110). For Fowler, the bizarre hodgepodge of religious symbol holds no convincingness:

> The Pope worked his prophecies with a pencil in a movable lid and the people believed. In any vision somewhere you could find the planchette. I had no visions or miracles in my repertoire of memory . . . The job of a reporter is to expose and record. I had never in my career discovered the inexplicable (110).

The creed of the Caodaists is an intellectual analogue of the ludicrous eclecticism of their grotesque religious ornamentation. Interviewing the Pope's deputy, Fowler notes how like a gramophone record his speech is, as he explains: "Caodaism was a religious synthesis . . . the best of all religions . . . missionaries had been dispatched to Los Angeles . . . the secrets of the Great Pyramid" (106). The High Priest, a chain smoker who scatters ashes as he talks, uses the word Love often. In parting, he reminds Fowler that "'. . . God loves the truth.'" When Fowler parries with "'Which truth?'", the priest answers glibly, "'In the Caodaist faith all truths are reconciled, and truth is love'" (106). But Fowler has already noted that the priest's face is both cunning and corrupt.

The Caodaist religious machinery apparently represents for Fowler the ultimate distillation of all the irrationality and hypocritic superstition which (Fowler feels) inevitably accompany any religious movement. The Caodaists

have reached a high point in religious hocus pocus, incorporating into their faith in a sweeping synthesis the banalities, illogicalities, and fanciful unrealities of centuries of both eastern and western religious traditions. For Fowler the nightmarish banalities of Caodaism are a religious counterpart of the ludicrous slogans and meaningless abstractions of Pyle's political theories. Fowler perceives both the grotesqueness and the corruption inherent in their religious hodgepodge, but he credits them for the fact that their hypocrisy has at least won them arms, supplies, and even cold cash. Pyle, characteristically, fails to detect the sinister aspects of the Caodaist organization. His analysis of them is that they are "friendly people" who will respond properly if they are treated with kindness. (Fowler knows that even at the festival Pyle is promoting a political tie-up with the Caodaist leaders--the Caodaists are one of the warring factions in the country.) Pyle rides back with Fowler, but midway they are halted when the car runs out of gasoline. (The Caodaists have funneled it out, just as they have stolen Pyle's muffler for conversion into a bomb.) The two men spend the night in a patrol tower manned by two frightened young natives. Fowler and Pyle pass the tense hours in the tower exchanging ideas on the basic issues of the book: love (sex), politics, and God. The tower in this scene serves as a kind of dual symbol. It becomes, first of all, a kind of tower of contemplation where the two men

withdraw to meditate and share their ideas on the basic issues of life. Also, occupied as it is by its solely male inhabitants, it operates as a kind of symbol of essential maleness. That is, the two men now withdraw into their essentially male selves, meet on terms of their basic masculinity, and face the central issue of the clash between them which involves their contrary attitudes toward virtually every aspect of life. (Their earlier relationship, that of father-son, experience and innocence, has now been transformed by their new roles as men competing for the affections of the same woman.) In their colloquy in the tower, Fowler consistently rejects all "mental concepts" and affirms the validity of the facts of experience over the fancies of the intellect. He explains that he does not believe in God because he can find no reason why he should. Pyle, as might be expected, is a Unitarian. (This belief adequately reflects Pyle's preference for a logical, unemotional approach to existence. One also is reminded of the Unitarian tendency to refine God out of existence, to dissipate the idea of divinity into an extremely tenuous mental concept. As with the Caodaists, the God of the Unitarians is extremely difficult to characterize or get hold of.)

In the realm of politics, Fowler asserts that the people of the East want neither communism nor democracy, but enough rice to eat and the assurance that they will not be shot at. When Pyle protests that they also need freedom of

thought, Fowler answers, "'Thought's a luxury. Do you think the peasant sits and thinks of God and democracy when he gets inside his mud hut at night?'" (120).

When the talk turns to women, Pyle confesses that he has never had a "real experience" with a girl. He then candidly questions Fowler about his own sexual experiences. Fowler answers that perhaps four women in his life have been truly important to him. (The other forty-odd he accounts for as a result of mistaken notions of hygiene and of one's social obligations.) Fowler then sums up his present attitude:

> ". . . I've reached the age when sex isn't the problem so much as old age and death. I wake up with these in mind, and not a woman's body. I just don't want to be alone in my last decade. That's all . . . I'd sooner have a woman in the same room--even one I didn't love. But if Phuong left me, would I have the energy to find another?"
>
> "If that's all she means to you . . ."

In his reply, Fowler sums up the exact nature of the threat posed by the young American: "'All, Pyle? Wait until you're afraid of the years alone with no companion and a nursing home at the end of it'" (133).

Fowler attempts to explain to Pyle the nature of his relation to Phuong:

> ". . . It [love] isn't in their nature. You'll find that out. It's a cliche to call them children--but there's one thing which is childish. They love you in return for kindness, security, the presents you give them--they hate you for a blow or an injustice. They don't know what it's like--just walking into a room and loving a stranger. For an aging man, Pyle, it's very

> secure--she won't run away from home so long as the home is happy" (132).

Just as the conversation is about to turn to God once again, the Vietminh open fire on the tower, and Fowler and Pyle are forced to flee for their lives. (Pyle wants to kill the native guards, but Fowler prevents him from this. It is Fowler who is the humanitarian in the moment of specific application. Pyle is ready to sacrifice anyone in the interest of expediency and the service of his ideal.) In the frantic exit from the tower, Fowler seriously injures his leg. Thus he is put in the uncomfortable position of depending for aid and protection on Pyle, who insists on saving his life. Fowler can never forgive him for this, since he had, after all, come east to be killed.

The interval after their return to safety is concerned with Pyle's discovery of Fowler's duplicity toward Phuong (he has kept from her both the fact that he has been ordered back home to England and the news that his wife has flatly refused him a divorce) and Fowler's simultaneous detection of the nature and scope of Pyle's secret mission in Indo-China. During this time Phuong leaves Fowler for Pyle, who through private contacts has been operating through General Thé and cooperating in the manufacture of a new type of bomb made from a plastic substance called Diolacton. At first, there are only a few innocent bombings around town, causing little damage. Then there is a major demolition, a setting-off of the big bomb in the milk bar,

which results in the death or brutal maiming of many women and children. The bomb had exploded at 11:30 a.m., the shopping hour, when the square was full of women. Fowler knows that Phuong always visits the milk bar at this hour. (Milk, with its associations with infancy and nourishment, here has the obvious connotation of innocence and purity. Also, as Fowler remarks, the Diolacton used in the bombs has something to do with milk--as the name suggests. Here, Diolacton, derived from milk, suggests the ideals of innocence and purity gone wrong; that which should nourish now destroys.) Fowler discovers Pyle, squeamishly viewing the blood and chaos, and pleads with him to help find Phuong in the wreckage. When Pyle assures him that Phuong is safe, since he had warned her to stay away at that hour, Fowler realizes that Pyle is implicated in the bombing beyond justification. He angrily inquires why the plotters chose this precise hour, when the square would be full of women and children. Pyle lamely replies that a parade had supposedly been scheduled for 11:30. He defends General Thé, insisting that someone (perhaps the Communists) have deceived him, but Fowler reminds him that for General Thé, such a demonstration (the slaying of women and children) is much better than the killing of a few colonels in a parade. The mass slaughter of civilians is real news, a stroke that will put Thé in the headlines at once.

It is at this point that Fowler realizes the true

threat of Pyle's innocence. Looking at him, he thinks: "What's the good? He'll always be innocent, you can't blame the innocent, they are always guiltless. All you can do is control them or eliminate them. Innocence is a kind of insanity" (215-216).

Fowler now knows that Pyle must be stopped at all costs. He contacts Heng, the native leader who first revealed to him Pyle's association with the bombs and with General Thé, and together they plot the death of Pyle. Fowler is to invite the young man to dinner at a public restaurant that evening. On the way Heng's men will quietly dispose of him as he crosses the dark Dakow bridge. In an interview with Pyle earlier in the evening, Fowler momentarily relents and decides to warn Pyle. But Pyle insistently injects his absurd platitudes into the conversation, finally driving Fowler in despair to let the plan proceed as planned. Pyle explains that he has no thought of breaking with General Thé over the bombing incident. He has, however, seen Thé, and has spoken to him "very severely." Fowler notes that "He spoke like the captain of a school team who has found one of his boys breaking his training." Pyle also reveals that he has gotten permission from Washington to reimburse the relatives of the bombing victims for the inconvenience the disaster caused them. Anyway, he explains, they were "only war casualties" who, in a way, "died for democracy." With this, Fowler's decision is irreversible. Now only God

can save Pyle, should He choose to intervene.

But God does not intervene, and Pyle is discovered, according to schedule, murdered by a rusty bayonet and left to die in the Dakow mud.

Thus Fowler has at last become *engagé*. He has discovered the essential truth of the fact voiced earlier by Heng, his coconspirator: "'Sooner or later, one has to take sides--if one is to remain human.'" Fowler thus discovers that if one is to live at all, he cannot remain an idle spectator of the "drama" of human events, but must become himself both an actor and a shaper of the action. Fowler has, by his action, acquired an irremovable guilt. And, since he has renounced God, he is left to bear alone the knowledge of that guilt.

Heng's comments are virtually a paraphrase of T. S. Eliot's remarks on Baudelaire (1930), which suggest that Fowler's present state of damnation is more desirable than his prior condition of apathy and moral paralysis:

> So far as we are human, what we do must be either evil or good; so far as we do evil or good, we are human; and it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing; at least, we exist. It is true to say that the glory of man is his capacity for salvation; it is also true to say that his glory is his capacity for damnation. The worst that can be said of most of our malefactors, from statesmen to thieves, is that they are not men enough to be damned.[25]

Heretofore, the reporter has stood in danger of

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[25]Quoted in another connection in his discussion of Greene by Zabel, op. cit., p. 283.

being neither "hot enough" or "cold enough" in the terms of the Angel of Revelation.[26] Now he has at least made a positive commitment. He has supported a basic human value--that of life itself--against the vain intellectualisms inherent in slogans and political abstractions.

Everything has gone "right" with Fowler since the death of Pyle. Phuong has come back to him and his wife has unexplainably decided to grant him the long desired divorce. Yet he is haunted by the image of the young man with the crew cut and the slogans of York Harding at his lips. Phuong pretends that she is content, but Fowler knows she can never forgive him his robbing her of her one chance to see the Statue of Liberty and the Royal Gorge. The police, though suspicious, have been unable to incriminate Fowler in the murder plot. Fowler himself lacks the courage to confess, but he points out to the police that in reality it is York Harding who is responsible for Pyle's death:

> ". . . Pyle came out here full of York Harding's ideas. Harding had been here once for a week on his way from Bangkok to Tokyo. Pyle made the mistake of putting his idea into practice. Harding wrote about a Third Force. Pyle formed one--a shoddy little bandit with two thousand men and a couple of tame tigers. He got mixed up" (220).

As for Fowler, "Everything had gone right with me since he

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[26]"These things saith the Amen . . . I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold or hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Rev. 3, 14-16. Quoted in a different context in his chapter on Greene by Lewis, op. cit., p. 252.

had died, but how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry" (249).

Thus the "innocent" American has produced a triple path of destruction. First, he has disrupted the personal relation between Fowler and Phuong. Next, his efforts in the political sphere have resulted only in the senseless slaughter of civilians, mostly women and children. Finally, by his forcing of Fowler to take positive efforts to destroy him, he has cast Fowler into a state of damnation for which there can be, for him, no redemption.

The innocents of Graham Greene may thus be seen to fall into two major categories. The first includes the "passive innocents"--the childlike Helen Rolt and the suffering Mrs. Rowe (not actually a character--only a motive--in the book). The loneliness and agony of these pathetic ones can be relieved only at the cost of adultery or murder committed by the Man of Pity. The second type--of which Alden Pyle is the final issue--is the actively destructive innocent: the justice-ridden Ida Arnold, the single-purposed Lieutenant, the illusioned Alden Pyle, who, themselves knowing only a simple standard of "right and wrong," search out as victims those who are endowed with an awareness of "good and evil." In each instance, the consequence is the ostensible damnation of the victim: The boy-criminal is driven to commit a massacre; the priest loses all the outward vestments of his station, falls into drunkenness and

debauchery, and finally dies without absolution; the degagé English reporter is forced at last to perform the unequivocal act of involvement, at the price of his own eternal damnation (since no means of absolution is available to him). But usually there is the implied premise that the outward damnation is essential to the inward salvation. Scobie sees clearly that he is a kind of Christ. The Priest obviously attains the status of martyrdom, even though he is robbed of its nominal attributes. And even Fowler, the reluctant murderer, has, by inference, attained a more desirable status than that of the sterile non-participant which he endured before his involvement in violence. Greene's apparent message is that the path of salvation passes necessarily through the slough of damnation. To achieve redemption, one must be willing to assume the stigmata of the damned soul. Only through the willing assumption of guilt and suffering can the purgatorial process be successfully set in operation and the soul receive its ultimate purification and redemption.

CHAPTER III

HENRY JAMES: OF INNOCENCE IN THE GUILT AND OF GUILT IN THE INNOCENCE

> ". . . beneath the stylistic surface, the portentous snobbery, the golden display, of James's work, there lurk forms of violence and chaos."
>
> Stephen Spender

The chief preoccupation of the major works of Henry James is, manifestly, the depiction of the archetypal encounter of innocence with experience. Repeatedly, James turns to the Adamic myth as his source, tracing its outlines through the innocent's emergence into the untried world of knowledge, the encounter, fall (the consequent moral growth resulting in _felix culpa_), and, finally, the process of coming to terms with the subsequent enlargement of experience. A catalogue of the Jamesian innocents constitutes a comprehensive listing of his chief works: Christopher Newman in _The American_; Daisy Miller; Hyacinth Robinson in _The Princess Casamassima_; Miles and Flora (and/or the governess, according to the reading one gives the work) in _The Turn of the Screw_; Lambert Strether in _The Ambassadors_; Isabel Archer in _The Portrait of a Lady_; Milly Theale in _The Wings of the Dove_;

and Maggie and Adam Verver in The Golden Bowl. Characteristically, the good-evil dialectic is set up in terms of American innocence ensnared by Old World decadence. The initiation is brought about through the Americans' encounter with previously unknown patterns, forms, values, which represent the corrupt heritage of the Old World. (This is not to imply that James was blind to the positive values of the European tradition. But when the initiatory process represents introduction into evil, it is the decadent aspects of the tradition which emerge as significant.)

The Jamesian encounter is not, however, a mere depiction of blameless American purity trapped and crushed by corrupt European exploiters.[1] James again and again drives home the point that it is the Americans who, in their search for an enlargement of experience, deliberately seek out the agents of their own destruction. And it is the Americans' insistent blindness to the dangers inherent in their precarious situations which stimulates the European conspirators to conceive and execute their various schemes of exploitation. Thus the Americans--the Isabel Archers, the Milly Theales, the Maggie and Adam Ververs--act themselves

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[1]R. W. B. Lewis observes, "James saw deeply--and he was the first American writer to do so--that innocence could be cruel as well as vulnerable. The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (U. of Chicago, 1955), p. 154. Lewis is here overlooking the even earlier examples of cruel innocence in Hawthorne, e. g. Dimmesdale in The Scarlet Letter and Hilda in The Marble Faun.

as passive agents of their own destruction.[2] In a sense, the passive innocents of James have as their prototype the image of destructive innocence set forth by Melville in Billy Budd. Billy is an archetypal figure of Christ-like purity, but his very presence is sufficient to evoke the operation of evil in the person of Claggart. (The most satisfactory explanation of Claggart's apparently unmotivated hostility towards Billy is that the mere existence of such unmitigated purity is adequate cause to arouse in Claggart a perverse desire to attack and corrupt.) Of course, the Jamesian exploiters have a more immediate, personal motive than the perverse sullying of unmixed good. But both Billy and his American descendants provoke the immoral act.

Frequently, in James, a bargain is struck for an exchange of European "experience" on the one hand and American "ready cash" on the other. Too late, the Americans realize that they have been the victims of an unfair exchange of values, that an assumed principle of reciprocity was not in operation. They come to terms with their discovery in various ways: Isabel Archer chooses to live with her mistake; Milly Theale effects a very literal renunci-

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[2] Elizabeth Stevenson points out that "one strange revelation of these [international] novels is that goodness may provoke evil. By being conspicuous enough, proud enough, or blind enough it does just that." The Crooked Corridor: A Study of Henry James (New York: Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 89.

ation of her life, making as her terminal gesture an act of unparalleled gratuitous magnanimity. Maggie Verver, alone of the trio, comes to terms with and conquers evil on its own ground, using its own techniques and instruments which she has mastered with such acuity.

Always, the Jamesian indoctrination into evil is a highly educative process. The American initiate gains immeasurably in moral perspective and total awareness of self and others. And, not infrequently, the European predator takes a lesson of equal value from his American victim.[3] Thus the process is both redemptive and destructive. The theme of the American innocents operating as agents of both destruction and redemption is stated with especial vividness in The Golden Bowl. The Ververs, by the fact of their presence, provide the occasion for the immoral act; but the ultimate consequence of the sequence of events they unknowingly activate is a mutually instructive process for those concerned.

The moral perfection of Adam Verver and his daughter is repeatedly emphasized throughout the novel. The Prince, speaking to Maggie, suggests that she is a creature shaped by some lost Golden Age rather than by present time:

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[3]Philip Rahv notes that "James's tendency is to resolve this drama of entanglements by finally accepting what Europe offers on condition that it cleanse itself of its taint of evil through an alliance with New World virtue." Image and Idea: Fourteen Essays on Literary Themes (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1949), p. 7.

"'. . . you . . . are not of this age. You're a creature of a braver and finer one, and the cinquecento, at its most golden hour, wouldn't have been ashamed of you.'"[4] Later, commenting to Charlotte on Maggie's rather unnatural state of bliss, he says of her: "'Of course she's happy, thank God! Only it's almost terrible, you know, the happiness of young, good, generous creatures. It rather frightens one. But the Blessed Virgin and all the Saints . . . have her in their keeping.'" (52). Charlotte also uses the word "terrible" in referring to Maggie's overwhelming goodness and the demands which such an immaculate spirit places on those who encounter it: "'She lets everything go but her own disposition to be kind to you. It's of herself that she asks efforts--so far as she ever has to ask them . . . And that's terrible . . . unless one is almost as good as she . . . Nobody is decent enough, good enough, to stand it --not without help from religion, or something of that kind . . .'" (102).

Maggie herself realizes that her innocence is in part a result of her having lived an artificially sheltered existence. She points out to her father that she does not know how she would respond to adversity because she has never endured any real sorrow in her life: "'I don't know, I

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[4]Henry James, The Golden Bowl (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1922), Vol. I, p. 13. All future references to The Golden Bowl will refer to this edition.

admit, what I should do if I were lonely and sore--for what sorrow, to speak of, have I ever had in my life? I don't know even if I'm proud--it seems to me the question has never come up for me. . . . I've never had the least blow!'" (131). Her carefully protected existence has given her a certain prim quality, a quality which has caused others to note her resemblance to a nun. Yet her father recognizes that her innocence is not merely that of the cloister. He detects within her a certain "mythological" quality suggestive of the nymph. Thus Maggie's fall into knowledge has a dual aspect. On the one hand, it marks her emergence out of the sheltered existence of her nun-like (Christian) state of artificially preserved innocence. At the same time, her transformation is a re-enactment of an even earlier cycle of loss of a natural, pre-Christian paradise. (The obvious parallel here is that of Donatello, Hawthorne's faun, who, like Maggie, represents an image out of a pre-Christian epoch.) Thus Maggie's loss is twofold: she is deprived of both the innate (faun-like) and artificially induced (nun-like) aspects of her innocence. (The point of Maggie's resemblance to a nymph should not be overstressed. Actually, it is only her father who perceives this quality which is, for the most part, submerged in her typical outward manner which reflects the nun, not the nymph.)

It is Mrs. Assingham, the constant choral inter-

preter, who sums up most effectively the imperfection of Maggie's perfection (her state of imperception) and who, later, recognizes most clearly her necessity to redeem herself through emergence into full moral consciousness: "'There are things . . . that no one could tell Maggie. . . . She'd be so frightened. She'd be . . . so hurt. She wasn't born to know evil. She must never know it'" (77-78). Later, she perceives that it is only through a recognition and acceptance of the fact of Evil that Maggie can save herself:

> "Maggie was the creature in the world to whom a wrong thing could least be communicated. It was as if her imagination had been closed to it, her sense altogether sealed. That therefore . . . is what will now have to happen. Her sense will have to open. . . . to what's called Evil--with a very big E; for the first time in her life. To the discovery of it, to the knowledge of it, to the crude experience of it. . . . To the harsh bewildering brush, the daily chilling breath of it" (384-385).

The childlike innocence of Adam (the implications of his first name are self-evident[5]) fully matches that of

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[5]But there is much disagreement as to the interpretation of the Ververs' surname. R. W. B. Lewis says that it is a "two-syllable suggestion of greenness or freshness." Op. cit., p. 154. F. O. Matthiessen comments that both syllables suggest spring. Henry James: The Major Phase (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 88. And Raymond Mortimer notes that "verver" is Latin for "wether." "Henry James," Horizon, VII (May, 1943), p. 322. Verve is defined simply as "marked aptitude or talent" and this seems to me to be the most likely meaning as here applicable. For the Ververs do demonstrate a marked aptitude or talent for life in their adjustments to a previously unencountered situation. Verve also refers to "vivacity of imagination" as well as "enthusiasm" and "spirit." These traits also characterize Adam Verver and his daughter.

his daughter. Though older, he is, in the terms of the Prince, "as bad--that is, as good--as herself" (11). Adam's appearance reflects the absence of pretense and cunning in his nature. He is a small, self-effacing man whose physical presence in no way suggests those qualities of assumed importance which might be expected to accompany his position and achievement in the world. The salient feature of his face is that it is "clear" (170). It resembles "a small decent room, clean-swept and unencumbered with furniture" out of which look a pair of eyes "youthfully, almost strangely beautiful" which are like "a pair of ample and uncurtained windows" (170). Twice in the novel, it is suggested that Adam is actually "younger" than Charlotte (once by Charlotte herself, once by Fanny). Again, it is Fanny who most effectively sums up Adam as "an incredible little idealist'" (281).

