

Université de Montréal

Believing in Belief: The Modernist Quest for Spiritual Meaning
(Croyer en Croyance: La quête moderniste pour le sens spirituel)

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Résumé de synthèse

Cette thèse défend l'idée que plusieurs auteurs modernistes ont utilisé des concepts centraux à la croyance religieuse traditionnelle afin de préconiser le changement social. Au lieu de soutenir l'hypothèse de la sécularisation, qui prétend que les modernistes ont rejeté la religion en faveur d'une laïcité non contestée, j'argumente en faveur de ce que j'appelle « la spiritualité moderniste, » qui décrit une continuité intégrale des concepts spirituels dans l'agitation de la période moderniste qui a déstabilisé les institutions qui avaient auparavant jeté les bases de la société Occidentale. En me basant sur les écrits de Sigmund Freud, William James et Émile Durkheim concernant les fins poursuivies par la religion, je développe cinq concepts centraux de la croyance religieuse que les modernistes ont cherché à resignifier, à savoir la rédemption, la communauté, la sacralité, le spectre, et la liturgie, et, dans chaque cas, j'ai montré comment ces catégories ont été réinterprétées pour traiter des questions considérées comme essentielles au début du vingtième siècle, à savoir ce que l'on identifie aujourd'hui comme le féminisme, l'écologie, la biopolitique, les crises, et le rôle du poète.

Le chapitre I se concentre sur la rédemption par le féminin telle qu'on la trouve dans le recueil de vers de H.D. portant sur la Seconde Guerre mondiale, *Trilogy* (1944-1946), qui projette un certain espoir grâce à un mélange synchrétique de Christianisme, de mythes anciens, d'astrologie, et de psychologie. Mon deuxième chapitre discute de *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) de John Steinbeck, qui élargit le rôle de la communauté en avançant une écologie universelle qui conçoit tous les gens comme étant intimement liés entre eux et avec le monde. Le chapitre III traite de la notion du sacré dans *The Light in August* (1932) de William Faulkner et *Nightwood*

(1936) de Djuna Barnes, qui préconisent une foi privatisée qui accentue l'illégitimité des concepts de sacralité et de pollution en élevant des individus qui sont marginalisés biopolitiquement. Le chapitre IV cherche à comprendre le retour des morts, et je soutiens que le topos a été utilisé par les modernistes comme un symbole de crises sociales; le chapitre enquête d'abord sur "The Jolly Corner" (1908) de Henry James, que j'ai lu comme la séquence rêvée d'un homme faisant face à son propre spectre, *Ulysses* (1922) de James Joyce, où Stephen Dedalus est hanté de façon répétée par le spectre de sa mère, et *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) de Virginia Woolf, qui se concentre sur le motif caché de la Fête des Morts. Ma cinquième section traite de la liturgie, la langue poétique utilisée pour les rites religieux, dans la première poésie de Wallace Stevens, qui conçoit le rôle du poète comme une vocation de l'imagination.

Mots Clés: Modernisme; Littérature anglaise; Culture Anglo-américaine; Religion; Spiritualité; Croyance; Féminisme; Écologie; Biopolitique; Spectres.

Abstract

This dissertation argues that many modernist writers used concepts central to traditional religious belief in order to urge social change. Against the secularization hypothesis, which posits that the modernists fully jettisoned religion in favour of an unquestioned secularism, I argue for what I term “modernist spirituality,” which identifies an integral continuance of spiritual concepts within the dire turmoil of the modernist period that destabilized the institutions such as an established organized religion that had previously formed the foundations of Western society. Hence, in each of my dissertation chapters, I have looked outside of organized religion to literature to find that spiritual impulse. Building upon the purposes of religion as defined by Sigmund Freud, William James, and Émile Durkheim, I name five concepts central to religious belief that the modernists sought to resignify, namely redemption, community, sacredness, the spectre, and liturgy, and, in each case, I have shown how these categories were reinterpreted to treat issues considered vital in the early twentieth century that would now be identified under the categories of feminism, ecology, biopolitics, crisis, and the role of the poet.

The first function of spiritual belief addresses the intertwining of redemption and humanity’s actions within history, and for this reason, Chapter I focuses on redemption through the feminine as seen in H.D.’s book of World War II verse, *Trilogy* (1944-1946), which offers hope through a syncretistic blend of Christianity, ancient myths, goddess traditions, astrology, and psychology. My second chapter discusses John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), which enlarges the role of community by positing a universal ecology of holiness that sees all people as connected with one another and with the land. Chapter III treats the notion of the

sacred in William Faulkner's *Light in August* (1932) and Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* (1936), both of which urge a privatized faith that emphasizes the illegitimacy of concepts of sacredness and pollution by elevating individuals who are marginalized biopolitically. Chapter IV seeks to comprehend the return of the dead in dreams or in visions, and I argue that the topos was used by modernists as a symbol of social crisis; the chapter first investigates Henry James' "The Jolly Corner" (1908), which I read as a dream sequence of a man facing his own ghost, James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), wherein Stephen Dedalus is haunted repeatedly by the ghost of his mother, and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), which is textually ordered by the hidden motif of the Day of the Dead. My fifth section is an epilogue that treats liturgy, the poetic language used for religious rituals, in the early poetry of Wallace Stevens, who revises the role of the poet as a vocation of the imagination.

Key Words: Modernism; English Literature; Anglo-American Culture; Religion; Spirituality; Belief; Feminism; Ecology; Biopolitics; Spectres.

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List of Chief Abbreviations

<i>A</i>	Jacques Derrida, <i>Acts of Religion</i>
<i>AR</i>	Paul de Man, <i>Allegories of Reading</i>
“Auto”	Paul de Man, “Autobiography as De-Facement”
“Ch”	Pericles Lewis, “Churchgoing in the Modern Novel”
<i>CPP</i>	Wallace Stevens, <i>Collected Poetry and Prose</i>
“EF”	Jacques Derrida et al, “Epoché and Faith: An Interview with Jacques Derrida”
“F”	Andrew John Miller, “Fables of progression: Modernism, modernity, narrative”
<i>G</i>	H.D., <i>The Gift</i>
<i>Gift</i>	Jacques Derrida, <i>Gift of Death (Second Edition) and Literature in Secret</i>
<i>HS</i>	Michel Foucault, <i>The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge</i>
<i>IPR</i>	George Santayana, <i>Interpretations of Poetry and Religion</i>
<i>JJ</i>	Richard Ellmann, <i>James Joyce</i>
<i>K</i>	H.D. <i>Kora and Ka; With Mira-Mare</i>
<i>L</i>	Wallace Stevens, <i>Letters of Wallace Stevens</i>
<i>M</i>	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i>
<i>MC</i>	Michel Foucault, <i>Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason</i>
<i>MCS</i>	Andrew John Miller, <i>Modernism and the Crisis of Sovereignty</i>
“MD”	J. Hillis Miller, “Mrs. Dalloway: Repetition as the Raising of the Dead”
<i>N</i>	H.D., <i>Notes on Thought and Vision & The Wise Sappho</i>
“OG”	Iris Murdoch, “On 'God' and 'Good'”
<i>P</i>	Martin Heidegger, <i>Poetry, Language, and Thought</i>
<i>PAYM</i>	James Joyce, <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i>
<i>Poets</i>	J. Hillis Miller, <i>Poets of Reality: Six Twentieth-Century Writers</i>
<i>REMN</i>	Pericles Lewis, <i>Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel</i>
<i>RC</i>	Michel Foucault, <i>Religion and Culture</i>
“Rhet”	Paul de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality”
<i>RT</i>	Paul de Man, <i>The Resistance to Theory</i>
<i>SAF</i>	George Santayana, <i>Scepticism and Animal Faith</i>
<i>SE</i>	Giorgio Agamben, <i>State of Exception</i>
<i>SL</i>	Richard Ellmann, ed. <i>Selected Joyce Letters</i>
<i>SM</i>	Jacques Derrida, <i>Specters of Marx</i>
<i>T</i>	H.D., <i>Trilogy</i>
<i>TF</i>	H.D., <i>Tribute to Freud</i>

Dedication

With great fondness and gratitude,
this project is dedicated
to the memories of

Lewis Archibald MacPhail

(1914-1997)

and

Andrew John Miller

(1959-2009).

'S ged a dh'fhalbh a' chuid sin bhuainn,
Chaithis iad dhan dachaidh bhuan;
Ann am pàileas Rìgh an t-sluaigh,
Far'eil sòlas, buan bhios maireann.

—“Òran do Cheap Breatainn”

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modernist literature and film, British and Irish culture, and reading poetry. At McGill University, I have taught four sections of a course on research and rhetoric and one section of a course on the challenges of modernist poetry. I am grateful for the opportunity given to me by Prof. Genevieve Leidelinger, Prof. Peter Sabor, and Prof. Trevor Ponech, and for the constant support, encouragement, humour, and friendship of Prof. Sue Laver. I have likewise benefited deeply from the energy and interest of my students at these institutions, and I thank them all for their passions for literature and life that they have shared so freely with me.

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Foreword

This dissertation represents ten years of an intellectual quest shaped by a serious and systematic questioning of the role of religion and spirituality in the human experience; my formal study of spirituality began around 2000, when I first moved to Montreal to pursue graduate studies, first in theology at McGill University and then in English literature at the Université de Montréal. This decade began with the election, decided ultimately by a Supreme Court ruling, of a Christian evangelical to the White House and met what may prove to have been one of history's pivotal points on the morning of September 11, 2001. Since that time, with two wars—ostensibly “on terror”—in Afghanistan and Iraq, further acts of religious violence in Bali, Madrid, London, and Bombay, water boarding, Abu Ghraib, CIA black prisons, Guantanamo Bay, secret military incursions in Iran and Pakistan, the at least at first hopeful election of a Democratic president, riots in French cities by disenfranchised second generation Arab immigrant youths that ended with the banning of outward religious symbols in public buildings in order to preserve the nation's sense of *laïcité*, a full blown national referendum in Switzerland banning minarets, new laws in Québec limiting the rights of veiled Muslim women to public services, and the at least momentary demise of social liberalism in Canadian politics and rise of social conservatism based in the Canadian Prairie's Christian fundamentalism.

Compared to the relative calm at the start of this project in 2000, the atmosphere in 2010 as I complete my dissertation has not only demonstrated that religion has remained a central motivating influence in the world, both for good and for evil, but it also has, quite unexpectedly for the West, emerged as one of the central and defining issues of our generation. I began to ask how forms of spirituality could

evolve in order to continue to provide the benefits they offered to human beings while not further fuelling such deeply rooted negative expressions.

My quest has taken many forms and has led me to look at writings by very diverse thinkers throughout the past centuries including those committed to positions within clearly defined theological traditions and others who sought to destroy any form of religious observance. In my degree at McGill University, I concentrated on the ethical and theological writings of John Owen, the Congregationalist pastor who was coincidentally scheduled to preach to the Westminster Assembly the morning Charles I was executed. Cromwell appointed Owen to the vice-chancellorship of Oxford University (Cromwell was the figurehead chancellor) during the Commonwealth. Owen survived the British Civil War, the Commonwealth, and the Restoration only to suffer under the new government's Conventicle and Five Mile Acts (meant to constrain the Puritans) as well as the natural deaths of his wife and all eleven of his children. Isolated by law and removed from his former congregation, Owen refused an offer to become the president of Harvard and sought a new path of spiritual community among the Dissenting Christians. He reentered the periphery of politics to work for greater freedoms of worship for all believers, gave his aid in winning the release of John Bunyan, later the author of *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), and he was eventually well received by Charles II and had some influence in the king's *Royal Declaration of Indulgence* (1672), which relaxed earlier laws against the Non-Conformists and allowed for greater freedoms for religious belief. Like our age, Owen's was a time of spiritual, political, and social upheaval, and my work showed how he sought to remain faithful to his comprehension of the Christian life while

seeking peaceful resolutions through political interventions to disagreements with the State or among Christian groups.

As that project drew to a close, I entered doctoral studies at the Université de Montréal under the supervision of Andrew John Miller in order to begin a far reaching study of the literature of the modernist period as informed by the lessons of poststructuralism. At the same time, the religious tensions of our own age began to tighten, so I decided to bring a different light to bear on our early twenty-first century attempts at peaceful religious coexistence by evaluating how thinkers in a recent period of social turmoil and religious division sought to develop new forms of spiritual belief that were specifically appropriate to the needs of their generation and which have undoubtedly influenced our current and future comprehensions of spirituality.

Introduction:
Believing in Belief

“To shun dogma does not mean to renounce belief”
—Louis MacNeice, “The Poet in England Today” (1940)

“We and God have business with each other”
—William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902)

Subsequent to the decline of traditional religion and amid increasingly disruptive sociocultural turmoil, modernist writers consciously sought new forms of spiritual meaning that could address the human desire to believe. The modernist era in the West witnessed a great multitude of sociocultural shifts: secularism, individualism, fundamentalism, rationalism, existentialism, post-industrialization, global warfare, and the erosion of traditional foundations of Western society such as the family, the nation, and, of course, the historic Christian religion. This dissertation will concern itself with these shifts as perceived by those within and outside of religious communities and as caused by and observed within the literature of the time, which did not provoke an acute rejection of spiritual belief but its renaissance into new forms. Of particular interest is the belief in spiritual conceptualizations that in turn fuel an individual's or a community's ethical, volitional, political, and intellectual interactions with life and the world. Literature, for its part, at times actively attacked religion, advocated its continued importance and relevance, or became a source of new narratives that provided their own sources of meaning. Modernism's literary interactions with religion were constant and yet varied.

Given the increasing role of religious strife in our current global context at the start of the twenty-first century, the centrality of the religious questions asked by the modernists adds urgency to our existing intellectual curiosity about religion as an expression of our humanity. By interrogating the religious views held by the modernists, my research echoes Jacques Derrida's insistence that religion's "ethical and political urgencies . . . do not permit the response to be put off" (*A* 64). Likewise, Stanley Fish voices his concerns with an academy that continues to "bracket off" these "thorny questions" of spiritual belief, and he applauds the emergence of

scholarly research into the phenomena of religion (270). Indeed, it is only by attending to modernism's search for religious epistemology that literary scholars, as custodians of the literary traditions of the past, can rectify this deficiency in our knowledge of the period and thereby better comprehend the cultural, moral, and political mythologies expressed in those texts that form the literary expressions of spirituality that the modernists left to our generation.

If, as Carl Sandburg ventured in *Good Morning, America* (1928), creative works are “a search for syllables to shoot at the barriers of the unknown and the unknowable” (318), then how does modernist literature further the possibility of dialogue about ultimate questions in a post-Christendom paradigm? How does it envision its linkages with faith and with the community's ethical, volitional, and intellectual imperatives? How did modernists seek to recultivate their spiritual wasteland, and what did specifically *modernist* forms of spirituality look like? What does the modernist experience of religion have to contribute to contemporary constructions of spiritual belief as an aspect of human culture?

Certainly, the modernist era, with its immense impact on our present world, played a major role in formulating the current Western comprehension of human spirituality despite, or perhaps even because of, an obvious and almost inevitable decline in traditional forms of religious observance. This era of massive social upheaval bore the trauma of two world wars, genocides, the influenza epidemic, the Great Depression, institutionalized racism, and the collapse of a world ruled by white empires. The way people thought about life and existence were challenged on multiple fronts, including existential anxiety, questions of morality and guilt, relations of humans to the universe and the natural world, new conceptualizations of biology

and physics, conflicts between science and spiritual beliefs, a realization of the meaninglessness of life and the inevitability of death, violent disputes over political and economic systems, doubts about the nature of good and evil and of war and peace, and aesthetic practices that changed to favour new poetic forms or the manipulation of past archetypes found in the Jewish and Christian scriptures, the classic literatures of Greece and Rome, or the traditions of other cultures. The convergence of historic Christianity's decline and the enduring desire for ontological meaning resulted in new avenues of epistemological exploration aimed toward new sources of spiritual knowledge; this exploration is apparent in philosophical enquiry, psychological and medical advances, scientific postulations, political change, and the poetic experimentation of modernist writers. If religion is seen as a complex, large, interconnected mass of learned sociocultural ideas, thoughts, and beliefs, then it can be argued that modernists tried to alter the whole system, which they saw as flawed and outdated, through the introduction of new texts refocusing and reinterpreting and even recreating the great spiritual narratives of human history. These texts, then, are discursively located in an ethical and epistemological framework that is cognisant of the hidden mechanisms of social institutions and practices that govern and control and that seek to entrench the established power of economic, patriarchal, political, or religious forces already under threat.

The modernists lived in a rapidly changing and shrinking world of material devastation and cultural upheaval, and with a natural desire for relevant meaning in an uncertain situation, they could not disregard their culture's Christian past despite organized religion's decline; indeed, that decline was a central aspect of the anxiety felt during the modernist era, but it also provided a chance for regeneration. As

Marshall Berman characterizes modernity, it “pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, ‘all that is solid melts into air’” (15). Many thinkers during the modernist period either bemoaned or hastened these shifts, for religion's decline does not indicate its easy nor its quick disentanglement from the worldview of the modernist era. These very changes were foundational to the tasks of theologians like Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and Reinhold Niebuhr or of philosophers like Bertrand Russell and Friedrich Nietzsche. Some creative writers of the period, like T.S. Eliot after announcing in 1927 that he was now a “classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and Anglo-Catholic in religion” (*For Lancelot Andrewes* ix), urged society to return to Christianity's “traditions with intelligence” as the only path leading forward from the devastation of war in a world whose only choice was between the formation of a new Christian culture and the acceptance of a pagan one. In this vein, modernist writers sought to recultivate the waste land through what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have called a “chiliastic project” that led many of them to attempt to resurrect religion (21). This concern with a decaying civilization pervaded all of Europe and influenced continental writers like Hermann Hesse, Franz Kafka, and Thomas Mann. The German-American Christian existentialist Paul Tillich named their era an “Age of Anxiety” under the traumatic threat of spiritual non-being that sought a new God as a “ground of being,” “present, although hidden, in every divine-human encounter” (*Courage* 177). Official Roman Catholicism took a hard-line approach against “Catholic modernism,” and, in 1907, Pope Pius X published *Lamentabili*, an encyclical condemning sixty-five modernist propositions adhered to by progressive

figures like Alfred Loisy and George Tyrrell. Conversely, Thomas Hardy urged a full disavowal of the Christian Demiurge; W.B. Yeats sought to synthesize Christianity with Celtic folklore or with the occult; Ezra Pound became deeply influenced by occult mysticism and by Chinese philosophy; Aldous Huxley tried to reduce all religions to varying expressions of what he called the Perennial Philosophy; despite his homosexuality, W.H. Auden returned to the Anglican Church after a twenty year absence; Cleanth Brooks, for one, recognized the importance of these new spiritual venues by noting the importance of non-Christian critiques for the international Church. These radically different approaches questioned the validity of religious belief and produced an ethos that was especially favourable for the rejection of traditional religious forms and the adoption of forms that the Anglo-American modernists considered to be new or foreign.

From this context that allowed traditional beliefs to change in very divergent ways, the question that arises is why spiritual belief remained important at all, and how and in what guise it survived this assault on the dominant role of Christianity in the West. Certainly, the reasons for the survival of belief are as complex as—and indeed sometimes identical with—the factors that contrived to overcome it.

Paramount among these were the scientific age of reason and industrialization, the continuing influence of the Enlightenment project that effected a rejection of traditional institutions, and the theological influence of liberal German biblical criticism that in turn produced modern literary criticism, neo-orthodoxy, fundamentalism, Catholic modernism, and the “Modern Churchmen” of the Church of England. These shifts in the wider culture influenced literature even as literature influenced them. Each of these themes are not only present in the literary texts of the

period, but are used therein to produce new literary styles, to develop links with the past, to form political movements, and to evaluate Christian societal structures and the power of its allusions and narrative force.

Modernists freely questioned the religious foundations of previous generations, tore them down or altered them, and, ultimately, replaced them with new forms informed by syncretism, personal belief systems, existentialism, creativity, or renewed relationships within the human community or natural world. The methodology of this thesis offers a comprehensive understanding in an interdisciplinary manner, for it is only by carefully attending to the questions the modernists asked, debated, and attempted to answer that we can obtain the fullest possible understanding of their texts and their world. My own academic background has stressed literature as well as theology, philosophy, and history, and I bring all of these categories to bear in considering the spirituality of the modernists. Later in this introduction, I synthesize the most prevalent spiritual categories used by the modernists by looking to the definitions of the purpose of religion offered by Sigmund Freud, William James, and Émile Durkheim; thus, the basis of my argument begins with a comprehensive view of the explanations of religion's importance as seen by the thinkers of the modernist period itself. In each chapter, I vary the theoretical framework according to the literary material and the political issues being examined; Chapter I necessitates the use of Freudian psychological theories to understand the archetypes used in H.D.'s poetry; Chapter II discusses the ecosophical philosophies of thinkers such as Arne Naess and Felix Guattari; Chapter III twins approaches from the early anthropological study of religion with contemporary understandings of biopolitics; Chapter IV relies on Derridean and Freudian notions of

reading and hauntology, and the epilogue likewise concerns itself primarily with poststructuralist formations of language and meaning.

In part, the methodology of this dissertation aims to challenge what has been identified as the “secularization hypothesis,” which, despite the continued relevance of belief discussed above, argues that the literary figures of the modernist period simply jettisoned religion in favour of an unquestioned secularism. As Pericles Lewis defines it, the secularization hypothesis “characterizes the emergence of modernity as the result of increasingly rational modes of thought and a rejection of belief in the supernatural” (“Ch” 673), seen, for instance, in the turn away from epic, with its concern with divine penetration into the world of human affairs as narrated by an omniscient narrator, and the rise of the novel, with its “heightened attention to the workings of individual consciousness and to the most intimate of experiences” (“Ch” 675). Fredric Jameson finds this hypothesis revealing, in that the secular nonbeliever has a tendency “to attribute some unique and specialized, intrinsically other type of psychological or spiritual experience to the believer”; he argues to the contrary that religious traditions reflect a spiritual belief that in itself does not mean to have “some apprehension of the presence of God” but rather a desire that arises from a very tangible sense of the silence and absence of the divine; Jameson can then say that, with this understanding, “there is basically no real difference between a believer and a nonbeliever in the first place” (*Marxism and Form* 117). A type of secularism may be observed in that most modernist writers did not remain observant followers of traditional organized Christianity, yet they maintained an integral spiritual life that actively sought new forms of spiritual belief to take the place of religious dogma.

One commonality was that many modernists actively blended and manipulated the archetypes of the past as found, for example, in the Jewish and Christian scriptures, the classic literatures of Greece and Rome, the touchstone texts of Western culture, or the mythologies of other cultures. Their methods of interpretation disparaged the claims to absolute authority made by these texts, traditions, or hierarchical religious organizations, and they thus deconstructed metanarrative stances by opposing the official papal rejection of Catholic modernism and the moves towards fundamentalism and literalist dogma within Protestantism that occurred at the same time.

Modernist authors thus saw religion as a learned sociocultural behaviour and set out to rewrite its textbooks so that it might evolve into forms befitting the twentieth century. This level of sociocultural evolution had certainly affected Christianity before, yet the changes wrought in the modernist period remain the most far reaching since the Protestant Reformation; they consciously involved catalysts from outside the church, and they did not seek to protect the organic unity of the Church community. The desired results varied widely, of course, and, for that reason, this thesis will concern itself with writers who hailed from differing spiritual traditions and nations and who desired sharply different goals for the spiritualities they envisioned. By selecting authors from different contexts, I will be able to show the commonalities between their questions and answers, whether they lived in Europe or North America, and whether they identified with Catholicism, Anglicanism, evangelicalism, or mainline Protestantism. And indeed, the writers on this list show a broad understanding of who constitutes a modernist writer; this breadth is indeed necessitated by the current debate within modernist studies about how to define

modernism itself. For the purview for this study, modernism is understood as a rejection of nineteenth century aesthetics, a body of knowledge drawing as much on the Classics and Medieval texts as on the latest scientific or psychological research, a response to the crisis of representation, a search for a truer representation of the inner nature of reality through highly experimental poetry or prose, and an intensity of intellectual engagement with the sociocultural concerns of the period. The issues that the modernist writers dealt with were not limited to one locality or tradition, so any successful examination must cross cultural, national, and even continental boundaries. Thus, the particular writers considered in this study were chosen because of the depth and complexity of their incorporation of a spirituality into their texts that portrays the possibilities made available through new avenues towards truths that maintain an authentic relevance and expand valid forms and expressions of belief relative to the individual.

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Religion's function as a motivating force, both politically and personally, is much more obviously relevant today than it has been in past decades. In many areas of the world, fundamentalist forms of religions—most notably Christian, Islamic, and Hindu—continue to fuel political and military conflicts for control of human lives. The secular West witnesses an enduring interest in ancient and modern spiritual options that diverge from the mainstream. Even the descendants of historic Christianity see their worldview as substantially different from that of their predecessors. Hence, in both the public square and in the academy, interest is now increasing in religion as a sociocultural phenomenon. Contemporary literary studies, however, have been slow to integrate religion. The New Critics carefully identified

biblical, theological, occult, and mythological motifs used in modernist works, much of which forms the annotations and explanatory notes of modern academic texts, while at the same time scrupulously avoiding the suggestion that these motifs indicated any real affiliations between the authors and heterodox beliefs. After the 1960s, however, secular liberal humanism had relegated religion to the periphery, so the religious concerns of modernist texts, once acknowledged as issues of life and death, were subsequently seen as outdated and were increasingly ignored as major topics of research. Yet due to the current global importance of religion, what is now necessary is not mere identification of religious influence, as in the scholarship of the fifties and sixties, but an in-depth exploration of the central questions of religious epistemology raised by the modernists from our contemporary vantage point. In the humanities, academics must turn to analyze the decline of religion in the West and the impact this decline had throughout the world. These are complex questions about the ebb and flow of sociocultural movements, the nature and purpose of religion, and its continued evolution. In seeking answers to the current situation, scholars must continue to look to its roots within the modernist period, when the largest demographic shifts began to occur in Western society's religious life.

Despite Virginia Woolf's famous insistence on December 1910, 1905 is the pivotal year in measuring the growth of secularism as opposed to religious allegiance in Europe and North America. This year marks a crisis point in the long, slow progression of Christianity's decline after the Enlightenment. In church history after the Protestant Reformation, a type of stalemate developed after the Thirty Years' War in the 1600s, which began as a struggle for control of the Holy Roman Empire between Catholics and Protestants but eventually spread to become a general conflict

throughout Europe. The eighteenth century brought the Age of Enlightenment, and a gradual decline in all Christian forms of worship began in the West. This decline, however, was interspersed with periods of rapid renewal termed “spiritual awakenings,” “revivals,” or “movements of the Holy Spirit.” The movements led to mass conversions, outpourings of deep emotion, and increased piety and church attendance among adherents; importantly, although these awakenings could begin in a small locality, they quickly spread to other areas and countries and affected thousands of people. Hence, an awakening indicates a widespread movement back to traditional forms of religious belief by a large proportion of society though the actual spread of the awakenings would usually only last for a few months. Typically, awakenings were associated with evangelists or preachers such as John Wesley and George Whitefield in England and Jonathan Edwards in the United States during the eighteenth century or Charles Finney in the United States and Thomas Chalmers in Scotland during the nineteenth century. The first modern Protestant missionary movement dates from this period with the founding in 1701 of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and in the 1730s when Count Nicolas Ludwig von Zinzendorf’s Moravian Brethren began sending evangelists to the West Indies.

The Third Great Awakening took place in the second half of the nineteenth century and featured evangelists such as Dwight Moody, William and Catherine Booth (founders of the Salvation Army), preachers like Charles Spurgeon, overseas missionaries like Alexander Duff, David Livingstone, and James Hudson Taylor, and even former professional baseball player Billy Sunday and his particular form of “muscular Christianity.” The Third Great Awakening is also associated with the beginnings of the Bible college movement and the social gospel with its emphasis on

the middle and working classes. It further espoused a postmillennial understanding of the “End Times,” which imagined that the evangelization of the entire world and improvement of life on earth for all would be so successful that it would usher in the return of Christ—a belief that evaporated in the mustard gas mists of the Great War. Hence, 1905 is pivotal because it marks the year of this last large revival movement, whether it is seen as subsequent to or a final event of the Third Great Awakening. The 1905 Revival is also called the Welsh Revival because it began in Wales with a series of special Methodist meetings. During the fifty years of the Third Great Awakening, church attendance in Western society did rise steadily, but, after the 1905 peak, organized Christianity recommenced the slow descent it had started 250 years earlier with the start of the Enlightenment project.

Certainly, the modernists in Britain and America were affected by these religious traditions, but the religious doubts voiced during the Victorian Age kept growing. As perhaps the best representative of the decline of Victorian religious belief, Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), at times torn between belief and doubt, identified this decline as a disillusioned society's rejection of divine truth that had long offered permanence. In his dark and pessimistic “Dover Beach” (1867), Arnold famously regrets that the tide of the “Sea of Faith,” once so full and supporting of civilization, was now receding in a “melancholy, long, withdrawing roar” (line 25) and was never to return. For him, this necessitated a melancholy world with “neither joy, nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain” (33-34); further, the lack of faith meant that people were left hopeless and alone as if on “a darkling plain / Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, / Where ignorant armies clash by night” (35-37). Like Eliot after him, Arnold identified Christianity, broadly

understood, as integral to the national culture of Britain, so despite the fact that his Christianity was certainly a product of the Enlightenment that dismissed miracles and the supernatural as superstition but retained ethics and ritual as “morality touched with emotion,” Arnold wrote several volumes on what he saw as the true nature of Christianity, including *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870), *God and the Bible* (1875), *Literature and Dogma* (1873), and *Last Essays on Church and Religion* (1877). In the latter work, Arnold recaps the harsh reception his religious criticism had born on the European Continent, noting that his writings that passed in England or America as “revolutionary and anti-religious” were seen in foreign nations with “astonishment and impatience” because thinking people on the Continent were glad that “religion was going to ruin as fast as could be expected” and were shocked that the English still clung to the old tradition, even if, as in Arnold's case, the old tradition was “set on new grounds” (500). As Charles Taylor summarizes Arnold's view of his cultural moment, his “civilization was both philistine and atomistic. A fragmented society was the counterpart to a fragmented self. . . . This fragmentation and loss of depth is a part of the price we pay for the ending of the Christian era” (*Secular Age* 381).

In J. Hillis Miller's judgement, this fractured reality reflected Arnold's belief that “an originally good society has drifted further and further away from its holy beginning until mere empty husks are left. . . . Social forms no longer draw strength from God, and, on the other hand, they are no longer appropriate to the life man leads” (246); Arnold looked to poetry itself to fill this gap in providing a ritualized liturgical language to reference the meaningfulness represented by the good. For this reason, Arnold is keen to develop a sharp distinction between “traditionary religion,”

which maintains miracles, metaphysical proofs, and an anthropomorphic God, and “the *natural truth* of Christianity,” which is primarily meant to celebrate the “grand virtues: kindness and pureness, charity and chastity” (503-06); on this basis, he writes that “Christianity will survive because of its natural truth” and that “old forms of Christian worship . . . will survive as poetry” (510). Miller argues that Arnold, by thus stressing the natural truth of belief as expressed through poetry instead of the “mere empty husks” of traditional religion, “wants to return to a time before abstract thought became necessary, a time when man lived his religion directly, in powerful feeling, without needing to think about it” (253).

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) shows a similar struggle between doubt and faith tending towards agnosticism. In what is possibly the best known poem of the Victorian era, “In Memoriam A.H.H.” (1849), Tennyson mourns the death of his closest friend and his sister's fiancé, Arthur Henry Hallam, who died at twenty-three from a suspected blood clot or cerebral hemorrhage (Untermeyer 505-06). The poem, one of Queen Victoria's favourites, reflects the period's dissatisfaction with religion's answers to human suffering but nonetheless attempts to maintain a stoic belief in a compassionate personal God. Composed over seventeen years, Tennyson's poem reads as a personal theodicy, specifically in response to the pain of the death of an innocent friend. The poem is in fact addressed to the “Strong Son of God” (stanza I: line 1) and seeks to renew faith in God, admitting that “We have but faith: we cannot know; / For knowledge is of things we see” (I:21-22). Tennyson's narrator speaks of one he had known who was “Perplexed in faith” yet remained faithful and “pure in deeds” because he believed that “There lives more faith in honest doubt, / Believe me, than in half the creeds,” and by emphasizing this distinction between the creeds of

organized religion and the faith of personal spirituality, the friend is able to “find a stronger faith his own” (XCVI:9-12, 17). Near the end of the poem, the narrator again attempts to reconcile his faith and his doubt by realizing that, for him, “If e’ver when faith had fall’n asleep, / I heard a voice 'believe no more,’” he then felt that “A warmth within the breast would melt / The freezing reason's colder part” leaving him like “a child that cries, / But crying, knows his father is near” (CXXIV:9-10, 13-14, 19-20). It is on this basis of an emotional paternal comfort that he overcomes the objections of reason and can write “‘Tis better to have loved and lost / Than never to have loved at all” (XXVII:15-16). Yet, even in this bold assertion of the comforts of faith, there remains a tenuous balance between spiritual faith and doubt about the claims of traditional religion.

Some of the modernists in this study, William Faulkner being a prime example, inherited some of these Victorian sentiments that identify “religion” as dead and controlled by dogma and hierarchies and “spirituality” as alive and personal and real, and they thus sought the kernel of true spiritual belief within the religious tradition. On the other hand, other modernists fully returned to the traditional Church and depicted it as a necessary institution for society to withstand the turmoil of the new century. T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) is the quintessential modernist proponent of Christianity, for after publicizing his conversion in 1927, he became a religious conformist and urged society to return to the Church and chided those who rejected it. He became vocally Christian in his aesthetics by, for example, championing the Metaphysical Poets, commemorating Anglo Christian history in *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), serving on the official committee struck by the Archbishop of Canterbury to produce *The Revised Psalter* (1963), and even greeting the ominous

stirrings of World War II with his *The Idea of a Christian Society* in 1939. He saw Christianity as a necessary framework for British society to provide stability and tradition, and he defined the traditional elements of Christianity in *After Strange Gods* as “a way of feeling and acting which characterizes a group throughout generations” (19, 29). For this reason, Eliot’s play *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) begins with the women of Canterbury standing “close by the cathedral” and wondering, “Are we drawn by danger? Is it the knowledge of safety, that draws our feet / Towards the cathedral?” (23); Eliot pictures their fear and the Church's comfort in 1170 as a proper parallel to the fear of fascism and war in 1935, and he argues that Anglo Christianity still has the power to stabilize the foundations of Christian Britain.

News of Eliot's public conversion did not sit well with his literary acquaintances who were mainly sceptical or uninterested in religion and rejected it on what they felt to be intellectual grounds; it is in response to such rejection that Eliot, in *Christianity and Culture*, would urge society to “treat Christianity with a great deal more intellectual respect than is our wont” (6). Perhaps the best known rebuke of his religious affiliation is that of Virginia Woolf, who, in a letter to her sister Vanessa Bell on February 11, 1928, wrote that she had “a most shameful and distressing interview” with Eliot that made her claim he “may be called dead to us all from this day forward” because he “believes in God and immortality, and goes to church”; Woolf claims to have been “really shocked,” specifically attacks Eliot's credibility, and declares there is “something obscene in a living person sitting by the fire and believing in God” (*Letters* III:457-58). Virginia Woolf was a committed atheist, likely owing to the considerable influence of her father, Leslie Stephen, a very public

Victorian agnostic;¹ Woolf was in fact the final guest lecturer of the famous Cambridge Heretics Society (Franke 229).²

Eliot, for his part, undoubtedly saw the question of traditional religion in the opposite light, and in *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (1934), he castigates W.B. Yeats and D.H. Lawrence as “modern heretics.” However, it is his view of Lawrence that verges on the obsessive, calling him “an almost perfect example of the heretic” (41) and even insisting that, because Lawrence was “spiritually sick” and suffered from “an incapacity for what we ordinarily call thinking,” in him the “demonic powers found an instrument” (65). Indeed, Eliot's resentment of Lawrence's spiritual, sexual, and political freedom appears to derive from Eliot's own snobbery on grounds of class and education, for despite his unlikely upbringing in St. Louis, Missouri, Eliot placed great pride in his Harvard, Sorbonne, and Oxford education and in his eventual role as the gatekeeper of “Englishness” after his conversion to Anglicanism and adoption of British citizenship³; indeed, in his opinion, Eliot believed Lawrence's “heresy” arose because he “started life wholly free

¹ For a fascinating and detailed study of the immense role as a public Victorian agnostic played by Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen (1832-1904), and his considerable influence on her beliefs, see Noel Annan's *Leslie Stephen: The Godless Victorian* (1984). Stephen, an accomplished mountaineer, was the first editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography* and wrote several books including *The Science of Ethics* (1882) on evolutionary ethics and *An Agnostic's Apology* (1893).

² Her lecture was later published as “Character in Fiction.” Other figures who addressed the Society, which existed from 1909 till 1924, include Jane Harrison, George Bernard Shaw, G.K. Chesterton, T.E. Hulme, Bertrand Russell, George Santayana, Rebecca West, Adrian Stephen, Ivor Richards, I.A. Richards, Edith Sitwell, Clive Bell, G.E. Moore, and Roger Fry (Franke 219-29). As is obvious, this partial list includes several members of the Bloomsbury Group, who were themselves formed as a continuation of a secret Cambridge fraternity originally founded by Tennyson and his fellow students which was composed of the university's twelve brightest students, for which reason they were called the “Apostles”; their number included Leonard Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey, G.E. Moore, Saxon Sidney-Turner, and E.M. Forster (Johnstone 7-8).

³ Ironically, it would be F.R. Leavis, himself influenced by Eliot and frequently now charged with elitism, who would champion Lawrence as a central modernist participant in the “Great Conversation” through two monographs: *D.H. Lawrence: Novelist* (1955) and *Thought, Words and Creativity: Art and Thought in Lawrence* (1976). In fact, in Leavis' 1958 article “T.S. Eliot's Stature as a Critic,” he reassesses the stature of Eliot and finds him wanting in comparison to Lawrence's “vital intelligence.”

from any guidance except the Inner Light, the most untrustworthy and deceitful guide that ever offered itself to wandering humanity” (66). Lawrence, notably, would agree wholeheartedly with Eliot about his reliance on his own spiritual nature, later urging his readers to adopt his own credo “Believe in your own Holy Ghost” (*Studies* 102).

Whereas Eliot's conversion appears to be a calculated preservation of national and class traditions in danger of erosion, W.H. Auden (1907-1973) was raised in the Anglican Church, left it at thirteen or fourteen, and returned to it twenty years later in 1940 (*Forewords* 517). The catalyst in his case was the terrible traumas of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and specifically the attacks on Christians: many Republicans were virulently anti-Catholic and closed churches and executed clergy, while the Nationalists reflected Franco's hatred for Protestants and likewise treated them with violence and death. Auden remembered that this persecution aimed against religious persons left him “profoundly shocked and disturbed” (41). It was after this and with the first indications of a second world war that Auden left England for the United States in 1939, a move that was seen as a betrayal by many. It was in New York that Auden watched a theatre newsreel showing the German invasion of Poland and was sickened when the audience, composed mainly of Germans, yelled “Kill them!” whenever Polish citizens appeared in the footage; Auden realized that his liberal secular humanist mindset now seemed naive:

We assumed that there was only one outlook on life conceivable among civilized people, the liberal humanism in which all of us had been brought up. . . . The novelty and shock of the Nazis was that they made no pretence of believing in justice and liberty for all. . . . One could hardly avoid asking the question, “If, as I am convinced, the Nazis are wrong and we are right, what is it that validates our values and invalidates theirs?” (“W.H. Auden” 39-40)

After the atrocities of the Holocaust became known, Auden argued that the “ubiquitous violence of the present age is not truly passionate, but a desperate attempt to regress from reflection into passion instead of forward into faith. The worst feature, for example, of the massacre of the Jews by the Nazis is not its cruelty but its frivolity” (*Forewords* 181). Again, Auden was deeply affected by realizing how wrong he had been to rely on the liberal humanist belief that the goodness of humans to one another could substitute for a religious system of ethics.

Thus, Auden came to believe that society needed to work towards a common faith in order to overcome its bestial nature, and he looked back to the religious traditions of his childhood to offer an ethical and philosophical framework for life in the modern world. In 1940, he joined the Episcopal Church, and in 1946 he gained American citizenship, thereby making a curiously similar but opposite move to that of Eliot. Decidedly unlike Eliot, however, Auden's faith was greatly influenced by modernizing moves within Protestantism itself, for he read deeply from thinkers like Søren Kierkegaard, Reinhold Niebuhr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Paul Tillich. Auden found comfort in the Anglican Communion, which he gladly believed saw “[u]niformity of rite” as always “more important than uniformity of doctrine, and the private devotions of her members have been left to their own discretion without much instruction or encouragement from her” (*Forewords* 71).

Yet, the adherence to Christian forms by some moderns like Eliot and Auden does not deny that there was a massive decline in traditional Christianity in the West or that there were those who, as it were, worked actively to roll the stone back over Christ's tomb. Take for instance this modernist credo: “I do not believe in Belief.”

