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THE HERO IN THE POST WORLD WAR II NOVEL:
SOME DIFFERENCES OF CONCEPT IN THE WORKS
OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN NOVELISTS

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ABSTRACT

THE HERO IN THE POST WORLD WAR II NOVEL: SOME DIFFERENCES OF CONCEPT IN THE WORKS OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN NOVELISTS

By

Elaine Marianne McLevie

This study investigates some of the ways in which the concept of "hero" in the English novel after World War II differs from that in the American novel of the same period. Three English novelists whose work differed widely were first selected, in the hope that similarities between their heroes would be significant. Graham Greene, writing from religious commitment, Alan Sillitoe, writing of working class city life, and Lawrence Durrell, whose novels are set in North Africa, were those chosen.

An American author similar in some way to each of these three was then sought so that comparisons could be made and any significant differences examined. Flannery O'Connor, also writing from a Roman Catholic viewpoint, was selected for comparison with Graham Greene. Nelson Algren, who writes of the inner city in New Orleans and Chicago, was chosen for comparison with Alan Sillitoe. And Paul

Bowles, who also sets his novels in North Africa, was selected for comparison with Lawrence Durrell.

Each pair was first examined individually and the characteristics of a typical hero of each author isolated. From the initial comparisons of the three pairs, those characteristics shared by the heroes of the three English authors were discussed. These were then compared with the characteristics shared by the heroes of the three American authors.

Since they followed suppositions made initially after a wide range of reading, the following generalizations were made on the basis of this comparison.

For the hero of the Post World War II English novel the most frequently recurring characteristics appear to be his ability to draw others to him in love or admiration, his awareness of his place in society, and his aim to discover himself in terms of that society or a modification of that society which he will work to bring about. Those characteristics which recur for the American hero of the same period appear to be an ability to assume larger-than-life proportions, and a self-reliance and intensity of self-analysis which cuts him off from others, and which set him wandering on a pilgrimage symbolic of his search for identity in his own soul. His is a lonely search apart from, or in spite of, society.

Heroes from a wider range of Post World War II English and American novels were then examined to see whether they also followed the pattern established. Some form of this pattern was shown to exist in novels by Kingsley Amis, John Braine, William Golding, Phillip Larkin, Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark, David Storey, John Wain, Keith Waterhouse, John Barth, Saul Bellow, Ralph Ellison, Joseph Heller, Ken Kesey, Edward Loomis, Norman Mailer, Bernard Malamud, James Purdy, Jerome Salinger, William Styron, John Updike.

Some possible reasons for the differences in the English and American view of the hero were then suggested and the possibility of there being less noticeable difference in future novels was raised.

This study, isolates some of those differences which similarities of language and of background culture have tended to mask. It thus represents a small step in the investigation of the effect of cultural differences on assumptions basic to the concepts illustrated in novels.

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INTRODUCTION

The material out of which this study grew was collected over a period of six years. In teaching Contemporary English Literature to Chinese students at the University of Hong Kong, I found it necessary to explain some aspects of the novels studied in the course, which among New Zealand students had been taken for granted. I began to analyse the structure of each work, looking at it through my students' eyes. It was clear that two aspects puzzled them. First the social structure, which was the explanation for some of the action described in the novel, and second the motives of the characters for certain actions. Had the students been in the place of the protagonist, it was clear they would often not have acted as he did. Since they came from a society even more tightly structured than the English, I began by concentrating on the first difficulty, indicating some of the similarities and differences between their own society, and the English society. As I was, myself, neither English nor Chinese, they found it relatively easy to discuss these patterns with me, and we began to look at the novels again, taking into account what we had discovered of the social background. Immediately the difficulties over explaining motives began to disappear, and those that remained, more often than not,

could be solved by further investigation of the social assumptions of English society. I felt confident that the connection between hero, motive and society was a basic one.

My contact with the American Twentieth Century novel, begun at much the same time under the guidance of a visiting Fulbright professor, put me in the position my students had been in with the English novel, but with a different slant. My initial problems also had to do with motive, but the answer in this case was not so much an investigation of the social structure of present-day America. It was concerned with the guilts and ideals inherited from the past. There was a whole new mythology to be absorbed.

The further I read, the more conscious I became of the different effects produced on the reader by English novels and American novels, and of certain strains of similarity linking the novels within each group. Most of the differences concerned with motive centered around the hero. I therefore decided to investigate the typical hero of three English novelists whose work I had discussed in Hong Kong, and if possible to find an American similar in some way to each of the three, by way of comparison. In making the initial selection, I had looked for novelists who were as unlike as possible, since then any similarities between them would be significant. The three that most fitted this requirement were Graham Greene, because of the religious commitment out of which he writes; Alan Sillitoe,

because of his interest in the working-class city hero; and Lawrence Durrell, because his novels are not set in Britain, and his heroes therefore meet different stresses. Three American authors immediately suggested themselves as being similar to the three English authors in important ways, and thus good yard sticks for observing the differences of emphasis in which I was interested. Flannery O'Connor, also writing from a Roman Catholic point of view, was my choice for comparison with Graham Greene. Nelson Algren, who writes of slum life in Chicago and New Orleans, was chosen for comparison with Alan Sillitoe. And Paul Bowles, who also is an expatriate, writing of the North African scene he knows so well, was chosen for comparison with Lawrence Durrell.

I hoped, by a study of these six authors, to isolate some of those aspects of their work which would classify them for the reader as distinctly English or distinctly American. Although I had already formed some impressions as to what those aspects might be, I did not wish to impose them from without. Rather, I intended first to investigate the three pairs of authors in isolation, so that any differences would become apparent of themselves. However, my impressions form hypotheses which will inform the course of my investigation. They are as follows:

1. The English hero is the kind of person I might meet any day, in a street in Britain, whereas the American

hero has something larger than life about him. He is different from the people I meet in American streets.

2. The American hero is involved in a search for identity which is carried out with little reference to the society in which he is placed, or in spite of that society. The concentration is more on the struggle within the hero's own soul, than on the interaction of characters. With the English hero the interest seems to be more on the interaction with others.

3. The American hero often seems concerned with serious philosophical problems. The English hero is more likely to be concerned with problems in his immediate society. His disagreement with society, when it occurs, is often put into a humorous form. Jim Dixon, the hero of Kingsley Amis' Lucky Jim, for example, however much his problems may be paralleled by real life American college teachers, would never be mistaken for the hero of an American novel. This study will try to ascertain why this is so.

A comparison such as this will inevitably raise questions of differences of values and different connotations attached to abstract words like "love," "duty" and "responsibility." Walter Allen¹ questions the possibility of comparing English and American novels, except in the

¹Walter Allen, "Novels English and American," The New Statesman and Nation, Vol. 53 (February 23, 1957), 247-248.

broadest terms, on the grounds that what results will probably be not a literary judgement, but a pronouncement about national differences. I consider that the isolation of some of these "national differences" would be of considerable assistance in avoiding the kind of literary criticism which so often appears, where novelists on the one side of the Atlantic, or the other, are castigated for what they are not, rather than appreciated for what they are. Because of a distant heritage in common, and more immediately because of a similarity of language, some very real differences in interpretation have been masked. Assumptions about what is "normal" made for one social pattern, are not necessarily true for the other. The different role of women, or of the police, in the two societies illustrates something of this dichotomy. The American hero's motives seem as much in need of explanation for a reader brought up in an English literary heritage as were the motives of the English hero for my Chinese students. Perhaps they heed even more, since the English and the traditional Chinese societies² are much more rigidly structured than is American society.

The English society which is pictured in the post World War II novel has not changed very radically since the

²Like expatriates anywhere, the Chinese of Hong Kong are probably more traditional in their social structure than their forebears, the pre-Communist Chinese in China itself, because they are consciously maintaining something which they see as being in danger of being lost.

Nineteenth Century. There is still a definite aristocracy, usually based on heritage, perhaps not now as wealthy as in former times, but just as conscious of strict rules of etiquette and propriety as ever, and of its role as patron of the arts. The middle class has become more wealthy than in former times. Its interests are still with trade, its leanings toward the aristocracy, and its values and rules of social behavior, like those of the upper classes, fairly rigid. The working class have always considered themselves separate from the rest of society, less dependent upon rigid protocol. The significant thing, however, is that this social structure has been established for so long, that one can predict fairly reliably what the reaction of someone from a particular social group will be, to certain situations. For example, if someone were to swear in mixed company a working class group would probably make no comment; a middle class group would register disapproval, not necessarily verbal; and an upper class group would offer profuse apologies to the ladies present. Any variation, then, any unexpected reaction, will be at once apparent. The English author can assume that his reader, of whatever class, will understand the basic rules of behavior appropriate to all classes, and will thus be able to appreciate degrees of deviation in speech, dress or behavior, without their being underlined. Subtleties of this nature are difficult for the non-English reader to

appreciate in the same way. What may seem a minor, or insignificant action, to him, may have much greater significance than at first appears.

One might also point to upper, middle, and lower classes in American society, but these do not have the rigidity of generation after generation's experience. Although sociologists would not necessarily believe in it, the layman in America believes in equality of opportunity much more than does the Englishman. The American youngster, of whatever social position,³ is encouraged to believe that even he could possibly become President. Moreover, a larger country, settled by groups with varying customs, and encouraging the perpetuation of some, at least, of those differences, America has a society described by Ihab Hassan⁴ as seeming to be organized

on the principle of a fruit cake. It is full of odd, sweet and incongruous things and full of layers and pockets within layers. It contains beliefs--in God, democracy, the machine, the devil, white supremacy, the almighty dollar, and vegetarianism, to name but a few--that seem utterly unrelated, unassimilated, and anachronistic.

Under such conditions a minor variation of speech, dress or behavior, immediately noticeable in the relative stability of English society, will go unremarked in America. History has given the English hero a precise and

³With the probable exception of certain minority groups.

⁴Ihab Hassan, "The Way Down and Out: Spiritual Deflection in Recent American Fiction," Virginia Quarterly Review, Vol. 39 (Winter, 1963), 85.

well-known backdrop against which to move. The American hero is still close to the frontier man with much less in his background to be just accepted. For him breadth of vision and larger than life proportions will be easier to assume than for the English hero.

For this reason I believe that Ahab and Huck Finn may easily appear in modern dress, that there are still causes for the American hero to adopt, whereas the English hero is much more likely to agree with John Osborne's Jimmy Porter, who says

I suppose people of our generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer. We had all that done for us in the thirties and forties when we were still kids. There aren't any good, brave causes left. If the big bang does come, and we get killed off, it won't be in the aid of the old-fashioned, grand design. It'll just be for the Brave New-nothing-very-much-thank-you. About as pointless and inglorious as stepping in front of a bus.⁵

For him grand causes are not significant.

To ascertain whether these impressions are justified I will go first to the six authors selected. By an initial comparison of each pair I will isolate what is typical of the hero of each author. My next task will be to assess whether there are any aspects common to all three English heroes, and to all three American heroes. My experience leads me to believe that aspects common to a group as widely differing as each of these would also apply even

⁵ John Osborne, Look Back in Anger (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 84.

if the selection of novels were much wider. I therefore will apply any categories arising out of the initial comparisons to a selection of other novels, English and American; the selection will be random, but as representative of each group as I can make it.

I am aware that since I am neither English nor American, I may fail to respond to some nuances in both sets of novels. I hope that this disadvantage will be offset by my being able to see each group of novels from the different viewpoint of an outsider.

CHAPTER I

GRAHAM GREENE AND FLANNERY O'CONNOR

My first aim is to see what aspects are typical of a Graham Greene hero, and of a Flannery O'Connor hero, and then to compare these representative heroes to see how they differ. These two novelists are both Roman Catholic, and have written novels which have disturbed both critics and churchmen. There is a strong recognition of the power of evil in these novels, and violence, murder, and betrayal are major ingredients. Both authors are interested in a protagonist who is alienated, in some way, from society, and who is far from perfect from an orthodox church point of view, yet who proves, in contrast to those around him, to have been nearer to the religious ideal than one would have at first surmised. Yet the effect on the reader, in each case, is of a different order.

Of Greene's nineteen novels, two, The Name of Action (1930), and Rumour at Nightfall (1931), were subsequently removed from those to be put in his collected works, and have not been reprinted. I will accordingly exclude them from consideration. A group of the remaining seventeen

have been divided off under the name of entertainments,¹ by Greene himself, on the grounds that they are less serious than the others. Since the hero of these entertainments bears a close resemblance to those of the novels proper,² these will not be examined in any depth. In particular I will concentrate on the heroes of the four novels which are clearly from a Roman Catholic point of view, since these novels, besides being thoroughly representative of his work, also will have most similarity with Miss O'Connor's. Consequently, the differences that appear should be significant. These four novels are Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter, and The End of the Affair.

The heroes of the entertainments are the center of psychological thrillers, swift in movement, full of suspense, and with endings which, if not actually happy, at least reconcile opposites to some extent. In his introduction to The Third Man,³ Greene records that he "held

¹Stamboul Train (1932), A Gun for Sale (1936), The Confidential Agent (1939), The Ministry of Fear (1943), The Third Man and The Fallen Idol (1950), Loser Takes All (1955), Our Man in Havana (1958).

²The Man Within (1929), The Name of Action (1930), Rumour at Nightfall (1931), It's a Battlefield (1934), England Made Me (1935), Brighton Rock (1938), The Power and the Glory (1940), The Heart of the Matter (1948), The End of the Affair (1951), The Quiet American (1955), A Burnt Out Case (1961), The Comedians (1966).

³Graham Greene, The Third Man and The Fallen Idol (London, Melbourne and Toronto: Heinemann, 1950), p. 6.

the view that an entertainment of this kind was too light an affair to carry the weight of an unhappy ending." He goes on to state his aim as being "to entertain" people, "to frighten them a little, to make them laugh." For this reason, the heroes around whom the action centers are not as complex as those of the novels, but themes dealt with in the entertainments reappear in the novels, and there is a close link between the heroes in these cases. Greene is, for instance, interested in the character who verges on the insane, like Harry Lime in The Third Man, Willi Hilfe in The Ministry of Fear, and Sarah Miles in The End of the Affair.

In the novels, though he does, on occasion, "make them laugh," he is more concerned to make his readers think, to re-examine concepts they may have accepted blindly. In this concern he closely resembles Flannery O'Connor, as he does in his concentration on moral heroism and moral degradation and his dislike of cautious mediocrity. His typical hero is one who has had a series of choices to make, and whose present position is the result of a line of choices already made by him, stretching back into childhood. In The Power and the Glory, Greene comments, "there is always a moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in."⁴ Because of this chain reaction, what the

⁴See also Graham Greene, The Power and The Glory (New York: The Viking Press, 1950), p. 95.

hero's childhood has been places him in a certain position in society and limits his chances of attaining any different social rank. Raven, in A Gun for Sale, bears with him the crippling effects of a squalid, violent childhood. He sees himself as ugly and unlovable, largely because of his hare-lip, which is for him "a badge of class. It revealed the poverty of his parents who couldn't afford a surgeon." This, and the warping effect of his orphanage upbringing, lead to the cynical view he has of life, illustrated by his comments on the crib scene in the shop window.

He stood there with his face against the glass . . . staring at the swaddled child with a horrified tenderness, 'the little bastard,' because he was educated and knew what the child was in for, the damned Jews and the double-crossing Judas and only one man to draw a knife on his side when the soldiers came for him in the garden.

He knows where he is on the social scale, and he determines to gain financial security and an easier life for himself by whatever means are available to one in his position. The comment on the crib scene becomes an ironical comment on his own fate. He accepts the task of assassinating a diplomat. The pay he receives is stolen money, and so, instead of being a key to easy living, it makes him a marked man. He has been betrayed by those who employed him as assassin, just as he was by society in general. Whatever means he uses, he finds he cannot better his position because he is trapped in the society of which he is a part. Moreover, those who arrange the killing are the

ones whose wickedness is far-reaching. Yet society leaves them unscathed, while for him there is no escape from the route he has taken.

In this respect Raven is a prototype of the other Greene heroes. They are men and women who are doing something unacceptable to the society, or to the church, which functions in his novels as a society within a society. Yet they are in the position they are because of the ways in which that society works.

In Brighton Rock, Pinkie Brown, who is a Catholic version of the atheist Raven, is also the product of a miserable and ugly childhood. The teenage inheritor of the leadership of a gang of thugs, operating from the Brighton race track, Pinkie is involved in a series of murders, and in his attempts to cover his tracks, makes choices which lead to his own destruction. Pinkie is what he is, because of the role society has accorded him at birth. He functions within a code, not only of social and religious rights and wrongs, but also of "honor among thieves." The rules of behavior are laid down and he knows that certain steps will have definite consequences. In view of the different way in which the choices the hero makes works in Flannery O'Connor, it is important to note that Pinkie makes his decisions with his position as gang leader in the forefront of his mind. He has, by this rank, a responsibility to the gang members. The initial murder

was not on account of any personal vendetta; it was for the survival of the gang. The other murders were unfortunate but inevitable results of the first. Unfortunately for Pinkie, his movements on the night of the first murder were noticed by Rose, behind the bar. To prevent any repercussions, he woos and marries her. His first open defiance of society comes in his marrying outside the church. The church represents for him part of that order which has always given him the rough row to hoe. He is getting his own back on society by marrying a girl he does not love, in a ceremony he believes to be unsanctified. It is ironical that Rose genuinely comes to love him. He is like other Greene heroes in being unable to see the positive side of himself, therefore being unable to accept the reality of a love, either of this girl, or of God. Unlike Flannery O'Connor's heroes, he is more conscious of his own shortcomings than of the force that is in him.

It is again an accident beyond his control that Ida, a friend of Rose, should have made the acquaintance of his first victim, just before his death. Her enquiries become a threat to him and he must counter them as he can. Finally, when the police net seems to be closing in fast, he decides he must get rid of Rose also. He organises a suicide pact. Ostensibly they will die together, cementing in death the marriage vows that never had had the blessing of the church. This would constitute a second flouting of

church law, and put them both permanently beyond hope of grace. For him, again, it is a kind of defiance.

Deliberately going against the tenets of church and society registers a protest, a protest of the gentle kind which in an American novel would be less significant. For Rose it is a second affirmation of her loyalty to Pinkie. She is prepared to give up even eternal life to be with him. Here again we have a characteristic which is significant. Unlike Flannery O'Connor's heroes, Greene's require the sympathetic loyalty of another character close to them, to make them sympathetic in the reader's eyes. Rose's love and devotion to Pinkie show him to have something of value about him, something which makes him the leader who is looked up to, something which draws others to him, even if he does not realize it himself.

But in fact Pinkie does not intend to die. It is an accident which makes him the victim and saves Rose. He is, as always, a victim of circumstances beyond his control. His plan has misfired, and Rose is robbed at last, even of that belief in Pinkie's love which had sustained her.

At no time does Pinkie opt to remove himself entirely from the restraints imposed by society. His concern is survival in an everyday sense. He never becomes symbolic or archetypal, though he is typical of many of his class. He may go against the rules, as he does in living with Rose without having married her in a ceremony their church

will recognize; he may be the leader of a gang; but he is still quite a small cog in the wheel of society. Nor does he finally remove himself from the church, that other society in which he moves. He may object, by breaking a rule, but the feeling of uncomfortableness that this entails remains with him. He never bursts out of the restrictions entirely. Nor does he ever turn his back on the responsibilities for others that he has undertaken, whether it be for his gang, or, in his own way, for his wife. In these aspects he draws away from the kind of hero in Flannery O'Connor's two novels.

Sometimes even at the point of the undertaking of responsibility and commitment to a course of action, the hero is vaguely conscious of the agonies ahead if he is to make his choice. Looking back on his marriage, Scobie, in The Heart of the Matter, recognizes that the vow he has made will have repercussions beyond his knowledge at the time.

He had always been prepared to accept the responsibility for his actions, and he had always been half aware too, from the time that he had made his terrible private vow that she should be happy, how far this action might carry him. Despair is the price one pays for setting oneself an impossible aim. It is, one is told, the unforgivable sin, but it is a sin the corrupt or evil man never practises. He always has hope. He never reaches the freezing point of knowing absolute failure. Only the man of goodwill carries always in his heart this capacity for damnation.⁵

⁵Graham Greene, The Heart of the Matter (New York: The Viking Press, 1948), p. 61.

The choice made, the tragic stage is set. Like Sarah in The End of the Affair, he will sacrifice himself to give life and happiness to others, but it will be a quiet gesture, without violence or self-dramatization.

Characteristic of Greene's heroes is what David Lodge⁶ calls "the Judas complex," and with it a hounding or pursuit. Sometimes, as in Raven's case, he is the one betrayed all along the line, by society, his parents, the girl he trusts. Harry Lime in The Third Man, meets his death through his friend, and Fowler in The Quiet American connives at the death of Pyle, the man to whom he owes his life. At other times the hero is the betrayer, like Andrews in It's a Battlefield, of whom Carlyon, the chief smuggler says, "He's a sort of Judas." In this case the betrayal is a kind of perverse self-assertion, as perhaps it is with Pinkie, in his attempt to murder Rose.

Betrayal is to play a large part in Flannery O'Connor too, but is used to give the betrayed something of a universal aspect; to make him more significant than just an ordinary human sufferer. This is noticeably not the case in Graham Greene. In The Power and the Glory, the betrayal of the whisky priest by the half-caste parallels Christ's betrayal closely. But it should be noticed that though this is so, the priest is never raised to the position of

⁶David Lodge, Graham Greene (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 9.

a savior himself. He is portrayed as just one small unworthy cog in the big machine of the church, which will go on from era to era, whether or not he exists. He is merely a priest, not even a bishop, much less a Christ. He is one man doing what he can, and in this context only, worthy of honor. It is clear in all these cases that the hero is portrayed as a man like ourselves, full of frailties, yet worthy of our sympathy. He has become caught up in a process which he does not control, and which it never occurs to him he might control. He does not see himself as the great redeemer of mankind. He does not even realize he has within him the seeds of his own redemption.

With Scobie, and with D. in The Confidential Agent, we have yet another type who is both betrayer and betrayed. Scobie feels very keenly his betrayal of Louise, of Helen, and most of all, of God. Yet he comes to like Wilson, the investigator sent out from London, and in so doing, makes it possible for Wilson to disclose his suicide to Louise. Scobie has decided to put himself in eternal damnation in order to avoid causing continued pain to those he loves. Because it would upset Louise to know this, he carefully fabricates a fatal disease, knowing that Wilson can be relied on to look after her. It is an ironical turn of events that makes Wilson the destroyer of Louise's happiness instead, since he uncovers the truth. Again coincidence plays an important role. As Pinkie's plans go astray,

so do Scobie's. When he tries to control the process, he is too much an ordinary mortal to succeed and in his anxiety to fulfill responsibilities to others any idea of responsibility to himself (or as in Miss O'Connor, to mankind), is irrelevant.

D. is even more conscious of his double role of betrayer and betrayed. The confidential agent in whom no one has confidence, and who can have confidence in no one, sees betrayals of him and by him everywhere. As he approaches England, on a mission, he thinks

You could trust nobody but yourself, and sometimes you were uncertain whether you could trust yourself. They didn't trust you He wasn't certain that he wasn't watched at this moment. He wasn't certain that it wasn't right for him to be watched. . . . And the watcher--was he watched? He was haunted by the vision of an endless distrust.⁷

But despite this feeling that one must rely on oneself alone, all Greene's main characters define themselves in relation to others. They act and react with others. Though feeling cut off from society, because of their belief that they have offended against its tenets, they are nevertheless part of it, and find their reality through it. Here again we will find a different approach on the part of Miss O'Connor's protagonists.

The intricate web of betrayals, like those noted by D., indicates a close association between the hunter and

⁷Graham Greene, The Confidential Agent (New York: The Viking Press, 1939), p. 4.

the hunted in Greene's view. To underline such closeness, the hero is often paired with another character who resembles him in some startling ways, so that the differences stand out in relief. The hero is noticeably lacking in some quality usually associated with the "good" life. He is perhaps inhuman and selfish, like Pinkie, yet his betrayer Ida, on the surface a good member of society, and acting from humane intentions, is revealed at last to be far less worthy than at first appears. Scobie avoids mass and confession, commits adultery, and fails in the carrying out of his duties as a police officer, and yet Father Rank indicates to Louise, Scobie's chaste, rule-keeping wife, that Scobie who has tried to help others and shown genuine compassion is probably closer to divine grace than she. The whisky priest has fed himself, rather than his flock, has an illegitimate daughter and has to be carried to his execution, while his pursuer, the lieutenant of police, leads a life of self-denial, acts only according to the tenets of his ideology and carries out what he sees as his saving of the people, with ruthless determination. But it is the priest who is shown to have reached self-knowledge, and whose life is, finally, more significant to the boy, and to those who follow after. In The End of the Affair, the pair has become three. We have Sarah Miles' love for Bendrix leading her to be able to love God totally, and Bendrix's love for Sarah leading him to defiance of

God, as one comparison; as the other, Sarah's unwished-for search for God, compared with Bendrix's careful following of clue after clue, in the end finding God, not an earthly usurper of his place as lover. There is also a comparison between the relentless search of Bendrix for a way back to Sarah's heart, and beside it an equally relentless pursuit of her by God, for unknown to her she had been baptized in her infancy. Comparisons will also be used by Miss O'Connor, but their effect will be rather to emphasize the representativeness of the hero, than to indicate his human individuality, as in Greene.

Another aspect of the novels which emphasizes the individual load of responsibility the Greene hero is required to carry, is the authenticity of the location. The heroes are placed in a setting which is totally real in an everyday sense, Greene visited lengthily all the countries which provide backgrounds for his characters, and the spirit of the place is part of the framework of each novel. Whatever the society represented, it is given a detailed treatment and the place of each character in it made clear. It matters that the vultures Scobie hears on the roof are in Africa; Pinkie is part of the heartlessness and gaudy brashness of an English summer seaside resort; the priest can best be shown us in the cultural upheaval and dusty heat of Mexico. Geographical location is not used in this way in Miss O'Connor.

The Heart of the Matter shows particularly well how the structure of the society in which the hero is placed sets the limits of his horizons. Scobie finds himself in a British colony in Africa. Here the sense of rank which underlies the way of life in Britain itself is found in a more extreme form. Scobie was expected to succeed to the rank of Commissioner of Police. He is passed over. His wife is mortified. She does not see how she can hold up her head in "the club," the central point of social life. What must have been a disappointment under any circumstances, in this setting where everybody knows everybody, and seniority is well established, becomes a crushing blow. The effect on Louise has its repercussions on Scobie. He feels compelled to raise a loan to let her get away for a holiday and this separation allows the actions which follow to take a course they would not otherwise have been able to. Pettiness and prejudice which breed in corners where people are homesick for a different way of life also force certain actions on Scobie. Because the Syrians are suspect in the eyes of the British, it is assumed that whenever he is talking to Yusef he is accepting a bribe. And since he is clearly suspected, there are times when he kicks out at this society by deliberately giving the impression he is not to be trusted, as when he tells the Commissioner that if anyone wants him he will be with Yusef, when he had not in fact made any plans to see him. The heat

and the structure of this society provide the forces which will alter Scobie, the only upright, sincere member of the police force, into one who must tell lie after lie, and whose only way out of the predicaments he piles around himself is suicide under the guise of death from a heart disease.

On the one hand Greene is putting the theory that the outright condemnation of those who commit suicide may not be religiously justified, that if a man's motives are pure, he must be close to God's grace, in spite of having acted on wrong judgment. On the other, he is examining the double sidedness of pity. In The Ministry of Fear Greene had already examined pity in the character of the hero, Arthur Rowe. When Rowe kills his wife so that she may be spared more pain, it is called by the newspapers a "mercy killing." But later, when he is able to examine his motives more clearly, he realizes

that it was he who had not been able to bear his wife's pain and not she. . . . It was her endurance and her patience which he had found most unbearable. He was trying to escape his own pain, not hers.⁸

Ugliness serves as a producer of pity in both Rowe and Scobie. It is the basis of the love they bear others. It is not, to the same extent as in O'Connor, a symbol of

⁸ Francis L. Kunkel, The Labyrinthine Ways of Graham Greene (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959), p. 69 citing Graham Greene, The Ministry of Fear (London: Heinemann, 1943).

spiritual degeneration. Scobie even pities God, whom he thinks of as a failure. Both heroes are betrayed by their sympathy for the suffering of others and their automatic response to the pain of others, and both shoulder with quiet deliberateness the whole burden of responsibility for the happiness of others. In Scobie the pity is extended first to Louise.

He watched her through the muslin net. Her face had the yellow-ivory tinge of atabrine: her hair, which had once been the colour of bottled honey, was dark and stringy with sweat. These were the times of ugliness when he loved her, when pity and responsibility reached the intensity of a passion. It was pity that told him to go.⁹

He also pities Wilson because of his "puppy love" for Louise. He is trapped into not carrying out his duty as an inspecting officer, by his pity of the captain of the *Esperanca*. And he pities Father Rank, Helen and God.

Louise suspects Scobie's pity to be self-love. "Do you love anyone Tiki, except yourself?" she asks.¹⁰ She is also anxious that he should not let his pity for Wilson cloud his judgment. "I shouldn't see too much of him. There's something phony about him."¹¹ But Scobie dismisses the warning. Whereas Rowe finds that pity in his case is the outer side of self-love, Louise's estimation of Scobie is not quite accurate. It is not so much self-love, as

⁹Greene, The Heart of the Matter, p. 16.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 19.

¹¹Ibid., p. 101.

love of God, which is behind Scobie's pity. That is what Scobie does not realize, and what Father Rank is trying to convey to Louise in the last scene of the novel. Louise, like Bendrix, expects an earthly rival to be the explanation for the loss of joy in the future that she sees in Scobie. But in both cases the rival is God.

In his relationship with the dying child, after the torpedoing of the SS45, we see Scobie's pity transcending self-love as he makes the shadow of a rabbit sleep beside the child for comfort.

"There's your rabbit," he said, "to go to sleep with. It will stay until you sleep. Sleep." The sweat poured down his face and tasted in his mouth as salt as tears. "Sleep." He moved the rabbit's ears up and down. Then he heard Mrs. Bowles' voice, speaking low just behind him. "Stop that," she said harshly, "the child's dead."¹²

Mrs. Bowles is the wife of a missionary and lives according to "oughts," yet she has no compassion and is an extreme form of Louise, who is really the one to be accused of self-love. So Scobie becomes a hero whose pity for others brings with it a compulsion to do everything in his power, and more, to help. From praying to God to give the dying child peace, even if it means taking away his own peace for ever,¹³ it is but a step to sacrificing his eternal life by the act of suicide, in order to save Louise, Helen, and

¹²Ibid., p. 132.