Together, Adam and Maggie Verver typify the characteristic Jamesian American innocent. Their faith is a characteristic "American good faith" (10) and their blindness to the imperfections of the world about them is nourished by an inescapably romantic view of life. To the Prince's observation that "'You Americans are almost incredibly romantic'" (11), Maggie replies, "'Of course, we are. That's just what makes everything so nice for us. . . . The world, the beautiful world--or everything in it that <u>is</u> beautiful . . . we see so much'" (11). On this the Prince

reflects that there seems to be no real folly attached to their romantic dispositions, for, to appearance, they enjoy "innocent pleasures, pleasures without penalties" (11).

There are, of course, inescapable penalties attached to the "innocent pleasures" of Adam and Maggie. Through their innocent desire to extend their range of experience, as well as because of their mutual concern for each other's welfare, they seek a new member to complete their "magic circle." Adam's choice of Charlotte creates a situation which is charged with destructive potential. True, the Ververs have no way of ascertaining the prior relation of the Prince and Charlotte, a relation which obviously colors their later situation as members of the same household. Yet, had Maggie and her father not been so totally absorbed in their own shared, exclusive world; and, further, had they not so persistently clung to their romantic faith in the inherent goodness of mankind, commensurate with their own moral perfection--then the intriguers would certainly not have found it so easy to put their subtle scheme into operation. As it is, the Ververs, as if deliberately subverting the good intentions of their sposi, provide them with an opportunity which is impossible to refuse.

The Prince is indeed a "personage" in the eyes of the Ververs. He is a representative of the "great world" as opposed to the restricted "little world" of the Ververs.[6]

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[6]Philip Rahv points out that the American search for

He is one of the few survivors of an ancient tradition, one of the last of the "real" princes. Not only is his heritage bound up with a tradition of greatness, but it bears the imprint of all the marriages, crimes, follies, and boundless bêtises which comprise the history of his house. His race has been notably possessed of certain vices, arrogance and greed foremost among them. Although the Prince consoles himself that he is free of the latter, he is forced to recognize that he is, nonetheless, stamped with the mark of his race. "Its presence in him was like the consciousness of some inexpugnable scent in which his clothes, his whole person, his hands and the hair of his head, might have been stamped as in some chemical bath" (16). Thus, though the Ververs through the Prince associate themselves with a tradition of grandeur from which their American background has heretofore excluded them, they, at the same time, lay themselves open to all the deceits, connivances, and corrupt

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experience is a re-enactment of the Faustian urge to explore "'the little and the great world.' -- Wir sehen die kleine, dann die grosse Welt." However there is a confusion of roles, since the protagonist is unsure as to whether he is to play the part of Gretchen or Faust, seducer or seduced. "It may be that this confusion of roles is the inner source of the famous Jamesian ambiguity and ever-recurring theme of betrayal. James's heroines--his Isabel Archers and Milly Theales and Maggie Ververs--are they not somehow always being victimized by the 'great world' even as they succeed in mastering it? Gretchen-like in their innocence, they none the less enact the Faustian role in their uninterrupted pursuit of experience and in the use of the truly Mephistophelean gold of their millionaire-fathers to buy up the brains and beauty and nobility of the civilization that enchants them." Op. cit., p. 11.

machinations implicit in that tradition.

The prince, however, reveals by no outward sign the seeds of deceit within. His inward degeneracy (marked by an absence of the "moral sense") is offset by an outward charm, grace, and concern for "form." (Indeed, the Prince adheres to a concern for "appearance" or "form" in lieu of accepted morality.) In every way, the Prince seeks to comprehend and accommodate himself to the unfamiliar patterns of life in the English-American household. In the early years of his marriage, he takes special care to attend to the desires and comforts of his father-in-law, who, observing the smooth way Amerigo has fitted himself to the household, concludes that Amerigo is very "round" in all his aspects. Amerigo himself recognizes, however, his fatal lack of the moral sense. To Fanny he confesses:

> "I've of course something that in our poor old dear backward Rome sufficiently passes for it. But it's no more like yours than the tortuous stone staircase--half-ruined into the bargain!--in some castle of our quattrocento is like the 'lightning elevator' in one of Mr. Verver's fifteen-story buildings. Ours is slow and steep and unlighted, with so many of the steps missing that--well, it's as short, in almost any case, to turn around and come down again" (31).

The Prince, too, has his own sense of romance, and it includes as its center the "passion of personal loyalty." It is precisely to this sense that the Ververs never appeal. For them, the Prince is never called upon to be tested or tried: ". . . one had never to plot or to lie for them. . . one had never to lie in wait with the dagger and the cup.

These were the services that, by all romantic traditions, were consecrated to affection quite as much as to hate" (315). Because their demands on him are so few, the Prince feels that there is a deficiency of the "personal relation" with the Ververs. And, although the Prince has mastered the outward forms of English society, he feels that here, too, something of him is left out: ". . . he had learned to do the English things . . . in the English way . . ." (327) but "'English society . . .' cut him in two" (328). "His body, very constantly, was engaged at the front--in shooting, in riding, in golfing, in walking, over the fine diagonals of meadow-paths or round the pocketed corners of billiard tables" (327-328) but he feels a constant need "of returning upon himself, of . . . rejoining there . . . that part of his mind not engaged at the front" (327). Furthermore, with the English he feels "reduced," relegated to a position of inferiority by people themselves his inferiors. He is like a man with a private shining star or decoration which is needed to complete his identity but which he is forced to keep hidden because such ornaments are not generally worn (328). The Prince experiences a sense of full recognition, of existing as a "congruent whole" only when he is by himself, or with his own people, or alone with Mrs. Verver.

Charlotte Stant, like Prince Amerigo, is something of a personage. Though she has no home in the world, and

no great means (her lack of wealth had been the irremovable impediment blocking her marriage to the Prince), she creates in others a sense of a presence which is somehow higher, finer, elevated above the common level of humanity. She generates an immediate effect of competency and assurance, an ability to cope with all situations. She suggests "winds and waves and custom-houses . . . far off countries and long journeys, the knowledge of how and where and the habit, founded on long experience, of not being afraid" (45). For Maggie, Charlotte represents a "grander" way of life than her own. She finds Charlotte "'Great in nature, in character, in spirit. Great in life'" (180). And the Prince sees in her "a rare, a special product" (54) possessed of some "rare gift of nature to which you could scarce give a definite name" (54). She is like "some wonderful finished instrument, something intently made for exhibition, for a prize" (47).

Charlotte shares with Amerigo the suggestion of a corrupt ancestry. Though an American, she was born in Florence of parents who themselves were "demoralised," being "of a corrupt generation." Her position in society is, simply, that of an adventuress, and her appearance suggests her "adventurous situation" (45). She displays the "sylvan head of a huntress" (46).

Charlotte has, manifestly, rejected her American heritage. Mrs. Assingham points out early that Charlotte

"'doesn't like her country'" (40). Charlotte herself admits that America doesn't seem to be her own country (56). Mrs. Assingham later observes of Charlotte that "'. . . she hates America. There was no place for her there--she didn't fit in'" (68).

Indeed, Charlotte's attitudes and affinities are much more closely allied to the Prince and the ancient heritage he represents than with her fellow countrymen. Her very method of operation has a notable resemblance to Old World tactics of expediency. When she arrives at Fawns and discovers that the Ververs are encumbered with unwelcome guests, Charlotte simply "clears them out" as by the operation of some superior force. She acts with the directness of a Borgia dispensing wine to unsuspecting guests (193-194).

Charlotte's affinity to the Prince is further emphasized by her remarkable facility in Italian. To account for the mystery of her perfect control of his native tongue, the Prince posits some remote, unknown Tuscan ancestor, who now makes himself known in Charlotte's "blood and in her tone" (55). Observing that Charlotte displays the same consideration and attentive attitude toward him that the Prince has customarily shown, Adam wonders if they are not somehow associated with the same "tradition, training, tact, or whatever else one might call it" (205). And when the Prince complains that he cannot understand his relatives because he is "too different,'" Charlotte replies, meaningfully, "'Yet

you're not . . . too different from me'" (311). The extent of Charlotte's assimilation of Old World standards is later fully revealed when it is she, not the Prince, who takes the initiative in their scheme of duplicity.

From the first, the marriages are set up on a false basis. Although Maggie clearly loves her husband, she is incapable, at first, of comprehending with any completeness certain unexposed aspects of his nature. The Prince warns her that although she may know his public history--the accounts of the follies, crimes, plunders, wastes of his infamous ancestry, all carefully documented and written up in books--still, she knows nothing of his "personal quality," the single self, unknown but important (9). (Maggie naively retorts that she is not afraid of history.) For the Ververs, then, the Prince represents an unknown quantity, but one which they assume will supplement and enrich their own rather meagre store of experiences. Charlotte, too, is seen as a mode of entry into life on a "grander" scale, and it is for the ostensible purpose of thus enlarging their lives that Adam and Maggie bring Charlotte into their circle.[7]

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[7]Philip Rahv asserts that "since Whitman and James the American creative mind, seizing at last upon what had long been denied to it, has found the terms and objects of its activity in the urge toward the immersion in experience. It is this search for experience, conducted on diverse and often conflicting levels of consciousness, which has been the dominant, quintessential theme of the characteristic American literary production--from Leaves of Grass to Winesburg, Ohio and beyond; and the more typically American the writer--a figure like Thomas Wolfe is a patent example--the more deeply does it engulf him." Op. cit., p. 8.

Charlotte, also, warns Adam that he does not know her, but he casually turns her caution aside.

For Adam, both the Prince and Charlotte represent important additions to his collection of rare items. Adam is one of the great collectors of the world. It was the instinct of the collector which had finally moved him for the acceptance of the Prince's suit. The Prince had shown the "great marks and signs . . . the high authenticities" of the rare, precious object (140). Maggie explains, "'You're at any rate a part of his collection . . . one of the rare things that can only be got over here. You're a rarity, an object of beauty, an object of price'" (12). Charlotte, too, impresses Adam as presenting the same note of "reality" that he had occasionally observed in his great finds (196). It is Adam's way to apply the same test of value to "new human acquisitions" and "old Persian carpets." In this way he had satisfied himself both about Amerigo and a Bernadino Luini he had discovered; in the same way he evaluates the extraordinary set of oriental tiles he purchases shortly before he makes his offer to Charlotte.

The marriages, then, are grounded on false premises from the beginning. In an innocent desire to widen the scope of their restricted lives, the Ververs choose mates whose essential identities they are incapable, by nature, of fully comprehending. Thus the unions are incomplete because the Ververs never really "have" their mates. Adam,

judging from his experience in appraising valuable "things," applies a false set of standards, and thus misses the subtle, hidden imperfections in the human acquisitions. Finally, his prime motive in obtaining Charlotte as his wife is palpably fallacious, for he acts not out of a personal feeling of need or love (the word love is not mentioned in his proposal), but from a wish to please Maggie. Maggie is concerned lest her father feel neglected or "left out" after her own marriage to the Prince. In order to reassure her that he feels no sense of loss or exclusion, Adam proposes to Charlotte, to "put his child at peace."

It is significant that both the Prince and Charlotte enter upon their respective unions in the best of faith. The Prince, contemplating his approaching marriage, vows that he will be a "decent" son-in-law (5). And in the early stages of his union, he strives consciously to win acceptance, to fulfill in every possible way the image of the rare, perfect being which the Ververs take him to be. Of course, it is only with the entry of Charlotte into the household that the Prince is put to any sort of real test. Fanny assumes (probably correctly) that the Prince endorsed Charlotte's union simply because he felt that he was adequate to meet the test (282). Charlotte, also, in Fanny's view, married in good faith. She apparently believed that she could match the standards of integrity set by the "incredible little idealist," her future husband (281). Char-

lotte waited, significantly, for the acceptance of both Maggie and the Prince before she accepted Adam's suit. The Prince granted his approval because he believed in Charlotte, and she accepted her opportunity because she felt herself strong enough to justify his trust.

The good intentions of the Prince and Charlotte are, however, quickly subverted by the curious conduct of their respective mates. Maggie's marriage to the Prince had done little to loosen the close ties between herself and her father. The birth of the Principino had served as a link, not between wife and husband, but between wife and father (156). The Principino, in fact, was virtually reduced to the state of a half-orphan. After Adam's marriage, Maggie and he continue in their old pattern of shared intimacy, utilizing every opportunity to be close together, in "make-believe renewals of their old life" (252). The Prince acutely observes that the pair is simply undivided by the marriage of each (323), that in her father's house the Princess would always be Maggie Verver. In his relations with Charlotte, Adam is like a father-in-law rather than a husband (269). And Charlotte, in her turn, defers to Adam's wishes in everything, but her acquiescence is perfunctory, as if she were performing the duties of a remunerative office (318).

The first public revelation of the disturbed state of affairs in the Verver household occurs at an important

ball to which both pairs have been invited. Adam, feeling ill, and not particularly fond of social activity anyway, has stayed behind. Soon after her arrival at the ball, Maggie leaves to return to her father. The Prince and Charlotte are thus thrown into a conspicuous pairing, and Fanny Assingham is quick to detect in their appearance an objectionable note of "being together." Charlotte, defending their situation, ruefully observes to Fanny that Adam's company is of first necessity to Maggie (258), and that Maggie, in turn, represents the greatest affection of which Adam is capable (262). And when Fanny warns the Prince that Charlotte should be known more as "her husband's wife" (267), the Prince counters that Adam should manage to be known more as "his wife's husband" (272).

To this point, Charlotte and the Prince have not truly taken advantage of the opportunity which the singular attitude of their mates has set before them. Shortly after the ball, however, Charlotte boldly takes the initial step to utilize the larger freedom of their curious position. She goes to the Prince alone (his wife is again spending the day with her father at Portland Place) and there boldly asserts the futility of their trying to escape the destiny which fate (the Ververs) has prepared for them. Their unique situation has come about with no plottings, no conscious exertion on their parts. They have been granted an unprecedented freedom, but "the magic web had spun itself without

their toil, almost without their touch" (298). They agree that their own course must be directed toward accepting the Ververs as they are, utilizing the unexpected liberties granted them, but sparing the Ververs all knowledge and all pain. And they seal their pledge with a passionate kiss.

It is at Matcham of course, that the Prince and Charlotte make, at last, the irretractable gesture, the act which "can be explained but which cannot be justified." They have gone to Matcham alone, at the insistence of Maggie, to attend a house party at the country estate, and it is here that they are finally "matched" or paired.[8] Contemplating his present freedom, the Prince muses that it is "as perfect and rounded and lustrous as some huge precious pearl" (358). Further, he has not had to work or scheme to bring about his present opportunity: "He hadn't struggle nor snatched; he was taking but what had been given him; the pearl dropped itself, with its exquisite quality and rarity, straight into his hand" (358). The Prince and Charlotte discover their long awaited chance when they contrive to remain behind after the other guests leave, and go together to the neighboring

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[8]R. P. Blackmur observes that "during her long days of suspicion without certainty of Charlotte and the Prince, she [Maggie] had tortured them to go off together, so by her goodness she had bred their wrong, and had so put them between Scylla and Charybdis, between 'the danger of their doing too much and that of their not having any longer the confidence or the nerve, or whatever you may call it, to do enough.'" "Introduction," The Golden Bowl (New York: Grove Press, 1952), p. xvii.

town of Gloucester, on the pretext of exploring the tourist attractions there. Later, Fanny, contemplating the consequent entanglements of their disordered domestic relationship, remarks that all the participants were "victims of fate" (392). For the Prince and Charlotte, as much as the others, were abjectly innocent in their original intentions.

The incident at Matcham marks the beginning of Maggie's initiation into the processes of evil. She senses intuitively that something is amiss in the delayed arrival of the Prince and Charlotte. Her suspicions are apparently confirmed a short time later when she comes into possession of the Golden Bowl and discovers the facts of its history. The Bowl is, of course, the central image of the book. The flaw in the Bowl finds obvious parallels in the flawed nature of the Prince and the imperfect relationship that exists among the members of what has been, apparently, a charmed circle. The crack which is contained within the Bowl is concealed from the eye of all but the acutest observer. (The Prince, significantly, perceives its imperfection at once, suggesting that the corrupt observer is required to detect the hidden corruption.) The seller points out that it will require some fierce blow to reveal its hidden defect; it is through an abrupt revelation that Maggie is shocked into recognition of the truth about her husband. (He has earlier been likened to "a perfect crystal.") The shattering of the Bowl coincides with the de-

struction of Maggie's universe, and marks her ejection from the false Eden.

It is, appropriately, Fanny who smashes the false cup. It is she who has instigated the false unions. It was she who promoted the case of the Prince with Maggie. And through her silence, Charlotte was able to obtain entry into the family. Fanny, of course, refuses to admit her error to Maggie. Fanny is unwilling, or unable, to assume responsibility for the consequences of her act. Thus, her smashing of the Bowl is, in effect, an attempt to eliminate the evidence. Apparently she feels that by destroying the visible symbol of shared guilt, she can effectually eradicate the basic fact of corruption. Her action, of course, merely confirms the existence of the suspected deficiency. The flaw of the bowl is revealed openly, and the Prince, entering at this moment, understands immediately that his own deceptions are thus exposed and known.

Having thus been introduced to the fact of Evil, Maggie must now discover a means of coming to terms with it. Significantly, she chooses the weapons of her adversary to achieve her victory.[9] The first technique she adopts is

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[9]Blackmur comments that "the sacrifice that she [Maggie] makes is that she renounces the old ground of her beseeching--the aspiration of her innocence, candor, and energy, the innocence of her money--and stands on the new and terrible ground of the conditions of life itself." The Lion and the Honeycomb: Essays in Solicitude and Critique. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1955), pp. 275-276.

the device of concealment. True, she confronts the Prince with the visible evidence of his duplicity. Yet, she leaves him to speculate as to the full extent of her knowledge. And she pointedly refuses to divulge the degree of Adam's awareness of the situation. Previously, it had been Maggie who did not "know" the Prince. Now it is the Prince who is left to grope toward a recognition of heretofore undiscovered aspects of his wife's identity.

The second method Maggie utilizes in her struggle is deception in the form of the manifest lie. Maggie lies twice to Charlotte, once in the garden when she explicitly denies that she finds anything amiss in their situation, again by implication when she allows Charlotte to believe that she (Maggie) will suffer a defeat in the proposed separation from her father.[10]

The third means employed by Maggie is an exaggerated reliance on forms and appearances. Forms, as such, are of supreme importance to the Prince, as an integral part of his Old World heritage. He has carefully preserved the outward appearance of a successful marriage, and the keynote of the conspiracy has been to insure that no hint of irregularity, no sense of a wrong committed, be transmitted to either of

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[10]Marius Bewley observes that Maggie's duplicity represents a kind of reversal of ordinary human values, an inversion elevated to the level of sublimity. The Complex Fate: Hawthorne, Henry James and Some Other American Writers (London: Chatto & Windus, 1952), p. 94.

the Ververs. It is now Maggie who insists on preserving the externals. She allows no hint of her discovery to betray her to either her father or to Charlotte. On the night of her confrontation of the Prince with the Golden Bowl and the discoveries it implies, she and the Prince attend, as planned, a state dinner at the American Embassy. Maggie carefully touches up her appearance, so that no outward dishevelment will suggest the disturbance within. In the interval before the group makes its annual summer retreat to Fawns, Maggie consciously seeks out the company of Charlotte, in an averred renewal of old friendship, so that the couples are now paired as conspicuously according to sex as they were previously on lines of affection. At Fawns, where the group is resolved into a tense body of watchers and watched, deceivers and deceived, it is Maggie who insists by every outward gesture and attitude that the perfect circle of their relationship is unbroken.

Thus Maggie successfully survives and triumphs in her initiation. Her eyes have been opened to the presence of Evil in the universe, more especially to the revelation that Evil can exist within the confines of the small world which has been her own, private province.[11] She learns that wrongs can be committed, and she discovers the personal sense

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[11]Austin Warren notes that "The great theme of The Bowl is the discovery that evil exists in the forms most disruptive to civilization: in disloyalty and treason." Rage for Order: Essays in Criticism (University of Minnesota, 1959), p. 159.

of wrong. She accepts the necessary condition of "sacrificing" her father, of freeing herself from the infantile bonds which have linked them too long. Finally, she is willing, for the first time in her life, to place herself first, to put her own interests before those of others. The net effect of her transformation is that she begins, at last, to "live."

The obvious victory achieved by Maggie is in the immediate fact that she saves her marriage. The Prince, faced with the inescapable decision, chooses his wife over his mistress. (Maggie becomes aware of her impending victory when she realizes that the Prince has not confided in Charlotte. Thus Maggie knows that the center of the conspiracy has shifted, and that it is now she and the Prince who are leagued in a mutual alliance.) Further, because of her discovery, Maggie's marriage now has provided for it a basis for becoming a true union. Maggie has suffered the felix culpa, and because of her changed state, she has acquired heightened value in the eyes of her husband. He realizes his mistaken estimate of her as one who reflected merely the "neutral and negative propriety that made up, in his long line, the average of wifehood and motherhood" (322). He realizes that his wife is, indeed, a remarkable person.