These words form the blunt introduction to one of E.M. Forster's best known essays⁴ wherein he argues that his civilization was inherently one that yearned to exercise faith in something, whether that something was the God of Christianity, or democracy, or fascism, or science. Forster would thus agree with Jacques Lacan's assertion that "Scepticism is an ethic. Scepticism is a mode of sustaining man in life, which implies a position so difficult, so heroic, that we can no longer even imagine it" (*Four* 224). Forster advocates that difficult, heroic position that maintains a scepticism about the constructed belief systems of religion, politics, or science; his conclusion, however, is that if "Force," meaning the common will of the populace, is to be used in the world for good—to end despotism, to protect the simple beauty of human relationships, to guarantee the liberties (including criticism) of the individual, and to ensure the very survival of the human race—then this Force must now be founded in very different sources than it was in the past and present. This striving for love, truth, beauty, and goodness apart from a controlled and hierarchical belief was certainly a major tenet of Forster's experience of modernism but so too was the acknowledgement of a break with the past and the need for a new renaissance. Hence, Forster concludes his argument by saying:

I cannot believe that Christianity will ever cope with the present world-wide mess, and I think that such influence as it retains in modern society is due to the money behind it, rather than to its spiritual appeal. It was a spiritual force once, but the indwelling spirit will have to be restated if it is to calm the waters again, and probably restated in a non-Christian form. (172)

Forster urges society to agree that the great number of very difficult problems they had to solve could not be rectified by the outdated solutions of Christianity. And yet,

⁴ The essay was often reprinted under various titles such as "What I Believe," "Credo," and "Two Cheers for Democracy."

he had an abiding hope that a path forward might be found, originating perhaps in some entity akin to what Forster calls the Force. Reminiscent of Emerson's "one-soul," Forster's great Force is the sum of the force that rests inside each individual and represents her ability to join with her neighbour in acting for the good of all. In reminding us of our bare humanness, the last words of Forster's essay are: "Naked I came into the world, naked I shall go out of it! And a very good thing too, for it reminds me that I am naked under my shirt, whatever its colour" (172). Certainly, Forster's rejection of Christianity from the outside echoes an impatience experienced by many on its inside, including groups as diverse as the Catholic modernists and Protestant fundamentalists.

With its ambitious desire to comprehend these complexities, this dissertation, in examining the aforementioned historical factors, will be rooted in the ethos of a time period that was both remarkably destructive and creative. After all, modernism's coexistence with brutal war, fascism, the collapse of empire, Jim Crow laws, and genocide also birthed the study of the psychology of religion as first explored by William James; it witnessed theological movements for renewal within churches themselves, such as the Seventh Lambeth Conference of 1930 that approved the use of some birth control, rejected war as a means of settling international disputes, and opposed racial segregation in churches; further, a segment of modernism, typified by the Oxbridge elite, exhibited a fascination with High Church Anglo-Catholicism as a formative factor of English life and national consciousness and was embraced by many seemingly liberal writers long before the reforms of the Vatican II Conference in the early 1960s. In this fashion, the convergence of historic Christianity's decline and the enduring desire for spiritual meaning resulted in new avenues of

epistemological exploration that raised once again the philosophical questions that had consumed the greatest minds of the several generations since the start of the Enlightenment.

Hence, literature, as one of society's most important artifacts and as an archive of its thought, is scholarship's best source for evaluating the religion of modernism as an entity very much influenced by its cultural setting. For this reason, contemporary scholars like Pericles Lewis suggest that "the modern novel is strikingly concerned with the spiritual rather than the material" ("Ch" 671), that the "sense of the sacredness of everyday life, and of the need to create more intimate, modern rituals in place of the great public rites of the Church, can be observed continually in the modern novel" ("Ch" 687), and even that modernist literature "seems obsessed with vast impersonal and ineffable forces, with the way that individual lives are shaped by things unseen—patterns, myths, social and psychic forces . . . These are the gods of modern life with which the modern novel has to grapple" ("Ch" 688). Although characters in modernist works may remain outside of organized religion, they represent their culture's enduring desire to fashion authentic spiritual experience. Yet, due to the decline of religion, even the notion of the individual changed from the Thomistic figure of a person with a soul to Mill's individual with the absolute freedom and personal right to seek happiness and fulfilment. This individual's search for meaning consequently focused on satisfactory and unsatisfactory sources of epistemology apart from the traditional claims of the historic Christian religion, or, for that matter, of nation, of family, or of humanity in general. Hence, epistemology and belief are very much linked—the questions of how people know and how much they can know form the basis either for a rejection of religious belief or for what

Kierkegaard as a Christian existentialist would call “the leap of faith.” This in turn affects the feeling of local and universal community experienced by the individual and asks whether one can belong to a community at all or whether it too must be rejected along with the hierarchy frequently felt to be inherent in the structure of the Christian community.

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Since a religious or spiritual impulse does survive the rapid decline of organized traditional religion as an institution, the question we must ask is what does religion (understood as a communal, external set of beliefs and rituals) or spirituality (understood as an internal sense of connection to something beyond our everyday physical experience of life) give to human beings? What does religion or spirituality do? What are the effects of the metaphysical turn in the human psyche? This project posits the emergence of what I call “modernist spirituality,” which argues that although traditional organized religion did decline and a new organized religion did not arise to take the place of historic Christianity, a spiritual need not only survived but thrived. Against the secularism hypothesis that would see the West as finally growing out of its religious phase in an almost Hegelian process of maturation, modernist spirituality demonstrates that the spiritual impulse remained very much intact; indeed, now cut free of the limits imposed by the structures of organized and even nationalized belief, emerging modernist forms of spirituality were enabled to meet the human desire for a spirituality that twinned mystery and explanation in a fashion fit for the twentieth century with an emphasis on the new, on refurbishing the ancient or the outlawed, and on looking with a renewed interest beyond the geography of organized religion to the marginal. Although for some modernists, such

as T.S. Eliot or W.H. Auden, traditional forms of Christianity remained effective and even vital, the modernists of this study are those who maintained spiritual beliefs and consciously worked to reapply those concepts outside of organized religion. Their goal is not to create a new religion or to usher in a second Reformation, nor to prove or disprove even basic religious tenets like the existence of a personal God or an afterlife, but to make a trenchant argument for resignifying spiritual concepts whose meaningfulness had been dulled by organized Christianity.

This resignification is a process by which the meanings involved in a sign are altered significantly by changing their context or import, which may occur in order to reflect changes in the wider culture. The sites of resignification studied in this dissertation indicate aspects of spiritual belief that take on new meanings in order to meet the challenges of modernism, to increase the value of outdated religious symbols, or to effect change in people's thoughts and actions. Of course, when Christianity itself expanded into Europe and the Americas, it resignified many local beliefs or traditions in order to ease conversions.⁵ Barbara Herrnstein Smith, in *Belief and Resistance* (1997), refers to this process of resignification as part of an ongoing “reconception of belief” that arises from epistemological controversies; in particular, she identifies three main features of the reconceptualization of spiritual belief. First, Smith argues, “Beliefs are *modified* in the same ways, through the same general mechanisms, as they are *maintained*”; these changes occur through an evaluation of the consequences of “the actions we perform by virtue of the beliefs that we have,” meaning that beliefs will be “strengthened, weakened, or reconfigured” on the basis

⁵ For example, Chapter I references the syncretism caused when the figure of the Virgin Mary took on characteristics borrowed from Northern European goddess traditions; Chapter IV refers to the combination of the Christian All Souls' Day with Celtic beliefs resulting in Halloween or with Aztec beliefs resulting in the Mexican Day of the Dead.

of whether their consequences are meaningful and beneficial in light of the challenges people face (45). Hence, it is not necessary for a resignified spiritual belief to become part of an entirely different system of belief that makes no reference to its earlier forms; it is only necessary that belief continue to evolve to meet new challenges.

Second, Smith maintains that changes in belief are determined by “the limits of human knowledge or of cognition,” in that humans attempt to live and believe so as to adapt to their changing realms of knowledge about their environment; thus, it is not only that “our structures define what we can *detect* about the world, but that the world we *occupy*—the world we can act *on* and can be acted on *by*—is a particular perceptual and behavioural niche” (46). As human knowledge of existence and the world environment increases, human spiritual beliefs must change in order to keep pace. Third, Smith posits that the “characteristics of a creature's global (organic) structure at any given time can be seen as the joint product of . . . the evolutionary history of that creature's genetic make-up and its life-history in a particular environment” (47). Thus, structures of belief are not set at birth and will frequently change for individuals and for societies as their contextual environment shifts; these interactions with the environment “continuously modify our structures *and* the ways they operate, and these structural and functional modifications affect our subsequent interactions with our environments, both in *what we perceive* and in *how we behave*” (47). The resignifications treated in this dissertation correspond to these types of change outlined by Smith, whereby modernist writers adapted aspects of traditional Christianity by giving them a new meaning in order to make belief more meaningful for the people who faced modernism's upheavals. According to Smith's analysis, patterns of the resignification of belief are ongoing and are quite natural responses to

needed outcomes, increased human knowledge, and a changing cultural environment; however, the social changes and increases in human knowledge that occurred during the modernist era were immense, and the continuing desire for spiritual meaning clearly indicated the need for deep and ongoing resignifications of traditional religious concepts that would meet the immense challenges of the period.

The removal of the traditional Christian framework meant the removal of the answers it had posited to the fundamental human questions about who and what humans are, why they are here, what their lives mean, how they relate to other humans, and how they interact with our world. The removal of the old answers of course did not remove the ancient questions, and indeed, Christianity's weakening set the questions free to be fully felt anew by the modernist generation. For some, this led to deep anxiety that, as Charles Taylor argues in *The Malaise of Modernity* (1991), grew directly from the negative effects of individualism, the primacy of reason, and a loss of political freedom due to the constraints that are actually felt because of increased individualism and dependence on reason (2-9). For others, new freedoms led to a deluge of new metaphysical ideas that in turn fuelled aesthetic experimentation that just as surely led to a new perspective of humans, of their world, and of the ancient ultimate questions themselves. Indeed, this is at the least a formulation of modernism that sees God not as an actual entity but as a concept that perhaps could best be seen as haunting the modernist period and modernist literature as surely as the concept had haunted the Victorians. As the neo-Platonist philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch argues in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (2003), humans of our time and place need to believe in something divine without the need for God—something she would call love or goodness. The desire for spiritual

meaning is maintained, but the objects or rituals that are sanctified change dramatically.

Importantly, the three immediately obvious intellects of the modernist period—Sigmund Freud, William James, Émile Durkheim—to whom the moderns would turn for answers regarding the purpose of belief do have set, straightforward, succinct definitions of why humans desire religion or spirituality, but the definitions offered differ remarkably. Indeed, beyond the inherent difficulty of offering a definition of such a complex and protean cultural tradition, the reasons for this confidence on the one hand and difference on the other are clear upon reflection: although all three offer conclusive definitions of religion as an aspect of universal human culture, they express varying emphases on psychology, on sociology, on history, or on anthropology; Sigmund Freud speaks of religion's place for the common follower of a sect, William James of the spiritual experience of individuals who have the creativity to lead within those sects or to set a new spiritual path outside an organized faith, and Émile Durkheim of the role of religion and belief as it affects society or the community. Obviously, these concerns do overlap, but from an aggregate of their various definitions, five central characteristics arise that determine the role of the spiritual in human life and so define the central concerns of this dissertation's chapters and the selection of the literary texts that I treat under each.

First, belief purports to provide a method for interpreting humanity's actions within history, and for this reason, my first chapter focuses on the redemption of time as seen in H.D.'s book of World War II verse, *Trilogy* (1944-1946). This function of belief is best summed up by Sigmund Freud, who was once one of H.D.'s guides in her own spiritual journey. In his 1932 essay, "The Question of a *Weltanschauung*,"

Freud succinctly defines religion as “instruction, consolation, and requirements” (XXII:162). By *Weltanschauung*, he indicates a totalizing worldview that rests on an overriding hypothesis that seeks to leave no question unanswered (XXII:158). A freer form of belief is seen in H.D. and in modernist spirituality in general, but H.D.’s *Trilogy* certainly gives a very full account of human history interpreted through images like the palimpsest that give it meaning and show a source of redemption. In *The Walls Do Not Fall*, *Tribute to the Angels*, and *The Flowering of the Rod*—the three volumes of poetry that together form *Trilogy*—H.D. explores the destructive force of war on London where she lived during the London Blitz. H.D. was raised as a Moravian, and although that tradition's influence can be seen throughout her life, the belief system of H.D.'s adulthood sought new meaning through a syncretistic blend of Christianity, Greek and Egyptian myths, European goddess traditions, astrology, and psychology in a fashion that privileged the power and role of the feminine, thereby offering a corrective to the Christian patriarchal tradition and providing a source of redemption from the trauma of irrational warfare and destruction. For Freud, H.D.’s redemptive history would accord with his definition by meeting the human desire for an epistemology that soothes the traumas of human life (XXII:161-63), though in H.D.’s case, the relevant traumas are those of the war and personal tragedy that insists again on *Trilogy*’s immediate question: “What saved us? What for?” (I:1).

Not surprisingly, Durkheim’s account of religion in his *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912) foregrounds its role in building and maintaining a society or a community centred on spiritual rituals: “A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things . . . which unite into one single moral community

called a Church, all those who adhere to them" (47; italics original). Durkheim's language celebrates the unity, the oneness, the singleness, the communion, and the adherence of the "all" who are regarded as a part of the community. Durkheim himself was raised in a rabbinical household and seemed destined for the ministry, and though he lost his Jewish faith early on, he maintained a deep interest in spiritual things. For Durkheim, so fundamentally a product of the close knit religious community from which he was ostracized at a young age, the main purposes of religion, not surprisingly, centre on the sense of community religion provides. Durkheim argues that when the individual loses ground to the state, there is a need for secondary groups that intermediate between the two because the state is not a basis for comprehending life or finding a basis for moral certainty. Yet, paradoxically, the spiritual community, because of the rarefied realm with which it deals, becomes Durkheim's ideal society *par excellence*, to the extent that he can write that "the idea of society is the soul of religion" (419).

Rooting his community based definition of belief in the self definition of believers, Durkheim characterizes the purpose of belief thus: "it is to make us act, to aid us to live. The believer who has communicated with his god . . . is a man who is *stronger*. He feels within him more force, either to endure the trials of existence, or to conquer them" (416; italics original). In characterizing this ability to stand against trials within community on the basis of belief, my second chapter briefly invokes Walter Benjamin's philosophy of history, which identifies the opportunity and oppression of trauma as a state of emergency that forces us to struggle towards an eschatological "Messianic time" wherein happiness will be equated with redemption. John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) focuses on just such a struggle in Jim

Casy, a former preacher who has abandoned historic Christianity, taking with him only a belief akin to the liberal Protestant social gospel that, in the harshness of the Great Depression and mass migration, is painfully reborn as social activism. Steinbeck pictures Casy as an eventual union organizer who consciously reworks Christian theology into an idea of socialism rooted in the Emersonian concept of a world soul that unites all peoples under it and that repeatedly brings the concept of sin to bear on corporate institutions like the banks, holding companies, big plantation owners, and packers of the novel. For Casy, the kernel of his new belief is that all things are holy and intimately interconnected with one another and with nature; thus, Chapter II draws further connections to the deep ecology of environmentalists like Arne Naess and Felix Guattari. Casy' "ecology of holiness" clearly aims towards an ideal society, and Durkheim argues that this ideal is based in the collective ideal (in effect, a heaven on earth); in spite of its frequent shortcomings, the community becomes "the school of collective life [where] the individual has learned to idealize" (423). In this way, shared belief significantly strengthens the bonds between individuals in their embrace of goodness and peace or in their fight against injustice for a better and more just world.

In regard to the invocation of Steinbeck in this project, it is important to clarify that while writers like Joyce, H.D., and Faulkner are readily identifiable as modernists, Steinbeck is often seen as a second string modernist writer. Yet I would argue that Steinbeck, who was born in 1902 in California, can simply be considered a second generation American modernist. Too late to be a member of the 1920s Paris expat circle, Steinbeck found his voice and his moment in the late 1930s with the sorrows of the Great Depression. Steinbeck, at least in his early career, should be

understood in the tradition of political involvement that also characterizes John Dos Passos and W.H. Auden during the same period. Certainly, Steinbeck is not a modernist novelist in the vein of Faulkner, who revels in what Yeats calls “the fascination of what's difficult”; Steinbeck's is a different type of experimental writing, and, for this reason, he is often set in tandem with Ernest Hemingway, whose deceptively simple declarative style layered and hid meanings in what was definitely intended as experimental prose. An acknowledgement of the controversial and rather uncanny similarities between Steinbeck's *The Pearl* (1947) and Hemingway's subsequent *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) is enough to establish Steinbeck as a fellow traveller in the modernist project. Further, although Steinbeck has been disparaged as a propagandist, overly-simplistic, or a mere regionalist, his importance as a voice of the late modernist period has not waned. Steinbeck displays a vital political consciousness and a strong artist voice, and scholars, teachers, and students have recognized *The Grapes of Wrath* as an ambitious and complex text that clearly emphasizes what is at stake in the way class, religion, economic capitalism, and environmental devastation have molded American history and society.⁶

Chapter III treats the notion of the sacred as a central characteristic of belief. William James' best known definition of religion, despite his proviso that any simple definition is probably “more misleading than enlightening” (28), is that religion is “the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto” (53). In expanding this definition to the question of what religion does insofar as the individual attempts that adjustment,

⁶ Certainly, these issues remain prevalent to our own political context, with increased competition over diminishing resources, a burgeoning world population, unrestricted consumption in wealthy nations, issues surrounding the treatment of undocumented labourers, and environmental catastrophes exacerbated by pollution and global warming.

James notes three things: “Sacrifice, Confession, and Prayer” (451). It is the first two of these that dwell on the notion of the sacred; James shows that “Sacrifices to gods are omnipresent in primeval worship,” but in the modern age, this is continued in the enactment of the Sacrament of the Eucharist and through the spiritualized idea of offering the heart and of renouncing the fleshly desires of the inner self. Likewise, confession refers to an “inward and moral stage of sentiment” that is a part of a “general system of purgation and cleansing” aimed at a proper relation to the divine, whatever that word is felt to signify. Two literary texts that develop these notions of the sacred in fascinating ways are William Faulkner’s *Light in August* (1932) and Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood* (1936) and reading them together will urge a further representation of the importance of privatized faith within modernist spirituality. In this sense, both Faulkner and Barnes emphasize a space for sacredness within private belief by moving ritual away from the public realm where religion had become too intertwined with supporting the biopolitical claims made by the state. Both texts deal with the sacred in terms of sacred space, sacredness and pollution, ritual, and confession to individuals who are deemed to be set apart for a sacred purpose but who, because of biopolitical reasons, have been forced to the margins of society and of organized Christianity. Chapter III will therefore centre on the roles of Faulkner’s Rev. Hightower, a defrocked Presbyterian minister who finds meaning in action and community by rejecting his former church, and Barnes’ Matthew O’Connor, an Irish Catholic who is a transvestite and an abortionist.

Chapter IV seeks to comprehend perhaps the oldest catalyst of human spiritual thought in perhaps the earliest trauma to the human community: death. Death simply does not fit into our comprehension of life, and spiritual questions abound regarding

what if anything happens when we die. A very ancient answer provided by belief was the return of the dead in spiritual form, which was often believed to happen in dreams or on a special day of the year. This primitive belief corresponds broadly to the definitions offered by the experts of the modernist era. For Freud, belief could give us knowledge about the unknown existence of human life beyond death, it could quell our fears of spirits and of our own approaching deaths, and it gave us rituals to follow in properly honouring our dead ancestors. For Durkheim, ritualizing the return of the dead corresponds to our societal unity understood as a thing indivisible even by death. For James, the whereabouts of the soul after it leaves the body is an aspect of the great unknown with which humans try to communicate through belief. Given the evident prevalence of death from the warfare and epidemics of the early twentieth century, the modernists used the return of the dead as a central topos to figure repressed crises of society and the limitations of language especially to voice mourning. Following Freud's volume on the interpretation of dreams, my chapter first investigates Henry James' tale "The Jolly Corner" (1908), in which a man comes face to face with his own ghost in his childhood home during a dream sequence. I then turn to James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), wherein Stephen Dedalus is haunted repeatedly by the ghost of his mother, who is in turn mourning his apostasy from the Catholic Church. Finally, I examine the hidden motif of the Day of the Dead as developed in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) through the frequent invocation of Richard Strauss's "Allerseelen" (Opus 10, Number 8; 1885) with its images of flowers strewn on the grave of the departed and the hope that they will return.

The fifth section is an epilogue that discusses the role of the artist and of poetry in particular as a modernist expression of the language of ritual and liturgy. In

many ways, the philosophical or theological foundations of Christendom underpinned a perceptual construction of the world and of human life. The epilogue thus asks what happens when these underpinnings for ontology and epistemology are removed by investigating selected poems from Wallace Stevens's first collection of poetry, *Harmonium* (1923). With a focus primarily on "Peter Quince at the Clavier," I show how Stevens revisioned liturgy, ritual, meditation, and prayer by recasting the role of the modernist poet in a new vocation of the imagination that enters into the world through and despite the limits of language.

Thus, the chapters that follow progress on a conceptual basis that argues that, in order to work for change within their society, these modernist writers consciously reinterpreted the traditional Christian categories of redemption, community, sacredness, the spectre, and liturgy to treat issues according to the sensibilities of the early twentieth century that would now be identified under the categories of feminism, ecology, biopolitics, social crises, and the role of the poet. Hence, my study relies on a different critical and theoretical approach in each chapter that is in each case motivated by the texts and the individual modernist writers being considered. Likewise, although the traditional aspect of religion treated in each section has been suggested by the definitional work done by Freud, James, and Durkheim, the resignified meanings have been determined by the texts and authors themselves. Further, although in each section I emphasize one particular category of spiritual meaning that the modernists adapted to their context, there are clearly aspects of the five chapters that overlap with one another, and each chapter deals with further questions of meaning or of ethics that are suggested by the central focus or by the texts being examined. Chapter I focuses on redemption, but it contextualizes this

sense of peace within the scope of feminism, sexuality, and the occult, and it comprehends its subject in terms of history and time as intersected by the trauma of war. Chapter II suggests ecology as an alternate basis for human community, but this is not removed from the concerns of the social gospel and of poverty, ethnicity, and class oppression. Chapter III treats ethical and moral concerns within two frameworks that question the very possibility of human communication and consciously interrogate the social constructions of race, gender, and sexuality. Chapter IV deals with important questions about the dead, or rather, with how the bereaved deal with death, so it must further involve itself with issues of personal and societal trauma, war, psychology, depression and misery, alcoholism, and mourning and melancholia. Finally, the epilogue's subject is the role of the poet and the use of language, which indicates a concern with how human beings perceive their world, which in turn invokes questions of epistemology, sensuality, phenomenology, and ritual.

In this manner, each chapter reflects upon the interconnectedness of these spiritual concerns and categories as they were constructed during a very complex moment in human history that was both post-Christendom and post-trauma. The formulations of modernist spirituality considered in this study show that though society's belief in traditional religion had waned, these modernists continued to believe in belief by attempting to recast the power and beauty of those concepts so as to meet the challenges of their day in their quest for spiritual meaning.

Chapter I:
The Redemptive Feminine in H.D.'s *Trilogy*

“Behold, I make all things new . . . behold, I come quickly”

—Revelation 21:5, 22:7

“I thought, / we will be saved yet.”

—H.D., “R.A.F.” *Collected Poems 1912-1944*
London, September 1941

1. Reading the Trauma of Erasure

The London Blitz began at 4pm on September 7, 1940, when 348 German bombers, escorted by 617 fighters, terrorized London until 6:00 pm. Two hours later, guided by the fires set by the first assault, a fresh group of bombers commenced an attack that lasted until 4:30 the following morning. Until it lessened in mid-November, an average of 200 bombers attacked London every night except one, dropping 13,000 tons of high explosive and more than 1 million incendiary bombs and forcing some 177,000 people to seek refuge in 80 stations of the London Underground (Price 109). The most extensive raid, on December 29, was dubbed “The Second Great Fire of London”; fire bombs set 1500 fires and destroyed a greater swath of London than was affected in 1666 (van Hartesveldt and Tucker I:224). The deadliest raid was that of May 10, when London, crowded with football fans, saw 3000 casualties, a quarter of a million books burned at the British Museum, and fires visible from as far away as 160 miles (van Hartesveldt and Tucker I:224). When the Blitz finally ended on May 10, 1941, 43,000 civilians had been killed, 139,000 were injured and over a million houses destroyed.

During the war, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) resided in Lowndes Square, only a few blocks away from the city’s central anti-aircraft batteries at Hyde Park, yet she refused to abandon London during the Blitz despite the urging and offers of her friends. She later explained that “Actual fire has raged round the crystal. The crystalline poetry to be projected, must of necessity, have that fire in it. You will find fire in *The Walls Do Not Fall*, *Tribute to the Angels* and *The Flowering of the Rod*”—those three books being the components of her book of wartime poetry, *Trilogy* (qtd. in Morris, *How to Live* 110-111). In *Trilogy*, H.D. bemoans the destruction of London

and, indeed, of European civilization in general, but she realizes that such devastation has been seen time again throughout the history of humanity. This certainly does not make destruction and devastation any easier, in the heart or in the mind, but realizing that civilization itself would survive, H.D.'s poetic speaker in *The Walls Do Not Fall* soon remarks, "we passed the flame : we wonder / what saved us? what for?" (I:1).¹ Thus, she begins to look for answers in the second book, *Tribute to the Angels*, where her hope is that European civilization might be enabled to experience rebirth and renewal allowing it to grow towards new heights and new beauties. In the third volume, *The Flowering of the Rod*, H.D. points to a path past the modernist dilemma to offer an alternative meaning to the tragedy of the war by insisting that the key to the map lay in a modern invocation of ancient symbols—such as the palimpsest, the virgin, and the goddess—that reveal the redemptive feminine power inherent in our collective past.

In tracing the text's complex development through all three of *Trilogy's* books, I argue that the wartime context urged H.D. to produce a feminist-androgynous mythology that revised Christianity and drew upon her knowledge of astronomy and astrology, psychoanalysis, and spiritual images from Christianity, Moravianism, ancient myths, goddess traditions, spiritualism, and the occult in looking for an applicable image of hope and redemption. She ultimately locates this redemption in the astrological Aquarius figure, but, in expressing this source of redemption, H.D.

¹ Certainly, this question coming at the beginning of the text indicates a complex philosophical poem is to follow. Indeed, as Alicia Ostriker posits, *Trilogy* seeks to "grapple with the giant issues of twentieth century poetry: the need to recover a coherent idea of self and society from the shards of social fragmentation, the apocalyptic horror of war, and the confusion and distress arising from changing gender relations; the need to construct or invent some grounds of spiritual faith in a world dominated by materialism and doubt; and the need to redefine the nature and uses of poetry and the imagination" ("No Rules" 339).

significantly alters the twentieth century understanding of the Age of Aquarius through the linguistic artifice of an alchemical transformation that results in a palimpsest of divinities who express the possibility for healing offered by the redemptive feminine within a world greatly traumatized by war and death.

H.D.'s intellectual and spiritual world was very complex. To name but a few of these influences, H.D. was raised in the Pennsylvania Moravian community of her mother and thought she was gifted as part of a hidden church; her father was a celebrated astronomer who eventually moved his family to Philadelphia when he took up a new university post; H.D. dedicated herself to imbibing the milieu of the classical world yet produced and acted in avant-garde film; she read extensively in several branches of mysticism and the occult during the 1930s and later underwent psychoanalysis with Freud that she initiated after a mystical vision in Corfu. This intensely alive openness to new experience and ideas fed H.D.'s poetry and led her along widely different avenues of literary experimentation, to the extent that those readers who know only the Imagist incarnation of H.D. may be quite surprised by the breadth and fresh voice found in her later work. After the Imagist period, H.D.'s output did not slow, though the number of works she actually published certainly did. Many of these works are only being published now, decades after she wrote them, laid aside because she was not content with them or because they were too overtly bisexual or rooted in the occult.²

² These four texts are *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, which was published in 2007, and *Majic Ring*, *The Mystery*, and *White Rose and the Red*, which were published in 2009. Previously, these texts were only available in manuscript form at Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. The earliest drafts of *Majic Ring* were written at in 1943-44, and the text anticipates many of *Trilogy's* images, its spiritualist concerns, and its mythopoeic function; the three latter novels were completed in the years following the war and likewise bear similarities in content and spiritual tone to *Trilogy*. These texts provide fascinating additions to H.D.'s published corpus and to our knowledge of her interest in spiritualism” *The Mystery* recreates the history of her mother's Moravian Church; *The Sword Went Out to Sea* references H.D.'s interest in alchemy and

H.D. felt the terrors of the First World War in a personal way through the death of her brother and the trauma suffered by her husband, Richard Aldington, which contributed to their divorce; H.D. blamed news of the sinking of the *Lusitania* for the stillbirth of her first child, and she was very near to death in 1919 when she gave birth to her daughter Perdita while suffering from the Influenza Pandemic.³ Given these experiences, H.D. feared the second war even more. *Trilogy* became the source of the answers she sought when overcome by the trauma of war, for H.D. believed that her art was powerful and had answers for a world in turmoil. The text links London's sufferings with those of past civilizations and invokes the spiritual guides of the past in new forms to aid her to survive the traumas facing Western civilization with the hope that something new and better would emerge. In doing so, much of the imagery she uses is drawn from the intellectual interests that fascinated her. Elements are adapted from long dead civilizations and their religions, from the occult and alchemy, from astronomy and astrology, from decidedly proto-feminist and Sapphic thought that actively sought out feminine spiritual symbols that had long since suffered from partial erasure, and from Freudian interpretations of how the past continues to influence the present. H.D., even in personal letters to her lover, Bryher, maintained that occult wisdom had “a whole other-science” to it; this claim leads Helen Sword to suggest that H.D.'s intent then became “to legitimize visionary

spiritualism as well as her 1946 breakdown, her hallucinations, and her visions; *Majic Ring* includes notes from seances H.D. conducted in the early 1940s and letters originally written to Lord Dowding, whom H.D. had met at one of his public lectures on his spiritualist communications with dead RAF pilots; even *White Rose and the Red*, which ostensibly focuses on Elizabeth Siddall's role among the Pre-Raphaelites, connects with H.D.'s spiritualism by involving William Morris, whose round three-legged table H.D. used in her own seances after Bryher purchased it at the estate sale of Violet Hunt.

³ The 1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic killed an estimated 50 million people worldwide and infected approximately 500 million people, a third of the world's population at the time (Taubenberger and Morens 15).

experience both by revealing the mystical basis of Freud's supposedly 'scientific' work . . . and, conversely, by treating mystical revelation as a science" (*Engendering* 155).⁴ Adelaide Morris similarly observes H.D.'s "insistence that poets, like scientists, can discover and report on fundamental, enduring, and universal laws" ("Science" 203), while, as Rachel Blau DuPlessis points out, instead of inventing new mythic systems, H.D. chose to "revamp and realign specific myths" drawn from a variety of cultures, places, and eras so as to show their continued relevance for our time ("Revisionary" 117).

Morris, in her essay "Science and the Mythopoeic Mind: The Case of H.D.," argues that the influence of H.D.'s scientific and familial background was essential to her poetics. She had a sometimes troubled relationship with her astronomer father⁵ but an otherwise positive view of her Moravian grandfather, the Reverend Francis Wolle, who devoted himself to the study of cryptogamous plants after his retirement; unlike H.D.'s seemingly "stark and severe" father, Wolle "recognized no disharmony between science and art and in his catalogues felt equally comfortable classifying his little forms, exclaiming over their beauty, admiring their resourcefulness, and comparing them to mythological beings" ("Science" 200). Miranda Hickman argues that H.D. felt "expelled" and in a "condition of estrangement from the realm of scientific inquiry in which the men of her family had excelled" that led her to "regard her visionary abilities as enabling her to move beyond" their realm of knowledge (219). As Morris further notes, H.D. lived during a period in which the confidence

⁴ Freud would certainly become a role model in this endeavour, even if a limited one. Susan Stanford Friedman argues that "in an ultimate sense, he became both mother and father to [H.D.] as he fused her mother's art and her father's science in the mysteries of psychoanalysis" (*Psyche* 153).

⁵ In describing a dream of him, H.D. referred to her father as cold and distant and remarked that his profession gave her "only terror, a blind fear of space and the distances or the planets and the fixed stars" (Friedman, *Analyzing* 212).

that physics was “closing book” was erased when “almost every known 'law' had been disputed, diminished, or discarded” by the “new physics” (“Science” 196). H.D. applauded such questioning of fields of knowledge considered to be unquestionable; as Morris argues, H.D. admired those thinkers who unsettled “any easy opposition between science and art. . . . H.D. habitually defines great artists as those who push toward truth and great scientists as those who devote themselves to a pure and poignant beauty” (“Science” 197). For H.D., another major factor in her own push toward truth apart from strictly defined modern science would be to look backward in time to the truths of ancient mythology.

H.D.’s *Trilogy* invokes one of the most important of her ancient symbols, the palimpsest, at its outset, when the first book of the series, *The Walls Do Not Fall*, is dedicated “To Bryher / for Karnak 1923 / from London 1942” (I:1). Bryher was of course of central importance in H.D.’s life: they were lesbian lovers, and it was Bryher who had nursed H.D. through the 1919 Influenza Pandemic and a difficult childbirth after her husband and the father of the child deserted her. Later, Bryher encouraged H.D.’s search for spiritual visions and was present with her at Karnak, Egypt, when Tutankhamen’s tomb was opened (Gubar, “Sapphistries” 208-09; Holmes Pearson v-vi). In superimposing London and Karnak atop one another, H.D. is suggesting they are palimpsestically linked. The palimpsest is an important symbol for H.D., who even published a work of prose under that title. It refers to a clay tablet or piece of vellum that had been written upon, erased, and then written on again, a process that could perhaps take place many times. By transporting this image from the literal to the figurative, H.D. argues that all civilizations are linked by a process of creation and destruction that is never really complete. She thus embodies a broad

view of history that invokes the great strata of history by drawing from several cultures, spaces, and times, including London and the “wild” United States, ancient Greece and Rome, Egypt and Babylon, and even unspecified fertility cults. Common to several of them, however, was a reapplication of the powerful image of a saviour or messiah. During the destruction of war, messianic figures entered the imagination of the modernists and became a model of the answers for which they looked. These messiahs took different forms, such as Eliot’s Fisher King, Pound’s fascist leader, Steinbeck’s union organizer, and Faulkner’s enlightened descendant of the plantation. Yet, perhaps one of the most complex is the messiah offered by H.D. It was not enough for her that there was a messiah *en route*. He must be revised for the age in a manner befitting to the sensibilities of the time. H.D. determined that the new hero who was to conquer the lingering atavism of the past—palimpsest of earlier ages and earlier heroes though he was expected to be—must embody a healing character that was decidedly feminine.

The poet Robert Duncan, who identified himself intimately with H.D. and within her tradition, claimed that H.D. unquestionably expressed the need for a spiritual solution to her civilization's desperate quandary. For Duncan, *Trilogy*'s three sections embody the “three panels of a triptych, related when they are complete to the three panels of an altarpiece: on the left the desolation of the war, centre the revelation of the angels and the flowering tree in the midst of a last judgement, and on the right the three kings, the poet herself as Magdalene, and the Child Redeemer” (180). Duncan thus identifies the poem, like a Christian altarpiece, as having access to an overarching view of world events that provides a metahistory or metanarrative. The vantage point of H.D.'s text, however, starts in the midst of the violence of war,

experiences judgement, and then seeks renewal in Duncan's final panel; this is opposed to the traditional Christian altar's story arc that begins in the Garden of Eden, moves to the central depiction of the Crucifixion, and ends with the final telic notion of a world judgement and everlasting damnation or eternal life. For H.D., the difference lies in the concept of the palimpsest, which is never really absent in the text. Destruction is present because it has never really departed; it is as if the same war is being played out again and again, only with bigger weapons. The redeemer H.D. presents in the final poem of the third section of the book is but a baby in a manger, another obvious symbol of birth and rebirth, but he has not yet reached a stage of ministry or of addressing the world's troubles. Instead, Mary Magdalene emerges as the focal point of the power of effective action, despite the obstacles put in her way by her gender and low position; her vocation derives from her special friendship with the goddess who later appears as the poem's true Saviour figure, and, if Duncan is correct to argue that H.D. identified herself in the poem as Mary Magdalene, then the poem's indication of the goddess tradition as a way past war's terrors is made even clearer. Certainly, that was Duncan's response when he set *Trilogy* before him as an Ur text in his own poetic career and claimed that it was "a revelation of truth, true to a life or consciousness sought" (344). Throughout his long manuscript on H.D.,⁶ Duncan closely links *Trilogy* with Pound's *Pisan Cantos* (1948) and William Carlos Williams's *Paterson* (1946-1958), thus creating another trilogy; perhaps with H.D.'s astronomical imagery in mind, Duncan identifies the three texts as "our first constellation" and "living stars" and "striking fire that continues to burn

⁶ Duncan's "H.D. book" was never published in his lifetime but is soon expected from the University of California Press.

and lead on” (139) or again as “that germinal grouping” (152). In the three texts, he identifies the very landscape as “a multiple image, in which the historical and the personal past, with the divine world, the world of theosophical and of poetic imagination, may participate in the immediate scene,” here citing Pound’s separation between real time and apparent time and of course H.D.’s image of the palimpsest (45).

H.D. reminds her readers of these various layers of the palimpsest as a warning against the futility of building monuments to one’s self or to one’s cultural context, arguing from the analogy offered by the world’s palimpsest where many civilizations have turned to dust. She first invokes Egypt, which secondarily references Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “Ozymandias,” a poem written to England in 1818 to picture the eventual downfall of the English Empire as parallel to that of the Egyptian empire after Ramses II. The first function of the palimpsest is to warn of the possibility of erasure or of becoming obscured. In this vein, a dominant image in the third book is the lost city of Atlantis and the migrating flocks of birds that still remember it and circle over the water where it once rose from the sea (III:3-6). Hence, it is with subtlety that H.D. begins *The Walls Do Not Fall* by mentioning the “rails gone (for guns) / from your (and my) old town square” (I:1). London is not really old in the sense of being as ancient as Karnak, but it is old in the sense of being familiar. On the other hand, what the Londoners themselves are destroying rail by rail are their own town squares, weighty symbols of community and integrity, of civilization and order. And though the city was thought to be permanent and safe, it is not, and there is a possibility it will grow no older. After all, it is being dismantled to be remade into guns to bring about more violence, more bloodshed, and more death.

Will this war effort against Nazi Germany be successful? H.D.'s narrator does not know, but she does know that London during the Blitz is beginning to look a lot more like the ruins of ancient Egyptian temples and tombs which “lie open to the sky” in the midst of rain on sand dunes where only “eternity endures” (I:1). This brings “desolation,” and a prayer calls out in biblical language on behalf of defenceless children who “cry out for food” while the Germans’ “flaming stones fall on them,” yet, never completely hopeless, “inspiration stalks us through gloom” (I:29; I:1). In response to this violent transformation, the narrator's initial imagined refuge is a seashell (I:4) that Albert Gelpi sees as representing “the psyche as a protective shell,” which in turn foreshadows the latter images of the cocoon and myrrh jar (320-21). Susan Gubar defines the attraction of the shell image: “Hidden and therefore safe, the mollusc is protected in precisely the way the poet craves asylum . . . She wants not a shell into which she can withdraw but, on the contrary, an escape from entrapment” (300, 302). It is this breadth and depth that does not hide from crisis but simply seeks freedom that makes *Trilogy* so remarkable; as Duncan posits, *Trilogy*

provides an historical perspective in which the experience of London under attack in the Second World War becomes meaningful in relation to depths and heights of personal reality, depths [H.D.] had come to know in her psychoanalysis with Freud and then in new terms with the study of occult and hermetic lore, heights she had known in aesthetic and erotic ideals as early as her first work. (59)

Hence, the poetry speaks across the ages of human history but also down to the depths of the human subconscious.

In seeking a more tangible and immediate symbol of the world’s history and the human soul, *Trilogy* engages with atavism, the palimpsest of the body, both in its negative and positive meanings. Negatively, atavism originally referred to diseases or

conditions that intensified over generations of the same family, but it can also be used in a broader and more positive sense to mean the inherited traits that make people who they are as individuals or as a society. This is used by H.D. as a type of organic palimpsest in which all generations are recreated in their children, both in the devolution that causes war and strife and German National Socialism, and the evolution that leads to peace and hope. She writes of “the jungle-growth / of biological aptitudes // inherited tendencies, / the intellectual effort // of the whole race, / its tide and ebb” (I:38). As Susan Stanford Friedman suggests, “H.D. refused to explain the rise of Nazism in strictly nationalist terms [but] bears witness to the Nazi holocaust and celebrates the rebirth of civilization . . . on the stage of history” (*Penelope* 347, 353).

The politics of atavism and modern societal systems illustrate another importance of H.D. as a poet: her membership in what has come to be called Sapphic modernism, an appellation that I think is valid in her case in two ways. First, as Diana Collecott, in her *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism*, remarks, for H.D. the Sapphic “means a sometimes exact intertextuality with Sappho, and hence includes her complex relationships with ancient Greece and English Helenism” (4). In fact, Collecott argues, H.D. received an “electrical charge . . . in the construction of an identity for the 'H.D.' from the remnants of Greek sculpture and the partially erased writings of Greek poets, and especially of Sappho” (32). Thus understood, H.D. qualifies under Sapphic modernism through her strongly felt connections to Sappho and the near dialogue that seems to persist with Sappho in her writing as seen in form and content. Collecott argues that Sappho can thus be seen as a spectre that haunts H.D., and her fragments can be seen often underlying H.D.'s text, thus forming a poetic palimpsest.