¹³Ibid., p. 130.

more importantly God, from further suffering. Having taken this latter decision he is suddenly aware

of the sense of exile. Over there where those people knelt, was a country to which he would never return. The sense of love stirred in him, the love one always feels for what one has lost, whether a child, a woman, or even a pain.¹⁴

The bitter irony of the close parallel of himself and Christ at this point, and in the final sacrificial act, lies in his being so oblivious of the closeness of God's pity. In his final agony he does not recognize the voice calling him, "appealing for help," "in need of him," as that of God, and he becomes "the saint whose name nobody could remember" on the medal he has carried with him. To do the wrong thing for the right reason is his fate, as it perhaps is for all tragic heroes. His suicide means damnation, as he sees it, and as does the Catholic who takes the rules literally. But Father Rank indicates that a wrong choice for the right motives can perhaps be forgiven by an understanding God.

In the whisky priest and Sarah Miles, it is the right choice for the wrong reason. Sarah prays to a God in whom she does not believe to return her lover to life; the priest chooses his vocation because it will give him position and comfort, and chooses to stay in Mexico as a priest, out of pride. Yet, these choices having been made, the road is open via intense suffering to salvation, for

¹⁴Ibid., p. 235

the protagonist and for others. Like Scobie, the priest falls far short of the ideal. Here the focus is on the way in which the demands of the office of priesthood conflict with the very real feelings of the holder of that office. At first he, too, feels pity to be a burden. He is aware "of an immense load of responsibility: it was indistinguishable from love."¹⁵ But it is only through privation and suffering that he comes really to see those to whom he ministers. Brought to humility he can have compassion for them, and can sacrifice himself to bring divine forgiveness to a condemned and godless gangster, knowing he is being lured into a trap. This ability to ignore his own best interests in concern for some other person or persons, individually known, is a recurring aspect of the Greene hero.

The direct source of the priest's persecution is the lieutenant of police, an example of the frequent parallel character to the hero, who seems at first so much more of a priest-like figure. It is the lieutenant who is ruled by pity. He has compassion for his flock. He is working for a communistic earthly Utopia, while the priest is urging his people to practise self-denial on earth, in order to gain a reward in heaven. For all his apparent worthiness, and lack of transgression, the lieutenant cannot match the

¹⁵ Greene, The Power and the Glory, p. 92.

priest in one important respect--he has no power to save his fellow countrymen, while the priest has, simply by being a priest, despite his state of sin. The fact that such a lieutenant should be in his area is another example of the way in which coincidence, or fate rules the lives of the characters. Greene's heroes are what they are because of the community setting in which they find themselves. It is not a matter of their exerting tremendous self willpower, though they must make choices. They are contained within the circumstances of their situation. As the priest tries to tell the lieutenant after his final arrest,

That's another difference between us. It's no use your working for your end unless you're a good man yourself. And there won't always be good men in your party. Then you'll have all the old starvation, beating, and get-rich-anyhow. But it doesn't matter so much my being a coward--and all the rest. I can put God into a man's mouth just the same--and I can give him God's pardon. It wouldn't make any difference to that if every priest in the church was like me.¹⁶

Another anti-hero, the priest has many points of similarity with Scobie. He cannot bear to see suffering either, and his prayer, "O God, give me any kind of death--without contrition, in a state of sin--only save this child,"¹⁷ points to the humaneness we have seen in Scobie when Mrs. Bowles objects to his rabbit. His self-knowledge

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 263.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 111.

and self-horror are constant features of the hero, and cause for him, as for the others, a blindness to the possibility of grace for himself. As he leaves for the last time the town where Maria and their child, Brigida, live, he is moved to explain to his daughter how much he values and loves her. Her using the title "father," rather than either a name or "father" in the family sense, makes it clear to the reader that Brigida is as slow to understand his words as the priest is to understand the love of God for him. He is preoccupied constantly with the knowledge of how far short he has fallen of the ideal priest. Like Raven, Pinkie, Sarah, Scobie and the rest, he cannot see any of those things which are positive about his character; the things we are gradually shown as we compare him with the others among whom he moves.

He was a man who was supposed to save souls: it had seemed quite simple once, preaching at Benediction, organising the guilds, having coffee with elderly ladies behind barred windows, blessing new houses with a little incense, wearing black gloves It was as easy as saving money: now it was a mystery. He was aware of his own desperate inadequacy.¹⁸

Greene's hero often, like this, proceeds from feelings of adequacy to those of inadequacy. The movement in Flannery O'Connor is more likely to be in the opposite direction. Like Scobie, deciding that the people at mass are in a country he is leaving forever, the priest in his dream

¹⁸Ibid., p. 111.

before his execution "sat on, just waiting, paying no attention to the God over the altar, as if that was a God for other people and not for him."¹⁹ And he fills Scobie's description of a man capable of despair²⁰ exactly. His journey through this area has been an odd travesty of the saint's life being read at the beginning and at the end by the "devout" mother to her three children.

"And that one," the boy said slowly, "they shot today. Was he a hero too?"

"Yes."

"The one who stayed with us that time?"

"Yes. He was one of the martyrs of the Church."

"He had a funny smell," one of the little girls said.

"You must never say that again," the mother said.

"He may be one of the saints."²¹

In this novel the generality of the application of the story is pointed out by the fact that neither the priest nor the lieutenant are named, and the boy kisses the hand of the priest's successor in greeting, before learning his name, indicating that the office transcends the petty problems that really constitute martyrdom, rather than the romanticized version read by the mother. It is also a way of insisting upon the ordinariness of the priest. He is not a super-human. The priest's failure, his sins, make him a complete part of the human experience, something that shocks those whose piety is really an abstention from life.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 283.

²⁰ See p. 17.

²¹ The Power and the Glory, pp. 297-298.

The mother reading the saint's life and the woman with the holy books in the prison, like Louise, have not known what it is like to be tried, and are condemned by their own self-congratulation. The mestizo, like Wilson, is recognized as a possible danger, yet the priest too can be sorry for the man who will be his betrayer. "It was really shocking bad luck for the poor devil that he was to be burdened by a sin of such magnitude." The line, as always, between sin and sanctity has become blurred. In the other novels, too, the reader recognizes that the overly pious are not necessarily pure at heart, that suicide may not always be anathema to God, that miracles are not the property of saints alone. In this sense the heroes rise above their single existence, but at no stage is there a suggestion that any one of them is larger than life, or more than human. The hero is made in God's image but he never aspires to being God. Though parallels exist between his actions and Christ's, he remains ignorant of those parallels. His saintliness comes unexpected. At this point he resembles Flannery O'Connor's heroes least. Her heroes see life in a very different light and struggle with their saintliness in different terms.

The typical hero of a Graham Greene novel, then, is one who underestimates himself. He is loved by others, but does not usually recognize that love, whether it be human or divine. He is a man who has many human weaknesses, but

the strengths he has make us sympathize with him. He belongs to a society which is clearly delineated, and which exerts great pressures upon him, thus limiting his ability to initiate his own roles. He is often the victim of coincidence, or fate, and so has very limited control over his own destiny. What happens to him in the end can be traced back through a series of choices to the situation he found himself in, perhaps in childhood. He undertakes, without hesitation, the responsibility for others as individuals, but he is not, in so doing, embracing an ideology or displaying any unusual idealism. However he does tend to set himself goals beyond his reach, and then castigate himself for not attaining them. At no time does he become larger than life, even though he does illustrate some basic human problems in the understanding of God's ways. If he is seen by the reader as a sort of saint, at the end, he himself would be the last to see this. His is the kind of saintliness of which we all might be capable.

The "saintliness" of Miss O'Connor's heroes is of a different type, one which sends shivers down your back. Yet both her heroes and Greene's spring from a very consistent point of view. In the work of a serious writer, Paul Levine tells us,²² there will be a consistent honesty

²²Paul Levine, "Intemperate Zone: The Climate of Contemporary American Fiction," Massachusetts Review, Vol. 8 (Summer, 1967), 505-523.

of vision, and this we find in the books of the two authors under discussion. He goes on to say,

For the serious there can be no easy solution or slick reconciliation. Moreover, there is for the serious writer the problem of distortion: through the lens of his singular sensibility he must create for the reader a world at once real and illusory, recognizable and foreign.²³

It follows that the protagonists within such worlds will bear the individual stamp of their creator. Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away, Flannery O'Connor's two novels, bring together a series of characters often referred to as grotesque, and the protagonists battle their way to salvation through country which, despite its disturbing recognizability, is very much Miss O'Connor's own.

The reader is more conscious of the "real" and the "recognizable" at first in Graham Greene, because to acknowledge that aspect of Flannery O'Connor's characters is to be brought face to face with aspects within our own personalities of which we might rather deny the existence. This in itself points to a different kind of hero, one with a more soul searching relationship to ourselves. The context within which Graham Greene's heroes function is one which readers of the Nineteenth Century novel would find fairly natural. They meet what would appear to be "normal" problems of a sensitive person in a world of narrow vision. Those of Miss O'Connor demonstrate the deflection discussed

²³Ibid., p. 207.

by Ihab Hassan.²⁴ The deliberate distortion of the lens she holds up to life is not, he feels, just a trick of writing,²⁵ but such a deflection is "a form of disavowal: its true aim is to reject evil without the confidence to propose a good." In Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away, we are, then, being guided "down into the underside of consciousness, where all true tests are faced."²⁶ Hassan sees this as perhaps a means of eventually getting beyond the threat of nihilism.

The pattern of pursuit, the betrayal that is a kind of fortunate fall, and the hero who, though less than perfect, turns out to have been closer to the ideal than those who seemed to be keeping the rules, occur in Miss O'Connor's novels as in Greene's. She too is concerned with the close relationship of pursuer and pursued, but the final emotional effect of her novels is different. Her hero has an extra dimension, elusive but powerful. It is suggested first by the backgrounds against which the two

²⁴Hassan, "The Way Down and Out . . . ," pp. 81-93.

²⁵See also Lewis A. Lawson, "Flannery O'Connor and the Grotesque: Wise Blood," in Flannery O'Connor, ed. by Robert Reiter (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., Christian Critic Series, n.d.), p. 66. "The grotesque for her was a form of religious hyperbole. There is always the danger that an audience not attuned to the form will misunderstand such hyperbole. That is a chance that Miss O'Connor must have felt she had to take."

²⁶Hassan, "The Way Down and Out . . . ," p. 82.

types of hero move. Where Greene's are depicted in a setting of everyday realism, Miss O'Connor's protagonist is placed in a surrealist nightmare landscape, like a medieval tapestry, with utter simplicity suggesting a detailed whole, the more intense because it is added to by the imagination.²⁷ He is real enough to capture our sympathy but at the same time convinces us we are taking part in a modern parable. Thus where Greene's heroes were located precisely in Africa, Thailand or England, Miss O'Connor's are not. To be sure the flavor of the South is there and the characters reflect this, but while the road, the view from the hill, the clearing in the trees may be in Tennessee, they could just as easily be anywhere. This gives to Tarwater and to Haze Motes a kind of universality which is not apparent in Greene's heroes. They become representative of mankind.

Tarwater, the hero of The Violent Bear It Away, is one of the new breed described as "radical innocents" by Hassan.²⁸ This type of hero is "radical, first because it is inherent in his character, and goes to the root of it. But radical, too, because it is extreme, impulsive, anarchic, troubled with vision. The new hero brings the brilliant

²⁷ Cf. Keats' Ode to a Grecian Urn, lines 11, 12, "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter."

²⁸ Ihab Hassan, Radical Innocence (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961).

extremities of the American conscience and imagination to bear on the equable tenor of our present condition." The radical innocent, then, is one who has moved beyond innocence. By rejecting the values of the contemporary age, he is valueless in terms of that age and is therefore innocent. By asserting values which society does not approve of, he becomes radical: hence "radical innocence." As well as being of this group, Tarwater also has some of the qualities of the traditional American hero. As noted by Melvin J. Friedman,²⁹ Tarwater is the modern version of the American boy going through the initiation required of him before he can become a man. In this regard, his fumbling baptismal drowning of the idiot boy, Bishop, shows the same kind of internal conflict as Ike McCaslin has in his feelings about the bear hunt in Faulkner's The Bear, and Huck Finn's uncertainty about Jim's destiny. In each case, as Friedman points out, "the spiritual resolution which turns the boy into a man is crucial."³⁰ Faced with this very personal initiation, and as a radical innocent, fiercely free of society's claims, Tarwater is of a different type from Scobie or Pinkie. His life is led determinedly alone. Not only has he been forcibly removed from the

²⁹Melvin J. Friedman, "Flannery O'Connor: Another Legend in Southern Fiction," in Flannery O'Connor, ed. by Robert Reiter (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., Christian Critic Series, n.d.).

³⁰Ibid., p. 21.

society of his birth by his uncle, but with his uncle's death he is utterly alone and so, apparently free to determine his own life in a way no Greene hero ever was.

Kidnapped as a boy, so that he can be brought up apart to follow the footsteps of his uncle as prophet and savior (through baptism), Tarwater is both repelled and drawn by his calling. His uncle's sudden death at first offers him release from bondage. He rejoices at being able at last to decide what he will do with the property he now assumes. As a mark of his new freedom, he deliberately goes against the first injunction laid upon him by his uncle, that he see to his burial. The defiance takes a suitably violent form in the burning down of the house with the corpse inside it. He is freeing himself from the bonds of the past--a sort of ritual purification. But the old man's spirit is not to be put by so easily. Try as Tarwater may, when he goes with news of the old man's death to his uncle Rayber, he cannot meet him uninfluenced by what he has learned of him through his years of indoctrination, nor can he isolate himself in order to avoid carrying out the second injunction--that he baptise Rayber's idiot son. Again violent means must be sought to absolve Tarwater from his appointed task. He drowns the boy. And as in the former act of defiance, there is an ironical turn to events, for the uncle's body does receive burial at another's hands, and Bishop is baptised, for the words insist on slipping

out as the boy is immersed. However much he may later explain them away, the ritual words have been spoken. Any triumph at having broken free from his destiny is short-lived, and again it is by violent means that his final education is initiated, when he is raped on his way back to the site of the funeral fire. By this traumatic experience he is brought to understand and accept his own destiny, after he has passed through another sacrificial fire, and been shown his uncle's burial duly completed. Only then is he able to turn again towards the city "where the children of God lay sleeping," this time not in rebellion, or running away from responsibility, but as a man.

Who then is this Tarwater? He is a young man, alienated, and set apart from society. He is one within whose heart rages a conflict that will, like Ahab's, lead to his own self-destruction and will have profound repercussions beyond his own personal sphere. His name, and that of Bishop, the simple son of a "welfare woman," indicate that his role is symbolic, his journeying of more than surface meaning. Perhaps it is not accidental that there is the same ambivalence in Ahab's feelings toward the simple-minded Pip, as in the repulsion and attraction Tarwater feels for Bishop. In each case there is an opportunity offered the hero to turn to spiritual values through the mediation of the simple-minded.

The double symbol of tar and water indicates the internal conflict between the base and the spiritual, and suggests to Hassan³¹ that perhaps in an era such as ours the appropriate baptism is one with tar, rather than water. The novel takes the familiar form of the preparation for, and initiation into life. Despite the consistent attempts Tarwater makes to turn from his spiritual heritage, to deny its existence, it remains a fact that will burst forth in due season. But it is more than this in the form in which it is depicted. Tarwater is not just a rebel-victim. He is himself a Christ figure, one whose final sacrifice will, it seems, provide the saving grace for those asleep in the city.

The difference of treatment of Greene's heroes and Miss O'Connor's is particularly striking in this respect. As has been noted³² even where the whisky priest, or Scobie approach something like sainthood, they never become the kind of figure who is clearly head and shoulders above the human race. Scobie for instance is equivalent to the saint whose name nobody could remember. But Tarwater is made a kind of Christ. This is underlined especially in the last two chapters. Granted this is a case of the religious hyperbole spoken of by Lewis A. Lawson,³³ but

³¹Hassan, "The Way Down and Out . . . ," p. 83.

³²See page 21.

³³See p. 35, note 25.

the form of the hyperbole, even if Tarwater is not meant to be literally a Christ, has the effect of making him larger than life.

The scene after the violet-clad rapist disappears, might be viewed as a small scale Calvary, with the deflative twist which by this time has become the "normal" view.

When Tarwater woke up, the sun was directly overhead, very small and silver, sifting down light that seemed to spend itself before it reached him. He saw first his thin white legs stretching in front of him. He was propped up against a log that lay across a small open space between two very tall trees. His hands were loosely tied with a lavender handkerchief which his friend had thought of as an exchange for the hat. His clothes were neatly piled by his side. Only his shoes were on him. He perceived that his hat was gone.³⁴

The details here underline his position as a Christ figure. The position of the body as if on a cross, between two trees; the exchange of clothing, like the casting of lots; and the clothes neatly piled, giving a suggestion of the resurrection to come. Tarwater is to rise from this depth of degradation, and be ready for visions and understanding. That his shoes are on symbolizes the journey ahead, and with his hat gone he has no protection from the light filtering down, which his old uncle had told him he would be better off under than in the city. The coming of spiritual grace has been prepared for.

³⁴Flannery O'Connor, The Violent Bear It Away (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1960), pp. 231-232.

Already singled out as a victim supreme, Tarwater is again linked with the crucifixion in a reference following closely on the passage above.

The boy's mouth twisted open and to the side as if it were going to displace itself permanently. In a second it appeared to be only a gap that would never be a mouth again. His eyes looked small and seed-like as if while he was asleep, they had been lifted out, scorched, and dropped back into his head. His expression seemed to contract until it reached some point beyond rage or pain. Then a loud cry tore out of him and his mouth fell back into place.³⁵

The cry, like Christ's on the cross, precedes the acceptance of manifest destiny. Once it has been uttered the way is clear for the coming of the power of prophesy, symbolized by the falling of the mouth back into place. At the same time this is reinforced by the comparison of his eyes to seeds. The ability to "see" will grow from this point forward and the seed image will be repeated just before the vision of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. At the end of chapter eleven we find him no longer able to turn away.

He knew that his destiny forced him on to a final revelation. His scorched eyes no longer looked hollow or as if they were meant only to guide him forward. They looked as if, touched with coal like the lips of the prophet, they would never be used for ordinary sights again.³⁶

The question of seeing and perceiving, of vision simple and inspired, is one Miss O'Connor will take up again in her

³⁵Ibid., p. 232.

³⁶Ibid., p. 233.

other hero, Haze Motes. Meanwhile this minor crucifixion is but a necessary step along the way, an idea reinforced by the picture of Tarwater stepping over a tree fallen across his path and not stopping for a thorn vine which caught at his shirt and tore it. There are further temptations to be met, and a further identification with Christ, this time in the context of the temptation after the fasting in the wilderness. At first when he reaches the top of the hill and looks down at the site of the first fire he sees what he had expected to see, a clearing

burnt free of all that had ever oppressed him. No cross was there to say that this was the ground that the Lord still held. What he looked out upon was the sign of a broken covenant. The place was forsaken and his own. As he looked his lips parted. They seemed to be forced open by a hunger too great to be contained inside him. He stood there open-mouthed, as if he had no further power to move.

He felt a breeze on his neck as light as a breath and he half turned, sensing that someone stood behind him. A sibilant shifting of air dropped like a sigh into his ear. The boy turned white.

Go down and take it, his friend whispered.
It's ours. We've won it³⁷

And as we would expect, his "Get thee behind me Satan" is as violent as his other determined actions. He shakes himself free and with a burning pine bough brand sets fire to the evil spot, as he had done to the place where the rape had taken place. The voice inside himself that tempted him at the half-dug grave, the voice of the truck driver full of advice of how to get on in the world of business, the voice

³⁷ Ibid., p. 237.

of the rapist, are all brought together. Each is referred to as the voice of a "friend," and one is reminded how small the change is from "friend" to "fiend." Thus, his temptation over, he can come to the final revelation that his uncle has in fact been buried and that a cross has been raised over the ground he has been surveying. This culminates in the vision of the feeding of the five thousand and of the "red-gold tree of fire," the symbolic cross of redemption. The final identification with Christ will take place in the deliberate self-sacrifice presaged by the last sentence of the book.

His eyes, black in their deep sockets, seemed already to envisage the fate that awaited him but he moved steadily on, his face set towards the dark city, where the children of God lay sleeping.

A transfiguration of a kind has taken place, as this hero has taken on him all the trappings of prophet and sacrifice. He has become, like Ahab, a figure larger than life--an archetype.

It is this kind of one to one relationship with a figure like Ahab or Christ that I have come to expect of an American hero. It seems to be taken for granted to some degree. In Tarwater we have an extreme case. We might also notice that the position of prophet and sacrifice has a certain ambivalence in it. The responsibilities involved are responsibilities to himself to become what he must be, rather than responsibilities to individual people, or to a gang of thugs, even to God.

A similar transcendence on a lesser scale befalls the hero of Wise Blood, Haze Motes. He too is a symbolic figure, as indicated by the two sections of his name. The suggestion is that his vision is faulty, and our early estimation of Haze will bear out our propensity to "behold the mote" in the eyes of others. We are introduced to the series of false prophets Haze meets on his journey of initiation, resembling a pilgrim's progress through the haunts of symbolic beasts, including Shoats³⁸ and Hawks, and come to realize that the mote in his eye is minute compared to their "beam." At first, as his name tells us, he sees "as through a glass darkly." When the rain spatters on his face in a kind of baptism, however, and he throws his glasses out through the door, where significantly there is no longer a fire-escape,³⁹ he is being prepared for the final scenes where his landlady, literally, and he, spiritually, will "see face to face." Haze is presented as an everyman, who by extreme penance, and the violent capacity to feel that is a necessary part of his make-up, shows what it means to be a Twentieth Century saint and is our equivalent of a medieval exemplar, a way of life we might follow if we have the courage. The message this time is not as religiously optimistic as in The Violent Bear It

³⁸A young pig, old enough to be fed.

³⁹Flannery O'Connor, Wise Blood (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1949), p. 189.

Away, and so Haze does not become the giant figure of allegory that Tarwater does. However he is raised well above the ordinary by the parallels drawn between him and Enoch Emery, and between him and the dried-up, yellow, shrunken mummy, both of which are distorted mirror images of aspects of himself, a sort of grotesque trinity. Where Miss O'Connor is taking three characters and using them to reinforce each other, thus emphasizing the universality or symbolic nature of Haze, Greene in using characters as parallels did so to contrast one with the other, to break each one down to life-size as it were. Thus his characters are noteworthy only in so far as they are more spiritual than their parallels. Flannery O'Connor's are noteworthy because they are like the parallel characters, but more extreme cases. They are thus larger than life.

The mummy is lifeless, less than man, horrible to behold, and separated from the world by a glass case. It is an extreme symbol of what Haze has made of himself spiritually. As such, it speaks to him in a disturbing way in the museum,⁴⁰ a pattern which is repeated as he becomes the mummy momentarily, after he has destroyed it.

[H]e was stopped by a cough. It was not much of a cough--it sounded like a little yell for help at the bottom of a canyon--but the color and the expression drained out of his face until it was as straight and blank as the rain falling down behind him.⁴¹

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 99.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 189.

Enoch, too, is an inverse image of Haze, again cut off from society, hungering for friendship and drawn to a kind of ritual worship of the mummy. His name also suggests parallels between himself and Tennyson's Enoch Arden, whose quest, self inflicted was a deliberate cutting himself off from the world of society, its aim probably more selfish than on the surface. Perhaps too, it is intended to carry a reference to the patriarch, Enoch, who "walked with God."⁴² Here he symbolizes, by his lack of understanding, the limitation of Haze's spirituality, which he is interpreting in the cold scientific light suggested by his buddies in the army.⁴³ For Enoch, the mummy is clearly the right occupant of the shrine he has created out of a wash-stand,⁴⁴ and equally the right candidate for the "new jesus" called for by Haze,

one that's all man, without blood to waste . . .
 one that don't look like any other man so you'll
 look at him.⁴⁵

A literal fulfillment of all requirements for the center of the Church without Christ, of which Haze is the founder, the mummy signifies how devoid of spiritual understanding Enoch is, totally incapable of grasping the idea that the new jesus

⁴²Genesis, V:22, 24.

⁴³O'Connor, Wise Blood, p. 24.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 131.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 140.

is "a way to say a thing," not a literal person or thing, as Haze tried to explain to Hoover Shoates.⁴⁶ By this means the lack of spirituality in Haze too is indicated, since he is a parallel. Enoch is alive physically but he has no more spirituality than the mummy. He is the existential "hero" determined to make himself--ready to act. His inability to "see" is symbolized at the moment when, having heard Haze preach, he thinks the mummy to be the answer to his call for a "new jesus." Where Haze sees, but without clarity, Enoch has no eyes at all.

He began to back away. He backed across the street and over a piece of sidewalk and out into the street and a taxi had to stop short to keep from hitting him. The driver put his head out the window and asked him how he got around so well when God had made him by putting two backs together instead of a back and a front.⁴⁷

That Haze is linked in a very integral way with Enoch and the mummy is illustrated by Haze's reaction to the story told by Sabbath Lily Hawks, the far from innocent daughter of the fake blind preacher, concerning the woman who killed her child because it was ugly.

This child had Jesus and this woman didn't have nothing but good looks and a man she was living in sin with. She sent the child away and it came back and she sent it away again and it came back again and ever' time she sent it away, it came back to where her and this man was living in sin. They strangled it with a silk stocking and hung it up in the chimney. It didn't give

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 159.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 142.

her any peace after that though. Everything that she looked at was that child. Jesus made it beautiful to haunt her. She couldn't lie with that man without she saw it, staring through the chimney at her, shining through the brick in the middle of the night.⁴⁸

He exclaims in a mutter "My Jesus," completing the ironic picture with this blasphemy. For just as he has strangled and denied Jesus, and cut him out of his church, everything he looks at is Jesus, and He continues to "shine through the brick in the middle of the night."

Having broken away from Hawks and his daughter, Haze pushes through the crowd that is coming out of the cinema warning them to look out for the preacher below. As he does so, someone cries, "make room for this idiot."⁴⁹ We see here a connection with the ideas of innocence and nearness to God associated with Bishop in The Violent Bear It Away, as well as with Melville's Pip. Ironically Haze does speak a truth of which he is unaware, like a simpleton foretelling the future. This is further reinforced by the constant argument as to whether or not Hawks, or Haze himself can see. There is never any doubt of the latter's capacity to see--after all he had "kept the glasses in case his vision should ever become dim."⁵⁰ The limitations on his vision are self-imposed. The hat that he wears

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 52.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 54.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 25.

points him out to those he meets as a preacher, but he refuses to believe in the religious side of himself. "By metaphysical ordination a man of God" and like Tarwater, the grandson of a preacher,⁵¹ he resists the call within him until he discovers God at last in a vision so tremendous we are not given anything more than a suggestion of what it is.

In using this hyperbolic way of presenting her thesis, as a means of drawing the readers' attention to what she has to say, Miss O'Connor is making an unusual use of the traits found elsewhere in American fiction. The point is she is using them. This hero appears to have taken his fate in his own hands, and for a considerable part of the story he has succeeded in making of it what he will. He has stepped outside society and as he moves from experience to experience, has no real responsibility to anyone but himself.

When Haze destroys the mummy which Enoch had expected him to welcome, it is as if he is destroying part of himself by the act, the part that must go before real self-knowledge can be established. Also in his killing of Solace, the false double of him set up by Hoover Shoates as a money making venture, he is recognizing, and ritually killing his own assumed unbelief. He makes Solace take off

⁵¹See J. Baumbach, The Landscape of Nightmare (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 88 et seq.

the clothes that represent his false identity, and runs him down in his car. As Baumbach points out,⁵² the confession Solace makes of his sins to Haze is an objectivization of Haze's own confession, revealing to him his own unadmitted evil. The slap on the back with which Haze sends Solace, whom he has shriven, to eternal life is thus not only ambivalent in the sense of perhaps being a putting out of his misery, as well as a death blow, it is also a brotherly greeting and an acknowledgement of a common bond. By this act Haze takes his first step in the journey to salvation. Then, with the destruction of the car, the weakness in which he has always refused to recognize, his pulpit and hiding place, giving him the security of his assumed identity, he can see the enormity of his sin and make penance. The patrolman saw the Essex to be "not a car" and in pushing it over the cliff shows it to be no sanctuary or protection against Jesus either. Though Haze does sacrifice himself, stage by stage, it is with less widespread ramifications than in Tarwater's case. Lewis A. Lawson⁵³ sees clear parallels between Haze Motes and St. Anthony in the unfolding of the story at a number of points. Also in the overall picture of Haze as possessed

⁵²Ibid., p. 95.

⁵³Lawson, "Flannery O'Connor and the Grotesque: Wise Blood."

with an overpowering sense of the importance of religious belief as the only force that will give order and meaning to life, and in his use of self abasement to express the realization of the gulf that separates the human from the spiritual. As such a figure, Haze combines aspects of the "criminal or demonic hero" and the "saintly or sacrificial hero," and as is often the case with the grotesque character,⁵⁴ shows that the tragic aspects of our experience are often simply absurd or pathetic. He also shows something of the ambivalence which the self-dramatized role of preacher and penitent that he has taken as his own entail. Tied to the penitence is a pride not unlike Ahab's.

Haze is also in the tradition of Huck Finn, in exposing the corruption and mendacity of the world about him, and finally making his escape from the society, which in Wise Blood is symbolized by the uncomprehending landlady who has the last say. Though he may be an everyman, he does not attain to the same extent, the larger than life quality that so distinguishes Tarwater.

Where Scobie and those like him show us the marvelous ways of God in Man, in Haze and Tarwater we have been thrust nearer the presence of God himself. These two are the

⁵⁴Hassan, "The Way Down and Out . . . ," p. 90.

products of a vision almost at the limits of our meagre earthly sight. To give them palpability calls for a dramatization more violent and compelling. Beside the violence of Wise Blood and The Violent Bear It Away, the murder and betrayal and persecution of Greene's characters is a summer gale. For Greene's hero we summon up pity, understanding and respect. The extra dimension added by Miss O'Connor is awe.