Because of Maggie's felix culpa, her loss of innocence is both destructive and redemptive. The Prince shares in the redemptive process, for the experience is also, for him, a

highly instructive one. Just as Maggie is informed as to the true nature of evil, the Prince, also, is brought to an awareness of the potentialities of good.[12] The theme of a reciprocal transference of knowledge is stressed throughout the book. Just as the Prince represents to the Ververs a link with an unknown past, the Ververs, for the Prince, are seen as a means of access into untried areas of experience, particularly those associated with all that is "modern" in the world. The Ververs' tie with the "modern" era is seen by the Prince specifically in terms of their acquaintance with the world of the machine: " Maggie had images, like that, that were drawn from steamers and trains, from a familiarity with 'lines,' a command of 'own' cars, from an experience of continents and seas, that he was unable as yet to emulate; from vast modern machineries and facilities whose acquaintance he had still to make . . ." (15). The Prince expresses, always, a felt need to be informed of any situation, to know clearly where he stands. He compares his forthcoming marriage to a voyage on unknown waters, and asks Fanny to be his companion ship, to serve as his interpreter and guide in unfamiliar regions. Repeatedly, the Prince confesses his inability to understand his

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[12]Blackmur remarks, "What he [the Prince] failed to see was that his tortuous morality would be exposed to, and transformed by, the secretly growing, quiet, desolating, convinced force of his wife's morality when it found itself, in peril of its life, opposed like a tide-rip to his own." "Introduction," The Golden Bowl, pp. xii-xiii.

relatives, who remain, always, something of a mystery to him. The American state of mind is for him like a dazzling white curtain, reminiscent of the baffling white mist encountered by Arthur Gordon Pym in his journey to the polar regions (22). The Prince carefully studies his wife and father-in-law, gathering data, facts, impressions, and generalizations, "putting them away and packing them down because he wanted his great gun to be loaded to the brim on the day he should decide to fire it off" (163).

But the total sum of the Prince's accumulated store of observations is insufficient to lead him to an accurate estimate of the potential of his wife's spirit. She proves to be, finally, the unexpected factor, and it is she, not the Prince, who directs the course of events during the final stages of the action. Maggie proves herself possessed of depths of perception, of resources of action that can arouse in the Prince only amazement and wonder. He is unprepared for Maggie's deft utilization of methods essentially belonging to his own tradition. However, Maggie triumphs through a fusion of Old World duplicity with New World magnanimity. Her basic motivation in choosing her particular course of concealment is to spare, at all costs, her father the ugly truth of their situation. (Hence, she suffers a minor defeat when her proposal that the Prince and Adam go abroad together is so neatly frustrated by Charlotte. Maggie cannot afford to give her real reasons for desiring

the particular separation at this time.) And Maggie acts, throughout, with characteristic freedom from pettiness or narrow vindictive attitudes. She realizes that she cannot permit herself the latitude of ordinary jealousies. Her explanation for her actions is simply that she does all for "love." She, in effect, "lets the Prince off," (once she has revealed her discovery to him), indicating that she is willing to co-operate with him fully in his efforts to extricate himself from his uncomfortable situation. Not only does she refuse to confront Charlotte directly with the evidence of her guilt, but she makes a point of humiliating herself before Charlotte, never clearly defining to her the reasons for her action. Thus Charlotte is allowed to retreat with at least a portion of her pride intact.

The Prince is confounded by Maggie's willingness to let herself appear as a fool in the eyes of Charlotte, but he is forced to the recognition that her methods are effective. The Prince, who has complained that the Ververs never really have put him to the test, has been tried and found wanting by their standards of integrity and purity. Maggie, on the other hand, triumphs when she is matched against Old World deceit and duplicity. Her triumph is effected through a fusion of both old and new, a blend of deceit and magnanimity. On the immediate level, her victory is expressed by the retention of her husband, in whose eyes she takes on new value. For Maggie, the experience has been one of discovery,

suffering, and growth. And the Prince, too, has been instructed in the effectiveness of certain methods of dealing with reality, methods which are essentially the possessions of the pure heart and the generous spirit.

Maggie's victory is qualified, however, in a typical Jamesian ambiguity. In the first place, though she is willing to relinquish her father to retain her husband, Maggie nowhere gives explicit evidence that she herself is cognizant of the full extent of her culpability in insisting on maintaining a relation of unnatural intimacy with her parent at the expense of her relationship with her husband. Further, her reliance on deceit to achieve her ends compromises the essential purity of her own nature.[13] (She not only recognizes evil, she herself becomes, for the time, an active practitioner of its own devices.) Finally, a basic question is raised as to what Maggie has really won in the Prince. Obviously, their situation has altered immeasurably. Maggie has gained an adulterer for a husband, but, more important than this, the Prince (though his eyes have been opened to previously undetected values) has, by virtue of his moral defection and subsequent discovery, diminished markedly in overall moral stature and intrinsic value. For Maggie has succeeded where he has failed. She has acted as the super-

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[13]Matthiessen asserts that Maggie "seems to get an unnatural knowledge of evil since she keeps her innocence intact." Henry James: The Major Phase (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 101.

ior moral force, displaying attributes of imagination, plasticity, and wisdom excelling all the efforts of the Prince. She has won the "sovereignty" in their relationship, for she has proved herself his moral superior. Thus Maggie is now ready to assume full possession of the title which she has won not by birth but by right of painful acquisition.

Maggie's awareness of the Prince's reduced status is indicated in the final lines when she cannot meet his eyes out of "pity" and "dread"--pity, presumably, out of her recognition of his defeated, diminished state; and dread lest she discover a corresponding awareness in his own eyes.

A survey of the criticism of The Golden Bowl reveals an amazing divergence of opinion as to the proper assessment of the guilt of Maggie and Adam Verver. The views range from the allegorical interpretation of Quentin Anderson, who, assuming that James was working from the Swedenborgian frame of his father's philosophy, constructs an intricate pattern in which Adam represents "Divine Wisdom" and Maggie "Divine Love,"[14] to the somewhat hysterical attack of Joseph Firebaugh, who denounces Maggie and Adam as moral monsters.[15] Firebaugh labels Maggie a "heathen Machiavellian absolutist"

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[14]Quentin Anderson, "Henry James and the New Jerusalem," Kenyon Review, VIII (Autumn, 1956), pp. 555-561.

[15]Joseph Firebaugh, "The Ververs," Essays in Criticism, IV (Oct., 1954), pp. 400-410.

who, in marrying her father to Charlotte, is guilty of "symbolic incest." According to Firebaugh, Maggie and Adam, in their attempts to salvage their respective marriages, follow a course which is "obscenely cruel." One of the earliest critics to detect the evidence of Maggie's culpability was Ferner Nuhn, who points out that, had the story been told from Charlotte's point of view, Maggie, the "lovely Princess of the fairy tale," might instead have stood revealed as "the bad witch."[16] Jean Kimball, taking Nuhn's suggestion as her point of departure, sees Charlotte Stant as the true heroine of the novel, tracing her affinities with the archetypal Jamesian heroic woman, Minny Temple, as well as Minny's fictive descendents, Milly Theale and Isabel Archer.[17] In a brilliant summation of the total impression one might well receive from the "Ververs as serpents" school, Walter Wright says:

> . . . we may find that she (Maggie) is the spoiled daughter of a seemingly meek but actually ruthless aggressor, who uses his money to buy whatever he wants. He purchases Maggie a prince for husband--for by any interpretation the Prince recognizes the financial considerations in his marrying Maggie; otherwise he might have married Charlotte. Maggie regards her husband as her possession--James considered the attempt to possess another soul as a supreme evil. Adam, with Maggie's encouragement, purchases Charlotte as a work of art and a protection against the marriage designs of

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[16]Ferner Nuhn, The Wind Blew from the East (New York: Harper & Bros., 1940), p. 133.

[17]Jean Kimball, "Henry James' Last Portrait of a Lady: Charlotte Stant in 'The Golden Bowl,'" American Literature, XXVIII (Jan., 1957), pp. 449-468.

> other women. He controls Charlotte with faint tugs on a silken halter--several times mentioned in the novel--and Maggie delights with a witch's malice in the power she has over both Charlotte and Amerigo. She finally manages to force Charlotte into the presumably horrible exile of American City, while she herself overmasters Amerigo and has him as a helpless possession at the close. She represents evil destroying all attempts to live, to be free. And the justification of the novel is that James is being bitterly ironic on the evils of American materialism and Puritanism.[18]

In my own discussion of the guilt of the Ververs, I have in no sense intended to exonerate their "sposi." The Prince and Charlotte, after all, are the ones who commit the adulterous act. And there is ample evidence in the novel to show that James certainly did not condone their particular duplicity. What James intended, I believe, was to show the distribution of the guilt among the participants.[19] The novel is in effect a meticulous examination of "the guilt in the innocence and the innocence in the guilt." Thus, though Amerigo and Charlotte "sin," there

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[18]Walter Wright, "Maggie Verver: Neither Saint nor Witch," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XII (June, 1957), pp. 59-71. Mr. Wright also includes excerpts from statements by the major critics on the guilt of the Ververs.

[19]It seems highly unlikely that a man of James' acute moral sensibility could be guilty of the charge of imperceptivity directed at him by Leavis: "That in our feelings about the Ververs there would be any element of distaste Henry James . . . seems to have had no inkling." The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad (New York: Geo. W. Stewart, n.d.), p. 160. It is improbable that James, the exemplar of the conscious artist, did not know what he was about in his depiction of the curious conduct of the Ververs.

are obvious extenuating circumstances which in part mitigate their act. And, although the Ververs are childlike in their innocence, they must share in the responsibility for the consequences of their stubborn retention of the Edenic view. But the Ververs are not villains. They must share the blame for what ensues, but their destructive quality arises out of the basic fact that they <u>are</u> pure, that they are true "innocents."

CHAPTER IV

JOYCE CARY AND THE OLD HORSE: THROUGH GENERATION INTO REGENERATION

> "But I was born very young, and I grew up with little experience of the world."
>
> Gulley Jimson, in The Horse's Mouth

The central purpose of Joyce Cary's political trilogy (Prisoner of Grace, 1952; Except the Lord, 1953; Not Honour More, 1955) appears to be to show the impossibility of ever establishing the truth of human motive and conduct, either on the private or public level. The lives of the three principals--Chester Nimmo, Jim Latter, and Nina Woodville Nimmo Latter--are hopelessly entangled throughout their adult years. Each book presents the action from the point of view of one of the characters. Each narrator, in effect, sets forth his case against the other two; thus each in turn is presented as the wounder and the wounded, the abuser and the abused. Each exposes the others, but at the same time each displays a certain generosity toward and understanding of his fellow participants in the communal experience. Jim is shown first in the role of seducer of

Nina, and later as the cuckolder of Chester (who has married Nina apparently to further his political career). Jim recognizes his early wrong to Nina; and Chester's motives in marrying her are obviously suspect; but both men manifest what appears to be a sincere devotion to her throughout life. Chester's senile advances toward Nina after she has finally divorced him and married Jim seem indefensible; yet his guilt seems in part mitigated by the fact that Jim has deceived him in the same way when Nina was his (Nimmo's) legal wife.

Nina's role is even more difficult to assess. Her flaw seems to stem from the fact that she hates violence and scenes, and prefers, always, to "let things drift" rather than to take a definite action. Thus, she is never able to terminate completely her relationship with either man. As Chester's wife, she bears Jim two children. As Jim's wife, she allows herself to be compromised by Chester. Her attitude toward Chester seems to be shaped by pity, rather than love. She senses his great need for her as the source of his vital, creative energies. Though she does not really love him, she cannot totally reject him, since she feels that, with all his faults and weaknesses, he may indeed be the great man he believes himself to be, one called by destiny to play a great role in the shaping of the events of the nation. By the time of the final action, she is fluctuating violently in her attitudes toward both men, expressing alternate love and hate for Jim, vacillating be-

tween loyalty toward and renunciation of Chester.

The hopeless muddle of the personal relationships of the three principals is reflected in their respective involvements in the political action. In Nimmo's book, Except the Lord, he recounts the events of his childhood which molded his character and led him to his great decision to dedicate his life to politics. In his account of the poverty which beset his own family and most of the inhabitants of their district, in the depiction of the fanatic religious dedication of his father, in Chester's own early involvement with causes of various kinds--we get what appears to be a sincere and honest account by Chester of the motives which led him, finally, to plunge into the realm of politics as a way of rectifying the wrongs which beset the nation at the time. Yet Nina's story of Nimmo's rise to political power (in Prisoner of Grace) reveals undeniably that Chester is not motivated by a simple humanitarian desire to raise the standards of the working classes, but that he acts from a compulsive desire to satisfy the demands of a megalomaniac ego. Jim finally establishes the truth of Chester's moral corruption when he uncovers indisputable evidence of his political duplicity and personal dishonor. Nina, apparently, is unable to make up her mind about Chester. She submits to his will and supports his political maneuverings at the expense of personal freedom and, finally, her own integrity. (It is she, ultimately, who is the Prisoner of the Grace

which Nimmo believes has been extended to him in his role of political savior.[1] Nina is finally unable to face the truth of her own inner corruption, and attempts suicide when she and Chester are about to be exposed in their mutual deceit of Jim.

Unlike Nina, Jim has no doubt where he stands toward Nimmo and Nimmo's political views. He never doubts that Nimmo is a hypocrite and a phony, and it is he who finally takes steps to resolve their impossible situation. Failing in his first attempt to kill Chester, he is prevented in his second try only by the untimely death of his victim at the moment of apprehension. Jim contends that his murder of Nina was motivated not by a husband's jealousy but by his unbearable outrage at her involvement in the unsavory political schemes of Chester, which are, he thinks, symptomatic of the moral corruption which is destroying England. (Jim's motives here obviously could not be as unmixed as he contends, but he is right in his contention that Nimmo and Nina have become corrupt through submission to political expediency at the cost of honor and truth.)

It is difficult to say just where the theme of destructive innocence rests in this study (to be meaningful,

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[1]Cary states that Nina's imprisonment is confirmed when Nimmo stops her at the railway station: "Nimmo stops his wife from running away by purely moral pressure. That is, she became a prisoner of grace." John Burrows and Alex Hamilton, "An Interview with Joyce Cary," Paris Review, II (Fall-Winter, 1954-55), p. 74.

the three novels must be treated as a single unit). All the participants are manifestly guilty of certain destructive acts. Chester in his rise to power sacrifices numerous victims to the success of his career. And both Jim and Chester contribute to the destruction of Nina; one is guilty of physical murder, one of spiritual violation. Nina, through her vacillations and refusal to take a firm stand, contributes to the moral deterioration of Nimmo (she fails to check the dangerous expansion of his inflated ego), and arouses in Jim a response of moral outrage that can be satisfied only at the cost of murder. Thus all contribute, in one way or another, to the destruction of themselves and others. And all are, in one sense, innocents. Jim is the most naive member of the trio. He clings to an outmoded sense of ethics which is impractical in the modern scheme. He cherishes outworn notions of honor, truth, justice, which clash with the world of political necessity and the expedient compromise. Jim's sense of justice can be served only by adherence to the inflexible codes of the past age. And it is Jim, finally, who takes the drastic step to end their mutual dilemma. He commits the act of overt murder, but his victims must share in his guilt. For Cary makes it clear that it is impossible, within the tangled course of human events, ever to set up final lines of truth and

falsehood, guilt and innocence.[2]

In his "first trilogy," Cary also employs the multiple point of view to reveal the underlying complexity and many-sided aspects of human experience. The first volume, Herself Surprised (1941), is told in the person of Sara Monday, an exuberant earth-mother, who possesses an undying capacity for renewing her sources of vitality through constant adaptation and change to the unexpected configurations of life. The second book, To Be a Pilgrim (1942), is narrated by Tom Wilcher, whom Sara serves as housekeeper and mistress for some ten years prior to her imprisonment. The third book, The Horse's Mouth (1944), is the story of Gulley Jimson, defiant artist-rebel, who is Sara's common-law husband after the death of Matt Monday.

Although Cary utilizes three separate points of view in this trilogy, he is, in effect, stating a single central

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[2]Andrew Wright seems to believe that Cary intends to make some final statement about the nature of reality in the trilogies: "But these worlds constitute different aspects of a single world, and that this world has a 'final' shape is a fact clearly to be drawn from a consideration of each of these trilogies as a whole. To write a novel in the first person may be to hide behind the mask of a narrator; to write trilogies of the kind now discussed is, on the other hand, to insist upon 'finality,' for the reader is constantly required to compare and assess the versions of the same world presented by competent but interested witnesses." Joyce Cary: A Preface to His Novels (London: Catto & Windus, 1958), pp. 109-110.

Cary, however, seems to take a somewhat different view, asserting: "For it is only from one point of view that experience, like landscape, can be ranged in any kind of order." Quoted by Edward Case, "The Free World of Joyce Cary," Modern Age, III (Spring, 1959), p. 119.

theme three different ways. In each book, he affirms the need of the human spirit to constantly renew and reshape itself in terms of a changing world, which world is itself a product of the unceasing creative imagination of the human spirit. The titles of the books suggest this affinity of theme: Herself Surprised suggests the unpredictable quality of Sara Monday, whose spontaneous responses to the challenge of unexpected circumstance often are a surprise, even to Sara herself. In To Be a Pilgrim (the phrase is taken from Bunyan) Wilcher repeatedly asserts the need to view life as a journey of discovery of the self, since stasis can lead only to spiritual stagnation and death. In The Horse's Mouth, Gulley Jimson, through his ability to recreate constantly his vision of the universe through works of "passion and imagination," reveals that he is in direct contact with the ultimate sources of creation.

The human spirit regenerates itself in the act of creation, but destruction inevitably accompanies the creative act.[3] Those who are most alive are those who are in some way larger than the ordinary, confined spirits of the

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[3]"Roughly, for me, the principal fact of life is the free mind. For good and evil, man is a free creative spirit. This produces the very queer world we live in, a world in continuous creation and therefore continuous change and insecurity. A perpetually new and lively world, but a dangerous one full of tragedy and injustice. A world in everlasting conflict between the new idea and the old allegiances, new acts and new invention against the old establishment." Joyce Cary, quoted in Burrows and Hamilton, op. cit., p. 65.

world. The vital, creative souls--Sara Monday, Gulley Jimson, Lucy Wilcher, and, before his downfall, Edward Wilcher --these have somehow got hold of a source of secret energy which infuses them with its currents and lifts them out of the realm of the ordinary. They seem to transcend the laws of human action by which most men allow themselves to be governed. Thus Sara can with easy conscience lie to, steal from (and for) Gulley--and at the last refuse Wilcher the relation that would restore his own life-energies. Sara obeys the law of her own nature, which is, always, to answer her own inner needs, at the world's expense.[4] Lucy Wilcher goes off to her Benjamite preacher, and breaks her father's heart, but her action is an external expression of her internal need for self-assertion. Edward abuses his mistress Julie, uses his faithful brother Tom to relieve him of the irksome duties which attend the management of his estate--yet Edward stands excused in the eyes of his devoted servitors by virtue of his prerogatives as a great man, whose political ascent must be augmented at all costs. Tom Wilcher, who allows himself to be confined in the mold of convention and duty for more than sixty years, finally breaks out at the cost of becoming a social menace. (He takes to accosting young girls in the street as a means of

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[4]Often, of course, Sara's "inner need" is simply to give fully of herself to the person in want. This she does in defiance of the laws of church, state, and custom.

protest against the "system" and a way of giving the girls a needed shock.) Thus the Cary hero is godlike in his creativity and self-assertion, but diabolic in his ability to inflict human suffering and disturbance as the price of the expansion of his own soul.

To Be a Pilgrim is concerned with life as an inexorable process of growth and change, with emphasis on the continually shifting aspects of reality. The central consciousness is that of Tom Wilcher, now seventy-one and suffering from heart trouble, suspected also of being somewhat mentally unbalanced. Tom has been brought to Tolbrook, the ancestral home of the Wilchers, by his niece Ann, who is apparently concerned both with providing for his physical welfare and removing him from the temptations of shop girls in the London parks. Tolbrook, as the setting of his childhood, immediately calls up in Tom a great rush of past memories, so that his present situation is constantly contrasted with and reflected through these memories and images of his past life which have, for him, even greater reality and significance than events of present time. And, as Tom reviews his life, the persons he recalls and their various relationships are seen in constantly changing perspectives. Thus Tom's recollections of continuing change illustrate that life itself is a flow, not a fixed image, that those who are to survive must be prepared to travel with its currents. Since fixity is death, pause is fatal. The only mode of

salvation is through a constant mobility which produces life.

Wilcher's detainment at Tolbrook is a gross violation of personal freedom. His imprisonment is actually twofold: he is, in a literal sense, the prisoner of his niece and her co-conspirators. Further, his being placed at Tolbrook serves to thrust him into his past life, and his many past selves, so that he becomes the captive of a former time. Wilcher realizes that in order to escape complete stultification he must break out of his prison and flee Tolbrook. Thus, during the course of the narrative, he keeps in mind his intended flight from Tolbrook and the reunion with Sara which is to mark, for him, the beginning of a new life.

In the course of Tom's reminiscences, several types of "innocent' destructions are revealed. There are, first of all, the cruelties inflicted by the young upon each other. One of the great traumas of Tom's childhood occurred when he was locked in a clothes basket by his brothers and sister. Not realizing that he was the victim of a prank, Tom suffered the agony of one convinced that he was being deliberately murdered. Even as an old man, Tom feels the hurt of this childhood terror. Tom's siblings do not intend a conscious hurt to his ego. As children, they simply are incapable of realizing the serious consequences of their action. In a similar fashion, because of a lack of understanding, they

(as adults) later mock the simplicity of Amy (Bill's wife) and exploit her willingness to serve them. They fail to perceive that Amy, though she appears totally naive, may be deeply wounded by the unkindnesses directed at her.

A second type of hurt arises out of the total inability of the generations to understand each other. Tom realizes that the seemingly callous attitude of Ann and Robert toward him is but a repetition of the failure of his own generation to understand their parents. He knows now that youth can never comprehend the loneliness and sorrows of old age. He remembers with regret the pathetic image of his mother in her last years, when she was cut off in spirit from all her children, including Edward, her favorite son. Tom senses the cruelty inflicted upon his father in his last hours, when he was rendered unconscious with opiates at the very moment he was attempting frantically to make a final statement before dying. In the same way, Ann and Robert, who do not understand Tom, unintentionally frighten and wound him. On the trip to Tolbrook, Tom is terrified by Ann's fast driving, and only when she expresses concern for his well-being after they arrive is he assured that she has not deliberately attempted to torment him. Tom is also able to understand that Ann and Robert have no way of perceiving the blow dealt to his spirit by confining him at Tolbrook. There is no way in which the young can understand the meaning of his life or share his present

experience of the world. Thus, although Ann and Robert agree to attend the household religious services that are so meaningful to Tom, they do not really grasp the inner import of the ritual. Twice, Tom is so elevated by the services that he feels that the others must inevitably be sharing his illumination. But each time, before he can communicate his feelings, the others leave abruptly to attend to mundane household duties. Because Tom knows that Ann cannot comprehend or sympathize with the impact upon his sensibility of various aspects of Tolbrook, he often prefers to let himself be taken for an eccentric, even unbalanced old man rather than to violate the past by an ineffectual attempt to share his memories with an unsympathetic listener.