Second, H.D. is also seen as a Sapphic modernist because of her lesbianism or bisexuality. Adrienne Rich argues that H.D.'s struggle as a bisexual is important because "lesbian existence has been written out of history or categorized under disease; partly because it has been treated as exceptional rather than intrinsic" (322). Shari Benstock adds that "the denial of all forms of lesbian experience, including artistic and aesthetic experiences, and the suppression of lesbianism by and within history have defined it as an excluded Other within cultural tradition" (183). In her concerns with a European culture that would provoke world war and that insistently aimed at self-disintegration, H.D. also resisted the patriarchal and heteronormative opinions that belittled her existence and her literary contributions as a bisexual woman.

Looking forward past persecution from state, church, or society to peace, H.D. writes, "my mind (yours), / your ways of thought (mine), // each has its peculiar intricate map" (I:38). She sees the past as the key to the map that unlocks the causes and the cures of humanity's dilemma, be it the war in general or the rise of Nazism or society's maltreatment of homosexuals. She knows this past, this history and the future all point to something larger than ourselves, so, again, the teleological question that remains for H.D. is, "what saved us? what for?" (I:1). In answering her own question, H.D. assigns herself the role of the Apostle John through her quotations from the gospel and the book of Revelation that are attributed to him, the parallels she draws between the Blitz and his Apocalypse, her longing for Old Testament prophecies of peace to be fulfilled, and her assumption of the position of a privileged observer of heaven and of the working of the divine hand (II:3, 4).

2. Timing the Procession of the Equinoxes

The peaceful reality H.D. seeks is found in a “Presence” announced by Spirit not by a voice. This is a transcendental Presence addressed by different names but common to all worshippers at all places and times of the world palimpsest. H.D. immediately connects this Presence to that which called to Samuel in the Hebrew Scriptures (I:1). At that time, Israel was hard pressed by the Philistines, there was no king, and Eli, the great priest, was too old to offer leadership while his sons, like many Israelites, were living sinful lives. This biblical scene is evoked by H.D. in speaking of the trauma of the Blitz: “Evil was active in the land, / Good was impoverished and sad” (I:2). The biblical story records that in the tribe of Ephraim, there was a woman named Hannah who was barren and who prayed to the Lord for a child. She miraculously gave birth to a son in her barrenness, and to fulfil her vow, she gave him up to Eli as a servant. God then called young Samuel and used him to save the people of Israel and spoke through him in choosing the first kings. For H.D., this story speaks of the hope of resurrection and renewal even in the darkest days through the enduring presence of the Divine who ends one story while beginning another even when it uses humble instruments to accomplish this work.⁷

The only clue given to read the meaning of the message of the Presence is the “indelible ink of the palimpsest / of past misadventure” (I:2). This misadventure is the pattern of death and destruction that has happened so that humanity as a whole could go on being renewed as H.D. insists in I:6 through the first of her many references to the worm, an image taken from Psalm 22. This psalm is usually interpreted as a

⁷ This is expressed in the prayer poem of Hannah, parts of which are clearly intended to be reflected much later by the Virgin Mary in her song of praise in Luke 1:46-55, commonly referred to as the Magnificat.

prophecy of Christ's sufferings on the cross, and because it is written in the first person and is very graphic, it is also one of the most vivid and disturbing passages in the Bible. Moreover, like the Christ-figure, H.D.'s narrator foresees a resurrection and so decides to "spin my own shroud" (I:6)—a shroud in this case for death and burial but also for use as a cocoon for transformation and rebirth. The following sections speak of secret Gnostic wisdom and its initiates (I:8:9-12), such as Joseph⁸ the dream-interpreter of Pharaoh whose story is recorded in the Biblical book of Genesis (I:8:31-34).

Fittingly, since the problems H.D. faced threatened to engulf the entire world, the source of the answers she sought became the stars; influenced as much by ancient astronomy and mythology as by the modern astronomy of her father and brother, H.D. exhibited a deep and complex interest in this body of knowledge that had been transmitted across cultures and throughout changes in empires. H.D. manipulates astrological transformations several times in *Trilogy*. One example is poem 21 of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, wherein she refers to the Egyptian divinity Lord Amen; clearly, she sees the mythical figures as affected by her ordering category of the palimpsest and so identifies Amen as a precursor of the Greek Aries, the Ram. Further back in the history of astrology, she would find that the celestial constellation associated with them was first identified by the Babylonians, and their work was later copied by the Egyptians, the Greeks, and then the Romans. In fact, all the constellations of the Zodiac were known to the ancient Babylonians and all subsequent identifications, or,

⁸ H.D. once identified Freud as Joseph, which she said delighted him (Friedman, *Analyzing* 213).

layers of the astrological palimpsest as it were, use names that approximate the ones they chose.⁹ For H.D., the Aries character

bellows from the horizon:

here am I, Amen-Ra,
Amen, Aries, the Ram;

time, time for you to begin a new spiral,
see—I toss you into the star-whirlpool

.....
be cocoon, smothered in wool,
be Lamb, mothered again. (I:21)

This last image points three poems back, where H.D. argues, “now it appears obvious / that *Amen* is our Christos” (I:18). By identifying Amen with Aries and again with Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, H.D. at once shows the nature of history’s cyclical celebration of heroes and emphasizes her belief that history is not linear but operates instead in terms of spirals.

H.D.’s concept of spiral time is later compared to a lily

folded like a pyramid
.....
each petal, a kingdom, and aeon,

and it is the seed of a lily
that having flowered,

will flower again. (III:10)

The temporal implications of the lily image correspond to those of the palimpsest through the invocation of layers that hide other layers beneath; thus, though the palimpsest of history appears to have only one layer of meaning and thus to represent a unified entity, its hidden layers show that it actually has developed in a more chaotic and organic way. Similarly, although the lily appears to be new and complete, it is a

⁹ This still pertains to the names now used in the modern Western world.

perennial plant that dies each year though life remains safely within the pyramid shaped bulb, which, “having flowered, // will flower again.” H.D.'s Aries calls upon the world to begin a new spiral and usher in a new age, with the confidence that “the ancient rubrics reveal that / we are back at the beginning” (I:8). This was the type of answer that H.D. and her contemporaries sought. Their age was a dry wasteland that restlessly searched for a saviour. For H.D., the new saviour of the new age was just around the corner, and his layer of the palimpsest would revitalize everything that was used and dirty in the world. Thus, it is easy to understand why someone like H.D., living through the terror of the Blitz, would say, almost as a supplication to the Divine, “I wish Aquarius would get born before we perish” (*Trilogy* 181 n.). She terms the Blitz in spiritualized language, claiming Nazi aggression was a form of iconoclasm (II:1), that the British dead are “martyrs,” and their survivors had witnessed “the battle of the Titans” where “the lightning shattered earth / and splintered sky” even as they were forced to “hide in caves” (II:6). Thus, as Friedman writes, H.D.'s “rejection of materialism and the consequent search for spiritual realism is the central poetic act of *Trilogy*” (*Psyche* 102).

In looking to the stars for a new age, H.D. found the Age of Aquarius, most plainly delineated in poem 30 of *The Walls Do Not Fall*. The idea of world ages, or the procession of the equinoxes, was first developed and expanded from earlier Babylonian work during the second century B.C.E. by Hipparchus and later recorded by Ptolemy in his *Almagest*. Using the twelve figures of the Zodiac, they divided the ecliptic¹⁰ into twelve equal sections of 30 degrees each. Of course, the earth spins once on its axis to make a day and over three hundred and sixty-five days revolves

¹⁰ The ecliptic is the imaginary line in the sky traced by the sun in its yearly voyage.

once around the sun to make a year.¹¹ The largest measurement of time is the Great Year, also known as the Equinoctial cycle and, through a Medieval misunderstanding, as a Platonic Year. A Great Year is complete when the point at which the equatorial line of the earth meets the ecliptic on the Vernal Equinox¹² has worked its way through all twelve Zodiac zones. Due to the 23.5 degrees of shift in the axis of the earth, this point progresses very slowly and completes its counter-clockwise progression in approximately 25920 earth years. The Zodiac age is determined by the constellation zone in which the Vernal Equinox appears to lie, and according to the Ptolemaic model, each of the twelve ages lasts for approximately 2160 earth years or 30 degrees of the circle. This astronomical model of the movements of the solar bodies was accurate although without astrological application in the time of the Greeks, but that had changed by the modernist period with the beginning of modern astrology.

In the early twentieth century, this ancient astronomy was differently interpreted by Carl Jung. H.D. was not herself a Jungian,¹³ but Jung's interpretation of this ancient system of solar time became widely known in the modernist era, so his innovations frequently determined how this astrology was interpreted by others. In the volume later compiled in 1951 under the title *Aion: Researches into the*

¹¹ Ptolemy of course saw it the other way around.

¹² The Vernal Equinox is the first day of Spring.

¹³ The issue of H.D.'s opinion on Jung is inconclusive. There is little indication that she read much of Jung's work directly. In fact the only indication is a line in *Compassionate Friendship* where she writes "I have read very little of Jung" (20, qtd. in Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* 192). However, a May 11, 1933 letter to Bryher records that she did read Charles Boudouin in Vienna and was discussing Trigant Burrow with D.H. Lawrence and with Freud himself. Boudouin and Burrow were both eminent Jungians, and Burrow in particular was known for his critique of Freud in his book *The Social Basis of Consciousness* (1927); although H.D. does not render her own opinion in the letter, she loyally reveals that Freud thought Boudouin a "pure charlatan, quack" and Burrow "an intellectual freak" and "muddle-headed" and that he opined that Lawrence's connection to Burrow showed the state of Lawrence's own unconsciousness (Friedman, *Analyzing Freud* 262-264).

Phenomenology of the Self, Jung looks to astrology and its symbolism for the key to humanity's archetypes of the self. In his work, Jung thought of the constellations as including only as much space as can reasonably be said to border them. He dispensed with the traditional 30 degree slices of cosmic pie, preferring instead to allot a greater wedge to wider constellations. This led to the further development that now each age was of a much more indeterminate span of time as well; so, because Jung obviously wanted to see the next age, the Age of Aquarius, in his own lifetime, he set its dawning in the year 1940. This is despite the fact that the International Astronomical Union had defined the edges of all 88 official constellations in 1929, and the 12 that form the Zodiac would place the dawning of the Age of Aquarius firmly around 2600.

Yet, Jung's most important and interesting alteration was to treat the dominant symbol of each Zodiac age as the archetype that guided the evolution of humanity for that time period. Recorded civilization goes back to the Age of Gemini, when humanity was young and linked by more than what divided them. The Age of Taurus was an age of strength and building and of roaming over the earth. The Age of Aries, the 2000 years before the birth of Christ, reflected the aggressive nature of the ram as a time of empires and strife. The Age of Pisces was represented by two fish, one pointed north and one pointed south. Jung argues that this is the time of great religions, for humanity as represented by the fish is surrounded by water symbolizing enlightenment. The age is ushered in by the birth of Christ, who is often symbolized by fish and who preaches self-sacrifice, love, fraternity, and forgiveness. Humanity makes progress in living together peacefully, but the age is also one of division, symbolized by the fish heading in opposite directions (Jung 72-74; 89-92). This provoked many to expect not only the Christ but also an Antichrist, for the age of

religions was characterized by attention to the orthodoxy of correct Christian belief as opposed to the orthopraxy of Judaism (Jung 77-81).

Jung goes further in interpreting the stars when he postulates that though the two fishes opposing one another as the Pisces may imply the coming of an Anti-Christ at the end of the age, its primary and most important reference is in fact to the mother and son relationship, which is all the more intriguing because “this relationship suggests that the two fishes were originally one” (111). He relates this to the influence of the stars on myth throughout the ages (112); notably, these constellations became the basis for many of the female figures who are central to *Trilogy’s* goddess palimpsest, including Ishtar, Astarte, and Venus. Furthermore, Jung believes the whole of the Christian myth can be told by the Pisces, from the relationship of the mother and son to the tragedy of the son’s early death and his resurrection. He also states that since the Pisces is the twelfth sign of the Zodiac, its setting represents the end of the Great Year and the beginning of a new one coinciding with Christianity’s expectation of an eschatological End of Time and the coming of God’s kingdom through the ministration of a saviour and bringer of healing (114).¹⁴

The Aquarius is the Waterman, first known by the Babylonians simply as Gu, the Great One. The Aquarius constellation is that of a human being carrying a large bucket of water. Since water represents enlightenment, the Age of Aquarius will be one where humanity attains peace and spiritual fulfilment, not by being inside enlightened waters like the Pisces, but by carrying the enlightened waters outside of themselves and so having knowledge and the ability to use it correctly. H.D. claims

¹⁴ Certainly, other modernists cited Christianity’s setting as the cause of the world’s dryness and anticipated a new age to come; W.B. Yeats’ theory of the gyres of history, referenced in his well known poem “The Second Coming,” operates on this basis of successive world ages.

that Pisces remains a time and place of division and “sterile logic, trivial reason . . . illusion, reversion of old values, / oneness lost, madness” while Aquarius is “the age of the new dimension” that tells us “dare, seek, seek further, dare more, // here is the alchemist’s key, / it unlocks secret doors” (I:30; ellipsis added). H.D. further believed that the Aquarian characteristic blending of Pisces opposites would heal the rift between “Religion, art, and medicine, [that] through the later ages, became separated; they grow further apart day to day [but one day will] work together to form a new vehicle of expression or a new form of thinking or of living” (*TF* 75). H.D. looked to the Aquarian Age as one of great shifts in all positive aspects of humanity. The East will adopt Western technology, the West will adopt Eastern meditative and selfless spirituality, the divisions between religions and nations will fade away, and humanity will enter a golden age.¹⁵

3. Drawing the Dream of the Door

It is with this ideal of the redemption of time in mind that *Trilogy* celebrates its female heroes. Many of H.D.'s central images are drawn from a type of dream language that H.D. studied through her own interest in psychology and association with Freud. During the Fall of 1932, H.D. was preparing for her first sessions with Freud, and she began to keep a dream journal, wrote preparatory notes, and read intensively in Bryher's extensive collection of psychoanalytic literature (Friedman, *Analyzing* xxxiv). For example, H.D.'s first vision of *Trilogy's* “Lady,” who is central to the text's redemptive action, came to H.D. in a vision, and H.D. likewise positions

¹⁵ This is followed by the Age of Capricorn, an odd archetype Jung seemed puzzled over and scarcely wrote about. The Capricorn has the torso of a goat, but the lower body of a fish, and so unites the opposites of the sea and the mountain in one being, albeit a monstrous one.

much of the poem's action in a dream sequence experienced by the poetic narrator (Holmes Pearson ix; Barnstone x-xiv; I:16; II:26). Importantly, as Helen Sword notes, "Almost without exception, H.D. interpreted . . . visionary experiences from the early war years as positive symbols of hope and salvation"; speaking of her two visions written into *Trilogy*, those of the alabaster skinned "Master" from a 1941 dream and the Lady in white who appeared during a 1943 seance, Sword insists that "both are complex but clearly redemptive figures" (129).

In seeking this redemption, H.D. does step away from Freud in having her text assign a level of divine importance to the redemption offered by dreams. Her narrator remarks,

Now it appears very clear
that the Holy Ghost,

childhood's mysterious enigma,
is the Dream. (I:20)

As such, the Holy Spirit

acts as go-between, interpreter,

it explains the symbols of the past
in to-day's imagery,

it merges the distant future
with most distant antiquity. (I:20)

Thus, compared to Freud, H.D. assigns a different and perhaps a deeper authority to what is happening in the dreams of the poem, and the work done by it then adds a prophetic urgency to the Freudian lexicon that provides the text's contextualization. Importantly, H.D. saw herself as a student of Freud instead of his patient, and she referred to him in several letters to Bryher as "papa" (Friedman, *Analyzing*).¹⁶ He, by

¹⁶ Kenneth Macpherson held a suspect view of this relationship. He wrote that H.D. "has got in [with

H.D.'s account at least, was delighted to work with her; in one instance, she wrote to Bryher that “papa has embarrassed me, by telling me I have a rare type of mind he seldom meets with, in which thought crystallizes out in dream in a very special way” (Friedman, *Analyzing* 183-84). When she gives accounts of the analysis of her dreams, she writes as if she and Freud are working together as colleagues to explain the meanings encoded in her dream work. Yet, there were tensions. As Holly Laird's opines in her analysis of H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud*, “The protagonist of this text . . . turns out not to be Freud, but H.D. as thinker and writer, prophet and priestess” (132). Similarly, Albert Gelpi argues that H.D. regretted that “in her own life Doctors Doolittle and Freud, awesome as their power might be, restricted their area of exploration and refused to submit human reason to the realm of mystery” (322); perhaps innocently using Freud's dream term of the significance of the door, H.D. complained that he “shut the door on transcendental speculations” (qtd. in Gelpi 322). Hence, it is not surprising that H.D. often goes her own way in the lexicon that pertains to the dream sequences of *Trilogy*.

A central image in her text is that of the door, the lintel, and the threshold. As H.D. knew, Freud argued that, generally speaking, women and the uterus are often represented in dreams by box-like objects such as cases, ovens, ships, and cupboards—such as the little alcove H.D. indicates as the setting of the meeting between Kaspar and Mary Magdalene in the third book of *Trilogy*. Freud argues that since “rooms in dreams are usually women . . . if the various ways in and out of them are represented, this interpretation is scarcely open to doubt. In this connection, interest in whether the

Freud], hasn't she. She'll be unbearable. A pupil of Freud. She'll live on that till she dies” (qtd. in Laird 147).

room is open or locked is easily intelligible” (V:354).¹⁷ However, H.D.'s image of the door, while certainly a central image, more often stands for a margin or a border between states of knowledge or being (such as the aforementioned “secret doors” unlocked by alchemy's key), so the emphasis is on crossing or transgressing lived boundaries instead of a purely sexual reference to the female genitalia as Freud would have it. For H.D., the women of the text come to symbolize an ability to cross set boundaries or to control access to doors or to recognize their importance.

The first use of the door image is in the fifth poem, wherein the narrator speaks of living in the “company of the gods” and finding love and rapture in discovering Love's new Master, a Mage bringing myrrh whose footprints in the sand lead to “a half-open hut-door” (I:5). This Mage foreshadows the character of Kaspar, the youngest of the biblical Magi who meets with Mary Magdalene and eventually gives her a gift of myrrh that she gives to Christ before the Crucifixion. The narrative of this initial meeting, which is recounted later in *The Flowering of the Rod*, quickly moves to a scene unfolding between Mary Magdalene and Kaspar, and he is clearly upset that the interview is happening at all. Yet, Mary Magdalene is frequently described in relation to Kaspar and the hut door. Her power to open or close it represents her feminine source of mysterious power that disgusts, then overpowers, then saves Kaspar: Mary Magdalene

had not taken a hint, had not sidled gracefully
at a gesture of implied dismissal

¹⁷ Although Freud met with H.D. decades later, his certainty on that point would seem to indicate he would have raised the possibility of that interpretation when she dreamt of being in a room with the transformation of her father, a Scorpio who grew wings; H.D. “ran forward across a room {crossed out} floor to open a door so that this deadly insect might run out. But as I open the door, he spreads bright translucent needle-like wings and with a sword like directness, flies into the branches of a small tree, in the dark hallway” (Friedman, *Analyzing* 212).

and with no apparent offence really,
out of the door. (III:13)

He is angered with “his eyes now fixed on the half-open door, // she understood; this was his second rebuff / but deliberately, she shut the door” (III:15). In Kaspar’s reticence to help Mary Magdalene, he finds himself frustrated in “an alcove or a wide cupboard / with a closed door, a shaded window” (III:17) until “demurely, she knotted her scarf / and turned to unfasten the door . . . slipped out and got away” (III:19-20; ellipsis added).

Effectively bracketing the question of why and how Kaspar changes his mind, the poem simply recounts that Mary Magdalene had been seeking a special alabaster jar filled with precious myrrh and that after his heart is softened, Kaspar somehow sends it after her. Myrrh in this connection becomes yet another palimpsest for H.D., given its importance to all cultures in the ancient Middle East. It is notable for being a spiced oil product of vegetable and not animal matter that is represented by Egyptian recipes dating back to the third millennium B.C.E. It was used throughout the region for female adornment, festal decoration, on coronations, and most typically for burial rites in which it was considered a necessity (Kittel IV:800-01). Hence, when Mary Magdalene finds Christ at the house of Simon and presents the myrrh to him, she means the “priceless, unobtainable-elsewhere myrrh / was for the double ceremony, a funeral and a throning” (III:13). Yet, their host Simon is offended, believing he has

seen something like this
in a heathen picture

or a carved stone-portal entrance
to a forbidden sea temple. (III:22)

He tries to get rid of Mary because of his embarrassment in front of so many people, for “There was always a crowd hanging about outside / any door his Guest happened to enter” (III:23).

This story is recounted with several slight variations in each of the four gospels, but H.D.’s version most nearly matches Luke 7:36-50, where an unnamed woman kneels at Jesus’ feet, cries on them with tears of repentance, pours the perfume over them, and wipes them with her hair. Simon, a man (and according to one of the gospels, a Pharisee) who had been healed of leprosy at some point in his recent past, attempts to remove her, but Jesus soundly rebukes him and blesses the woman. H.D. shows how Mary Magdalene ignored those judgemental men around her and

paid no attention;
she was busy; she was deftly un-weaving

the long, carefully-braided tresses
of her extraordinary hair. (III:21)¹⁸

Simon is discomfited by remembering the sea-temple where he saw pagan images like this embarrassing scene unfolding in his living room:

they called the creature,
depicted like this,

seated on the sea-shore
or on a rock, a Siren,

a maid-of-the-sea, a mermaid;
some said, this mermaid sang

and that a Siren-song was fatal

¹⁸ Cassandra Laity traces Mary's hair to “a central (male) Romantic and modern trope for the stranglehold of female sexuality—the Pre-Raphaelite femme fatale's luxuriant, overflowing hair” (179), and she suggests it may derive directly from Rossetti's portrait *Lady Lilith*, in which Lilith combs “her magnificent swath of hair” (181).

and wrecks followed the wake of such hair. (III:22)

The image is likely drawn from H.D.'s own memories, for, as she writes in an account of her childhood, in her father's study hung several pictures including one of "a lady, lying on the ground with a big book open and a skull . . . ; she was someone in the Bible, Mary-someone in a cave with long hair" (*G* 38).

Notably, in the gospel according to Mark, it is this act of forgiveness toward the woman that immediately precedes Judas' betrayal of Christ. Through this reference, H.D. at once crafts another connection between the misunderstanding force of patriarchy and the dangerous exotic Otherness of woman as seen by it.

Compounding her reference to the door, H.D. names Mary Magdalene as the very forbidden temple itself, into which seven devils

had entered separately or together
 . . . perhaps not wantonly,

but crossing the threshold
 of this not unlovely temple,

they intended perhaps to pay homage,
 even as Kaspar had done,

and Melchior,
 and Balthasar. (III:26; ellipsis added)

By coordinating the seven demons with the three Magi, H.D. shows Mary Magdalene's power as the one who is able to go to Christ and give the tribute that no one else is capable of doing. The demons are identified as pagan goddesses with various names (Isis, Astarte, Cyprus, or Ge-meter, De-meter, earth-mother, or Venus), and from the Jewish tradition, Eve, Lilith, and one unknown but born even before Lilith (III:25, 33). Interestingly, this is another occurrence in which H.D. contravenes tradition and rewrites the biblical canon; instead of having the demons exorcised to

Hades or Tartarus, as one would expect in biblical literature, H.D. depicts them as forgiven and allowed to remain calmly within Mary Magdalene.

By entering over her “threshold” through the “door” to her innermost being, all of these female divinities or ancient heroes come to pay homage to Christ. This truth is whispered to Kaspar like “an echo of an echo in a shell [that] *in her were forgiven / the sins of the seven / daemons cast out of her;*” (III:28; italics original). He immediately recalls that when as a young Mage he went to see the Baby Jesus, it was the eldest Mage, Balthasar, who had “pushed open the stable-door / or gate” (III:42); however, in the epiphany given to him by the appearance of Mary, he realizes that even now, if he finally fulfils his vow to send the promised myrrh, the door of salvation can be opened to him. Again, H.D. emphasizes the door several times describing the knowledge Mary Magdalene leaves behind her:

as Mary lifted the latch and the door half-parted,
and the door shut, and there was the flat door

at which [Kaspar] stared and stared,
as that line of wood, the rough edge

or the polished surface or plain,
were each significant, as if each scratch and mark

were hieroglyph, a parchment of incredible worth
or a mariner’s map. (III:39)

This immediately suggests the ending of the first book of *Trilogy*, where H.D. says that each mind “has its peculiar intricate map” in its “search for historical parallels” (I:38). However, it is also clear that this is a map we draw along the way, for

we are voyagers, discoverers
of the not-known,

the unrecorded;
we have no map;

possibly we will reach haven,
heaven. (I:43)

Although H.D. writes much of *Trilogy* in terms of the individual search, she clearly intends the map to be for all fellow voyagers, and sees herself “surrounded by companions // in this mystery” (I:13). Likewise, the image of the map will make the door a living thing that guides Kaspar to fulfil his vow and thereby find his own route to the haven and the heaven he seeks. However, to Kaspar, that closed door and the map it becomes embody the threatening, powerful knowledge of women, a fact that at first disgusts him, then frightens him, and then leads him to a greater acceptance of the mysteries that life places before him as he recalls his feelings of unworthiness and his search for ultimate meaning. Thus, Kaspar is able to learn to overcome the barriers inherent in any absolute dialectic, gender-based or otherwise, through the symbol of the closed door that allows him to open a new door to peace that he himself had shut long before. Thus H.D. displays the powerful attributes of the Aquarius in a setting that actually would have been the dawning of the argumentative Pisces after the setting of the violent Aries.

4. Hearing the Sound of Aquarius

The identity of Aquarius is revealed in poems 7 and 8 of *Tribute to the Angels*. H.D. first invokes an angelic figure she calls Uriel, Hebrew for “flame of God.” Yet, he exists without temple or shrine and is instead identified with an unguarded city gate, dark water without even the light of a torch on its surface, and an empty town with levelled walls reminiscent of an altar. This, H.D. remarks, is the flowering of the rood and the reed and therefore a cause for “thanks that we rise again from death and

live” (II:7). The darkened water operates as a symbol of birth itself, and the reflowering of trees in spring or the tree that is half burned and yet reflowering shows the power of life to constantly renew itself. The apple tree, half burned and yet flowering, has been interpreted by Louis Lohr Martz as a reference to the sacred temple and olive tree of Pallas Athene on the Acropolis, which though destroyed and burned by the Persians, nevertheless survived and grew again (93-94). Another mention of the burned yet flowering apple tree equates it with the Holy Spirit and indicates a renewal of ancient Holy Wisdom traditions (II:36). One can also easily imagine H.D., as she was, simply being impressed by the image of a still blooming apple tree that had been hit and half destroyed by a German bomb during the Blitz.

The burned yet flowering apple tree is an organic symbol of the power of life to continue to flourish even at the worst times. It is a call to strength, energizing the oppressed to grow through turmoil or to leave the cocoon as new creations and find the power brought by the Waterman. H.D. employs several other similar images that represent the human quest for meaning through motifs related to pregnancy, birth, female sexuality, and motherhood. These include the worm in its cocoon, the seashell producing a pearl, the growth of a seed, and hatching boxes for butterflies. These images, according to Susan Gubar, “demonstrate the need for imagistic and lexical redefinition, an activity closely associated with the recovery of female myths” (“Echoing” 299). Ostriker sees the use of Freudian images of the female to be in contrast with the poem’s earlier phallic images of writing such as the sceptre, rod, Caduceus, pen, and quill; she reads these images as H.D. asserting her equality with Freud, her former “teacher” and “master,” and Ostriker further argues that this

assertion is again echoed in the poem when Mary Magdalene rebelliously treats Kaspar as an equal (33-35).

What becomes more intriguing in the transition to the next poem is that, despite its dominant water imagery, H.D. does not let go of the fire imagery first invoked with Uriel, the flame of God. The narrator speaks of polishing the crucible, a symbol of burning and purification that will remove the dross from the new creatures of the new age. Alchemy, which is crucial for H.D. and for *Trilogy*, is thus appealed to as the “science—or art—of psychological and spiritual transformation” (Gelpi 332). Morris summarizes the four tenets of alchemy as that “the universe . . . was everywhere alive,” that “transmutation is considered the essence of life,” that “all transmutation moves toward perfection,” and that “all creation requires an initial act of destruction” (“Concept” 290). Morris further sees this pattern as ordering *Trilogy*: the first book is set in the crucible of London “flattened by a ceaseless pounding,” the second in the crucible of the poem-bowl that mixes the “word-fragments that survive as traces of the great traditions of female divinity,” and the third is set in the crucible of the legend of resurrection that is made possible by Mary Magdalene's offering of the myrrh to Christ in advance of his resurrection (“Concept” 290-93).

In a text that so frequently employs alchemy as a source of imagery and motion, this appearance of the poem-bowl crucible is the most explicit rendering of the mysterious transformations wrought in the alchemist's workshop. *Tribute to the Angels* actually ends with indications that the heaven longed for at the end of *The Walls Do Not Fall* is to be found “when the jewel / melts in the crucible” (II:43). The use of “distill” in the next line of poem 8 continues the flow of purification thought while simultaneously introducing the image of water. The items to be distilled, not

surprisingly, are two words, both of which are Hebrew words meaning “bitter.” Yet, in a second union of opposites, the two words are “*marah*” and “*mar*,” the only actual difference being that the first has the feminine ending “-ah” on the masculine root. In another layer of meaning, the poem is also invoking the biblical book of the Moabitess Ruth, who, much like Hannah, is left on the outside of Israelite society until her mother-in-law helps her to remarry, becoming, in fact, the grandmother of David, the greatest of Israel’s kings. Yet, it was in Moab, under famine and after the death of her two sons and husband that Ruth’s mother-in-law rejects her original name, Naomi, meaning pleasant, for her new name, Marah, meaning bitter. Hence this allusion strengthens H.D.’s indication of the power of women to overcome tribulation and find not only rebirth but great success. Referencing their hardships, H.D.’s poem links this bitterness with the salt water of the “sea, brine, breaker, seducer, / giver of life, giver of tears” (II:8). Again, the poet calls for the crucible to be polished and “the jet of flame” set beneath it to “fuse and join // and change and alter” the opposites of water and fire or male and female so that out of their Pisces-like opposition will emerge the synthesis of the Aquarian path forward. As Morris argues, this is an “astonishing rewriting” by H.D. that imagines the crucible as the most explicit coming together of the several and various male and female images of the poem thus far, which echoes the traditional alchemical mixture of fire and water that is then applied as an elixir to the object to be transformed; this application and transformation occurs when Mary Magdalene uses her hair to apply the alchemical elixir to the feet of Christ; this process becomes “the first step in triumphant regeneration,” and Christ becomes the philosopher's stone or, in Christian terms, the resurrection and the life (“Concept” 293).

The language of this poem-bowl is identified by Ostriker as a “part of the magic of H.D. as a poet,” in that she can “affirm radically antinomian spiritual principles without theological argument, without rhetoric, merely by creating a pattern of cadences and sounds that perform the work of persuasion” (“No Rules” 344). In this poem chapter, H.D.'s cadence forming technique is that of sound repetition, which Ostriker notes “has the function of intensifying emotion” and “suggests the mind ruminating over and over a thing, a word, an idea”; referring specifically to this section, Ostriker argues that the words are like “material substances capable of alchemical refinement; they are like organisms which evolve over time, taking new forms in new generations” (“No Rules” 348-49). Susan Gubar observes that H.D. uses “recurrent references to secret languages, codes, dialects, hieroglyphs, foreign idioms, fossilized traces, mysterious signs, and indecipherable signets” in order to demonstrate that patriarchy can be subverted by the language of woman (298). Gubar later defines the crucible image as a poem that functions “as the transformative redefinition of language itself” that seeks “a noncoercive vocabulary, a new language that will consecrate what has been desecrated by the culture” and reestablishes the “primacy of what masculine culture has relegated to a secondary place as 'feminine’” (306).

In the next four short lines, H.D. reveals that the figure she is casting in the role of the Waterman is none other than a woman who embodies all the distinctions, dialectics, and dualities of the previous age in one perfect new fusion of power and presence: the Virgin Mary. As observed by Deborah Kelly Kloepper, this process “takes conflicting aspects of the mother and attempts to fuse them, change them, alter them, passing through maternity and bitterness and illusion and divinity until the

word—Mother—lies in the crucible. To extract her requires this transmogrification through language, a textualization, alchemy worked not upon the lost maternal form itself but on the words that both contain and release her” (130). The poem actually alters its form to a repetition of names or descriptions of Mary, approaching a form similar to a religious chant, when it reads, “mer, mere, mère, mater, Maia, Mary, // Star of the Sea, / Mother” (II:8). It is sections of *Trilogy* like this that, for Duncan, suggest that the poem’s “passing of image into image, person into person” derives from H.D.’s earlier cinematic ventures, her connections with Sergei Eisenstein, and the “transitions and montage that developed in the moving picture” (40). In this section, H.D.’s use of auditory and visual montage, perhaps also influenced by her understanding of dream work gained through her sessions with Freud, parallels the use of chant or liturgy in religious ritual as it builds up to the climatic unveiling of the true identity of the poem’s “Mother.”

In this development, H.D. employs a device I would call “auditory etymology,” in which she shows links between words and concepts that she suggests are connected through their verbal etymology but which in reality are not.¹⁹ For this reason, H.D. changed the traditional spelling of one angel’s name from Anael to Annael to better match the rhythmic pattern suggested by Anna and Hannah. Building on the earlier distinction between *marah* and *mar* and the later use of myrrh and mirror, the only links these terms actually do have are links of sound that, when placed in H.D.’s arrangement of auditory etymology, culminate with the Virgin Mary.

¹⁹ The technique of drawing such connections between words based on their similarity of sound is first used by H.D. in her 1934 short story, *Mira-Mare*. The name Mira-Mare first refers to a newly finished apartment building seen by Alexis, the main character. While trying to convince her lover to visit it with her and perhaps rent a flat, she explains, “It’s called Mira-Mare; Mira, the Wonderful, and Mare, the Sea, obviously” (K 88). Later when she is alone, she repeats the words Mira-Mare, meditates on the effect of the repeated sounds and realizes, “It was a charm” (K 91).

The chain begins with *mer*, a French word with a Latin root meaning the sea. This is not surprising because of the reference in English to the sea seven lines earlier. *Mer* is followed by *mere*, which displays H.D.'s attention to the playfulness of language, showing what the form would be if it was feminized by the addition of an “-e” suffix, much as she earlier begins the poem through play with the Hebrew word *mar* and its feminine form *marah*. Actually, *mere*, which refers to a glimmering body of water, such as a lake, pond, or arm of the sea, is an English word of Old Saxon origin. H.D. also uses this form because it is properly pronounced the same as “mirror,” and it has the same spelling, excepting the accent on the first “e,” as the next word, the French *mère*, meaning “mother.” This is followed by *mater*, the Latin word for mother. *Maia* is a double reference, first, undoubtedly, to Maia, the mother of the god Hermes, the Greek Logos who is so central to *Trilogy* (Weigall 42), and, secondly, to the Hindu concept of maya, the doctrine of the ambiguous nature of our experience in a world that is often an illusion—the constant “change and alter” of the poem’s previous line (Goudriaan IX:297-98).

One of the most revealing aspects of the play on sound developed in *Trilogy* occurs when *Maia* is followed by *Mary*, equating their roles as mothers with their roles as divine figures. The connection between the sound of *Mary*’s name and several other female heroes like *Maia*, as well as the blending of attributes from earlier goddesses like *Venus* with *Mary*, was borrowed by H.D. from Arthur Weigall’s work on Greek, Hindu, and Buddhist influences on Christianity; he argues that the actual name of the mother of Jesus was lost in time, and the stock name “*Mary*” was eventually substituted (Weigall 42; Holmes Pearson viii).²⁰ More immediately linked

²⁰ Notably, this was not disputed by many within the Church itself though the role and identity of

to the biblical context, “Mary,” meaning “headstrong,” “obstinate,” or “stubborn,” was simply a very popular name for first century girls because it commemorated the name of Miriam, the sister of Moses, much as the name Jesus referred to Joshua. All of these references to the mass of connections between these various women indicates that Mary is to be taken as a fulfilment of the earlier ones and a climax of the power that they embodied. This is further indicated by her quotations from Hannah, her story of rising from outcast to redemptrix like Ruth, and her role as the new Eve that approximates the position of Christ as the New Adam in I Corinthians 15. Coupled with Mary usurping Eve is her further connection with Lilith, who according to the Jewish Kaballah, was the first wife of Adam. Mary is called a lily, which although a traditional symbol of her purity and beauty, is used here as a play on Lilith’s name to show that Mary has subsumed everything good that once belonged to her fallen predecessor (II:30; III:10, 30, 31). Poem 8 ends with two other titles of Mary: the Star of the Sea and Mother. The Star of the Sea in Latin is *Stella Maris*, and has long been a title associated with Mary, resulting in her representation in some Medieval paintings where she is pictured with

her snood
drawn over her hair,

or her face set in profile
with the blue hood and stars. (II:29)

Jesus' mother had become a central battleground for Christian Fundamentalists. Mainline Christians were much more apt to accept biblical criticism and the anthropology of religion. For example, Harry Emerson Fosdick, in his sermon “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” characterizes Fundamentalists as simply ignorant of “one of the familiar ways in which the ancient world was accustomed to account for unusual superiority . . . stories of miraculous generation are among the commonest traditions of antiquity”; Fosdick gives the examples of Buddha, Zoroaster, Lao-Tsze, Mahavira, Pythagoras, Plato, and Augustus Caesar and points out that Moses, Confucius, and Mohammed are alone among the founders of great religions in not having some miraculous birth attributed to them (779).

The conjunction of these images drawn from heaven and the oceans symbolizes Mary's power to unite opposites in power and grace, revealing her own brilliance and purity. These alchemical transformations point not just to Mary but also to the "Dream Lady" of *Tribute to the Angels*; in this manner, they both incorporate the multiple characteristics of these previous figures, as the Dream Lady will further incorporate Mary's. This makes them both two layers of the same palimpsest or two blooms of the same lily bulb that indicate to the same continuing divine feminine possibilities for redemption.

A source of H.D.'s description of these goddess like figures is the regal woman about whom she dreamt and whom she discussed over several sessions with Freud. In *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. describes these discussions of the "dark lady" they named the Princess (*TF* 53-55). H.D. recalls that the Princess appears as an Egyptian at top of a long marble staircase leading down to a river where H.D. as the dreamer is standing. Nearby is a small box with a baby inside, and it is then that H.D. knows she has dreamed herself inside of a Dore Bible illustration she knew well from her childhood, that of Pharaoh's daughter finding the baby Moses in a box caught in the reeds. In her discussions with Freud, H.D. is prodded by him to discern whether she was not dreaming that she was Moses himself and, hence, showing her subconscious desire to be the founder of a new religion (*TF* 53-55; 75-76).

The most cogent example of this process of possible resignification is H.D.'s alteration of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, the divine figures in Christianity. Although theologically postulated to be above gender, the three figures are presented as males and arose in patriarchal cultures. The largest female roles in the Bible, neither of which is divine, are held by Eve, who is blamed for nothing less than the

“Fall of Humanity” through her disobedience and her act of leading Adam into sin, and the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is both eternally a virgin and eternally the mother of Jesus.²¹ According to Marymat Downing, in either case, “the symbol contributes to sexism, if not to the more virulent problem of misogyny” leading many women to look for archetypes of more realistic feminine power in the ancient goddess traditions found around the world for “a way to maximize religion as a positive, beneficial factor” (69; 76-77). Instead of jettisoning the Christian faith, H.D. points to the lost prominence of women like the Princess, as well as the downtrodden and the oppressed within the teachings of Christ. She claims that

The first—it is written,
will be the twisted and the tortured individuals,

out of line, out of step with world so-called progress;
the first to receive the promise was a thief;

the first actually to witness His life-after-death,
was an unbalanced, neurotic woman,

who was naturally reviled for having left home
and not caring for house-work. (III:12)

H.D. then reworks Christianity's chauvinism, casting a Virgin Mother goddess who has freed herself from the shackles of the Child and instead carries a book. Yet she retains the mother goddess attributes even without the child, so the progression of the poem still ends with the single word “Mother.” This recalls Mary’s role as the Theotokos,²² the Mother of God, and her parallel to the fertility goddesses of the ancient world who are subsumed into the character she came to represent after the

²¹ Perhaps twinning these images, Mina Loy claims “Madonnas are everlastingly mothers in ecstasy” in her poem “Aid of the Madonna” (115; line 1).

²² Theotokos derives from the Greek terms *Theos* (God) and *tokos* (childbirth); hence, as a theological title, it defines Mary as the God-bearer.

Patristic Era of the early church with the influence of Northern Europe's similar goddess traditions.