There are special aspects of both Greene's and Miss O'Connor's heroes which are due to the religious point of view of the novels. There still remains, over and above these, a general pattern in each type. Haze and Tarwater are individuals. They are rebel victims and radical innocents. The violence with which they act sets them apart, and they are deliberately removed from society. They are self-reliant to the extreme, and the symbolism and parallel-ing that Miss O'Connor uses sets them up as exemplars, special, not just men, but exceptional larger-than-life characters. Despite the fact that this elevation to the position of archetype is hyperbole and so not intended to be read in the same way as the normality of Greene, the very fact that it is used, points to a general acceptance of such a view, an acceptance which Flannery O'Connor can then twist to suit her own ends.

It would thus seem that already a polarization along the lines of my initial suppositions is making an appearance.

Flannery O'Connor's heroes face trials which require them to become larger than life. They have none of the support of family and friends that Greene's heroes do, and their place in society is not as important to them as their search for their own identity and their carrying out of a self-appointed task. The ways in which these differences show themselves to be part of a pattern will be further investigated in the first section of Chapter IV.

CHAPTER II

NELSON ALGREN AND ALAN SILLITOE

Nelson Algren and Alan Sillitoe are two novelists whose work shows the heart of the city, and whose heroes meet life head on in a setting of tenement housing, factories, dirty streets and violence. Both write in very realistic detail, Sillitoe of Nottingham and Algren of Chicago and New Orleans, and the central character of each book is a man who makes the most of his situation at any one time. Yet the difference between the two groups of heroes is as great as the geographical distance which separates their origins. Again the English author depicts protagonists aware of their class. It is true they are often engaged in revolutionary activity with the ultimate aim of destroying such a distinction, but they are unquestioningly proud of themselves and the group to which they belong. They aim, not to raise themselves to a "better" social status, but rather to remove the artificial barriers that others have raised to keep themselves aloof, or to give their own class the power of government, for which they feel themselves thoroughly adequate. Algren, on the other hand, presents characters who, like Flannery O'Connor's, are concerned with

what they are making of themselves, rather than with their place in the scheme of society. They do not see themselves as part of a group, so much as individuals. As with Flannery O'Connor's heroes, the element of self-dramatization in their portrayal makes the reader's identification with them a more intense process than is the case with Sillitoe's heroes.

Perhaps it is the basic class structure which is taken for granted in Sillitoe's work which makes him appear to critics like J. W. Aldridge, not to have fulfilled the promise shown in his first two books. Aldridge says of Sillitoe's first novel Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (1958) and the long story The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner (1960), that they were

both undeniably sincere works of some originality and force. But they were ridiculously overpraised by a number of critics whose judgment one had assumed until then to be trustworthy, while his second and third novels, The General (1960) and Key to the Door (1961) suffered the relative neglect they clearly merited.¹

To this list has now been added two parts of a projected trilogy, The Death of William Posters (1965) and A Tree on Fire (1967), and although these are more ambitious in their scope than The General or Key to the Door I doubt they would alter Aldridge's opinion of Sillitoe's work.

¹John W. Aldridge, Time to Murder and Create (New York: Van Rees Press, 1966), p. 239.

It is those very aspects of his work which I felt to distinguish most recent English fiction, which make him insipid to Aldridge. Yet these same aspects are not considered drawbacks by English critics, nor by his reading public for his paperbacks have reached the million-sale bracket. It seems that this is an example of the applying of a set of assumptions based on one cultural background to another. Aldridge, for instance, sees Sillitoe as doing what has already been done to death by Dreiser.

There is little virtue in repeating the discovery or the mistakes of one's predecessors or in trying to make literature out of a cultural lag that merely social reform and the payment of some money can rectify.²

He feels that the American novel has grown beyond the themes of realistic social criticism, and implies that this is all that Sillitoe's is, and that in not having gone further he has achieved little. Sillitoe's heroes do not move Aldridge. Perhaps the reason is that they function so much within the framework of the English class system that they cannot reach larger-than-life proportions. The character under stress is still there, but the stress is related directly to that class structure which is taken for granted in English novels and therefore lacks universality.

²Ibid., p. 242.

Realization of this is shown in a later statement by Aldridge.

Americans . . . may well find what he [Sillitoe] writes about rather hard to relate to their own experience. There can be no doubt that working-class life has a reality, a special kind of presence, in England that it has not had in America for a very long time.³

It has indeed--and it needs to be explained not only to Americans, but more specifically to the British of non-working class origins. Sillitoe makes a plea for a working class perspective in literature, and so presents the way people of this group really feel and behave, through roistering, restless, thoughtful heroes.

Working men and women who read do not have the privilege of seeing themselves honestly and realistically portrayed in novels. They are familiar with wish-fulfilment images flashed at them in cliché form on television or in the press, and the novels they read in which they do figure are written by those novelists of the Right who are quite prepared to pass on the old values and who, unable to have any feeling for the individual, delineate only stock characters.⁴

It is these individuals in whom Sillitoe is most interested, with all the fascinating complication of their thoughts and actions. They have a wisdom all their own, and the excitement with which his novels were received is precisely because of this. Those outside the group could see in his heroes what the working class man really

³Ibid., p. 239.

⁴Alan Sillitoe, in The Writer's Dilemma, ed. by Stephen Spender (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

thought, and by what process. The need Sillitoe saw for the working class reader to see his real self in literature was at least equalled by the need of others to know the intricacies of their thought, and to understand their aggressive relish for life.

One characteristic which Aldridge did not comment upon and which belongs to Sillitoe's heroes in particular is the pride in being what one is. This pride is typical of each class, but is more belligerently declared by the working class. Money and social reform do not overnight alter a way of looking at life. Sillitoe shows a very particular way of looking at life. Within the framework of its view, the social criticism aspect of the stand Sillitoe's heroes take is limited considerably. The criticisms his characters hurl at society are not all-inclusive. They are often not intended to be taken literally, an expression of exasperation against "the establishment" but not a statement of political belief. Expressions of exasperation will also be uttered by Algren's heroes, but they are not directed against the established society. His heroes do not see themselves as firmly placed at a particular social level. Their exasperation is levelled at anyone or anything which prevents their progress, and they feel free to progress in any direction which they may choose.

The general, who is the central figure of The General, shows the characteristics of Sillitoe's other heroes in a more extreme form. The novel, rather like Edward Loomis' The Charcoal Horse, is existential in form. Removed from the hurly burly of city life, an orchestra is travelling by train to entertain troops near the front line. A sudden military reverse plunges them into the battle zone. They become prisoners, and their death is ordered by high command. Defying this order, the general has the orchestra play, arranges their get-away, kills Kondal, his second in command and a blind follower of orders, and refusing to escape himself or to plead guilty, goes deliberately to his own destruction.

Finally Evart took the gun. "You win," he said to the general.

"Every battle except the last," he answered.⁵

The irony here lies in the fact that in his elaborate plan to save the orchestra, he triggers off the counter-attack that causes his own defeat. As he travels to his death, huddled in an open carriage with the other prisoners he muses,

Despite the endless spaces of the world's continents--seen for the first time as something more than matchless obstacles to the movement of troops--he viewed the whole world suddenly as a tiny area of the brain, an atom making up the total consciousness of any man. And life, he thought, is like a prison cell we are slung into

⁵Alan Sillitoe, The General (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 1961), p. 181.

by our birth--a limited room we are penned in and lifted from when we die. Who sentenced us to such a life? We never even had an opportunity of shouting and raving at the judge: "I didn't do it, Your Honour. I'm innocent! I'm innocent!" But we have to live out our sentence just the same, grow to like it in fact so that faced with the real freedom of death we become afraid and cower back against the wall.⁶

He has broken free from "the system," and like the long distance runner he has chosen to live meaningfully, and, as is often the case, in so doing chooses to die.

The general's statement is the intellectual version of the position of Arthur Seaton, in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, the runner, Brian Seaton in Key to the Door, and Frank Dawley in the trilogy. The general has found a meaning in his existence within the framework of a military hierarchy. That framework is necessary if he is to take a stand. His position as general separates him in a sense from Kondal and his troops, but links him firmly with them too. In the same way, the other heroes are individuals, leaders of skirmishes against the establishment, prepared to take a stand eventually that may mean some form of self-destruction, but sure of themselves within, and because of, their class. This means that rising to archetypal heights is never required of them and would, in fact, be a denial of their very reason for existence.

⁶Ibid., p. 188.

Frank Dawley, in The Death of William Posters and A Tree on Fire, is also a development of the two Seatons and the runner. In him one can see the effect of the end of austerity in Britain, and the sharp rise in real wages for large sections of the people.

Most of my mates wanted an easier job, less hours, more pay, naturally. But it wasn't really work they hated, don't think that. They didn't all want to be doctors or clerks, either. Maybe they just didn't like working in oil and noise, and then going home at night to a plate of sawdust sausages and cardboard beans, two hours at the flickerbox with advertisements telling them that those sausages and beans burning their guts are the best food in the country. I don't suppose they knew what they wanted in most cases--except maybe not to be treated like cretins.⁷

Here the "gaiety, style and free-ranging capacity for experience" which David Craig notes in the youthful characters of Sillitoe and MacInness⁸ carry the hero from a double existence, where he keeps becoming the persecuted other self of his imagination (the William Posters of the title), through the reality of being a freedom fighter in Algiers, to a relatively settled life in a community of radical idealists. Like the previous heroes he has no illusions about the problems, the chaos, the work that must be his lot. He even exults in them. This was the basis indeed of that other self he often became. From

⁷Alan Sillitoe, The Death of William Posters (London: W. H. Allen, 1965), p. 44.

⁸See notes to Longmans Edition of Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (1968), p. 220.

reading everywhere "Bill posters will be prosecuted," a notice often seen on fences and places where one might be tempted to put up an advertising "bill," he has created the personality of William Posters, "The workman-underdog, the put-upon dreg whose spiritual attributes he has been soaked and bombarded with all through his school, home and working life."⁹ This character, threatened everywhere with prosecution, he identifies as part of himself.

It is significant that the daydreams of this hero do not concern his being one of the upper classes, unless perhaps he has risen to a very high place in the union and can insist on higher pay and more representation for the workers. Algren's heroes also have flights of imagination, but they entail having the central place in the lime-light, and do not have social duties attached.

The relationship of the hero to the law is also one which is to appear again, and which differs from that of Algren's heroes. William Posters is to be prosecuted. Like the long distance runner, Frank Dawley feels this is unfair, that the law is a set of rules imposed by the upper classes on the working class. When any of Algren's heroes are faced with the prospect of running foul of the law, they have much more confidence in their ability to avoid it, but they also see being caught by it not just as being "prosecuted," but as a threat of death.

⁹Sillitoe, The Death of William Posters, p. 16.

If Arthur Seaton and the long distance runner are the prototypes for the other heroes, what are the characteristics that distinguish them? The young runner has been sent to borstal for robbing a bakery. The family had almost no income, since the father was frequently out of work, but when he died of cancer, the five hundred pounds in insurance and benefits which the family collected gave them a brief taste of prosperity.

[A]s soon as she got the money, mam took me and my five brothers and sisters out to town and got us dolled up in new clothes. Then she ordered a twenty-one-inch telly, a new carpet because the old one was covered with blood from dad's dying and wouldn't wash out, and took a taxi home with bags of grub and a new fur coat. . . . Night after night we sat in front of the telly with a ham sandwich in one hand, a bar of chocolate in the other, and a bottle of lemonade between our boots, while mam was with some fancy-man upstairs on the new bed she'd ordered, and I'd never known a family as happy as ours in that couple of months when we'd got all the money we needed.¹⁰

Happiness is, for him, money which will buy food, drink, sex, and TV. But even when money is readily available it is not an assured income, and the memory of days of want is very clear. It is not surprising that there is a great resentment against those who have money and who clap you in prison if you try to get your "grabbers" on it. They are never mentioned by the runner without the addition of adjectives like "pig-faced" and "snotty-nosed." He divides everybody up into "In-Laws" and "Out-Laws,"

¹⁰Alan Sillitoe, The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), pp. 20-21.

feeling that the law is designed by and for those who have money, and anyone of his class is born an "Out-Law"--whether one gets to borstal or prison depends merely on whether one gets caught. "The police invariably stifle and restrict the working man, bind him in laws that are cruel and irrelevant"¹¹ in the "Out-Law's" eyes. This causes resentment, but it also shows up the positive aspects that the runner displays. His confrontations with the governor of the borstal convince him of the shallow worthlessness of the "In-Laws," and strengthen in him the desire to display his own "honesty." He will not play the game according to the dishonest rules set down by the governor and the society he represents. The runner recognizes that the governor's kind words and promises of lenient treatment are a thin cover over his basic antagonism for the runner and what he represents. There is no respect by either one of the other.

I know when he talks to me and I look into his army mug that I'm alive and he's dead. He's as dead as a doornail. If he ran ten yards he'd drop dead. If he got ten yards into what goes on in my guts he'd drop dead. At the moment it's dead blokes like him as have the whip hand over blokes like me, and I'm almost dead sure it'll always be like that, but even so, by Christ, I'd rather be like I am--always on the run and breaking into shops for a packet of fags and a jar of jam--than have the whip-hand over

¹¹James Gordin, Post War British Fiction, New Accents and Attitudes (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), p. 21.

somebody else and be dead from the toe-nails
up.¹²

And so the runner determines to take a stand. He has more respect for the policeman who arrested him than for the governor, because the policeman did not conceal his hostility. He will get his own back on the governor and the "In-Laws" by

letting them sit up there on their big posh seats and watch me lose this race, though as sure as God made me I know that when I do lose I'll get the dirtiest crap and kitchen jobs in the months to go before my time is up. I won't be worth a threpp'ny bit to anyone here, which will be all the thanks I get for being honest in the only way I know. For when the governor told me to be honest it was meant to be in his way not mine, and if I kept on being honest in the way he wanted and won my race for him he'd see I got the cushiest six months still left to run; but in my own way, well, it's not allowed, and if I find a way of doing it such as I've got now then I'll get what-for in every mean trick he can set his mind to. And if you look at it in my way, who can blame him? For this is war--and ain't I said so?¹³

Yet he realizes that this stand, and his story too, are likely to be incomprehensible to anyone outside his own group.

[E]ven if he [the governor] did read it though I don't think he'd know what it was all about. And if I don't get caught the bloke I give this story to will never give me away; he's lived on our terrace for as long as I can remember, and he's my pal. That I do know.¹⁴

¹²Sillitoe, The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner, p. 14.

¹³Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 54.

The system, then, remains. The hero cannot change it. Even his stand for honesty will be meaningful for him alone, or at best for some of his own class, and it will take the form of kicking against those further up the social scale and pointing out their lack of integrity.

This is also the case with Arthur Seaton in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning. Like the long distance runner he is an Out-Law and thrives on it. He is not weighed down by the work and drabness of his city life. Despite his constant complaints about the sameness of each day at the lathe, and his binding at the "system," he "gets his kicks" by showing how he can beat that system; and familiarity with the scene, far from breeding contempt, makes it possible for him to see the beauty and excitement inherent in the city bustle, which to the outsider is hidden under the initial impact of grime and lack of comfort.

The bright Monday-morning ring of the clocking in machine made a jarring note, different from the tune that played inside Arthur. It was dead on half past seven. Once in the shop he allowed himself to be swallowed by its diverse noises, walked along rows of capstan lathes and millers, drills and polishers and hand-presses, worked by a multiplicity of belts and pulleys turning and twisting and slapping on heavy well-oiled wheels overhead, dependent for power on a motor stooping at the far end of the hall like the black shining bulk of a stranded whale . . .¹⁵

¹⁵ Alan Sillitoe, Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (London: Longmans Green and Co. Ltd., 1968), p. 23.

Two minutes passed while he contemplated the precise position of tools and cylinder; finally he spat on both hands and rubbed them together, then switched on the sud-tap from the movable brass pipe, pressed the button that set the spindle running, and ran in the drill to a neat chamfer. Monday morning had lost its terror.¹⁶

Arthur, who is not separated from his peers by a borstal sentence like the long distance runner, shows in detail the kind of support a man gets from his relations and friends, the kind that is singularly lacking to Algren's heroes. The fun he has regaling the factory workers with stories showing how clever he is, and how silly the foreman is, is one example. Another is the Christmas party at Aunt Ada's with everybody singing and being friendly and understanding of the visitor from Africa, and of each other. The scene in the pub, when Arthur gets drunk and falls down the stairs, indicates this excitement at sharing, which is underlined by the way in which Arthur and the waiter (who was to have turned him out) become pals, united in their thralldom to society. It is a similar feeling he has for the young offender who is squirming under the hand of the law, awaiting formal arrest, after having thrown a brick through a window. Arthur tries to get him to run away, but the youngster is too scared, and the law, that bug-bear of the downtrodden, will not, it is suggested, treat

¹⁶Ibid., p. 24.

the offender leniently. Craig¹⁷ describes Arthur as intended to be a typical working man, and emphasizes that he is thus a type, but not the type. He embodies many factors found in many members of the group, but it is important also to notice his particular temperament, his aggressive self-justification. The detail with which he is drawn makes him an individual, like the general and the runner. He is something of a leader, liable to bursts of impulsive rebelliousness or aggression, anxious to impose his ideas on his followers, and feeling confident of their acceptance of him.

Here is a man who recognizes the ugliness and the squalor, but who also realizes the satisfaction in his life. He comments on how much better off he is than his father could ever have been. He notices the war, for all its evils, did have positive values too, in that because of it the working man's lot improved greatly. There are many occasions when he suddenly boils over with aggression or rebelliousness, and he enjoys this feeling too. The rebelliousness is nearly always sheer animal spirits, rather than the expression of bitterness or anger. He wants to blow up Nottingham Castle, but he has no real gripe against it since it is now a museum (entry free). It is merely a symbol. Similarly he talks of blowing up

¹⁷Notes to Longmans Edition of Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, pp. 222 et. seq.

the factory, but adds, "Not that I've got owt against 'em, but that's just how I feel now and again."¹⁸ Much of this violence comes in daydreams. But there are also many pleasant flights of the imagination.

It was marvellous the things you remembered while you worked on the lathe, things that you thought were forgotten and would never come back into your mind, often things that you hoped would stay forgotten. Time flew while you wore out the oil-soaked floor and worked furiously without knowing it; you lived in a compatible world of pictures that passed through your mind like a magic lantern, often in vivid and glorious loonycolour, a world where memory and imagination ran free and did acrobatic tricks with your past and with what might be your future, an amok that produced all sorts of agreeable visions. Like the corporal said about sitting on the lavatory: it was the only time you have to think, and to quote him further,¹⁹ you thought of some lovely and marvellous things.

This side of his personality is very important to him and is best seen in his various fishing trips. The time to enjoy nature is set aside with special care. He carves fish-shaped floats and decorates them intricately, and the fishing trip is the last thing he hangs on to as his very own. When he shares this corner of his life with Doreen, the girl he will marry, he is making the final step in giving up his bachelor individuality. Yet even this is not entire capitulation. He misses the excitement of the danger inherent in his previous journeys

¹⁸Sillitoe, Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, p. 34.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 33.

with married women but with Doreen he can create something new. He and she can become one with the fish.

Arthur's eyes were fixed into the beautiful earth-bowl of the depthless water, trying to explore each pool and shallow until, as well as an external silence there was a silence within himself that no particle of his mind or body wanted to break. Their faces could not be seen in the water, but were united with the shadows of the fish that flitted among upright reeds and spreading lilies, drawn to water as if they belonged there.²⁰

Later, on his own, he can identify with the caught fish, for he sees marriage as a kind of trap, but he also sees it as a challenge.

Arthur was subdued, his mind blocked with questions and unsatisfying answers, fighting the last stages of an old battle within himself, and at the same time feeling the first skirmishes of a new conflict. But he was good in his heart about it, easy and confident, making for better ground than he had ever trodden before.²¹

This kind of closeness to anyone is not to be found in Algren's heroes. They come to a point where such a relationship seems in view, but they have not understood the true feelings of the other person to whom they are trying to relate, and so those hopes are dashed. Arthur, on the other hand, knows where he and others stand; he can get some satisfaction from his job, some from the regularity of his pay packet, some from "working the system" and knowing how to work at a rate which will convince the factory officials he is doing his best, but will be slow

²⁰Ibid., p. 201.

²¹Ibid., p. 209.

enough to earn just the fourteen pounds a week he finds adequate. He can enjoy the fun of the pub, the fair, fishing, illicit affairs, but he knows there is often a day of reckoning if one is not lucky--this too is part of life.

The exploration here, as in the later novels, is of the intensely personal problems of men of deliberately everyday stature. This is not to say they lack the kind of universality which gives insight into more than just their own individual crises. As with Charlie Chaplin in Modern Times we are shown what it is like to work at a repetitive job, with no feeling of pride in the total finished product. Sillitoe depicts some of the results of industrial society, dramatizing a need which Craig reminds us²² is always there, and every now and again becomes urgent. As he does so, he explains what it feels like to be a young product of that society. The picture is often not a pretty one, but I think that Leslie Paul's estimation²³ that Sillitoe represents a far more genuine protest against society than that of John Osborne and Kingsley Amis is perhaps ignoring the similarities underlying all three. The "I'm all right Jack" attitude of

²²Longmans Edition of Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, pp. 233-234.

²³Leslie Paul, "The Angry Young Men Revisited," Kenyon Review (Spring, 1965), 351.

Sillitoe's heroes is traditional. The criticism of the hollowness of upper society is made without the aspect of direct humor found in the other two authors. But the imagination that blows up castles and factories is not so far removed from that which upends stuffy professors into the toilet.²⁴

If Sillitoe's novels constitute social protest, and the toast by Hanley in A Tree on Fire²⁵ indicates that they do, this is secondary to the major intention of showing the working class life as it really is, not with bitterness but with amusement, and a pride in the telling which will not be put by. When Baker bids farewell to England as he and the hero of Key to the Door, Brian Seaton, leave for Malaya he says

England
This syphilitic isle
This seat of majesty
This lump of excrement

and Brian retorts, "As long as you don't include Nottingham in that."²⁶ He is true, not to England, but to that corner of its society in which he can hold up his head with pride.

All Sillitoe's heroes have this pride in themselves and their group, and they all insist that they belong to

²⁴See Amis, Lucky Jim.

²⁵Alan Sillitoe, A Tree on Fire (London: Macmillan, 1967), p. 446.

²⁶Alan Sillitoe, Key to the Door (London: W. H. Allen, 1961), p. 427.

the honest part of society. There is no doubt that they realize where, within that society they fit, and they do not avoid the retribution of that society by following rules. Rather, knowing what the penalties will be, they behave in such a way as to show up the weaknesses of society, even though they realize that the lesson will not be learned and that the only ones who will appreciate the stand will be those like themselves. The hero can rely on the support of others of his class completely, and when he takes on the responsibility for individuals or groups of individuals (like the orchestra), he will sacrifice himself if necessary for their safety and comfort. Again he is a person who draws others to him, even though he may not realize how much he is their strength, and he finds his identity in interpersonal relationships. He wants reasonable comfort, is distrustful of the police, and given to flights of the imagination. He has a zest for life and love of danger but can find both beauty and satisfaction, and even enough danger, within his working class life to make him surprisingly settled in society.

It is quite a different situation with the heroes of Nelson Algren's Never Come Morning (1941), The Man with the Golden Arm (1949), and Walk on the Wild Side (1956). They are Bruno Bicek, a prize fighter, Frankie Machine, a drug addict, and Dove Linkhorn, a Jack-of-all-trades, whose major success is as an initiator of "virgins" for

the pleasure of concealed onlookers. Each is isolated and unable to communicate on any meaningful level with almost everyone he meets. There is no suggestion here of class or family solidarity. It is each man for himself. Each is depicted in a sympathetic way--an individual with talent, and with the capacity for warm feelings; and to each, life metes out blow after blow, with hopes for a rosier future held out only long enough to make the dash-
ing of those hopes spectacular. It is not just their integrity which is constantly at stake, but their very existence.

Never Come Morning illustrates the longing for human dignity, the feelings, the dreams, of the Poles of Chicago's northwest side, and in so doing pleads the cause of dignity for minority groups in general. Not quite eighteen, Bruno Bicek is the son of the owner of the Milk Depot and Half Price Day-Old Bakery. He is divided in ambition between becoming a big-league hurler and contender for the heavyweight champion of the world. Such ambitions set him apart from Sillitoe's heroes immediately. Constantly with him he has a small red sponge ball with which he can exercise his fingers. In some ways this ball makes a fitting symbol for "Lefty" himself, for like it he is squeezed, pushed and manipulated by manager, employers, and his associates generally, but most of all by the police. It is clear that whatever

he says or does will not alter how the police will handle him. Indeed, from the beginning of the book, where he has had a jail sentence at fourteen, to the last episode, when his victory in the ring brings him, not freedom and love with Steffi, his childhood playmate, but another set of handcuffs, he is squeezed, pushed and worked on. Only Steffi has faith in him--more than he has in himself. But another symbol indicates that this is not strong enough to save Bruno from destruction. The first time he makes loves to Steffi she resists strongly for some time. Then she loses her fear and submits.

"I ain't got it in me to fight you off no more," he heard her confess at last.

Later the fly without wings returned. He saw it against the screen and crushed it in his palm.

"You got blood out of him," Steffi said wistfully, as though thinking of something else.

From her there had been neither blood nor tears. Though inwardly she bled and wept.²⁷

The fly without wings is Steffi, unable to escape her fate, unable to fly from him, nor from his mates when they each insist on having their turn with her at a later meeting. Attracted to him like a fly to light, at every contact she is bruised and hurt. He too is the fly, as trapped as she. But his is a trap he has made for himself, it is not society's doing. Whereas the Seatons or the long distance runner are with their mates and against the rest

²⁷Nelson Algren, Never Come Morning (New York and London: Harper Brothers, 1941), p. 28.

of society, Bruno is on his own against everyone, except Steffi, and her he does not regard as a support. He is also on his own against inexorable fate. Even when he does act from generous impulses, as he does to Steffi, the results are appalling to him. Through him she is forced into prostitution, is beaten by her "owner," and once Bruno's final handcuffs are on, neither of them will ever reach the bright light they sought. They will be crushed, this time in the palm of the law.

As is the case with the other two heroes, Bruno is prone to daydreams of a self-aggrandizing sort. He is a forceful character, planning on going somewhere and becoming a holder of the limelight, but retains, almost guiltily, a seldom seen gentleness and warmth beneath it all. Alone in prison, having been picked up for the shooting of a drunk, he has one of these flights of imagination. In it he performs fabulous feats in the ring and wins the world heavyweight title. In this moment of triumph he is borne aloft to the changing room on the shoulders of Father Francis and the ref. and is reaching out to touch the film-star heroine he has always associated with these situations,

and he touched the cross at his throat as he rode, stretching his arm toward her. As their fingers touched, the lights flashed on like a lightning flash, he caught a full glimpse of her face against his and it was Steffi's face.²⁸

²⁸Ibid., p. 94.

The moment of truth comes in a dream of something like pontifical grandeur, and he wakes up in his dark cell.

The flights of imagination of Arthur, of the runner or of Frank Dawley, are either light hearted escapism, self-justification, or the satisfaction of present desires. They do not single out the dreamer for great public recognition. Instead they include him in a warm group. Whether asleep or awake Bruno is cut off from his peers even when he is not "in his dark cell."

The picture Bruno has of the chief of police may be compared to the view the long distance runner has of the borstal officer.

He had a small, fair mustache, but his hat was too large, giving the boy the idea that he was wearing it mostly as a place to make his badge conspicuous. The cap's visor showed the upper part of the face to the mustache; the lower half was undershot. Without being able to see his eyes, Bruno felt that the man was short sighted or deaf: there was that lack of expression about the lower half of the face peculiar to those thus handicapped. When the captain tilted his hat back Bruno saw that his eyes were equally colorless, and equally lightless too; there was that same expression, like a mask of flesh, of unreceptiveness to sights and sounds.²⁹

This hero, like Flannery O'Connor's, sees physical disability as a symbol of personal limitedness--this is a view tinged with the grotesque, which is more individual and intense than is that of Sillitoe's hero. Where the borstal officer is simply flabby and insincere, the chief

²⁹Ibid., p. 81.

of police in the hero's eyes is deformed. Because of this view, when at the end of the novel Bruno becomes blind, his situation, too, becomes symbolic. Because of tremendous feelings of guilt, he has always looked at life from a distorted viewpoint. The distortion of his face thus makes him a fitting inmate of that world he has himself created.

Most of his guilt feelings are concerned with his having wronged Steffi. He longs for punishment. He wishes he had shot the man whose fate is ostensibly the reason for his being in prison. Then he could suffer something suitable as expiation of the enormous sin he feels in himself.

If only the old man had been killed. Regardless of who held the gun. Bruno B. would have been guilty . . . and who, in Tenczara's wind, he would have burned for, could have made no difference. For all his guilt was for Steffi R. Whatever happened to him now was on her account. He alone had killed her.³⁰

But he is not to be allowed to expiate his major sin in this way. He must do so in the end by having Steffi wait for him in vain. Heaven was so near and yet, "'Knew I'd never get to be twenty-one anyhow,' he said."³¹ His life has illustrated what Lawrence Fellinghetti speaks of

³⁰Ibid., p. 156.

³¹Ibid., p. 284.

as "all the other fatal shorn-up fragments of the immigrant's dream."³²

The grotesque aspects of the life the hero sees around him depend on his being an individual, not part of those with whom he mixes; they also help to indicate the ways in which he is self-reliant, and so able to remain unscathed by them. Similarly the added significance given his actions by the use of symbols like the fly make him appear battling more with some grand overall design than with society. The use made of both the grotesque and symbolism in Nelson Algren makes his heroes very different from Sillitoe's.

In The Man With the Golden Arm, Frankie Machine the dealer, is surrounded by those with physical deformities. His wife has lost the use of her legs as a result of his drunken driving, and he is torn by guilt on this account. Older and more bitter than Steffi, she knows how to use this guilt against Frankie. Then there is the blind distributor of drugs, Pig; filthy, lascivious, with a deliberately offensive manner and gums which were "gray and lined with a livid margin of rawest red."³³ The dog which is produced for Frankie to give his wife is also

³²Lawrence Ferlinghetti, A Coney Island of the Mind (New York: New Directions Publishing Co., 1958), p. 13, poem no. 3.

³³Nelson Algren, The Man With the Golden Arm (New York: Fawcett Crest Co., 1956), p. 56.

grotesque, both bloated and ravenous looking, and continuously breaking wind.³⁴ And all these make suitable buildup for the monster of them all, Nifty Louie, to whom Frankie must go for his "fix." Louie has the whip hand over those like Frankie, and can let them suffer at length, so as to enjoy that power. He revels in the secret knowledge that given time Frankie would be a "twenty-dollar-a-day man."