Likewise, the young also suffer from the incapacity of their elders to comprehend their needs and motives. Thus Tom frequently blurts out harsh criticisms of Ann's behavior and appearance, although he himself is often stunned and embarrassed by these outbursts. For the young, the ways and attitudes of their elders represent, inevitably, a restricting mold from which they must free themselves if they are to discover and realize their own natures. Lucy's childhood rebellion reaches an extreme point when she flings herself into the lake in a suicide attempt rather than submit to her father's stern will. Later, Lucy's defiance of her father is expressed again when she runs away, and marries the radical preacher Brown.

In Cary's view, anything is damaging which restricts the growth of the human spirit and impairs its necessary self-realization. At the same time, the very process of self-expression and creative fulfillment inevitably entails the incidental infliction of hurt upon those who are chosen to serve the needs of the expansive ego. In the careers of the Wilcher children, Cary traces the course of creative vitality operating in various areas. Edward, at first the brilliant success and later the brilliant failure of the family, enters politics with great initial success. Tom recognizes that Edward's talents place him above the rank of ordinary men. Edward, however, is extraordinarily lacking in a sense of social responsibility toward his immediate associates. He treats his mistress Julie shamefully, using her merely as an adjunct of his own ego, utterly refusing to recognize or respect the inner needs of her own spirit. On coming into his inheritance, Edward immediately begins to squander his estate, leaving Tom burdened with the management of Tolbrook. It is of no concern to Edward that Tom is sacrificing his own dream of serving as a foreign missionary in order to attend to Edward's affairs. Far from being grateful to Tom, Edward seems totally unaware of the extent of his brother's sacrifice. Edward's success has come easy, and he is unprepared for failure. He is unable to survive defeat, for he is spiritually bankrupt. In adversity, his spirit shrinks and dies.

Lucy, the constant rebel, explores the religious career. Allying herself by marriage to the leader of the radical Benjamite sect, she thus renounces everything inherent in the conservative genteel tradition of her family. Her decision is an act of open defiance against her father and the values he has steadfastly attempted to inculcate in her. It is inherent in Lucy's nature to inflict the wound upon the spirit of others. Tom especially is the helpless victim of her bitter tongue and demonic nature. Yet Tom loves Lucy intensely, for he recognizes that she is in touch with the vital springs of life.[5] Her untamed spirit is constantly asserting its right to life, and thus he forgives her all offense. Lucy's affiliation with the Benjamites, as well as being an act of rebellion against her background, seems to operate also as a self-willed punitive device. Among the Benjamites, Lucy performs the humblest chores (Tom discovers her scrubbing floors on his first visit) and suffers the humiliation of seeing her husband choose a second wife whom she must serve as handservant.

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[5]Tom says of Lucy and Brown, "They were both people of power; life ran in them with a primitive force and innocence. They were close to its springs as children are close, so that its experience, its loves, its wonders, its furies, its mysterious altruism, came to them as to children, like mysteries, and gave them neither peace nor time to fall into sloth and decadence." Joyce Cary, To Be a Pilgrim (New York: Harper & Bros., 1942), p. 93. All future page references to Cary will refer to the Harper editions, unless otherwise noted.

It is as if Lucy were cognizant of the need for rebuking her devil within, and had deliberately chosen the religious mode for quelling her rebellious nature.

The Benjamites as a sect reflect both the vitality and danger inherent in fanatical organized religion. The Benjamites are alive with the sense of the significance of their mission. Their dedication has all the appeal that accompanies any cause which offers to its adherents a sense of purpose and a set of answers for all questions. Yet the Benjamites also display the dangers implicit in radical religion. Tom sees Lucy deliberately deceive an innocent landlady, who is led to believe that she has accepted a few transient roomers and then is invaded by the outsized contingent of travelling Benjamites on crusade. When Tom protests the unfairness of her duplicity, Lucy easily defends her action with the attitude that the landlady should be proud to serve the holy cause. Tom is also appalled at witnessing the distortion of the ideal of Christian humility by one of the members who grovels at the feet of the leader Brown. Brown himself is the stereotype of the religious zealot, whose inflated ego is revealed when he puts Lucy aside for a second wife, on the pretext that it is God's will.

William, the soldier of the family, inflicts little damage on those about him but he accomplishes virtually nothing of real worth. William's life reflects both the

dangers and virtues of submitting to the rigidity of an inflexible external system, here the military. William lives in all a quiet, sensible life, which seems to serve the needs of his undemanding spirit. William is the most nearly "innocent" of all the family. Marrying on only a few days' acquaintance, William and Amy discover much happiness in their union, simply because it does not occur to either of them that things might be otherwise. When Amy bears her first child, she refuses to worry in anticipation, simply trusting that God has prepared her internal physiology for the event. Though Tom honors and respects both William and Amy, he cannot endorse their life or attitudes. For, though they are good people, they are missing that creative spark which energizes the truly vital spirits such as Edward and Lucy.

Tom's life is characterized initially by the timidity and reserve of William, finally by the defiance and energy of Edward and Lucy. As a child, Tom is awed by Edward and frightened by Lucy. Yet he willingly suffers their arrogance and intimidations because of the glamor which he attaches to them. As a young man, he foregoes his ambition of entering the foreign missionary service in order to act as Edward's agent. (The closest he gets to realizing his dream is in dressing in Indian garb and speaking to local civic clubs on Indian affairs.) Tom never marries, partly because his shy nature fears to assert itself. Yet

Tom's urge toward self-expression is manifested sporadically from an early date. One of his childhood memories is of becoming overcome with an attack of hysteria in the presence of Lucy, of whom he had for once lost all fear. It was as if something within Tom had been released and, although his suddenly freed energies found no direction or purpose (it is significant that Lucy was in his bed at the time) the incident foreshadows the later springing forth of his inner spirit. As a youth, he seeks sexual experience, but he must be virtually robbed of his virginity by a coquettish housemaid. In a fit of boldness he manages to win a kiss from Edward's mistress Julie, of whom he is in great awe, and finally succeeds in gaining Julie for his own companion. His liaison with Sara, continued over some ten years, is an act of defiance against the standards of his family and his society. But, for the most part, Tom lives a life of containment rather than rebellion. His great breakthrough--his ultimate release of inner spirit--occurs in the final series of antisocial acts that leads to his confinement at Tolbrook.

In his later years, Tom wearies of his affiliation with Julie. He goes to her not from a sense of personal need or satisfaction but out of a wish to spare her feelings, and a fear that if he broke the pattern of their fixed routine, he would also break something within Julie. Tom is both amazed and horrified at his actions in accosting

young girls. He recognizes that his behavior is a manifestation of an inward spiritual corruption, bred of his failure to exercise his true spiritual capacities. He writes the following entry in his commonplace book at the time:

> "The soul which is deprived of its essential activity, in works of faith and imagination, quickly corrupts. Like all spiritual things, enclosed within the prison walls of fear and doubt, it grows quickly monstrous and evil. It is like a plant shut away in darkness, which, still living and striving, throws out, instead of green leaves and bright flowers, pallid tentacles, and fruit so strange, so horrible that is like a phantasm seen in a dream; something at once comic and terrifying. The dumb stupid creature appears suddenly to be possessed of a devil's imagination" (307).

Tom's behavior is indeed both comic and terrifying. It is as if some inward force or energy, deprived of normal, creative outlets, were suddenly released in a perverted expression, so that Tom presents the ludicrous spectacle of a corrupt old man attacking innocent London shop girls. Yet his actions spring from motives far more complex than a simple urge to release pent-up sexual energies. His excitement during his adventures is heightened by his awareness of imminent apprehension by the police. Tom is flirting with all the dark forces of destruction which he has heretofore avoided in his cautious life. Each successful encounter (successful in that he avoids apprehension) is a kind of triumph against "the laws of the country and decency, and everything I respected" (306). Tom's deliberate

wooing of disaster parallels Edward's earlier reckless course, when he was forever on the brink of open scandal (for his clandestine romantic activities) or financial ruin. And Lucy also provokes her own destruction, when she rashly marries Brown and throws away her chance for a normal life of happiness and joy within the confines of a conventional existence.

In part, Tom is driven by a need to startle into life the dull natures of the shop girls he accosts. He finds unbearable their smug, blank faces, which have "no more expression . . . than a new potato" (304), are as dull as "an unaddressed envelope" (304-305). His purpose is to ". . . shock her modesty . . . to wake her up. To excite her. To make something happen, for myself as well as her" (306). The psychiatrist who calls on Tom after his apprehension accurately pinpoints the nature of Tom's need: to smash the pattern. The psychiatrist recalls other instances of violent actions performed out of an intense inner need to break through the restricting forms which confine the human spirit: instances of smashing china, climbing rocks, confessing to uncommitted murders. When the psychiatrist refers to an old lady who had, just the day before, "'broken all her china and torn all her clothes off and walked down a crowded street, in the rain,'" Tom perceives instantly her secret motives:

"I know exactly how she felt. She thought, 'Here I

> am, a nice respectable old lady in a black silk dress, and two petticoats, and stays and drawers, with lace edges, and chemises and all the rest. . . .'
>
> 'Here I am . . . a respectable old lady, and all my brothers and sisters, and nephews and nieces, think that they have me safe, stuck down in this parlor, and tied up with strings and buttons and buckles, so that I can't be anything else but a respectable old relative, until I die and leave them my money. Yes, they think they have got me boxed up for life, and almost as good as in my coffin. But they're wrong, I'm not dead yet. I've got legs and arms. I've got a body. I'm a human being after all. See.' And off came the silk dress, the stays and the petticoats and the buttons and the strings, and there she is walking down the street as naked as Eve. I wish I had been there to see." And I burst out laughing (309).

Tom's great need (like the old lady's) is to register a protest, a supreme act of defiance against the law, the church, the conventions and restrictions of life which have bound his spirit and stifled his soul. Though his breakthrough is expressed in a form which verges on sheer evil, though he shocks his victims by his breach of the accepted mores, though he represents--by his antisocial action--a menace to all the established norms and conventions which give society coherence and stability--yet his great act of rebellion is essential to him if he is to survive in life. It is the essential immersion into the destructive element which is the necessary prelude to rebirth, the reshaping of the spirit in an untried image:

> To change the pattern. To get into prison, into an asylum. You would say whole nations grow suddenly bored at the same moment and tear off their clothes and dive into vice, or, fascinated by some dark unknown sea, draw nearer and nearer to it, walking on the very edge of war and destruction.

> All breaks, all passes save God's cry to men,
> Break all, die all, that ye be born again (310).

The way of life is thus a course of defiance. One must constantly reject the outworn molds, break through the confining shell of existence. If, in the process, one is forced to violate another's protective armor, this destruction must be accepted as but the inevitable consequence of the effort for individual fulfillment. And one must be prepared to accept, in turn, the blows inflicted on him by others in their thoughtless course of self-assertion. The child Tom, shocked and terrorized by his nightmarish imprisonment in the clothes basket, is nursed back to well-being by being allowed to share his mother's bed for three nights.

> It was by mere contact, I suppose, that I regained, on my mother's breast, the power to live, to believe, taking it directly from that warmth, that life, which had given me life already. As I took from Lucy, from Amy, and from that little maid whose name I can't remember, from Bill, from Sara, some direct communication of their energy, their confidence (334).

Lucy, rejected and humiliated by her husband, returns to him in an affirmation of life. Ann performs a similar act of acceptance after Robert deserts her and gets a new wife and child. Sara, after her imprisonment, discovers for herself a new husband and a new life. Adaptation is the key to survival. Even Tolbrook must be modified to fit into the patterns of the new age. The old lovers' lane must give way to the new pastures, the thresher must be brought into the outmoded drawing room. These changes are

but reflections of the vaster transformations going on in England itself.

If a nation or an individual is to survive, he must accept, assimilate, absorb, adapt to the inexorable shifts and changes of existence. He must not "hold grudges" against life. This is the way of death. Edward fails because he succumbs to the harsh blow dealt him by an unpredictable fortune. His spirit withers and dies. Likewise, the mother and father of the Wilcher family lapse into a state of spiritual death long before they die in fact. A too solid acceptance--a passive receptivity lacking plastic adaptability --is also fatal. Bill and Amy accept and endure, but they fail to create. The grand achievers, those who are aflame with life, are those who constantly create the world afresh in a new image. Tom looks to Sara to restore him to life after the humiliation of his imprisonment at Tolbrook:

> "With you I can make a new life, and unless life be made, it is no life. For we are the children of creation, and we cannot escape our fate, which is to live in creating and re-creating. We must renew ourselves or die; we must work even at our joys or they will become burdens; we must make new worlds about us for the old does not last . . . Those who cling to this world must be dragged backwards into the womb which is also a grave.
>
> "We are the pilgrims who must sleep every night beneath a new sky, for either we go forward to a new camp or the whirling earth carries us backwards to one behind. There is no choice but to move, forwards or backwards. Forward to the clean hut, or backward to the old camp . . . " (29).

Tom's final pilgrimage, his escape to Sara, is a manifest failure. Sara has prepared a new life for herself,

where there is no place for Tom, and, though she treats him kindly, she delivers him into the hands of his captors. Awaiting his death at Tolbrook, Tom realizes that he was not prepared, by nature, to be a true pilgrim:

> The truth must be confessed, that I am an old fossil, and that I have deceived myself about my abilities. I thought I could be an adventurer like Lucy and Edward, a missionary. I shouted the pilgrim's cry, democracy, liberty, and so forth, but I was a pilgrim only by race (342).

Yet the fact remains: Tom gave the pilgrim's cry. Though perhaps he lacked the bold spirit and inner flame essential for the reckless venture, he understood the need for the pilgrim's quest, his spirit was illuminated by the truth of its vision.

Sara Monday, spokeswoman-heroine of Herself Surprised, epitomizes both the virtues and vices of the natural woman. Sara's roots are in the earth, and she displays all the intense gusto for the simple pleasures of life that characterizes the country woman. Her particular grace is a profound sense of joy in life. And the joys she discovers are the simple ones which arise out of the constantly changing course of her surprising career. Her response to life is spontaneous, unpremeditated. Her reactions are frequently surprising, even shocking, to herself and others. But it is her plastic quality that fits her to cope with the exigencies of life and to triumph over rather than succumb to its shifting circumstances.

Sara's background is that of a simple country girl from a solid middle-class family: ". . . I had come from a good home, for my father was a freeholder and working foreman, and my mother had been a teacher. I myself had prizes from school for recitation and scripture, and a certificate for sewing; and afterward I had a very good training as kitchen-maid under a man cook in a good religious house . . ." (4). Although she is possessed of a quick native intelligence, Sara is fully aware of her intellectual limitations: "For though I could speak very well, like any farmer's daughter in those days, I knew very little of geography, or music, or languages" (3). In the first months of her marriage, Sara is in terror that she will shame her husband by revealing her ignorance.

Sara is always associated with images of life. Of these, food is perhaps most significant. It is as a cook that Sara goes into the world and it is to this role she returns when she loses her money after the death of Matt. Contemplating her kitchen at Tolbrook, Sara reflects that a kitchen is her true home:

> So here I am, I thought, mistress of my own world in my own kitchen, and I looked at the shining steel of the range and the china on the dresser glittering like jewels and the dish covers, hanging in their row from the big venison one on the left to the little chop one on the right, as beautiful as a row of calendar moons, and the kitchen table scrubbed as white as beef fat and the copper on the dark wall throwing out a glow to warm the heart, and the blue delf bowls like pots of precious balm.

> And then beyond where the larder door stood ajar you could see bottles of oil and relish and anchovies and pickles and underneath the lid of the big flour bin as white as its own lovely flour: I call it a treat for queens to sink your hands in new wheaten flour. . . . I felt bits of myself running out from the grand kitchen into pantry and scullery and larder and beyond into the passage and the still-room and even to the wood cellar and the boot hole as if I was really a king or queen whose flesh is brought up to be father of all his countries. . . . You would say I was putting out in buds like a shallot with my big kitchen heart in the middle and my little hearts all around in the empire of those good faithful offices . . . (182-183).

Sara typically sees the world in terms of kitchen or food imagery: "It was about sunset with a sky like a kitchen fire, all sparkles below and blue ash on top; meaning perhaps a storm tomorrow. But the air as warm as new milk and still as water in a goldfish bowl. The water was as soft and bright as sweet oil; it seemed that you could have put it on your tongue and tasted its luxury" (28).

Sara is also associated with gardens and outdoor settings. At Woodview, she is delighted with the kitchen garden, a place where a maid can "walk and look at the world, I mean the growing world, and sometimes even bring out a chair and shell her peas or shred up her runners, and feel the open air . . ." (6). At Tolbrook she is quickly won by the "old gardens full of yew trees and old statues of the women goddesses" (171). Sara notes the resemblance of the figures of the women goddesses to her own: ". . . They had just such thick waists and wrists and ankles, and heavy chins" (171). The image of Sara in her garden setting

suggests a kind of archetypal woman anticipating her fall. And the garden does serve her as a place of temptation, since it is while strolling in the garden at Woodview that she allows Hickson to make his first overt advances to her. And it is, appropriately, on a little island in the lake on his estate that Hickson really goes too far with Sara, who has failed to notice what he is about until it is too late. The temple with its white pillars where Hickson seduces Sara is obviously intended to represent a kind of temple of love. Sara herself notes that the temple is "all white and clean, as if from a wedding cake" (29).

The kitchen garden is a favorite place of Sara's in which to read. Thus it serves her as a kind of "garden of contemplation." Sara's reading reflects the simplicity of her approach to the world. Her favorite books are highly romantic accounts of noble characters caught in overwhelming catastrophes and sorrows. She is convinced that they offer not only a real picture of life but a valuable source-book for moral conduct. Sara tries to convince herself that she is better off in her "quiet corner" at Tolbrook than she was during her happy years at Woodview, but the truth is that with only books for companions, Sara finds life dull. Secretly she is convinced that this inactive life is "a waste of my days and their proper delights" (178).

Yet Sara's great virtues are her unfailing joy in life and her ability to accept and adapt to its changes. The

many transformations her life undergoes are reflected in her various husbands and lovers (Monday, Hickson, Jimson, Wilcher, etc.) with the accompanying changes of lodging and adaptation of role each new relation brings. Thus at Woodview she goes from cook to lady (as Matt's wife) to mistress (of Hickson). After Matt's death, she becomes a kind of itinerate companion of Gulley; then she is cook at Tolbridge, later Wilcher's housekeeper and mistress in his London house. She is later installed by Wilcher in a "box" in a new housing section, before her final apprehension and confinement in prison. In To Be a Pilgrim, Wilcher discovers her after her release, already set up in a new household with a new companion who is a prospective husband. Sara's mobility, the ever-willingness of her spirit to shift to a new location and a new role, is symbolized by her maid's "box," which contains most of her possessions, and which she is ever prepared to transfer on short notice to a new location and a new life.

Sara has another great virtue, which is also a weakness, in her love of human nature. She is ever ready to excuse her own and others' conduct on the grounds that it is simply "nature." Her humane spirit causes her to let herself be taken advantage of, rather than hurt the pride of another. Thus most of her infidelities occur because she fears to wound her lover's ego. Sara vows that she never meant to deceive her husband Matt, but she fails to stop

Hickson's amorous overtures because ". . . he was my friend and Matt's and I did not want to hurt his feelings" (30). Later she becomes Wilcher's mistress because she does not wish to embarrass him by revealing that she had believed that his offer was a proposal of marriage.[6]

Sara's weak nature is a continuing threat to the happiness of those about her. Matt, after first being brought out of his timidity by his marriage with Sara, is crushed by his discovery of her adulteries, and returns to his earlier "creeper stage." Because she fails to consider the consequences of her actions, she becomes a source of embarrassment to her children, and finally leaves Woodview to spare their pride. Her affair with Tom contributes to the violent reaction on the part of his family which results in his being virtually imprisoned at Tolbrook during the last part of his life. Sara's vague notions of right and wrong lead her to write bad checks, give Hickson possession of Gulley's valuable prints, and steal household goods from Wilcher. Thus, by her actions, Sara is indeed guilty of the judge's accusation that she is ". . . another unhappy

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[6]Walter E. Allen says of Sara, "She is a woman in her twin-role of mother and mistress; despite her good intentions and her early religious education, she is incapable of resisting the demands that man, the male child, makes on her. If she cannot square her behavior with her sincerely held religious beliefs it is because they cannot in the nature of things be squared. In her own eyes she is a sinner; but to the reader her life is a hymn of praise to creation and the creator." "Joyce Cary," British Book News, XLI (London: Longmans, Green, 1953), p. 22.

example of the laxity and contempt for all religious principle and social obligation which threatens to undermine the whole fabric of our civilization" (1). Sara, with her gusto for life, her unfettered spirit, does represent a constant menace to the fixed social frame. She is a constitutional rebel against all the stable values of society. Cary says of Sara, "Her morals were the elementary morals of a primitive woman, of nature herself, which do not change; and she was supremely indifferent to politics, religion, economics."[7] Sara is a menace, but only because she follows her instincts as a natural woman. In her attempts to realize the spirit of life within her, she introduces an element of chaos which can be repaired only at the cost of imposing external restrictions which would imprison her spirit and fetter her wayward soul.