5. Writing the Palimpsest of the Mirror

The desire of the poem, then, is that Mary, as the Mother and as the Aquarius, will lead a new civilization of peace and unity where all are

nameless initiates,
born of one mother,
companions of the flame. (I:13)

H.D. continues the image of the Aquarius emerging from the crucible, a precious jewel that looks like a "broken mirror" representing dualities like "mother-father," and

star of the east
star of the west,

Phosphorus at sun-rise,
Hesperus at sun-set,

which H.D. knew were actually two different names used by the ancient Greeks to identify the planet Venus (II:9, 10). Not only did H.D. know these variant names, but she also attributed a mystical power to them that she described when, in a letter describing her childhood reading of classical stories, she recalled that "as my father and brother were astronomers the *names*, Venus, Mercury, and so on, were subconsciously potent" (H.D., qtd. in Swann 10). Hence, Mary is given the names of, as Alicia Ostriker poetically puts it, "a rainbow of goddesses who were projections of female love, wisdom, and creativity" (32); these include Venus, whose "venery stands for impurity" but "whose name is [also] kin // to venerate, / venerator," at once

indicating Mary's fecundity, her desirability and her purity (II:11, 12).²³ This double identification of the goddess with Mary and Venus is perhaps foreshadowed in that Venus performs the same act of writing and of commanding the poet to write herself in H.D.'s *Hermetic Definition* when Venus

draws the veil aside,

unbinds my eyes,
commands,
write, write or die. (7)

There is a similar effort on H.D.'s part to show a continuation of certain attributes in the figures of male divinities as well. As Thomas Burnett Swann remarks in his study of H.D.'s classicism, *Trilogy's* characters mark a shift in H.D.'s poetry, for while Hermes is mentioned only once in her earlier work—significantly though, this was “Hermes of the Ways” (1912), the first poem signed by “H.D. Imagiste”—he is here preferred to Helios because Hermes survives in the Middle Ages as the patron of alchemists even as Venus survives through an imagined link with Mary (Swann 165-66). H.D.'s mention of Hermes and Thoth is meant to further invoke the traditions of Hermeticism, derived from Hermes Trismegistus, the ancient figure uniting the Greek god Hermes and the Egyptian god Thoth, who is supposed to have written the *Hermetica*, an important ancient collection of multilingual texts for mystical purposes including alchemy, magic, and astrology. As Timothy Materer discerns, Hermes and Hermes Trismegistus “are virtually the same figure in H.D.'s

²³ H.D.'s personification of Venus stands almost as a challenge to the manner in which her father and brother saw Venus. For instance, after one of H.D.'s dreams about seeing herself in mirrors, Freud thought she desired to be Venus herself (Friedman, *Analyzing* 212); interestingly, this is one dream over which the two had differing opinions about the meaning of the dream and agreed in the end that both were correct. In another dream after working on astrological maps, H.D. sexualized the goddess and dreamt of kissing her breasts and “was in the 7th heaven”; in her letter to Bryher about the experience, she again plays with the auditory sound of Venus' name: “Venus-Venice-Vienna-Vaud” (Friedman, *Analyzing* 434-35).

poetry” (192 n.8). These characters function as a palimpsest, most clearly shown when H.D. equates “Mercury, Hermes, Thoth” in a poem that goes a step further by linking these three to the next layer, Jesus Christ, who is invoked by quoting the words of John 1, “*in the beginning / was the Word*” (I:10, italics original). Using Ezra Pound’s term, Materer writes that H.D.’s poetry is “a ‘phantastikon’ in which one mystical figure or image merges into another, in a manner that defies ‘fixed meanings,’ and in a process that her ply-over-ply stanza forms re-enforces” (104). On the same token, however, Materer takes issue with past critics who saw Hermes as a distinctly masculine character whose male authority H.D. uses for protection or patronage; Materer instead states his “impression that Hermes is too mercurial a figure to be considered specifically male or female” (89). Importantly, against characterizations of H.D. as decidedly feminine, she herself celebrated the special qualities of her personal viewpoint, which she saw as an expression of both female and male; likewise, it was due to Freud’s diagnosis of H.D. as “the perfect bi[sexual],” that Helen Sword argues that H.D. felt she was “privy to the secrets of both sexes and could thus, by sublimating sexuality into art, fuse ‘female’ spirituality and ‘male’ science” (*Engendering* 155-56).

After emerging from the male and female elements combined in the crucible, Mary the jewel gives off a very subtle fragrance and the narrator can only call it by the invented name, “agate,” referring not only to the stone agate but to “a-gate,” a development of the image of the door as an access point to further realms of being or of knowledge. In the second book of *Trilogy*, Mary emerges out of the crucible only after a long series of transformations, much like the new Europe and the new World that would emerge after the fire of the war. Her final jewel-like appearance is likened

to “a broken mirror” that creates a wide spectrum of multifaceted light (II:10). This reflects Mary’s ability to combine a plurality of images into one, and, hence, she is not limited to one point of view as would be an unbroken mirror.

Mary is like one who can

stare past a mirror
through an open window,

where boat follows slow boat on the lagoon;
there are white flowers on the water. (II:30)

This gaze combines Mary’s key connections to a mirror (which she can look through or past, as if it is powerless to hold her reflection), the water, and white flowers which are undoubtedly lilies because of their status as traditional symbols of Mary and because, as was mentioned, H.D.’s lilies also symbolizes the notion of non-linear time. Consider also H.D.’s other Sapphic images of the field that is annually ploughed, seeded, and harvested; the jar that is filled and emptied; the tree that sheds its leaves only to regrow them the next spring; the sea that is in constant motion yet retains its original qualities. All of these point ultimately to the mirror, which receives and reflects images again and again only to have them erased and replaced just as quickly. With its Sapphic import, the mirror then becomes the dominant image of the Virgin Mary and of her influence throughout all ages.

Luce Irigaray, in her landmark text, *The Speculum of the other Woman* (1974²⁴), names the mirror the ultimate palimpsest, “which, memoryless, forgetful of all traces and imprints, re-presents the image of things set before it” (308). Her question then becomes how “*the mother’s relation to the specula*” as an issue can be raised; Irigaray’s answer is that the cave, or a mother’s womb (a physical cave) is a

²⁴ The text was first published in English in 1985.

natural speculum—*speculum*, or *specula*, in this instance references the Latin term for a mirror (255, 308; italics original). In her subversion of Plato’s “Parable of the Cave” (*The Republic* Book VII), Irigaray poetically represents the cave or the womb as a pleasant place whose feminine walls reflect both what is present and what is behind (350) and which allows its inhabitants to rehabilitate their gaze to the power of the sun without being blinded by it (297). Irigaray argues that “the sun, even in eclipse, must be observed only *indirectly, in a mirror* on pain of blindness, even so the spirit acts as an additional reflection that helps us to look upon the Good. In the strictest sense, mortals cannot look upon the Good” (147), for “*To see the father face to face . . . is as much as to say—die!*” (299; ellipsis original; italics original).

The nature of Mary as the palimpsest mirror further illustrates her supremacy over the traditional Judeo-Christian God. Irigaray argues that God, who made humans in his own image, fears getting lost in the world of mirrors. She writes of the confusion that would ensue if God, “who, throughout all eternity, has not, and will not, suffer the slightest alteration” (336) were to get mixed up visibly in the world of his creatures, where

they are bound to reflect Him, and somewhere a mirror in which his image has formed is bound to be involved. And God does not want this. For fear his power will be overturned perhaps? That He will be altered in/by another gaze? That, once caught in the becoming of a looking-glass game, his being will suffer innumerable, unpredictable transformations? [. . . That He will] perceive himself backward and the wrong way up, thus losing an immutable awareness of the position of right and left. If He has lost his grasp on those geometric landmarks that are indispensable in keeping the world moving along properly, in distinguishing and subordinating same and other (331).

But, no, H.D.’s Mary is very visible and very immediate. The narrator is surprised, in fact, that the Goddess herself appears and is not instead represented by an angel

(II:28). Mary can be seen by humans and yet not be lost in their gaze, for she is eager to transform and to be transformed as testified by her changes in the crucible and the many names and pictures through which she represents herself. And further, Mary is herself the mirror, a broken multifaceted mirror that reflects images back upon themselves, which is how H.D.'s narrator feels herself becoming one with Mary.

H.D. ends her powerful sequence of images centring on the Aquarius/Mary figure when she realizes it is something she does not want “to name” or

to talk about,
I want to minimize thought,

concentrate on it
till I shrink,

dematerialize
and am drawn into it. (II:14)

The final duality has given place to the power of the Aquarius, and the observer and the observed, the Self and the Other, the venerator and the venerated, become one through a mutual gaze. This is prefigured much earlier when the narrator emerges from sleep and either sees or remembers dreaming of mysterious eyes²⁵ that were

²⁵ This vision is quite reminiscent of that written of in *The Pisan Cantos* by Ezra Pound in 1945 while in an American military detention centre; Canto LXXXI:118-133 witnesses the return of the goddess, who is chiefly represented by her eyes:

there came a new subtlety of eyes into my tent,
whether of spirit or hypostasis,
but what the blindfold hides
or at carnival
nor any pair showed anger
Saw but the eyes and stance between the eyes,
colour, diastasis,
careless of unaware it had not the
whole tent's room
nor was place for the full Εἰδῶς
interpass, penetrate
casting but shade beyond the other lights
sky's clear
night's sea
green of the mountain pool
shone from the unmasked eyes in half-mask's space. (98)

all one texture,
 as if without pupil
 or all pupil, dark
 yet very clear with amber
 shining . . . (I:16; ellipsis original)

In this fashion, the subject/object dualism is overcome because Mary fits Irigaray's description of a "mirror clearer, purer, more resplendent with light than all these which, already, have been made in [God's] image"; this is a "mirror untouched by a reflection, *like a pupil—a korē*—dilated to encompass the whole field of vision, and *mirroring itself*. Reflecting nothing (but) its own void, that *hole* through which one looks" (328; italics original). The aim is a view that is unobstructed and comprehensive and so understands the other and seeks peace through that particular immediacy of communication and community.

6. Looking Down the Well of Time

A good opportunity for such community is illustrated in the third book of *Trilogy*, which develops the redemptive feminine power expressed by Mary. Through her transformative power, she anoints a representative in Mary Magdalene, who then identifies herself as "*the incense flower or the incense tree, / myself worshipping, weeping, shall be changed to myrrh . . . I shall be a tower*" (III:19; ellipsis added; italics original). The statement that Mary is "a tower" at first appears to be a straightforward reference to her hometown, which literally means "the place of a tower," but the implied phallic image cannot be overlooked; its import shows that Mary Magdalene, like the Virgin who emerges from the crucible, also has the power to take into account what has been considered male and what has been considered

female, thus overcoming the male-female dichotomy and moving beyond it to a greater position of knowledge, power, and authority.

Mary Magdalene's meeting with Kaspar, some thirty years after the Nativity and just prior to the Crucifixion, is a meaningful subject choice on H.D.'s part, for in doing so, as Morris notes, she actively rewrites the biblical canon by breaking down "the familiar racist and misogynist reading of the Scriptures that dismisses Kaspar as a dark heathen and Mary Magdalene as a devil-ridden harlot, making both peripheral to the real story. In H.D.'s rewriting, they are central" ("Concept" 292). Hence, Kaspar can guess that she is "a confidential friend, sent by some great lady" (III:27). The "great lady" of course is one of the layers of the palimpsest represented by the Virgin Mary and the Dream Lady. This divine presence surrounds Mary Magdalene, and for this reason, she is able to say, "I have need, not of bread nor of wine / nor of anything you can offer me," repudiating the expectation of her submission to the charity of this man or, by extension, even for her need for the ritual importance of the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist (III:19). Interestingly, the Virgin Mary does not communicate the attributes of the mirror to Mary Magdalene's eyes but to her hair, which becomes like:

moon-light on a lost river
or a sunken stream, seen in a dream

by a parched, dying man, lost in the desert . . .
or a mirage . . . it was her hair. (III:17; ellipsis original)

Kaspar immediately reflects his distrust, remembering that "no secret was safe with a woman" (III:14). He detests this brazen woman, considers her unseemly and perhaps a prostitute, and, like Simon later, he simply "did not recognise her" (III:27). He flatly

refuses to give her the myrrh she seeks until, suddenly, he is somehow lost through the mirror of Mary Magdalene's powerful hair (III:28).

It is then that he experiences enlightenment in the form of a mystical experience that H.D. develops over several poem chapters, although in "real time" it happens "in a second or a second and half a second" (III:40). This experience suggests a connection to the time lapse of a vision H.D. herself once had of two Ss, which she understood to signify the twining of Gnostic and Moravian conceptions of feminine knowledge and power with the enduring questions of the ages (Barnstone xii-xvii). This in turn refers to I Corinthians 15:52, which speaks of the instant growth in knowledge that accompanies the second coming of Christ. This type of transformation is mentioned in H.D.'s autobiographical novel, *HERmione*:

She saw it now. She would always be seeing what she saw now in a flash, in Saint Paul's 'twinkling of an eye.' Something that has been going on (kaleidoscope whirl) star and whirl, frost flowers on a windowpane, rainbow prismatic frost flowers going (kaleidoscope) round and round in her tight head, became . . . static. (105)

The mirror experience occurs when Kaspar bends down to pick up Mary Magdalene's scarf that she dropped and sees light reflected on her hair. Looking into the point of light, he has the epiphany of figures looking at him and speaking to him "as in a mirror" (which becomes a repeated chorus throughout the remainder of the poem sequence). These are the "demons"—actually including Eve, Lilith, and Venus—that had possessed Mary and were apparently still inside her, though now they were forgiven and were with her seeking myrrh with which to honour Christ. The mirror-like hair at once captures and distorts the light, reflecting, like the broken mirror from earlier, its "inner facets" (or inner faces), that "seemed to cast incalculable angles of light"; at the same time, the mirror epiphany allows Kaspar to see "clearly, O very

clearly,” and he is overwhelmed with emotion at the beauty of the women and goddesses and the jewels they wear that no jeweller of his time had ever seen or even heard of (III:28). Kaspar also functions as a palimpsest for his ancestors, so he represents the sum of their great learning (III:29); hence, he has some comprehension of what happens to him when the point of reflected light,

the speck, fleck, grain or seed
opened like a flower
.....
and the circle went on widening

and would go on opening
he knew, to infinity. (III:30, 31)

Kaspar is given a vision of the circle of time and the changes wrought on the earth, until he sees it “before Adam . . . before Eve” and so before the Fall, and even before creation when the earth was a formless void of water (III:31, 32; ellipsis added).

In this vision, Kaspar is able to translate the message of the “demons,” and he understands the importance of Mary Magdalene’s mission and the possibility of his own salvation occurring thereby; still, he feels he “must defend the innermost secret” from a woman because

it is unseemly that a woman
appear disordered, dishevelled,

it is unseemly that a woman
appear at all. (III:34)

In his chauvinism, he is again siding with the cultural understandings of his ancestors, but he knows the woman is really “a woman of discretion” whom he has disappointed through the hardness of his heart. Gubar posits that Kaspar's epiphany allows him to establish “the matriarchal genealogy that confers divinity upon [Mary Magdalene]” through the line of “female strength, female speech, and female sexuality”

represented by the figures incarnate within her, and it is this realization that eventually makes him overcome his reticence and send her the myrrh, thereby fulfilling his own oath as well and finding peace through accepting this feminine authority (310). In that moment, Mary Magdalene leaves, and Kaspar sits staring at the door, thinking about flowers on Mount Hebron, how people identified him with Abraham because of his care for his flocks, how humble he had been in front of the other Magi at the Nativity,²⁶ how he had made that vow to bring the second jar of myrrh to the Baby Jesus, and how the spirits of the seven women in Mary Magdalene were now coming to collect on that vow. The text indicates that the true nature of time and of history is akin to H.D.'s comprehension of time as a spiral or a lily, for when Kaspar “looked down the deep deep-well // of the so-far unknown / depth of pre-history,” it was like “a sort of spiritual optical illusion . . . reflected from a strand of a woman’s hair, / reflected again or refracted . . . as in a mirror” (III:40; ellipsis added). And this reflection and the map he suddenly sees in the wood grain of his door forces him to come to terms with his vision of the seven demons and of the history of the world, which ultimately culminates in the memory that finally makes him send the myrrh.

In his memory, Kaspar is transported back to his humble offering of the first jar of myrrh in the stable. He remembers that he refused even to bow lest it should suggest he was on par with the other Magi. Yet, he looks up when Mary, holding Jesus, addresses him, saying,

Sir it is a most beautiful fragrance,
as of all flowering things together;

²⁶ Given the earlier argument about the symbolic importance of the door, it is notable that H.D. writes that “Balthasar had pushed open the stable-door, or gate” (III:42).

but Kaspar knew the seal of the jar was unbroken.
he did not know whether she knew

the fragrance came from the bundle of myrrh
she held in her arms. (III:43)

With those words, the 129 poems of H.D.'s *Trilogy* end, with one of the wisest men in the world being given the knowledge that the history of the world was focused on this one young woman bearing enlightenment and peace. It is then evident that, as Gary Burnett writes, Mary's students "are only able to see what they see through the medium of the Priestess, and it is *only* through her powers of speech that their visions come into being" (173). In Kaspar's acceptance of this lesson (as in H.D.'s acceptance or that of her readers), he becomes a devotee of that truth, a truth that has the power to unite all peoples under the fragrant clarity of its vision. However, there may be something of a concession, or a lingering misunderstanding, in Kaspar's attempt to understand the odours of the barn.

7. Smelling the Fragrance of the Sapphic Saviour

The narrator does not know, any more than Kaspar does, whether the fragrance came from the child or from his mother, yet, in an earlier poem, Mary Margadele speaks for all the Marys when she insists:

Mary shall be myrrh;

I am Mary—O, there are Marys a-plenty
(though I am Mara, bitter) I shall be Mary-myrrh;
I am that myrrh-tree of the gentiles. (III:16)

This complex construction unites all the Marys of the Bible together and speaks for all of them as types of the Virgin Mary or as different layers of the same palimpsest.

The passage embraces pagan referents, again taken from ancient mythology—this time of the figures Attis-Adonis-Tammuz, the mother of Adonis being Myrrha, who bore her son in “unhallowed fashion” like the Virgin Mary who gave birth to Jesus out of wedlock. The poem also connects itself with the traditions not only of the Christians but also of the Jews when it says, “I am Mary, I will weep bitterly, / bitterly . . . bitterly” (III:16; ellipsis original), by which Mary takes on the role of Rachel, the matriarch of the Hebrews, who in Jeremiah 31:15 is said to weep over the desolation of the children of Israel. Yet, perhaps the most astounding indication of Mary’s power is her simple and insistent self-identification: “I am Mary.” This phrase is repeated with variations seven times in poem III:16, and thus it is an assumption of the person and role of Christ, and through him, of God the Father. Given H.D.’s continual reliance upon the books of John for imagery and their parallel use of the number seven—note the tribute to seven angels, the seven demons in Mary Magdalene and the trinity of 43 poems—this affirmation must be taken as a palimpsest upon the seven predicate and seven absolute “I am statements” of Jesus in the gospel of John. This is echoed by Jung’s argument that the mother and son fish of Pisces were once one fish and by H.D.’s conclusion to a later work of poetry: “Christ and his father, or as the Eleusinian mystic would have said, his mother, were one” (*N* 52). These statements of Christ in turn refer back to Exodus 3, where God reveals his name to Moses as “I am,” which uses an emphatic form that shows his self-reliance and eternal nature.

It is thus as yet another layer of the Marian palimpsest that the Dream Lady appears, first during the narrator's dream sequence in *Tribute to the Angels*. Indeed, the majority of *Tribute to the Angels* treats the appearance of the Dream Lady, first

following the alchemical transformations (II:1-24) and second in the dream sequence and lengthy description by the poetic narrator (II:25-43). As I have argued, the Dream Lady further moves the development of *The Flowering of the Rod*, for it is she who empowers Mary Magdalene to obtain the myrrh from Kaspar. In her first appearance, the Dream Lady comes to the narrator, who lies in bed, and she stands at the door and knocks, again invoking the image of the door and requesting the narrator to rise and cross the threshold. The Lady is further usurping the role of Christ in Revelation 3:23; thus, through her own power and her own presence, she takes the authority of Christ in the End Times as presented in the Book of Revelation, wherein he returns to redeem the world and to usher in a New Heaven and a New Earth.

Throughout “Tribute to the Angels” and “The Flowering of the Rod,” the narrator is surprised by the immediacy of the Dream Lady, asking, “how could I imagine / the lady herself would come instead?” (II:28). The narrator addresses the Lady with honorific titles such as

Our Lady of the Goldfinch,
Our Lady of the Candelabra,

Our Lady of the Pomegranate,
Our Lady of the Chair. (II:29)²⁷

These specifically are not titles of the Virgin Mary, but due to the Dream Lady's similarities to Mary, she is instead a further layer of the same palimpsest. She is thus an embodiment of the several goddesses that have been invoked throughout *Trilogy*, including the Virgin Mary, Isis,²⁸ Astarte, Aphrodite, Venus, Lilith, and Eve. The

²⁷ For possible interpretations of these titles, see Alik Barnstone Note 93.3-6 in the 1998 New Directions edition of *Trilogy*. On the other hand, Gelpi suggests these titles may simply be linked to “rich details from the Renaissance painters and their Pre-Raphaelite imitators” (328).

²⁸ Interestingly, Susan Gubar notes that Kaspar's identification of those divinities inhabiting Mary Magdalene reveals in particular the “aspects of Isis retained by Christianity—the lady of sorrows weeping for the dead Osiris and the divine mother nursing her son, Horus” (311).

narrator is impressed by the ineffable nature of their communion, saying that “she was not impalpable like a ghost, / she was not awe-inspiring like Spirit, // she was not even over-whelming like an Angel” (II:40). The Dream Lady is ubiquitous, seen the world over in several forms and claiming several differing allegiances (II:29); she presents herself through biblical language used to describe God the Father’s acts of cleansing, such as the fuller’s soap of Malachi 3:2 and the snow of Isaiah 1:18 (II:32). Indeed, H.D. presents her as speaking like God when Kaspar hears “a sound as of many waters,” a reference to the act of creation, which begins with the first spoken words uttered over the face of the formless expanse of the primordial seas (III:32). As Jonathan Culler remarks, “Notions of truth and reality are based on a longing for an un-fallen world in which there would be no need for mediating systems of language and perception but everything would be itself, with no gap between form and meaning” (132). The Dream Lady’s earlier incarnation in the Virgin Mary is able to overcome those shortcomings of language as the very mother of the biblical Living Word, holding him in her arms exactly as Aquarius carries the water jar of perfect enlightenment that leads to redemption. Yet, as if she is indeed the perfect mix of dualities, she is pure and fallen, father and mother, and son and spirit altogether. She has none of her “usual attributes,” meaning simply that “the Child was not with her” and, instead, she has the power of writing and carries a book (II:32). As Rachel Blau DuPlessis observes,

H.D.’s blank page of the new is a resistant exploration of the cultural imagery of woman as page awaiting someone else’s writing. Because Mary carries a book, not a baby, H.D. proposes the female authority of scribe and lawgiver. . . . H.D. offers the possibility that Mary is not a conduit for One whom she bore, but is herself the One: the goddess is God. (*Career* 93)

Elsewhere, DuPlessis returns to this image to argue that this new “Lady of the Blank Book” signifies the beginning of the process of writing a new canon, which indicates that the actual text H.D. was writing was divinely inspired and superseded the old Christian canon of the Bible as insufficient (“Revisionary” 119). Therefore, the new canon is really another layer of the palimpsest, with *Trilogy* adding its own voice to the stories that it revives and renews, even as the Lady takes attributes of Mary and Mary takes attributes from previous Mother Goddesses or from the astrological Aquarius.

Likewise, H.D.’s Lady is a goddess of multidimensional creative and redemptive powers whose image lingers. Carrying her book, she stands before the world as

the new Eve who comes
clearly to return, to retrieve
what she lost the race,
given over to sin, to death;
she brings the Book of Life, obviously. (II:36)

Yet this Book is decidedly unlike the biblical Book of Life in Revelation 20 that is read aloud to indicate the names of all those saved by Christ just before those whose names are not written down are thrown into the lake of fire of eternal damnation; the poetic narrator attempts to decode the image and interprets the Book of Life held by the Lady by stating that its “pages, I imagine, are the blank pages / of the unwritten volume of the new” 38). In this method of interpreting the vision, the poetic narrator emphasizes that

the Lamb was not with her,
either as Bridegroom or as Child;

her attention is undivided,
 we are her bridegroom and lamb;
 her book is our book; written
 or unwritten, its pages will reveal

a tale of a Fisherman,
 a tale of a jar or jars,

the same—different—the same attributes,
 different yet the same as before. (II:39)

After this process of renaissance begins, the narrator remarks, “we are satisfied, we are happy, / we begin again” (II: 43). In this sequence, very characteristic of H.D.’s tendency to spread one story or image over several poem chapters, the Lady once again fully usurps the role of Jesus, the biblical composer of the Book of Life.

H.D.’s Lady thus fulfils the line of Eve and of Mary and redeems the world through her own strength. Hence, she has no need for Jesus as Lamb, Bridegroom, or Child. In this role, she will write on the blank pages of the book and will tell the story of a fisherman, referring to the Aquarius and to the biblical story of Jesus calling his first disciples to become “fishers of men.” She tells another tale of jars, which refers to the illustration in II Corinthians 4:7 of the power of God that dwells in the Christian, but with the connection to Kaspar’s jars of myrrh, the true referent is the power of the Lady, who as the Aquarius brings enlightenment with her in her jar and who will make all things different and yet the same as they were before. Hence, her power of knowledge, renewal, and regeneration will lead to H.D.’s expected heaven on earth where everyone is happy and satisfied and eager to begin again. In this fashion, the Lady is presented as the telos of Jewish, Christian, pagan, and astrological forerunners, embodying and embracing all of them to lead humanity further into a golden Aquarian Age of enlightenment and peace as the great mother of

all; it is she who answers H.D.'s initial question, "What saved us? What for?" (I:1), for the Lady is the one who saved us to the purpose of showing her own compassion and renewing a world and a humanity she loves, leading it forward past the terrors of war and destruction through the power of the redemptive feminine.

Chapter II:

The Community of Ecology in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*

What thou lovest well remains,
 the rest is dross
What thou lov'st well shall not be reft from thee
What thou lov'st well is thy true heritage
Whose world, or mine of theirs
 or is it of none?

.....
Learn of the green world what can be thy place
In scaled invention or true artistry,
Pull down thy vanity,
 Paquin pull down!
The green casque has outdone your elegance.

—Ezra Pound, *Pisan Cantos* LXXXI:134-139, 148-152

“Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons.
It is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth”

—Walt Whitman, “Song of the Open Road,” 71-72

Walter Benjamin, in his “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (1936), famously argued in the context of Nazi Germany that “our image of happiness is indissolubly bound up with the image of redemption” and that every generation has “been endowed with a *weak* Messianic power” by those that preceded it (253-54). In other words, all generations look to the future as a time when things will be better and when they will escape from the tyranny of the ruling classes. Benjamin argues that “The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule” and that our task is “to bring about a real state of emergency” where we can finally make things change for the better (257). In our time, when traditional religion is often maligned, sometimes with just cause, as a dour outdated institution that has a mind only for its own survival, examples of people of faith who sacrifice themselves in order to bring about a real state of emergency for the good of others become sources of enduring inspiration for the wider community. One such character is Jim Casy, who, as one of John Steinbeck's central protagonists in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), accompanies the Joad family on their journey to the “Promised Land” of California. Steinbeck moves the character along a significant spiritual journey from his start as a hellfire preacher to a doubter and then to a thinker, a comforter, a union organizer, a martyr, and, finally, a lasting source of wisdom and strength for those who fight against injustice.

Steinbeck portrays Jim Casy as an embodiment of a new spiritual vocation by portraying him as a community leader who reapplies the traditional Christian conceptions of love, sin, holiness, and hope through a significantly broadened notion of community action based in his belief in what I would identify as an universal

“ecology of holiness” that approximates the later ecological movement known as deep ecology. This represents a new spirituality that Steinbeck presents through the character of Jim Casy; as will be shown, Casy's new ideas about humanity's integration with the natural world only develop at the end of a long process of doubt and searching for answers, first during his private wilderness sojourn and second during his migration with the Joads. In the first of the four sections that follow, I trace Casy's crisis of faith in the charismatic Christian tradition that arises because of his guilt over his sexual desire; in this crisis of faith, Steinbeck locates Casy alongside spiritual visionaries of the past who have founded new religions, and he shows that the one spiritual tenet that Casy clings to is his love for others that he realizes had actually been central to his religious vocation. In the second section, I discuss Casy's wilderness epiphany and his attempts to resignify Christian beliefs into a new teaching that embraces the interconnectedness of all things, celebrates the holiness of life, and corrects traditional religion as well as secular society; in developing these broad themes in his text, Steinbeck relies upon the narrative technique offered by his intercalary chapters that adds a wider perspective of the social injustices perpetrated by the powerful economic system that he identifies as a monster that threatens the land and the migrants. In the third section, I explore Casy's characterization of this system as feral and of traditional religion and prayer as ineffectual, and I argue that his deepening theology posits a new ecology of holiness. For these beliefs, Steinbeck drew upon the Transcendentalism of Ralph Waldo Emerson and the visionary poetry of William Blake in creating Casy's new vocation based in love and the belief that all people are intimately connected with each other, with the land, and with the universe

through the existence of a one-soul; these ideas also stem from Steinbeck's friendship and collaborative research with the marine biologist Edward Ricketts and thus clearly anticipate what later became known as “deep ecology.” Hence, Steinbeck questions the proper limits of work performed by human beings in relation to the soil or other creatures; he strongly criticizes the political actions of those who perpetrate large scale social injustices against other people or against the land itself through unecological factory farming methods, and he characterizes them as monsters, rapists, or feral humans who do not understand the need to respect the land, other humans, or the interconnectedness of the universe. In the fourth section, I discuss how Casy's new sense of vocation centres on a significant transition from “I” to “we” that moves the concern of individuals beyond their kinship group toward others who suffer need, including the earth itself. This transition demands political, economic, and environmental direct action at the local level, which begins under Casy's leadership and continues after his martyrdom when migrants like Tom realize that their only hope lies in turning away from traditional religion and banding together to help themselves and to effect changes leading to a more just society for all.

Sex and the Vocation of Love

When readers first meet Jim Casy in the novel, his background is clearly rooted in the hellfire and brimstone preaching tradition that had brought him to western Oklahoma several times. On each occasion, the people were overcome with emotions that they took for the baptism of the Holy Spirit when they felt ecstatic or were physically baptized and repented for their sin or, as in the case of Grandpa,

performed feats of physical prowess. As Casy relates stories of his past, he clearly associates spiritual highs with physical and sexual highs. For example, in his first appearance in the text, he sits beneath a tree singing “Yes, Sir, That's my Saviour” to the tune of “Yes, Sir, That's my Baby,” an indication of the sensual nature of his current religion (21). He later tells Tom Joad that the catalyst of his break with Christian teaching came through his intense desire—after preaching—to have sex with girls who had listened to him and who, though an apparently widespread association of the spiritual and sexual, were just as aroused as he was. Given the traditional Christian teaching against extramarital sex, Casy identifies his indulgence as sinful and unchristian, which leads to feelings of guilt and to impossible vows that require him to refrain from sinning again. Yet it is these experiences linking the spiritual with the sexual that lead Casy to doubt his vocation, to question the nature of uncton, and to redefine his mission on the basis of love for humanity.

Historically, however, intimately identifying the spiritual and the sexual is not without precedent in Christianity or in other religions.¹ Although some contemporary Christians reject these connections outright, the writings of the medieval Christian mystics are often sexually graphic. Consider Saint Catherine of Siena, who claimed to have entered into a mystical marriage with Jesus Christ, or Saint John of the Cross with his *Spiritual Canticle*; John Donne's fourteenth *Holy Sonnet* prays that God would “enthral” and “ravish” him so that he might become “chaste” in God's

¹ Slavoj Žižek further connects the mystical and the sexual in the Internet age when he claims that the actual nature of sexual intercourse with a “real other” is no different from the actual nature of “virtual sex” online because both are already “inherently phantasmic”; the Internet does not change the way humans interact with their social networks, “it simply renders manifest its underlying phantasmic structure” (*Mapping 2*). Seen in this light, belief in a divinity can be said to have a very similar phantasmic structure that can strongly impact human social organization.

judgement. These sexualized spiritual longings of course find their antecedent in biblical books like the Song of Songs, known for its intense sexual poetry. The connection between the mystic and the divinity is seen to be an all consuming and passionate sense of desire and loyalty that affects all aspects of the mystic's life to an extent that goes beyond the devotion of a typical believer.

Steinbeck characterizes Jim Casy as a believer with the capacity for the level of devotion of a mystic. Casy is defined by the energy that is expressed through his spirituality, his sexuality, and his process of thinking and talking out his religious questions. The first time Jim Casy as the “preacher” is invoked is in response to the story told by the truck driver that picks up Tom Joad in the second chapter. The driver is trying to impress Tom with the story of another driver who used to write dirty sounding racist poetry with big words and asks him and if he ever knew anyone to use big words like that, to which Tom simply replies “Preacher,” which we later learn is the first specific mention of Jim Casy (22). The truck driver counters by saying that one expects that with the preacher but that people who drive constantly on the roads have to do something a bit “screwy” in order to stay sane. This foreshadows the long journey in the middle section of the book upon which Tom and the Joads and Jim Casy will soon embark. The driver then jokes that truck drivers eat all the time, but the truth is that they just want to stop for a break because “They're just goddamn sick of goin’” (14). In this way, the narrative makes a connection between a rambling or sophist style of preaching with big words and the loneliness that results from long distance hauling.

Though known for his big words and his sermonizing, Casy is like the long distance drivers in that he slowly realizes that he has relied on his forward momentum for so long that he has not come to terms with his growing religious doubt. In fact, despite the lengthy passages recording Casy's conversations in the novel, he has already given up preaching, which depends upon his having all the answers to the people's spiritual searching. Likewise, when Casy is described physically, it is his capacity for creative, energetic thinking that is emphasized: he had "an abnormally high forehead, lined with delicate blue veins at the temples. Fully half of the face was above the eyes" (22). When Tom meets with Casy under the tree, it seems that Casy is already in the middle of his spiritual journey. And although *The Grapes of Wrath* is a story of the Joads being forced from their land, journeying across the American Southwest, and trying to survive in what they thought was the Promised Land, it is just as surely the story of Jim Casy's religious development.

In his earliest conversation in the novel, Casy identifies himself with a localized term as a former "Burning Busher." This name is clearly suggestive of a Pentecostal group, which Ma Joad will indeed later specify as a division of the Holiness Pentecostal movement (211). These believers used the image of fire to represent the Holy Spirit, who appeared at Pentecost when tongues of fire alighted on the heads of the Apostles. Through the description of their worship, including speaking in tongues and baptism to receive the Holy Spirit, the narrative suggests that Casy was clearly a charismatic preacher—charismatic referring to the Koine Greek word *charis*, which New Testament used to describe the gifts of the Holy Spirit and outward manifestations of his presence. The image of the burning bush invoked

through Casy's past religious heritage recalls an ancient biblical metaphor of God miraculously dwelling in the hearts of his people, for while he engulfs them without consuming them, he simultaneously makes them a beacon to other nations. Given Steinbeck's penchant for duality, the burning bush also represented a symbol of the oppression of those who seek to consume the Christian community and yet cannot. Significantly, the biblical account of the burning bush is in Exodus 3, where God confronts Moses and calls him to lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt. Given this allusion, it is notable that both Tom and Casy are barefoot, paralleling God's command to Moses in the Exodus passage to remove his sandals because he was standing on holy ground.² Hence, Tom and Casy both represent Moses: Tom because after killing someone, he was sent into the wilderness of prison, and Casy because he is unsure of himself and yet feels he is called to lead the people.³

Yet, to argue, as some critics have, that the central characters in *The Grapes of Wrath* are intended to represent specific biblical figures, and them alone, imposes a needless limitation on the narrative. John H. Timmerman summarizes the debate on this subject that took up many pages of *College English* in the late 50s and early 60s and was republished *en masse* in Agnes McNeill Donohue's *A Casebook on The Grapes of Wrath* in 1968. There, nine scholars, including Eric W. Carlson, Martin Shockely, and Charles T. Dougherty, debated whether Casy or Tom is the real Christ figure, whether Tom is better understood as St. Paul, and whether the characters are types or are really meant to function as human beings. These arguments and the

² This type of sacred space is discussed in Chapter III.

³ Casy also parallels Aaron, the brother of Moses, whose skill was to speak and negotiate on behalf of Moses and Israel.

rebuttals that followed reveal the weight given to symbolism by the scholarship of the time; however, a recent article by Ken Eckert makes a similar argument.⁴ Eckert posits that Steinbeck did intend to produce a precise one-to-one allegory of a biblical narrative, and he attempts to equate the plot line of *Grapes of Wrath* with what he calls an “inverted” Exodus motif. However, Steinbeck did not mean the text to be read as a simple allegorical retelling of the biblical story. It is instead a narrative with an epic scope focused on one family, though in strengthening his telling of it, Steinbeck draws heavily on several sources of structure, of imagery, and of association.

Many of Steinbeck's characters are suggestive of biblical figures. Tom suffers as a Christ figure, and Rose of Sharon offers life giving strength to a dying man. Casy, in his death, is akin to Jesus Christ, as well as John the Baptist through his wandering and anointing of Tom; he is like Paul through his intellectual arguments, like Moses in leading the community, like Aaron in his role as a spokesman, like Jeremiah in his sorrow over the injustices of the social hierarchy, and like Isaiah in his intercessions on behalf of the oppressed. Although *The Grapes of Wrath* has sometimes been debated on aesthetic grounds due to its intercalary chapters, diverse symbolism, and use of metaphysical posturing, Steinbeck himself was quite clear about its complexity and clarified that his intention was to write a symphonic novel with a contrapuntal structure and at least five layers of meaning (qtd. in DeMott, Introduction xii-xiv). These multiple layers restructure biblical, national, and Eastern

⁴ See Ken Eckert, “Exodus Inverted: A New Look at *The Grapes of Wrath*.” Similarly, Tamara Rombold argues that many of the central plot points in the text are intended as inversions of events from the biblical narrative; see her essay “Biblical Inversion in *The Grapes of Wrath*.”

religious myths and present them with strong poetic language meant, as Louis Owens posits, to present “the story of mankind's quest for profound comprehension of his commitment to his fellow man and to the earth he inhabits” (45). Jeff P. Turpin has identified this commitment to others in *Grapes of Wrath* as dependant upon a reciprocity and altruism “common to all known human cultures” that is “adaptively functional” to the extent that care for others, even strangers, remains vital even in the face of dire social turmoil that threatens basic kinship units with suffering or death (384-87).

Nonetheless, for Jim Casy, being a preacher and a Burning Busher is a thing of the past; he tells Tom that he “Used to howl out the name of Jesus to glory. And used to get an irrigation ditch so squirming' full of repented sinners half of 'em like to drowned. But not no more . . . Aint's got the call no more” (23). Within many evangelical or charismatic sectors of the church, a pastor or preacher obtains a hearing not through the official sanction of a governing body or through educational degrees but through proof of his ability to preach as a sign of his divine equipping and vocation. Thus, to lose one's vocation is much more than simply changing one's occupation. For a man like Jim Casy, to doubt one's vocation is to doubt one's identity. He tells Tom “I was a preacher . . . Reverend Jim Casy—was a Burning Busher. . . . But not no more . . . Just Jim Casy now” (23); his identity has been reduced to a name because he has lost the title of Reverend and his ability to control the crowds with his preaching after his traditional spiritual belief was shaken by his unanswered questions. He has lost his grounding as a Christian, as an individual, and as a member of a community of faith. This loss of identity, however, mirrors the loss

of identity felt by many urban dwellers during the rapid urbanization of the modernist period. As Bill Devall, a supporter of deep ecology, argues, cities led to “the rise of bureaucratic domination” whereby when people identify themselves with the words “I am a New Yorker’ or ‘I am a Californian’ . . . they have allowed their broad self to be diminished by a bureaucratic identity” (111). Like the Joads who lose their identity as farmers tied intimately to a specific area of land and become defined by the state bureaucracy as unemployed migrants, Casy loses the identity of a preacher and leader, which is why he too is uprooted and joins the Joads on their pilgrimage West.

This concept of vocation is rooted in the Roman Catholic belief that an actual ontological change occurs in a priest when he is consecrated by the sacrament of Holy Orders and accepts his vocation to minister to God’s people. The word “vocation” is derived from the Latin verb *vocare* meaning “to call,” and it refers theologically to those who are called out to lead the people as God’s representatives. Hence, Casy now laments, “Here I got the sperit sometimes an’ nothin’ to preach about. I got the call to lead the people, an’ no place to lead ‘em” (24). Tom quips, “Lead ‘em around and around. . . What the hell you want to lead ‘em someplace for? Jus’ lead ‘em” (24). But this task seems impossible to Casy, whose insecurity about his own path does not allow him to consider taking responsibility for others.