In his dealings with Louie, Frankie shows the same characteristics as Bruno and Dove.³⁵ He is too sure of himself and of his ability to rise to great heights. He is at times very conscious of the suffering of others, but the possibility of sacrificing himself to avoid causing such suffering never occurs to him. In fact he appears to have an inborn need to suffer guilt. He remains sure of his power, and of the necessity to make of himself what he will, and is unable, except at the end, to accept the fact that he is a pawn, to be moved at will by others. "'I think you're one of the weaker sheep yourself,' Louie decided silently."³⁶

The relationship between Frankie and Sophie parallels that between Bruno and Steffi. In each case the girl has really loved, and has had to suffer from the outward indifference which masks a love for her too. Thus even

³⁴ Ibid., p. 59.

³⁵ In Walk on the Wild Side.

³⁶ Algren, The Man With the Golden Arm, p. 69.

in this kind of personal relationship Algren's hero can make no complete communication, while Sillitoe's can. As Louie and Sophie's friend Violet both recognize, the drinking and the remorse that Frankie suffers while drunk indicate "his heart's in the right place when he's sober."³⁷ But he is unable to show feeling more directly.

For this hero the broken crutch that appeared, origin unknown, at the bar where he and Sophie were celebrating, and again in the closet at the hospital where Sophie was recovering from the accident, is the key symbol. And, since crutches belong in pairs, it is for her also. The memory of the first crutch recurs to her when, bitter and alone, feeling that the whole city has become crippled, she says,

"It was mine 'n I didn't even know it." She felt a ceaseless wonder now. And a bottomless sorrowing: "I shouldn't ought to have laughed when I seen it."³⁸

And the crutch symbol is connected to the grotesque. The nightmare of the accident in which Frankie involves her is heightened to a lurid extreme by the gawking crowd

lurching with age and skipping with youth, the lame, the sick and the lazy, the fearful, the cheerful and the tamed, recalling with laughter other local disasters.³⁹

³⁷Ibid., p. 75.

³⁸Ibid., p. 107.

³⁹Ibid., p. 77.

It is also heightened by the policeman who is ready to arrest the wrong person for the wrong reasons, and by the arrival of everything but the ambulance. From Zigmud, the prospector, who helps the poor gain more disability allowance, in order to gain a large proportion for himself, to the analyst at the people's clinic, the world in which Frankie moves is full of twisted people, and those who are not twisted become so in his eyes, because "only the blurred image of a woman in a wheelchair remained to darken his moods: that was the monkey's other paw."⁴⁰

Though he may be strong enough to give up taking morphine if it were not for Sophie, his guilt on her account keeps him a slave to it and to her. And yet that guilt and agony is something self-imposed, as is the front of being his own man. Both prevent his asking Sophie for the help he needs, and she needs to give. In Molly he finds someone to whom he can talk straight, something he has never done before. Yet, like Bruno, he isn't ready for trust. He knows he has never been really straight, even with himself, and he also knows that the trust of Molly is not strong enough to support him against the monkey on his back. It too is a broken crutch.

Nor can he, as the runner can, rely on his close friend, Sparrow. When Sparrow is taken away by the police

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 124.

he knows that sooner or later the case against him over the murder of Louie will be complete. There is no escape, and no one on whom to rely but himself. We are shown Frankie in a nightmare world. There are the terrible fictions of his drugged imagination, and the no less terrible drama of his daily life, culminating in the final running away from the inevitable confrontation with the police. To the nightmare horror of Frankie's world is added the extra horror of knowing that one will not wake up, that there is no escape.

A conversation recording the reaction of two real drug addicts to The Man With the Golden Arm⁴¹ corroborates my feeling about Frankie Machine, and the way he fits my pattern of an American hero. One addict had liked the book, the other had not.

He says to the other guy, "You know it isn't like that," he says. "I come on and I read three or four pages of the book this guy is telling what it's like." You know the part where the junkie in the book, Frankie Machine, is talking, dramatizing the thing. This guy says, "Well you know it isn't like that. We don't talk like that about junk." The other guy, the guy who liked the book, agrees that the junkie in the book was a phony. "Yeah," he says, "that's right. But if this guy knew what it was really like, he couldn't have written the book. He'd be out in the county jail. He'd be a junkie."

The key word here is "dramatizing." Frankie is drawn larger than life as a junkie, so that the full impact of

⁴¹H. E. F. Donohue, Conversations with Nelson Algren (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), p. 141.

the tragedy in his life and in those around him can be felt.

There is attached to the flyleaf of the first two novels the usual claim that no character or situation depicted in them is drawn from life. Such an assurance is not found in the front of Walk on the Wild Side. From the conversations with Donohue it is clear that many of the incidents recorded are from his own life, and that to a large extent the hero, Dove, is Algren himself. The similarity of the terrain in which Algren's heroes find themselves, whether in Chicago or New Orleans, and the closeness in the resemblance of each with the others, makes many statements made of one apply also to the others. Dove is perhaps the ultimate Algren hero. He has more in common with Miss O'Connor's Tarwater, Haze Motes and Enoch Emery, than with the Seatons and the long distance runner. Like Tarwater and Haze, he is the son of a small town preacher of hell-fire and brimstone, and like them he has periods of hallucination bordering on insanity and periods of intensely clear vision during which he sees into the heart of the society around him. As with Sillitoe's heroes, we are given an insight into how the moneyless class, more out of work than working, thinks, feels and acts, but by a very different means. Dove and Frankie and Bruno become symbols themselves in a way that the Seatons and the runner do not. They are always on

the outside, moving through their society, but not belonging anywhere. They are the bum, and the addict and the man alone against everything.

Like Flannery O'Connor's heroes there is something of the grotesque in their world. This is underlined by the physical deformity of some of the characters, and the violent deaths suffered by others. It is further emphasized by the contrast often shown between the sparkle and warmth of the brothel by night and the fag ends and empty glasses in the cold light of morning. There is also a great deal made of sexual abnormality and of different kinds of religious fanaticism. The situation for Dove, Bruno and Frankie is therefore more dramatic than is the world of Sillitoe's heroes, and will require more of them.

Having left home where his preacher father and elder brother spent hours in argument over beliefs, Dove became odd job man at the Mexican cafe in town. Here he was initiated into both the art of reading, and of making love, by the proprietress, Teresina. It was here that he first heard about the tin soldier of Hans Christian Andersen.

Dove guessed right away that, of the whole army, this was the very one who would get to see most of the world, have the greatest adventures and at last win the love that all the others wanted too.⁴²

⁴²Nelson Algren, Walk on the Wild Side (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956), p. 31.

Immediately it is the ability to outshine others that he seizes on as the characteristic of a hero. It becomes clear that this story is a kind of parable. He meets and becomes the rival of one deprived not only of one leg, as is the soldier, but of two. This broken man has the girl's love, in spite of Dove's apparent success. And in many other ways, too, Dove's incident-full life parallels that of the tin soldier. He, too, is borne on the current of life, must suffer and be beaten entirely before he can return again to his first love. Dove is no Christ figure, but he is the questor writ large. He is the greenhorn who learnt rapidly and found out how to make being a greenhorn pay. Then through suffering, and a final frightful beating up, he has learned what he needed to know and has returned, now broken and blinded, to the girl who has haunted him ever since he left her.

But though we leave Dove outside the restaurant, insisting he will find his own way upstairs, we sense all is not to be perfect, for the story which affected him so much to begin with was told in great detail, and the ending underlined.

The soldier was so moved at all this, especially at the sight of his beloved, that he was ready to weep tears of tin joy. But that would hardly have befitted a soldier. So he looked straight ahead, a bit to one side, as one returns an officer's look; but she looked directly at him. At that moment one of the little boys took up the soldier and without reason or rhyme pitched him into the fire, where he died, true to duty, looking straight ahead but directly at no one.

Dove leaped up, slammed the book so hard he caught Terasina's thumb - "Basta!"

Enough of fairytales. He hadn't liked an ending like that, it appeared. For he raced to the juke, tripped it and began to dance as though trying to forget the soldier's sad end as soon as the juke began to sing -

All of me
Why not take all of me

Raising one foot then the other, he began a slow swaying with his head, arms hanging loosely in a dance wherein, the woman saw, love strangely mixed with despair.⁴³

The use of the story of the tin soldier makes the reader aware of the dangers and their outcomes before the hero himself, and by this dramatic irony increases the tensions which his story creates. Thus he becomes a fairy-tale character himself, put into a category of people to whom strange and wonderful things can happen. He is not a man of ordinary stature because of the ominous undertones of all that befalls him.

Within the story of Dove and Terasina is another story of Dove and Hallie which also parallels part of the tin soldier story. Thus by the same kind of reinforcing parallel stories as Flannery O'Connor used, Algren makes of his hero's fate something above and beyond the usual. In a book owned by Hallie, who had once been a teacher, Dove met the tin soldier again. Hallie had lost a lover and his child, and had become a prostitute, more dead than alive in soul. From this lethargy she was awakened

⁴³Ibid., p. 33.

to love again by the human version of the Goblin nutcracker, Schmidt, the amputee. She had left the brothel where she was known as Schmidt's wife because of indignities he made her suffer, and lived in an uneasy bliss with Dove. She completed the reading education begun by Terasina, and once again love was beginning to stir in Dove's bosom. But when he awoke one morning she was gone, and all his joys turned to despair. A smaller version of the overall tragedy has occurred.

In his relationship with Hallie, Dove follows the pattern of the other Algren heroes. In his excitement at his own feelings he is oblivious of the ominous undertones to the passages Hallie reads him. Hallie has decided she is pregnant and wants to return to her ancestral home and possess the baby (probably the amputee's) herself, alone. There is no real communication. Even with Hallie, Dove is an isolated soul. When he finds her gone he is off as the tin soldier once more.

He left in a ceaseless rain, the saddest that ever fell. He went by streets both steep and narrow and the rain fell all the way.

In that hour when tugboats call and call, like lovers who have lost their way.⁴⁴

And so at the end of part two he is being swept, as if in his paper boat, down the gutter that should lead to his being swallowed by a fish and restored at last to the sight of his first love.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 284.

The story of the tin soldier allows a closer look at the use of the grotesque by Algren. It is particularly evident in the section in prison, which might be paralleled to the time spent by the soldier in the fish. Like the meeting of the hero with the various false preachers, in Flannery O'Connor, the meeting here with the various prisoners shows the degradation of the common human lot, and by contrast, the hero, grotesque as he is, is shown to have more humanity than all the rest put together. Just as Dove was not as cruel or deliberately underhand as Fort and Luke, his fellow room mates in New Orleans, so he is not as criminal, in the sense that the others in jail with him are. He has merely been caught in a brothel without his trousers and resisted arrest. Nor has he, for all his oddities, the twisted mind of some of the others, like Raincoat, who had organized his clothing so that he could take a stroll

having, of course, taken the perfectly sensible precaution of severing his trousers at the knees and binding the bottoms to his calves with rubber bands; lending an impression, to the casual passerby, that he was fully clothed. Here and there, passing some woman who appeared deserving, he would fling the raincoat wide for her amazement and delight, then modestly button himself and modestly hurry on.⁴⁵

Or his cell mate, the natural whose wife had had him locked up because he had made up his mind to have a baby by their fifteen year old daughter, since she was a lot

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 304.

better looking, and also much younger. But they are extreme forms of aspects of himself. This is why he is able to recognize the humanity within those twisted exteriors. He is not one of them, yet from his greater height he can understand them, so that he alone can respond to the symbolic elements when Country, who has been shot in the stomach, trying to escape, is being asked to agree to an operation. This is not to save his life, merely to clear the sheriff.⁴⁶

Outside the rain began again, Dove heard the wind blowing between the wash of it, trying to say "Yes. Yes. Yes."

But no one heeded the brainless rain and nobody heard what the wind tried to tell. For the wind and the rain came every day and whispered like two unpaid lawyers together all night, fixing to say what, in the coming day, everyone wished to hear said.

"It's awful when it's like this," Dove thought, "and it's like this now."⁴⁷

The tin soldier is on his way again--having learned of Country's death and dreamed of Hallie's maimed cat, he thinks of all he has seen and done until his mind is directed back to the lonely Mexican restaurant.

"Terasina," the boy asked in a small awed wonder of the woman who had once pitied his ignorance there. "Are you there? Are you there in your bed at the end of the world while I am here in my bed at mine?"⁴⁸

⁴⁶This is one of the situations drawn from his own experience in jail. See Donohue, Conversations with Nelson Algren, p. 43.

⁴⁷Algren, Walk on the Wild Side, p. 331.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 333.

There are three aspects of the novel in which we see specifically the difference between Algren's heroes and Sillitoe's. When Dove, Bruno or Frankie make love to the various women in their lives their thoughts are directed to the process, or to the release of tension in themselves, or in Dove's case to display of prowess. Even in this most intimate contact they are concerned almost entirely with their own feelings, and experience little emotional involvement. Sillitoe's heroes, by contrast, make love as part of a warm friendship. It is not a matter of forcing their attentions on an unwilling partner, as it was at first with Bruno. There is a greater understanding and companionship between Sillitoe's hero and his current amour, than with Algren's. In the bars and brothels as a second point of contrast, Algren's heroes seek companionship but are always conscious of themselves as not part of a camaraderie. They observe or join in, but are never fully accepted with warmth, or regarded with affection. Sillitoe's heroes, however, find companionship and warmth too. For them pubs and bars are meeting places for like souls and produce feelings of belonging. Finally, when each hero is faced with a test of endurance there is an added intensity in that faced by Algren's heroes. More super-human strength is required of them, and they do not escape without permanent maiming. This is one of the ways in which Algren's heroes become

larger than life and removed from the world of everyday existence. If we compare the fight between Dove and Schmidt, in which both are permanently maimed, with the attack on Arthur Seaton by the two hired thugs, we have in miniature the difference between the effect of the two novels and of their heroes. Schmidt fights on a platform on wheels, for he has no legs. He fights to kill, though indeed Dove does not know where Hallie is, and he succeeds in blinding and laming Dove. As for him, the last we see of him is his platform wrapped round a pole and his senseless form half on the roadway, perhaps lifeless. By contrast Arthur, though unable to defend himself adequately against two attackers, though bleeding and battered, never really considers the possibility that he may not survive and can still haul himself back to the pub for a drink. Although he passes out on the way home, he has the help of his girlfriend and after some time in bed is able to return to his normal routine. There has been no permanent maiming of either body or spirit, and he is not left to suffer alone.

The quote which introduces Never Come Morning

I feel I am one of them -
 I belong to those convicts and prostitutes myself -
 And henceforth I will not deny them -
 For how can I deny myself?

Whitman

applies as much to Algren's other two novels, for as the

details of his life related to H. E. F. Donohue⁴⁹ indicate, he has personally witnessed most of what he describes. His heroes are partly autobiographical. Because of this there is little authorial distance in Algren's three novels. The intensity which this situation lends to the events related is further added to by his stated intent of making inroads into the protective wall the middle class had built around themselves to insulate themselves against having to acknowledge the existence of those about whom Algren writes.

Nelson Algren's innocent, bold, vivid and poetic imagination . . . has long brooded over the possibility of changing the social world in which we live, has long dreamed of the world's being different, and this preoccupation has, paradoxically, riveted and directed microscopic attention upon that stratum of society that is historically footloose, unformed, maleable, restless, devoid of inner stability, unidentified with class allegiances, yet full of hot, honest, blind striving. Algren's centering of his observations upon the lowly and brutal strivings of a Bruno Bicek is the product of his sound instinct and reasoning, for, strangely enough, the Bruno Biceks of America represent those depths of life--the realm of the irrational and the non-historical--that periodically push their way into the arena of history in times of crisis, war, civil war and revolution.⁵⁰

In these words, Richard Wright gives an indication of just those qualities about Algren's heroes that I have

⁴⁹ Donohue, Conservations with Nelson Algren.

⁵⁰ Richard Wright, "Introduction," p. ix, in Nelson Algren, Never Come Morning (New York and London: Harper Brothers, 1941).

come to associate with the American novel of the Twentieth Century. Algren's imagination is "innocent" in the same sense as Ihab Hassan uses the word:⁵¹ free from the guilt of patterns which have meaning only in terms of a code of behavior which is no longer relevant. He is thus able, as are Sillitoe, O'Connor and Greene, to show us the positive side of those who might be rejected outright if judged by commonly accepted behavior criteria. What sets O'Connor and Algren apart from the English writers is the "poetic" aspect of their imagination, which Wright notes, and their recognition of the existence and force of "the realm of the irrational and the non-historical." Whereas Aldridge noted⁵² that the British have traditionally taken a kind of proprietary interest in their working class, so that the reading public would be open to the ideas presented by Alan Sillitoe, Algren realized that the American reading public were different. While it was true that those about whom he wrote could be seen in the street of any city, he saw that,

The people who didn't live in this world said,
 "It doesn't exist; they aren't there, we know
 that they aren't there, and if they are there,
 it doesn't matter because we're here and we
 don't live in that sort of world."⁵³

⁵¹Hassan, Radical Innocence.

⁵²See page 58.

⁵³Donohue, Conversations with Nelson Algren, p. 94.

And he felt sure that by writing about the world of Bruno, Dove and Frankie Machine, he would be able to "make a dent" in this isolationism.

I didn't make the least dent, because there is no way of convincing or even making the slightest impression on the American middle class that there are people who have no alternative, that there are people who live in horror, that there are people whose lives are nightmares. This is not accepted. The world of the drug addict doesn't exist. The world of the murderer doesn't exist. Nothing that does not touch the person individually exists.⁵⁴

Since his was an avowed attempt to instruct the middle class, while Sillitoe's stated aim was to give the working class reader a person of his own kind with whom to identify, it is not surprising that Algren's heroes are "bold" and "vivid," a touch grotesque, and drawn with an intensity which gives them a special stature. Then, because of the tendency of the middle class to ignore sections of the community of which they are not a part, his heroes must also seize the attention completely. They will not be immediately recognized as people often met, by those readers he hopes to reach, so they must be given special emphasis, raised as it were, to the level of a symbol. They must "touch the person individually." Their treatment is thus not one which shows them first as representatives of a class, and then as individuals. Algren's heroes are individuals first and foremost,

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 94.

isolated and alienated, struggling alone against a fate of which society is only a part, and through this they become symbols.

Even if in his brief career Sillitoe's Arthur Seaton manages to get away with adultery, criminal assault, and being drunk and disorderly, it is all within the context of getting one back on "them," a real-life game of cops and robbers. One is impressed with the humanity of Sillitoe's heroes, but one does not feel, as with Algren's, that the inner soul is at stake. The tragic dimension, with its self dramatization, sets the American author apart again.

CHAPTER III

LAWRENCE DURRELL AND PAUL BOWLES

Paul Bowles and Lawrence Durrell are both outside the regular stream of Twentieth Century English and American literature. Both are expatriates by choice, who write of North Africa with deep insight and with a poetic vision, and it is clear that each has been captivated by the warmth, the violent beauty, and the primitive genuineness of the area. The fascination with Eastern mysteries produces a very different reaction in the two novelists, however, and the view of humanity presented is startlingly dissimilar. Bowles is primarily concerned with the person searching for his identity outside his own cultural background. His novels take the form of the quest, and the reader rapidly singles out, and becomes especially involved with a clearly delineated hero. To be sure, the existential dilemma in which this hero finds himself allows him little opportunity to perform "heroic" acts, or to end up having reached his goal. More often he attains his moment of truth in an act of violence which will be the cause of his own destruction. In all cases, even when he conducts his search from within a group, he remains cut off from others in some way, and there is never any doubt that he is the character on which

our attention is supposed to be focused above all others. In Durrell's novels it is usually much less easy to determine just who the major character is. There are far more of them who are of importance, and they interweave in constantly changing kaleidoscopic patterns. While the major characters of a Durrell novel all have periods of importance, they are carefully controlled, so that no one outshines the others permanently. There is therefore no hero in the sense that there definitely is in Bowles' novels. The separation between the hero concepts of the two authors is of a different degree from that discussed in Chapters I and II. It is, however, a further projection of the two stances so far illustrated.

Durrell's novels are: Pied Piper of Lovers (1935), Panic Spring (1937),¹ The Black Book (1938), Cefalû (1947),² White Eagles over Serbia (1957), the four books that together make up The Alexandrian Quartet, Justine (1957), Balthazar (1958), Mountolive (1958), and Clea (1960), and finally Tunc (1968). Of these the first has claim to fame only because of its extreme rarity. Neither the British Museum, nor the network of American libraries can produce a copy.³ For this reason, and also since its setting is

¹Published under the pseudonym Charles Norton.

²Reissued in America as The Dark Labyrinth (1962).

³See John A. Wiegel, Lawrence Durrell (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1965), p. 153.

Bloomsbury, not North Africa, it will not fall within the scope of this comparison. Nor will White Eagles over Serbia, which G. S. Fraser describes as an entertainment rather than a novel.⁴ This is an adventure story in the style of John Buchan, with no sexual or sadistic elements, a code of simple gentlemanliness, and an intense feeling for the wild scenery of the Balkans, and for the toughness of the lone "masculine" hero. It is a tribute to a literary convention much admired by Durrell in his youth, and because of this the attitude towards the hero is already set for him. In the Quartet, and those novels that presage it, this is not the case.

The beginnings of those characters who people the Quartet are apparent in Panic Spring, Cefalû and The Black Book. Of these Cefalû is a transitional novel, taken from the point of view of the hero it portrays, between that laid down by the traditional form in which the novel is written, and that which emerges as his own in the Quartet. Cefalû is described by Durrell in a letter to Henry Miller as

an extended morality, but written artlessly in the style of a detective story. Guilt, Superstition, The Good Life, all appear as ordinary people; a soldier on leave, a medium, an elderly married couple (Trueman), a young unfledged pair, a missionary.⁵

⁴G. S. Fraser, Lawrence Durrell: A Study (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 127.

⁵George Wickes, ed., Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller: A Private Correspondence (New York: Dutton, 1963), p. 20.

As it is a morality the characters are stereotypes. The seven major ones enter the labyrinth, located in Crete, in a personal quest, each, as it were, working out his own destiny. Each of the characters on the cruise is linked in some way with the others--but the fate of each one is of equal significance to the reader. The only possible exception is Campion, whose leap into the sea with Virginia Dale is "heroic" in that he cannot swim and is lost, while she is saved (because of her innocence). He is thus the "champion," the hero in the romance sense of the word. Like White Eagles over Serbia, Cefalû is a special case, outside the regular pattern of Durrell's work because of its acknowledged basis in a previous mode, but it is transitional in its view of the hero, since Campion is both the hero of the morality, and also similar in many ways to Darley in the Quartet. The beginnings of the typical Durrell hero are apparent in his concern for Virginia Dale, to the extent of being willing to sacrifice himself for her safety; in his ability to inspire in her confidence in himself; and in his recognition of the interrelatedness of all the characters. It is also apparent that although Campion has the heroic role to play, and is a stereotype, he remains throughout a man, not a super-man.

Different views of the nature of love and life weave in contrast through Panic Spring. Though Marlowe is the first questor presented, and the one round whom the story

seems to revolve in the opening chapters, he soon becomes just one of the several questors who have become the "guests" of the eccentric millionaire Rumonades. Marlowe, the gentle schoolteacher who has fled from England, and is absorbed in philosophy and fascinated by words, is one version of Campion, of Darley, and of Lawrence Lucifer in The Black Book.⁶ Similarly Francis, the artist, the subject of a long flash-back section, who rejects all offers of love, and spends the novel searching herself for herself, is an early version of Clea. But then, as John Weigle wryly suggests "most women in general are only preliminary drafts of Clea!"⁷ An analysis of the Quartet will therefore throw light on the author's view on these characters.

Already in the early novels Durrell is setting a pattern which illustrates why I see his major characters as being a further projection of the usual English hero. All his major characters are very much part of a social group, so much so that they do not stand out from that group in any very significant way. Clearly placed in their position, and delineating themselves by means of interpersonal relationships, they are at last shown to be so much a part of that society that what happens to other

⁶And also, one suspects, of Durrell himself.

⁷Weigel, Lawrence Durrell, p. 43.

members of it is as important to the reader as what happens to them. All the characters find their true identity through and in their society, not apart from it or in spite of it, as is usually the case with the American hero. Any character, even if he is the central one around whom the action moves, is so much a part of society, and so much concerned with his responsibilities to other individuals, that he is given no importance over and above them. This pattern is carried through The Black Book and the Quartet.

Gerald Sykes⁸ sees The Black Book as predicting the Quartet. "All of his favorite colors are already spread out on the palette." A few of its characters have already appeared in Panic Spring; others reappear in the Quartet. Like the Quartet, it depends on more than one narrator, dealing with the same material and the same characters in different times. The narrators in this case, Gregory, a forty-year-old Englishman, and Lawrence Lucifer, a teacher in Corfu who has discovered Gregory's diary in a London hotel bedroom, create the same interweaving of brilliant colors and strange lives that distinguish the Quartet, though not on so majestic a scale. It is on a miniature scale that will develop in the Quartet. Thus it illustrates how the lusty material which would find a place more readily in the work of Flannery O'Connor and Nelson Algren

⁸"Introduction," The Black Book, American edition, 1960.

than in that of their English counterparts receives a very different handling by this English author.

The characters, seen from the point of view of both the young Lucifer and the middleaged Gregory, are grotesques. Dusty and shifty, they are loaded with adjectives and bright, tense phrases. They tend to wither in the light of an explication or synopsis.⁹

They are, then, not the material of which a Tarwater is made, but something much more fragile. There will be, as a result, no central character who becomes an archetype. The characters may be regarded more readily as strands to be woven into a rich tapestry, appearing here and there with vividness and in other places subordinated to other threads. Even more than Sillitoe's Arthur Seaton who was found to be representative but not symbolic, the narrators, and those on whom their story is focused, will each be a type rather than the type.

The tapestry design becomes more ornate in the four books of the Quartet, singled out by critics as Durrell's most important literary statement. They are designed in such a way that each is an entity, and yet each gains immeasurably from being part of the whole to which it contributes. Who then is the hero of each book, and of the Quartet as a whole? Justine, Balthazar and Clea are all written from the point of view of Darley, the Irish schoolmaster narrator. In Mountolive the story is told largely

⁹Weigel, Lawrence Durrell, p. 44.

by an omniscient novelist, with Darley hardly figuring at all. A careful look at Justine, and at Mountolive, will indicate how these two narrative methods relate to each other, and how Durrell views his hero. Then the placing of these two sections in their larger context will throw light on the major protagonist of the Quartet.

No name is given the narrator throughout Justine. The reader is obviously intended to identify entirely with Darley, and to this extent he is the hero, the questor, whose search for truth we experience first hand. "What I most need to do," says Darley, "is to record experiences, not in the order in which they took place--for that would be history--but in the order in which they became significant for me."¹⁰ The quest is a double one. On the one hand we explore the recesses of the narrator's own mind; on the other we search also for the clues to unlock our understanding of Justine herself. Of all the fascinating people who surround Darley in Alexandria, she is the one who stands out from the first meeting as of special significance for him. She is linked throughout the book with the goddess, Aphrodite, and also with the spirit of the city itself. The Jewish wife of the Coptic banker and businessman, Nessim Hosnani, Justine is beautiful in a forceful, almost masculine way, and her impelling personality has at one time or another touched all the major characters

¹⁰ Lawrence Durrell, Justine (London, Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 115.

introduced. Symbolic of this is the search Darley makes for the perfume she customarily wears. He cannot locate it until he mutters her name in the hearing of the salesgirl. She can then immediately pick out the right one.

The other two important characters are Nessim, and the prostitute Melissa, who is Darley's mistress. These two act as mirror images of Darley and Justine, in many ways, as is clear from the frequent references to mirrors and the analysis to which the narrator subjects the thoughts and feelings he has towards the other three. As Nessim says, when he grows to love Melissa, when they have been drawn to each other by mutual sympathy, I "began to explore and love Melissa as an extension of Justine . . . the four of us were unrecognized complementaries of one another inextricably bound together."¹¹ To find out what kind of a hero Darley is we need thus look also at Nessim, but the parallel does not end there. There is also Justine's first husband Arnauti. Darley sees himself as a mirror image of him.¹² Again, he sees himself as a distortion of Pursewarden, another Englishman and novelist. He is fascinated

¹¹Ibid., p. 203.

¹²He met Justine just as did Arnauti, in the vestibule of the Hotel Cecil, in the mirror (p. 65), and as Arnauti had searched far and wide for a clue to the anxiety check Justine experiences in her sexual relations, so Darley seeks everywhere to find out what makes her what she is. Arnauti had written a novel, the central character of which was Justine, just as Darley will do in Balthazar and Clea.

by Cohen's death, ugly as it is, because Cohen had loved Melissa, and failed to buy her a coat and marry her, just as he himself had, and in his death he feels he can study his own. In his search for identity, Darley is thus certainly defining himself in terms of his relationships with others, and those relationships all revolve round his love for Melissa, Justine and the city of Alexandria, all three as intricately interwoven by mirror images¹³ as are Nessim, Arnauti, Pursewarden, Cohen and Darley.

Justine is close to mental illness, the victim of an obsession with sex, compelled to take lovers, according to Arnauti, in order to recreate a traumatic rape in childhood.¹⁴ She fascinates Darley as she has many others. But through all his physical attraction and mental fascination with Justine, Darley never forgets his responsibility to Nessim, her husband, for he values that friendship too. In this he resembles Arthur Seaton, for just as Arthur is of Brenda's husband, Jack, Darley is considerate of Nessim, and avoids embarrassing or paining him. This is shown, for example, when Darley and Justine first acknowledge their physical attraction for each other, on the beach.

¹³The motif of the mirror is important in indicating the many interrelatednesses, as above. Justine is often viewed by others in the mirror, and her love affairs are symbolized in the many distorted images of Justine and Arnauti in the mirrors of the Orient Express, as he searched for a cure.

¹⁴Durrell, Justine, p. 78.

She got up now and walked away down the long curving perspective of the beach crossing the pools of lava slowly, her head bent; and I thought of Nessim's handsome face smiling at her from every mirror in the room. The whole scene which we had just enacted was invested in my mind with a dream-like improbability.¹⁵

And his responsibility for Melissa is not forgotten in his love for Justine, in fact it is through the depth of communication with Justine that he comes fully to understand his love for Melissa.

I took her face in my hands and examined it silently, with a care and attention, with a sadness and hunger I don't ever remember feeling before. She said, "It is not me you are seeing, it is someone else." But in truth I was seeing Melissa for the first time. In some paradoxical way it was Justine who was now permitting me to see Melissa as she really was--and to recognize my love for her.¹⁶

Relationships of this kind come to Bowles' heroes at the moment of death, if at all, and never occur with Algren's or Miss O'Connor's heroes.