Gulley Jimson, rogue-hero of The Horse's Mouth, epitomizes the character who is fully alive because he is constantly born afresh out of the perpetual unfolding of his inward self in his work. Gulley typifies most vividly the fierce, joyful life pilgrim, the person unafraid to take the tremendous leap into experience, to discover and recreate himself anew in the constant flow of the life process. Gulley is in immediate contact with the basic sources of

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[7]Joyce Cary, "The Way a Novel Gets Written," Harper's Magazine, CC (February, 1950), p. 92.

human vitality. Its currents shoot through him like an electric force, so that he is constantly reacting and responding to external stimuli, then transforming the subjective experience into the forms of art. Gulley's electric vitality is revealed when he describes himself just after his release from prison as "hopping up and down Greenbank Hard for half an hour grinning like a gargoyle" (1) or says that it makes him "jump" to think of a little marble woman of Dobson, or describes the impact of a new idea for a picture like the kick of a foal inside his stomach.

Gulley is a picaresque hero.[8] The unity of his narrative is obtained not from a clear sequence of events relating to a single development of action, but from his role as artist and his unfailing artistic perception of the world about him. Gulley's prime purpose in life is to function as an artist. All other concerns are secondary. People, institutions, his own welfare--all are subservient to the needs of his own creative will. To serve his calling as artist, Gulley has turned rogue. Thus his story becomes a picaresque <u>künstler roman</u>, with Gulley as rogue-hero.

In his role as picaro-artist, Gulley offers a virtual parody of the traditional artist type. The various aspects

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[8]Gulley Jimson would seem to fall clearly into the category of modern heroes recognized by R. W. B. Lewis as the "Picaresque Saint." Gulley, of necessity picaro-rogue, is by nature sanctified artist. See Lewis, <u>The Picaresque Saint</u>.

of the artist myth included in Gulley's self-account have been transformed by his comic sensibility into a hilarious inversion of the stereotyped image of the struggling artist. This is not to say that Gulley fails of being a true artist, or that his work is lacking in significance. Gulley seems clearly to be intended to represent the true artistic principle, seeking to express itself in a society of philistines. Yet, because the narrative is filtered through the consciousness of Gulley, the most serious events are invariably given comic treatment. Gulley is fully aware of the inherent absurdity of his situation as a national genius who must endure severe deprivation and humiliation to express his talent. He chooses to assume an air of mild cynicism as an alternative to the bitter despair that would follow a frank confrontation of the truth of his position. Society victimizes Gulley, but Gulley retaliates by rendering society (as well as himself) ludicrous. His comic irony thus becomes a cushion against the harsh truth of his condition. He knows that self-pity is fatal, that hate clogs the springs of creativity. Thus he utilizes Joy as a fundamental life principle, and finds laughter the equivalent of prayer.[9]

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[9]In his Preface to the Carfax edition, Cary says: "Anyone who has served in a war knows the man who's suddenly full of jokes on the night before an attack, even just before going over the top.

"Jimson, as an original artist, is always going over the top into No Man's Land, and knows that he will probably get nothing for his pains and enterprise but a bee-swarm of bullets, death in frustration, and an unmarked grave. He

Almost every convention and cliché of the artist myth is parodied in Gulley's narrative. Part of his defense is his ostensible refusal to take himself seriously, and thus many of the crucial experiences of his life are deliberately presented in reduced terms. For example, one of the great crises of the artist's career is the moment of commitment, when the aspiring artist accepts his vocation and dedicates his life to the service of art. Gulley describes his conversion in this way:

> But one day when I was sitting in our London office on Bankside, I dropped a blot on an envelope; and having nothing to do just then, I pushed it about with my pen to try and make it look more like a face. And the next thing was I was drawing figures in red and black, on the same envelope. And from that moment I was done for . . . I had a bad infection, galloping art (55-56).

The established artist generally views his youth as a period of struggle against the stifling restrictions of convention and respectability of a bourgeois society. Gulley, on the other hand, had deliberately chosen the bourgeois life for himself:

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makes a joke of life because he dare not take it otherwise. He is afraid that if he does not laugh he will lose either his nerves or his temper, that he will want to run away from his duty, or demand with rage, 'What is the sense of anything in a world at war?' and either shoot the nearest officer or himself.

"He is himself a creator, and has lived in creation all his life, and so he understands and continually reminds himself that in a world of everlasting creation there is no justice. The original artist who counts on understanding and reward is a fool." Quoted in The Horse's Mouth (London: George Rainbird, 1957), p. 19.

"When I came to London in '99, I was a regular clerk. I had a bowler, a home, a nice wife, a nice little baby, and a bank account. I sent money to my mother every week, and helped my sister. A nice happy respectable young man. I enjoyed life in those days" (55). When Gulley is bitten with the bug of "galloping art," he simply ignores his family until they go away.

Every event, every human relation, every moment in time is immediately translated by Gulley into artistic terms. The world about him acquires significance only as it relates to his function as creator of visual form. A striking characteristic of the novel is the way Gulley's strong visual sense is revealed through the imagery. Gulley's observations of the Thames on the morning after his release are typical:

> I was walking by the Thames. Half-past morning on an autumn day. Sun in a mist. Like an orange in a fried fish shop. All bright below. Low tide, dusty water and a crooked bar of straw, chicken boxes, dirt and oil from mud to mud. Like a viper swimming in skim milk. The old serpent, symbol of nature and love (1).

Gulley's visual perception emerges even in the most unexpected circumstances. While resting after being chased by a policeman, Gulley notes:

> Surrey all in one blaze like a forest fire. Great clouds of dirty yellow smoke rolling up. Nine carat gold. Sky water-green to lettuce-green. A few top clouds, yellow and solid as lemons. River disappeared out of its hole. Just a gap full of the same fire, the same smoky gold, the same green. Far bank like a magic island floating in the green (48).

Gulley's mind inevitably relates all human experience to his role as artist. When Captain Jones speaks of his daughter who is going deaf, Gulley immediately thinks of all the handicapped girls in the world as material for a picture:

> And I saw all the deaf, blind, ugly, cross-eyed, limp-legged, bulge-headed, blind and crooked girls in the world, sitting on little white mountains and weeping tears like sleet. . . . Yes, and a lot of nuns pushing perambulators, with a holy babe in each. Yes, and every nun with a golden crown. Yes, and the nuns would be like great black tear drops. They could be the tear drops. And they wouldn't have feet. They would go on little wheels (13).

And Gulley concludes that if he were a pretty girl going deaf, he would be an artist's model. Or better yet, an artist. He would use his deafness to concentrate on his works, like Edison.

Contemplating his mother's strength and devotion to his father, Gulley sees in her conduct a sense of control comparable to the technique of the grand classical style: "Nothing like the classical. A sense of form. None of your surface tricks; but solid constructions" (52). Remembering his grief at his mother's funeral, Gulley is now unsure whether he was in agony for her death or for his awful pictures. His work of that period seemed dead to him: ". . . it looked like a rotten corpse that someone had forgotten to bury" (57). While Coker is determinedly attempting to reach a settlement with Hickson for Gulley's "stolen" pictures, Gulley is occupied in making sketches in

Hickson's visitor's book. When Mr. Moseley discusses Hitler, Gulley immediately thinks of Hitler as Artist, and agrees that "He's got ideas that chap. And he wants to see them on the wall" (67).

Thus the unity of the novel rests with Gulley's persistent artistic consciousness and his unfailing creative energies. The driving force in Gulley's life is his need to create; all else is secondary.

Gulley suggests the "typical" artist in other ways, also. His appearance is that of the familiar impoverished artist. His condition is truly pathetic, yet there is something undeniably humorous in Coker's calling him over to show his worn-out boots to Hickson as proof of his poverty, in Sara's promising to bring him hand-me-down shirts from her current husband, and in Gulley's arranging newspapers into a kind of night dress as he prepares to go to bed.

Gulley's antisocial behavior accurately reflects the Artist as Rebel, defying law and convention to serve the needs of his art. Gulley lies, steals, and cheats his way through life. He is the epitome of the amoral artist; yet some of the funniest scenes in the novel occur when Gulley is enacting his role of deceiver. When the oilman attempts to collect Gulley's long overdue account, Gulley hides behind a cart in the street:

> I nipped under the horse and round the back of the cart. Stood there with my legs by the front wheel. Got a nice view of the oilman in the shop

> window opposite. He was a bit surprised. Looked up and down. Came out at last to have a look under the cart. So did I, the opposite way, and when he came back to the horse's head, I was round by the tail-board (9).

When Coker is adamant in her insistence that Gulley accompany her to demand justice from Hickson, Gulley tries to escape by going to the men's room, in the hopes that he can flee out the far exit. But Coker, who is not fooled, triumphantly accosts him at the top of the stairs:

> She jumped on me like a lion. "I thought so--now why shouldn't I give you a smack." "Didn't I come up the same way?" "No, you didn't, and you didn't do anything down there either. There wasn't time. Why, you old fool, I knew you wanted to make a get-away as soon as you spoke. A monkey at the Zoo could look more innocent" (91).

Gulley is especially ludicrous in his attempts to play the extortionist, calling Hickson in various roles including the President of the Royal Academy and the Home Secretary. Even Gulley's great swindle at Brighton, when he sells post-card views of the sea by pretending that they are obscene pictures, can be classed only as a brilliant absurdity.

Surrounding Gulley is an assortment of characters typical of those who associate themselves with Art. Each is given (in Gulley's perception of them) some ludicrous twist of personality, some trait of banality or naivete, which renders him preposterous and reduces him to a parody of his serious countertype. Foremost among these is Hickson, the millionaire collector. Gulley sees Hickson as ridiculous in appearance:

> Hickson came in. Hickson had got older since I saw him last. Small and dry, black suit hanging off his back like a sack. Looked like a little beetle on its crooked hind legs. Poking out his head as if too heavy for his neck. Long white face, all folded with misery-wrinkles like a sick albino bloodhound. Big bald head and a couple of tufts of white wool. Eyes like a pair of half-sucked acid drops. Rolled them from me to Coker and back again. Then lifted up his hand half-way and let me shake it. Like shaking a piece of cold bacon fat (99).

When Hickson speaks, it is "in a kind of thin flat voice, like some chemical squeezed out of him by the weight of woe" (99). Coker has descended on Hickson in the belief that he has ruthlessly swindled Gulley out of his valuable art work. She is astonished to learn that Hickson has actually contributed some three thousand pounds to Gulley, in loans and allowances. Hickson carefully explains that he was forced to cut off Gulley's allowance because of Gulley's threatening calls. Then he explains politely: "'I'm an old man . . . and a sick man. I don't mind much if you do murder me, and you can write as many threats as you like. But I can't bear all this telephoning. It disturbs the servants. One man has given notice already'" (107). Hickson, who has conscientiously attempted to be the friend of art, has had his life totally disrupted for his efforts. He has invested about a half a million pounds in pictures, "'Including commissions to artists who never delivered any pictures at all'" (106). Gulley has made such a nuisance of himself that Hickson is ready to pay any price for peace of mind. But just as they are about to conclude

the settlement, the man servant notifies Hickson of Gulley's thefts, and Hickson is forced to call in the police.

Hickson represents the wealthy patron who sincerely wishes to aid the struggling artist. Gulley, however, refuses to take him seriously, so that Hickson becomes a victim of mockery and exploitation. Lord and Lady Beeder are further examples of this type. They are sincere in their dedication to the cause of Art, but are handicapped by a basic imperceptivity to both art and the nature of the artist. The Beeders are determined to maintain an air of genteel refinement in every situation. Gulley, in his observations of their apartment before they arrive, renders them ludicrous when he notes that not only do they maintain an expensive art collection, but Sir William stocks his wardrobe with real silk underdrawers. When the Beeders graciously ask him to tea, Gulley reflects that, after all, it is nothing to people like that to send their cushions to the cleaners. When Gulley slyly suggests that he could stay the night with Lady Beeder, he rightly calculates that they will not take offense. "But I knew that I couldn't shock cultured people like the Beeders. They get past being shocked before they are out of school, just as they get over religion and other unexpected feelings" (153). When Lady Beeder modestly presents her own amateur art efforts for Gulley's inspection, Gulley is caustic in his responses. He finally sums up his critique with the observation that

"'. . . all this amateur stuff is like farting Annie Laurie through a keyhole. It may be clever but is it worth the trouble.'" (155). As Gulley has expected, the Beeders respond to this comment with a look of sheer "Christian benevolence" (156). Gulley rightly judges the Beeders as persons willing to undergo all humiliations and inconveniences in the service of art. After Gulley wrecks their apartment, pawns their furniture (including the bathroom chain and taps), and ruins their wall with his sketches of assorted feet for the Lazarus mural, they do not set the police on him. Instead, they send him a polite message through Alabaster thanking him for the care of their apartment and indicating that they are still interested in purchasing a picture from him. Gulley sums up their attitude of genteel acceptance as follows:

> What I like about the rich is the freedom and the friendliness and Christian atmosphere. Liberty hall. Everything shared because there is too much. All forgiveness because it's no trouble. Drop their Dresden cups on the fireplace and they smile. They are anxious only that you should not be embarrassed, and spoil the party. That's their aim. Comfort and joy. Peace on earth. Goodwill all round (152-153).

The Art Critic is represented in the person of A. W. Alabaster, who proposes to bring out The Life and Works of Gulley Jimson. Gulley at first is half inclined to believe that Alabaster may be an established critic, but on closer observation he realizes that Alabaster is a boy just out of school; further, he recognizes in his eye "the look of a man who can't pay for a drink" (138). Taking

closer inventory, Gulley notes that

> . . . there was a piece of his shirt sticking out of his trousers, a little piece no bigger than a sixpence but blue as the North Star. Indication to mariners. And when I looked longer I saw that his shiny brown boots were down on one side like torpedoed ships. There was a fringe on the back of his trousers like old flags after the battle and the breeze, and his collar had an edge like a splintered mast (138-139).

Gulley entertains Professor Alabaster at the Elsinore doss-house, treating him to dinner and breakfast, and extending him a loan of fourpence.

Gulley also has a stuttering Disciple, Nosy Barbon, the insistent youth who plagues Gulley with his attempts to administer to his physical and spiritual needs. Nosy brings Gulley coffee and buns when he is starving, and Gulley accepts his kindnesses, protesting vehemently all the while. Gulley mimicks Nosy's speech, ridicules his artistic ambitions, and in every way attempts to dissuade him from pursuing an artistic career. Thus Gulley is inverting the stereotyped image of the Master Artist offering sympathetic encouragement and inspiration to his devoted follower. The following exchange is typical:

> "B-but, Mr. Jimson, I w-want to be an artist."
> "Of course, you do," I said, "everybody does once. But they get over it, thank God, like the measles and the chicken pox. Go home and go to bed and take some hot lemonade and put on three blankets and sweat it out."
> "But Mr. J-Jimson, there must be artists."
> "Yes, and lunatics and lepers, but why go and live in an asylum before you're sent for. If you find life a bit dull at home," I said, "and want to amuse yourself, put a stick of dynamite in the kitchen fire, or shoot a policeman. Volunteer for a test

> pilot, or dive off Tower Bridge with five bobs' worth of roman candles in each pocket. You get twice the fun at about one-tenth of the risk" (15-16).

Others in Gulley's circle include Coker, the Practical Friend; Plant, the Philosopher Friend; and Sara and Rozzie as Female Inspiration. Coker represents all the homely girls in the world who have adopted a tough-minded approach to life as a defensive measure. Coker is obviously impervious to beauty of all kinds. To her, Gulley's works have merit by virtue of the fact that they have market value. However, although Coker does not understand Gulley the Artist, she has a very humane concern for Gulley the Man. She invariably allows him to wheedle money from her for art supplies, furnishes him with new socks, and even takes him home with her on a rainy night when his shed is flooded (she thoughtfully has Gulley reverse his trousers before getting in bed to forestall any romantic mischief on his part). Coker's mother is even more lacking in the aesthetic sense. When she and Coker move into Gulley's shed, Mrs. Coker chops up Gulley's painting of The Fall and utilizes the pieces to repair the leaky roof.

Plant, the philosopher-cobbler, represents the abstract thinker whose energies are expended in thoughts about rather than in the creation of art. Gulley likes Plant but he cannot finally approve of Plant's intellectual approach to experience. Although Plant pretends to like Gulley's work, Gulley knows that he secretly hates it. Gulley is

not fooled when Plant brings in a group of blue-nose preachers to admire his work:

> But preachers, being a class proof against domestic influence, often go on believing in truth, beauty and goodness all their lives. Plant was a very strong believer in all three, and whenever he could persuade anybody to see my pictures, especially another preacher, he would bring him in. As a public duty to art and God and the English nation.
>
> The trouble is that though all good Protestant preachers round Greenbank including anarchists and anti-God Blackboys love beauty, they all hate pictures, real pictures. Each time Plantie sees one of my pictures, he gets a worse shock. This, of course, excites him to great enthusiasm, and makes me feel depressed (40).

Gully, on the other hand, is totally distrustful of abstractions: "Contemplation is not the doings" (101). He says, simply: "Talk is lies. The only satisfactory form of communication is a good picture" (85).

Sara and Rozzie are Gulley's Female Inspiration. Gulley lives, off and on, with each of them, and at one time maintains a dual household. The kind of exuberance for life of these two is best depicted in the scene in Herself Surprised where Gulley is wedged between the two women on a horsehair sofa, like "'Mahomet between the Mountains' or the 'Widow's Cheese Mite'" (98). Although Sara is at the time a widow in black, she cannot repress her giggles at Rozzie's animated repartee with Gulley, who is "fizzing between us like ginger beer" (98). Actually, Gulley's best work seems to have been accomplished during the time he was living with Sara. By the time of The Horse's Mouth, Sara

is an old woman, but Gulley still detects in her traces of the "original fireship." After Gulley and Coker call on Sara to get her admission that she illegally gave Hickson possession of Gulley's paintings, Gulley is impatient to get back to his current project, since he is excited over his meeting with the "old individual geyser" (33). "I felt I could paint. As always after a party. Life delights in life. Especially with Sara" (35).

Thus, throughout the novel, everything is reduced to comic terms. Primarily, this reduction is accomplished by Gulley himself as interpreter of events around him. However, other factors also contribute to the comic effect. For example, the title, The Horse's Mouth, is Gulley's term for the great source of Artistic Inspiration. When Gulley is inspired for a new depiction of Adam, he feels that his idea is "straight from the horse" (21). And when his inspiration fails, Gulley notes that "'The truth is, THE OLD HORSE DOESN'T SPEAK ONLY HORSE'" (43).

The names of the various characters also contribute to the humorous effect of the narrative. Gulley Jimson, for example, hardly seems appropriate as the name of a serious artist. A gully is a miniature gulch, and jimson is a type of weed. Hickson suggests typical British aristocratic respectability, until one notes its patronymic connotations. Alabaster suggests pretentiousness, primarily through its sound. It is a word which "sounds big," but which produces an undeniably comic effect. (Sylvester is a word which would

fall in the same category.) Coker's name suggests, of course, coke or coal, and Coker is indeed as plain and simple and practical as a piece of coal. Further, the short, blunted syllables of the name suggest Coker's abruptness, and her blunt, direct approach to life. Mr. Plant is stubbornly planted in his opinions, clinging to his beliefs that there"must be a purpose in it," even when he loses his right hand by blood poisoning. Also, his family has flourished like a plant in England for centuries.

The yoking of high and low is seen constantly in the flow of Gulley's own consciousness. He consistently undercuts his own serious or profound observations with a wry, acrid counter-statement. It is as if he literally jerks his thoughts back to earth, when they threaten to soar too far. Thus Gulley's sense of the ridiculous emerges in his description of Ollier on a cold morning: "Frost on the grass like condensed moonlight. Moon high up, transparent. Like snow mark in ice. Birds very lively. Sparrows fluffed out like feather dusters. Met friend Ollier delivering first post. Drop on his nose, a pearl, and two more on his mustache, diamonds" (19). Contemplating his outcast state, Gulley observes, "I wander weeping far away, until some other takes me in. The police" (60). Formulating a definition of Freedom, Gulley concludes that it is the Inside of the Outside (102), and then he adds that "even a philosopher like old Ben can't judge the XXX by eating

pint pots. It's the wrong approach" (102). A second principle of contrast also operates when Gulley's exalted ideas are presented in ludicrous contexts. Thus, while Gulley is loudly proclaiming to Coker that he is a genius, one of the greatest artists who ever lived, Coker is busily yanking his trousers off to get him ready for bed. ("'Lift up your bottom--how can I get 'em off when you keep on sitting down.'" [88]) Gulley's great flash of insight into the meaning of Freedom occurs as he wanders about Hickson's drawing-room, totally oblivious to the negotiations concerning his welfare being conducted by Coker and Hickson on the other side of the room. Gulley absolutely refuses to let others become maudlin at his expense. When Alabaster simpers, "'Nobody could call you a commercial artist, Mr. Jimson,'" Gulley instantly answers, "'Blow the trumpets, sound the drum, Tantara, Boom'" (137).

Frequently, the ironic contrast occurs when Gulley quotes Blake.[10] (The Blake quotations actually form a serious frame of meaning for the novel. They serve as a reminder that despite his ironic mask, Gulley is sincerely committed as an artist.) Recalling his days with Sara, Gulley quotes and then interprets lines from "The Mental Traveller":

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[10]Hazard Adams presents an interesting discussion of the biographical and artistic affinities of Blake and Jimson in his article, "Blake and Gulley Jimson: English Symbolists," Critique, III (Spring-Fall, 1959), pp. 3-14.

> And he rends up his manacles
> And binds her down for his delight
> He plants himself in all her nerves
> Just like a husbandman his mould
> And she becomes his dwelling-place
> And garden fruitful seventy fold

> As Billy would say, through generation into regeneration. Materiality, that is, Sara, the old female nature, having attempted to button up the prophetic spirit, that is to say, Gulley Jimson, in her plackethole, got a bonk on the conk, and was reduced to her proper status, as spiritual fodder (46).

One of the great scenes of ironic contrast occurs when Sara and Gulley drink beer and make love in Plant's kitchen, finally falling off their chairs altogether and tumbling onto the floor, while the speaker of the evening pontificates in the next room about "'The boundless possibilities of human happiness when guided by those natural loves and fraternal sympathies planted in the soul'" (75).