Casy first begins to doubt his vocation after he realizes that his liaisons with women seem to conflict with his faith. In a conversation with Tom, Casy reveals the inner dilemma caused by his own guilt and by the willingness of the women to sleep with him after hearing his sermons. He wonders that “the more grace a girl got in her, the quicker she wants to go out in the grass” (25). Tom, too, shares a similar

sentiment, stating that he always found girls easier to “push over” after a good meeting. Casy had asked himself, “What's gnawin' you? Is it the screwin'?" An' I says, 'No, it's the sin.' An' I says, 'Why is it that when a fella ought to be just about mule-ass proof against sin, an' full up of Jesus, why is it that's the time a fella gets fingerin' his pants buttons?'” (26). Tom recounts the “godawful pounding” that another preacher would give to his wife every night after a meeting and so assures Casy that spiritual and sexual ecstasy are also linked by other preachers as well as by the laity. Casy's solution is to suggest that

Maybe it ain't a sin. Maybe it's just the way folks is. . . . There ain't no sin and there ain't no virtue. There's just stuff people do. It's all part of the same thing. And some of the things folks do is nice, and some ain't nice, but that's as far as any man got a right to say. (26)

Just as the narrator focuses on Casy's forehead, Casy aptly summarizes himself as “Just Jim Casy now. Ain't got the call no more. Got a lot of sinful idears—but they seem kinda sensible” (23), and he remarks that “The sperit's strong in me, on'y it ain't the same” (23).

In order to deal with his doubts, Casy goes out into the wilderness to be alone and think. This parallels the stories of many biblical characters, including Moses and several Old Testament prophets like Elijah, and most pointedly, Jesus himself. In each case, the wilderness sojourn is a time of meditation that often leads to a special anointing by God for a task. This does not literally happen to Jim Casy, but his meeting with Tom Joad does lead him to his appointed task, and so the trajectory of his journey is forever altered. The meeting also allows Casy to ascertain that he had not hurt anyone through his preaching and also to exercise a very real pastoral

concern when he asks Tom about his time in McAlester, a conversation that Steinbeck carefully juxtaposes with Tom's terse, at times even hostile, encounter with the inquisitive truck driver (15-17; 28-29). This shows just how highly Casy is still held in esteem and how lovingly and pastorally he relates to other people, which is echoed by his concern that he might have somehow done harm to his listeners when he was preaching. For this reason, Casy asks Tom to remember when he baptized him and asks “did you take any bad from it? Think hard”; Tom assures him that he did no harm because, to him, “They wasn't nothing in it, good or bad. I just had fun” (27).

Most telling in this encounter is Casy's comparison of himself with the turtle that Tom is taking home to give to his younger siblings. The turtle keeps trying to get away, and Casy remarks that

Nobody can't keep a turtle though. They work at it and work at it, and at last one day they get out and away they go—off somewheres. It's like me. I wouldn't take the good ol' gospel that was just layin' thereto my hand. I got to be pickin' at it an' workin' at it until I got it all tore down. (24)⁵

Due to his turtle-like attribute of persevering in order to get away or to get to the bottom of a problem, Casy identifies his perseverance to answer religious questions as the reason that he tore down the Gospel, and hence, undermined his traditional understanding of his vocation. Yet a different conception of vocation quickly becomes central for Casy, who finally concludes that his sense of the spirit, upon which everything else depends for him, was in fact love for other people:

'I says, 'What's this call, this sperit?' An' I says, 'It's love. I love people so much I' fit to bust, sometimes.' An' I says, 'Don't you love

⁵ Daniel Griesbach discusses how Steinbeck's animals often function in the intercalary chapters as “the supreme protagonist,” as does the turtle in interchapter 3. Griesbeach argues that this shows Steinbeck's portrayal of “humans as a species among species” that arises from his “holism” and “ecological thinking” (587).

Jesus? . . . 'No, I don't know nobody name' Jesus. I know a bunch of stories, but I only love people . . . an' I want to make 'em happy, so I been preachin' somepin I thought would make 'em happy.' (26)

Telling people what they want to hear would be simony: crassly selling the gifts of God based upon consumer demand and pandering to the crowd. So this is the big change in Casy, which drives him to think more and more about what he is doing and why he is doing it. He continues to think and says,

Why do we got to hang it all on God or Jesus? . . . maybe it's just all men an' all women we love; maybe that's the Holy Sperit—the human sperit—the whole shebang. Maybe all men got one big soul ever'body's a part of.' Now I sat there thinkin' it, an' all of a suddent—I knew it. I knew it so deep down that it was true, and I still know it. (27)

Tom agrees that this revelation is not any good for a church because people want emotion and jumping and yelling and showmanship on the part of the preacher. Even though Casy feels guilty for sleeping with some of his listeners, it is clear that this is not a problem for the people. Pa Joad sums up Casy as having “too long a pecker for a preacher” (30), and Grampa insists with a lecherous and knowing wink that he liked him “since I seen him—” (82); these characters do not object to Casy's sexual behaviour as hypocritical, and they continue to trust Casy and define him as “the preacher” long after he has given up on that vocation.

Casy still has the love and compassion he has always felt for his people, but he feels that he has lost his unction. Here, unction does not refer to the Catholic sacrament of anointing the dying, but the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon the preacher. This anointing allows him to deliver his message with power by acting as a conduit for the Holy Spirit to speak through and to move the hearts of his listeners. This sense of being a tool in the hands of the Divine is what leads to the physical

“antics” that characterize Casy's meetings, the emotional highs that he clearly feels, and the increased libido that leads him to question his calling and indeed the existence of a personal God. Clearly, Casy experiences several traumas, not the least of which include economic oppression, beatings by the police and townsmen, imprisonment for leading the union cause, and finally losing his own life to vigilantes because of his outspoken passion for his new calling. Yet, possibly the greatest trauma that Casy faces is of a psychological nature: the loss of his faith. Yet, this loss leads him to the formation of a new spiritual system that is more responsive to the needs of the people suffering the effects of the Great Depression. As Michael J. Meyer posits, Casy

recognizes his need to lead—to help others understand a new concept of God and religion that is just beginning to develop in his own consciousness. By contemplating the ineffectuality of the old religion and his use of it to satisfy his own selfish desires, Casy has begun to question his former ways. (“Fermenting” 54)

This is a provocative move for Steinbeck in that he presents Casy as rejecting Christianity in all its forms by rejecting his own former uses of it while, nevertheless, adopting the obvious postures of several biblical heroes in suffering injustice and oppression and yet remaining dedicated to correcting social ills that affected the poor and the marginalized. Steinbeck thus makes Casy a focal point for a challenge presented against traditional organized religion that actually places him within the wider religious tradition itself, which over time has continued to have members who challenge the wider body to adhere to a faith or a practice defined as more authentic to the original biblical teachings. However, since the Enlightenment, numerous philosophers and theologians have similarly identified historic Christianity as being outdated and have therefore sought to redefine it and suit it for the modern age in a

manner that references humanism instead of biblical teachings.⁶ In practical terms, many liberal Protestant Christians in North America at the turn of the twentieth century repackaged themselves through the social gospel movement, meaning they saw themselves as primarily a social organism working for the betterment of the plight of humanity.

Though Casy reflects these theological currents, it is his devotion to love that invites a further comparison to the Christian understanding of love in the New Testament Greek paradigm. As opposed to our one English word for love, the New Testament Greek writers had four.⁷ These were “*storge*,” denoting affection for family members; “*philia*,” love and respect for others through friendship; “*eros*,”⁸ well known to Casy through his erotic endeavours with girls after his meetings; and finally, “*agape*,” love that is charitable, unconditional, freely given, and based on the highest principles. The term *agape* was rarely used in classical Greek literature and, when it was, meant non-sexual affection for family or activities; however, the term underwent a process of resignification during the early Christian era. As James Strong stresses, the difference between *agape* and *philia* is revealed in that *philia* meant to “*have affection for . . . denoting personal attachment, as a matter of sentiment or feeling*” whereas *agape* came to embody a type of love that “*is wider, embracing especially the judgement and the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle,*

⁶ These include, for example, Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) attempts to keep the ethics of Christianity while jettisoning its metaphysical teachings or the existentialist theologian Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) and his movements to demythologize the Bible or Paul Tillich (1886-1965) revisioning of Christianity as a means of facing psychological anxiety and estrangement.

⁷ Though he does not actually deal with the etymology of the terms, C.S. Lewis popularized a his Christian conception of these four Greek terms for love in his study *The Four Loves*.

⁸ Plato's *Symposium* explores the nature of Eros through the speeches given by each of the men who try to characterize it.

duty and propriety” (102). Building upon the teachings of Christ as expressed by the New Testament writers, *agape* began to designate the universal love of God for human beings, a love that is based on God's redemption of Christians by sending his son Jesus and allowing him to die as an atoning sacrifice. It is this sort of freely given, unconditional love that Christians were to return to God and share among each other. Indeed, the earliest form of the modern Eucharist mentioned in the New Testament is preceded by the “*agape* feast,” a large communal meal where rich and poor alike shared what they had. That *agape* is the highest, most spiritual of the loves is seen in that its meaning remains difficult to define fully. Hence, the concept often exchanges idioms with the other types of love in biblical or mystic literature. *Agape* is expressed as *storge* in Matthew 23, when Jesus compares himself to a hen seeking her chicks; to *philia* in John 15, when Jesus tells his disciples that they are now friends for whom he will lay down his life in love; and to *eros* in Patristic Christian commentaries on the Song of Songs.

Steinbeck characterizes Casey as a former preacher who has lost his connection to the Holy Spirit and his former vocation, but he moves Casey forward to an adoption of an *agape* love for others as the theological and philosophical framework that will inform his life and ministry. This choice reveals a path that enshrines love as one of Christianity's greatest theological beliefs. Biblically, it is emphasized in Matthew 22 when Jesus teaches that love is the greatest commandment: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the

prophets.”⁹ He would again have easily grasped the example of love Jesus sets in John 13: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” And this would have been based on the spiritual imperative of I John 4:7-8, which argues that since “God is love,” Christians should therefore

love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love . . . No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us . . . God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Casy would also have understood that the depths of this divine *agape* should be expressed to all people, even those who appear to be evil. Ma Joad is perhaps the best example of this type of love, because as will be discussed later, she is conscious at the end of the novel that she has responded to the needs of those around her by moving past defending her family alone to helping anyone she comes across who is in need. As Meyer argues, despite Ma's claim “to have not understood the principles of Casy's new philosophy as Tom explains it to her, it is evident to the reader that this central character has been a constant practitioner of this new faith even when it was in a developmental stage and could not be articulated by either the preacher or his major disciple” (“Fermenting” 70).¹⁰ This function of *agape* is espoused in Matthew 5:43-44, where Jesus says,

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless

⁹ All biblical quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

¹⁰ Meyer gives several examples of Ma “reach[ing] out to others in generosity: first to Casy, then the Wilsons, then the Hooverville children and the Weedpatch camp residents, and finally to the Wainwrights” (70).

them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Notably, in each occurrence of the English word “love” in these verses, the Greek verb or noun used is *agape*. It is telling that in Matthew 23,¹¹ for example, when Jesus compares *agape* with the type of “love” felt by the establishment, he pointedly contrasts *agape* with *philia*. He states that the scribes and Pharisees “love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.” By using the two different verbs, he teaches that the religious establishment was rooted in a crass lust for powerful positions and honours from society based upon a hypocritical and false portrayal of themselves as holy leaders. Later Christian writers used this switch between Christian *agape* and worldly *philia* to point to the different choices that the religious leaders of Christ’s time made about how to live, how to express themselves, how to treat other people, and how to define the very purpose of their lives.

¹¹ The same distinction is made in the synoptic texts in Mark 12 and Luke 11 and 20. Likewise, John 15 creates a similar distinction when the author writes that Jesus tells his disciples “These things I command you, that ye love [*agape*] one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before you. If ye were of the world, the world would love [*philia*] his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you”(John 15:17-19). *Philia* is used in I Timothy 6:10, “The love of money is the root of all evil.” An intriguing juxtaposition of the two verb forms is in John 21:15-20, wherein a resurrected Christ confronts Peter, who had denied him three times; Christ asks if Peter loves [*agape*] him, and Peter replies that he loves [*philia*] him; the same question and answer are then repeated, but the third time, Christ switches his question by asking if Peter loves him using the verb form of *philia*, and Peter replies in the affirmative using the same verb form. Christ then prophecies that Peter will die by crucifixion, and Peter, seeing the Apostle John nearby, asks Christ how John would die. Yet the text refers to John not by name but by the description “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” and the verb form for Christ’s love for John is *agape*, a striking choice within the context of the five lines wherein Christ and Peter clearly debate the nature of true Christian love.

The Wilderness and the Monster

While the first section of this chapter has explored the developing framework of Casy's operational theology, the great problem that remains for Casy is that although he has recognized that his love for people has taken the place of belief in a personal God, he still lacks a basis for social engagement. He will soon discover a purpose for his ministry in the plight of the farming families who, through the oppression of the faceless establishment of the banks, big companies, and corporate farm plantations, are in the process of losing the land they have worked for generations and are about to become ungrounded migrants struggling for survival. After the Joads and other small farmers suffer the consequences of not meeting the obligations set by the financial system, Casy comes to a realization that leads him to characterize the banks and companies as a monster that rapes the land and devours the poor.

Thus far, my reading of Jim Casy has revealed that Steinbeck constructs Casy's vocation chiefly through its association with his sense of unction, the spiritual and then physical and sexual high that he feels when preaching, and his accompanying participation in *agape* toward all people. To some degree, after losing his faith, these things are still present in a modified form, but, without the belief system of Christianity and a personal and present God, Casy feels the lack of a grounding upon which to negotiate his self-conception and his interactions with others. He has risen to become one of the most important people within the rural, agricultural, uneducated society of western Oklahoma that was all he had ever known,

but now he finds himself doubting the veracity of all he has ever believed or represented. Notably, Casy makes the difficult but honest decision to step back from his Christian vocation and to search for a different source of truth that is more authentic to the struggles of the migrants. Although he is one of the most intellectually aware people of his region, in that he lives by his ability to disseminate biblical teachings through his verbal instructions to others, to an outside observer he appears as culturally and socially rough as his surroundings. And yet, when Casy begins to experience the trauma of extreme doubt that challenges his religious worldview, he quits preaching and wanders in the wilderness until he finds an answer.

While Casy's wandering obviously refers to the wilderness meditation and temptation of Christ, it also corresponds to the years in the wilderness experienced by Moses, who then leads Israel out of Egypt, the wanderings in search of Enlightenment by Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, and the retreat to a cave to seek meditation by Muhammad, the founder of Islam. Yet Steinbeck is not simply employing a clichéd topos. A better grasp of what is at stake is expressed in the thesis of William James's 1902 landmark Gifford lectures: that the purity of the original spiritual vision of any visionary is often lost or transformed by the organization that follows. Thus, the original insights become codified and then perhaps diminish over time within the organisms that arise after the visionary, who may have actually been quite specific in facing a certain set of challenges that pertained to their time or place without the intent that their teachings would be later applied in what might be quite different circumstances.

Hence, although original visionaries may treat only a circumscribed set of issues, organized religions attempt to enshrine what their hierarchy or their culture desires to portray as most important. One thinks of Shelley's 1818 sonnet, "Ozymandias," about a statue of a god king

whose frown
 And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
 Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
 The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed. (lines 4-8)

Or consider Albert Schweitzer's condemnation of liberal Protestants based on their tendency, as Schweitzer understood it, to look down the well of history and to mistake their own reflection for the true image of the historical Jesus. Perhaps the most obvious examples are traditional societies and their belief in agricultural and fertility gods or goddesses. In each case, what is important to the society's conception of spiritual belief is what is relevant to their lives: a successful crop and fertile herds, the correctness of one's opinions, a justification of violence or greed, or in Casy's case, universal love for all people and especially for those who suffer oppression.

In his wandering and his Buddha-like posture sitting beneath the tree waiting for answers, Casy moves another step further away from historic Christianity, for, even if he had grown to base his relations with others on the concept of *agape* toward them as an expression of God in the world, he has come to doubt the very existence of God. It is this doubt that leads him to a process of philosophical and theological questioning, which in turn leads to his enlightenment, his epiphany, and the extension of his spiritual journey. The first step of this journey, which has already been discussed, demonstrates Casy's realization that he was preaching because of his love

for people and a deep desire to make them happy. The next step is challenging himself, not by asking if he really did not believe in God's existence anymore or give intellectual assent to the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, but by returning to the question of love and asking himself if he really did not love Jesus. Casy's honest answer is no, he does not love Jesus because he realizes that "I don't know nobody name' Jesus" and that Jesus represents merely "a bunch of stories" and not a real person; what Casy is sure of is that "I only love people. An' sometimes I love 'em fit to bust, an' I want to make 'em happy, so I been preachin' somepin I thought would make 'em happy" (26). For this reason, Casy argues that it seems pointless to, as he puts it, "hang it on God and Jesus," when "maybe it's all men an' all women we love; maybe that's the Holy Sperit—the human sperit—the whole shebang. Maybe all men got one big soul ever'body a part of"; this comes to him as an epiphany, for, as he recounts to Tom, "I sat there thinkin' it, an' all of a suddent—I knew it. I knew it so deep down that it was true, and I still know it" (27).

Steinbeck's characterization of Casy's sexually linked spirituality echoes another of his sources, Walt Whitman, whose "Song of Myself" likewise expresses a metaphysical epiphany that arrives through sensuality. The first chant begins by insisting that "every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you" and "every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air" (3, 6), just as the penultimate chant realizes "I am large, I contain multitudes" (1326). Whitman's early formation of Transcendentalism is presented in Chant 24, which produces the self identification of the narrator as "Walt Whitman, a kosmos" who claims "Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touch'd from" (497, 524). Like Steinbeck's

Casy, Chant 5 links the sexual with the spiritual when the text details an intimate homosexual encounter that leads to “the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth” (line 91); the poetic narrator attempts to express this ineffable revelation in Chant 50, but determines that “There is that in me—I do not know what it is—but I know it is in me. . . . I do not know it—it is without a name—it is a word unsaid, . . . Do you see, O my brothers and sisters? / It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal life—it is Happiness” (1309, 1312, 1318). The sensual and immediate physical experience of another human being leads to a spiritual and universal realization of something that is inexpressible but that indicates interconnectedness of all that is typically invisible to the limited scope of vision of the individual. From this point of view, loving a stranger or loving an animal or the soil or the water is the same as loving one's own family or one's self because all things are so intimately united together through the existence of this one universal soul.

Steinbeck had adapted the concept of the “one-soul” from Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882),¹² who wrote an essay in the subject in 1841 following his study of the Vedas. Steinbeck himself had read the Vedas and in fact drew the epigram for his second novel, *To an Unknown God* (1933), from the Rigveda (DeMott, *Reading* 13, 113, 114, n178). Steinbeck incorporated Emerson's ideas in *Grapes of Wrath* through Casy's spiritual epiphany that posits all people to be a part of the “one big soul” that clearly corresponds to Emerson's ideas in “The Over-Soul” (1841). For these reasons, it has become a commonplace in Steinbeck studies,

¹² The Unitarian churches in America, previously liberal Protestant, would follow Emerson by substantially changing their theology into an expression of universalism and transcendentalism after they adopted these teachings of Emerson that he drew from Buddhism (DeMott *Reading* 38, n144).

following Frederic I. Carpenter's essay, "The Philosophical Joals" (1941), to agree that to Emerson's American transcendentalism, Steinbeck added the democratic ideals of dependence upon and love for the common man found in Walt Whitman,¹³ and a philosophical grounding in pragmatism expressed through action, to form "a new kind of Christianity—not otherworldly and passive, but earthly and active" (325).

These ideas of the value of all life forms and their ecological interconnectedness drawn from Emerson's essay are developed by Steinbeck in his well known Easter Sunday meditation on the nature of what he called "non-teleological thought" in *The Log from The Sea of Cortez* (1941).¹⁴ This study of the intertidal ecosystem's marine life, published only three years after *The Grapes of Wrath*, is partially presented in the form of a journal or log of the study of the invertebrates of the Gulf of California that Steinbeck undertook in the company of his close friend, the Cannery Row marine biologist Edward F. Ricketts.¹⁵ By "non-teleological thinking," Steinbeck stresses that humans must have an ecological

¹³ Richard Astro posits that Steinbeck actually inherited his admiration for Whitman from Edward Ricketts, who thought that Whitman was one of those poets who "reflect a heightened consciousness . . . which enables them to move non-teleologically . . . beyond right and wrong to an acceptance of what is" (40-41).

¹⁴ Robert E. Morsberger mentions that Steinbeck once identified himself as "the only American writer who is [an oceanographer] at all," which is ironic considering that the only other modernist writer who might have made such a claim was Ernest Hemingway, whose writing style is so often compared with Steinbeck's, and whose great novel *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) is likewise compared with Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, published five years earlier in 1947 and inspired by a true story he had heard while on the *Sea of Cortez* expedition (Nakayama 194). Morsberger illustrates the major difference between their comprehension of the sea by insisting that Hemingway had actually been "a killer of giant marlins rather than a marine scientist [like Steinbeck]" (269). As Gary Snyder notes, the killing technology admired by people like Hemingway who celebrate big game hunting at sea and on land leads to the "irreversible loss" of the "extinction of a species, each one a pilgrim of four billion years of evolution. . . . Large highly adapted vertebrates, once lost, will never return in the forms we have known them. Hundreds of millions of years might elapse before the equivalent of a whale or an elephant is seen again, if ever. The scale of loss is beyond any measure the planet has ever known" (176).

¹⁵ Later editions of *The Log* include Steinbeck's seventy page essay, "About Ed Ricketts," which is a collection of his reminiscences about his friend's life and ideas he wrote soon after Rickett's untimely death from injuries sustained when his car was hit by a train.

mindset that experiences the world “through 'is' thinking” and so does not evaluate nature or other humans on a solely teleological basis that values them as resources to be exploited; he argues that “Non-teleological thinking concerns itself primarily not with what should be, or could be, or might be, but rather with what actually 'is'—attempting to answer the already sufficiently difficult questions *what* or *how*, instead of *why*” (160). Mary Chandler McEntyre draws a further connection when she argues that non-teleological thinking is “a way of understanding the natural and thence the social world independent of the causal relations and presumed purposes we so readily posit to satisfy our need for comprehensible meaning” (114). Indeed, in this view of nature, Ricketts and Steinbeck anticipate the later concerns of deep ecology. As Bill Devall and George Sessions see the task of deep ecology, it relies upon Steinbeck's type of difficult questioning that thwarts the human tendency to impose order and meaning; their definition stipulates that “Deep ecology is a process of ever-deeper questioning of ourselves, the assumptions of the dominant worldview in our culture, and the meaning and truth of our reality” (8). Steinbeck is highly critical of teleological thinking that focuses on easy answers that stress “the evaluation of causes and effects, the purposiveness of events. This kind of thinking considers changes and course—what 'should be' in the terms of an end pattern (which is often a subjective or an anthropomorphic projection)”; importantly, Steinbeck's concerns with the migrants are involved in his ecological philosophy, for he argued that teleological thinking, which evaluates everything by its end value to the consumer, is “exemplified by the notion about the shiftless unemployed” (159). As Katharine A. Rodger observes in her essay on the influence of Ricketts's literary philosophy on Steinbeck, Ricketts used the

term “unified field hypothesis” to reflect his “early awareness of the interconnectedness of individuals to each other and their environment—an ecological awareness not yet common in the 1930s and '40s, but one now often thought to presage deep ecology” (33).

Steinbeck makes Casy a central fictional character who emulates non-teleological thinking that accepts and loves people and the biosphere for what they are instead of how they might be used for a capitalist end gain. Steinbeck moves Casy through the trauma of losing his faith by a process of thinking through spirituality and achieving an epiphany that led to a working philosophy that met the needs of those struggling during the Great Depression. Casy does not lose his love for others, and indeed uses it not to ward off bitterness but to rebuild his conception of the world and himself. True to his personality, before and after, he is a man who is very open, sharing this most personal of accounts with Tom Joad, whom he has not even seen for several years. However, this meeting occurs early in the narrative and is in fact the only time Casy addresses the subject of his doubt and lost vocation; for this reason, it is Tom who later steps in to explain to the family why the former preacher is acting the way he does. As Casy and Tom get reacquainted, it becomes clear that they are two people who have been set apart for a special purpose and who re-encounter one another significantly after mutual periods of solitude and reflection. Casy and Tom are the only two characters who are, in effect, newly introduced to the Dust Bowl context. When they come to the Joad homestead, Tom does not know why the place is deserted because in the four years he has been gone he has only received two Christmas cards from the family (28-29), and Casy is quick to point out, “I don't

know what happened. I been away. I didn't hear nothin'" (43). At this point, the reader knows more than either character due to the information offered by Steinbeck in the intercalary chapters, and so we know that the Joads have been forced away from their home by the bank.

Certainly, the intercalary chapters are one of the most distinctive literary techniques that Steinbeck relies upon in *The Grapes of Wrath*. These chapters,¹⁶ interspersed at irregular intervals between the chapters that detail the plot line of Casy and the Joads, perform important work in the narrative by giving a wider view of the immense economic and political forces that determine the fate of the Joads, which, after all, are but one family of several thousands migrating because of economic desperation.¹⁷ Daniel Griesbach defines the narrative function of the intercalary chapters as “the formal correlative of the problem of whole and partial knowledge. Characters in the novel do not understand the changes taking place because of their insufficient knowledge of the whole”; hence, the substantially broader view of the migrants' situation offered by the intercalary chapters echoes cinematic technique in providing what Griesbach calls a “panoramic” point of view (580). In his plans for the novel, Steinbeck identified these chapters as “pace changers” meant to “hit the reader below the belt. With the rhythms and symbols of poetry one can get into a reader—open him up and while he is open introduce things on a intellectual level which he would not or could not receive unless he were opened up” (qtd. in DeMott,

¹⁶ The intercalary chapters, also referred to by critics as interchapters or general chapters, as 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, and 29.

¹⁷ Roy S. Simmonds has traced this narrative technique through Steinbeck's manuscripts, which originally planned for a novel with three main sections and one-to-one alternations of intercalary chapters. Simmonds found that Steinbeck regarded the intercalary chapters as “general chapters” meant to describe the plight of the migrants as a whole as opposed to the “particular chapters” that treat the specific story of the Joads (4-5).

Introduction xi). Several of the intercalary chapters are composed in very poetic prose that is meant to provoke a deeper sympathy toward the sufferings of the migrants or of the land itself, which is frequently shown through an anthropomorphic lens that emphasizes that it too is suffering deeply. Still other intercalary chapters give short accounts of other migrants who do not fare as well as do the Joads.

Beyond using the intercalary chapters in these ways to develop the narrative's presentation of the broad social movements during the Great Depression, Steinbeck is also providing a further intertextual allusion to the traditions of English literature; John Han relates these chapters to similar techniques used by various writers (613); in particular, Han refers to Henry Fielding in *Tom Jones* (1749), Leo Tolstoy in *War and Peace* (1869), Herman Melville in *Moby Dick* (1851), and John Dos Passos in his U.S.A. trilogy: *42nd Parallel* (1930), *1919* (1932), and *The Big Money* (1936). Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), for example, is characterized by lengthy chapters detailing the biology of the sperm whale or the history of whale hunting, which are interspersed between the main chapters that tell the story of Ahab's mania to kill Moby Dick. Just as Steinbeck alludes to Julia Ward Howe's *Battle Hymn of the Republic* (1862) in his title, his technique also alludes to Melville's tale to anticipate claims that the book was anti-American because of its political views, which many would characterize as socialist although he was moved to action, as DeMott argues, "more from his own feelings and humane sensibility than from the persuasiveness of the national or international left's economic and social ideals" (*Typewriter* 168). Deborah Cosier Solomon argues further that the intercalary chapters share various literary techniques, sentence structure, and rhetorical tropes with the Old Testament,

and she posits that this adds to the musicality and urgency of the the novel by making it more compelling by using “Biblical literary techniques [to] reinforce the universality of the Migrants' sufferings and add dignity and pathos to their wretched lifestyle”; the intercalary chapters “accost the reader with a message that seems as simple and as old as creation, a message of authority, demanding attention and respect” (568). In another sense, however, the omniscience found in the intercalary chapters that provide an overarching view of the migrant situation and the wounded voice of the land itself represent the voice of the one-soul of ecology. As will later be shown, Steinbeck provides Casy with a theology that sees all life as holy and intertwined in the one-soul, which provides a further basis for an ecology that privileges not only lifeforms but the earth and water upon which life depends. The intercalary chapters imply a narrative point of view that emanates from the one-soul and is equally concerned with the suffering of the migrants, the actions of the social hierarchy that causes that suffering, and the land that is mistreated and overworked for profit.

The terrible Dust Bowl conditions to which Tom and Casy are soon introduced threatens both of them as individuals as surely as it threatens the integrity of the Joad's family unit that Steinbeck uses to represent the wider traditional rural culture of Oklahoma. For Casy, this crisis becomes the testing ground of his new theology. Is his developing theology of belief and action strong enough to stand against the further traumas that are to come? Can it provide him with direction through times of oppression and despair, and will it prove relevant to the needs of others? Although it is a hard proving ground, this testing is what is needed to give

Casy a basis to envision how he can now act as a reconstituted minister by resignifying his concept of vocation based upon what he realizes is love for people instead of love for Jesus or God. Steinbeck thus presents Casy as a minister who leaves his vocation because the intellectual basis of his ministry, his belief in God, has eroded; now that Casy has started to develop a new intellectual basis through his doctrines of love for all people and the ecology of holiness that interconnects all things, he will likewise attempt to renew his sense of vocation in serving others. For, while Casy now has regained a framework for life and action, it is specific only to his personal view of the world and humanity. Importantly, what he has not yet recovered from the faith that he lost is the feeling that what he is doing matters; where he once saw himself as saving souls by being an instrument of God in the world, he is now just a man in an intermediary state of experiencing a love for humanity he cannot adequately express. Nor can he accept Tom's suggestion that he should lead the people even though he does not know where he is leading them. For Steinbeck's conception of non-teleological thinking, however, Casy and all "the people we call leaders are simply those who, at the given moment, [are] moving in the direction behind which will be found the greatest weight, and which represents a future mass movement"; hence, leaders do not "actually direct and consciously lead the masses" but happen to find themselves speaking for many others who have the same experience of life as they have through common challenges or goals (164). Casy's new vocation is defined for him because he knows himself to be intimately united with these people whom he loves; when they begin to feel the hard oppression of the establishment, whose actions Casy realizes can only be labelled as evil and sin on a scale larger than

anything he has ever conceived in the past, he becomes a leader because, as Steinbeck defines a leader, Casy is the one who speaks out of the mass of those “moving in the direction behind which will be found the greatest weight” (164).

It is in Casy's treatment of institutional sin that he approximates what would much later become an influential theological resignification of the concept of sin meant to show that, in the modern industrial age, sin is has reached new depths when it becomes something perpetrated by huge companies or organisms or countries.¹⁸ Steinbeck develops his critique by likening the larger economic system—embodied by the banks, the land owners, and the corporations—to a monster that controls all the individuals under its power. The metaphor of the monster is deepened because these institutions are faceless and their actions seem relentless to the migrants because corporations have the ability to cause damage to millions of people and to the planet on a scale that goes far beyond Grandpa cursing, Al coveting his neighbour's Cadillac 16, or Casy committing adultery. The corporation is thus akin to a reverse one-soul, in that the migrants see it as one entity that is in fact simply many people acting out their roles as part of a larger whole that they themselves do not control or fully comprehend. The institutions sidestep all accountability because they are not a single person, and hence, as the farmers find out when the owners come to force them off the land, even the representatives of the landowners speak of the system as a monster

¹⁸ The most widely known of these treatments is the extensive work of Walter Wink, who critiques modern power structures from a progressive Christian position. These texts include Wink's “trilogy of power”: *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (1984), *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (1986), and *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (1992). A similar conclusion was reached from a secular position by the economist John Kenneth Galbraith, who, in his classic analysis of the causes of the Great Depression *The Great Crash, 1929* (1959, 1997), blames skewed institutional mores that privileged greed and speculation for precipitating what he calls a “great speculative orgy” that ended with the rapid downfall of the economic system (169).

that could not be fought or overcome (34-37). When Hercules fought the Lernaean Hydra, he was able to cut off its heads one by one and scorch them so they would not grow back, but the Dust Bowl farmers do not even have that opportunity. In every case, the “orders” are said to have originated somewhere else; accountability is displaced from the foremen who interact with the sharecroppers onto the landowners, from the landowners to the banks, from the banks to the Company, and from the Company to a corporation somewhere back East (41).

Of course, those people who worked in the banking system after the stock market crash of 1929 were also victimized by a system they could not control or rectify. As the Harvard Keynesian economist John Kenneth Galbraith observes in his history of the Great Depression, “The banker [had] yielded, as did others, to the blithe, optimistic, and immoral mood,” but he claims that the problem ultimately was not with the bankers but that, at least in retrospect, the whole “banking structure was inherently weak” (184). Nonetheless, Galbraith argues, the majority of Americans before the Crash trusted the banks as embodied by the American Federal Reserve System that claimed to be regulating the nation's banking system properly, yet this was due to the misunderstood “*mystique* of central banking”: as Galbraith explains, because the meanings of the Fed's “actions are not understood by the great majority of the people,” they assume that it has “superior wisdom” and think of it as “awe-inspiring” (32); this is despite the fact that later economists like Milton Friedman and Anna Schwartz identify the Fed's mismanagement as a major reason that the 1929 Crash worsened into the Great Depression. Ben Bernanke agrees with their analysis, and he claims that the “monetary data . . . underscore [their] stinging critique of the

Fed's policy choices,” for, “unlike all other major countries, the United States is the only country in which the discretionary component of policy . . . was arguably significantly destabilizing” (153). When the stock market crashed and the big Wall Street bankers agreed “to pool their resources to support the market, . . . [t]he effect was electric. Fear vanished and gave way to concern lest the new advance be missed” (106-07).

When this renewed trust too was quickly revealed to be unfounded, a deep and lasting mistrust of the bankers developed, especially in light of their previous, unfounded optimism that the economic boom would continue unabated and after rumours that they themselves were selling off their stocks to save themselves instead of working to stabilize the market (76, 118). Hence, Galbraith claims, the Crash represents a drastic change in the way the bankers were perceived: “the nation's most powerful financiers” would be “pilloried and maligned by New Dealers” (106) while common Americans remain

very hard on those who, having had power, lose it or are destroyed. Then anger at past arrogance is joined with contempt for present weakness. . . . Such was the fate of the bankers. For the next decade they were fair game for congressional committees, courts, the press, and comedians. The great pretensions and the great failures of these days were a cause. (118-20)

For the sharecroppers in *The Grapes of Wrath*, the actions of “the Bank” and “the Company” are very real, although the farmers do not understand that the banks are foreclosing due to their own great losses. Indeed, as Ben Bernanke notes, the effects of the Great Depression on banks were of “great severity,” for the percentage of banks that failed each year from 1930 to 1933 were 5.6, 10.5, 7.8, and 12.9, and

“the number of banks operating at the end of 1933 was only just above half the number that existed in 1929” (44).¹⁹ Nonetheless, the novel is presenting the great Depression from the viewpoint of those without any power, so the intercalary narrator adopts their voices in claiming that the economic system “needs—wants—insists—must have—as though the Bank or the Company were a monster, with thought and feeling that had enslaved them. . . . the banks were machines and masters all at the same time”; the narrative voice thus insists that “Some of the owner men were a little proud to be slaves to such cold and powerful masters,” and they would deny responsibility for what happened to the sharecroppers, saying, “It’s the monster. Men made it, but they can’t control it” (34, 36). As Albert Schweitzer observed, “Man can hardly even recognize the devils of his own creation” (qtd. in Carson 6).

Steinbeck uses the monster metaphor further to claim that not only are the system's actions harmful to the poor sharecroppers but they are also harmful to the people who work within the system by dehumanizing them in the process of performing their work. The system controls people and increases its grasp on them the richer and more dehumanized they become. As Lisa Kirby notes, the metaphor of the monster thus adds complexity to Steinbeck's perspective of the banks and of the American social system because “he blames those who possess wealth and power, while at the same time admitting that the system is beyond everyone's control. Even the owners appear to be helpless, to a certain extent” (252). Though Steinbeck uses the metaphor of the monster to refer to the system as a whole, its effects are felt by

¹⁹ Somewhat ironically, Bernanke, a self-described “Great Depression buff” (vii), published his extensive study, *Essays on the Great Depression*, in 2000—in 2006, he was himself appointed as Chairman of the Federal Reserve System under President Bush and was then reappointed by President Obama, who credited Bernanke's expertise on the Great Depression for his ability to contain the 2008 “Great Recession.”

individuals and Steinbeck makes the point that although the sufferings of the migrants are most obvious, those who profit from the system financially are also in danger of becoming dehumanized through its effects on them.²⁰ As an example, Steinbeck invokes the famous millionaire William Randolph Hearst in a discussion between Jim Casy and some other migrants.²¹ Although unnamed, the crazy, rich newspaper man mentioned in Chapter 18 is William Randolph Hearst (1863-1951), the newspaper and magazine magnate famous for his wealth and the political power he welded through the mass media he controlled. Steinbeck refers to him in the text as a man who is afraid to die and who finds life in massive accumulation of material goods while hundreds of thousands have nothing and are starving (206-07). Hearst's Mexican cattle ranch was known as Babicora, and it covered one million acres. Casy takes immediate notice of the inequality of such a huge possession while others have nothing and begins to explore the psychology of a person that would need to accumulate so much. He concludes that Hearst was lonely and old and disappointed and was busy collecting things to make himself feel less poor on the inside. To Casy, Hearst is a bitter man who is not able to comprehend the true holiness of life, of love, and of togetherness.²² He contrasts Hearst with Mrs. Wilson, who found richness in lending the Joads her tent when they knew Grampa was about to die and then giving

²⁰ These ideas are certainly present in many other literary texts, such as E.A. Robinson's "Richard Cory" (1897) or Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843).

²¹ Two years after the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath*, Hearst was again criticized for his relentless pursuit of power when portrayed as the central character of Orson Welles' film, *Citizen Kane*, released by RKO in 1941.

²² In his *Three Ecologies* (1989), Felix Guattari provides a similar characterization of Donald Trump: "In the field of social ecology, men like Donald Trump are permitted to proliferate freely, like another species of algae, taking over entire districts of New York and Atlantic City; he 'redevelops' by raising rents, thereby driving out tens of thousands of poor families, most of whom are condemned to homelessness, becoming the equivalent of the dead fish of environmental ecology" (29).

them her quilt to wrap up his body. In line with the biblical claim in Matthew 19:24 that it is harder for a camel to enter the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, Casy posits that Hearst would never understand love because he was blinded by his haste to accumulate wealth.

A similar perception of the immensity of corporate evil is seen when Casy speaks with “the fat man” at the gas station who hopes the tribulations affecting everyone else will pass him by. In response, Casy aptly characterizes this evil as a Gila monster, and he claims that as a preacher, he used to fight the devil, but he now knows that the greed of human beings is far worse than any invented being. He asks,

Ever see one a them Gila monsters take hold, mister? Grabs hold, an' you chop him in two and his head hangs on. Got to take a screw-driver an' pry his head apart to git him loose. An' while he's layin' there, poison is drippin' an' drippin' into the hole he's made with his teeth.
(129-30)

It is this monster that foreclosed on farmers who then must suffer even further degradation as the sons of their former neighbours arrive on tractors to knock over their homesteads. After they are forced off, their land will be farmed as part of a huge tract of property by men who admire machinery but cannot love the earth itself. For the intercalary narrator, the new methods of work with tractors and machines is dead work²³ because it is comparatively so “easy and efficient. So easy that the wonder goes out of work, so efficient that the wonder goes out of the land and the working of

²³ A late modernist distinction between types of work that centres of the deadness of the tractor as a symbol of modern technology is Edwin Muir's evocative poem “The Horses” (1956). The poetic narrator speaks of the world after a “seven days” nuclear war “that put the world to sleep”; the text records the various technological implements that no longer work, but the despair of the people ends when wild horses come to find them; the narrator notes that “We had sold our horses in our father's time / To buy new tractors,” but still the horses come as if in loyalty to a “long-lost archaic companionship . . . Since then they have pulled our ploughs and borne our loads, / But that free servitude still can pierce our hearts. / Our life is changed; their coming our beginning” (lines 2, 37-38, 44, 50-52).

it, and with the wonder the deep understanding and the relation” (117). Steinbeck's language demonstrates that these men, on behalf of the system, now perform surgery on the land and then rape it with “long seeders—twelve curved iron penes erected in the foundry, orgasms set by gears, raping methodically, raping without passion” with the result that the land “under iron gradually died; for it was not loved or hated, it had no prayers or curses” (39).²⁴

It is this treatment of the land as a resource and not as something sacred that deep ecologists see as immoral and dehumanizing. Rachel Carson argues strongly that

The “control” of nature is a phrase conceived in arrogance, born of the Neanderthal age of biology and philosophy, when it was supposed that nature exists for the convenience of man. . . . It is our alarming misfortune that so primitive a science has armed itself with the most modern and terrible weapons. (297)

Kathleen Hicks agrees when she posits that this “nightmarish technology, along with concepts of ownership and profit, serve as barriers between humanity and the ecology from which it evolved” (411), and she urges that “the development of a relationship between humans and the land, which is guided by an ethical consideration based on respect for all life, is essential for continued survival of the human race” (398). Alan Drengson, another supporter of deep ecology, argues that “The dominant technocratic philosophy which now guides policy and technological power is mechanistic. It conceptualizes nature as a resource to be controlled fully for human ends and it threatens drastically to alter the integrity of the planet's ecosystem” (74). Felix

²⁴ For a feminist theological reading of Steinbeck's literary use of rape, see Sigridur Gudmarsdottir's “Rapes of Earth and *Grapes of Wrath*: Steinbeck, Ecofeminism and the Metaphor of Rape”; Gudmarsdottir examines Steinbeck's “green apocalyptic,” his identification of the exploitation of nature as rape, and his portrayal of women as earth mothers. For a treatment of the intersections of ecofeminism, deep ecology, and Christianity, see Rosemary Radford Ruether's “Deep Ecology, Ecofeminism, and the Bible.”