On the first level, this is the story of Darley's search for love, and for understanding of Justine, the symbol of love that lies just beyond knowledge. On another level it is a story of a love affair between Darley and Alexandria, for Justine is constantly pointed out to be the personification of the city. "In her, as an Alexandrian, licence was in a curious way a form of self-abnegation, a

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 54.

travesty of freedom."¹⁷ She is "a child of the city which decrees that its women shall be voluptuaries not of pleasure, but of pain, doomed to hunt for what they least dare to find"¹⁸ whether it be the man who raped her, her lost child, or herself. The parting with Darley at the end of Part I makes him feel "as if the whole city had crashed about his ears"¹⁹ and Pursewarden says that "Justine and her city are alike in that they both have a strong flavour without having any real character."²⁰ The references to Justine as being Cleopatra or a cat or a goddess, are also part of the city personification.²¹ Yet frequent as they are they do not remove her to a plane above the other

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 88.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 139.

²¹ At the end of Part II she is going away a second time, saying she is afraid and doesn't know why, and her farewell is immediately preceded by a memory of a description of her by Arnauti.

Like women who think by biological precept and without the help of reason. To such women how fatal an error it is to give oneself; there is simply a small chewing noise as when the cat reaches the backbone of the mouse. Clea speaks of her as "truly Alexandrian and verging on the Goddess." Arnauti is described by Balthazar as "a sort of minor Antony, and she a Cleo" and as she sweeps Melissa's dressing table clear of personal things she is spoken of as a leopard. The comparison, though made, is not dramatized.

characters. She remains a mere mortal, in spite of being a mirror of Alexandria, the true object of Darley's love.

His quest is not yet over. At the end of this novel Justine has gone to Palestine, where Clea writes that she has lost her magnetic appeal and ceased to be a "goddess," separated as she is from the city.²² Darley is preparing for a new episode in a teaching post away from Alexandria. There is a calm with many questions left unanswered. In this novel, as in Balthazar and Clea, Darley the questor is central, therefore the hero, but Justine/Alexandria, the main object of the quest, is of equal importance. Both are characters who draw others to them. Both have a definite place in the Alexandrian society in which they move, and make their progress towards self-knowledge by interpersonal relationships within the framework of that society. Each has human frailties which prevent either becoming permanently larger than life. Even Justine, who as spirit of the city has verged on such elevation, is firmly returned to the ranks of the mortals at the end. And Darley, still looking for answers, does not see himself as in any way more significant than those around him. Nor is he called to fulfill any grand design.

The hero of the second novel of the Quartet, Mountolive, is destined to rise to head the British Embassy in Alexandria.

²²This supplies the answer as to why she was afraid, see note 21.

His is a position in the Alexandrian society of high rank, and as this is clearly recognized, it will affect his relationships with those he meets. And again within the framework of the Alexandrian society, and that of the diplomatic corps, he finds himself through personal relationships. At first a young cadet, Mountolive has been given an introduction to the Hosnanis, and has become the lover of the mystical Leila, mother of Nessim and Narouz, and wife of a cadaverous, sensitive invalid. Mountolive

had been formally educated in England, educated not to wish to feel. All the other valuable lessons he had already mastered, despite his youth--to confront the problems of the drawing-room and the street with sang-froid; but towards personal emotions he could only oppose the nervous silence of a national sensibility almost anaesthetized into clumsy taciturnity: an education in selected reticences and shames. Breeding and sensibility seldom march together, though the breach can be carefully disguised in codes of manners, forms of address towards the world. He had heard and read of passion, but had regarded it as something which could never impinge upon him, and now here it was, bursting into the secret life which, like every overgrown schoolboy, lived on autonomously behind the indulgent screen of everyday manners and transactions, everyday talk and affections.²³

He is the "innocent" who is to be educated, initiated into life by Leila, and into the ways of Alexandria. He is immature, hampered by feelings of guilt, and amazed at Leila's revelation that it is her husband who suggested she become his lover, because of his own fear of losing

²³Lawrence Durrell, Mountolive (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), p. 18.

her. We learn through him, and since this book is the most traditional in form, Mountolive is clearly its hero.

It is with mirror images again that the complex interrelationships are shown.²⁴ Leila, "the spirit of Alexandria," is associated, as is Justine, with Cleopatra and the sphinx.²⁵ She is a reflection of Justine, but a much paler one, and the extreme frankness of the relationship that develops between her and Mountolive is another example of a relationship available more to an English hero than to an American.

As ambassador to Egypt, Mountolive must judge the motives of the Alexandrians we have come to know in Justine and Balthazar. His quest is therefore like Darley's but more fraught with danger, since more is at stake than personal enlightenment. Pursewarden provides the link between the two heroes. The central section of Mountolive

²⁴Mountolive takes Leila in his arms "stumbling forward like a man into a mirror" and they meet "like reflections on a surface of lake-water." Leila's husband points a pistol at his mirrored reflection and swears to shoot himself if Leila should really fall in love with Mountolive. Leila writes of her thoughts about her feelings for Mountolive, now in Europe, after having caught sight of Nessim's naked body in the mirror. The symbol suggests that the love of Leila and Mountolive will be more transitory than those feelings which are reflected in mirrors of glass.

²⁵When she takes the crumb from Mountolive's lips "he felt the small warm tongue of an Egyptian cat upon his underlip for a moment" and when she retires to seclusion, after her illness, she writes to Mountolive of reading and writing "with only a snake for company, tame as a cat."

is a long letter from Pursewarden, whom Mountolive had met at Leila's suggestion some time previously. He gives in the letter much information about the intrigues of Alexandria, since he has angered the diplomats in charge, and does not expect to be there when Mountolive takes over as ambassador. Darley, for all his professional jealousy of Pursewarden, had held his opinion in high regard. Mountolive, too, is prepared to back Pursewarden's intuitive reasoning against the hierarchy of British Intelligence. He is thus an upper class, more important, but less mature version of Darley. Through him we can be given a political and diplomatist view of the affairs which touch the other characters on a more personal basis. It is another facet of the prism that is Alexandria. This time the personification of the city is less within the hero's grasp since, by his position, he is unable to become utterly absorbed into the society. Thus he keeps hoping to be reunited with Leila, but she eludes him until the end. When she comes to beg for the safety of her two sons she is repulsive to him, old, ravaged by disease, with nothing remaining of the magic of the first innocent encounter.

Much of this novel takes place out of Alexandria, and the spirit of the place does not assume the same importance as in Justine. Mountolive is of the same "bright stone"²⁶ as those who have Alexandria as part of their very

²⁶See p. 116, note 30.

being, as his sympathy with Leila and Pursewarden shows, but the stone has had to acquire a different luster because of Mountolive's position on the social scale. His education and initiation into the life of Alexandria takes this as an axiom. Though of it, he must of necessity be a little apart from it. His story thus is more contained than the other three. This hero is a man with frailties, who is taught much, sometimes through mistakes. But he is not destroyed by them, and he never becomes a symbol himself.

The people and events described in Justine are recast in Balthazar. Darley has given Balthazar, the prophet, his draft of a novel "Justine" and has had it returned annotated with views that constitute a reinterpretation of some of these events.²⁷ In this volume Narouz, Nessim's younger brother, and Mountolive as the English Ambassador to Egypt, become significant, and Pursewarden is more fully characterized. Thus Darley's quest for understanding of himself and of Justine is carried further and he must come to terms with painful discoveries such as that Justine did not really love him, but had used him as a decoy since she really loved Pursewarden. He is constantly reminded of the limitations of his own knowledge, not only by these new revelations, but also by the enigmatic killing at the end of the novel. Toto de Brunel, the homosexual, is

²⁷The part played by politics in Nessim's marriage to Justine, the part played by danger in Justine's acceptance of Nessim, a new theory as to the reason for Pursewarden's suicide are all suggested.

stabbed at a carnival ball. There are of course various possibilities as to why he is killed by Narouz, jealousy, politics, mistaken identity; none clearly more plausible than the others.

In the final book of the Quartet, Clea, Darley's quest is carried to its conclusion. He is brought up to date on Alexandrian doings by Balthazar and brings back Nessim and Melissa's child, whom he has brought up in an island retreat. Wartime Alexandria has its own kind of beauty and its usual high quota of sexuality. Darley finds he is no longer drawn to Justine, now like Nessim weak and physically deteriorated,²⁸ and learns that Capodistra's death at the end of Justine had been faked. He is ready now to begin a new reconstruction of the real Alexandria, helped by Clea to whom he is now drawn, and by Pursewarden's notebooks. Those who have been lowered in estate are being reinstated. Clea, whose hand has been damaged can paint again with her new steel one, and Darley begins the book that starts "Once upon a time." It is his point in space and time to find happiness with Clea.

What has happened to the hero concept? In Clea references are made to Nessim and Justine as playing cards, when Darley is trying to create an image of them as father and mother for Melissa's child; the revelation that Amaril is the Syrian lover who has restored Clea psychologically

²⁸Cf. Leila in Mountolive.

and now repairs her hand comes as no surprise to Darley. He thinks of Amaril as "like a playing card which had always been there, lying before me on the table, face downwards. I had been aware of its existence but had never turned it over."²⁹ There is the suggestion of the Tarot pack of fortune telling cards in many of the characters, and hence the kind of two dimensional effect which makes them part of a medieval tapestry rather than real flesh and blood. Yet for all their originality they still fall within the criteria expected of the English protagonist.

Durrell dramatizes a wide spectrum of the sensibility but his cast of characters is of an exceedingly special kind. All these fascinating and exotic beings share a high degree of nervous intelligence; they articulate their emotions with lyric power and unfailing subtlety, they live life at a constant pitch of awareness, more searching and vulnerable than that of ordinary men. They are cut from the same fragile stone and so reflect each other like mirrors disposed in cunning perspectives.³⁰

These heroes are a projection of the English hero so far delineated with the additional factor of this "constant pitch of awareness." For all their individuality they are never more than a part of a whole web of society. Their relative importance is laid down and accepted by an unwritten code, a question of money, birth, politics and religion within which each knows his niche. A newcomer like David

²⁹ Lawrence Durrell, Clea (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), p. 256.

³⁰ Harry T. Moore, ed., "Introduction," The World of Lawrence Durrell (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962).

Mountolive must be taught the niceties of the system, must be able to function within its limitations.

Darley is himself a character among others and he is not held in especial esteem by his friends and lovers; he never knows everything that might be known and he is the victim of a most elaborate deception practiced upon him by Justine and Nessim. Yet he does what he can, he tells what he knows.³¹

As such he demonstrates very clearly how different Durrell's view of a central character is from Bowles'. As Lionel Trilling suggests, the crucial difference has to do with the peculiar negative relation in which the Quartet stands to the will. It is Nessim's display of will which finally wins Justine in spite of herself, but such a firm stand is rarely taken. Nearly always the characters are swept this way or that by a will not their own. This is not to say that loyalty and responsibility do not have an important place in the relationships between the characters, not only with regard to friends and loved ones, but also to nations. In this way the national individuality of the various characters stands in the same relationship to Alexandria as class identity does to Britain. Pursewarden, for all his criticism of British society, shows himself fond of it at heart. Mountolive has the weaknesses and strengths of a British public schoolboy. Darley seeks refuge from dealing with problems with Melissa in the comfortable traditionalism

³¹Lionel Trilling, "The Quartet: Two Reviews," in The World of Lawrence Durrell, ed. by Harry T. Moore (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), pp. 62-63.

of the British Council library. Pombal is by contrast thoroughly French. Justine is declared typically Alexandrian. Scobie is the old British sea dog. Leila is the spirit of Alexandria. And all are caught in the magic of the city itself. Indeed it is in many ways Alexandria which is the protagonist rather than Darley and Mountolive, for in the Quartet it has "a being far more complex and interesting than any of its inhabitants, having its own way and its own rights, its own life and its own secret will to which the life and will of the individual are subordinate."³² The characters move in a society ruled strictly by laws of love and art, both of which fall beyond the reach of the moral will. This means that they will never, as are Bowles', be torn between two possible ways of behaving, nor will they judge each other harshly. There will always be a hint of possible happiness somewhere in the future, an optimistic view of human nature for all its shortcomings.

Thus, for all its patches of the cruel, the horrible, the macabre, for all its maimings and deaths, its transformations and reductions, The Alexandrian Quartet is not a tragic novel like Anna Karenina, nor an epic one, like War and Peace; it is a lyrical romantic comedy in which the working through of the life-force, the It, is celebrated in its very absurdity . . . nothing is a final consummation, nothing is an end-stop.³³

This then is not a tragic view of life, and no character is permitted the tragic limelight for long enough to become

³²Ibid., p. 60.

³³Fraser, Lawrence Durrell: A Study, pp. 147-148.

self-dramatized. Each takes himself very much for granted, though the search for motives goes on. "There is scarcely a modern, or at least an American-style modern neurotic in the entire tetralogy."³⁴ In Bowles there are enough and to spare.

The society in which Bowles' protagonists find themselves does not absorb them into itself. It is not one entity with a personality all its own, in which those from various national backgrounds find their own niche, as is Durrell's Alexandria; instead there are groups of characters from different cultures who do not merge, love or understand each other. Bowles' heroes, exiles in a foreign country which is hostile to them, show the "deflection" already noticed in Flannery O'Connor.³⁵ In contrast to Darley who has experienced the many faces of love and society, and is now ready to write "Once upon a time," the heroes of The Sheltering Sky (1949), Let it Come Down (1952), The Spider's House (1955) and Up and Above the World (1966) face martyrdom, madness, immolation or defeat. Their quest for self-identity leads to a collapse of the civilized super-ego, into a state of almost mindless primitivism, and in the process of trying to wrest some meaningful personal

³⁴George Elliott, "The Other Side of the Story," in The World of Lawrence Durrell, ed. by Harry T. Moore (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), p. 91

³⁵See Chapter I, p. 34.

relationships from life they accelerate their own doom. Where Durrell was showing the many faces of love, time and life in a cohesive society, Bowles is exploring man's status in existence, and the reality of human personality in conditions of lovelessness and isolation,³⁶ and is highlighting the lack of understanding between man and man, and culture and culture.

In The Sheltering Sky Port and Kit Moresby, an American couple, travel in North Africa, ostensibly fleeing from the after effects of war into an area civilization has not yet destroyed. They really seek their own identity, and also the bonds of warmth and communication between them, which have been lost. Port describes himself as a "traveler," not a "tourist," the distinguishing factors being that he spends a considerable time in the country, and is willing to reinterpret his own culture in the light of what he learns from the new one. But it is clear he deludes himself in this, for the quantity of luggage he brings, including Scotch and English cigarettes, shows he has a firm hold on the West. Another symbol is the maps over which he pores by the hour. It is as if by studying them he hopes to impose a civilized order on a land where roads cannot be assumed to be passable just because they are on a map; where one cannot even be sure of a final destination. Here are two protagonists who are a further projection of

³⁶Hassan, "The Way Down and Out . . . ," pp. 87-88.

the alienation and inability to communicate seen in Miss O'Connor's and Nelson Algren's heroes.

It is not surprising to find that his passport means a great deal to Port, for it too is a firm link with civilization. The climax of the story is reached when Port's passport is stolen. His comment to the French lieutenant carries an ironic statement of self-knowledge.

"It's strange," he said with a deprecating smile, "how, ever since I discovered my passport was gone, I've felt only half alive. But it's a very depressing thing in a place like this to have no proof of who you are, you know."³⁷

Up to this point this is what Kit and he both seek--proof of who they are, both individually, and as husband and wife.

Kit is a slave to a fear of omens. For her, until Port becomes ill, other people have no significance except in so far as they represent "harbingers of undesirable events."³⁸ The two protagonists are both walled off, Kit a prisoner of dread, and Port inside "the cage he had built long ago to save himself from love."³⁹ Port's maps irritate Kit a great deal. For her all that has significance is the search for a way to regain closeness with Port. Whereas his name is ironical for her, for he is the port whose haven she seeks, to find it only at the time of his

³⁷Paul Bowles, The Sheltering Sky (New York: Belgrave Press, 1949), pp. 159-160.

³⁸Ibid., p. 45.

³⁹Ibid., p. 100.

death, hers is ironical for him, for in many ways she is just the baggage with which he travels. She does not share his walks in the native quarters, nor his zeal for travel; she simply goes with him, waiting for the time when he will turn to her. Until he does she is barely alive. Even more than Port she clings to the trappings of civilization, especially the little handbag of cosmetics which gives her support after her frightening ride in the fourth-class railway carriage.⁴⁰ As she rides on the back of the truck away from El Ga'a, with Port sick and unconscious beside her, "it gave her momentary pleasure to think of that dark little world, the handbag smelling of leather and cosmetics, that lay between the hostile air and her body."⁴¹ And when she is shut in with her dying husband in what amounts to a prison cell, although she cannot see in the dim light she moves over to the door and "made up slowly and carefully."⁴² There is one point after the loss of the passport when Port comes in to find Kit unpacking all her luggage in their tiny hotel room.

The room looked like a bazaar: there were rows of shoes on the bed, evening gowns had been spread out over the footboard as if for a window display, and bottles of cosmetics and perfumes lined the night table.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 86.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 195.

⁴²Ibid., p. 202.

"What in God's name are you doing?" he cried.

"Looking at my things," she said innocently.

"I haven't seen them in a long time. Ever since the boat I've been living in one bag. I'm so sick of it. And when I looked out that window after lunch," she became more animated as she pointed to the window that gave on to the empty desert, "I felt I'd simply die if I didn't see something civilized soon. Not only that. I'm having a Scotch sent up and I'm opening my last pack of Players."

"You must be in a bad way," he said.

"Not at all," she retorted, but a bit too energetically. "It'd be abnormal if I were to adapt myself too quickly to all this. After all, I'm still an American, you know. And I'm not even trying to be anything else."⁴³

Kit and Port are unable to communicate in a really meaningful way with each other, much less with those in Africa. Kit recognizes her inability to become part of the society in which she is moving. Both she and Port must make their decisions unaided. Neither has a recognized place in the society. They must act apart from, or in spite of it and so are a far cry from Durrell's Alexandrians.

All through the first part of the novel Kit has been on the lookout for omens of disaster. She has been distressed at Port's recounting of his dreams, and while he has looked on the sky as protecting, keeping out whatever is above, for her it has been a symbol of the void she continually tries to escape. Ironically the omens have presaged destruction, but for Port not Kit, and just before that destruction comes the union of feeling which, with no sense of urgency, both had been seeking.

⁴³Ibid., p. 161.

"Kit, Kit. I'm afraid, but it's not only that. All these years I've been living for you. I didn't know it, and now I do. I do know it! But now you're going away." . . .

"But Kit," he said softly. They looked at each other. She made a slight motion with her head, letting it fall onto his chest. Even as he glanced down at her, her first sob came up, and the first cleared the passage for others. He closed his eyes again, and for a moment had the illusion of holding the world in his arms--a warm world all tropics, lashed by storm.⁴⁴

And she weeps for the wasted years and because of the dread within her, while "the wind at the window celebrated her dark sensation of having attained a new depth of solitude." There is to be no building on this communication, as with Darley's loves, for it comes only with death.

Port meets death alone, because in her need for release Kit has gone onto the roof, and then on impulse, to watch a truck arriving, and has stayed beyond the time that the gates are shut. His final delirium links him with Camus' L'Etranger as he views his own death from the outside.⁴⁵ He is also like Sisyphus.

There was only the endless black wall rising ahead of him, the rickety iron staircase he was obliged to take, knowing that above, at the top, they were waiting with the boulder poised, ready to hurl it when he came near enough. And as he got close to the top it would come hurtling down at him with the weight of the entire world.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 217.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 231-232.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 232.

But with the important difference that he does not have control of the stone, that no amount of effort on his part will propel it towards the summit. His position is even more absurd than these archetypes of the absurd.

The truck had brought Tunner, a young American with whom the Moresbys had begun their journey, and who had awakened Kit to some of her hidden sensuality by making love to her on the train. Here is someone to whom Kit can turn in her anguish at Port's approaching death. Since the fort gate is locked they spend the night in the sand dunes. Here the irony of the story reaches a climax for Kit clings to Tunner, telling him how much she loves Port, at the very time that Port is giving his death cry. She had been unable to tell Port of her love, and it is clear that Tunner is unable to understand how she really feels. Between her and Tunner there is also incomplete communication.

Port's death culminates a build-up of omen after omen.

His cry went on through the final image: the spots of raw bright blood on the earth. Blood on excrement. The supreme moment, high above the desert, when the two elements, blood and excrement, long kept apart, merge. A black star appears, a point of darkness and gateway to repose. Reach out, pierce the fine fabric of the sheltering sky, take repose.⁴⁷

We have been prepared for this surrender to the elements by the details of the red light of the sun shining on the excrement in the pit toilet where Port was being sick on

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 235.

his way to El Ga'a.⁴⁸ The signs have foretold it. The sky has not been so sheltering after all. This man in his solitary agony is everyman, or more accurately every-civilized-man, whose fate in the hands of a ruthless universe is to lose his identity forever, just as he has found it. He is the representative of the West, with its expectations of logical explanations, unwilling to read the signs, unable to feel the hostility of the elements. He is also its representative in imagining he is in tune with the Arabs from time to time, when it is clear they understand so much more of the non-rational side of life than he, with his maps and passport.

Kit now becomes the only protagonist. Returning to find Port dead she experiences a state of non-being. "Nothing moved inside her; she was conscious of nothing outside or in."⁴⁹ And fate prepares to take over, with the camel train gathering for departure in the courtyard. She decides against Tunner, and taking her money, passport and express checks, she escapes into the desert. All she had lived for is now dead, and with a ritual immersion in a moonlit pool she is reborn. At this point she loses her watch, and is free to become part of the timelessness of the desert. The proper tourist is gradually stripped away. The

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 185.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

money, passport and checks are of no value in the primitive world to which she consigns herself. She has found again a "joy of being" and after a series of adventures full of sex, violence and difficulties of communication, she chooses the desert freedom and madness, not the shackles of civilization. She too is the civilized West, who must set aside suitcase, cosmetics, money and passport, if she is to realize the full potentiality she has as a feeling being--a discovery which will bring madness. That she is symbolic of those who dare to break free from the bonds of civilization is shown by the reaction of Miss Ferry, the official at the American Embassy, who is sent to meet her when she has been "rescued" from the desert.

"Damned old idiot!" she said to herself. This was not the first time she had been sent to be officially kind to a sick or stranded female compatriot. About once a year the task fell to her, and she disliked it intensely. "There's something repulsive about an American without money in his pocket," she had said to Mr. Clarke. She asked herself what possible attraction the parched interior of Africa could have for any civilized person. She herself had once passed a weekend at Bou Saâda, and had nearly fainted from the heat.⁵⁰

And on hearing that Kit has no luggage she shows how little she understands. "The desert's a big place, but nothing really ever gets lost there . . . Things turn up sometimes weeks later."⁵¹ Miss Ferry, unable to converse in

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 313.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 315.

intelligible French with the mechanic and irritated by his attentions to Kit, is the extreme form of what Kit was before she was freed by the desert. Kit makes her decision. Faced with what Miss Ferry stands for and the imminent reappearance of Tunner, she escapes to the Arab quarter. Like Port she becomes the Westerner in his existential predicament. The lines from Kafka--"From a certain point onward there is no longer any turning back. That is the point that must be reached"--at the beginning of Book Three, Kit's book, set her up as an archetype. She is one of Hassan's radical innocents, who is a tragic figure because her final incoherence is due mostly to the inability of civilization to understand, just when she has learned to feel and to communicate.

The intense isolation of these two characters is an extreme form of that found in Algren and Flannery O'Connor. Their stand, which will bring their own destruction, is tragic because their love for each other was there all along, and their inability to communicate had driven them both to lonely deaths, without the supporting warmth of family or class, nor of friends and compatriots, as in Durrell.

Dyar, the hero of Let it Come Down, is very like Camus' Mersault. He, like Port and Kit, begins self-alienated, someone to whom nothing has ever happened. For the first time in Tangiers he really sees himself, and the

cage which confines him, a cage he has been unable to lose simply by leaving the West. For the first time he is confronted with real choices and in the process of making them, like Kit, becomes alive. The Marquesa de Valverde tells him he is not yet really alive, and comments, "We're all like that, these days, I suppose. Not quite so blatantly as you, perhaps but" ⁵² Thus he too is symbolically the ignorant Westerner, unable to communicate, or to feel, in search of identity. He begins, as Kit did once she was alone, in a state of non-existence, lying inert on the bed in a box-like room, conscious of having made that Kafkaesque step which cannot be reversed. And the reader, if not the protagonist, is conscious of the continuity of the falling rain, with its implication of inevitable doom.

The gothic qualities of the novel give Dyar's quest for meaning in life something of the aspect of a fable. The nightmare begins immediately he arrives in Tangiers. He dines the first night, at the suggestion of his new employer Wilcox, at the home of the Marquesa with its tank of octopus, its sick cats requiring injections, its tapestries and candles and its gothic setting on a stormy promontory. Here, as in Flannery O'Connor, the grotesque setting heightens our fear for the protagonist, and helps us identify with him in the horror he feels and the fear

⁵²Paul Bowles, Let It Come Down (New York: Random House, Inc., 1952), p. 230.

for his own safety. He thus becomes the existential everyman, having to make choices without having all the facts available to him. As seen by Eunice Goode, the fat American woman who had become "a full-fledged legendary figure in the Zoco Chico"⁵³ because of her lesbian attraction to the lovely prostitute Hadija, Dyar is "not at all distinguished in appearance. He did not look like an actor or a statesman or an artist, nor yet like a workman, a business man or an athlete. For some reason she thought he looked rather like a wire-haired terrier--alert, eager, suggestible."⁵⁴ Dyar the everyman has stumbled into the lair of a dangerous beast, only slightly less dangerous, one suspects, than the Marquesa.

The regular Sunday gatherings at the home of the Beidaouis show that no love or understanding is to be found between the various nationalities represented. It is a society very unlike Durrell's Alexandria, bristling with hostility and misunderstanding, with everyone out for what he can get. Dyar is the victim, recognized by all the strong characters as the greenhorn who can be used for their own purposes. The Marquesa singles him out to arrange her a hotel booking at another's expense; Eunice Goode sees him as a possible source of international secrets; Wilcox expects to arrange his shady financial deals through him;

⁵³Ibid., p. 97.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 99.

and Thami, the disowned Beidaoui brother, also seeks to use him. By the end of the Sunday party he attends it is clear that Dyar is an outsider. Warned by the Marquesa of some of the plots in which he may become embroiled, he has been designated as the prey of both Thami and Hadija. The fates are closing in and to indicate this cats become significant again. An American couple who have left the party with Dyar and the Marquesa hear abandoned kittens crying. The wife wants to find and feed them. Her husband retorts

"Why in hell try to keep them alive? They're going to die anyway, sooner or later."

Dyar turned his head sideways and shouted against the trees going by; "So are you, Holland. But in the meantime you eat, don't you?"

There was no reply. In the back, unprotected from the wet sea wind, the Hollands were shivering.⁵⁵

The cats are mankind in general, and the hero in particular. He must make his way on his own, outside of society, relying on no assistance. In order to do so he must exert that kind of will which was so noticeably lacking in the Quartet. He realized

that his great problem right now was to escape from his cage, to discover the way out of the fly-trap, to strike the chord inside himself which would liberate those qualities capable of transforming him from a victim into a winner.⁵⁶

In this way he exerts his will as Durrell's characters do not. He sees his responsibility to make something of

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 139.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 172.

himself, and is not bound by responsibility to any other individual. He feels awkward about the money he has accepted from the Russians for spying, but rejects any thought of reporting what he has done to the American legation. "He knew that was the action of a victim. It was typical: a victim always gave himself up if he dared to dream of changing his status."⁵⁷ To him, to function within the pattern of society, signified by the legation, is to deny his self-hood, to become a victim. He wishes instead to take his fate into his own hands.

The central part of the book is the period he spends lying on the sand, naked in the sun. As Kit had bathed away her shackles and learned to live, in her moonlit pool, so Dyar finds in relaxation within sound of the waves and within sight of the sky, the key to being. From this point on, as did Kit, he is able to take advantage of situations as they arrive, and again with each choice he makes he brings himself closer to his doom. Escaping with Thami is to become Thami's prisoner. Escaping from him is to affirm himself, to "escape being a victim."⁵⁸

This hero withdraws, as does Kit, into insanity. His murder of Thami is not, like Mersault's action, a great gesture of defiance, done as it is under the influence of hashish. Yet it is the carrying out of his unspoken

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 266.

⁵⁸Ibid.

desires and as such, an affirmation of his existence and a declaration of a final separation between him and the world of Western civilization, to which the Marquesa comes to bring him back.

He stood there in the patio a moment, the cold rain wetting him. (A place in the world, a definite status, a precise relationship with the rest of men. Even if it had to be one of open hostility, it was his, created by him.)⁵⁹

He has thus placed himself, not in any society, but in "the world," and the relationship he sees himself in with the rest of men does not involve responsibility for them in any way, nor any meaningful communication. His is an extreme isolation. Though Dyar does not, like Mersault, reach that ecstatic moment of knowledge, he demonstrates Western man's hunger for "being," to be achieved only by setting aside the Western ego. The threat of nothingness links in well with gothic terror in Bowles' novel. They reinforce each other, forming together what has been called the novel of outrage. This kind of novel Ihab Hassan finds in the works of Styron, Baldwin and Ellison as well as in Bowles.⁶⁰ Such a threat never seems to occur to Durrell's characters. They take their existence very much for granted. The combination of gothicism and realism with which Dyar's situation is laid bare makes his struggle a

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 311.

⁶⁰ Ihab Hassan, "The Novel of Outrage: A Minority View in Post War Fiction," American Scholar, XXXIV, pp. 239-253.

parable. His is the trapped situation of Twentieth Century Western man--one man against the universe.

Up and Above the World replays the themes of the two novels just discussed, with more accent on the gothicism and less on fine distinctions of character. Thus we may regard Grove as another version of Dyar. Stenham, in The Spider's House, however, has a new dimension because of all Bowles' heroes, he is the one who most clearly portrays the theme underlying both the novels and the short stories. Port had had limited contact with the Arabs and had been full of mistrust. Dyar had travelled far with Thami, but was unable to respect him fully. Stenham's relationship with Amar is based on mutual respect. Because of this respect, an unusual degree of real understanding exists between these two. The gap between the cultures is at least partly bridged. Amar is a real noble savage, without education, but having the gift of healing as had his father and grandfather.⁶¹ His "innocence" makes him wise beyond his fifteen years. Stenham is an intellectual in whose home religion and sex could not be mentioned. He had at one time been a communist, but had come to believe that "there could be no equality in human life because the human heart demanded hierarchies."⁶² He comes to value the simple

⁶¹Cf. Tarwater, Chapter I.