The final episode of the book, the painting of the church mural, represents a parodic treatment of the theme of art as religion, or art in the service of the church. Gulley discovers his church by accident, while he is snooping about in an alley looking for a wall for his mural of The Creation. The church is not only deserted, it is condemned. Gulley must pay for its use, and he acquires permission to use it only by tricking the caretakers into believing it is to be utilized for "religious observances." ("'What religion?' 'Low.' 'What sort?' 'Peculiar.'" [251]). The subject of Gulley's picture ("The Creation") is manifestly

appropriate for the religious setting. (The title also serves to sum up the intent of Gulley's life.) Gulley's treatment of his subject is characteristically unorthodox (included in the picture is a whale with its face on the back of its head). The painting is in every sense a depiction of Gulley's subjective perception of the beginning of the world, literally his creation of the Creation. The whole episode rises to riotous absurdity when Alabaster arrives leading a committee of the Beeders, et al, who wish to persuade Gulley to leave off his present dangerous project in favor of a conventional work, a portrait of a noted general. The committee of "art lovers" obviously has neither comprehension of nor sympathy for Gulley's efforts. Gulley is finally torn from his "Creation" by a party of wreckers, who knock him out of his swing and demolish his mural. As he goes down, he seems to hear a thousand angels combining their voices in a gigantic horse laugh. Gulley apparently perceives God not only as the Divine Inspirer but also as the Divine Destroyer. Gulley is first granted his idea and his wall ("God has been good to you" [252]). Then both are destroyed in what seems to be a huge cosmic joke. Gulley's answer, as always, is to refuse to feel aggrieved. When the nun reminds him that he had better pray than laugh, he answers "'Same thing, mother'" (311).

Thus Gulley's view of life seems to be rooted in an awareness of God (the Old Horse) as a source of both

creative inspiration and potentially destructive energies. Gulley himself illustrates both the creative and destructive aspects of the creator in action.[11] On his first day out of jail, Gulley attempts to wheedle money from Coker (to whom he is already in debt), makes another threatening call to Hickson, steals paint from the oilman, and solicits money from the unsuspecting Captain Jones for his fictitious William Blake Society. In his role as artist-rebel, Gulley is a threat to all the fixed institutions and codes which stabilize society. Foremost among these is the family. As soon as he is infected with the germ of "galloping art," he promptly renounces all familial responsibilities. ("My wife was nearly starving, and we had pawned most of our furniture, but what did I care" [56]). He soon becomes totally absorbed in his transition from classic to impressionist schools, so that he hardly notices when his wife leaves him and his mother dies. ("I was so wretched that I hardly noticed when we were sold up and my wife went off, or even when my mother died" [57]). After this, Gulley sets up, from time to time, a variety of irregular domestic establishments. Recalling his last imprisonment, Gulley reflects: "Last time I was locked up, in 'thirty-seven, I left a regular establishment behind. Nice little wife, two

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[11] Andrew Wright points out that "The world of creation is a world of injustice, and injustice is a major theme of The Horse's Mouth." Op. cit., p. 125.

kids, flat and studio with a tin roof . . . when I came back, there was nothing. Wife and kids gone back to her mamma. Flat let to people who didn't even know my name" (4-5). Gulley entices Sara to come away with him by promising to marry her, but at the registry office he is forced to confess that he is already encumbered with a wife. (This incident is described in Herself Surprised.) Gulley's solution, which Sara accepts, is that they simply pretend to be man and wife without benefit of an actual ceremony (he explains that he found this plan quite satisfactory on prior occasions). While Gulley is living with Sara, he is also courting Rozzie, who bears his son Tom. After Rozzie's death, Tom comes to live with Gulley and his current companion (Margaret or Mud). Sara describes in Herself Surprised the effects of letting Tom grow up in the bohemian artistic household. Gulley advocates a Rousseau-like upbringing for the young:

> "I'm not going to hand over this kid to the schoolmasters and get rid of it under the pretence of education. No, I'm going to teach it myself. No reading and writing and arithmetic for my kid." For I was really keen on education at the time. And I had the idea that if you could only prevent a kid learning to read, it couldn't pick up all the rubbish out of the newspapers and books, that spoils children's brains. My idea was to teach kids first of all to sing, since Nature starts 'em singing before they can talk; and then to draw; and then to swim and box; and then when they got a bit older and could do more brain work, to dance and make poetry in their heads. Also I was going to teach my kid to know all Blake's poetry and what it means and what is wrong with it, and then, if he was a boy, I should have gone on to Shakespeare and navigation, so that he could be a

> sailor and see some of the outside world, and keep away from culture and all the rest of it; or if a girl, Milton and cooking; so she might go into service and see some of the inside world (265).

Gulley expects his "wives" to assume the burden of his support (he continues to demand money from Sara long after they are separated), and he uses them as a means of releasing his hostilities when he is frustrated in his work. Sara notes, accurately, that Gulley is the type who will always beat his women (Herself Surprised, 142). Her great source of grief is that Gulley, in a fit of pique, once gave her a "bonk on the conk" that ruined her nose forever.

Gulley also habitually practices theft, fraud, and extortion. Most of his thefts are petty larcenies committed to obtain necessary supplies to survive and function as an artist. He lifts paints from the oiler's shop, lets a frypan fall into his hand outside a Greenbank store, and steals Sara's wedding picture to pawn the silver frame. At Hickson's, he fills his pockets with Netsukes and expensive snuff boxes, presumably because they appeal to his aesthetic sense. Among his more notable swindles are the phony William Blake Society and the ingenious post card scheme. Both of these projects furnish ironic comments on Gulley and his situation. When Gulley purports to obtain funds for the Blake Society, he is in one sense speaking the truth, since he himself as creator is a living exponent of Blakean principles; in fact, Gulley is actually a kind of one-man Blake

Society.[12] The novel is interspersed with Blake quotations, which provide a structuring principle for the picaresque development. Gulley constantly quotes and interprets Blake to himself, and spends his time in jail learning more Blake. The post card swindle not only shows Gulley's cleverness, but it also suggests the underlying irony of the attitude of a public which will readily purchase "art" that is obscene, but will not recognize, much less pay for, the serious productions of the true artist. Gulley's ability to confuse and outwit his opponents in business deals is revealed in his devious bargainings with Coker, the paint dealer, and the church sexton.

Gulley's antisocial acts frequently assume more serious proportions. He makes himself a nuisance and a threat to Hickson, who is forced to prosecute in self-defense. Gulley literally wrecks the Beeders' elegant apartment, but they graciously do not prosecute. His greatest act of destruction is, of course, his unintentional murder of Sara, who dies as a consequence of a struggle with Gulley over an

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[12]That Gulley is a Blakean artist is readily apparent. "With Blake, art is a vehicle of knowledge in which the imagination creates what it experiences. This act of creation is the true ceremony, the inward ceremony, of Christ, whereas abstract moral codes are the 'outward ceremony' or Antichrist. Thus Art becomes an intuition of reality and the artist becomes a prophet for having created the world in its true form and thus revealed a morality in its highest sense--a morality beyond abstraction. All religious thought is thus the study of art." Adams, op. cit., p. 11.

early portrait of her which Gulley wants to sell to the Beeders.

None of Gulley's destructive acts is committed as a deliberate attempt to commit an evil. He threatens Hickson because he is desperate for money, and feels that Hickson is enjoying undeserved profits from his (Gulley's) work. (The fact that Hickson has a legal right to these paintings is of no consequence to Gulley.) His appropriation of the furnishings of the Beeder apartment is justified in his mind as a means of maintaining himself while he executes the wall mural which he has commissioned himself to do for them. And the death of Sara is an unforeseen consequence of Gulley's determination to wrest from her the early portrait which he believes is his by virtue of his right as creator.

Gulley's prime aim is to function as an artist, and all other considerations are insignificant to him. His destructions occur as an inevitable consequence of his determination to release in artistic expression the creative impulse within him. His is the amoral nature of the dedicated artist for whom all else is subordinate to his work. He thus embodies the creative-destructive principle which is reflected on a larger scale in the continuing cosmic processes of destruction and regeneration. As creator he is, inevitably, destroyer. But out of his destructions are born his "works of passion and imagination" through which are revitalized the spirits both of himself and of the world.

Gulley recognizes the danger he represents in the eyes of a world which fears to be transfigured. He poses a threat not only because he is an artist, but, more especially, because he is a modern artist. Modern art is an ever-present menace to the established forms of society:

> All art is bad, but modern art is the worst. Just like the influenza. The newer it is, the more dangerous. And modern art is not only a public danger--it's insidious. You never know what may happen when it's got loose. Dickens and all the other noble and wise men who backed him up, parsons and magistrates and judges, were quite right. So were the brave lads who fought against the Impressionists in 1870, and the Post-Impressionists in 1910, and that rat Jimson in 1920. They were all quite right. They knew what modern art can do. Creeping about everywhere, undermining the Church and the State and the Academy and the Law and marriage and the Government--smashing up civilization, degenerating the Empire (18).

Art is innocuous only after it has grown old, and stale, and familiar. When it can do no more harm, it is ready to be accepted as a masterpiece:

> Nothing is a masterpiece--a real masterpiece--till it's about two hundred years old. A picture is like a tree or a church, you've got to let it grow into a masterpiece. Same with a poem or a new religion. They begin as a lot of funny words. Nobody knows whether they're all nonsense or a gift from heaven. And the only people who think anything of 'em are a lot of cranks or crackpots, or poor devils who don't know enough to know anything. Look at Christianity. Just a lot of floating seeds to start with, all sorts of seeds. It was a long time before one of them grew into a tree big enough to kill the rest and keep the rain off. And it's only when the tree has been cut into planks and built into a house and the house has got pretty old and about fifty generations of ordinary lumpheads who don't know a work of art from a public convenience, have been knocking nails in the kitchen beams to hang hams on, and screwing hooks in the walls for whips and guns and photographs and calendars and measuring the children on the window frames

> and chopping out a new cupboard under the stairs to keep the cheese and murdering their wives in the back room and burying them under the cellar flags, that it begins even to feel like a real religion. And when the whole place is full of dry rot and ghosts and old bones and the shelves are breaking down with old wormy books that no one could read if they **tried**, and the attic floors are bulging through the servants' ceilings with old trunks and top-boots and gasoliers and dressmaker's dummies and ball frocks and dolls' houses and pony saddles and blunderbusses and parrot cages and uniforms and love letters and jugs without handles and bridal pots decorated with forget-me-nots and a piece out at the bottom, that it grows into a real old faith, a masterpiece which people can really get something out of, each for himself. And then, of course, everybody keeps on saying that it ought to be pulled down at once, because it's an unsanitary nuisance (174-175).

Gulley's comparison between the tree and the house suggests the difference between the artwork which is a new, living, organic creation and that which is an ancient, established, dead artifact. The distinction is that between art as process (of creation) and art as history (of accomplished fact).

Taking the part of society, Gulley sums up its hostile view of art and artists in an ironic denunciation:

> "What is art? Just self-indulgence. You give way to it. It's a vice. Prison is too good for artists--they ought to be rolled down Primrose Hill in a barrel full of broken bottles once a week and twice on public holidays, to teach them where they get off" (66).

Gulley asserts that he deserves seven years in prison for "being Gulley Jimson" (53), and declares that the penalty for being an artist ought to be "death without the option" (54).

The great crime of the artist against society is

that he insists on being free.[13] For Gulley, art is equated with Freedom, the expression of the inner imagination. While Hickson and Coker haggle over Gulley's paintings, Gulley experiences his great illumination as to the truth of artistic freedom: "Contemplation . . . is ON THE OUTSIDE. . . . Freedom . . . is nothing but THE INSIDE OF THE OUTSIDE. . . . it's SOMETHING THAT GOES ON GOING ON. . . . It's the ginger in the gingerbread. It's the apple in the dumpling. It's the jump in the OLD MOSQUITO. It's the kick in the old horse. It's the creation" (102).

Art is the inevitable enemy of Government, which seeks to restrict the imagination.[14] Gulley asserts that

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[13]Edward Case observes of Cary, ". . . of all those who may be styled the major novelists of this century he is the only one whose dominant theme is neither tragedy, evil, decadence, guilt, anxiety, neurosis, nor despair. His many-volumed subject is human freedom. He sees the world as a place of change, of adventure and surprise. He sees life as full of infinite possibilities of experience. He embraces joy as readily as sorrow."

"'Freedom' is not a political term, as Cary uses it. He is not talking about liberty. 'Freedom' is descriptive. It is the label for the internal reality of man's life, whatever his condition. It is the <u>fact of humanity</u>, which is the fact of conscious individuality, conscious will and aspiration, however thwarted or muted by physical circumstance. It is that drive of self which is the very definition of human consciousness. It is that inward autonomous realm where man knows his own needs and yearnings, and ponders their realization. Freedom, above all, is <u>human power</u>. It is the capacity for action. It is actualized by knowledge and means. It is in fact beyond good and evil. It is the creative principle itself." "The Free World of Joyce Cary," <u>Modern Age</u>, III (Spring, 1959), pp. 116-117.

[14]Frederick R. Karl notes, "Jimson, like Rousseau and Blake, believes that the natural goodness of man has been corrupted by institutions, schools, and academies,

"'The only good government . . . is a bad one in the hell of a fright; yes, what you want to do with government is to put a bomb under it every ten minutes and blow its whiskers off . . . " (225). Judges are appointed to "'keep imagination in order. If it wasn't for imagination . . . we shouldn't need any police or government. The world would be as nice and peaceful and uninteresting as a dead dog full of dead fleas'" (234).

Gulley as Artist represents the ultimate principle of human freedom. He demonstrates the process of life constantly being born anew out of itself. He describes his discovery of Manet as a young artist as like a rebirth into a new world of color (57). As an old man in the forest, he feels that "no one has seen a tree till this moment" (229). For Gulley, "'It's a new world every heart beat. The sun rises seventy-five times a minute'" (227).

Although Gulley is destructive in that he is a disruptive element in society, deliberately rebelling against its restricting forms and uses, he is ever an innocent with the innocence of Natural Creation.[15] Like the maiden

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and that the only way a man can regain a pure vision of the world is by dissociating himself from society and following the call of his own individuality. Accordingly, the conflict of The Horse's Mouth is created through the pure will of Jimson as it runs against institutions and institutional people." "Joyce Cary: The Moralist as Novelist," Twentieth Century Literature, V (January, 1960), p. 184.

[15]Barbara Hardy observes, "Like Mister Johnson, the best of the African novels, and Charley Is My Darling, this

Oothoon, he possesses "the eternal innocence that thinks no evil" (103). His is the "passion of intelligence . . . The everlasting creation of delight. The joy that is always new and fresh because it is created" (103). For Gulley knows

> That the soul of innocence, maidenhood, could never be destroyed so long as it lived in the free spirit. For it would always be new created in real virginity. The virginity of the soul which never allows experience to grow stale. Which never allows custom to hide the wonders of love (104).

As Cary observes, "There is nothing sure, nothing dependable, but the spirit of life itself and its invincible desperation which, among the cruelty of circumstance that is the form and effect of its real being, begets itself for ever in newness and innocence eternal delight."[16]

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book [The Horse's Mouth] is about creative power and creative lawlessness. The emphasis varies. Mister Johnson is cheat first and poet after, Jimson is painter first and lawbreaker after, and Charley is both juvenile delinquent and infant prodigy. The characteristics are constant though the proportions vary. Johnson, Charley, and Jimson all create, all destroy, and all have power, a power which is less the product of genius or courage or lawlessness than of vitality." "Form in Joyce Cary's Novels," Essays in Criticism, IV (April, 1954), p. 187.

[16]From a note to his poem The Drunken Sailor. Quoted by Allen, op. cit., p. 19.

CHAPTER V

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER AND THE DUBIOUS INNOCENCE OF MADNESS

> "Fact is, I'm for law and order, I don't like to see lawbreakers and loonatics at large. It ain't the place for them."
>
> Mr. Homer T. Hatch,
> in "Noon Wine"

Although the theme of "destructive innocence" as such is not central to the work of Katherine Anne Porter, it is an important motif in several of her stories. In "Flowering Judas," for example, the innocent appears in the character of Laura, the American school teacher, who has come to Mexico to participate in the revolutionary activities there.[1] Laura is obviously from a highly conservative background. She herself attended a convent, and even now

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[1]Ray B. West says that according to Katherine Anne Porter, "Laura was modeled upon a friend with whom Miss Porter had taught school in Mexico . . ." "Katherine Anne Porter and 'Historic Memory,'" Reprinted in Louis D. Rubin, Jr., and Robert D. Jacobs (eds.), Southern Renascence: The Literature of the Modern South (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1953). West adds: "But the important thing to notice is that in all cases, Katherine Anne Porter's characters possess qualities which have some point of similarity with her own experience." Ibid., p. 281.

she is unable to break away entirely from her Catholic upbringing. She displays a distinct puritanism in her character, and this puritanism contrasts markedly with the corruption and degeneracy evident in the leaders of the revolution. Laura can best be described as "prim." Her appearance suggests the nun. She carefully conceals any evidence of sexual attractiveness: " she covers her great round breasts with thick dark cloth, and . . . hides long, invaluably beautiful legs under a heavy skirt" (151). "Her knees cling together under sound blue serge, and her round white collar is not purposely nun-like" (142). She sleeps in a "white linen nightgown" (159) symbolic of her chaste state.

Laura's innocence is further emphasized by her position as teacher. In the elementary school at Xochimilco, she plays the role of mother to the native schoolchildren, who obviously worship her:

> When she appears in the classroom they crowd about her with smiles on their wise, innocent, clay-colored faces, crying, "Good morning, my titcher!" in immaculate voices, and they make of her desk a fresh garden of flowers every day (145).

Laura is careful to maintain her virginity despite the insistent advances of numerous suitors. Always, she takes precautions to insure that her rejections do not give offense. When the young captain of Zapata's army invites her for a horseback ride with the intention of expressing "his desire for her with the noble simplicity befitting a rude folk-hero" (148), she cleverly manages for her horse

to bolt and gallop off just at the moment the captain is preparing to help her from the stirrup. When a young union organizer serenades her persistently from her patio, she observes the conventions by throwing him a flower, but she does not encourage a closer relationship. When Braggioni visits her in the evening to woo her with mournful ballads, she listens with "pitiless courtesy" (140), for she fears to do otherwise: "She knows what Braggioni would offer her, and she must resist tenaciously without appearing to resist, and if she could avoid it she would not admit even to herself the slow drift of his intention" (141). The result of Laura's caution is that "nobody touches her, but all praise her gray eyes, and the soft, round under lip which promises gayety, yet is always grave, nearly always firmly closed . . ." (147).

Laura's ostensible commitment is to the cause of the revolution. She wears "the uniform of an idea" (142), but she cannot precisely define the "nature of this devotion, its true motives . . . [or] its obligations" (145).

> During her leisure she goes to union meetings and listens to busy important voices quarreling over tactics, methods, internal politics. She visits the prisoners of her own political faith in their cells, where they entertain themselves with counting cockroaches, repenting of their indiscretions, composing their memoirs, writing out manifestoes and plans for their comrades who are still walking about free, hands in pockets, sniffing fresh air. Laura brings them food and cigarettes and a little money, and she brings messages disguised in equivocal phrases from the men outside who dare not set foot in the prison for fear of disappearing into the cells kept

> empty for them. . . . she brings them their favorite narcotics, and says in a tone that does not wound them with pity, "Tonight will really be night for you . . ." (145-146).

Some of her missions are potentially dangerous, but Laura is protected with the invulnerability of innocence:

> She is not afraid to knock on any door in any street after midnight, and enter in the darkness, and say to one of these men who is really in danger: "They will be looking for you--seriously--tomorrow morning after six. Here is some money from Vicente. Go to Vera Cruz and wait" (146-147).
>
> She walks back and forth on her errands, with puzzled eyebrows, carrying her little folder of drawings and music and school papers (147).

Though she expends her time and energies in behalf of the revolution, she carefully maintains her separateness from those who share her dedication to the common cause:

> . . . the very cells of her flesh reject knowledge and kinship in one monotonous word. No. No. No. She draws her strength from this one holy talismanic word which does not suffer her to be led into evil. Denying everything, she may walk anywhere in safety, she looks at everything without amazement (151).

The danger inherent in Laura's dedication lies in the fact that the cause she serves is a corrupt one. The corruption of the revolutionary movement is summed up in the character of Braggioni, the cunning leader. Braggioni is lustful, self-indulgent, contemptuous of his followers. He brags that he is a man of power, and that this power entitles him to indulge his love of elegant refinements:

> He has good food and abundant drink, he hires an automobile and drives in the Paseo on Sunday morning, and enjoys plenty of sleep in a soft bed beside a wife who dares not disturb him; and he sits pampering his

> bones in easy billows of fat, singing to Laura, who knows and thinks these things about him. When he was fifteen, he tried to drown himself because he loved a girl, his first love, and she laughed at him. "A thousand women have paid for that," and his tight little mouth turns down at the corners. Now he perfumes his hair with Jockey Club, and confides to Laura: "One woman is really as good as another for me, in the dark. I prefer them all" (154).

Of his followers, he says, "'They are stupid, they are lazy, they are treacherous, they would cut my throat for nothing . . .'"(154). When Eugenio dies, Braggioni comments, "'He is a fool, and his death is his own business . . .'" (157).

Laura herself is aware of the discrepancies between the ideal revolutionary and the "bulk of Braggioni" (141), but she cannot renounce either her leader or her cause:

> The gluttonous bulk of Braggioni has become a symbol of her many disillusions, for a revolutionist should be lean, animated by heroic faith, a vessel of abstract virtues. This is nonsense, she knows it now and is ashamed of it. Revolution must have leaders, and leadership is a career for energetic men. She is, her comrades tell her, full of romantic error, for what she defines as cynicism in them is merely "a developed sense of reality." She is almost too willing to say, "I am wrong, I suppose I don't really understand the principles," and afterward she makes a secret truce with herself, determined not to surrender her will to such expedient logic. But she cannot help feeling that she has been betrayed irreparably by the disunion between her way of living and her feeling of what life should be, and at times she is almost contented to rest in this sense of grievance as a private store of consolation. Sometimes she wishes to run away, but she stays (141-142).