Guattari notes that this new technology differs from that of earlier generations because it actually works against human progress by breaking down social stability and negatively affecting large segments of the population instead of freeing humans from toil; as he argues, “While there no longer appears to be a cause-and-effect relationship between the growth in techno-scientific resources and the development of social and cultural progress, it seems clear that we are witnessing an irreversible erosion of the traditional mechanisms of social regulation” (31). Naess likewise argues that the problem lies in government measures of progress, which “has in all seriousness been measured by the rate of energy consumption and the acquisition and consumption of material objects” (*Ecology* 24). On this basis, deep ecologists question the use of the Gross National Product (GNP) index as a proper measure of a nation's true or long term prosperity because the GNP is “a value-neutral quantity: a measure of activity, *not of activity of any kind of value*” and so it cannot differentiate between “waste, luxury, and a satisfaction of fundamental needs,” nor can it reflect the long term ramifications of economic activity such as the decidedly negative economic effect of the irreversible changes caused by environmental degradation or the depletion of limited resources (*Ecology* 112-13).

Clearly, the deep flaws of the American economic and agricultural systems that Casy criticizes indicate the need for what Guattari calls an “ecosophy”: “an ethico-political articulation . . . between the three ecological registers [of] the environment, social relations, and human subjectivity” as understood through the lenses of “social ecology, mental ecology and environmental ecology”; in other words, Guattari identifies the economic and political patterns of the twentieth century

as a long process of “ecocide” that cannot be altered unless humans adopt a wholly new sense of ecology that fundamentally changes the way humans interact with their world; these changes must (1) redress social wrongs that mire large sections of the human population in poverty despite unprecedented increases in productivity, (2) challenge people's ideas and sensibilities, which depends upon resisting the passivity urged upon them by mass media homogenization, and (3) recognize the sacredness of the earth and all its various forms of life (19-20, 28). Carson draws upon these same themes when she observes that “nowadays it is fashionable to dismiss the balance of nature as a state of affairs that prevailed in an earlier, simpler world—a state that has now been so thoroughly upset that we might as well forget it”; she defines this “balance of nature” as a current reality that expresses “a complex, precise, and highly integrated system of relationships between living things which cannot safely be ignored . . . it is fluid, ever shifting, in a constant state of adjustment. Man, too, is part of this balance” (246). Carson argues that the basic change that must occur in the way humans think about the Earth is revealed in “all these new, imaginative, and creative approaches to the problem of sharing our earth with other creatures,” which is the “constant theme, the awareness that we are dealing with life” (296). For his part, Guattari urges that this balance must be maintained through a “social ecosophy” that is not only theoretical but practical and specifically geared to social and ecological and economic intervention “that will modify and reinvent the ways in which we live as couples or in the family, in an urban context or at work” (24). Like Carson, Guattari recognizes the contemporary realities that have fundamentally altered human relations to the planet; as he admits,

it would be inconceivable to try and go back to the old formulas, which relate to periods when the planet was far less densely populated and when social relations were much stronger than they are today. But it will be a question of literally reconstructing the modalities of 'group-being,' not only through "communicational" interventions but through existential mutations driven by the motor of subjectivity. (24)

Guattari's "existential mutations" must happen at all levels of human society.

While Casey's critique is aimed at the economic hierarchy, it is also clear that the small farmers like the Joads share responsibility for harming the land and for mistreating it, although their relationship to the land and their dependence upon it is much different from those of the large agribusinesses that take it from them. As David Cassuto observes, "The differences between the Okies and the banks lay more in scale and philosophy than methodology and eventual result. Both sides participated in the capitalist mechanism, but the banks had better adapted to thrive within it" (78). The Oklahoma farmers, despite their confessed love for the land, have themselves overworked their land by not allowing any of it to lie fallow; indeed, Tom observes early in the text that "Ever' year I can remember, we had a good crop comin', an' it never come. Grampa says she was good the first five plowin's, while the wild grass was still in her" (30). However, as Jane Jacobs has convincingly argued in *The Economy of Cities* (1969), rural farming methods (like those the Joads would originally have used prior to the commanding influence of the landowners and banks) were replaced with more destructive methods only with the rise of the modern city, by which "the industrial revolution occurred first in cities and later in agriculture" and resulted in the "transplanting of modern factory work from cities to the countryside" so that the "new kinds of farming come out of cities" (9, 11, 13); thus, the central

problem of modern farming practices arises with the increased demand created by burgeoning urban populations and the use of factory farming methods that treat livestock as commodities instead of as living things, that unthinkingly deplete the oceans of their lifeforms, and that overuse cropland or treat it with harmful chemicals in order to maintain levels of productivity and profitability. It is these implementations, now defined as the “Green Revolution” of dramatic increases of food production globally, that have allowed human population to increase at such an unbelievable rate so that global population has grown from 2.3 billion people in 1939 when *The Grapes of Wrath* was published to approximately 6.9 billion in 2010 (United Nations),²⁵ though this can only be seen as a short term deferral of the “Malthusian Catastrophe.”²⁶ Robert Miltner, in his essay “Monopolizing Monsters: Demise of the Family Farm and the Rise of Corporate Farming in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*,” insists that this overuse of the land was necessary for sharecroppers because “The tenet farmers, who know that crop rotation aids production, are too poor, however, to let any of their land lie fallow”; on the other hand, California's “prototype of corporate farming” only makes these problems of mismanagement worse because they “expedite the ruin of the farmland by rushing forward with cotton production, banking on the idea that corporate farming would pay off by feeding the military market” (283). As Miltner observes, it was the agribusiness experiments of the 1920s and 1930s that led directly to North America's

²⁵ See Naess' essay on the need for a slow and measured reduction of human overpopulation: “Population Reduction: An Ecosophical View” in *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*.

²⁶ The “Malthusian Catastrophe” is named for Rev. Thomas Robert Malthus, who wrote *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1789), one of the earliest studies of human population; he argued that population grows on a set exponential model and that it will eventually outgrow its food source, at which point it will be checked by famine or disease.

corporate farms and agribusinesses in the late twentieth century, wherein a small number of large companies exercise a near monopoly on grain and livestock production (295).

The agricultural practice of the sharecropper is not a mechanical rape, but their shortcomings in tending it with an ecological awareness of interdependence and sustainability leads to the instability of the land, their own economic downfall, and the end of myths of the American farmer. As Sarah Wald argues, Steinbeck's text "discredits the crucial myths (Frontier, Eden, and Jeffersonian) that celebrate the relations of the American citizen to the American land" (493). Steinbeck offered a similar critique of the American farmer's relation to the land in one of the oddest moments in the Steinbeck corpus, wherein the land is first feminized and then sexualized quite vividly. In Steinbeck's *To a God Unknown* (1933), Joseph Wayne stakes out his new homestead in the Valley of Nuestra Señora, Our Lady, which symbolically connotes both virgin soil and sacred space. The character is overcome with the experience of ownership: "'This is mine,' he said simply . . . 'It's mine,' he said, 'and I must take care of it'" (10). Without warning, "his possessiveness became a passion. . . . He flung himself face downward on the grass and pressed his cheek against the wet stems. His fingers gripped the wet grass and tore it out, and gripped again. His thighs beat heavily on the earth" (11). After his orgasm against the soil leaves him exhausted and dazed, he is frightened by his emotion as much as by his actions or by the realization that "For a moment the land had been his wife" (12). Thus, the possession of the land becomes possible only through a first step of feminizing it, which ultimately leads to its victimization, whether by the

sharecroppers who do not allow it to lie fallow or the agribusiness concerns whose factory farming methods rely on an overuse of pesticides and fertilizers to overcome their misuse of the land. Likewise, the American land of *The Grapes of Wrath* was taken by the farmers forcibly from its original inhabitants, both for the purpose of possession and for the necessary propagation of the myths of Eden, of the Jeffersonian gentleman yeoman farmer, and of America's Manifest Destiny. Cassuto sees this as an act with mythic import whereby “Settling a ‘virgin land’ offered Americans the chance to reincarnate themselves in a world whose history had no relation to their inherited Eurocentric worldviews [and] offered a singular destiny for those brave enough to seize it” with the “notion that technology and God would see to it that the Great Plains became the agricultural capital of the world” (72-73).

The Native Americans who inhabited those Great Plains are left landless or dead and so exist as ghosts on the margins of the text. Migrants along the road refer to their grandparents having to kill Indians and snakes to get the land (36); one man even brags about fighting Geronimo and regretfully recalls an incident when his captain ordered him to kill an almost deified Apache warrior sky-lighted against a ridge (325-26). No mention is made of the fact that Oklahoma, previously called the Indian Territory, was in fact the end of the Trail of Tears in the 1830s, when the so called Five Civilized Tribes²⁷ were forcibly resettled from the American South under Andrew Jackson’s presidential order to make room for white settlement. Indeed, the migrants nowhere admit that their “right of ownership was established through displacement of the native peoples. That act in and of itself constituted (in the

²⁷ These were the Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Choctaw nations.

farmer's eyes) a right of title" (Cassuto 76). These historical facts and the apparent amnesia of the migrants add a sad irony to their displacement and mistreatment by the Oklahoma establishment. Yet, this greed and insensitivity is not evident in Oklahoma alone.

When Casy and the other migrants get to California, they find the same system acting as a monster by mistreating the migrants, misusing the land, and leaving its produce to spoil. In perhaps one of the most moving sections of *The Grapes of Wrath*, intercalary Chapter 25 begins with a beautiful description, given in biblical metaphors frequently used in the Hebrew Bible, of a very fertile valley that is decidedly feminine with fruit blossoms like "fragrant pink and whites waters," new life swelling from the old vines, and "full green hills [that] are round and soft as breasts" (346). The big landowners here do not love the land either, but unlike the machine men, they are "men of understanding and knowledge and skill, men who experiment with seed, endlessly developing the techniques for greater crops of plants" (346). As Rachel Carson argues, this expertise creates further problems, for "This is an era of specialists, each of whom sees his own problem and is unaware of or intolerant of the larger frame into which it fits. It is also an era dominated by industry, in which the right to make a dollar at whatever cost is seldom challenged" (13). These men become proud because their knowledge has made the land produce heavily, but this becomes a problem because of their limited point of view of the effect of their actions when the market is glutted and the prices fall. And so, fruit by fruit, vegetable by vegetable, Chapter 25 lists the produce that is thrown on the ground to rot in order to raise the prices: red apples, black and red cherries, purple prunes, yellow pears,

green grapes, and entirely new engineered foods like nectarines, forty varieties of plums, and walnuts with paper thin shells. Coffee is burned for fuel, oranges are sprayed with kerosene, potatoes are dumped in the river, pigs are slaughtered and covered with quicklime, and all these heaps of compost are guarded by men with shotguns so no hungry migrants can salvage the discarded items. Even small farmers are forced to sell out and join the migrants looking for work because they cannot compete with richer men who own huge farms and then buy canneries in order to sell their produce to themselves below cost and so make even larger profits (283, 420-21). Hicks identifies these “land-hoarders” as “concerned only with profit margins” and “completely alienated from their biotic community”; hence, they “possess no moral obligation to either land or people. To them, both are simply commodities that are to be bought, sold, and abused in order to turn a profit” (414).

Witnessing this desecration of the land and outright disregard for other human beings for the sake of ownership and profit sets Casy on the path of organizing strikes and speaking out on behalf of the poor and, sadly, eventually leads to his martyrdom. Steinbeck's language becomes evocative when it records that while little children were dying from pellagra, “the sweet smell is a great sorrow on the land”; the smell of food rotting for the sake of profit indicates

a crime . . . that goes beyond denunciation. There is a sorrow here that weeping cannot symbolize . . . and in the eyes of the hungry there is a growing wrath. In the souls of the people the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy, growing heavy for the vintage. (348-49)

Though this image of the grapes of wrath is drawn first from Julia Ward Howe's “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” its original source is Revelation 14:18-20, which tells

of God judging the sins of people who act violently towards one another and shed blood. In the biblical passage, one angel cries out to another,

Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles.

In Casy's newly formed atheistic philosophy, the ripened grapes of wrath are witnesses of the magnitude of the monster's evil, the lack of a judge to set things right, and the need to either find someone who will or to try to do so himself.

Feral Humans and the Ecology of Holiness

In bringing Casy to the point where he decides to fight for social justice, Steinbeck indicates groups of people that are Casy's direct opposites. Characterized as feral and subhuman, these groups are the big business establishment that is oppressing the poor and the various Christian groups that appear to help the people but can do nothing more than momentarily distract them from their sorrows. Casy's new vocation deepens as he develops his new ideas of sin, holiness, love, and the interconnectedness of all things—concepts that will become the framework of his future actions and will significantly impact the people whose lives he affects.

Why does the establishment insist on pretending to be ignorant of these ripening grapes of wrath, increasing its wealth while allowing little American children to die of hunger while their parents swell with an anger that is certain to seek an

outlet? Intercalary Chapter 19 recounts the first streams of Americans who flooded into California and stole the land outright from the Mexicans who found “they could not resist, because they wanted nothing in the world as ferociously as the Americans wanted land” (231). This ferocious nature eventually calms when the Americans have taken the Mexican land, and then “the hunger was gone from them, the feral hunger, the gnawing, tearing hunger for land, for water and earth and the good sky over it, for the green thrusting grass, for the swelling roots” (231). That Steinbeck describes the land hungry immigrants as feral is important in a novel that, as has been well demonstrated, owes much to the ecological and zoological metaphors inspired by Steinbeck's friendship with the marine biologist Edward Flanders Ricketts.²⁸

However, in an intertextual reference from the time period, Steinbeck also cites *The Winning of Barbara Worth*, a 1911 novel by Henry Bell Wright (92). Wright's novel is a moralizing Christian story of a man who opens California to settlement by developing irrigation while fighting Eastern big business and modelling an American capitalism of and for the people. While this reference shows the choice available to the early settlers to form the equitable society Casy sought, in reality the farmers actually left the land they owned to enjoy its wealth while not working it themselves. They “followed Rome, although they did not know it. They imported slaves, though they did not call them slaves: Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Filipinos” (323); this is why the Californian cartel of produce growers advertizes for more workers than they can employ with handbills sent far over the country; they know that competition for

²⁸ Steinbeck's ecological theory certainly owes much to Ricketts' research and philosophical writings on ecology, such as his “Essay on Non-teleological Thinking”; for more on their friendship and collaboration, see Richard Astro's *John Steinbeck and Edward F. Ricketts: The Shaping of a Novelist*.

labour will drive down their costs and increase their profits despite the negative effect this will have on the migrant labourers. Indeed, although Steinbeck chose to tell the story of the Joads in order to present the sufferings of a family that, specifically, would be identified as white and therefore American by his readers, the realities he writes about had long been known to migrant labourers of other ethnicities. However, as Florian Schwieger notes, this multicultural context can lead to “the undefined hybridity of cultural contact zones [that allow] for the emergence of new identities and innovative forms of cultural and political resistance” (208). Michael Denning points out that Steinbeck's source for the strike scenes near the novel's end actually come from the multicultural political resistance of

the great 1933 strikes of Mexican, Filipino, Chinese, and Japanese farm workers, led by the Communist organizers of the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union. These crop-wide strikes began with the spring pea harvest and continued throughout the summer, culminating in the cotton fields of the San Joaquin Valley; they were the largest strikes in the history of American agriculture and the great majority succeeded in winning wage increases. (260)

Already in 1939, Carey McWilliams²⁹ had identified California's corporate agriculture as “a story of nearly seventy years' exploitation of minority racial and other groups by a powerful clique of land owners” (7). These people have no economic choice but to succumb to what Guattari calls “the long-term establishments of immense zones of misery, hunger and death” that he identifies as playing “an integral part in the monstrous system of 'stimulation' that is Integrated World Capitalism” (21).

²⁹ McWilliams was a well known California lawyer and journalist who brought attention to the conditions of the migrants; he later wrote against Japanese internment during World War II, was called before McCarthy's Committee on Un-American Activities, and broke the Bay of Pigs story for his magazine, *The Nation*.

As Steinbeck's intercalary narrator words it, these big landowners who have the financial capital and power to work within the capitalist system to exploit migrant workers eventually only "farmed on paper; and they forgot the land, the smell, the feel of it, and remembered only that they owned it, remembered only what they gained and lost by it" (232). Their desire for land devolves into a desire for the profit that can be made from it, which eventually extinguishes their relation to the land and their respect for those that suffer from their actions. After several such soft generations, the migrants come, hoping to

find a home, and they found only hatred [because the owners] knew they were soft and the Okies were strong, that they were fed and the Okies hungry; and perhaps the owners had heard from their grandfathers how easy it is to steal land from a soft man if you are fierce and hungry and armed. (233)

Clearly, the corporate owners fear the Okies as "outlanders, foreigners" (235) because they know the migrants can handle weapons and will surely take up arms when their wrath can be contained no longer. They fear the migrant hoards will become like the Lombards, the Germans, the Turks, or other invaders who took countries by force, and they will conquer California to allay their "fear beyond every other," that their children will continue to starve to death (236).

Faced with such an opponent, the landowners entrench themselves in their centres of power, where, not surprisingly, they find themselves clearly supported by mainline religion. Organized religion is thus portrayed as being solidly on the wrong side, an organism like any other that has fallen under the sway of the monster. It even abused the power of the pulpit by preaching against the desire to establish unions for fear that these organizations might topple the status quo (344-45). Jim Casy's

expression of his religious beliefs while a preacher and to how he now will begin to function as a union organizer and defender of the poor is intended by Steinbeck as a counterpoint to his picture of a false religion that historically aided the establishment.

Indeed, the only other groups of people identified as “feral” besides the owners are certain Christian sects. For example, the Jehovites seek to have a prayer meeting for Granma, whom they know to be dying (210-12). When Ma Joad turns them away, they pray anyway with loud bestial sounds of “feral howling,” wailing, crying, and baying “wild and fierce, like the cry of a beast” that ultimately crescendos into hysteria and the “gabbling screams of a hyena” that ends when they fall to the ground whining like “a litter of puppies at a food dish” (211-12). Later, the Joads meet the “titanic” Mis' Lisbeth Sandry, whose “eyes shone with virtue” and who tells Rose of Sharon that if she sinned by “hug-dancing” then her baby will be deformed or stillborn (308-10; 319-21). This guilt adds to Rose of Sharon's emotional distress and exacerbates her weakened condition, obviously contributing to the eventual still birth of her child (337, 341, 393). When Ma advances on the hatefully legalistic Sandry in Rose of Sharon's defence, Sandry turns feral like the Jehovites, is overcome with the Spirit, howls “long deep animal howls,” foams at the mouth, and begins to twitch, which gathers a crowd including the manager who asks the rather able looking Ma Joad, “Did you clout her?” (320-21). Besides these groups, there is the false prophet of false hope. He is pictured in an intercalary chapter in which his preaching is presented as an entertainment, for the section about him concludes: “The migrant people looked humbly for pleasure on the roads” (303). His false preaching includes tiger-like pacing, whipping the people with his voice until he gains mastery over

them, baptisms in the irrigation ditch, and praying that the people might be so conscious of their sin that they would “grovel and whine on the ground” (329-30). This false preacher's religion merely delivers a temporary high that can only divert the people momentarily from the pain of their empty bellies.

Conversely, readers learn early on that Casy is known for never having taken up collections of money when he was preaching. That this is very much outside the norm is seen at the Weedpatch Camp, where, although preachers are free to come anytime, they cannot ask for money, and consequently stop coming altogether (58, 287). As Helen Lojek remarks, this sorry situation indicates that for the migrants, “religion has become an unaffordable luxury” (32). The counterpoint to Casy's beliefs about sin and holiness is very strong when seen in contrast to these feral figures. Their universal truth claims about sin as well as who is and who is not a sinner are exactly what Casy is rejecting when he says, “Them people that's sure about ever'thing an' ain't got no sin—well, with that kind a son-of-a-bitch, if I was God I'd kick their ass straight outa heaven! I couldn't stand 'em!” (224). This is a depiction of a religion that is not based on life and love, but on sin and death, and so is false and without any meaningful substance for dealing with suffering. This was a great quandary for many charismatics who believed that all suffering, especially physical illness, could be overcome by faith and prayer.³⁰ To the contrary, prayer to Casy has now become an automatic, subconscious method of thinking and meditation that is

³⁰ One of the most outspoken American proponents of healing through faith during the early twentieth century was A.B. Simpson, the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. In his *The Four Fold Gospel* (1925), he argued that healing was a part of redemptive work of Christ performed in the present era by the Holy Spirit. Simpson pointed to the resurrection of Christ as proof of his overcoming death and disease and claimed that the promise of Isaiah 53:5, “We are healed through His stripes,” pertained to all Christians of all times to show God's power and to prove the Gospel to unbelievers (47-67).

not aimed at any personal god (53), which is a far cry from his former theology of prayer. Casy's prayer, as McEntyre argues, is “no longer a petition to an omnipotent God but a way of being and a largeness of awareness that comes to him in moments of solitude in the wilderness” (115). Casy reveals his changed understanding of prayer to Tom when he says that he used to think all his troubles would stick to the prayer “like flies on fly paper,” to which Tom, in his good rural common sense, replies that “Prayer never brought in no side-meat. Takes a shoat to bring in pork” (250).

Indeed, Casy's articulation of an ecology of holiness begins when he agrees to say grace for the Joads back at the Oklahoma homestead. He had “a look not of prayer, but of thought; and in his tone not supplication, but conjecture” (83). His grace is not a prayer at all, but a story about when, like Jesus, he went out into the wilderness to ask questions and figure things out. He recounts that he would be out at night praying to he did not know what, looking at the hills and the stars, when suddenly he would feel that he was actually one with nature, “An' that one thing was holy” (83). He explains what holy means by suggesting that when people work together and do not run off on their own, they and their experience of togetherness are good and holy. Casy then proceeds to give thanks for the holiness of breakfast and the love among the Joads. Frederick Carpenter assesses the character of Casy as a representative of mysticism specifically through his discovery of the ecological world's holiness:

Unorthodox Jim Casy went into the Oklahoma wilderness to save his soul. And in the wilderness he experienced the religious feeling of identity with nature which has always been the heart of transcendental mysticism. . . . the corollary of this mystical philosophy is that man's self-seeking destroys the unity of “holiness” of nature. (324-25)

Thus, Casy presents an ecology of holiness in his prayer in that he resignifies holiness as an integral connection with the communities of humanity and of the natural world that provokes one to act towards the land and towards other people out of *agape*.

This resignification is what gives Casy the reason he needed to serve people through a new sense of vocation, so he steels himself for the challenges he will face and asks to go West with the Joad family. Earlier, after learning the history of the migrants' situation from Muley, Casy's vocation began to take this turn; he is no longer wandering in the wilderness seeking truth for himself. He has made a significant discovery that will change him forever. As he realizes the dire situation of the migrants, he announces,

I gotta see them folks that's gone out on the road. I got a feelin' I got to see them. They gonna need help no preacher can give 'em. Hope of heaven when their lives ain't lived? Holy Sperit when their own sperit is downcast an' sad? They gonna need help. They got to live before they can afford to die. (55)

In a Catholic sense, one might refer to the ontological change that is believed to happen to a man who undergoes the sacrament of Holy Orders that makes him a priest and that is believed to never leave him. But with Casy, there was no ontological change nor a belief in one, but instead an innate difference that sets him apart as someone who is capable of becoming a preacher, or a thinker, or a leader. This difference is seen by others. For example, in the special confessor relationship that develops with Uncle John, Casy makes it clear that he is not a preacher anymore, and even if he was, a preacher “ain't nothin' but a man” to which John nonetheless replies, “Yeah, but—he's—a *kind* of a man, else he wouldn' be a preacher” (223-24).

Likewise, Grampa had earlier stated his opinion that “Once a fella's a preacher, he's always a preacher. That's somepin you can't get shut of” (103). To become a charismatic preacher in such a rural, agricultural society set one apart as a person who thought and felt differently than lay people and who had the role of giving instruction to others and of having the ability to bring about feelings of ecstasy at religious revival meetings; this meant that a preacher would always be marked by his role, and lay people would expect him to act and to interact in specific ways that related to his vocation.

When Casy breaks away from these expectations, the Joads do react, but they react with compassion. Soon after Casy's grace, Ma privately remarks to Tom that Casy's prayer was the “Curiosest grace I ever heerd” because he did not refer to Christ or salvation or use any of the expected formulas for a prayer; she remarks that the prayer “Wasn't hardly no grace at all. Jus' talking', but the sound of it was like grace” (95). However, Ma believes that Casy is still a preacher even though he is trying to step away from that role; despite Casy's saying that he is not a preacher anymore, Ma believes he is in a special spiritual condition because “He sure looks baptized,” meaning he is under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit (95). At that moment, Casy comes and announces he wants to accompany the Joads on their journey. He will not preach or baptize, but he will try to learn from the people instead of teaching them. He seeks to sop up all that is ordinary to real people in their work, talk, love making, and eating; he will lie out in the grass with women himself; he will curse and swear, and drink in the poetry of the way folks speak. He will do all of this because, echoing his earlier statement, “All that's holy, all that's what I didn't

understand. All them things is the good things” (96). Clearly, this is a substantial resignification of holiness. Indeed, as McEntyre argues,

The idea of the holy has expanded for Casy since his rejection of the church. It springs from an awareness of nature honed and trained by his frequent retreats, his attitude of receptivity, and a habit of mind that links what he knows of the unconscious natural world to a deepening intuition about the ways of human nature. (115-16)

As I will show in Chapter III, holiness was constructed by religious groups to differentiate sacredness from pollution, thus giving clear guidelines for what was proper and what was taboo. Yet Casy reverses the expected prohibitions against activities that were considered secular or sinful by elevating work and talking and sex and eating to the level of holiness simply because they are the things most enjoyed and seen as “ordinary” by “real people.” Later, he says how happy he is that people now act like themselves around him, unafraid to tell funny dirty stories that, under his new outlook, could be considered holy (72), and he shares with Tom that his meditations on holiness are giving him a greater desire to lie with a woman (172). Thus, it is for reasons of holiness and love, thus envisioned, that Casy joins the Joads. When the family meets to discuss his request to join in, they decide to admit him and then call out his name. He hears them and responds, “Callin' me?” (105). This reveals a speech act of *vocare*, for it is the moment that the people call Casy to come and to minister to them from within. Just as a church would literally call forth a new pastor for a ritual to call him formally to his new vocation, the Joads call Casy to come to their meeting and to make plans for their journey West; indeed, as it happens, Casy thinks that “He knew the government of families, and he knew he had been taken into

the family. Indeed, his position was eminent, for Uncle John moved sideways, leaving space between Pa and himself for the preacher” (105).

Thus called and welcomed into the family and then given a respected position within it, it is as one of the people that Casy asks to salt down the pork, shocking Ma who responds, “It's women's work”; Casy's egalitarian theology and knowledge of the family's need replies, “They's too much of it to split it up to men's or women's work” (109). Sadly, this is the last act of the family as subsistence farmers; Gary Snyder recognizes that such work belongs to “a sacramental economy because it has faced up to one of the critical problems of life and death: the taking of life for food. . . . Our distance from the source of our food enables us to be superficially more comfortable, and distinctly more ignorant. Eating is a sacrament” (184). Casy's small act of working links him to the traditions of people who were at one with the nature around them. He further foresees the strength of women and especially of Ma Joad that will soon be evident along the road. When faced with car trouble, the men try to split up the family temporarily; it is Ma, powerfully grasping a jack handle, who stands against their decision and at once fully usurps control from Pa (169-70). She later explains it is because a woman can adjust to change easier than a man because women see the big picture as a flowing stream while men are more apt to experience life in short jerks, and she insists that it will be through the strength and foresight of women that the people will keep going on, even if they must change (423). This strength is what later keeps Ma in the back of the truck all through the night with Granma's corpse, even past the guards to whom she lies so that the family can make it across the desert without getting stopped. Casy witnesses Ma's actions and is inspired

to remark, “there's a woman so great with love—she scares me. Makes me afraid and mean” (229).

Casy's theology of the ecology of holiness is presented most clearly at the end of Grampa Joad's life, when he is called upon to give assistance because of his past experiences of being with the dying (136-47). Despite Casy's insistence that he is no longer a preacher, he submits to Granma's equally insistent demand that he pray for her husband. When Granma understands the severity of Grampa's condition, she quickly urges prayer, either to endure her husband's death, or perhaps like many Holiness Pentecostals, because she believed in the power of prayer to heal Grampa—though it is telling that after he dies, she “looked straight ahead, proudly, for she was on show now” (139).

Yet, prayer has no real function in the new situation the Joads find themselves in: Granma tells Casy how Ruthie once prayed, “Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. An' when she got there the cupboard was bare, an' so the poor dog got none.” George Bluestone, perhaps following Bertolt Brecht,³¹ argues that “The moral is clear: in the face of hunger, religious piety seems absurd” (153). And yet, prayer for material goods is not aimed at making individuals into the type of people they have to be in order to face up to the challenges of the Depression or to treat others with the love and respect they deserve. The most effective way Casy helps Grampa is by holding back Grampa's tongue that had been choking him. However, when Granma starts cursing and hopping about the tent, Casy relents and begins to pray by reciting the Lord's Prayer, though very pointedly, he stops in the middle. The

³¹ In his *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) writes that “Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral,” or, “First comes the fodder, then comes morals.”

conclusion of the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever, Amen," is halted at the line "and forgive us—," for he notices that Grampa has died. At that point, instead of completing the prayer, Casy just adds the word "Amen." Significantly, then, the petition to forgive our sins is left out, a decision that is reiterated when Tom writes a Bible verse to put in Grampa's grave and chooses Psalms 32:1, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," in which the blessed is the one who gives no place to the conception of sin, and so is not crippled by an undeserved guilt.

Completing the quasi-religious acts surrounding Grampa's death are the words Casy says before the burial. His message is unexpected, the weight of it being that Grampa is dead and thus has an easier task than the living who are struggling, not knowing which way to turn amid a thousand possibilities. Thus, Steinbeck characterizes Casy's new vocation as one that moves beyond the emotional support of traditional religion by instead seeking to strengthen people to face the economic and social problems that Casy anticipates for the migrants. When Casy sits by a dying Sairy Wilson later on in the journey, Sairy asks for his comfort, but she also tells him that, though he thinks he does not have a God anymore, he does have one he cannot identify and so he can still offer her the comfort of the closeness and intimacy of their spirits, embracing her through his discovery of the oneness of all things and of all people (218-19). This situation is more compelling given John Clark Pratt's observation that the Wilsons to some extent represent the biblical Abram and Sarai,

who are visited by God in their old age to announce a promised son³²; however, unlike the biblical parents of the nation of Israel, Ivy and Sairy Wilson have no offspring, no water, no food, no promise of new life, and their “new saviours, Casy and Joad, bring only death, for it is in Sairy's tent that Grampa Joad has his fatal stroke . . . the Wilsons, as do so many others, drop off on the way west, never reaching the imagined 'land of milk and honey,' California (read Canaan)” (Pratt 155).

The one kernel of theology that Casy develops in his funeral prayer for Grampa is the line “All that lives is holy” (145). This comes not from the Bible, but from William Blake’s long poem *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-1793). According to Robert DeMott in *Steinbeck’s Reading*, Steinbeck had read Blake's work and commented on a fine edition sent to him by Random House, which was courting him at the time (14-15, 134). This central line reappears in intercalary Chapter 23 when a drunken man sleeps beneath the stars and reminisces, regretting that there are those who would call him a sinner for being drunk but asserting that he knows better. He says, “the stars are close and dear and I have joined the brotherhood of the worlds. And everything's holy—everything, even me” (327). The line also echoes Casy's grace earlier in Oklahoma when he recalls the time when he sat under the stars during his wanderings feeling at one with the universe and realizing that all was holy. This epiphany links the text to what would become known as deep ecology, which relies upon “the doctrine of self-realization, a meta-ontology which supporters of deep ecology regard as a non-anthropocentric position” that “seeks to show that there are no ultimate boundaries between self and other, and that as a result, all living

³² See Genesis 17.

beings as reciprocating, interrelated manifestations of the same self” (de Jonge 3). Thus, the self-realization that forms the basis for deep ecology is simply what Arne Naess identifies as the metaphysical nature of “how we experience the world . . . If deep ecology is deep it must relate to our fundamental beliefs, not just to ethics. Ethics follow from how we experience the world. If you articulate your experience then it can be a philosophy or a religion” (qtd. in Fox 46). Hence, Casy's experience of the world reinterprets his spiritual comprehension of his place in the one-soul of the universe, and he uses this as the basis for his ethical view of everything from sex and work to the power dynamics of America's economic systems.

Deep ecology follows the research of environmentalists such as Arne Naess, George Sessions, Bill Deval, Warwick Fox, Freya Matthews, Eccy de Jonge, Gary Snyder, and Aldo Leopold. Arne Naess, the Norse philosopher who first coined the phrase deep ecology in 1972 at the Third World Future Research Conference in Bucharest, meant to highlight an important distinction between “shallow” ecology concerned only with limiting pollution and maintaining environmental resources for the “health and affluence of people in the developed countries” and “deep, long-range ecology,” which rejects “the human-in-environment image in favor of *the relational, total-field* image”; deep ecology thus embraces “biospherical egalitarianism” and the principles of diversity and symbiosis in an “anti-class posture” to fight pollution and resource depletion as an ethical consideration that accepts biospherical relationships as complex and not chaotic or complicated (though they may seem to be due to human ignorance³³), for which reason decentralized local autonomy is to be favoured

³³ For more on the deep ecologist view of the results of human ignorance of the complex realities of the biosphere, see Naess' “Reflections on Total Views” in *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by*

(“The Shallow” 3-9).³⁴ Indeed, supporters of deep ecology emphasize direct action within communities because the community is most aware of its own “bioregion,”³⁵ meaning they can most easily characterize the health of their local environment by monitoring any biotic shifts in plant or animal welfare and any changes in their watershed; they are also most keenly aware of the “spirit-of-place” as revealed in areas deemed to be sacred space³⁶ and express their own cultural distinctiveness that may well be influenced greatly by their bioregion through its “land forms or weather or relationships with the landscape” (Devall 116-19). It is at the local level that direct action can be most effective, for it is there that people should be most aware of their relation to and interdependence with their bioregions. In sum, as Alan Drengson notes, Naess' distinction is “between those who see the problems in isolated ways compatible with mild reform and those who see the problems holistically as requiring a deep change in our form of life” (75).

It is these strains of deep ecology that Kathleen Hicks identifies in *The Grapes of Wrath*; she argues that “Casy's mode of searching for wisdom and his intellectual discoveries are very similar to the basic tenets of deep ecology, which . . . are based on the love and reverence for all life that emerges from our 'basic intuitions,' or feelings, for the earth” (408); therefore Casy “not only acknowledges

Arne Naess.

³⁴ From his philosophic grounding, Eecy de Jonge summarizes deep ecology: “(i) as a deep questioning of the relationship between human beings and nature; (ii) as a metaphysics of ethics rather than an environmental ethics; (iii) as a political movement whose premises are both descriptive and normative; and (iv) as an activist approach to dealing with the ongoing destruction of natural entities” (2-3).

³⁵ Bill Devall notes that although the origins of the term “bioregion” (which is also known as an ecoregion) are not known, one of the earliest uses was by the infamously radical Canadian poet Allen Van Newkirk in his 1975 essay “Bioregions: Towards Bioregional Strategy for Human Cultures.”

³⁶ See Chapter III: The Sacred Margins in Faulkner's *Light in August* and Barnes' *Nightwood* for a discussion of sacred space and its definitions.

that community includes the land, but he also extends the idea of land as community by granting it the love and respect that exist only in the realm of ethics” (399). Alec Gilmore reflects these different views of land:

To business and commerce, [land] may be a resource, capital, an opportunity for equity or real estate. But, for those who live there, that land and its people enjoy a feeling of closeness and a sense of unity with it. . . . They actually feel part of the land and the land is a part of them. (132)

This is why Grampa dies just as the family is leaving the land that is integral to his identity; as Casy says, “He's jus' stayin' with the lan'. He couldn't leave it” (147).

Through his resignification of Christian tenets, his epiphany, and his recognition of the inherent value of all life, including that of the land itself, Casy approaches a new religion or a new mythology that, like deep ecology, will adhere to a biospheric egalitarianism that acknowledges the symbiotic interdependence of all. Drengson argues for the importance of such an orientation, for

Humans organized and orient their lives in terms of various ideals, models, symbols, and metaphors. A major function of myth is to weave knowledge, aspirations, and skills together in an intersubjective realm of image and symbol that blends art and science. . . . In a loose sense dominant paradigms are forms of mythic understanding. (76-77)

Of course, such a mythic understanding can lead to a destructive metanarrative that postulates the Earth as something to be overcome and used to provide for human need, but Drengson also makes the point that “A saving antidote here is a healthy dose of Socratic ignorance, humbly recognizing our limitations and the relativistic character of our theories about the world” (77). If, as Drengson argues, “Mythic symbols can store and convey vast amounts of meaningful information in concise form” (76), and Casy's mythic understanding of the Earth does not lose his sense of

connection to the universe or his awe that, like the drunk man in the intercalary narrative, “the stars are close and dear and I have joined the brotherhood of the worlds. And everything's holy—everything, even me” (327).

The linchpin in all of these instances of Casy attempting to articulate the precepts of a new myth or religion that embraces an ecology of holiness, not surprisingly, is William Blake's poem. This peculiar prophetic piece adopts a posture influenced by biblical narrative and Swedenborgianism in recounting a vision of heaven and hell and earth. Its aim is to do away with notions that body and soul are separate, that good and evil are opposites, and that the best choice is to live the life of the ascetic.³⁷ Indeed, the text's thesis is seen in the narrator's claim that “Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence. / From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy” (34).

From the Hebrew prophets, the poem's narrator learns that the problems of modern life stem from the abuses perpetrated by organized religion, which has distorted the ancient Greek understanding of energy and exuberance that the world's inhabitants should really embrace. The narrator converts a heavenly angel to the devil's side, and they look forward to an increase in sensual pleasure on earth and picture organized religion as holding a candle in the sunshine while hypocritically calling itself a pure virgin, wishing for but not acting upon its pale lechery. In a final

³⁷ For further information on Steinbeck and the concept of the union of opposites, see Michael Meyer. “Living In(tension)ally: Steinbeck's *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* as a Reflection of the Balance Advocated in Lao Tze's *Tao Teh Ching*.”

condemnation of organized religion, the poem sets physical pleasure before its readers as a natural human experience that is meant to be enjoyed rather than twisted into the source of guilt and depression that it has so often become. Harold Bloom claims that although Blake put this poem, “A Song of Liberty,” at the end of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, it serves as a coda and as an introduction or a promise of the content of poems to come.

Notably, this same line reappeared in Blake's next long poem, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), as the fourth to last line: “Arise, and drink your bliss, for everything that lives is holy” (Blake 50). *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* is an account of a woman named Oothoon (the name is taken from the Gaelic epic *Ossian*) in love with a puritanical man named Theotormon, a mix of Greek and Latin words meaning twisted or tormented by God. After Oothoon is raped by the third character, a lustful, violent, passionate man named Bromion, Greek for “One who roars,” the first man in his jealousy binds the two back to back in a cave. The poem ends with the woman giving a long lament that ends by rejoicing in the power and goodness of nature, calling it to rejoice, for everything that lives is holy. Although it is debatable from which Blake poem Steinbeck took the line, the import is the same. The two poems were published at roughly the same time, and Blake intended the repetition as a final resonant phrase in each. Hence, Casy's theology of love and his rejection of sin and guilt as the worst lies of organized religion are encapsulated for him in Blake's tenet that everything is holy. This is why he is able to extend his vision of what is holy to include the common activities of the human community, including language forms and sexual activities typically seen as profane by the Church.

The address to Nature at the end of *Daughters of Albion* is important, and although the poem as a unit is usually read as addressing morality and sexual equality in marriage, David Erdman notes that it further shows Blake's interaction with Enlightenment rationality and progress as entities as enslaving as religion and convention. It is clear that Blake was hopeful following the French and American revolutions, but that hope was replaced with the observation that “nearly everything of value in those revolutions had been lost” and was replaced with “the irresponsible 'right' to buy and sell” (Erdman 226). The rich agrarian images, so fully tied to the poem's sexual images that are echoed repeatedly in *The Grapes of Wrath*, can be read as Blake's revised economics, which Erdman summarizes as expressing the desire of the land itself: “To say that she wants to be loved, not raped, is to say economically, that she wants to be cultivated by free men, not slaves or slave-drivers; for joy, not for profit” (227).