⁶²Paul Bowles, The Spider's House (New York: Random House, Inc., 1955), p. 195.

philosophy of Amar, who is in effect battling against the sexual charms of Lee Veyron for Stenham's love. Stenham is attracted to Lee physically, but her shallow understanding of what she sees around her grates. Yet she eventually wins, and in taking up his ties with the West, Stenham sacrifices his chance for a meaningful, genuine communication between himself and Amar. In so doing he acknowledges no responsibility towards Amar, abandoning him as he does at the top of the hill. This would not be the reaction of a Durrell character, for whom responsibility in friendship carried so much weight.

The native uprisings serve as parallels to the clashes between individuals and provide a dramatic setting. They also help to indicate the degree of understanding of the central characters. Both the French and the local national party, a communist inspired group of terrorists and the genuine fomentors of the revolution, want to remake Morocco and destroy all the charm, color and simple integrity of the people, including the very religion in whose name the national party has taken up arms. Lee, in her blindness, sides with the nationalists; Amar and Stenham are both aware of the destructiveness in each rival, but Amar is the one who stands out as the symbol of moral and religious integrity. When Stenham chooses Lee, not Amar, we know

it to be a mistake, and as Oliver Evans puts it,⁶³ it is Stenham and not Amar who is finally the loser, for Amar retains his integrity and virtue which render him impregnable. The title this time is from the Koran:

The likeness of those who choose other patrons than Allah is as the likeness of the spider when she taketh unto herself a house, and lo! the frailest of all houses is the spider's house, if they but knew.

In Amar's genuine, child-like affection, Stenham had something of great worth. He chose to reject it for the values of the West and he leaves in the car,⁶⁴ choosing the fragile world of appearances, not the world of the soul. Stenham's place in the scheme of Bowles' work is made clear by a later book, Yallah (1957).⁶⁵ This is a book of photographs with a text by Bowles, which is an impassioned plea for the understanding and the preservation of what is best in alien cultures. Distressed at the way in which civilization was destroying beauty and tradition in the name of hygiene and ease of living, Bowles is concerned to show that the original state had values too, none the less valuable for being less tangible. Stenham, then, is the hero who represents Western man at his best, able to make more than

⁶³ Oliver Evans, "Paul Bowles and the Natural Man," Critique, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring-Fall, 1959), 43-59.

⁶⁴ Bowles, The Spider's House, p. 405.

⁶⁵ Paul Bowles and Peter W. Haeberlin, Yallah (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1957).

surface contact with the East. He has so much to learn from Amar, and is so needed to interpret these truths for the West, yet he chooses instead to turn his back on those values and face the West, with its hard, unthinking women and its mechanization. This is a tragedy far beyond the individual. Stenham and Amar are highlighted in order to carry a message.

I disagree with Glicksberg, who states that it is an inability to find a real self-identity that causes Bowles to write as he does.⁶⁶ In the heroes of his four novels Bowles shows that identity for the West is an artificial code; that real feeling, compassion and understanding is there underneath, but its uncovering may also be its death. In our relations between cultures we mirror the absurdity of modern life. The hero drawn by Bowles is pessimistic and alone.

Richard Arlington comments that adultery, prostitution, sodomy, lesbianism, sadism, murder, suicide, incest, gun-running--all these and eroticism

are as much a part of the Alexandrian scene as a pea-souper fog and Sunday boredom are a part of London. It would be absurd to present Alexandria as having the physical climate of London, or the moral rectitude of New York where business alone needs a mere thirty thousand call girls.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Charles Glicksberg, The Tragic Vision in Twentieth Century Literature (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963).

⁶⁷ Richard Arlington, "A Note on Lawrence Durrell," in The World of Lawrence Durrell, ed. by Harry T. Moore (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), pp. 6-7.

But different as is his material from that of his compatriots, Durrell moulds it in terms of class divisions and a hero who belongs, even if he at times rebels, or a being which is that society itself--Alexandria. His hero is entirely a part of the society, and concerned in a very deep way with his responsibilities to individuals within it. He makes his discoveries through meaningful relationships with others, and remains throughout just one of the group, never of supreme importance.

By contrast, from a background setting so similar, Bowles makes a totally different structure. The setting is treated realistically and yet as bizarre; and disaffinities become more important to the hero than correspondences. The hero under the second set of circumstances clashes with the environment. To the extent that he takes a determined stand he resembles Ahab, for his fate is sealed and yet he is driven to act as if it were not. The ambivalent tragedy of the individual is Bowles' concern, as it was with Melville. And, as Yallah indicates, each tragedy is not of one person alone. The heroes are representative of Western civilized man, and so each reaches more than individual stature, as he finds himself alone and outside society.

CHAPTER IV

THE HERO OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL AND THE HERO OF THE AMERICAN NOVEL

I now turn to the examination of all three English authors to see how far their heroes bear out the tentative hypothesis formulated.¹ To what extent is the hero of Graham Greene, Alan Sillitoe and Lawrence Durrell

1. a person of everyday stature, not larger than life,
2. a person whose place in society is clearly delineated,
3. a person involved in a quest which takes place within and through the society in which he is placed, rather than apart from, or in spite of it.

Greene, Sillitoe and Durrell

The protagonist of Graham Greene's religious novels is a person who has some position of authority. He is Pinkie, responsible for the organization of a gang of thugs; he is Scobie, police officer of some seniority;

¹The word "hero" will be used in the same sense as "protagonist" and will refer to both masculine and feminine main characters.

Sarah Miles, wife of a respectable member of the middle class and controller of the fate of her former lover; or the priest, the last representative of the church, and so responsible for the souls of all in the province. As such, his place in society is shown in detail, and the pressures that the society exerts on him limits his ability to initiate his own roles. He spends the whole novel tearing himself apart because of his responsibilities for others, and troubled because of actions which he believes have put him beyond redemption. He underestimates, or appears to be oblivious of the traits of character that might be considered in his favor, and so although others love him he is unable to recognize that love, whether it be human or divine. Each of them feels himself responsible for others and in the carrying out of these responsibilities often falls victim to coincidence or fate. Sarah makes a vow to give up Bendrix if he is restored to life, not knowing that he is not dead at all. Scobie makes a vow to make Louise happy, not knowing that he will also find himself called upon to support Helen. The priest sets himself the task of keeping the church going in Mexico, oblivious of the single-mindedness of the lieutenant's search and destroy plans. Pinkie makes a commitment to Rose and to the gang; Scobie to Louise and Helen; the priest to his "wife" and child and to his flock; and Sarah to her husband and to Bendrix. Each in his own way has also a

commitment to God, which constitutes a further conflicting loyalty, and, unable to ask anyone else's help, they are much less able to seek God's. Each is a tragic figure, because in his limited vision he is unable to make use of the help that was there for the asking. He illustrates some of the basic human problems in the understanding of God's ways. In the end each is realized to be doing his best in his own way. He is thus very much of everyday human stature; if he achieves something like saintliness his is the kind of saintliness which we might all be able to attain.

Alan Sillitoe's heroes do not have a position of authority immediately recognizable in society's terms, but each has that air about him which draws others to love and rely upon him. Arthur, in Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, can hold the whole factory spellbound with his stories, and captivates Brenda and Doreen. The long distance runner is on his own because of his circumstances, but his thoughts range back over the companions who were not caught and put in borstal as he was. He is a leader among them, and takes up responsibility for them in accepting the punishment and not inculcating them. In his stand for honesty as he sees it he is also a leader for all those, like him victims of a legal system not of their making. The general, in The General, has rank, but it is clear from the beginning that there are plenty of officers more powerful

than he. His authority over the orchestra is established by his rank but it is his personal strength of character that defines his position in the end. Something about his self-confidence allows others to trust his judgement, and to follow his instructions. Brian Seaton in Key to the Door and Frank Dawley in the trilogy are both questors who must leave their own country in order to find this self-confidence. Yet both have a drawing power about them, whether or not they recognize it. People are ready to follow them; love them; or live with them while they are there knowing it must finish sometime; or wait for their return, despite the knowledge they may never come back.

Within the tenets of their class, all Sillitoe's heroes show some responsibility for others. Arthur suffers with Brenda who is trying to lose their baby. He does his best to avoid hurting Doreen, or any of his friends. He is understanding of the waiter who is sent to throw him out of the pub when he is drunk. Even when he is established as the lover of Jack's wife, he is considerate of Jack's "rightful position." He feels some sort of responsibility to him as well as to Brenda. The runner's responsibility to others is less clearly defined since he is in contact with no member of his class at the time of his story. His sureness that the boy down the street would help him, however, makes it clear that he too works within the assumption of responsibility for others, and would if

need arose, help that boy or any other member of his class. In a sense, by digging in his toes and refusing to go along with the hypocrisy of the prison governor he is assuming a responsibility to set an example for others. The general feels so much responsibility for the orchestra that he is prepared to jeopardize his own safety to obtain theirs, as is Brian Seaton, to help his friend. Frank Dawley's idealism carries him to fight in Algiers. He takes this as a real responsibility. He also shows a responsibility of a kind to his wife, for he does return to her directly he is saved from the battle zone, and at the end is planning to have her and the children join him in the community in which his other love is established.

Sillitoe's heroes are all from the working class. They show greater pride in themselves and in their group than do Greene's and unlike Greene's heroes they survive and attain some sense of achievement. Because of the basic optimism of the working class they are carried past those moments which for Greene's heroes lead to despair.

Lawrence Durrell also writes his books around major characters who have a kind of personality which marks them as natural leaders. Justine has animal magnetism which compels everyone towards her. Clea has the vision of an artist and the aesthetic fascination that comes from it. Mountolive has official position and also a significant drawing power in his personal effect on Pursewarden, Lisa,

Leila, Nessim and many others. Balthazar knows more about the various members of the society of which he is the hub than any other character. He too has the kind of personality that brings others to him with their confidences. People also seek Darley out; and Alexandria, that fascinating lure for all the Quartet characters, has more magnetism than all the rest combined.

In Durrell's novels responsibility for others is again one of the sources of conflicting allegiances. The intricacies of the plot turn almost entirely on how the characters' love, politics and family duties conflict. Darley loves Melissa, and is drawn to Justine and Clea. Nessim marries Justine for political reasons, owes a filial duty to Leila, a duty of friendship to Mountolive, and is drawn by sympathy to Melissa. And because of this responsibility one for the other, the hero can expect the support of friends when he is in need. He never feels totally cut off from society and is always part of the group among whom he moves.

There are three constant characteristics that emerge.

1. In all three authors all the protagonists have some personal standing in the eyes of the others around them; something that draws others to them and gains their love or respect.

2. The protagonists' place in the society of which they are a part is clearly shown, and is the starting point

of their action. They either work to maintain that position, like Pinkie, or they show how their position is superior to another morally, by deliberately acting against the code of another section of that society, specifically for effect, as does the long distance runner.

3. While it is true they seek their own identity, they do so with reference to the social pattern in which they are placed. None of them desert that society completely and move permanently outside it.

The nearest anyone gets to doing the latter is when Frank Dawley joins the cooperative society of like souls in Southern England. Restless, he has joined the Freedom Fighters in Algiers, and in sacrificing himself for others there, has found his identity. When he returns he joins a group dedicated to setting social change in motion through their own example of harmonious communal living. So that even in this case the dissatisfaction Frank felt with society is dealt with by setting up this model community within that society. The hero thus ends his quest for identity within a group who love and respect him. He does not come to his moment of truth alone and at the expense of others, as does Ahab; he does so in relation to them, and with their willing help.

One can see how these three aspects apply to the English heroes and distinguish them from the American heroes, by comparing the physical ordeal which each of the

heroes depicted by the three English and three American authors has to survive in the course of his search for himself.

Scobie faces death wilfully, to prevent any further hurt to Helen, Louise and God. At the moment of his agony, Louise is just upstairs and he is conscious of doing it for her. At the same time there is a voice within him crying out to him with words of succor. He does not recognize the words as God's, but the reader does (and if he doesn't Father Rank draws his attention to them at the end of the book in his part-justification of Scobie to Louise). Scobie had always worn a medallion on which was depicted a saint nobody knew. In the death scene he is identified with that saint and his throwing of his own life away is symbolized by the medallion falling off and rolling away under the refrigerator. In his deliberate act of self-sacrifice he has found his true identity.

Pinkie's carrying out of murders is one kind of ordeal, made necessary not because of personal issues with his victims, but ones concerned with survival in a community with a set code of behavior, and ultimately with the preservation of his gang. His death, itself, is unintentional and it is the reverse of Scobie's situation. Where Scobie intended to kill himself and make it look like suicide, Pinkie intended to kill the girl who loved him in a kind of euthenasia, and make it look like suicide. In both

cases the plan backfired, and again in Pinkie's death he finds his true relationship with himself and with others. Unable to accept love offered in life, he can recognize it as he dies.

In his ordeal, the whisky priest is given the opportunity of seeing himself clearly, and at the same time is put into that close relationship with the boy, and with the church members in general, and more important from his point of view, with God. It is once again an act in a social setting. Lonely as he is, he is in the "company" of others.

Like the whisky priest, Sarah Miles has always seen only the negative side of herself. Her ordeal is brought on by her willful renouncement of the man whom she loved. It gives her the opportunity to reach out to God, and indirectly has an inspirational effect on Bendrix. She, like Scobie, has sacrificed herself for others. Her act is not a selfish one.

The ordeals of Sillitoe's and Durrell's heroes do not have the religious overtones, but again from a physical ordeal comes a strengthening of relationships with others. Arthur Seaton gets beaten up by two strongmen, who set on him at the instigation of the husbands of two women he has made love to. He knew it could happen, because of the unwritten code of his set. From the help and understanding Doreen shows him at this time grows the love which allows

him to marry her and go to live in one of those housing estates where every house is like the others. His re-entry, beligerent as it is, into a stable society is brought about by the physical ordeal.

The runner's ordeal is physical in a different way. He brings upon himself six months of carrying garbage and other unpleasant tasks, when he could have taken the soft option. His ordeal has meaning for him, and for those he hopes will read his story, in terms of social protest. He doubts the governor would understand, but his aim has to do with relationships within society. It is not just a personal defiance.

Brian Seaton suffers the loss of his close friend as they stand side by side in a trench, during a battle in Malaya. Again this suffering is the spark from which he is able to see himself and his relationships with others. He returns to society with more understanding and less resentment, with more idea of how one can be an individual, even within the restrictive limits set by social mores.

In the military hospital in Algiers Frank Dawley nearly dies. He has done what he felt was necessary for a cause in which he believed. He has got rid of the martyr side of his personality, the role of William Posters, which previously he had often assumed. A friend, at great personal risk, frees him and he is able to return to his own society, ready to start from where that society is, and

work to bring it to a more meaningful point. As before the ordeal in the battle zone has paved the way to renewed relationships of more depth with those who love him, with his wife, and perhaps also with society in general.

The interrelatedness of people is carried to its greatest extreme with Durrell, particularly because of his view of the many-sidedness of time and the open-endedness of action. Justine suffers a partial stroke after having to work in exile for some time, but at the end of the Quartet, the way is paved to the restoration of Hosnani rights and social position. Clea has her hand pierced by a barb from an underwater shotgun. As she is an artist this is a calamity. But in the end she writes of being able to paint with the hand her former lover has reconstructed for her. Her relationship with Darley, and indirectly with the dead Narouz, whose shotgun it had been, is brought to its fullness by this ordeal.

Mountolive must suffer separation from Leila; and Balthazar illness and being reviled as preliminary steps to self-understanding; and Darley must suffer separations and painful recognitions before he can evaluate the relationships of others, and of himself with them.

The self-understanding which the hero achieves is always of significance in terms of inter-personal relationships. The existential attitude which permeates all post World War II literature is expressed here particularly

in terms of human action, or engagement. The choices that have to be made will be with limited knowledge; they must be made nevertheless, and man is then caught in the web he has woven for himself.

How far are these common trends reflected in the American novels? What effect does the vastness and the variety of the American scene have on the hero depicted? Like the English heroes, Flannery O'Connor's, Nelson Algren's and Paul Bowles' all face an ordeal. But where those faced by the English heroes were shattering enough from their point of view, the American hero's is catastrophic. Here is no problem that the "average man," illusive as such a concept may be, may find himself faced with. In every case the trial requires superhuman strength.

O'Connor, Algren and Bowles

Tarwater goes through ordeals of fire, water and rape. The choices he must make involve his "being" in more than physical sense. He has the devil himself to contend with. At no time is there anyone to whom he can turn for help. Everyone at some time or other seems to want him, but only to use him for their own ends. It is not a question of loving him or of respecting him. His existence depends upon his being able to recognize all advice he receives as partial, and in most cases to act in spite of it. He is, as it were, hounded consistently by his uncle's spirit, which is more like a spirit of vengeance than a

saving grace. God is constantly reaching out for Sarah Miles, but He never becomes a kind of other demon, as he does for Tarwater. The whisky priest is betrayed and killed in a Christ-like manner but he is never visited by the devil incarnate, like the lavender man of The Violent Bear It Away.

Haze Motes, too, is an utter loner. Others approach him only to use him, not to follow. They may be fascinated by him, but they do not love or respect him. There is no one who could begin to understand what goes on in his mind, and his ordeal, self-inflicted, ranges from walking in rock-filled shoes and wearing barbed wire round him next to his skin, to burning out his own eyes with quicklime. Like Tarwater he is "possessed" by his visions and unable to make really meaningful communication with anyone, for they have minds appropriate to their feet of clay.

Nelson Algren's protagonists also suffer a physical ordeal which reaches catastrophic proportions. Agonies undergone by Frankie Machine in his morphine addiction and withdrawal are more than any mere mortal should be expected to withstand. The spirit of evil shows its face constantly, especially in the person of Niftie Louie, who is the devil incarnate for Frankie. There is no one who is strong enough to really help him. Molly comes close to it, but she can do only so much and then is no further support. His wife's self-pity makes her another cross for him to

bear, and he knows his friend will betray him, and that there is no escape from the electric chair. This is not a battle of conscience alone. It is not just a battle for survival. It is a mortal combat with Niftie Louie and with the police in which he must join and in which he knows he cannot prevail. His heroism lies in his spirit to continue against all odds his battle against his own white whale. It is a contest terrible in its isolation.

Two other loners are Dove and Bruno, who attract only those who wish to use them as did Tarwater and Haze Motes. Again they face a physical ordeal of terrifying proportions. Dove is blinded in a combat of animal ferocity, and Bruno, having survived the battering in the boxing ring, leaves handcuffed to face his death. In so doing he suffers the other torment of being within a step of a real life with Steffi, only to see her vanish for ever as the police take him away. They are fully aware that the tasks they face require Herculean strength but they do not turn their backs. Anti-heroes as they may be in their lack of beauty of form or manner, they still retain something of the old romantic hero about them. They will face the dragon, even if it means death, and in that death they have a tragic eminence we used to associate with figures like Othello and Macbeth.

In Port, Kit, and the heroes of Paul Bowles' novels in general, the ordeal takes on a more intense horror

because of its gothic associations. The pain and horror of typhoid in a country with no hygiene or comfort makes Port's solitary death an ordeal in the extreme. Kit, too, must face physical torment and mental anguish. Her insanity and isolation are tragic in their intensity. Dyar finds himself pursued by demons, real and imagined, in a setting where survival itself is a tremendous task; and Stenham, the most human of the group, must sacrifice something which is really part of himself. His death is to be the nightmare "life in death," more lingering and therefore with horrible implications. The nihilism that infuses all these heroes makes their agony an extreme form of the hopelessness the Twentieth Century reader feels in a world where complete answers have ceased to exist. They therefore have an intensity of effect which "thicks men's blood with cold."

If their ordeals are more than the English hero is called upon to bear, the assistance they may expect in making their decisions is even less. Since, as has been noted, these heroes are loners, they do not, as does the English hero, have that quality of leadership about them which draws others to them with love and respect. Those they attract come solely for their own advancement; others they drive away by their odd behavior, even if they should not wish to do so. Tarwater repels and is repelled by all he meets (except the man in lavender, who, being the

wolf in sheep's clothing, seeks to devour, not love). Haze horrifies his landlady, and drives away by his behavior all except those who cling like leeches, not through love of him, but to satisfy some gnawing need in themselves. Frankie increases his wife's self-pity, and makes it impossible even for Molly to help him. He does not make a depth of friendship with anyone sufficient to save him from betrayal. Even Hallie, the girl whom Dove has come to love, is driven away by him. And Bruno cannot accept Steffi's love for what it is, and is lucky to have retained her interest in him, for everybody else has turned their back on him.

Like Bruno, Port behaves in a way calculated only to kill any love for him in Kit. In the end she cannot even believe him when he tells her that he has always lived for her. He is his own worst enemy. Dyar repels offers of friendship from Thami, the Marquesa and Wilcox, and cannot persuade Hadija that the emotion he feels for her is any more than that of any man for a prostitute. Even Stenham accepts the cold sexuality of Lee Veyron and cuts off the genuine warmth of Amar.

The second point of similarity mentioned among the English heroes was their recognizing their niche in society. Such a view of himself is almost impossible for the American hero. For Tarwater and Haze, society is equated with Sodom. Life in the city is a battle against evil powers seeking

control of you. Tarwater will go to the city and redeem it, but he does not see himself in any way as part of it. Haze has seen what man is doing to man and has put out his eyes. His being picked up, nearly dead, in a ditch by two policemen who club him "just in case" indicates how far outside society he is, even if he lives on its fringes. Frankie, Dove and Bruno have beginnings that place them, but their quest for personal identity takes them further and further away from any sense of participation in a stable group. They each become one man against the universe. There is no place in society which they see as their own, and the police are closing in--society sees no place for them either.

Since Bowles' heroes are expatriates, they find it difficult to see themselves as belonging anywhere in the foreign society. Here they provide an interesting contrast to the characters of The Alexandrian Quartet. Port, Kit Dyar and Stenham remain American through and through, whereas Durrell's characters, while maintaining their nationality, also acquire some degree of Alexandrianization. They do become part of this society, and unlike Bowles' travellers, are there to stay. Stenham's return to the West comes about only by his leaving his true, feeling self behind in the grieving Amar.

Because of this total alienation from society, the moments of truth accorded the American heroes are intensely

personal ones. They are not concerned with meaningful relationships with others. They are moments of realization of hidden depths within themselves. They have thus dramatized the other aspect of existentialism, not primarily the choices that act and react with others, though of course these provide the means by which they reach those moments of enlightenment, but the question of "being" itself. "Being," says Wesley Barnes,² "is the beginning, middle, and end of the existing which has meaning for an individual only insofar as he wills, endures, decides, chooses, suffers, and agonizes." It is this willing, enduring, deciding, choosing, suffering and agonizing that we examine in the American hero, while it is more the results of such actions in their human repercussions that we see in the English hero. If the novels indicate what it means to be an Englishman and what it means to be an American, then the two experiences are of a different order of intensity.

Certainly the other post World War II novels which I have read would bear out this impression. The English novels not only support the generalizations made on the basis of the three English authors discussed, but they also differ from other American authors in the same way.

²Wesley Barnes, The Philosophy and Literature of Existentialism (New York: Barrons Educational Series Inc., 1968), p. 210.

Other Post World War II English Novels

The heroes of a large group of contemporary English writers have been given by critics the label "Angry Young Men." While the novelists who belong to this group have received loud acclaim in England, American critics have found it hard to account for the continued interest in this group centered around Kingsley Amis, John Wain and John Osborne.³ Kingsley Amis' Jim Dixon⁴ has become the hero who has most caught the imagination among English readers, and perhaps, caused most irritation among American critics, because of his apparently irresponsible attitude to the larger issues of life.

Jim has taken up Medieval History because it was the easiest subject at his university. He does, however, recognize good teaching and good scholarship. He works for the ideals of "occupational integrity" and is impatient with pretense among his colleagues. Unable to bring the ineffectualness of others to public notice for almost all the novel, he dissipates his irritation by means of elaborate daydreams in which he says the cutting thing which society does not permit him to say in fact, or in which he registers

³See e.g. John W. Aldridge, *Time to Murder and Create*, p. 232; and Frederick R. Karl, "The Angries: Is There a Protestant in the House?" The Contemporary English Novel (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1962), p. 220, who feels that the word "snivelling" would perhaps have been more appropriate than "angry."

⁴Kingsley Amis, Lucky Jim (London: Golancz, 1957).

revolt in some suitable act, like stuffing Professor Welch down the toilet. On occasion, he allows these mental pranks to carry over into real life in the anonymous telephone calls he sometimes makes or the elaborate lies he fabricates, like those intended to hide the hole he had burned in his bed clothes.

Because he comes from the lower class Jim is conscious of the hypocrisy and self-congratulation of the upper middle class, among whom he moves as a college teacher. He understands the social system, since he is a part of it, but like Sillitoe's long distance runner, indicates that the ways of classes further up the social scale are not honest. Gore-Urquart and his niece represent the aristocratic class and they too are able to recognize the pretensions of the Welches and those of whom Jim makes fun. It is for this reason that Gore-Urquart is able to empathize with Jim's pranks and offers him a post in London, not because he has the qualifications but because he "hasn't got the disqualifications--and that's much rarer."⁵ Had he belonged to the upper middle class, he would, I suspect, have automatically had the disqualifications. Thus Jim has moved up the social scale due to the lucky appearance on the scene of Gore-Urquart, just at the point where otherwise Jim would have been crushed by the organization of the genteel university world. I do not entirely agree with James Gordin that the

⁵Ibid., p. 238.

ending is "accomplished only by a shift into the realm of fantasy" and not "the logical outcome of the moral issues demonstrated by the novel."⁶ Granted it is a coincidence that Gore-Urquart is there at the right time but he is impressed with Jim because of his ability to see through sham. This ability has also won his niece Christine's admiration. The middle class in which Jim has been operating could only accept him if he conformed to it. The upper class is able to accept him because he does not conform to the upper middle class. There has always been more room for individual idiosyncrasy among the aristocratic class than among those further down the scale (and of course there is no guarantee that this young man raised in the lower classes will have a successful future in the aristocratic circle, either).

Besides winning the enthusiasm of Gore-Urquart and Christine, Jim has also attracted Margaret, one of his colleagues, and he has favorably impressed Professor Welch and his wife until they become the butt of his pranks. He thus is one who draws the love or admiration of others. In a similar way to the English heroes already discussed, he realizes exactly where he belongs in the History Department hierarchy and in the wider social context illustrated by the weekend parties at the Welches. The third common aspect is also found, for he registers his protest at the

⁶Gindin, Post War British Fiction . . . , pp. 38-39.

section of society in which he moves, from within the society itself, even to the extent of giving an inaugural lecture which was purposely invented to expose what he really saw around him, realizing that in so doing he will call down retribution on his head. He does not find life unbearable and so leave for foreign shores as Bowles' characters do. He does not fight alone and unaided against an unrelenting fate. He always has friends, and in Margaret and Christine as well as in Gore-Urquart, friends who are willing to cover for him or assist him in anything he may wish to do. Furthermore, in Gore-Urquart's intervention, fate deals with him kindly--he is not destroyed.

Jim Dixon fits the three categories of the other British novelists discussed and so do the protagonists of Amis' That Uncertain Feeling, I Like It Here, and Take a Girl Like You. John Lewis in That Uncertain Feeling, like Jim, is a great mimic and exposé of public nonsense. He constantly debates and worries over his relationships with others. Having come from the simplicity of a mining town to the complex world of Aberdarcy, he attempts to adjust to the new social setting and these attempts form the real basis of the novel. "The social and the sexual consume far more time and speculation in Amis' novels" than do problems of occupational integrity,⁷ and wider

⁷Ibid., p. 38.

issues involving man's position in the universe never occur to his protagonists. Like Jim, John finds the structured society of his new situation one to which he is unwilling to accommodate. Both must move, Jim to London with its greater social variety, John back to the mining town where he can find his niche more easily among the lower class. In Amis' later two novels the heroes are more socially adaptable. Garnet Bowen, in I Like It Here, sets aside moral scruples raised by his wife and investigates a novelist for a publishing firm. He handles himself adroitly in the society of Portugal. In Take a Girl Like You there are two major characters, Patrick Standish and Jenny Bunn. Patrick wants to seduce Jenny and succeeds eventually, and Jenny learns that the pattern of behavior she has brought with her from the small town in which she grew up must be adapted. She learns how to keep Patrick, and how to operate in the more sophisticated town. For Jim and John Lewis adjustment to the middle class way of life would mean too much loss of the social values of their past. For Garnet Bowen, Patrick and Jenny, adjustment must be made to society in order for them to survive in that class in which they wish to live.

In all the Amis novels, the hero as he moves in the society in which he is placed establishes his own identity by his relationships with others. We are not shown Jim puzzling over his reactions to outside stimuli, as we are

with Algren's or Bowles' heroes. We are shown those characters he approves of and gets on well with, and those he thinks "stuffy" and makes fun of. By his interrelation with others we come to know his inner mind. People of everyday stature, Amis' heroes are seen against a range of English society and work out their destiny within, and by means of that society. Though they may be placed in a part of the society to which they do not wish to adjust, they are never utterly alone in their struggle to survive and they find their niche in society and foreswear neither English society as a whole nor Western civilization.

Joe Lampton, in John Braine's Room at the Top, belongs to the same group of heroes as Jim Dixon, but instead of just kicking against the middle class system he has decided to make out well in it. He heads for big money and a high class girl. The clashes for Joe are between the values of his lower class upbringing, love, feeling, temporary satisfaction, and those of the middle class, money, reason and long-range ambition. His powers of attracting others are chiefly with the women of the story. They are definitely there. His position on the social scale is clear to him, as his early conversations with the aristocratic Susan show:

"I'm sorry for keeping you waiting," she said, "I couldn't find my engagement book. Saturday evening will be all right, Joe."

The first dragon was killed, even if it was only a small one. I tried not to sound too exultant.

"Grand. I'll call for you at a quarter past six, shall I?"

"No, no," she said quickly, "I'll meet you at the theatre."

"A quarter to seven then."

"Golly here's Mummy. I must rush. Goodbye."