Laura's overt act of destruction occurs when she brings to the imprisoned Eugenio the narcotics which he uses to commit suicide. Laura, as always, is endeavoring to serve the larger cause by providing for the comforts of

its followers. But the fact that it is she who supplies the material means for Eugenio's death leaves her with an overwhelming sense of guilt. This deep guilt is reflected in the dream which concludes the story, in which Eugenio comes for Laura. At first Laura wishes to go with him (that is, she desires to escape her present existence), but she hesitates when Eugenio calls her "Murderer," and refuses to take her hand. Against her will, Laura is transported away from familiar surroundings and into the "strange land": ". . . she clung first to the stair rail, and then to the topmost branch of the Judas tree that bent down slowly and set her upon the earth, and then to the rocky ledge of a cliff, and then to the jagged wave of a sea that was not water but a desert of crumbling stone" (160). At this point, she discovers that Eugenio is taking her to death. Again she refuses to go unless he will take her hand. Laura obviously senses that the spirit of Eugenio has come not out of love but out of a desire for vengeance. As his "murderess," she must forfeit a life for a life. Yet she rebels against this extreme punishment, and Eugenio now turns to her, commanding her in a "voice of pity" to eat the Judas blossoms:

> Then eat these flowers, poor prisoner, said Eugenio in a voice of pity, take and eat: and from the Judas tree he stripped the warm bleeding flowers, and held them to her lips. She saw that his hand was fleshless, a cluster of small white petrified branches, and his eye sockets were without light, but she ate the flowers greedily for they satisfied both hunger and thirst. Murderer! said Eugenio, and Cannibal! This is my body and my blood. Laura cried No! and at the

> sound of her own voice, she awake trembling, and was afraid to sleep again.

Thus, Laura expresses her highly ambivalent feelings toward the death of Eugenio. He has, in effect, tricked her into becoming an unwitting Judas. Supposedly her friend, he has made of her a murderess. Eugenio, as sacrificial martyr of the revolutionary cause, becomes the slain Christ, she the betraying Judas. Thinking to do him kindness, she becomes the agent of his death.

The guilt which Laura feels for the death of Eugenio reflects, also, her larger guilt arising from her mixed feelings for the entire cause in which she is involved. Her betrayal of Eugenio is a betrayal of the cause for which he stands, and thus her feeling of guilt for his death merges with her larger guilt which arises from her growing distrust of the revolutionary movement (distrust which she, to this point, must repress at the conscious level). Despite her doubts, she cannot desert the movement (cannot go "out of this strange house" in the dream just as she could not, earlier, "fly out of this room and leave Braggioni singing to himself" (142). At the same time, she feels guilty for the fact of her continuing association with the movement. If she stays, she remains a "poor prisoner" who must re-enact the betrayal of Eugenio (and all those whom the cause should serve, but fails) in the symbolic ritual of the sacrament. Thus, Laura's dream reveals to her not only her

immediate sense of personal guilt for her contribution to the death of Eugenio, but also her larger sense of guilt arising from the knowledge that she serves a cause which is only too ready to betray those whom it should sustain.[2]

Depictions of larger scenes of social disorder also occur in "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" and "The Leaning Tower." In the first, the stability and order of the world have collapsed into the violence of war. In the second, the damages of that war are presented in the depiction of Germany in the early thirties. Both stories present examples of the innocent agent of destruction. Miranda, by her unwitting transmission of the fatal influenza germ to Adam, and Charles, by his inadvertent destruction of his landlady's fragile souvenir of the past age, both act in this capacity. The young artist in "The Leaning Tower" is a characteristic figure of the American innocent abroad. His journey to Europe is an archetypal quest of youth for experience. As artist, his aim is not only to discover and comprehend, but

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[2]Harry J. Mooney, Jr., notes that "what Flowering Judas suggests so powerfully is the treacherous capacity of the individual to do wrong even when armed with the firmest intentions of doing right; and the story itself, like the modern history of which it is an instance, indicates this in the light of the tragic course of contemporary political events, in which so many noble concepts have led to so much horror and oppression." The Fiction and Criticism of Katherine Anne Porter ("Critical Essays in English and American Literature," No. 2; Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1957), p. 47.

to frame, know, and interpret his discoveries.[3] He has been drawn to Germany by the myth of its splendors relayed to him by his childhood friend, Kuno. In Berlin, he discovers alarming discrepancies between the myth and the actuality. Germany is for him a grim, hostile country where he is victimized by unscrupulous hotel keepers and bullied by sullen landladies. The manner in which he breaks the delicate replica of the Pisan tower (his landlady's treasured relic of her honeymoon, to her a symbol of all the lost riches of her past life) shows that Charles is in no way to blame for the hostilities directed at him. The tiny reproduction simply crumbles at his touch. Yet the landlady clearly holds him responsible for his action, as if it has been a deliberate act performed with malicious intent. Frau Reichl clings to the souvenir as a symbol of the lost world of servants, luxury, wealth, and ease which was hers before the war. Charles' breaking of the tower is a reminder to her of all the losses which she has suffered. Charles could not avoid breaking the tower, for it was already in a state of decay, just as the entire structure of pre-war European aris-

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[3]Diana Trilling finds a weakness in the depiction of the character of Charles in the fact that Porter does not make clear whether he is successful or unsuccessful as an artist. I think this is an irrelevant consideration. The point is that Charles is young and untried, that he is seeking an enlargement of experience. Even Miss Trilling grants that ". . . Charles is less an artist than he is young and American. . . ." "Fiction in Review," The Nation, CLIX (September 23, 1944), p. 360.

tocratic society was far gone in decadence before the war brought its final collapse. The German state of mind, as exemplified in Frau Reichl's attitude, is unable to accept the fact of self-guilt. For her, as for her countrymen, the fault does not lie within the native structures but is the consequence of damages inflicted by external agents. Frau Reichl hates Charles because he has destroyed the symbol of her opulent past, just as her countrymen despise America for the destruction Americans have inflicted on Germany.

Charles, the typical American, cannot understand the logic of the German rationale. He is bewildered by the conniving shopkeepers who either intimidate him or call on his pity to cheat him of his money. He does not understand the insolent pride of the young German Hans who arrogantly displays his ugly dueling scar as a symbol of aristocratic prestige:

> Charles had liked Hans on sight, but there was something he wouldn't know about him if they both lived for a thousand years; it was something you were, or were not, and Charles rejected that wound, the reason why it existed, and everything that made it possible, then and there, simply because there were no conditions for acceptance in his mind.[4]

Charles is faced with a set of standards and attitudes utterly opposed to those of his own tradition. At the end of the story, he decides that it is better to remain in his

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[4]Katherine Anne Porter, "The Leaning Tower," in The Leaning Tower and Other Stories (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1934), p. 197.

state of wretched loneliness than to associate with these disagreeable people.

In the story "Theft" it is the central figure (a Miranda-like young woman) who plays the role of the destructive agent. The key action is the theft of an expensive gold cloth purse from the bedroom of the heroine by the janitress of the building. But the young woman has invited the robbery by her careless attitude toward her possessions. When the janitress finally admits her guilt, she points out that the lodger has provided the temptation for the theft: "'I thought maybe you wouldn't mind, you leave things around and don't seem to notice much.'"[5] The young woman realizes that she has, indeed, lived by a principle of exaggerated trust: "She remembered how she had never locked a door in her life, on some principle of rejection in her that made her uncomfortable in the ownership of things, and her paradoxical boast before the warnings of her friends, that she has never lost a penny by theft . . ." (89). The theft of the purse now seems but the culmination of the continuing pillage of her life by those who have taken advantage of her trust. She allows herself to be drenched in a rainstorm to spare the pride of her impoverished escort, Camilo. When another friend, Roger, offers to rescue her in a taxi, she

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[5]Katherine Anne Porter, "Theft," Flowering Judas and Other Stories (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1930), p. 90.

must provide part of the fare. Her neighbor Bill refuses to return the fifty dollars he owes for her contribution of a scene to his play, although he has recently purchased a ninety-five dollar rug for his floor. Thus the loss of the purse epitomizes all the losses she has sustained in a lifetime of pillage:

> In this moment she felt that she had been robbed of an enormous number of valuable things, whether material or intangible: things lost or broken by her own fault, things she had forgotten and left in houses when she moved: books borrowed from her and not returned, journeys she had planned and had not made, words she had waited to hear spoken to her and had not heard, and the words she had meant to answer with; bitter alternatives and intolerable substitutes worse than nothing, and yet inescapable: the long patient suffering of dying friendships and the dark inexplicable death of love--all that she had had, and all that she had missed, were lost together, and were twice lost in this landslide of remembered losses (89-90).

She perceives, however, that it is she herself who has perpetuated the self-robbery: "She laid the purse on the table and sat down with the cup of chilled coffee, and thought: I was right not to be afraid of any thief but myself, who will end by leaving me nothing" (91).

The theme of the shaping of the life of the individual by forces outside himself and society is presented in the short sketch entitled "He." The idiot son in this story represents a burden and temptation which his parents are not equipped to cope with. They recognize their responsibilities to him, and sincerely attempt to give him the same love and consideration they express for their other

children. Yet almost in spite of themselves, they take advantage of his defenseless state. He is sent to fetch the dangerous bull, he is ordered into the pen to snatch the young pig from the fierce sow, and he must give up his blanket to warm the other children. Through their actions toward the handicapped boy the parents reveal their own inner weakness and basic selfishness. They are willing to exploit him to serve their own needs and comfort. They want to do what is just and proper for him. Yet, despite their just intentions, they exploit him cruelly. The idiot thus becomes the innocent agent by which the deficiencies of the human spirit are exposed. At the end of the story, the parents recognize their inability to carry any longer the burden which fate has placed upon them, and the boy is surrendered to society (he is sent to the charity hospital).

Many of the themes which appear in the above stories reoccur in "Noon Wine," a study which deals specifically with the problem of the destructive innocent. Again, the figure of the idiot (lunatic) is employed to demonstrate how "fate" works to lay on the individual a responsibility greater than he can bear.[6] Mr. Helton, the simple lunatic,

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[6]Mooney notes that "Noon Wine is another variation of the now familiar theme of the invasion of the private world by the reasonless forces of society at large. . . . Nowhere else in her fiction are the mysterious forces so hostile to the individual quite so succinctly dramatized as they are in the character of Mr. Hatch; and nowhere else is the individual's resistance in the face of the unknown quite so heroic as Mr. Thompson's." Op. cit., pp. 40-41.

is first the preserver and later the destroyer of the Thompson family. (Mr. Hatch is the immediate cause of Thompson's downfall. But if Mr. Helton had not come to the Thompson farm, Mr. Thompson would have avoided involvement in destruction and guilt.) Mr. Helton had no intention of bringing disaster down on the Thompsons. And Mr. Thompson certainly did not mean to harm anyone. But Mr. Helton, simply by his presence, serves as a passive agent of destruction, involving Mr. Thompson in a pattern of disaster which ends in death by violence for three of the principals. The final discovery of the story is the ultimate impossibility of evaluating or interpreting accurately the events of human life. It reveals the inextricable fusion of guilt and innocence in human motive and action, and demonstrates the complexity and irresolvable ambiguity of human experience. The characters involved are humble people, who are unprepared to comprehend or interpret the events in which they become involved; but the issues upon which the dramatic action rests strike to the core of the human dilemma.

"Noon Wine" is a study of the innocent in its most basic or essential form: that of the "simple," the man whose nature is so restricted in its intellectual and moral development that society at large recognizes his defect and makes allowances for it by placing him in a special category of persons not held responsible for their acts; the term "innocent" is applied to him in explicit recognition of

his state of moral non-accountability. The "innocent" in this instance is Mr. Olaf Helton, the silent Swede, who arrives one day at the small south Texas farm of Mr. Royal Earle Thompson, who hires him on the spot as a helper on the farm. For nine years Mr. Thompson enjoys the benefits of Mr. Helton's labors, flourishing as he never had before, unaware that the course of his life is to be so irrevocably altered by the presence of the stranger at his home.

During the early years of his stay with the Thompsons, Mr. Helton succeeds (ironically) in doing what Mr. Thompson has never been able to accomplish: he imposes a pattern of order on the heretofore slipshod and haphazard management of the farm. Mr. Thompson has never been able to cope adequately with the problems of running the farm. Inwardly he is convinced that most of the irksome chores of farm life were "women's work," anyway. The constant demand on him to cater to the needs of cows and chickens he finds bothersome:

> But from the first the cows worried him, coming up regularly twice a day to be milked, standing there reproaching him with their smug female faces. . . . Milk worried him, coming bitter sometimes, drying up, turning sour. Hens worried him, clucking, hatching out when you least expected it and leading their broods into the barnyard where the horses could step on them; dying of croup and wryneck and getting plagues of chicken lice; laying eggs all over God's creation so that half of them were spoiled before a man could find them. . . .[7]

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[7]Katherine Anne Porter, "Noon Wine," Pale Horse, Pale Rider: Three Short Novels (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1936), pp. 112-113. All future page references to "Noon Wine" will be to this edition.

The truth is that Mr. Thompson has been going downhill for several years. His wife, a frail woman, had "simply gone down on him early" (114). The yards and sheds have become cluttered with "broken-down machinery and ragged harness and old wagon wheels and battered milk pails" (114). The front gate is now "sunk so firmly on its broken hinges no one thought of trying to close it" (93). Things had gotten out of hand, and there was no one to straighten the chaos or remedy the disorder. Mr. Thompson had silently resigned himself to failure.

From the day of his arrival, Mr. Helton sets about determinedly to restore some order into the haphazard operation of the Thompson farm. Despite his limitations of mind and spirit, he acts for nine years as a constructive agent, steadily rebuilding the decayed fortunes of the Thompson household.

> He milked the cows, kept the milk house, and churned the butter; rounded the hens up and somehow persuaded them to lay in the nests, not under the house and behind the haystacks; he fed them regularly and they hatched out until you couldn't set a foot down for them. Little by little the piles of trash around the barns and house disappeared (115-116). . . . It was a fact the hogs were in better shape and sold for more money. It was a fact that Mr. Thompson stopped buying feed, Mr. Helton managed the crops so well (117).

Mr. Thompson begins to flourish. For the first time, the dairy begins to show a real profit. In gratitude, Mr. Thompson raises Mr. Helton's salary, once in the third year and again in the fourth, two dollars and a half a

month each time.

It is true that the Thompsons notice that Mr. Helton is a strange man, but they never guess the full extent of his abnormality. Over the years they accept his contribution to their welfare, oblivious to the extent of his defect or of the potential danger he represents.[8] Mr. Helton's manner and appearance strike Mr. Thompson as somewhat odd from the first. Mr. Helton never looks at Mr. Thompson, but then he never appears to be looking anywhere else, either. His eyes simply "Sat in his head and let things pass by them" (95). At times he seems to be simply sleeping with his eyes open. He is extremely uncommunicative, and, when he does talk, his voice wavers up and down, and he puts the emphasis in the wrong places. The Thompsons, however, readily excuse Helton's faltering speech as the consequence of his being a "foreigner." Mrs. Thompson decides that he is unwilling to talk because he can't talk: he simply doesn't know the language. At first Mrs. Thompson is distressed by the silent stranger at their house:

> "It's like sitting down at the table with a disembodied spirit," she said. "You'd think he'd find something to say, sooner or later."
> "Let him alone," said Mr. Thompson. "When he gets ready to talk, he'll talk" (117-118).

But the years passed, and Mr. Helton never got ready to

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[8]Porter notes that Helton possesses "the dubious innocence of the madman." "'Noon Wine': The Sources," The Yale Review, XL (Autumn, 1956), p. 34.

talk" (118). He goes his quiet way, silently performing his tasks about the farm, withdrawing in the evening to his cabin where he sits alone, playing interminably his single, solitary tune on one of his many harmonicas.

Although the Thompsons do not recognize it as such, Helton's obsessive attitude toward his harmonicas is the strongest manifestation of his abnormality. The few times he displays emotion of any kind, it is because his harmonicas are in some way threatened. On the day of his arrival, Mrs. Thompson warns him that the children might be tempted to meddle with them. Helton, for the first time, listens attentively, then jumps up with uncharacteristic speed, and sweeps the harmonicas onto a higher shelf. In the second year of his stay, Mrs. Thompson observes him shaking her two sons fiercely, his face "terribly fixed and pale" (121). Later she learns that Helton is disturbed because the boys had been tampering with his harmonicas. The look of hatred she had witnessed on his face made Mrs. Thompson uneasy, as if the whole scene were some sort of omen.

Mr. Helton owns several harmonicas, all expensive and new, but on them he plays but a single tune. At first the Thompsons like the melody very much, and stop whatever they are doing to listen. Later they grow sick of it, and wish to each other that Helton would learn another one. Finally they simply cease to hear it altogether, for it has become "as natural as the sound of the wind rising in

the evenings, or the cows lowing, or their own voices" (118). In the same way they come to accept Helton, too, as something natural and familiar, even though he is a Swede, and won't talk, and plays the harmonica besides: ". . . all the Thompsons became fond of him, or at any rate they ceased to regard him as in any way peculiar, and looked upon him, from a distance they did not know how to bridge, as a good man and a good friend" (127). Thus the abnormal is accepted and absorbed naturally into the pattern of the normal. Far from recognizing him as a threat, the Thompsons consider Helton the "hope and prop" of the family.

Thus the curious Mr. Helton maintains the Thompsons, gradually restoring their fortunes and introducing a frame of order into their hitherto undirected and chaotic existence. The Thompsons forget their early wonder at the queerness of the stranger, and come to accept him as a welcome and needed benefactor. Then, on a hot August afternoon in 1905, a second stranger arrives at the Thompson farm. By the events which follow, the established pattern of orderly living is abruptly terminated. Mr. Thompson finds himself caught in a pattern of violent destruction which took its origin years ago in a foreign place, but which now sweeps him up in its currents so that he becomes its unwitting agent, performing the rash deed which can ultimately be resolved only in his own final act of self-annihilation.

Mr. Hatch bares to Mr. Thompson the truth of the

stranger's identity. He reveals that Helton is an escaped lunatic, who had been confined for the murder of his own brother in a dispute over a lost harmonica. Hatch, a bounty collector, has come to capture Helton and return him to the asylum. Hatch is prepared to use force and intends to enlist the aid of Mr. Thompson to accomplish his purpose. Helton, hearing the heated exchange of words between the two men, rushes to Thompson's aid. Then, in a swift series of events that Thompson is never able to reconstruct accurately in his mind, Thompson murders Hatch. Thompson performs the actual deed of violence, but Helton is its passive agent. Just as his presence on the farm is sufficient to call up the appearance of Hatch, his sudden arrival at the scene of conflict precipitates Thompson into the murderous act. For Thompson thinks he sees Hatch attack Helton. He sees the bowie knife driven into Helton's stomach. In a frantic attempt to save his benefactor, he swings the axe at Hatch's head. His intent is to stun, not kill. But he discovers, too late, that he has indeed murdered Mr. Hatch. He has performed the irrevocable destructive act, which henceforth he will never be able to justify to himself or society.

Thus Thompson's status is changed in an instant from that of one comparatively innocent of moral wrongdoing to that of murderer. He is guilty of one of the most serious violations of the codes of society. Despite his apparently innocent intentions, he has killed. Further, he has killed

without sufficient provocation. For Mr. Hatch had not really attacked Mr. Helton, after all. When Helton (who flees the scene like a frightened animal) is finally captured, there is no mark of the knife on his body. Mr. Thompson has been the victim of a terrible hallucination. That single moment of frantic illusion is sufficient to effect the ruin of himself, his family, his victim, and the man he intended to save.

Thompson's hallucination, brief but disastrous, is well prepared for in the scene leading up to the act of overt violence. To begin with, Hatch himself is a thoroughly repugnant character. He is described as a rabbit-toothed man whose skin hangs about him in loose folds, as if he had recently been fat, but was no more. His loose-fitting skin suggests that he is wearing some sort of disguise. And it is soon apparent that in order to accomplish his mission he has assumed a false role. He misrepresents himself in his opening conversation with Thompson, claiming that he has come to the Thompson farm to purchase a horse. After he reveals his true purpose, he explains that he obtained the money to make his journey from North Dakota through a deception of Helton's aged mother. Helton had sent her a check for eight hundred and fifty dollars, his savings during his years of absence. Hatch persuaded the senile old woman to give him funds for the trip, promising to bring her a full report on her missing son. Ironically,

it is thus Helton's own money which Hatch utilizes to make his contemptible journey.

Hatch's manner emphasizes the basic falseness of his character. He shrieks with laughter at virtually everything that is said, as if this were an outrageously funny occasion. Mr. Thompson, himself a jolly sort, realizes that Hatch's gaiety is unnatural: "Now this feller laughed like a perfect lunatic . . . and he wasn't laughing because he thought things were funny, either. He was laughing for reasons of his own" (134). The final evidence of Hatch's duplicity is in the discrepancy between his avowed intention and his obvious purpose in tracking down Helton. He admits that he is a professional bounty hunter, having captured and collected the rewards for more than twenty escaped lunatics in his lengthy career. But he contends that his basic aim is to serve the ends of justice by protecting society from lawbreakers and lunatics. It is on these grounds of serving law and order that he appeals to Thompson to aid his cause.

Thompson is instinctively repelled by the impostor, who has, it is true, the law on his side, but who is obviously lacking in the basic essential of human decency.[9] Thompson cannot remember when he has so disliked a man on sight. Thompson has been further antagonized by Hatch's

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[9] Ibid., p. 38.

curiously devious logic, which somehow implies a defect in Mr. Thompson's thinking on virtually every topic that is introduced into the conversation. Hatch manages to impugn Mr. Thompson's choice of wife, his preference in chewing tobacco, and his judgment in hired hands. Somehow, he succeeds in twisting Mr. Thompson's words, so that everything he says is turned back against him in a distorted version. Mr. Thompson, sensing that Hatch is trying to mortify him, feels a "slow muffled resentment climbing from somewhere deep down in him . . ." (143). At one point, he even considers the possibility of shoving Hatch off his stump, in the hope that he might hurt himself on the axe, but he quickly rejects this temptation, realizing he has no motive adequate to justify such a hostile act.