Indeed, Blake's poetry is eminently concerned with religion as a motivating force in society, but it operates as protest poetry against the misdirection of religion. In his poetry, he looks to the myths of early Christianity and is concerned with the meanings that organized religion had drawn from those myths in order to control the lives of individuals. Hence, Blake practised what the twentieth century would call “demythologization—the practice of detaching the Christian faith from the mythical world picture of the first century so that it could be reimagined in more modern terms” (Ryan 155). Hence, while he was always reverent toward the Bible and personal faith, Blake objects outright, as Robert Ryan notes, to “the entire theology of submission, self-denial, contrition, and expiation that institutional Christianity

fostered. Humility and docility were to him suspect virtues, encouraged by those who would diminish the freedom of others” (156). Robert Rix further characterizes the *Marriage* as “a vivacious manifesto of antinomian theology”—antinomian here meaning contrary to the laws of morality or of religion (107). This concept developed from the central Protestant belief that the death of Christ abolished the Old Testament's Moral Laws universally for all human beings, meaning further that Christians are not obligated to justify themselves under the law to obtain salvation, but must instead rely on faith in God through the shed blood of Christ, this being termed *sola fides* (by faith alone) by the sixteenth century Reformers. And indeed, the final line of the *Marriage* is “One Law for the Lion and Ox is Oppression.” As Harold Bloom points out, Blake is not simply reversing the orthodox categories of Good and Evil, but denying their existence altogether (77). And Robert Gleckner goes so far as to claim Blake believes that “Man in his creative acts, as well as in his perceptions, is a god” (362), indicating a prefiguring of Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* who is able to move past human constructions of morality.

Blake saw religion as stripping people, both men and women, of their rights to life, enjoyment, and self-determination, and clothing them instead in chaste, virginal garments not of their choosing. In this, Blake was influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft's books and her ideas about marriage as state instituted prostitution, and his debt to her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is apparent in his *Daughters of Albion*.³⁸ Indeed, Blake sees both genders as thwarted by religion. He at points implies that prehistoric humans had more than our five senses and could know

³⁸ In his work as an illustrator, Blake worked on Wollstonecraft’s *Original Stories from Real Life* (1791).

more of the soul than can we; to reverse the process, asceticism is therefore exactly the wrong direction to move. Instead, as Bloom restates Blake, it is through “an increase and not a diminishment of sexual enjoyment that we can begin to expand our souls to their former dimensions” (78). Blake wrote in the *Marriage* that “The nakedness of woman is the work of God” and insisted that “As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys.” Certainly Steinbeck's invocation of Blake shows that there are many points of connection between Blake and the reasons for Casy's rejection of traditional organized religion, which they both claim curtails natural human desires and controls the power to define what is and what is not sin, and who is and who is not worthy of salvation and of inclusion in the community. This rejection of traditional religion is the basis for Casy's new ideas about the ecology of holiness that sees all things and all people as interdependent and sacred expressions of the one soul of the universe.

Casy's belief in this interconnectedness becomes the source of his hope that direct group action can improve life for all those suffering through the Great Depression. His hope, however, is contrasted with the migrants' reliance on the prayers of traditional religion for better days and for food to feed their families. Their faith—albeit strong—functions as what Karl Marx identified as “the opium of the people” (54)³⁹ that simply delays the day when their wrath boils over, and they stop praying, and they take up arms, and they band together as one group, and they fight for a life that is more equitable. The importance of the decision to stop praying is foreseen in the final lines of intercalary Chapter 19 that introduces and encapsulates

³⁹ This oft-quoted phrase comes from Marx's Introduction to his *Contribution to Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843).

the third section of the novel: “Pray God some day kind people won't be all poor. Pray God some day a kid can eat. / And the associations of owners knew that some day the praying would stop. / And there's the end” (239). The intercalary chapter's prophecy of the cessation of prayer marks a crucial change for the migrants, for it is a tangible sign of their final recognition of the impotence of traditional religion and of their own responsibility to effect lasting social change. As will be shown in the next section, the cessation of praying described by the intercalary narrator signals a significant break from trusting in traditional religious comfort and an acknowledgement of the community's obligation to band together in order to work for the social justice they envision.

The Conquest and Humanity's Threefold Cord

The growing wrath and the coming end to praying give Casy his call to action. Having lost his Christian faith while maintaining a love for all people and then being faced with the monstrous evil of the establishment, Casy has developed a theological basis for action in an ecology of holiness that depends upon his realization of the interdependence and the sacredness of all things. If humans abuse the land or if one segment of society oppresses another, then Casy realizes that the universal soul is in conflict with itself and something must change. The oppression faced by the migrants is seemingly invincible, but the same oppression offers an opportunity for the migrants to come to a realization about the economic labour system of which they are a part and its dependence upon a respectful use of the land. The similarities between Casy's new spirituality and the later tenets of deep ecology that I have outlined are

also linked in that both necessitate proactive political action in order to effect lasting and meaningful change. Importantly, Naess saw deep ecology as an ecosophy that was integrally tied to ecological practice, for which reason he and George Sessions developed eight basic principles that were reprinted widely and became known as the Deep Ecology Platform (Sessions 70).⁴⁰ Like Naess, Guattari criticizes the contemporary ecological movement as too “shallow,” meaning it is concerned with short term solutions like limiting pollution levels that are not long-range goals and that do not substantially benefit the Earth or future generations by changing the way humans comprehend the planet and the human relationship to it. As Guattari argues,

Environmental ecology, as it exists today, has barely begun to prefigure the generalized ecology that I advocate here, the aim of which will be to radically decentre social struggles and ways of coming to one's own psyche. Current ecological movements certainly have merit, but in truth I think that the overall ecosophical question is too important to be left to some of its usual archaizers and folklorists, who sometimes deliberately refuse any large-scale political involvement. Ecology must stop being associated with the image of a small nature-loving minority or with qualified specialists. Ecology in my sense questions the whole

⁴⁰ The platform principles are: “1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes. 2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realizations of these values and are also values in themselves. 3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital human needs. 4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease. 5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening. 6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present. 7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great. 8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation to directly or indirectly try to implement the necessary changes” (Sessions 70).

It is important to note that although the platform has been used by militant groups like Earth First! and the Sea Shepherds, most deep ecologists are like Naess himself, who follows Gandhi's principles of non-violent direct action; see for instance Naess' essays “Non military Defense” (207-18) or “Gandhian Nonviolent Verbal Communication: The Necessity of Training” (219-29) in *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*.

of subjectivity and capitalistic power formations, whose sweeping progress cannot be guaranteed to continue. (35)

For Casy, this realization of the people's labour power makes a real salvation and redemption possible that can extend to all people, even those perpetrating the system as a part of its hierarchy. Casy's desire becomes to unite the migrants, knowing that together, their strength will increase their ability to resist their oppressors. Likewise, just as deep ecology privileges the diversity of life, Naess conceived of the deep ecology platform as a common set of principles that could unite people from a variety of different backgrounds and ideological stances into one movement.⁴¹ In his "Apron Diagram," for instance, Naess pictures the movement as an apron in which the shoulder straps are the "ultimate premises" of the widely differing worldviews that make people realize their obligation to work for the environment, whether they do so because of Christianity,⁴² Buddhism, feminism,⁴³ indigenous beliefs, or philosophies drawn from Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) or Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947);

⁴¹ Indeed, for Naess, this difference seems to be essential; he explains that the issues faced by deep ecology raise "such diverse and deep questions that we need a total view as a conceptual framework. When the articulation of such a view is largely inspired by ecology, I call it an ecosophy. We need various ecosophies; I call mine Ecosophy T" (*Ecology of Wisdom* 302). That his is a private philosophy is seen in that the "T" in Ecosophy T stands for Tvergastein, a mountain hut 1500 meters above sea level on a mountain called Hallingskarvet in Naess' native Norway. An avid mountaineer, Naess saw Tvergastein as his *hjemsted*, or "homestead," and wrote several of his books there; see his essay "An Example of a Place: Tvergastein" in *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*.

⁴² A seminal Christian ecological text is Lynn White, Jr.'s "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis" in *Machina ex Deo: Essays in the Dynamism of Western Culture*. He portrays St. Francis of Assisi as a Christian revolutionary who urged a renewed spiritual relationship to the Earth.

⁴³ Among the several texts that provide a feminist perspective of ecology, those of Mary Austin (1868-1934) offer an interesting connection to Steinbeck's novel, as her *Land of Little Rain* (1902) and *The Basket Woman* (1904) as set in the context of the Californian desert. At the same time, some feminists, like Rosemary Radford Ruether, Ariel Kay Salleh, Marti Kheel, and Karen Warren criticize deep ecology for what they see as its "genderneutral anthropocentrism" that cannot reformulate the way humans think about and interact with the land before it deals with patriarchy's primary dominance of people based on gender or class. For a summary of the dialogue between the two groups, see Michael E. Zimmerman's essay "Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics" in *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*.

the bib of the apron represents the principles of the deep ecology platform that were written so as to be broad enough to correspond to the variances of people's own ultimate premises while remaining meaningful; the apron from the waist down represents the normative or factual hypotheses and policies about how humans should properly interact with nature; the final level, represented by the lower edge of the apron, is the particular rules, decisions, and actions that all deep ecologists work toward through their local or national governments (*Ecology of Wisdom* 105-119). What is remarkable is that the religious or philosophical points of origin of these people at the first level are, in Geroge Sessions' words, "in many ways incompatible [but] this widely diverse situation, however, is to be desired, not deplored. Supporters of the deep ecology movement will, however, tend to agree on the main points of the *platform*" (58). At issue is a willingness to accept the diversity that is found within the human community but at the same time to recognize that an "I" to "we" movement is possible that allows for differences to remain but that unifies people around a common platform that results in specific principles and practical outcomes through direct action on the local level.

Local direct action is not possible if human communities are weakened from oppressive conditions or if they lack a common purpose or a leader to aid in voicing their concerns. The Joads face such a weakening following the shooting at Hooverville when Casy is arrested and separated from the family, which itself begins to disintegrate. This becomes a test of Casy's legacy: Casy's wider principles have been critical in maintaining the family's unity, but when Casy is removed from the Joads, how are they—particularly Uncle John, Ma Joad, Rose of Sharon, and

Tom—affected by his teaching? Much later, Tom re-encounters Casy and discovers that he has been advancing their cause through the direct action of organizing union strikes, including one at a farm where the Joads are working, basically remaining ignorant of what is happening beyond the gates. In a last act of self sacrifice, Casy is martyred, demonstrating to Tom the dedication they must embody to rectify their troubled society; and so, after integrating what he has learned from Casy, Tom becomes a new leader in the movement for justice. This was the aim not only of Jim Casy but of Steinbeck, who was very conscious of the changes he was seeking to enact in the treatment of the migrants. As T.S. Eliot had said a few years earlier, “The common ground between religion and fiction is behaviour” (100), indicating that both have the power to move us emotionally and intellectually and to bring about the state of change for which Walter Benjamin and John Steinbeck and Jim Casy waited and for which they fought against monstrous establishments. Steinbeck writes that the familial and communal life of the sharecroppers was threatened when they found themselves adopting a nomadic existence in search of work; but in response to these immense changes in the foundations of the social stability, Steinbeck writes that “they changed . . . changed as in the whole universe only men can change” (196). This is a hopeful sentiment in a novel that is contextualized by the immense turmoil caused by the social, environmental, and economic upheaval of the modernist era. Arne Naess is optimistic when he claims that “Humankind is the first species on earth with the intellectual capacity to limit its numbers consciously and live in an enduring, dynamic equilibrium with other forms of life,” yet he also notes that “For the first time in the history of humanity, we stand face to face with a choice imposed upon us because our

lackadaisical attitude to the production of things has caught up with us” (23). The changes to which Naess refers, however, are ones wrought by humanity's impetuous greed for profit and greater control of nature. The Canadian environmentalist David Suzuki notes that

As the number of humans increased and technology grew, the nature of our associations changed . . . In this century, we have changed dramatically. . . . change itself has become the most pervasive and dependable part of our lives. But each innovation erodes the authority and value of traditional knowledge and the wisdom acquired over a long life or action and reflection. . . . We are a highly malleable species, able to engineer our surroundings and then to adapt to whatever physical and biological conditions result. . . . and this plasticity extends to the urban environment of large cities, where our physical needs may be well satisfied but our internal psyche is profoundly disturbed. (171-72)

The poet Gary Snyder makes a similar point in the metaphysical language of deep ecology when he urges that “Human beings themselves are at risk—not just on some survival-of-civilization level but more basically on the level of heart and soul. We are in danger of losing our souls. We are ignorant of our own nature and confused about what it means to be a human being” (177-78). As Rachel Carson argues in *Silent Spring* (1962), “The rapidity of change and the speed with which new situations are created follow the impetuous and heedless pace of man rather than the deliberate pace of nature” (7). Casy thus represents a much different pace when his wandering in the wilderness ultimately brings him to a mindset of hope that humanity will not only continue to adapt to its environment, but that this continued evolution will result in a much deeper recognition of the need to respect the earth and other life forms. Yet this can only occur if human beings come to respect one another as fully and intimately interdependent.

In attempting to overcome the flawed system causing such desolation to the land, Casy realizes that humans, who can change “as in the whole universe only men can change” (196), must change at all levels before they face the extinction of the economic system, familial units, or the species itself. When the guilt and fear of the established agricultural corporations meets the anger of the migrants, and it seems suddenly that the economic system is not invincible after all and may be defeated, if only through violence and civil war. The more violent the system becomes in its response and the more the people suffer, the surer the certainty that a change must occur. The more official papers that come to take something away from those that earned it, the more cops that harass people looking for work, the more vigilante mobs that form, the more camps that get burned down, the more men that end up “bull-simple” from being beaten too much, the clearer it becomes to the migrants that their only hope is to stand together no matter what occurs. In Exodus, the first generation of Israel that is liberated from Egypt dies in the wilderness; this even includes Moses, who is at least granted a look into the Promised Land from Mount Pisgah before he dies. By the end of *The Grapes of Wrath*, Grampa and Granma are both dead, the Wilsons are waylaid in Texas waiting for Sairy to die, Noah has wandered off to stay by a river like the prophet Elijah, Casy has been murdered, Tom is hiding from the law, Al is leaving the family to start a new life with Aggie, and Rose of Sharon loses her baby, which is set adrift in the flood waters by Uncle John. Still, they do not give up throughout their hardships and they keep moving on and embracing the new unity they have found with other people in the same condition. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton, in their translators' introduction to Felix Guattari's *The Three Ecologies* (1989), are at

once hopeful and despairing in considering humanity's future. They argue that “From a cosmic perspective the human race is at the beginning of the evolutionary process. There is time for life to spread beyond the Earth throughout the entire Cosmos, provided the planet's biosphere isn't destroyed”; while they argue that there really are no limits to the possibilities of human evolution, they acknowledge that the shortsighted manner in which the human species dominates and overuses the earth and acts violently toward one another means that it sets drastic limits upon itself because humanity, while “trapped on Spaceship Earth, and now that it has entered the nuclear and biotechnological age . . . remains vulnerable” (10). Provocatively, Pindar and Sutton posit that humanity's best option is a spiritual one that dismisses all traditional forms of religion; they claim that

to survive, the twenty-first century must be atheist in the best sense: a positive disbelief in God, concerned only with, and respectful of, *terrestrial* life. It will require the development of an immanent, materialist ethics, coupled with an atheist awareness of finitude, of the mortality of the species, the planet and the entire universe, and not an illusory belief in immortality, which is only a misplaced contempt for life. A proper understanding of our terrestriality and mortality does not imply a restriction of our horizons. There will always be new ways of life to be invented, for there are as many different ways of living as there are people; provided we rediscover our heterogeneity and resist the insidious normalization of our lives. (10-11)

The answers that Steinbeck offers to the economic problems of the Great Depression through Casy similarly reject the influence of an outside divinity who might be trusted to set things right; Casy's spirituality is firmly atheist and terrestrial, in that it urges respect and justice for all people, all living species, and for the earth, air, and water; for Casy, all of these aspects of Earth's biosphere are intimately interdependent, and, in Casy's terrestrial theology, since they are expressions of the

one-soul of the universe and are necessary for all life, they must be treated as sacred.

Indeed, as Naess observes,

Instead of 'biosphere' we might use the term "ecosphere" in order to stress that we of course do not limit our concern for the life forms in a biologically narrow sense. The term 'life' is used here in a comprehensive non-technical way to refer also to things biologists may classify as non-living: rivers (watersheds), landscapes, cultures, ecosystems, "the living earth." (*Ecology* 29)

Casy's spirituality is an expression of unity with the land and love for all living beings that further insists that systematic sin must be dealt with here and now by people joining together to organize themselves to face injustice, to create a Benjaminite "real state of emergency," and to effect meaningful and lasting social change. Guattari echoes the urgency of the ecological problems caused by humans; he warns that

There is at least a risk that there will be no more human history unless humanity undertakes a radical reconsideration of itself. . . . Rather than remaining subject, in perpetuity, to the seductive efficiency of economic competition, we must reappropriate Universes of value, so that processes of singularization can rediscover their consistency. We need new social and aesthetic practices, new practices of the Self in relation to the other, to the foreign, the strange—a whole new programme that seems far removed from current concerns. (45)

Intercalary Chapter 14 again presents an overarching point of view that treats the efforts of those in power to maintain the status quo that privileges their desire to produce greater profits at the expense of the land and the workers. The chapter treats the anxiety held in common by those in charge of the economic institutions throughout the southern states of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California as the migrants begin to organize themselves. The problem is presented in a biological metaphor, that of the joining and fusing of two cells together to form a zygote, the first stage of a foetus. The only way for the establishment to win

would be to keep the migrants apart so they cannot realize that they can win by banding together under a leader who actively unites them and harnesses their immense power. The beginning is a move that Casy starts to make even before the beginning of the novel. This is the transition “from 'I' to 'we,’” which occurs when, as the intercalary chapter states, “I lost my land” becomes “We lost our land” or when “I have a little food” and “You have none” becomes “We have a little food” (152). A touching moment of this change from “I” to “we,” from faceless Other to a named Brother, comes when Tom eats with a family on his first morning at the Weedpatch Camp, and he apologizes for not giving his name or asking for those of his hosts. Timothy Wallace and his son Wilkie look at him strangely, then Timothy remarks how you get out of the habit of telling or asking for names because there were simply so many people (292). During the Dust Bowl and Great Depression, there were between 300,000 and 2 million people on the roads looking for work, the single largest mass migration in U.S. history. The intercalary narrator argues that leaders were needed to unite the migrants, and these leaders would be like the four he specifically names: Thomas Paine, Karl Marx, Thomas Jefferson, and Vladimir Lenin, all of whom urge revolutions on the basis of an intellectual argument for social justice; however, the narrator argues that these people were not causes of change, but actually *effects* of it, and like the migrants, their “need [was] the stimulus to concept, concept to action” (153).

This is why the migrants laud Pretty Boy Floyd, who exemplifies working for others even when it is defined as a crime by the establishment. Ma Joad knew him personally and argues in support of the Oklahoman prejudice that Floyd stole because

of need and that the police who hunted him down were acting on behalf of the establishment to eliminate something their greed had created (78, 376, 419).

Steinbeck is intent on connecting Floyd and Joad as like-minded individuals. This was a link that the American folk singer Woody Guthrie understood well, since his first commercial album, *Dust Bowl Ballads* (1940), featured both “The Ballad of Tom Joad” and “Pretty Boy Floyd,” though the latter track was left out due to length until the album's re-release in 1964.

Employing another contrapuntal resonance that offers a sense of symmetry to the narrative's development, Steinbeck uses Floyd as the name of the man who befriends Casy, Al, and Tom. This Floyd reveals that the contractor is trying to trick the migrants into travelling for work only to be paid a pittance, and, as a result of sharing this information with other migrants, he is considered a rebel and a threat and so is shot at by the police (254-63). However, this gives Casy a chance for redemption of a different type. Earlier, Casy told Tom that he thought he should leave the family; now that they were in California and things were going badly, he felt he could not contribute anything. During this same conversation, Tom convinces Casy to stay for another day because he senses that something is about to break (250-51). Shortly after, the break does come when the police try to arrest Floyd. As Floyd runs away, Tom trips the deputy who is about to fire his gun; the deputy misses Floyd and hits a woman in the hand, but, when he is about to fire again at his real target, Casy steps out of the crowd, kicks him on the neck, and knocks him unconscious. Casy then sends Tom (who would be sent back to prison for parole violation) and Al away, and he takes the blame on himself, an action for which he is jailed and permanently

separated from the family, which must flee before the townspeople set the camp on fire in a futile attempt to try to rid themselves of the threat the dissidents pose to their lifestyle.

To this point in the plot, Casy has listened consistently to what people were saying, and, when he thought about it hard enough, he understood how they were feeling. The language used to describe the situation is highly metaphorical; Casy describes the migrants as “beating their wings like a bird in attic. Gonna bust their wings on a dusty winda tryin' ta get out,” and, more aggressively, he knows “They's a army of us without no harness” (249). The implicit threat is that though the people might not understand their own situation, they have a great and unstoppable power when they exercise it. As the narrator insists, need leads to concept, and concept to action (153), so Casy's concept of vocation has advanced to the point where he automatically acts, instinctively assaulting the deputy and then lying about the assault in order to protect his friends.

When more police come, Casy confesses and willingly goes along with them. The narrator explains: “Between his guards Casy sat proudly, his head up and the stringy muscles of his neck prominent. On his lips there was a faint smile and on his face a curious look of conquest” (267). Jim Casy's conquest is to let Tom escape, thereby repaying his earlier debt to the Joads and acting upon what he knows to be right, even if it is an action which ultimately leads to his own death and martyrdom. After Casy is arrested, he is absent from the Joads' storyline for a long time and is only reunited with Tom for a short period before he is attacked and murdered by the vigilantes. A good measure of Casy's influence and the validity of his teaching is seen

in how certain members of the Joad family act after he is gone when things fall apart even more for the family unit.

One unintended consequence of Casy's bravery is that Uncle John goes off to get drunk because, as in the case of Conrad's Lord Jim, a chance for John to prove his worth had come, but he stood by the sidelines and missed it. John reveals that he had been hoarding money to get drunk, but did not need it until

the preacher went an' give 'imself up to save Tom . . . I feel awful. He done her so easy. Jus' stepped up there an' says, "I done her." An' they took 'im away . . . Come a time when I could a did somepin an' took the big sin off my soul . . . An' I slipped up. I didn't jump on her, an'—an' she got away. (269)

The great sin was that John, believing his young wife had only an upset stomach, denied her medical treatment and so unintentionally allowed her to die from appendicitis, taking with her their unborn child and forever marking him with loneliness, guilt, and shame (70-71; 98; 223-24). Foreshadowing the starving man at the novel's end, he fasts to give food to the other family members when stricken again with guilt upon seeing the starving children at the first camp (257). In speaking about John's guilt and clarifying the nature of sin, Casy "gently" argues with him that "I got sins. Ever'body got sins. A sin is somepin you ain't sure about" (224). Yet, constantly, John accepts guilt as a natural consequence of what he did and fears that it is the cause of all the family's troubles despite their patient rebuttals (229; 268-69; 276; 359; 391; 423; 440-46).

Casy, nonetheless, refuses to give Uncle John advice or tell him what to do; however, he is aware of what Uncle John expects of him because John still thinks of him as a preacher, so Casy does listen to him with compassion and identifies with

John's guilt. Casy is straightforward in applying his new ideas about holiness, so he tells John that although his wife's death was unintentional, "for anybody else it was a mistake, but if you think it was a sin—then it's a sin. A fella builds up his own sins right up from the ground" (224). Casy never downplays the real power that sin—not as a real thing, but as a concept—holds over those who allow it to have that power, and he knows the hope of redemption that he and John both seek. For this reason, John is tormented upon seeing Casy's selfless act in taking the blame for Tom so easily, and his guilt increases until the end of the novel when, instead of burying the corpse of Rose of Sharon's stillborn baby, he allows it to float down the floodwater in its wooden apple crate as a sign to the establishment and to the common people of the depths of the horrors they are perpetrating on their own people (446-47).

Uncle John's action echoes the book of Exodus, wherein the baby Moses, instead of being killed as Egyptian law demanded, is hidden and then set in a wicker basket among the reeds of the river Nile, only to be discovered by the Pharaoh's daughter and raised in the royal palace. He is later called by God and, after many tribulations, leads the people of Israel out of Egypt and to the Promised Land. But unfortunately, the Joads are not going to find such a positive outcome. In fact, reflecting the Hollywood expectation of a happy cinematic ending, John Ford's 1940 film version of Steinbeck's novel is much more hopeful in its outlook. Even the film's weather improves dramatically, and the story ends just after Weedpatch Camp when the family moves on to find work with the hopeful words of Ma Joad about how they are "the people" and they will always make their way through the hard times. Jason

Arthur posits that this is highly problematic because of the revised political statement the film creates:

In Ford's hands, Okie disenfranchisement, the very disenfranchisement that New Deal documentations had combated, is represented as no real tragedy. . . . the film leaves the impression that they can do this 'going on' without the help of social welfare. . . . In short, the film erases the need for audience intervention, making leftwing political stances passive. (179)

Nina Allen argues that this was actually a result of Darryl Zanuck's choice, as producer, to have an upbeat ending to the film, and that choice, perhaps unintentionally, “seems to imply an unquestioning acceptance of government intervention, and more broadly, total acquiescence to the values of Roosevelt's New Deal” (713-14). The novel, on the other hand, gets worse after the good days at Weedpatch, and, although the people keep fighting for survival, the family has been broken up, and those who remain quarrel among themselves. Rose of Sharon has lost her baby, they have no work, they get flooded out, their truck is rendered inoperable, Winfield has worms, Tom is on the run, and Casy is dead. Even when the children find a little piece of beauty in a red geranium, it starts another fight that reveals their greed (451).

When the floods come up and Rose of Sharon starts her labour, Pa Joad gets some of the other men to stay to fight the rising waters, and the men work beautifully together against the onslaught until their work is destroyed by a fallen tree (439-41). Likewise, Mrs. Wainwright helps Ma Joad with the delivery, and afterwards, they agree that their perspectives have changed dramatically. As Ma states, “Use' ta be the fambly was fust. It ain't so now. It's anybody. Worse off we get, the more we got to

do” (444). And this is a big change for Ma, whose idea of Us and Them has been set aside by her compassion for others who are in need, as much as by Casy's doctrine of the unity and holiness of all.

This is a lesson learned earlier by Ma Joad, who sees that economically, her family is being underpaid by the farmers and gouged by the stores at the same time. In her exchange with the mocking store clerk, she quickly realizes that everything costs about twenty five percent more than it should. She leaves the clerk playing with his tortoiseshell cat by saying, “I'm learnin' one thing good . . . If you're in trouble or hurt or need—go to poor people. They're the only ones that'll help—the only ones” (376). Where can the Joads look for help if not to their own people? It is when the winter comes, and there will not be any work for three months, that the migrants realize they cannot go on relief to at least feed their children unless they had been a state resident for a full year; that is when their growing wrath starts to boil over (433). It is then, with this “greatest terror of all,” that a change starts to happen: under their “begging, and under the cringing, a hopeless anger began to smoulder. And in the little towns, pity for the sodden men changed to anger, and anger at the hungry people changed to fear of them” (433). This guilt and fear is quickly expressed in an economics of oppression and scapegoating, whereby “money that might have gone to wages went for gas, for guns, for agents and spies, for blacklists, for drilling. On the highways the people moved like ants and searched for work, for food. And the anger began to ferment” (284).

As Cathy Caruth asks,

Is trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it? . . . One's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound. (7-8)

Early in the text, Ma Joad emerges as the rock that keeps the family together—but to the exclusion of all others; even Casy is somewhat excluded, for Ma insists that Tom alone should write out a Bible verse to bury with Grampa because “the preacher wan’t no kin” (144). Yet, now her insular little family has been replaced by love for the wounded People, the traumatized Family of Humanity. This is why Steinbeck was so insistent, against the will of his editors, that the starving man had to be someone Rose of Sharon did not know. He wrote that he could not change the controversial ending because “it must be an accident, it must be a stranger, it must be quick . . . the giving of the breast has no more sentiment than the giving of a piece of bread . . . The incident of the earth mother feeding by the breast is older than literature” (*Life* 178). Even the greatest sacrifices are made greater in their significance because they are so freely given on the basis not of kinship ties, but the common bonds of humanity.

Although, remarkably, Rose of Sharon does not have a recorded conversation with Casy during the course of the novel, she certainly has watched him and learned from his example, which partially leads to the changes in her own life. Like Tom, the choices she makes and the way she thinks have been significantly altered by Casy's philosophy. She has had a difficult journey of her own through her pregnancy, her desertion by Connie, and, eventually, through the loss of her baby. Before she does deliver, she seeks out a quiet and peaceful place and crawls deep into the brush to feel

herself enveloped by nature and the weight of the baby inside her (424-25). Indeed, her name is drawn from the Song of Songs 2:1, where the narrator writes that his love is a rose of the Valley of Sharon, indicating her beauty, her link with the earth, and her fertility simultaneously. Rose of Sharon later insists on picking cotton for a day and gets sick due to the strenuous nature of the work; after the birth, she feels pain from lactating, and begins to edge toward despondency. She is at once the child mother who is not protected by society in her time of need and the Earth Mother whose mistreatment at the hands of the owners has made her body weak and has forced a stillbirth.

It is in this image of the earth mother and the life that springs from her that many of the metaphors that Steinbeck has previously employed come together in one character. As Casy insists, individuals are all one, tied together in one single ecosystem, and what we do to the land or to other people, we do to ourselves. Rose of Sharon is well loved and taken care of until Connie abandons her and the family discovers that it cannot afford to feed her properly. Like the land being raped by the cold machines and by men who do not love or hate it, Rose of Sharon's body, which has been made to produce like the lush California valley, sees its fruit set aside to waste in a symbolic apple packing crate for no other reason than that its existence could not turn a profit as far as the monster was concerned. So when the Joads' flight from the rising floodwater leads them to a deserted barn where they find a starving man and his young son, although Ma communicates with her that this is something she should do, it is Rose of Sharon who makes the choice, and, once again as an Earth Mother, she gives willingly of her breast as a Eucharistic physical and spiritual

nourishment so that through its milk the man might live. Knowing the significance of her offering of herself, Rose of Sharon is depicted in the last line of the text in this manner: “She looked up and across the barn, and her lips came together and smiled mysteriously” (453), suddenly reminiscent of Casy and his likewise unexpected “faint smile” and “curious look of conquest” when he is arrested at the Hooverville (267).

As for Tom after he leaves the Weedpatch Camp, this realization of humanity comes by a different path than did Casy's epiphany. Tom knows finally that Weedpatch is a good camp because the migrants have a place where they are sovereign and where the police cannot come in and arbitrarily harass whomever they choose. With a frequent and resonant repetition of the verb “pick” that clearly foreshadows the homophonic instrument that will soon murder Casy, Tom explains the safety that the unity of the camp provides to the poor:

It's 'cause we're all a-workin' together. Deputy can't pick on one fella in this camp. He's pickin' on the whole darn camp. An' he don't dare. All we got to do is yell an' they's two hundred men out. Fella organizin' for the union was a-talking' out on the road. He says we could do that any place. Jus' stick together. They ain't raisin' hell with no two hundred men. They're pickin' on one man. (357)

When Casy and Tom are reunited during the strike, Casy continues to teach Tom and to demonstrate how his resolve to help the people has been steadily strengthened even though he has been persecuted because of it. Jim Casy says that he had learned the same lesson of working together while he was in jail. Casy remembers how he would talk to each new prisoner to learn his part of the story of injustice and oppression, and he began to feel at one with the other prisoners. One day, the men were served sour beans; when one prisoner yelled to the guards, nothing

happened, but, when they all put their voices together, the police saw to their needs right away, having no choice but to listen to the combined voices of the men.

Casy tries to convince Tom that now they have moved on, and the strike is a bigger part of the same struggle for humane treatment for all. Casy shows Tom that his “I” has become lost in the greater cause of the “we,” and this has given him a new purpose that Tom can share. However, Casy knows that since he has become the loudest voice of the “we,” those who hold power within the economic establishment will try to kill him. Casy compares himself and the death he sees coming to the persecution of the leaders of the French Revolution and the American Revolution; he tells Tom

French Revolution—all them fellas that figgered her out got their heads chopped off. Always that way . . . Jus' as natural as rain. You ain't doin' it for fun no way. Doin' it 'cause you have to. 'Cause it's you. Look a Washington . . . 'Fit the Revolution, an' after, them sons-a-bitches turned on him. An' Lincoln the same. Same folks yellin' to kill 'em. Natural as rain. (384)⁴⁴

Casy is convinced that he is organizing the migrants “‘cause you have have to” as a part of his new vocation, and he knows that he will become a target for the anger and fear of the townspeople. It is not surprising, therefore, that when the vigilantes from the town come and chase the strikers, it is Casy they are after. When they catch him, Casy tells them, “You fellas don' know what you're doin'. You're helpin' to starve kids.” He insists again, “You don' know what you're a-doin'”; at that point, his head is cracked by the swing of a pick handle, and he is killed standing in the midst of a

⁴⁴ Clearly, Steinbeck is aligning the social message of his text with American history because he anticipates the harsh opposition that he would face after the book’s publication; in fact, this opposition increased until Eleanor Roosevelt famously endorsed the novel’s veracity after touring the migrant camps of California, effectively ending challenges against Steinbeck personally and against his depiction of the economic plight of the Okies.

stream, a biblical symbol of crossing to the next life (386). Someone says, “Jesus, George. I think you killed him,” which is meant to offer the double reading of “Jesus” as a common swear word and also as the antecedent of “him,” meaning that George had killed Jesus. And then, like Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus is arrested,⁴⁵ Tom quickly strikes back with the man's fallen pick handle and kills one of the vigilantes in retaliation before fleeing, knowing that he will now have to leave the family in order to protect them but also in order to continue Casy's work. This is further signified the next morning when far away roosters crow, again offering an echo to the biblical accounts of the crucifixion of Christ and the denial of Peter (388). Tom later tells Ma Joad the story of what happened and of what Casy said to the police. When Tom says that Casy told his murderers, “You don' know what you're a-doin',” Ma twists her hands together, asks Tom if Casy really said that, and remarks how she wishes Granma could have heard (392). She is very clear about the import of these words as an echo of Christ's words on the cross, asking God, “Forgive them, for they know not what they do,”⁴⁶ an indication of both his forgiveness and his power.

Casy's great hope comes in that no matter what happens, the people do not break, and this is their conquest, not that they overcome the oppression of a system he identifies as a monster, but that they do not give up, they survive, and they learn to go on together. Using a narrative technique that is central to *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck employs the symmetrical rhetorical device of the fugue when he links Chapter 1 with Chapter 29. Michael J. Meyers defines this fugal technique as a mainstay of Steinbeck's literary method, whereby he consciously imitated the style of the

⁴⁵ See John 18:10.

⁴⁶ See Luke 23:34.

musical fugue popularized by Johann Sebastian Bach; these fugal manoeuvres include theme-exposition, point-counterpoint, question-answer, augmentation-diminution, inversion, and repetition and codas (“Share” 725-54).⁴⁷ In this instance of point-counterpoint, Steinbeck's first chapter portrays the conditions in Oklahoma after the crops fail, the topsoil erodes, and the migrations begin. Steinbeck writes:

The men were silent and they did not move often. And the women came out of the houses to stand beside their men—to feel whether this time the men would break . . . and the children sent exploring senses out to see whether men and women would break . . . After a while the faces of the watching men lost their bemused perplexity and became hard and angry and resistant. Then the women knew that they were safe and there was no break . . . Women and children knew deep in themselves that no misfortune was too great to bear if their men were whole. (7)

But there are indeed great misfortunes to come. In the mirror image of this intercalary chapter, Chapter 29 uses the same imagery to show how the situation has both changed and remained the same:

The women watched the men, watched to see whether the break had come at last. The women stood silently and watched. And where a number of men gathered together, the fear went from their faces, and anger took its place. And the women sighed with relief, for they knew it was alright—the break had not come; and the break would not come as long as fear could turn to wrath. / Tiny points of grass came through the earth, and in a few days the hills were pale green with the beginning year. (434)

Despite the conscious fugal parallels, the remarkable difference is twofold. First, the individual farmers and their families are replaced here with small groups of men and small groups of women and families that are thrust together through necessity. Now,

⁴⁷ For further information on Steinbeck's use of fugal forms, see Michael J. Meyer's essay “Share and Share Alike: Fugal Repetition and Modification in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.” An earlier and more general essay on musical techniques, also written by Meyer, is “Harmonic Dissonance: Steinbeck's Implementation and Adaptation of Musical Techniques” in *Literature and Music*.

they replace fear with the anger that comes of togetherness against a common oppressor, a link that is further strengthened by the presence of that which unites the people in the one-soul, that which Sairy tells Casy is his unknown God, that which takes the place of Jesus who promises his disciples in Matthew 18:20, “wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” The second change is that the land, as if sensing the wrath of the men who love her against the monsters who have raped her, discovers a new purpose and joy, perhaps offering a parallel to Rose of Sharon's own renewal. Thus, the land begins another year by sprouting grass and renewing the lives of all things and all people connected with her. The deep symbolism here insists that the migrants will go on and that they will eventually overcome the monster by banding together in community and in love and in equality.

This symbolic image of the migrants living in solidarity against oppression finds a new champion a few days later when Ruthie accidentally tells another kid about Tom, and he has to run again; he tells Ma that he has been thinking a lot about Casy, especially his idea of the one “great big soul” that everyone has a little part of which “wasn't no good 'less it was with the rest, an' was whole” (418). He remembers Casy quoting from “The Preacher,”⁴⁸ a name for the author of Ecclesiastes, who writes in 4:9-12,

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be

⁴⁸ For an examination of Casy's parallels to the Preacher, also known as the “Kohelah,” see James D. Brasch's essay “*The Grapes of Wrath* and Old Testament Skepticism.”

warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Steinbeck uses this image as an illustration of the importance of an ecological understanding that draws upon the necessity of living and working together, pulling in harmony with each other and with the land instead of privileging the desires of the individual or the allowances of a system that demarcates those with and those without power. This biblical image that Steinbeck uses to illustrate the move from “I to ‘we,’” which has now become a frequent reading at wedding ceremonies, illustrates the strength of community and partnerships that rely on the combined efforts of many; where a single cord would snap under the strain, a threefold cord is a rope made of three strands of cord twisted or braided together, which results in a high level of tensile strength. Though Casy is textually absent at the end of the novel, he is spiritually present in Tom’s memory, and so his death does not weaken the threefold cord. Casy's teachings about the ecology of holiness and his example in trying to make the migrants aware of the power they could have by uniting clearly resonate through the lives of the other characters and their continuing struggle to withstand the oppression that threatens them. Although Casy himself is dead, his influence as a part of the one-soul ecology and the universal struggle lives on—especially in Tom.

Tom has taken it as his mission to be a part of the social change envisioned by Casy's ecology of holiness, and he tells Ma not to worry about him because he too believes in the one-soul unity of humanity and its power to unite all people for justice. Thus, Casy's resignification of religious tenets into an ecology of holiness has taken hold with Tom. He echoes Casy's new theology by arguing that he now knows that,

“like Casy says, a fella ain't got a soul of his own, but on'y a piece of a big one”; on this basis, he believes that even if he too is killed, “it don' matter. Then I'll be all aroun' in the dark” (419). Like Jesus' Great Commission in Matthew 28 where he promises that he will be with his people till the end of time, Tom pacifies Ma by insisting “I'll be ever' where—wherever you look”; he tells her “Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there” (419); Casy taught Tom that a religion that tells its members to wait until they get to heaven if things are bad for them on earth is mistaken, for systemic evil should be dealt with here and now by people banding together to defeat it. Tom also presents Casy's theology through the interconnectedness of the spirituality found in the everyday aspects of life: “I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad an'—I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry an' they know supper's ready. An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build—why, I'll be there” (419). Tom realizes the influence that Casy's guidance has had on him, and he tells Ma, “God, I'm talking like Casy. Comes of thinkin' about him so much. Seems like I can see him sometimes” (419). Through Tom and Casy's intimate threefold cord relationship that continues past death, Steinbeck argues that the connection of those who labour for justice is not diminished, for they always remain a part of the greater community of the universal one-soul that urges social change through the ecology of holiness.

Chapter III:

The Sacred Margins in Faulkner's *Light in August* and Barnes' *Nightwood*

I met the Bishop on the road
And much said he and I.
“Those breasts are flat and fallen now
Those veins must soon be dry;
Live in a heavenly mansion,
Not in some foul sty.”

“Fair and foul are near of kin,
And fair needs foul,” I cried.
“My friends are gone, but that's a truth
Nor grave nor bed denied,
Learned in bodily lowliness
And in the heart's pride.”

“A woman can be proud and stiff
When on love intent;
But Love has pitched his mansion in
The place of excrement;
For nothing can be sole or whole
That has not been rent.”

—W.B. Yeats, “Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop”

W.H. Auden's verse during the last year of his life concisely summarizes several modernist questions about the nature of the sacred. On one side, Auden, from his Episcopal perspective, laments that the machine era had denigrated the spirituality of sacredness to such a high degree. In "Shorts II," he observes that "Space was holy to / pilgrims of old, till the plane / stopped all that nonsense" (853) and his accusation—after Futurism, World Wars I and II, the Korean War, the start of the Vietnam War—was to ask "Why should the cleverest minds so often hold the religion / *Sacred is any Machine, all that's alive is profane?*" (858). For his part, Auden claims in "A Thanksgiving" that "When pre-pubescent I felt / that moorlands and woodlands were sacred: / people seemed rather profane" (891). The poem catalogues international events that occurred during Auden's lifetime, each of which misappropriated notions of the sacred, including nationalism, fascism, racism, and the rhetoric of progress; during these times, the sacred was expressed as racial and national purity, leading to the Holocaust, or as doctrinal and ideological purity, leading to the Stalinist Purges. Auden's response is to question the validity of liberal humanism; as he recalls in the poem, the

hair-raising things
that Hitler and Stalin were doing
forced me to think about God.