"Goodbye," I said, feeling a little puzzled. Some of the guilt had already been taken off the gingerbread.⁸

Susan's use of the word "Mummy" categorizes her as upper class immediately. Joe goes on to comment on his not being good enough to call at her house. He has had his brief moment of homesickness when he "had a childish longing for the ugly rooms and streets where to be hungry or lost wasn't possible; for the familiar faces which might bore or irritate but never hurt or betray,"⁹ and has left all this behind for a meteoric rise to the upper class. He is making a new identity for himself in another section of English society.

"Lucky Jim, Look Back in Anger, That Uncertain Feeling and Room at the Top reveal that peculiar social displacement of the working-class graduate, brought about by what Geoffrey Gorer once called 'hypergamy' (where the hero of working-class origin is married to, or having an affair with, a woman of higher social status)." As Leslie Paul goes on to say, "The process of graduation enables the male to hide his social origin from almost everyone but himself. He may

⁸John Braine, Room at the Top (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), p. 69.

⁹Ibid., p. 11.

deceive others, even his girl; himself he cannot deceive and knows fatalistically or angrily that he does not belong."¹⁰ This hero, the young man who by his education has become something different from his father, occurs in novels by a number of English authors. While there has always been an interest in the "social novel" in these boys who "made good," the rash of them after World War II indicates the sudden prominence of this issue, and gives it a different significance. In Dickens, and earlier writers in general, to have been strong enough to have raised one's social position was spectacular. These heroes were somewhat like the dragon-slayers of early legend. In the Twentieth Century, education is a key to financial success, and perhaps to social prestige. The parents encourage their children to gain both--for them this has been an ideal beyond their grasp. When the children do succeed, however, they automatically find themselves in a different class, cut off in many ways from their parents, who cannot bask in the kind of reflected glory that was possible for an Eighteenth or Nineteenth Century parent, but are merely left in a backwater. The hero of the Post World War II English novel, as a result, often has to deal with a generation gap. The ideals that he has come to maintain are not those of his parents, who

¹⁰ Leslie Paul, "The Angry Young Men Revisited," Kenyon Review, Vol. XXVII, No. 2 (Spring, 1965), p. 345.

are often unable to understand how such a state of affairs has come about.

It is important to notice, however, that in this finding themselves in a social group for which their upbringing has not prepared them, the heroes of these novels know the social bracket to which their upbringing is appropriate. They realize that their education has removed the prejudices and hard and fast judgments that go with the class of their upbringing. They must now view society afresh and find themselves within it. In the reader's concentration on the supports the hero has lost and the unknown world he faces, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that he is still one who is admired, like Jim and the long distance runner, for strength of character. He is still functioning in a group and finding out, through personal relationships how he can function in society. Because of his own willingness to accept responsibility for others he may be too trusting of those of other social groups and so be made by them a figure of fun, like John Kemp in Phillip Larkin's Jill; or be taken advantage of like Margaret in Storey's Flight into Camden. But he does not desert his friends. His traditional supports in parents and the customs of the class of his origins may have been removed by education, but he usually still has those who admire and support him. In any case, he is all the more conscious of class and its values and limitations

because of the change. The heroes of this kind of novel cannot return completely to the ways of their parents, because they have seen more of the world. They do come to realize that they cannot abandon entirely what they have been born and brought up with. They judge themselves and their relationships within society, not distinct from it.

John Wain's Hurry On Down also deals with a University graduate, one who refuses to join the middle class, to which he belonged before his University days. Charles Lumley takes job after job, each one of lower rank than the one before, until he ends up as part of a team of script writers for a radio comedy show (presumably even less socially acceptable than that of "bouncer" at a strip joint). Like the two couples in A Travelling Woman, Lumley lays bare some of the curious anomalies of the social scene. In doing so he is always noticed admiringly by others, and does his best for those to whom he makes commitments of friendship, even at considerable cost to himself.

Similar to the University group are Keith Waterhouse's Billy Liar and Storey's This Sporting Life. Like Jim Dixon, Billy uses flights of the imagination to free himself from the humdrum round of his life as an undertaker's assistant in a provincial town. Here again social criticism is not the main aim, the society is taken for granted, and the place of the irregular individual attracts the novelist's interest. But where more direct criticism may be intended,

as of inhuman treatment of players by sports promoters, the criticism comes in much the same format. In This Sporting Life we are shown the rise to money and elevation in social rank of the football star. It is treated in terms of the effects on his relationships with others, particularly the women in his life. This time the personal standing usually associated with the English hero comes from sporting fame, and also, perhaps allied, from sex attraction. Art Machin is very clear where he has come from socially, and has visions of where he is going, but he is all through the pawn of the big business magnate. Even though the illusion of freedom is there, he can never fully escape the ties of his upbringing. Money can buy a better hospital room for the woman he loved, who is as much caught up in the web of her social standing as he, but it cannot change his way of looking at life. As with the angries in general, the interest centers around how he manages within the framework of society, whether he will beat it, join it, or be subjugated by it. In this case it is a double society, that of the football hierarchy, within that of the provincial town.

Since Amis, John Braine, William Cooper, Thomas Hind, Peter Towry, John Wain and Keith Waterhouse have all had their protagonists labelled "Angry Young Men,"¹¹ they all

¹¹See Karl, "The Angries"

will be found to concern themselves with the unusual individual in society and how he fares. This limitation within social issues has been seen by some critics as "wilful insularity, the new sincerity-haunted little Englandism of settling (rather than rising) expectation and diminished world position."¹²

Rubin Rabinovitz¹³ singles out Durrell, Golding and Murdoch as three writers whose novels differ significantly in form and tone from those of the Angry Young Men. Golding deserves careful attention in this study, because of his great popularity among American undergraduates. Since his Lord of the Flies "succeeded Salinger's Catcher in the Rye as the book most often discussed in Student Unions, English Literature classrooms, and literary seminars" in the middle sixties,¹⁴ it would seem that in this writer some of the "little Englandism" has disappeared--that there may be closer parallels between his work and that of his American contemporaries.

While not enjoying this special notoriety, Iris Murdoch and Muriel Spark have "not suffered the lapse of critical interest that has overtaken gifted contemporaries

¹²Warner Berthoff, "Fortunes of the Novel: Muriel Spark and Iris Murdoch," Massachusetts Review, Vol. 8 (Spring, 1967), p. 301.

¹³Rubin Rabinovitz, The Reaction Against Experimentation in the English Novel, 1950-1960 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967).

¹⁴Paul Elmen, William Golding (New York: William B. Eerdmans, 1967), p. 11.

like William Golding and Kingsley Amis: they have also been very nearly the most productive."¹⁵ Their interest to the critic may also suggest something less limitingly "English" about them.

Interested in this same group, Robert Scholes lists Durrell, Golding and Iris Murdoch among his "fabulators,"¹⁶ also including Nabokov and "a host of younger men" among the Americans. I would add Muriel Spark to this list, for her novels too have a fable-like quality. According to Scholes, the fabulators have returned to a "less realistic and more artistic kind of narrative: more shapely, more evocative; more concerned with ideas and ideals, less concerned with things."¹⁷ Let us also examine their heroes, therefore, to see whether they tend toward the American pre-occupation with individual crisis, or whether they are similar to the English hero so far emerging, the social being.

The first of this group is William Golding. Like Greene he writes from a religious commitment and his dissection of the motives of his characters makes his heroes closer to the American group than are those of the other English writers. Yet they still retain the same three

¹⁵Berthoff, "Fortunes of the Novel . . . ," p. 301.

¹⁶Robert Scholes, The Fabulators (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 13.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 12.

similarities which set them apart as being typically English. They inspire love and respect in others, they know what their place in society is and they function within that society and through it, not in spite of it. In Lord of the Flies the characters are a group of school-boys, stranded by an air crash on an uninhabited island. They are as completely cut off from the society of their upbringing as it is possible to make them, and they construct their own society, based on the beliefs that they have acquired. Each of the boys has a different dominant trait of character, and it is the interplay of these which forms the interest of the story. The two who represent civilized society's values are Ralph the hero, and his associate, Piggy. Against them is ranged brute strength in the person of Jack. One key symbol is the conch shell, which is blown by Ralph to assemble all the boys for conference. It represents the power of government, and great effort is expended to gain control through it. Another is Piggy's glasses. He represents book-learning, for he is the one who knows about survival and government, and is thus Ralph's advisor. His inability to live without his glasses parallels his inability to live by anything but civilized means. With his glasses fire can be made. Because of this they, also, are the object of much ambition, and their loss is literally death to him. It leads to the fire which nearly consumes all the boys, but is also the

means for summoning aid, for the glare brings a destroyer to investigate. Ralph and Jack are the two key figures. Each has his own leadership powers and his followers. Each knows just how strong he is, and how much control he has. By this means he recognizes what his position is in the island society, just as surely as heroes of other English novels do in theirs. Since the boys are all originally part of a select school group, their origins are all the same--all upper class.

The struggle for survival of civilization, against the forces of animalism, which takes place is depicted entirely in terms of personal relationships, and in terms of collective fear of the "beast," that symbol of the hidden fear in every man. Though the comment made on civilized man can be applied much more generally, it is focused specifically on British society by the final episode. Attracted by the fire, which has become ironically the beacon Ralph wanted tended right from the first, a destroyer comes to investigate. A British officer is rowed ashore. He is horrified at what he hears of the behavior of these children. "I should have thought," he exclaims, "that a pack of English boys . . . would have put up a better show." Notice that "the boys are being rescued by [English] adults, but they are in this plight because of a grown-ups' war, and the destroyer which rescues them is

itself on a manhunt not unlike that organized by Jack."¹⁸
 This book too is a commentary on the society in Britain,
 and its belief in the civilizing influence of a certain type
 of education. As Paul Elman points out, Lord of the Flies
 is directly descended from

the archetype of all such adventures, Daniel De Foe's Robinson Crusoe (1719). De Foe drew the rough outline that many lesser hands have filled in: there is a disaster that spares a few survivors, there is a lucky landing on an island that turns out to be a place of safety but also a place of mysterious danger, there is a struggle before the eventual rescue. Crusoe is the quintessential Englishman, who believes in God but who does not waste time in brooding about Beelzebub and Gabriel. He busies himself instead by turning his primitive acre into a copy of a Sussex farm. Not only is his English common sense on his side, but God is there too. More ready than Golding to ascend the pulpit, De Foe tells the story, as he explains in the preface, "to justify the Wisdom of Providence in all the Variety of our Circumstance."²⁹

If Lord of the Flies has some parallels with Robinson Crusoe, it is more directly descended from R. M. Ballantyne's The Coral Island (1857), which it brings up to date. Ballantyne's Jack and Ralph lead and explore as if to the manner born, and his boys meet threats of pirates and savages undaunted. He never doubts that

a public school discipline could subdue a native disturbance, just as easily as Robinson Crusoe built his rustic paradise and rescued Friday. What possible threat could survive the combined attack of Anglo-Saxon ingenuity, a tradition of justice impartially

¹⁸Elman, William Golding, p. 14.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 13.

administered, a stiff upper lip, and possibly also a Providence anxious that goodness should win.²⁰

Golding views the effect of education differently. He is saying that English society is based upon suppositions which are no longer relevant to the wider world in which it is placed. The upper class, like the destroyer's naval officer, expect certain types of behavior to result from certain upbringing. (Perhaps they, with the officer, were all boyhood readers of Ballantyne.) Yet they are engaged in a war which resembles very closely the episodes on the island, and the naval officer does not see it. It is clear that Golding intended that his readers should. The naval officer, then, is similar to the older generation depicted by Amis, and those associated with him. The boys with Ralph and Jack may grow up Charles Lumleys!

While Golding's subject here is the loss of innocence, as it is for Faulkner, James, Twain and Conrad, and many others, it still retains its peculiarly English flavor. Again Ralph draws people to him. Even some of Jack's followers still wish they were strong enough to side with Ralph. Again his position, both in English society and in that of the island, is clearly known to him, and he strives within that framework to maintain what he believes in--a set of values which themselves designate him as upper class. He does not seek the beast alone, or pit himself

²⁰Ibid., p. 14.

against this new world. His concern is in his relating to others, and in maintaining values in his society.

In The Spire, Dean Jocelin unites in himself the clashing spirits of Ralph and Jack. He has a vision of a mighty spire above his cathedral, and sets himself to the realizing of that vision, believing it to be for the glory of God. In the delirium that precedes his death he acknowledges that such a spire was really for the glory of himself, and that he has failed to recognize his own love for Goody Pangall, and his real reason for arranging her marriage to the church caretaker--Pangall's known impotence. He is therefore responsible for Goody's falling in love with Roger Mason, the builder who will erect the spire simply out of regard for Jocelin. This means that he is also responsible for Pangall's death, indirectly for Goody's death in childbirth, and Roger's attempted suicide. It is shown that even his rise to high position in the church has not been on the basis of his spiritual fitness. It came about because of the request of his aunt, mistress to the king. He does acknowledge his true place in the scheme of things. He suffers the expected physical testing, and dies with the look on his face that shows he knows himself redeemed, even before the last rights are performed. He thus comes to understand himself within the society of his town, and within the tenets of his church, not outside or despite either.

If Lord of the Flies and The Spire fit rather curiously into the scheme of the Contemporary British novel as I see it, then Pincher Martin,²¹ Golding's third novel seems at first glance to collapse the whole edifice. How can it be suggested that a novel where there is only one human being (ergo the hero, Geoffrey Martin), can be social in its conception? The case seems even more lost when one discovers that even that one human dies in the fifth paragraph. Yet I maintain that this, too, is an English-type novel, and that it fits the three requirements that label it as such. The hero is one who draws others to love or respect him. He knows what his position in society is, and he finds his true identity through that society. Where Dean Jocelin represents Jack and Ralph, Geoffrey Martin represents the last stages of Dean Jocelin's facing up to what he had called the "cellerage," those uglinesses which the dean sublimated for as long as he could by apparently throwing himself heart and soul into God's work. Martin is a lieutenant on a destroyer (therefore reminding the reader of the end of Lord of the Flies). When it is torpedoed, he is thrown into the Atlantic. As the castaway clings to a rock for survival, pictures from his past life pass before his inner eye, building up in the reader's mind, and in Pincher's too, a portrait of a "complete rotter," to use

²¹Published in America under the title The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin.

a phrase chosen carefully by Neville Braybrooke.²² The choice of words places Martin in the social scheme, just as much as Susan's "Mummy."²³ He is upper class (further emphasized by his naval commission), and he has been so loved and followed by others that he has been able to use the power of sex with women, men and boys, to promote himself. "I climbed . . . over the bodies of used and defeated people," he boasts.

If Jocelin's besetting sin was pride, Martin's is greed, hence the suitability of his nick-name, Pincher. His real name, Christopher, is thus ironical for he is no Christ-bearer. He is no symbol of love, human or divine. But he does become the lost sheep of the parable. Martin's clinging to the rock is the study of a man who will not accept death. His "ravenous ego invents a rock for him to endure on . . . He is not fighting for bodily survival but for his continuing identity in face of what will smash it and sweep it away--the black lightning, the compassion of God," as Golding himself has told us.²⁴ Martin is a man obsessed and alone. To this extent he is like Ahab. But he is not like Ahab in his fuller characterization. He

²²Neville Braybrooke, "William Golding," Notes on Literature, Vol. 80 (March, 1968), issued by the British Council, London.

²³See p. 163.

²⁴In a note to the Radio Times when his book was adapted for broadcasting.

is Greed, as in a morality play (and indeed he had been selected as an actor for just such a part), but he is no doer of fantastic deeds. His battling to prevent God from taking his ego is simply clutching with two giant claws to a tooth-like rock, formed in his mind. He is no Christ figure; he is pitiful, and while he may at times earn our disgust for what he has done in the past, and eventually our sympathy, he never inspires that awe which the American hero carries with him to a greater or lesser extent, wherever he goes. Martin becomes simply the maggot of the fable told to him by the producer.

. . . when the Chinese want to prepare a very rare dish they bury a fish in a tin box. Presently all the lil' maggots peep out and start to eat. Presently no fish. Only maggots Next the little ones eat the tiny ones. The middle-sized ones eat the little ones. The big ones eat the middle-sized ones. Then the big ones eat each other. Then there are two and then one and where there was a fish there is now one huge successful maggot. Rare dish

Like Jocelin, in the seconds before his death, having reviewed some of his life and acknowledged his real relationship with others, he becomes the one sinner that repenteth, and so may have brought joy to heaven even if, in fact, in his fall he really did not have time even to kick off his boots. He is placed within the hierarchy of the navy, and of British society at the same time. He finds himself, in review, in terms of social relationships, and so, lonely and lost as he is, he too fits the three criteria.

Golding's novels have several characteristics which at first make them seem of American stamp. They lack direct female characters; they deal with men and boys in an extreme situation, under stress; but they mix very subtly the English characteristics and the less English. The hero still has the respect and often devotion of those who admire him, and the society of Britain is there giving a solid base to all he achieves. At the deeper level these books too, concern the English society from which they grow.

Where Golding is interested in man under pressure, Miss Spark is involved with the eccentric. Her theme is basically that there are some very curious characteristics in quite natural people; that the world is filled with demons, "and there is a vast reality not perceived by the ordinary man."^{25,26} Jean Brodie, the protagonist of The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, is a teacher of history. Miss Spark takes the bond of hero-worship that often does bind pupil and teacher, and explores the tremendous effect this can have. Jean Brodie can control the minds of her more receptive pupils, and so lives through them. One of them, Sandy Stranger, is writing a book, "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace." It is the transfiguration of the

²⁵Ann B. Dobie, "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie: Muriel Spark Bridges the Credibility Gap," Arizona Quarterly, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Autumn, 1969).

²⁶In this respect she is doing for the novel what Coleridge saw as his mission for poetry in the Lyrical Ballads.

commonplace which is Miss Brodie's aim. She sees her goal as leading the students to their "prime" when insight and instinct meet in a "total life-gesture." Here is another protagonist who draws others to her, and who lives very literally through others.

In The Ballad of Peckham Rye Dougal Douglas performs a similar take-over, this time of the minds of a whole Welsh village, when he arrives "to help industry and the Arts walk hand in hand" for a firm of Peckham textile manufacturers. It is fascinating to see how, stripped of their code of behavior and really looking at each other through the distorted lens Dougal holds out, these folk can get so thoroughly at loggerheads. Siriol Hugh-Jones, reviewing The Ballad of Peckham Rye for The Tatler, gives some idea of the effect on the reader.

I have no words to describe the precise, wierd spell Miss Spark exerts over me, nor to convey the magic accuracy of her ear . . . her wild, sly, glittering wit and the little way she has of slamming you over the back of the head while you are still laughing. You must and will read The Ballad of Peckham Rye in one awestruck gulp.

Yes, the effect is scary, but not the key figure himself, so much. He is a kind of deus-ex-machina, but not a fully drawn figure, not someone you suffer with and for, not heroic or archetypal, but a denizen of the land of witches and fairies, a minor devil who exposes factory life as it really is. But he is not The Devil. He comes into a community and throws it askew, then leaves the whirlpool to

subside. Here the personal relationships which become reinterpreted are those of others. It is still within a very definite frame of social reference.

Something of the same fascination hangs about Iris Murdoch's work. Her first novel, Under the Net, has a hero, Jake Donaghue, who belongs to the same group as Jim Dixon and Charles Lumley. As a writer he exists by translating, rather than producing anything original. He gets involved in many kinds of scrapes and minor law-breaking. After all these escapades and journeys between London and Paris, Jake comes to realize that the impressions he has had of people have been incorrect--warped usually by distortions of language, the medium of the writer. From this discovery, and the subsequent re-evaluations, he finds his real self, and tells his landlady that he will begin to write again. The society associated with the film world, within the English society in general, is the means through which he makes his progress. He has, in his realization of the true relationship between himself and Hugo, Anna and the rest freed himself to be himself. It seems the clue to a meaningful existence is to hang on to something small that one can attempt. Here is no Ahab, tempting fate. Just a young man trying to make his way without losing his dignity.

Like Muriel Spark, Iris Murdoch is able to maintain a delicate balance between the serious and the ridiculous.

James Hall feels that she "attempts to synthesize opposing values out of hand. At her best she shows a choice between excess and sour grapes, with an undistributed middle. (In these circumstances the absurd is as popular as it is because it seems the only balancing system. It combines the mixture of aggression and sensitivity with realistic awareness. The facts would seem demonic--and the absurd functions to show that they are not.)"²⁷ This use of the absurd produces a different hero from the one which arises out of the American use of the absurd. If Iris Murdoch uses the absurd to play down the demonic, and Muriel Spark to show how normal the demonic can appear, the absurd is often used in American writing, as we have seen in Bowles, to play it up.

The Sandcastle, Miss Murdoch's third novel, illustrates her humanizing touch. The hero, William Mor, is a school-teacher with political ambition. Into his life comes an artist, Rain Carter, with whom he falls in love. Rain becomes for Mor the object of a romantic quest. But there is a very delicate balance drawn. Mor's wife and children represent stability and society, but they have their repelling aspects, however much we may from time to time sympathize with them. Mor's love for Rain is rather

²⁷James Hall, The Lunatic Giant in the Drawing Room, The British and American Novel Since 1930 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 215.

ridiculous, but is presented in a sympathetic way. We understand that he does want to run away with her and "live happily ever after." Through seeing how he really feels about his son and daughter as they perform feats intended to bring him back to the family, Mor chooses not to run away with Rain. He has his face towards a parliamentary career once more and his family intact.

As she uses absurdity to normalize rather than to emphasize the bizarre, so in The Bell she "borders on the edge of Gothicism," but "never steps over the line."²⁸ The symbols are part of the total effect and never become conspicuous. In her protagonist she is exploring the connection between illusion and reality, and between different kinds of love. Dora is a lively young wife, who joins her husband, a dedicated professor of history doing some research in a lay community. Dora is a sort of female Jim Dixon who, by the practical joke of substituting an old bell believed to be connected with a legend for a new bell the community is presenting to the near-by nunnery, is puncturing hypocrisy. The inmates of the community are all under illusions about religion, and their community is corrupting, offering an illusion of innocence instead of true vocation. Unlike the members, Dora is able both to

²⁸Charles Shapiro, Contemporary English Novelists (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), p. 69.

give and receive love, and so provides a commentary on the community and a hope for the future.

Like The Bell, A Severed Head treads the difficult margin between humor and terror, this time exploring the contemporary boundaries of freedom and restriction in love relationships. The bell, the net, the sandcastle, the severed head are all symbols around which the action turns. They are all things after which the hero strives. But they are not Moby Dicks, or any faint shadow of him. These heroes are people caught in a web of coincidences, of which our world is made, floundering and finding some answer to the questions raised by personal relationships, and relationships with God. Her heroes, like those of the other British novelists, function within the community, the society of their setting. They have some standing, they examine their own relationships and force others to examine theirs. By the knowledge thus gained, they come to a partial self-knowledge. Her heroes are part of the tradition of tragicomedy which, as Hall has pointed out, "the British developed before anyone had heard of the absurd."²⁹ Iris Murdoch portrays a hero in a world suffused with a sense of the unaccountable and the ridiculous. Her advice is that one can find satisfaction with the particular. In this respect she is perhaps a spokesman for the English writer in general.

²⁹Hall, The Lunatic Giant in the Drawing Room . . . , p. 223.

Other Post World War II American Authors

To find a spokesman for the American point of view on life, we might turn to R. B. Lewis who describes the new kind of protagonist found in Post World War II American literature as picaro and pilgrim--an outlaw either literally or spiritually, making an "eccentric pilgrimage" through a mysterious, hostile world "towards some shrine of honor and value and belief."³⁰ This hero, the walker, as Richard Pearce calls him,³¹ can be linked through Henry David Thoreau's essay "Walking," to a "literary hero who appeared in Moby Dick and Huckleberry Finn, and then skipped almost a century to capture the imagination of the best American writers of the mid-twentieth century."³² He appears not only in Nelson Algren's Walk on the Wild Side, but also in J. D. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye, James Purdy's Malcolm, Norman Mailer's Advertisements for Myself, and in Saul Bellow's The Adventures of Augie March, and Henderson the Rain King, and Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man.

Augie March is perhaps the best example. He seems to wander without direction. He allows Grandma Lausch, Einhorn, Mrs. Renling, Thea, Stella, Mintouchian, all to

³⁰R. B. Lewis, "Recent Fiction: Picaro and Pilgrim," in A Time of Harvest, ed. by Robert Spiller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), p. 149.

³¹Richard Pearce, "The Walker: Modern American Hero," Massachusetts Review, Vol. 5 (Summer, 1964), 761.

³²Ibid.

organize him. He is shipwrecked, lost at sea, hounded by the mad Bateshaw, and through all this he remains himself. In the end he tells us that what keeps him an individual through all his experiences is "the animal ridens in me, the laughing creature, forever rising up." He calls himself a "sort of Columbus of those near at hand"--he is on a voyage of discovery. If we compare him to Charles Lumley, who also sought to retain his identity in Hurry on Down, we find in Augie something more "elemental." He will remain his own man, whatever life's hostility and absurdity. He has some goal, some ideal just beyond his own comprehension, and it is concerned with developing himself. It is a question of finding out not where he fits into society, but of who he is. His passion for self-analysis shows that relationships with others are of secondary importance. By remaining true to himself in spite of others and in spite of society, he is sure he will achieve whatever he must.

Going even further afield, Henderson in Henderson the Rain King, leaves wife, family and pig-farm, and walks in Africa seeking basic truths, which, in true romantic style, he expects to find in those unscathed by civilization.³³ He is driven by some inner urge. In each of the societies he meets he feels the necessity to be a kind of

³³Cf. Port and Kit in The Sheltering Sky.

savior, though good intentions and technical knowledge do not necessarily accomplish this aim. For example, finding the Arnewi suffer drought because of frogs in their drinking supply, he blows up the "tank" and so destroys water supply and frogs. When it comes, at last, to the vast trial of strength that he undertakes for Dahfu³⁴ he is equal to the superhuman demands made of him and so becomes rain king. Henderson's relationship with Dahfu shows how this American hero differs from the English. Dahfu is not drawn to love and respect Henderson. He is chief of the tribe and therefore above all society including Henderson, but he does understand and undertake the education of this outsider. He also wants to use Henderson for his own ends. Henderson finds he does admire Dahfu, and so is able to re-evaluate himself in terms of what Dahfu teaches him. But he does not, therefore, join Dahfu's tribe. He is unaware he will become rain king and does not relish the idea when he finds out. Moreover, when Dahfu dies, Henderson feels no responsibility to the tribe as Dahfu's friend. He has learned what he needed to know and will return home, not out of having fitted himself into a niche in society where he belongs, but because in the kind of universe we inhabit one might as well make the best one can of what is available. "What's the universe?" he asks. "Big. And what are we? Little.

³⁴One of the many uplifting masculine friendships in American literature. See Conclusion.

I therefore might as well be at home where my wife loves me. And even if she only seemed to love me, that too was better than nothing."³⁵ The possibility of a closer relationship with his wife or with society in general does not really enter the picture. He becomes a symbol of the many who see themselves as outside society--alone.

Without such far journeying, Ralph Ellison's invisible man has to discover how he can be at home in the world, when no one, neither white nor black, sees him as he is. He becomes in this way a symbol, not only of the black in America, but also of man in the modern world. He finally destroys all those papers which seem to give him a personal identity, cuts himself off from the personality society wants to make him, and settles for what he himself can make of himself, outside it.

There is a curious link of another kind between these three and Moby Dick and Huckleberry Finn, and Twentieth Century American fiction in general. That is the escapism form they take. To read The Adventures of Augie March, or Henderson, or indeed any of the "walker" hero novels is to leave the humdrum and go on an adventurous holiday, such as travel posters assure us is just around the corner. There is a need felt among American readers to embark on such travels. Martin Green pointed

³⁵Saul Bellow, Henderson the Rain King (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), pp. 328-329.

out that where Lawrence Durrell was enjoyed by English readers because Britain "was hungry for an artist who will give her a world of mythical size color and complexity, which yet needn't be taken seriously," for American readers the enthusiasm was "a graduate-school vision of sin and subtlety in exotic old Alexandria, where you can forget you were brought up in Ohio."³⁶ Here, then, is the final clue I have been seeking. American literature still retains its yearnings of idealism. Under the many guises it assumes, there is still a remnant of the hopes attendant on the New World, and faith in the American Adam still infuses the hero this side of the Atlantic. "Bellow and Ellison describe a reality that is senseless and threatening but which does not deny human possibilities. It is just this paradox that characterizes the world of Moby Dick and Huckleberry Finn--and the "saunterer" who finds his Holy Land in walking."³⁷

The majority of Post World War II American novels are, like The Adventures of Augie March, Henderson and The Invisible Man, quest novels. The most significant among them are those concerned with the fate of people of minority cultures, particularly Jews and Black People, since they

³⁶ Martin Green, "A Minority Report," in The World of Lawrence Durrell, ed. by Harry T. Moore (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962).

³⁷ Pearce, "The Walker: Modern American Hero," p. 764.

thus become symbolical of the modern American view of man, as it appears in literature, as being alone in a hostile world. The heroes of these novels personify the "suffering" aspect of Being.³⁸

Herzog is one of these questors, one given not so much to walking as to journeys by taxi. Of all Bellow's heroes he is the one who most resembles the angry young University graduates of Amis, Wain, and their compatriots, in background and in his feelings of alienation. Yet he is, when completely drawn, not like them at all. Like Jim Dixon, Herzog has complaints about the life he leads. Both are University professors. Both are victims of circumstances, but also bring upon themselves much of the confusion that surrounds them. However, where we identify easily with Jim, and feel him more "sane" than the hypocritical role-players among whom he moves, our identification with Herzog is much more complex. For one thing Herzog is well aware that he is balancing perilously near the edge of insanity. There are even moments when such a possibility has a suggestion of satisfaction or escape in it, for he is not like Jim, struggling to maintain his genuine self in a society to which such a self is anathema. He is the victim of a struggle between two conflicting aspects of his own personality. The battle is thus one for

³⁸See p. 156.

survival, and so carries far more anxiety. Where Jim cheerfully amused himself by flights of the imagination, Herzog is the victim of a compulsion to write letters. They are addressed to the living and the dead. Many of these have a face-saving function. They "explain," "have it out," "justify," and "make amends." There is a satisfaction for him in pointing out Shapiro's faults of personality and academic shortcomings,³⁹ because Shapiro has been able to fascinate Herzog's wife, Madeleine. He has been unable to express his anger in staff meetings, but is able to criticize with precision the evening-class program and the lack of insight in its organization, in his letter to Smithers.⁴⁰ There are a number of other letters to academic and political figures, all carrying with them the idea that there is a serious flaw in the thinking of the addressee, which Herzog, in his self-appointed, all-seeing position is able to demonstrate. The president has not understood the full import of his income tax regulations; Edvig has not realized how he was being used by Madeleine; Strawforth has put forth a ridiculous defence of the risk involved in radioactivity; Governor Stevenson has deserted the cause of the intellectual; Commissioner Wilson's police force cannot control the parks.