When Thompson thinks he sees Hatch knife Helton, he is actually projecting into reality an act which is sufficient cause to enable him to release his mounting aggressions against Hatch. In part, he is expressing his own acute personal resentment against the stranger who has aroused his antipathies to the point of wrath. In addition, he is probably seeking to protect his investment in Mr. Helton, the faithful friend and helper who has enabled him to regain a foothold in life once more. More important, he is seeking to save from immediate attack by the intruder, the friend who has come to seem like one of the family.[10]

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[10]"Mr. Thompson's motives are most certainly mixed,

In part, the pressure that builds within Thompson is the result of his being unable to explain satisfactorily why he is unwilling to co-operate with Hatch. He knows that as a lunatic and murderer, Helton represents a menace to his family and society. He knows that Hatch has the law on his side. He also knows that Helton has been perfectly harmless for ten years, has succeeded, where he has failed, in rebuilding the farm. He also knows that Helton is a good man, in his own way more sensible than the devious Mr. Hatch, who appears out of nowhere on a peaceful afternoon to make trouble for a decent household. On the other hand, he knows that Helton is a lunatic, that it will "look funny" when folks discover that he has harbored an escaped madman for nine years and then refused to give him up. Seeing no way out, but recognizing the basic insanity of Mr. Hatch's perverted logic and corrupt pattern of life, he turns Hatch's own accusation against him:

> "You're crazy" Mr. Thompson roared suddenly, "You're the crazy one around here. You're crazier than he ever was! You get off this place or I'll handcuff you and turn you over to the law. You're trespassing," shouted Mr. Thompson. "Get out of here before I knock you down!" (152).

Hearing the shouts of violence, Helton rushes up

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yet not ignoble; not the highest but the highest he is capable of: he helps someone who helps him in turn; while acting in defense of what he sees as the good in his own life, the thing worth trying to save at almost any cost, he is trying at the same time to defend another life--the life of Mr. Helton, who has proved himself the bringer of good, the present help, the true friend." Ibid., p. 37.

to Thompson's aid. At this moment, roused to a pitch of unbearable tension, Thompson suffers the hallucination which for a brief interval throws him, also, into a state of madness. In the peak of his illusion, he grabs the axe and swings, thereby performing the act which is, in its own way, as surely the manifestation of madness as was Helton's crazed slaying of his brother with the pitchfork twenty-four years before. His claim to innocence is basically the same as that which excused Helton--he was, momentarily, unable to exercise normal powers of judgment. His act was violent, instinctive, unreasoned--the expression of a mind temporarily deflected from its normal course. But the aftermath of Thompson's temporary derangement is even more devastating than that of Helton's earlier.

The first serious consequence of Thompson's violent action is the death of Hatch. For, as Thompson soon discovers, Mr. Hatch is not simply stunned, but dead. Instead of preserving a life, as he had intended, Thompson has destroyed a life. The second major consequence is the death of Helton. Helton flees in panic at the sight of Hatch. When the men of the community discover him, he fights capture like a wild animal. In his frantic attempts to save himself, Helton is forced into the role of the lunatic once more. In capturing the "madman," the capturers find it necessary to wound him severely, so severely that he later dies in his jail cell. Thus Thompson's act has resulted in

the death of not one, but two men. The third pattern of destruction culminates in the death of Thompson himself.

The jury, of course, exonerates Thompson. The murder of Hatch was, they agree, clearly an act of self-defense. All the facts, however, are not brought out at the trial. Mr. Thompson is never given a full opportunity to explain "his side of the story." To support his case, Ellie, his wife, has to tell a lie. She has to testify that she was a witness, that Hatch had attacked Helton just as Thompson claimed. Mr. Thompson is acquitted, just as his lawyer had promised he would be, but his mind is not at ease.

> Mr. Thompson kept saying to himself that he'd got off, all right, just as Mr. Burleigh had predicted, but, but--and it was right there that Mr. Thompson's mind stuck, squirming like an angleworm on a fish hook: he had killed Mr. Hatch, and he was a murderer. That was the truth about himself that Mr. Thompson couldn't grasp, even when he said the word to himself. Why, he had not even once thought of killing anybody, much less Mr. Hatch . . . (162-163).

In an attempt to explain his motives and clear his conscience, Mr. Thompson forms the habit of calling on Mr. Burleigh, the lawyer, to tell him things he had forgotten to say before, and "explain what an ornery low down hound Mr. Hatch had been, anyhow" (162). But Mr. Burleigh does not look pleased to see him; he looked "sour and upset when he saw Mr. Thompson at the door" (162). So Mr. and Mrs. Thompson begin a dreary round of visits to the neighboring farms, in a despairing attempt to explain how it is that Mr. Thompson has come to be a murderer. (Thompson, like

Helton, now becomes the social outcast, forever repeating his "single tune.") But Thompson sees that nobody believes him. He sees "something in all their faces that disheartened him and made him feel empty and tired out. They didn't believe he was not a murderer" (168). Mr. and Mrs. Thompson even rehearse their pathetic tale for the McClellans, who are clearly white trash, but even here they are refused pity or compassion:

> "Well, now," said the man, drily, scratching his ribs inside his shirt, "that sholy is too bad. Well, now, I kaint see what we've got to do with all this here, however. I kaint see no good reason for us to git mixed up in these murder matters, I short kaint. Whichever way you look at it, it ain't none of my business. However, it's mighty nice of you-all to come around and give us the straight of it, for we've heerd some mighty queer yarns about it, mighty queer, I golly you couldn't hardly make head ner tail of it."
>
> "Evvybody goin' round shooting they heads off," said the woman, "Now we don't hold with killin'; the Bible says--"
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> "Shet yer trap," said the man, "and keep it shet 'r I'll shet it fer yer. . . ." (167-168)

These people are oblivious to the ambiguous nature of human guilt. Unlike Thompson, they are unable or unwilling to take into account that "'Circumstances alters cases'" (148). (Thompson's defense of Helton.) As Miss Porter points out, theirs is a society of fixed values, with established codes of conduct that rigidly define the boundaries of honor, transgression, and retribution. Mr. Thompson has violated these standards, and there is no pro-

vision within the code for his forgiveness.[11] Henceforth he can be viewed only as a moral outcast, pitiable, perhaps, but guilty. The code is founded on the ideal of retribution, not mercy. For his transgression there is no forgiveness. He might be comforted in his state of moral isolation if his wife would openly support him, and thus palliate his grief. But she does not. In public she dutifully repeats the lie (by now it is so familiar it almost says itself), but never once, in private, does she reassure him of her own faith in his innocence:

> Even Ellie never said anything to comfort him. He hoped she would say **finally**, "I remember now, Mr. Thompson, I really did come round the corner in time to see everything. It's not a lie, Mr. Thompson. Don't you worry" (164).

But Mrs. Thompson is silent, leaving her husband to face alone the terrible truth of the magnitude of his transgression. Together they make their lonely round, pitifully reciting their despairing explanation, but their listeners hear them with no indication of true comprehension or sympathy: "Their [the listeners'] eyes looked as if someone had pinched the eyeball at the back; they shriveled and the light went out of them. Some of them sat with fixed tight smiles trying to be friendly" (164). Some of them claimed

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[11]Miss Porter says of this society, "The elders all talked and behaved as if the final word had gone out long ago on manners, morality, religion, even politics. . . . The higher laws of morality and religion were defined; if a man offended against the one, or sinned against the other, he knew it, and so did his neighbors, and they called everything by its right name." Ibid., p. 27.

to believe him, and to accept his act as blameless. But Thompson knows that really they neither believe nor accept: "Sometimes the air around him was so thick with their blame he fought and pushed with his fists, and the sweat broke out all over him, he shouted his story in a dust-choked voice" (165). At the proper point, Mrs. Thompson never fails to say, "'Yes, that's right, that's the truth'" (165). But Thompson knows that she, too, is unconvinced; that she sees him now as a person who has committed a terrible crime which can never be justified. Her own life is ruined by the horror of her husband's misdeed:

> Life was all one dread. The faces of her neighbors, of her boys, of her husband, the face of the whole world, the shape of her own house in the darkness, the very smell of the grass and trees were horrible to her. There was no place to go, only one thing to do, bear it somehow--but how? She asked herself that question often. How was she going to keep on living now? Why had she lived at all? She wished now she had died one of those times when she had been so sick, instead of living on for this (155-156).

As Miss Porter points out, Mr. Thompson, in forcing her to tell the lie, is guilty of a double murder: one of the flesh, and one of the spirit.[12]

The Thompson boys side with their mother. Obviously they believe that their father is guilty, and by their shamed silence reveal not only their condemnation of their father but their resentfulness that they, too, because of blood ties, are implicated in the guilt. Regardless of his

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[12] Ibid., p. 36.

motives or justifications, Mr. Thompson has made his sons the sons of a murderer. This fact they will not forgive. They view him now as some sort of dangerous beast, who must be prevented forcibly from harming their threatened mother. It is this final realization, that not only his friends and neighbors--the world at large--but also his own family, those whose faith should sustain him, have turned against him, that finally drives Thompson to his ultimate act of despair. One of his last statements to his sons is another vain protest of innocence of motive: "'Don't you get any notions in your head. I never did your mother any harm in your life, on purpose'" (173). In fact, none of Mr. Thompson's actions were done "on purpose." As he points out in his death note, "'It was Mr. Homer T. Hatch who came to do wrong to a harmless man. He caused all this trouble and he deserved to die but I am sorry it was me who had to kill him'" (175).

Miss Porter says of "Noon Wine" that it is "a story of the most painful moral and emotional confusions, in which everyone concerned, yes, in his crooked way, even Mr. Hatch, is trying to do right."[13] But "every one in this story contributes, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, to murder, or death by violence; even the two young sons of Mr. Thompson who turn on him in their fright and ignorance

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[13] Ibid., p. 37.

and side with their mother, who does not need them; they are guiltless, for they meant no harm, and they do not know what they have contributed to; indeed in their innocence they believe they are doing, not only right, but the only thing they could possibly do in the situation as they understand it: they must defend their mother . . ."[14]

Thompson's wife and sons do not intend to drive him to the far edge of despair. Yet when he realizes the fixity of their condemnation of him, he can no longer live in the accusing world where he can never win acceptance again. In a desperate bid for exoneration, he takes his own life. Thus the circle of madness (for suicide represents a violent wrenching of normal modes of human conduct) completes its round. The track of violence set in motion by the crazed deed of the North Dakota farm boy twenty-four years before finally spends itself in the desperate act of self-annihilation of Mr. Thompson, both agent and victim of forces too powerful for him to comprehend or explain.

A word should be said about the title of the work and its relation to the theme. "Noon Wine" refers, of course, to the merry but sad tune that the Swede plays so persistently on his harmonica. Hatch explains that the song is about a Swedish laborer who carries a jug of wine to the fields with him to drink with his noon meal. The farmer cannot

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[14] Ibid., p. 35.

resist sipping the wine during the morning, so that when noon comes, the wine is gone. Like the song, the story is also "merry but sad." (Indeed, Porter's brilliant fusion of comic and serious elements deserves a separate study, in itself.) One who is intoxicated with wine is historically recognized as being in a state of "madness." The intoxicated man, being incapable of exercising normal judgments, is recognized as not being fully responsible for his acts. Madness is a central theme of "Noon Wine." The major acts of destruction are committed at peaks of emotional and psychological imbalance, when the agent is incapable of discovering a reasonable solution of his difficulties. His tensions are so great that they can find release only through the frantic act. Although the agent is not truly culpable, the consequence of his act is disastrous, irremediable. (The madness represented in the story is demonic, not divine.) And just as the wine of the song is consumed before noon, the lives in the story are ended prematurely.

In certain respects, the issues underlying the dramatic action of the story elevate it to the level of Greek tragedy. Like Oedipus, Mr. Helton has attempted to escape his destiny. He has fled his native land, and attempted to assume a new identity. Like Oedipus, he first rebuilds and ultimately destroys his "province," and the destruction arises as a consequence of past transgression.

The catastrophe here (as in Oedipus) occurs simultaneously with the revelation of true identity (tragic recognition). It is Mr. Thompson, of course, who performs the central destructive act, and his flaw (rashness) is identical with that of Oedipus. The suicide of Thompson parallels Oedipus' infliction of self-punishment through blinding. In "Noon Wine," as in classical tragedy, the disaster appears to be wrought through the dual operations of fate (here, perhaps, chance) and individual action. Glenway Wescott says, "When Hatch appears on the scene it all goes like a charm, like a curse. To save Helton, as he thinks, Thompson kills Hatch. He is tried and acquitted; but the breach of the secret taboo is too much for him to forgive himself. The Eumenides are in him, nagging, arguing . . ."[15]

Mr. Thompson obviously does not possess the magnitude or stature of the tragic hero, but he does meet the requirement of possessing an average, typical moral sensibility (he is neither saintly nor depraved). And his final action certainly lends to his character something of a tragic elevation. And, finally, the story arouses in its readers an abundance of both pity and fear, pity for the "undeserving man in his misfortune," and fear from the realization that Mr. Thompson, in his susceptibility to the manipulations of fortune, is, after all, a man like ourselves.

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[15]Glenway Wescott, "Praise," Southern Review, V (Summer, 1939), p. 161.

"Noon Wine," like all of Porter's work, reflects a sensibility fully aware of the complex ironies of life. It is as if Porter, the author, here reveals the mature vision toward which Miranda, the character of "Old Mortality," was groping. "Noon Wine," a study of the paradox of destructive innocence, thus relates in theme and technique to the total body of Porter's work. Robert Penn Warren's remarks on her overall production certainly apply to "Noon Wine":

> . . . there is the same underlying structure of contrast and tension, the same paradoxical problems of definition, the same delicate balancing of rival considerations, the same scrupulous development of competing claims to attention and action, the same inter-play of the humorous and the serious, the same refusal to take the straight line, the formula, through the material at hand. . . . It [her irony] implies, I think, a refusal to accept the code, the formula, the ready-made solution, the hand-me-down morality, the word for the spirit. It affirms, rather, the constant need for exercising discrimination, the arduous obligation of the intellect in the face of conflicting dogmas, the need for a dialectical approach to matters of definition, the need for exercising as much of the human faculty as possible.[16]

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[16]Robert Penn Warren, "Irony with a Center: Katherine Anne Porter," Kenyon Review, IV (Winter, 1942), p. 42.

CHAPTER VI

OF DESTRUCTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Once recognized, the type of the destructive innocent emerges as a familiar figure in present-day literature. Most often, he falls into one of four categories, most of which have been illustrated in the foregoing discussions. An understanding of these categories will aid in the detection of the destructive innocent as a prominent figure, and the operation of destructive innocence as a major theme, in contemporary fiction.

The first of these might be called the innocent revolutionary. He is (or would like to be) a world shaper and a world shaker. He is seeking in some way to change the patterned structure of society (through political action) or to disturb the world's image of itself by offering some unfamiliar interpretation. Most often he appears as a political reformer, or an artist, or a priest. The Quiet American would change the world, is determined to do good "not to any individual person, but to a country, a continent, a world." Gulley Jimson has discovered the secret sources of creativity, and is determined to release his

vision, even though in so doing he disturbs the settled views of society, his eternal enemy. As artist, he is automatic rebel against society with its governments and churches and schools, all of which restrict the creative spirit and stifle the creative imagination. He is willing to lie or cheat, to swindle a world, if necessary, in order to "get his picture on the wall." Society may be shocked by what it sees there, and alarmed at Gulley's amoral ways; but Gulley himself, by virtue of his status as creator, stands acquitted for both his radical representations of reality and his anti-social actions. As artist, he is endowed with the eternal innocence which characterizes all natural creation. The Man of Religion desires, like the political reformer, to change the world and has, like the artist, an inner vision of truth which does not correspond to the world's view of itself. When a Christ (or a Christ follower) appears, the world turns over. Old views submerge, old structures collapse into the institutions of the new age. A new era begins, time breaks at the moment of the savior's birth. The old order, sensing the threat of the messiah to its own establishment, kills the Christ, but the blood of the fallen god but serves to enrich the ground from which new martyrs spring. Graham Greene's furtive priest is tracked and hunted like an animal, for the lieutenant knows that the new state is not safe until it is rid of all those who would challenge its assumptions of a god-

less universe. But the spirit of the priest is indestructible; as the martyr is slain, a new priest arrives to carry on the spiritual mission.

Politician, artist, saint--these seek active involvement with a reality larger than self. They represent, always, a threat to the established order, a menace to the fixed institutions. Akin to these is the person absorbed in the search for enlarged experience. Generally he is a youth (or one young in spirit) seeking the archetypal encounter with experience. Philip Rahv (in a passage already quoted) sees this search for experience as the central theme in modern American literature:

> And since Whitman and James the American creative mind, seizing at last upon what had long been denied to it, has found the terms and objects of its activity in the urge toward and immersion in experience. It is this search for experience, conducted on diverse and often conflicting levels of consciousness, which has been the dominant, quintessential theme of the characteristic American productions--from Leaves of Grass to Winesburg, Ohio and beyond; and the more typically American the writer--a figure like Thomas Wolfe is a patent example--the more deeply does it engulf him.[1]

Rahv also points out the dangers of such innocence loosed upon the world:

> And the later heroes of American fiction--Hemingway's young man, for instance, who invariably appears in each of his novels, a young man posing his virility against the background of continents and nations so old that, like Tiresias, they have seen all and suffered all--in his own way he, too, responds to

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[1]Philip Rahv, Image and Idea: Fourteen Essays on Literary Themes (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1949), p. 8.

> experience in the schizoid fashion of the Gretchen-Faust character. For what is his virility if not at once the measure of his innocence and the measure of his aggression? And what shall we make of Steinbeck's fable of Lennie, that mindless giant who literally kills and gets killed from sheer desire for those soft and lovely things of which fate has singularly deprived him? He combines an unspeakable innocence with an unspeakable aggression. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to say that in this grotesque creature Steinbeck has unconsciously created a symbolic parody of a figure such as Thomas Wolfe, who likewise crushed in his huge caresses the delicate objects of the art of life.[2]

The innocent revolutionary and the innocent voyager --these represent types dangerous because of their active efforts to change the shape of the world about them or to absorb its essence into their own experience. Still another category of dangerous innocence consists of those who are not actively seeking to engage the world, but who are, on the contrary, to be classed as passive threats. Often they are dangerous by virtue of possession: that is, they possess some material item or personal attribute which is desirable and desired, but which they fail to protect adequately. They are dangerous because they arouse in others the temptation to robbery. Their possession may be of the spirit, as with Billy Budd, whom Claggart would rob of his moral purity. Or it may be material, as with the wealthy Jamesian heroes and heroines who consistently discover themselves swindled by the cunning Europeans. Or, again, the possession may be physical beauty, either of the self

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[2] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

or of the love-partner. This physical attractiveness becomes a destructive threat when it is inadequately protected, or when it arouses undesirable responses in others. Thus, Helen of Troy, herself guiltless, instigates a war, and Lolita discovers her Humbert Humbert. Mann's aged hero must die in Venice for love of the beautiful youth, and Lawrence's Prussian Officer turn sadist to mask his attraction to the young soldier. Husbands who fail to protect their wives (and vice versa) suffer consequent loss and humiliation, but as Bendrix remarks of Henry Miles in The End of the Affair, they are to blame after the fashion of a man who tempts to theft by leaving loose bank notes in a hotel room. The Ververs, also, fall in this category, as do the narrator in Ford Maddox Ford's The Good Soldier and, perhaps, Tietjans in Parade's End.

Another type of passive threat exists in the innocent who is dangerous not because of endowment but because of lack. His helplessness cries out for protection, and the response he provokes may be of two types, both charged with destructive potential. The man of pity may damn himself in an attempt to protect the weak innocent. Thus Arthur Rowe commits murder because he cannot bear to witness the sufferings of his invalid wife. Scobie literally damns himself in the eyes of the church after he allows himself to be caught in dual loyalties to his neurotic wife and to the childlike Helen Rolt. Scobie ends by committing

suicide, the "unpardonable sin," in a vain attempt to spare others through literal sacrifice of self. Mr. Thompson, in "Noon Wine," in seeking to protect the lunatic hired man from the threatening intruder, kills the bounty hunter and ends by taking his own life.

Thus innocence is dangerous when it provokes an overly protective response in its intended defender, who sacrifices self in his attempts to preserve the innocent. Innocence is also destructive when it poses a responsibility greater than the individual is prepared to bear. Children and mental defectives most often constitute this class. The idiot in Porter's "He" and the child in her "The Downward Path to Wisdom" both serve to reveal the deficiencies of their parents' characters in the latter's failure to provide adequately for them. Portia in Elizabeth Bowen's The Death of the Heart disrupts the household of Thomas and his wife, who do not wish to accept the responsibility of a full human relationship with the child. Though starved for love, the child acts as a guilty agent. Like one of God's spies, she observes those around her and records her observations in her mercilessly frank diary. The result is a revelation of the hypocrisy and sordidness which control the lives of those about her. She ends by effecting a universal shattering of illusion. (Children and madmen may also act as active destructive agents, as do the diabolic Miles and Flora in The Turn of the Screw and the unbalanced Nicole in

Tender Is the Night. Primitives, also, may be innocent and destructive in either the active or the passive sense.)

A final type of destructive innocent falls in none of the above categories, but, rather, shares attributes of all. He is the familiar American, traditionally recognized both at home and abroad as undeniably "innocent." His beginnings were in revolution, and thus he carries an abiding faith in his own powers to transform the political structures of the world in the image of democracy. Because he was not satisfied with the old ways of life, he came to America seeking enlarged oppportunities and experience; now he makes the return voyage still searching for those components of experience which are not discoverable in his native land. He is, at times, the dangerous innocent crying out to be robbed of his possessions, and, again, the perhaps more dangerous innocent crying out for protection. He descends from the type described by R. W. B. Lewis as the "American Adam." Earlier centuries detected his Adamic attributes, but only in the present age has his destructive potential been fully recognized.

The twentieth century has brought the recognition that not only is innocence itself not proof against evil, but that innocence may prove to be the destructive agent. This realization is reflected in the literature of the age; I have suggested typical thematic examples and others are readily available. The theme of destructive innocence is

clearly of major significance in the literature of the present century.

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