³⁹ Saul Bellow, Herzog (New York: The Viking Press, 1964), pp. 74-77.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 28.

In the letter to Edvig⁴¹ which is begun twice, the necessity to score a point is clear in the version: "My dear Edvig, I have news for you." He goes on with bitter recriminations against Edvig's unprofessional behavior.

Yet the letters also frequently indicate the other side of the picture--the self-contempt which results from neurotic pride. And it is this neurotic pride which reminds one of Ahab, and which keeps him alone and unable to join in any group situation. With the exception of Ramona, Herzog never gets into a satisfactory personal relationship with anyone, and as a result, is not able to see himself as a unity.

"There is someone inside me. I am in his grip. When I speak of him I feel him in my head, pounding for order. He will ruin me."⁴²

Herzog is caught in a series of compulsions of which the letter-writing is just one. He cannot identify his real self, and he is pulled apart by contradictory forces within him. He does not have the one external focus for his compulsion, as does Ahab, but the compulsion is there, and the battle as soul-destroying. In some of his letters he shows himself to be like Ahab, bent on self-glorification, vindictive triumph and mastery of life through intelligence and will power. This is the hero who pits himself unrelentingly against the universe. "I am Herzog--I have to be

⁴¹Ibid., p. 53.

⁴²Ibid., p. 11.

that man. There is no one else to do it."⁴³ He exults in his ability to make clear judgments and at the same time acknowledges that "his judgments exposed the boundless, baseless bossiness and wilfulness, the nagging embedded in his mental constitution." In the seclusion of his own thoughts he can admit that his aim was "to wrap the subject up, to pull the carpet from under all the other scholars, show them what was what, stun them, expose their triviality once and for all. It was not simple vanity, but a sense of responsibility that was the underlying motive."⁴⁴ The idea of responsibility is one basic to Bellow's novels, and it is important to note that the word has a different implication from the same word as used by Jim Dixon. Responsibility for the Angries involved personal relationships, probably with women. Jim was concerned lest he had assumed more responsibility for Margaret than he could leave unaccounted for if he transferred his affection to Christine. Responsibility for Herzog (and it may also be noted, for Malamud's Frank Alpine) means willingness to suffer. It is not a matter of suffering for some person. It is more concerned with the state of the hero's own being. Here again, as in Flannery O'Connor, the protagonist assumes a kind of cosmic responsibility, not for a person but more for "humanity."

⁴³Ibid., p. 67.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 119.

It can be equated with the sort of self-dramatization already noticed in the American hero.

"The Bellow hero takes little interest in anyone who is not fabulous, who does not have his prime quality in excess In the modern British comic novels eccentricity ordinarily marks individuality; in Bellow, it accentuates representativeness."⁴⁵ Herzog, then, like Augie and Henderson, is representative, a symbol of Man in his plight in a hostile universe, someone unable to place himself in any society, and forced to "make" himself despite his lone state.

If Bellow's heroes suffer compulsions, so does Malamud's Frank Alpine. The hero of The Assistant is a wanderer, an Italian brought up to dislike Jews, but drawn to the family of Morris Bober with a strange intensity. The names of the novel have symbolic significance, indicating that this is not just a realistic account of life in a city ghetto. Morris Bober has links with Martin Buber, the Jewish religious existentialist, and his surname does not include the sound of "boob" without cause. Frank is linked with St. Francis; he is Italian and must sacrifice himself like the saint if he is to prevail. "Alpine" indicates the mountain he must climb, and links him with the Ahab kind of quest, in the same way as Croft's insistence

⁴⁵Hall, The Lunatic Giant in the Drawing Room . . . , p. 134.

on climbing his mountain, in Norman Mailer's The Naked and the Dead, includes him in the fraternity.

The compulsion in Frank's case is to transfer the guilt he feels at having been part of a gang that robbed Bober's store to other less serious crimes, so as to put off confessing. He therefore steals from Bober and spies on the naked Helen, his daughter. On each occasion he feels a peculiar joy, as well as remorse, and in each case the transfer of guilt is not completely satisfying, and so he is compelled to keep doing it. This treadmill on which he sets himself even enables him to feel very "moral" because he is doing something about the original crime. But he is not confessing. He is forcing himself to suffer. Ironically it is the capacity of Bober (and Jews as a whole) to suffer uncomplainingly that has most irritated him.

That's what they live for, Frank thought, to suffer. And the one that has got the biggest pain in the gut and can hold onto it the longest without running to the toilet is the best Jew. No wonder they got on his nerves.⁴⁶

Gradually by a process over which neither has any control, Frank becomes Bober, so that when Helen and her mother return from Bober's funeral, they hear the till ring and realize that Frank is now the grocer. Like Bober he has "made himself a victim,"⁴⁷ and by an expiation long and

⁴⁶ Bernard Malamud, The Assistant, Signet Edition (New York: The New American Library, 1957), p. 71.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 181.

physically exhausting it is possible for him to reach "salvation." It is noticeable that Frank is on his own almost continually. He almost has a relationship worked out with Helen, but at the last moment destroys it by forcing her to let him make love to her when she would have giving herself willingly, had he only let her. He is not part of the family over the store, and is unable to fully understand Bober, or explain his own feelings to him. His attempts to make the business pay are to help the Bober family, but they fulfill first the urgent necessity he feels for expiation on his part.

To Malamud, says Norman Podhoretz,

The Jew is humanity seen under the twin aspects of suffering and moral aspiration. Therefore any man who suffers greatly and who also longs to be better than he is can be called a Jew.⁴⁸

In his hand, the novel becomes something more than realistic. Like Flannery O'Connor's *Tarwater*, the hero becomes the center of a parable or myth.

He has created a folk, partly out of what actually exists and partly out of what his spirit demands. You would not go to Bernard Malamud for a balanced and reliable picture of the East European immigrant Jew, but you would go to him for profounder truths⁴⁹ about human beings than mere observation can yield.

This "folk" is one created to explore the question of culpability and responsibility. As in the case of Bellow's

⁴⁸Norman Podhoretz, "The New Nihilism in the Novel," Partisan Review, Vol. 25 (Fall, 1958), 589.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 590.

heroes, the question is concerned with the salvation of one character. The world in which he moves impinges upon him, but we are not interested so much in his interaction with that world as with the struggle within his own soul. Like Sgt. Croft he must climb his mountain. "The mountain is everything man must conquer before he can achieve omnipotence, before he can become god."⁵⁰

Also belonging to the quest group of novels are Joseph Heller's Catch 22, and Ken Kesey's One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, which have been found by Joseph Waldmeir to be the only two cases since the second World War when "serious American novelists [have] made a conscious effort to transport the novel into the realm of the absurd."⁵¹ Waldmeir notes further that Henderson the Rain King, Mailer's Barbary Shore and Ellison's Invisible Man approach the absurd, but are caught up short by their adherence to traditional forms. Heller's and Kesey's heroes may thus differ from the other American heroes examined.

Lt. John Yossarian, the hero of Heller's Catch 22, goes on a quest which has a sort of parallel with its medieval forebears.⁵² His charm appears to be a mixture of

⁵⁰Hassan, "The Way Down and Out . . . ," p. 87

⁵¹Joseph J. Waldmeir, "Two Novelists of the Absurd: Heller and Kesey," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Autumn, 1964).

⁵²Of which Minna Doskow makes much in "The Night Journey in Catch 22," Twentieth Century Literature, Vol. 12, No. 4 (January, 1967), 186-193.

the basic qualities of Huck Finn and Ahab. He is one of the younger group of American heroes, homeless, caught between a world they have rejected and another they cannot accept. At the end of the novel he is about to escape to Sweden. Sanford Pinsker sees Yossarian as refusing the "traditional journey of learning in manhood,"⁵³ and thus he sees the ending as an escape from reality. I see his final escape as similar to the compulsive journey after *Moby Dick*, as a taking up of a yoke, not a casting of it aside. I thus consider him as like the other American heroes in that he is taking up his responsibility to "make himself," a responsibility which has little to do with particular people or societies. As noted before, it is something more elemental.

At first Yossarian believes he can work within the establishment and use their rules to his own ends. But a night journey through the streets of Rome, a symbolic visit to the underworld, gives him a new view of himself and of life. In this journey he is an onlooker. He is not communicating with those around him, though he may sympathize or identify with them at some times. The journey prepares him for a vision of self-knowledge, when he is close to death in the hospital. In the light of

⁵³ Sanford Pinsker, "Heller's Catch 22: The Protest of the Puer Eternis," Critique, VII (Winter, 1964-1965), 150-162.

this vision, his escape to Sweden becomes an alternative rather than a running away from reality. He says, "I'm not running away from my responsibilities. I'm running to them." This is again "responsibility" in the sense of duty to make himself into something, a sort of cosmic responsibility not seen within society. The journey in Rome has certain similarities in its effect with Tarwater's through the city with his uncle, retraced later by night. At first Yossarian is haunted by his surroundings, and full of compassion, but remains an alien observer. He grows fearful and tries to escape.⁵⁴ He must go on observing torments until he recognizes that the nightmare world is his world. A shout by a victim of police brutality shows him the forces that rule the world for what they are. He ceases to be merely an onlooker, and feels that he, like them, is a victim.⁵⁵ Because he is thus one of them, each a non-communicating lonely island, he behaves like the passive crowd watching the child being beaten. He does nothing. Now his flight through the streets reflects shame, not fear. He shares in the guilt of those around him, he has capitulated to the forces in control. From the depths of misery to which he sinks after his chance of redemption through Michaela is lost, he is set free by a vision, a

⁵⁴Cf. existential angst.

⁵⁵Cf. Frank Alpine.

glimpse of "the truth." His struggle is always to maintain his identity, and with it something more than mere existence. His is the quest "absurd," the rational quest in an irrational world, as is most of the questing of the Twentieth Century. It is thus an inverted image of the quest "surd" of the Nineteenth Century (the quest of Ahab for example), which is the irrational quest in a rational world.⁵⁶

Where Yossarian forces us to come to terms with "responsibility" to mankind and ourselves (not necessarily to others individually), Randal Patrick McMurphy and Chief Bromden, in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, make us wonder about the possibility of the individual's survival in the face of the "combine," which is the Chief's symbolic name for the impersonal machine that society has become. "The immediate motive for McMurphy's antics, in addition to a simple sense of fun and a straightforward lust for life, complemented by a hatred and fear of authority and discipline . . . is a hard-headed self interest."⁵⁷ He arrives at the mental hospital having got himself committed to avoid hard labor in prison. It seems he has jumped out of the frying pan into the fire, for Miss Ratchet, Big Nurse, is seen immediately to be a "ball-cutter," one of those people "who

⁵⁶For a full account of these two forms of quest see James E. Miller, Quests Surd and Absurd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

⁵⁷Waldmeir, "Two Novelists of the Absurd . . . ," p. 200

try to make you weak so they can get you to toe the line." What alienated, anti-social hero can do anything but resist? And McMurphy enjoys resisting! The very choice of this reaction, however, leads him to a role which he would ordinarily have been the first to shun, that of savior of the others in the "nest." Many of them are voluntary inmates, there to avoid the challenge of the life outside. Apalled by Big Nurse's power over them, McMurphy in standing up to her becomes a leader making men again out of these poor, snivelling shells.

McMurphy is thus a Christ figure, underlined by his being laid out as on a cross for the electric treatment and lobotomy which constitute his "victory" through self-sacrifice. He is also an Ahab.

. . . the bust, in conjunction with the whales emblazoned on McMurphy's shorts, set her [Big Nurse] forth as Ahab's nemesis, the evil in good which Ahab must destroy and be destroyed by; and of course, McMurphy is Ahab, good in evil, driving beyond hope of return toward guilt and expiation.⁵⁸

He begins as a modern anti-hero, and somehow remains this, even though, because of the Christ-like role he assumes, he also becomes a traditional hero. "In the modern world, such a hero individualistic to the point of disaffiliation, but at the same time altruistic to the point of self-sacrifice, is by definition absurd." McMurphy must therefore

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 203.

end in tragedy like Ahab or Jesus.⁵⁹ That he has joined the ranks of these larger than life heroes is shown by the way Candy, the prostitute, always calls him "a McMurphy," just as I have been calling the American heroes I have discussed "an Ahab," or "a Huck Finn," as if, as Waldmeir suggests, he were a state of mind rather than a person. He is a very clear representative of the state of mind which I feel is basic in the American idea of "a hero."

Two other heroes who belong to the anti-hero group like those of the quest novels, but are also cut off from a normal American society, as are Bowles' heroes or McMurphy, are Styron's Cass Kinsolving and Loomis' Gillespie. They also demonstrate the elusive quality which makes an American hero so often larger than life. Gillespie, in The Charcoal Horse, is a soldier who has accidentally been responsible for the breaking of the glass on a family portrait in the colonel's bedroom. He is afraid that owning up to this, accepting the responsibility, will inculcate him in another more serious mishap under investigation at the time, so he does nothing. Because of his silence a murder is committed and the murderer is sentenced to be hanged. Gillespie, haunted by guilt, goes on a quest for expiation reminiscent of Frank Alpine's and like Frank he is denied the solace of freeing himself from

⁵⁹Or like Kafka's Joseph K. whom Waldmeir shows to be a close parallel.

guilt by confession. He is told there will be no punishment, and no public recrimination. The consequences and the guilt are his alone, and there is no easy way out. The isolation is thus not physical, but lies in having no support of friends or family in facing himself. Like Henderson or like Frank Alpine he has to learn to know and live with what he is.

Similarly, Cass Kinsolving in Set This House on Fire is denied the luxury of confessing and giving himself up. He is an anti-hero, homeless American in Italy. His solitary quest for self-knowledge involves him in the murder of another American--the playboy, Mason Flagg--whom he mistakenly thought responsible for the murder of an Italian peasant girl, whom he loved. Mason Flagg is the personification of those aspects of Cass's own personality which he must expurgate. Therefore, his death at Cass's hands is a way of redemption. Cass then goes to the police chief to give himself up, but the load is not to be removed by confession. The chief will not allow him that. Cass, too, like Henderson or Herzog, is left with only the ability "to be for a time . . . And that for a while would do, that would suffice." In the case of these anti-heroes, there is something about their terrible loneliness (whether or not they are actually separated from others) which sets them up as symbolic of the state of man in the present age. They are not all super-human, far from it, but the demands made

upon them by the absurd universe (rather than the little community in which they are found) require a super-human struggle of them, for survival. They may have this struggle underlined with Gothicism as do the heroes of Flannery O'Connor, Bowles and Styron. It is then clear what an enormity they face. When the violence is rendered, rather, within themselves, it is not so eye-catching but it has the spine-chilling effect which produces the awe noted as part of the reader's response to the American hero. Under these conditions, representatives of minority cultures,⁶⁰ or rebel-victims⁶¹ and those Hassan has called radical innocents provide the modern American hero, since they best symbolize the modern sense of isolation and estrangement.

Two post World War II novels seem at first glance to differ from those of the main stream since they belong to social criticism more directly, and so their heroes may be expected to approach the English variety more closely. These are J. D. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye and John Updike's Poorhouse Fair. The hero of the former, Holden Caulfield, has been called by James Hall⁶² "the American Angry." Hall

⁶⁰As John Aldridge notes in Time to Murder and Create, p. 14.

⁶¹As Hassan notes in "The Way Down and Out . . . ," p. 86.

⁶²Hall, The Lunatic Giant in the Drawing Room . . . , p. 75.

points out that Caulfield first developed the language of revolt which we have come to associate with Jim Dixon's associates. Though this may be so, the situation Caulfield finds himself in is a far more isolated one than any of the English Angries. Caulfield is impatient with the rigorous adolescence which post-war hopes demand. His first drive then is for at-once adulthood as he imagines it to be. He does not want to spend years learning how to write English, how to get along with girls or how to be liked by his associates. He is a schoolboy version of Cass Kinsolving or of Yossarian or of Herzog. He wants no part of society as he sees it around him. He has an idealized vision of what he wants to be, seeing himself with a crowd of children in a rye field on the edge of a cliff. He is the one who will catch them before they fall off. Notice this has no relation to society as a whole, nor to any individuals as such. It is a self-agrandizing role. Like Henderson and Herzog, Caulfield has to come to terms with himself and with life. His love for his sister is the saving power for him, as regard for Dahfu was for Henderson. Any other relationships are partial only, and unsatisfying. Holden, then, as demonstrated by Hassan,⁶³ belongs to the "great tradition of Huck Finn," the adolescent who exposes the corruption and mendacity of our world and withdraws from it. His fate

⁶³Hassan, "The Way Down and Out . . . ," p. 88.

in the years ahead is ambiguous, as is Huck's, and intentionally so. His wounded idealism makes him a more intense figure than the English Angries with whom Hall associates him, and he has some of the existential qualities that adhere more readily to the American than to the English hero. He removes himself from the school, from his ex-teacher, and from society in general. His decision not to run away entirely is taken because his sister wanted to go too. He is not coming back to society to seek his proper place. He is going to make what he can of himself despite it.

Poorhouse Fair, on the other hand, looks like social criticism pure and simple, rather than the existential or the absurd. If it had been written in the twenties or thirties it would have been an honest and radical confrontation with reality. But it is not. Connor is the 1930s optimist cast forward when social ills will be fought on logical socialistic grounds. He is the pragmatic social reformer who is a victim of the social justice he is trying to help. He is another version of Big Nurse, driven by more generous impulses, but like her unable to see the inmates of the poorhouse under his care as people. Nor can he, like his predecessor, remove himself entirely from them, yet he shows time and time again that he is unable to communicate meaningfully with them, for their values belong to a previous age. Connor would like a clean-cut end for the old people

in his charge, such as that provided for the old cat by shooting. He sees them as a drain on society, and yet he has not lost the last shreds of his humane feelings for he is not yet like the ruthless Buddy, his assistant. He is thus torn between two aspects of his own character.

A crucial point is reached when the inmates become enraged and stone Connor (who becomes a sort of St. Stephen). Like Frank Alpine's association with St. Francis, this "elevation" has something in it of the deflection spoken of by Hassan. There is irony within irony, for Connor is not Christian, yet he reacts to the stoning as if he were. The inmates, on the other hand, are Christian, yet they do not see Connor's response as Christian; and even if they had done so they would have been wrong.

Connor, like Hook and Gregg, is a symbol, an embodiment of one way of looking at life. The poorhouse focuses the attention on a recurrent problem in society, and one that is increasing with advances made in medical science. No easy answer exists, as Updike illustrates. And if in its sterility, the final scene seems a far-fetched version of what our present actions will lead to if carried to their logical conclusions, there is the wall of the poorhouse to consider as a symbol. It looks strong and a clear division between the old way and the new, but when the delivery truck backs into it it crumbles. It was hollow and no real division after all.

The hero of this novel is a lonely Ahab figure as much as any of the other heroes. He undertakes the task of running the poorhouse not realizing the forces ranged against him. His is a pride based on things already accomplished, as was Ahab's and like him, too, he has those who visit him on his captain's bridge, asking like Starbuck for reconsideration of action. Like Ahab he must follow his star, however destructive that course of action may be. Even if it were not for the chilling pragmatism that makes Connor an American through and through, his similarity to the lonely Ahab who must rely entirely on himself and has no voice of comfort by his side marks him as in the main stream of American heroes.

Norman Mailer is clearly linked to this traditional hero not only by his novels, but also by the position he himself holds as a writer. Aldridge calls him "a major creative consciousness and conscience, the most annoying, destructive, hateful, but altogether remarkable writer of these undistinguished years."⁶⁴ Although Hearn may have been intended to be the hero of his The Naked and the Dead, as the stand he takes against Cummings at the end would imply, the real key figure for most of the novel is Sgt. Croft. His similarity to Ahab in his assault on Mt. Anaka has already been touched on. As an alter-ego Crofts is

⁶⁴Aldridge, Time to Murder and Create, p. 163.

echoed by the character of Cummings who represents an extreme form of one side of his own character. Both Croft and Cummings refuse to "accept the limitations inherent in any given situation as final."⁶⁵ They are thus like Ahab, totally unable to give up their task once they have undertaken it. Because he could not come out finally on the side of the Fascism these two represent, Mailer had to "violate the emotional logic of his novel by destroying them as best he could,"⁶⁶ but it is too late. Croft, the mountain's conqueror, is already Ahab the whale killer.

Sergius and Marion are the natural heroes of The Deer Park as Croft and Cummings are of The Naked and the Dead. While this novel is set in a desert playground for the Hollywood set, it really proves to be as lonely a place as only such a buzzing sea of humanity can be. Each character is so wrapped up in himself that for him others are mere objects. The talk of meaningful love relationships is thus an ironic comment on the isolation of each within himself. Where Sergius and Marion succeed in playing the system, because they see through it and have the courage of their convictions, Eitel, the director, gives in finally to a Congressional committee which has been hounding him. His reason is that he cannot turn himself into a ruthless

⁶⁵Norman Podhoretz, "Norman Mailer," in Recent American Fiction, Some Critical Views, ed. by J. J. Waldmeir (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1963), p. 198.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 190.

egotist. It thus seems that while the character who occupies the seat where we would expect the hero to be sitting fails to rise to the ruthlessness of Ahab, one or more of the other central characters does. It is as if deflection for Mailer turns his hero into a travesty. Leslie Fiedler speaks of D. J. the hero of Why Are We In Vietnam? as a "grotesque neo-Huck."⁶⁷ It seems that Mailer, writing a new kind of novel, still has a distorted Ahab and Huck along as central to his theme. Perhaps this marks a turning point in the use of these archetypes, future direction unknown.

If Mailer represents a larger than life figure as a novelist, then John Barth, in his complexity, is something even larger. Nothing compared with his intellectual demand on the reader exists in the English novel. Scholes quotes him as saying, "If you are a novelist of a certain type of temperament, then what you really want to do is reinvent the world. God wasn't too bad a novelist, except he was a realist."⁶⁸ Giles Goat Boy is also a quest, which involves playing with archetypes and word meanings both, so that even the sex act is raised to a plane of being the genesis of the universe. In his discussion of Giles Goat

⁶⁷ Leslie Fiedler, "Cross the Border, Close the Gap," Playboy (December, 1969), 154.

⁶⁸ John Barth, as quoted by Scholes, The Fabulators, p. 136.

Boy, Scholes writes of the two perspectives on experience which engage, in modern fabulation

like Yang and Ying in equal struggle for control. This mighty tension is at the heart of Barth's great fabulation and all the rest. Just as the realistic novel was rooted in the conflict between the individual and society, fabulation springs from the collision between the philosophical and mythic perspectives on the meaning and value of existence, with their opposed dogmas of struggle and acquiescence. If existence is mythic, then man must accept his role with equanimity. If not, then he must struggle through part after part trying to create one uniquely his own. Barth and the other fabulators build on the interanimation of these two views.⁶⁹

Where realism predominates in the novels, with the delicate balance that must be maintained, it would appear that for the English author society has the edge over the individual; for the American the individual prevails. And where the novels fall within the fabulations discussed by Scholes, the American fabulators give the philosophical more weight than the English. If one is at heart an Ahab one must continue to struggle whatever the odds.

This inclination to Fables, which is common to all Men, is not the effect of Reasoning, nor does it arise from imitation, or Custom; it is natural to them, and is rivetted in the very Frame and Disposition of the Soul

says Bishop Huet, in his letter on the origin of fiction.⁷⁰

The interesting thing is the way in which the fables produced are molded by imitation and custom so that those of

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 173.

⁷⁰English translation 1720, quoted as "Preface" by Scholes, The Fabulators.

each country bear the stamp of their origin, even if only faintly. English novelists have always had a place for eccentrics among their heroes as representatives of individual whim, but not for Ahabs or Hucks who can get themselves far out and still feel themselves representative of true sanity.

I am not suggesting that personal and metaphysical issues have no place in the English novel. Nor am I suggesting that there are no permanent or widely applicable theories to be found in them. Nor that the society in which a character like Clyde Griffiths or Sister Carrie finds himself is not significant in the way each acts. But I am suggesting that the emphasis on these aspects is different; that the English hero makes his stand or attempts to discover his true identity, within and through society, whereas the American hero does so in spite of society, or withdrawn from it. While the English society is relatively stable, it is easier for a working class or lower middle class person to obtain education and break through social categories than it was for his compatriot of the Nineteenth Century. Thus the contemporary English hero is not "a rare spirit who is inexplicable in terms that account for the mundane majority, linked to the rest of us only as an image of what we would like to represent. The contemporary hero is rather himself the illustration of the central issues

of changing society."⁷¹ In earlier centuries the social values appeared to be more fixed and the writer could afford to concentrate on the energy and exceptional quality of the hero, characterizing the society in only a peripheral manner, by the fixed alternatives that the hero faced. "But by the end of the Twentieth Century, the fixed alternatives seem far less fixed and the hero, neither exceptional nor exceptionally virtuous, is himself both a product and a problem of that society."⁷²

The American hero, on the other hand, has become an illustration of what the writer sees as the central issues of the universe. "No one has succeeded since the age of Sinclair Lewis and Sherwood Anderson in seeing an actual American small town or a living member of the Kiwanis club," says Leslie Fiedler. "To be sure, we do not all relive the legendary pattern, or even believe in it; but we have been unable to imagine our choices in any other image."⁷³ For, as Ihab Hassan saw, "Deep down, man always disavows the reality his hands touch and his eyes see. This too, is innocence, the dangerous and outrageous kind conceived in

⁷¹Gindin, Post War British Fiction, p. 90.

⁷²Ibid., p. 91.

⁷³"The Ant and the Grasshopper," No in Thunder (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), cited by Aldridge, Time to Murder and Create, pp. 81-82.

dreams. The anarchy of the American soul is nourished on an old dream; not freedom, not power, not even love, but the dream of immortality."

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Some possible reasons why the hero of the English novel now differs so much from that of the American novel are found in the kind of society of which each is the product. The relatively compact, relatively stable society in Britain, based on a long history, provides the hero of the Post World War II English novel with some degree of security from which he can look out to others and judge himself in terms of their reaction to him. The society which produces the American hero is much more vast and varied. Because it thus does not have an entity which an individual can readily grasp, it does not provide that same security. The hero of the American novel must turn to himself. The reactions of others to him give no sure basis for his judgment of himself. He must therefore dissect his own motives without their aid.

Moreover the rate of change within society has been made much more noticeable within America by the positive value assigned by its citizens to democracy. "What has happened in America is that Democracy has become more than a mere political form, a positive ethos permeating the whole society from the bottom up, and therefore has also come to

involve a bold experimentation with life itself and with the traditional human norms in which the life of the past sought to contain itself."¹ American life, with its high degree of technology and its emphasis on speed, is far more intense and seems to produce higher levels of anxiety than does British life at this time. And the kind of society the author sees around him will influence the hero of whom he writes. Philip Roth gives an indication of some of the reasons for the larger than life aspect of the American hero when he says,

The American writer in the middle of the Twentieth Century has his hands full in trying to understand, and then describe, and then make credible much of the American reality. It stupifies, it sickens, it infuriates, and finally it is even a kind of embarrassment to one's meagre imagination. The actuality is continually outdoing our talents, and the culture tosses up figures daily that are the envy of the novelist.²

The English novelist does not appear to be in the same degree of predicament.

The larger than life aspect of the American hero also descends from the Ahab's and Huck Finns preserved in folk lore. The Davy Crockets, Paul Bunyans, Daniel Boones and the rest were rugged individuals, people who could survive

¹William Barrett, "American Fiction and American Values," Partisan Review, Vol. 18 (November-December, 1951), 690.

²Philip Roth, "Writing American Fiction," cited by Paul Levine, "Intemperate Zone: The Climate of Contemporary American Fiction," p. 508.

outrageous odds without the help of others. They were people who could get along without women altogether, if need be. Perhaps to suggest, as Leslie Fiedler has,³ that the friendships that resound in American fiction between two men, Huck and Jim, Queequeg and Ishmael, Natty Bumpo and Chingachook, Boon and Ike Macaslin, show a homosexual tendency in the literary outlook is to go further than I would wish to, but it does suggest an ability in the traditional American hero to do without the humanity which was symbolically left behind with Aunt Charity's Bibles and tea, when the Pequod sailed.

What emerges from this study is that the English and the American view of life as reflected in the heroes of the Post World War II novels are very different. The common origins and similar language have disguised this to some extent, and might lead one to expect a degree of similarity which there is no reason to find. "As a general verdict," says Elizabeth Bowen,⁴ "it might be fair to say that English fiction at present, is at its most English: as an export, its value should rightly reside in that. A good deal may be germinating during this phase of apparent self-regard."

³Leslie Fiedler, "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in Huck Honey!" cited by J. W. Aldridge, Time To Murder and Create, pp. 228-229.

⁴Elizabeth Bowen, "English Fiction at Mid Century," in The Arts at Mid Century, ed. by Robert Richman, (New York: Horizon Press, 1954), p. 213.

We might also consider American fiction to be at a particularly American stage. The view of each of the two kinds of heroes who embody these differences is "normal" from the standpoint of the group from which it grows. Each presupposes a set of cultural values individual and assumed. To judge one in terms of the values of the other is to impose an arbitrary universal.

It may be that from the point at the middle of this century when Elizabeth Bowen wrote, the paths of the two types of hero may now begin to converge. If changes in present British society become more rapid, or their build-up has a greater effect, then the British hero may have to take further stock of his own inner resources. While if, as Paul Levine noted,⁵ in the early fifties with the publication of Invisible Man and The Adventures of Augie March, American novelists are turning "resolutely, if a bit warily, toward the distant drumming of a chaotic society," it may be that the distance will diminish--perhaps even the chaos. The signs of such a convergence have not become markedly apparent as yet.

For the hero of the Post World War II English novel the most frequently recurring characteristics appear to be his ability to draw others to him in love or admiration, his awareness of his place in society, and his aim to

⁵"The Intemperate Zone," p. 515.

discover himself in terms of that society or a modification of that society which he will work to bring about. Those characteristics which recur for the American hero of the same period appear to be an ability to assume larger-than-life proportions, a self-reliance and intensity of self-analysis which cut him off from others, and which set him wandering on a pilgrimage symbolic of his search for identity in his own soul. His is a lonely search apart from, or in spite of, society.

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