Why was I sure they were wrong? (891-92)

In a search for surety about what was right and wrong and what was sacred and what was evil, Auden felt he was able to return to his childhood notion of the reality and the power of the sacred through a renewed belief in God obtained by reading poetry and existential theology and by contemplating Nature and God. Auden's verses suggest that not all modernist alterations to traditional religious categories were equal.

Historically and on the surface, the term “sacred” in its fullest sense was reserved for that which was truly hallowed in a spiritual or religious sense, yet the sacred has long been a difficult category prone to misuse. The term “sacred,” as it is typically used in contemporary English, is itself unclear, referring as it does to a state, a place, a time, an object, an idea, a group, or a person that is considered to be set apart for a special purpose beyond the everyday, the typical, the ordinary. A reason for the trouble caused by the concept of the sacred in English is that in etymological terms, it embodies a high degree of play. Its root, in fact, holds two opposite meanings. Eric Partridge, in his etymological dictionary, traces the meaning of “sacred” from its Latin root “sacer,” which had a “double sense” because the same term was used for something set apart and for something accursed because it had violated a sacred object.¹ The second meaning would hence proclaim a violator execrable, forbidden, or punishable for misusing something pure. In fact, despite the several types of sacrifices mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, there is only one, the “scapegoat,” which reflects this double sense; the scapegoat was set apart each year to receive the symbolic collected sins of the people and, instead of being sacrificed, was led off into the desert and left to its fate (Leviticus 16). The double sense is now more evident in French than in English, as the French “*sacré*” is employed in the same manner either to indicate something holy or as a curse word (Partridge 578-80). The English synonym “holy” comes from the Old English “*halig*,” which carries only the positive connotation of something set apart (Partridge 292); likewise, the biblical terms for the sacred, the holy, or the clean—the Hebrew *quodesh* and the Greek

¹ This double sense of the term forms the basis for Giorgio Agamben's work on biopolitics, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995), a text that will be referenced later in this chapter.

hagios—carry only the positive connotation, though there is of course no etymological link between those terms and the Old English. However, English does, nonetheless, reflect the Latin double sense in some derivatives. Words like “sanctuary,” “saint,” “sacrament,” “sanctification,” “consecrate,” and “sacrifice” reflect the positive idea of setting something apart; “sacrilege,” “sanctimonious,” “to sanction,” “desecrate,” and “execrate” indicate a result of misusing something sacred.

Given these difficulties of definition and usage, the conceptual territory of the sacred must be approached with caution. Who decides which items are special, which secular, and which profane? Why does a community accept this designation? How does it carry such power in motivating human behaviour among both religious and nonspiritual groups? What are they experiencing when they sense holiness within common moments of human experience? Why do the sacred and the profane continue to hold such power and how can we invoke the sacred without risk of misuse? This chapter will examine these questions associated with the modernist period's use of the concept of the sacred by reading William Faulkner's *Light in August* (1932) and Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* (1936) primarily through two complementary lenses of analysis. Given the long history of the sacred as a conceptual field that still maintains its importance, I turn in my first section to the anthropology of religion and investigate the role of the sacred within human communities as examined by Mircea Eliade and Mary Douglas; in the second section, I add lessons from the contemporary theoretical approach of biopolitical criticism advanced by Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault, who analyze the work of hierarchies and of communities in regulating what is deemed social pollution by stigmatizing and marginalizing certain individuals or groups. By joining these sites of inquiry, I argue that Faulkner and

Barnes create a space within their texts for the “sacred margins,” which they then use to question social ostracization and to privilege the role of the sacred margins in critiquing wider society.

My choice to read Faulkner and Barnes together is inspired chiefly through the ways that they use their texts to question and develop notions of the sacred as a part of their primarily privatized faith. Their forms of modernist spirituality thus create a space for sacredness that removes sacred ritual from the public realm, and this further reduces the temptation for religion to become too intertwined with the concerns of the State. Both texts deal with the sacred in many ways, including terms of sacred space, sacredness and pollution, ritual, and confession. Yet, both authors modify traditional notions of the sacred to a great degree by situating it within unlikely individuals and by carefully castigating misappropriations of the sacred that serve the questionable aims of provincialism, racism, nationalism, or what Michael Warner has labelled heteronormativity (4). Hence, *Light in August* and *Nightwood* both focus on people who exist at the margins of society, who are regarded as profane or even as pollutants, and who nonetheless represent the true action of sacredness within these fictional texts. This focus is particularly vivid in the case of Faulkner's Rev. Hightower, a defrocked Presbyterian minister who finds meaning in action and community by rejecting his former church, and Barnes' Matthew O'Connor, an Irish Roman Catholic who becomes a transvestite abortionist, and Nora, who embodies a sacrificial love for others at the margins. Faulkner and Barnes present these characters as latter day Hebrew prophets who carry a sacred message with them that, despite being found in unlikely vessels, is able to effect real change in society if it is heeded.

Treating Faulkner and Barnes in tandem, as this chapter will do, is rare within the critical literature; at present, no monograph and only a handful of articles and dissertations treat both writers together. Yet, Faulkner and Barnes were American contemporaries and held in common a highly experimental style of modernist prose that reveals many parallels, rooted, no doubt, in their early focus on poetry that later expressed itself in their cross-genred poetic prose. In this vein, some critics do indeed classify them together, identifying them, for example, as fellow Impressionists (Shackelford 194) or as fellow neobaroque artists (Kaup 86-87; 101); in his introduction to John Hawkes' landmark 1949 postmodernist text *The Cannibal*, Albert J. Guerard links them by speaking of Hawkes' literary forerunners and invoking the “august names” of three “coldly intense writers”: Franz Kafka, William Faulkner, and Djuna Barnes (ix). In their early writing careers, Barnes and Faulkner published in similar journals, including New Orleans' literary journal *The Double Dealer* (Porter 25-26).² Faulkner was in fact then living in New Orleans; supposedly on his way to Europe, he stayed with Sherwood Anderson for a time following the publication of *The Marble Faun* in December of 1924. Importantly, this was the moment that Faulkner switched from poetry to prose; despite planning a second book of verse, he came to see himself as a failed poet and abandoned poetry (Porter 22-26).³ Despite his desire, Faulkner felt he could not meet his own standards of poetry, and this was no doubt in part to his self-comparison with the poets he was reading—poets like Djuna Barnes. Both authors were subsequently published by Boni and Liveright; they in fact

² *The Double Dealer* published them next to figures as central to modernist literature as Hart Crane, Ezra Pound, Thornton Wilder, Ernest Hemingway, and Sherwood Anderson (Porter 25-26).

³ Remaining in New Orleans, he concentrated his efforts on writing twenty short prose pieces for the journal and for the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* between January and September and even began drafting a novel (Porter 22-26).

published Barnes' *Ryder* (1928), which was a best-seller for a brief time (Carmichael 26). Due to these same linkages, we can surmise that Barnes read Faulkner's early verse and most likely would have read his later prose, but no record of her doing so or of her opinions of his style exist. However, Faulkner's name would have immediately caught Barnes' eye since she had briefly been married at eighteen to an unrelated Percy Faulkner, the fifty-two year old brother of her father's live-in mistress (Herring 59-61).

On the other hand, Faulkner was clearly impressed by Barnes' poetry, and his uncited allusions to her verse in his own texts have puzzled Faulkner scholars. In the inaugural issue of *The Faulkner Journal*, Calvin S. Brown wrote the first contribution of a regular feature that sought to raise thorny questions for discussion among Faulkner scholars. His short column was called "Some Problems in Faulkner: Words, Sources, and Allusions" and included a reference to Faulkner's late novel *Town* (1957), in which "Gavin Stevens (TWN 516) thinks of 'the spring, which an American poet, a fine one, a woman and so she knows, called 'girls' weather and boys' luck'"; Brown added simply, "Can anyone identify the poet and the poem?" (55). Likewise in *Intruder in the Dust* (1948), the same character—the educated and worldly lawyer Gavin Stevens who also appears in a short scene in *Light in August* (444-49)—recalls "A small voice, a sound sensitive lady poet of the time of my youth [who] said *the scattered tea goes with the leaves and every day a sunset dies*" (191). In both cases, the "lady poet" alluded to without acknowledgement is Djuna Barnes. The first quotation is not actually from a poem but from a section of poetic prose in *The Ryder* (1928), which is in fact the text wherein the character of Dr. Matthew O'Connor is first introduced by Barnes (29). The second allusion is more obscure, but

it was traced by M. Gidley to Barnes' poem "To the Dead Favourite of Liu Ch'e,"⁴ a poem Faulkner most likely read in *The Dial* of April 1920 (101); however, Thomas Carmichael, in his essay tracing this intertextual relationship, adds that Ben Wasson gave Faulkner a copy of William Stanley Braithwaite's *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1920 and Yearbook of American Poetry* in January of 1921, which includes a copy of this Barnes poem (23). In both cases, Faulkner is alluding to a text he had first read almost thirty years earlier. And indeed, in a 1943 postcard to Eudora Welty regarding her novel *The Robber Bridegroom* (1942), Faulkner chooses to compare her style favourably with that of Barnes (Welty 20).

Despite these connections, the reasons for the paucity of criticism twinning Faulkner and Barnes may be the result of critical trends as much as historical accident. As Monika Kaup observes, Barnes criticism in particular has seen two broad phases of orientation: first, following her publisher T.S. Eliot's lead, the New Critics read her for experimental formalism and, second, after a period of critical silence, critics returned to her work in the 1970s with a different focus on its feminist, political, psychological, or sexual content (85-86). New Criticism does not readily foster comparison; individually, the poetry-prose of Faulkner or Barnes would have lent itself to such comparative analysis; and the chief aspects of content now examined in each differ. The period of critical silence on Barnes of course echoes her own period of creative silence, when even other writers did not know if she were alive or dead. Indeed, Faulkner was one of these, for when questioned by a university student in 1957 about one of the unacknowledged quotations mentioned above,

⁴ This poem, written by Emperor Wu of Han (156 B.C.E.-29 March 87 B.C.E.) in memory of a deceased concubine, was also translated by Ezra Pound in his *Lustra* (1916-1917; *Poems and Translations* 286).

Faulkner cited Djuna Barnes, explained who she was, and then asked the audience if any of them knew if she was still alive or not (Gwynn 201). As is well known, Barnes had indeed disappeared into alcoholism and depression and did not publish anything after 1936's *Nightwood* until she moved to the apartment in New York's Greenwich Village, where she would live as a virtual recluse for 42 years until her death in 1982. It was there that, less than a year after Faulkner had wondered as to her whereabouts, Barnes wrote her fourth great text, the verse play *The Antiphon*, published in 1958.⁵ A similar pattern of disappearance and late recognition occurred with other women modernists after the rupture of World War II; most notably, these include Jean Rhys, who remained unrecognized until her publication of *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), and, to a lesser extent, figures such as Mina Loy and Anaïs Nin. Ironically, in light of assumptions regarding her death, Djuna Barnes was actually the last member of the first generation of modernist writers born in the 1890s to die, which she did in 1982, six days after her ninetieth birthday.

Although Faulkner and Barnes certainly have similarities in style and technique, they are also centrally concerned with questioning society's ill treatment of those people and groups who are considered to be marginalized, and their responses

⁵ Miriam Fuchs' engrossing essay on the development of *Antiphon* reveals a troubling relationship between Eliot and Barnes that may have led to Barnes' apparent silence during the twenty years between these two texts, both of which were edited by Eliot. Fuchs claims that Barnes had been "fairly prolific" before meeting Eliot, and at least one friend of hers cast Eliot "in the role of villain," and was "sceptical of the association and often disparaging of Eliot" (296). When she did finish *Antiphon*, Barnes expected the same encouragement from Eliot that he had given to *Nightwood*, but, "lavish in his criticism, he refused to sanction the play for publication" and insisted on twenty-nine laborious reworkings of the play (301). Even as the play was to go to press, Eliot wrote a preface as he had written an introduction for *Nightwood*, but Barnes, finally frustrated by Eliot, insisted on changes and then refused outright to have the preface that she saw as offensive to her work. Eliot's original preface, largely "his own ambiguous or negative remarks" was reduced to a few descriptive lines on the dust jacket and accompanied by a very positive sentence by Edwin Muir: "I feel myself that *The Antiphon* is one of the greatest things that have been written in our time, and that it would be a disaster if it were never to be known" (305).

and challenges to this marginalization are based in their understandings of the concept of the sacred. As shown in the Introduction to this dissertation, William James defined “religion” as the belief that there is an unseen order and that humans can modify their lives so as to live in harmony with that unseen order through rituals, confession, and prayer (53; 451). This depends on an “inward and moral stage of sentiment” that seeks to ensure the believer has been cleansed of what is worldly, profane, or immoral and is so in proper relation to the moral sanctity of the unseen order. Accordingly, following James, the sacred is always defined in opposition to the profane or the common, that believers think it vulnerable to contamination, and that those who control the sacred wield an otherworldly power. Durkheim seconds the centrality of the sacred as a religious concept when he insists that

All known religious beliefs, whether simple or complex, present one common characteristic: they presuppose a classification of all things, real and ideal, of which men think, into two classes or opposed groups, generally designated by two distinct terms which are translated well enough by the words *sacred* and *profane*. (37)

Mircea Eliade's classic examination of the concepts of the sacred and the profane postulates that they are integral to the religious experience itself in terms of who is considered to be a part of the sanctified community and who is considered to be marginalized and profane; his interest is to comprehend in which circumstances spiritual persons identify a “*feeling of terror* before the sacred, before the awe-inspiring mystery” that emanates from the divine power of the “wholly other” (9; italics original). The key finding in Eliade's treatment is that humans attempt to relate to the sacred in order to access its power, which specifically grounds all reality and all being (12-13); as Emmanuel Levinas has argued, this sense of a transcendent wholly other originates in the alterity first experienced in considering “the face of one's

fellow man,” from which humans postulate “the original locus in which transcendence calls an authority with a silent voice in which God comes to mind” (5). Hence, although notions of the transcendent sacred can be said to have arisen from the human realization of the alterity of the other, Eliade posits that reverence for sacred objects ultimately points outside of human experience to that which was then believed to cause human experience, first, to exist and, second, to have validity. For Eliade, sacredness is an attribute that stands in for the realness of an object, which is determined by its connection to the absolute or wholly other; the attribute is recognized (not assigned) by spiritual communities as already pertaining to sacred spaces, sacred time, Nature and the Cosmos, and human life.

A most provocative move on Eliade's part is to argue for the place of the margin between the sacred, the profane, and the absolute Other. Eliade posits that the threshold between the sacred and the profane represents “the limit, the boundary, the frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds—and at the same time the paradoxical place where those worlds communicate, where passage from the profane to the sacred world becomes possible” (25). This type of passage is often pictured as death and rebirth, and Eliade goes so far as to insist that among most religions “a common element, an invariable, remains. It could be defined as follows: *access to spiritual life always entails death to the profane condition, followed by a new birth*” (201; italics original). Certainly, as I argued in Chapter I, H.D. made this process of death and rebirth a central motif of *Trilogy*, and, as I argued in Chapter II, Steinbeck's portrayal of Jim Casy illustrates that real spiritual access to this renewed life comes only at what I call the “sacred margins,” sometimes positioned far away from the power structures that seek control and that punish those who stray too far from the

flock. What of course differs from the viewpoint of the sacred margins is what is seen as sacred, as profane, as marginal, as death, as rebirth and new life, or as legitimate spiritual power.

— § —

William Faulkner's *Light in August* (1932) explores the lives of people who exist on the sacred margins of a clearly defined society. None of the several central characters fit within the strict 1920s' culture of the American South, and all of them are forcibly disciplined when they violate the enshrined expectations of those around them. In reflecting upon the various characteristics and attributes of cultural space of Yoknapatawpha County within the novel, the reader has a rich pasture within which to ruminate, and one of the most fascinating aspects of Faulkner's constructed cultural space is his depiction of sacred space and its violation. In *Light in August*, Faulkner illustrates the folly of organized religion by portraying it as a self-defined sacred space that unsuccessfully attempts to cancel the pollution of the Rev. Gail Hightower, the novel's one character who is ultimately shown to embody the sacred margins of divine grace.

As discussed above, sacred spaces are set apart from those that are common and are intended as "a ritual space, a location for formalized, repeatable symbolic performances" referencing a greater power; hence, they are symbols of "the politics of position and prosperity, exclusion and exile" within a given community (Chidester 9). Sacred spaces are protected by controlling their purity, both in terms of who is given access to them and what activities take place therein or thereupon, because

whatever is sacred can also, by definition, be polluted. Building on the foundational works of scholars such as Mircea Eliade and Jonathan Z. Smith, the contemporary socioanthropologist Belden Lane has divided sacred space into four distinct types (323ff). First, sacred space is a specific place where a faith community believes that a divine being chose to reveal him or herself to a seeker. Exodus 3, for example, records the meeting of God with Moses—the first words spoken are God’s command to Moses to remove his sandals, for the ground upon which he was standing was holy ground. In a variation of this first definition, such spaces can also be deemed sacred apart from religion when they are directly related to the history of a nation, as are the American shrines at Pearl Harbor or the Twin Towers. These are made sacred through the importance to a nation of what occurred there, and the space is ritualized by the pilgrimages made to such locales. Hence, using Ferdinand Tönnies' differentiation, sacred spaces can be important to the relationships and social bonds that stem from both the *Gemeinschaft* community of an individual community of faith based in “real organic life” as well as from the “purely mechanical construction” of the larger and more diverse *Gesellschaft* civil society (17-19).

Second, sacred space can be an ordinary place that is designated as sacred through the rituals that are performed there. In Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, the church, mosque, or synagogue is declared to be a sacred space, and this reality is asserted when a community of faith uses these buildings for worship services and other rituals. Some internal parts of this sacred space are considered more sacred, such as the altar of a Roman Catholic church, to which an observant worshipper will genuflect. Such designated sacred spaces are filled with consecrated items, such as utensils, scrolls or books, furniture, vestments, and people who carry out sanctified

tasks (Farris 316). This type of sacred space can revert to the secular through a specially designated ritual of deconsecration or decommission, which may happen, for instance, when churches are closed and transformed into a secular use as condominiums or museums (Hubert 13-14).

Lane's third and fourth types of sacred space are less obvious. The third type is identified over a long period of time when rituals are performed without first demarcating the place in which they are to occur. They are eventually discovered to be invested with an existential power that is suggested by repeated symbolic acts. An example is the sacred groves of ancient religions that focus on divine figures associated with nature. And fourth, sacred space can be understood as both a local and a universal space, based on many concepts of God that believe him or her to be omnipresent. In much current Christian theological debate, this definition of sacred space is prevalent, especially given the import of Native North American belief within current liberal Christian formulations. America itself is often seen in these terms, especially given its early incarnation as a "New Jerusalem in the Wilderness" or a land of Puritan freedom. As is evident in regard to Faulkner especially, the American South is seen as a sacred space in that its inhabitants shared a common ethnicity, history, and worldview that they felt set them apart from other societies.

At issue here is the disparity between the common and the holy as expressed in the four types of sacred space. The question, in visual terms, asks how far the two would overlap if they could be neatly represented in a Venn diagram. For some thinkers, there is no difference; for others, there is no connection; and for some, there is a certain discernible overlap that is found only in our cherished sacred spaces. At times, some may use this fourth definition to refute such a particularity of sacredness

and, thereby, embrace the sacred margins and joyfully rebel against the conservative forces that control access to traditional conceptions of the holy. When Thomas Hardy's Jude asks Arabella to go to the Cathedral, she replies, "I think I'd rather sit in the railway station . . . That's the centre of the town life now. The Cathedral has had its day!," to which a bewildered Jude responds, "How modern you are!" (120). Allen Ginsberg was undoubtedly expressing such rebellious sentiments when he declared that "The world is holy! / The soul is holy! / The skin is holy! / The nose is holy! / The tongue and cock and asshole are holy!" (134). Jacques Derrida voiced a similar sentiment when he once claimed, "When I enter the post office of a great city, I tremble as if in a sacred place" (qtd. in Chidester 14). Yet, such debates over definitions of what spaces are sacred, for which groups they are sacred, and how to weigh competing claims to space are frequent; this is seen in contexts such as the city Jerusalem and its Temple Mount, as well as in the 2010 controversy regarding plans for a mosque near Ground Zero in New York. These sacred spaces are inevitably contested since its controllers, who exercise ownership over the symbols of the sacred, wield a great deal of power. Sacred space is contested because it is spatial, and therefore a limited resource, but also because it has the ability to multiply its importance by endlessly multiplying its meanings, thereby producing what David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal call a "surplus of significations" (18).

Biblically, the concept of sacred space is also heterogeneous. It refers to the place where God resides, where he reveals himself, or where he is worshipped. As Sara Japhet points out, the biblical narrative pictures God voicing his desire to dwell among his people, so he allows a tabernacle and later a temple to be built to represent his habitation with Israel. Hence, biblical sacred space can be localized in a particular

point. It is juxtaposed to the profane, and it is differentiated from the secular. It is hierarchical, in that parts of internal sacred space are considered holier than others, and its primacy is asserted over all other sites in the land. And finally, as biblical sacred space can be mobile, as was the tabernacle that travelled with the people of Israel through their desert wanderings (Japhet 60-63). In Eliade's postulation, sacred space depends on its connection to the Real, which exists outside our known reality; he notes that a sacred space is considered "holy ground *because it is the place nearest to heaven*, because from here, from our abode, it is possible to reach heaven" (39; italics original). In fact, this connection intimates that sacred space differs from spaces considered to be common because sacred space reproduces the divine realm, as when God is said to dwell on earth in a specific tabernacle or temple; this symbolism was cemented in the Christian basilica and, later, the cathedral (Eliade 61).

Mary Douglas' classic study of the anthropological roots of religion, *Purity and Danger* (1966), is crucial to understanding how conceptions of what constitutes sacred space were significantly altered to emphasize methods for defending sacred space from the danger of pollution. Douglas observes that after a place has been deemed sacred, all that is dirty is seen as a contaminant because "dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment" (2). The designation of what is dirt, or what is impure is then expanded and "certain moral values are upheld and certain social rules defined by beliefs in dangerous contagions . . . For us, sacred things and places are to be protected from defilement. Holiness and impurity are at opposite poles" (3, 7). Ritual itself, according to Douglas, is performed and institutionalized because society recognizes

the potency of disorder and so enshrines order. Quite often, impurity or a disorderly, dirty or immoral designation is believed to originate with persons who are in “a marginal state . . . placeless . . . left out in the patterning of society [and] formally classed as abnormal” (94, 97). Pollution, then, occurs only where the “lines of structure, cosmic or social, are clearly defined” (113). Douglas relates this pollution to the pollutants produced by the human body such as excreta, breast milk, or mucus. Pollutants come from society or from the body but are no longer deemed to be a worthy part of their origin, and hence, they are disposed of as useless or harmful (115).

Douglas identifies four causes of the danger associated with these social pollutants that violate the established order of the sacred (122ff). First, a dangerous contagion can press on external boundaries, rebelling against implicit or explicit structures and strictures. For example, an appeal made by a marginal member of a group to an outside body brings the first community under scrutiny and violates tacit boundary agreements. Second, social pollution may also transgress the internal lines of a system, such as a challenge given to the established hierarchy of a system by a flagrant disregard for accepted norms of behaviour; an unwed mother may be seen to transgress the male rulers of her society by disregarding the rules of the system they enforce. Third, danger can appear from the margins of a system by the mere existence of those who do not, cannot, or will not fit in. In response, societies can establish margins where such people can dwell without polluting the purity of the system as a whole. Problems arise when and if such people attempt to reassert themselves, thereby disturbing the rest of respectable society. And fourth, social pollution can be

dangerous by producing or by pointing out internal contradictions in a system where all the lines and boundaries are understood to be well defined and clear.

If and when such pollutants appear, they must be dealt with by the community. Douglas identifies two ways in which societies cancel pollution (136ff). The first method is by devising a ritual to counteract the pollution without actually enquiring into its cause or placing blame. In such a case, the unwed, pregnant daughter is sent away quietly until she can have her illegitimate child, or a polluted building is razed and simply rebuilt. The second method of dealing with impurity is to reimpose order by instituting a confessional rite, either willingly or forcibly, on the part of the contagion. In this scenario, the slave confesses his sin of attempting to flee his master and takes his punishment of a horse whipping, or a poet publicly apologizes for criticizing the state ideology in an earlier “misguided” work. In such cases, the pollutant is contained, and the purity and the order of the system is protected.

In William Faulkner’s *Light in August*, the central focus on purity and danger in the sacred margin is found in the character of Gail Hightower, a defrocked Presbyterian minister who is rejected as a relic of the past. However, Faulkner’s own vision of grace is ultimately revealed when Hightower finds peace and acceptance within himself after rejecting the claims of organized religion and scorning the hypocrisy of those who lead it unthinkingly and seek the power of the sacred for themselves by defining the sacred and the profane to serve themselves. Hightower is no second-rate character who lurks in the shadows. He is central to *Light in August*, though not so much to its plot as to its moral and thematic import. Although Faulkner is not negligent in criticizing him as backwards looking, impotent, unwanted, and a failure, he makes Hightower function as a representative figure for true sacredness

found in the margins of society instead of in the organized Church. Faulkner goes further with this character, making him the focus of the action of grace within the text. Hightower's temporal and spatial transition from July's darkness to August's light is greater and more extensive than that of any other character, and this transition is possible for him only by rejecting his nostalgia based in a fascination with Jefferson, his dead grandfather, the Church, and his martyr complex. Hightower is finally enabled to embrace life by realizing that its power and beauty dwell within himself. In so doing, he becomes not a pollutant to be thrust away from the pure and ordered system of the Church, but the true recipient of light, redemption, and holiness within the sacred margins.

Faulkner introduces the Reverend Gail Hightower, D.D., with the sentence: "From his study window he can see the street" (57). Thus, from the first, Hightower is presented as a character who merely observes and who refuses to interact with most of the other characters because of their ostracization of him. In chapter three, Faulkner gives the town's view of Hightower as a man touched by scandal when "his wife went bad on him" (59); the town ultimately rejects him and his preaching as "actual sacrilege" (63). For years, Hightower lives on the margins, and only becomes involved once again in the affairs of the community when called upon to deliver Lena Grove's baby, when asked to lie to save Joe Christmas, and when Christmas is finally murdered on Hightower's kitchen floor. After these crucial plot events have transpired, Faulkner returns to Hightower's study in chapter twenty, the penultimate chapter; this time, however, Faulkner presents Hightower through his own stream of consciousness instead of the town's gossip and allows him to reflect, perhaps for the first time, on his own story and experience of life, thus indicating the importance of a

self-realization that does not renege on one's responsibility to one's community and to those who are marginalized by the community.

When introduced in the third chapter, Hightower is sitting in his darkened study and listening to the sound of his former congregation singing hymns float over the night air (77). The church itself is never presented in a positive light, save in Hightower's memory, and Faulkner thus prods the reader to look for sacred space elsewhere. Faulkner originally intended to call *Light in August* "Dark House," and of the several dark houses in the novel, the most central is Hightower's own (Visser 46). It is located on a dark back lane, even more cordoned off by a line of tall maple trees that cast a dark shadow over the small house where this former clergyman now regarded as pollution dwells, and the dark street and line of trees are what David Theo Goldberg insists are physical barriers erected in urban societies to segregate undesirables (192ff). Nonetheless, this marginal space is a sacred space, fitted as it is in a thick grove of maples. Out front is a little sign advertising art lessons, which Hightower calls "his monument" (57-58). In the evening light, the sign looks like a tombstone, another relic of holy ground that further suggests Hightower is more dead than alive. He is most often found in the study of his house. A church, of course, is the most obvious type of sacred space according to Lane's second definition, that of places set off for specific rituals, but a minister's study functions in a similar manner. It is in the study that sermons are composed, meetings and counselling sessions are performed, and the life of prayer and personal devotion finds its centre. However, in the scene that first introduces Hightower sitting in his study, he is suddenly startled when someone begins up his front walk, and when he realizes it is Byron Bunch breaking his typical schedule of visits, he becomes intrigued (76).

From this first scene between the two men, it becomes obvious that Faulkner is presenting Hightower as peculiar and troubled. Even Hightower's name portrays him as one who lives on high, far removed from the real concerns of life. For twenty-five years, he has lived as a Presbyterian minister without a church, ever since his wife was found dead under mysterious circumstances and his own suspected unnaturalness was deemed the cause by his congregants. This unidentified, mysterious sexual deviance is enough to push him to the margins in the minds of the people, yet his greatest sin of pollution against traditional conceptions of the sacred happens in the church itself, for most of the townspeople would only consciously recognize the church building itself as sacred. Hightower contaminates it not only by disrespecting the Presbyterian patterns of stoic, intellectual worship, by allowing his wife to disrupt services and then by drawing the impurity of a mass media scandal. The Sunday morning after his wife is found dead, "The old ladies and some of the old men were already in the church, horrified and outraged, not so much about the Memphis business as about the presence of the reporters" (58). Hightower refuses to leave the town of Jefferson, filled though it is with bad memories and people who do not want him in their midst and who push him firmly to the margins.

On the margins, everything that made Hightower a respected part of the community either degenerates or is stripped away from him. He lives off half the proceeds from an annuity bequeathed to him by his father, and he donates the other half to a home for delinquent girls in Memphis. His extensive learning, required of all Presbyterian ministers, is left to degenerate. He is untidy, and his appearance itself is unwashed. He cooks for himself and keeps no servants because the townsmen do not allow it. He has few friends. Yet, he acts as a mentor to Byron and he is called upon

twice to act as a midwife within the community; the midwife, indeed, is an ironic symbol for Hightower, who, although he does sometimes seek to help others, needs someone to help him to find a source of rebirth and renewal—he perfectly embodies Henry David Thoreau's sad observation that “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation” (11).

Hightower has absolutely no voice in the affairs of the town, nor does he appear to desire to participate in their society. Due to his forced marginalization and lack of integration in Jefferson, Hightower appears to accept his alienation with the will of a martyr, calling it his cross and his sacrifice. This may make him appear to be superfluous to the novel's plot line. Faulkner does not intricately link Hightower to the action, which focuses on Joe Christmas, Lena Grove, Byron Bunch, and Joanna Burden. Yet, Faulkner allots many words to this character, giving his readers much cause for sympathy with Hightower; as I have argued, the two chapters that give Hightower's story do so in very different ways, for chapter two repeats the gossip of the town whereas chapter twenty is Hightower's stream of consciousness that shows the tremendous changes in his view of himself and of humanity after the events of the plot. Thus, Faulkner's presentation of the character is given by use of a modernist technique that makes these two chapters into two views of Hightower that function as bookends on either side of the plot.⁶ As the Lacanian literary scholar Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber argues, this use of Hightower constitutes Faulkner's move to overcome the cultural symbolic circle of Southern patriarchy's signifying chain by revealing a transformation in a character through self-actualization and indirect involvement in

⁶ Faulkner's ultimate bookends are the first and last chapters, which deal with Lena Grove arriving and leaving Jefferson. The inner bookends treating Hightower demonstrate a similar literary technique that highlights the changes that occur in Hightower's character.

the action of the plot line. Adopting Lacan's theory of the subject as a linguistic reality that represents a signifier within a chain of other signifiers, Schreiber posits that Hightower and all the characters who transgress rigid social boundaries in the novel are treated by others not

in their full complexity as living, feeling individuals, but in terms of significations that have come to represent them in their essential absence. Thus, a subject only appears in relationship to the socially constructed symbolic order or cultural symbolic of a particular community. (71)

Therefore, Hightower's essential absence compounds the town's rejection of his humanity, to the extent that the “town had had the habit of saying things about the disgraced minister which they did not believe themselves, for too long a time to break themselves of it” (74). Hightower is certainly guilty in the majority of his relationships, as he fails his wife and family and the community, yet he is not engaged as an individual by them either, which leads to his maltreatment and marginalization. Lacan identifies this marginalization as key to spiritual belief; he argues that “all belief is sustained” by a “fundamental alienation” and that “at the very moment when the signification of belief seems most profoundly to vanish, the being of the subject is revealed from what was strictly speaking the reality of that belief” (*Four* 264). For this reason, Lacan notes that “It is not enough to overcome superstition, as one says, for its effects in the human being to be attenuated” (*Four* 264). This would point to the possibility that Faulkner's choice to present Hightower as a marginalized and tragic figure who is stalwart only in his desire to maintain his fractured beliefs in Christianity, his grandfather, and the town, is accurate insofar as it correctly estimates the abiding effects of belief on the individual.

Though his many faults are certainly glaring, Hightower is unfairly treated by his wife and by the church members, as well as the press and the townspeople who cannot bear to have him remain in Jefferson. His black cook is driven off by the Ku Klux Klan, and he is directly subjugated to their racist brutality. When Hightower, already declared impure, insists on remaining within an ordered, sacred Southern community, that “community’s convictions and actions are in agreement, and they are aggressively, even destructively, expressed” (Visser 40). And yet, in spite of the violent beating he suffers, from deep inside Hightower comes a determination to remain in the town and to bear witness to his small measure of self respect and dignity through his mere presence.

Faulkner carefully develops the character of Gail Hightower in a manner that argues for the possibilities of grace within the human community. Faulkner imagines Hightower as a character who is intelligent and well meaning but misdirected and full of self-pity. Given Hightower’s general good will, even to those who have wronged him, this character becomes an exceptional case within the novel, meaning he is hardly superfluous. He is instead a central figure whose path may be less violent than Christmas’, or less sexual than Burden’s, or less life-altering than Bunch’s, and yet it is a fundamental shift in Hightower’s self-image that becomes the source of his regeneration as a human being. It is in Hightower’s character that *Light in August* finds a focal point for the action of grace and of light within the human spirit, opposed as this change is to the darkness in which Hightower’s life begins in the novel. He is sanctified while remaining within the sacred margins because, in the action of the text, God reveals himself to Hightower, surrounding him with the first and most powerful type of sacred space.

Hightower is a study in transitions, but he is first presented as a man trapped by his own nostalgia for the events of the past, and this quickly becomes problematic. He comes to Jefferson excited and almost bragging about his acceptance to the church that he had his heart set upon even before the beginning of his seminary training. Yet, from the beginning of his ministry, Hightower is considered an outsider because he is not from Jefferson but came there straight from seminary only because it was where his grandfather had died. As mentioned earlier, the South functions in Faulkner's writings as the fourth type of sacred space, wherein the whole land is holy because it is thought of as a uniformly ordered system. In such groups, membership often becomes the true test of accurate knowledge. As Joan Scott argues, to know the South, or to protect it from pollution, you must be of it, and to be of it, you must willingly and wholeheartedly conform to established group interpretations and experiences (10).

Faulkner pictures Hightower as oblivious to this reality because he has unquestioningly accepted the rhetoric of the Church. He preaches trite set pieces of theology in what he takes to be a high style. His method of sermon delivery leaves much to be desired by those who attend his congregation; they find him overly theatrical and boisterous—an automatic shortcoming in the stolid Presbyterian tradition. They claim he is “wild too in the pulpit, using religion as though it were a dream . . . a sort of cyclone that did not even need to touch the actual earth” (53). Hyatt Waggoner observes that even when Hightower recalls his grandfather's battles, he “spends most of his life above the battle and only at the end of his life comes down to the human life of man” because he is “so clearly the victim of his own delusions” (131-32). His is an imaginary faith that pertains more to the wild events of

his grandfather fighting in the American Civil War even more than to the events of the life of Christ. These two founding myths for Hightower are probably not too distinct in his mind; as Eliade argues, “Religious man's profound nostalgia . . . expresses *the desire to live in a pure and holy cosmos, as it was in the beginning, when it came fresh from the Creator's hands*” (65; italics original). Hence, the figures of his grandfather and of Christ both represent a similar romantic yearning for a pure paradise apart from the concerns of real life. It is for exactly this same reason that the congregation calls Hightower's preaching a cyclone that does not touch the earth, indicating that the sermons are not at all applicable to their lives. Nor does he conceive of religion as intellectual assent to the theological dogmas of the past because “he couldn't get religion and the galloping cavalry and his dead grandfather shot from the galloping horse separate from each other, even in the pulpit. And he could not untangle them from each other in his private life, at home either” (53).

Faulkner thus paints an image of Hightower and other Churchmen as those whose minds and hearts are set so far in the past that their ministry is made irrelevant to the concerns of the modern world. Hightower's ministry consists largely of preaching sermons as if he were a ringmaster at a three ring circus, and his subject matter is a tangle of romantic notions about his ancestry, the history of the town to which he has been able to get himself sent, and an even dimmer and more romantic notion of the Gospel of the Church. The accounts he heard of his grandfather, who actually died unromantically while raiding a hen house in Yankee territory, likely at the hands of “the wife of a Confederate soldier” (485), refer to a time twenty years before his own birth, and yet they set the tone of his entire life. He is born, lives, and dies in the instant when his grandfather is shot from the saddle decades earlier.

Likewise, the Church as a whole is born, lives, and perhaps, Faulkner suggests, dies in the instant when Jesus Christ is nailed to the cross. As Andrew John Miller suggests, beliefs such as these that are rooted in the distant history are “shadowed by a darkness that we can penetrate only by using assumptions grounded, not in legible, visible evidence, but, rather, in beliefs regarding the silent and invisible intimations of the unwritten and unspoken” (“F” 186). Hightower's vision of his grandfather and the Church's vision of its founding are not based in a testable reality but in very shaky evidence found in oral accounts offered by people who admired his grandfather but were not even present at the events. In the Church's case, this reliance on stories from the shadowy darkness results in a dusty institution that lives in the past and has long since ceased to be useful because it does not remake itself for the struggles or needs of each new generation but instead insists that new realities should be altered to suit a tradition that is derived from an imagined past that in turn institutes an outdated manner of life and understanding of the sanctified life.

In his own spiritual beliefs, William Faulkner sought just such a faith beyond the rule of society or organized religion. Faulkner's private faith is reflected in that, although he was baptized in a Methodist church, married in a Presbyterian church, and buried in an Episcopalian church, he was never a member in good attendance of any church (Sykes 44). However, Christianity was an important part of Faulkner's cultural inheritance, and he often referred to himself as a “good Christian”; he observed prayer times before meals and during Christian holy days, and his piety was well remembered by his family (Johnson 67). However, his biography of faith is also characterized by an abuse of alcohol and an empty pew on Sunday morning. Perhaps he shared opinion he writes into Hightower's stream of consciousness: “that which is

destroying the Church is not the outward groping of those within it nor the inward groping of those without, but the professionals who control it and who have removed the bells from its steeples” (487); Faulkner uses the bells as a metonymy for the mysteries of sacredness that he argues disappear within organized religion, and he criticizes clergymen intent on over-intellectualizing or demythologizing the unknown. The true darkness, then, is not Hightower's dark house or life but the minds of the clergy and their flocks who illustrate, as Shakespeare's clown Festa wryly observes, that “There is no darkness / but ignorance” (*Twelfth Night* 4.2.40-41). These “dark men” sell the Word of God for money, but substitute substandard merchandise, as Faulkner suggests when he said, “I have always thought of God as being in the wholesale rather than the retail business”; thus, in Faulkner’s view, “God deals directly with the human heart; the church is a meddling would-be-broker” (Faulkner, qtd. in Sykes 44). Faulkner thus saw himself as a devout private Christian who also “loved the people of his religion” and who, “in fact, loved them so fiercely that he was profoundly angry with most of them, most of the time” (Hlavsa 128). He writes about faith because it is central to his own life; he criticizes its usefulness because he is upset by its failings.

In a different sense, the issue of usefulness rises again when the text refers back to the time of the scandal in its attempt to depict the nature of Hightower’s relationship with his young wife. It seems that the churchgoers agree to overlook his preaching style, though not approve of it, until the “frozen look on [his wife's] face” and the inhospitable manse lead the local women to suspect something is very wrong within a year of their arrival in Jefferson (63-64). The women eventually reason that this, undoubtedly, is because Hightower “couldn’t or wouldn’t satisfy her himself,”

meaning he does not respect the command for Christians to keep the space of their marriage bed holy (51). Hightower's wife soon isolates herself in the manse in her misery and does not accept any visitors. Then she begins to take secret trips to Memphis and misleads the townswomen by saying that she is visiting her family instead; these trips do seem to cure her of her odd ways for a while. Memphis is the novel's "den of iniquity," and it represents the opposite of the sacred space offered by pure small town Jefferson. Ultimately, though, Hightower's wife suffers a nervous breakdown in the church during a service and is sent to a sanatorium for treatment; again, this treatment appears to work for some time until she renews her mysterious trips to the city. All through this period, Hightower continues to preach every Sunday "as though the whole thing had never happened," and this silence and apparent apathy enrage his congregation (65). But finally one morning, she is found dead in Memphis after jumping or falling from a hotel room where she had been registered as the wife of a man who was not her husband; the town feels embarrassment instead of pity when "the papers printed it, with the story: wife of the Reverend Gail Hightower, of Jefferson, Mississippi" (67). This is the last straw for the church, and they demand Hightower's resignation and even take up a collection so that he can leave Jefferson. However, Hightower knows he must remain in order to feel connected to his grandfather, so, as is later revealed, Hightower purchases the house of his imagination that looks out on the street where he thinks his grandfather rode and died; even before he arrives in Jefferson, he tells his wife,

I know the very street they rode into town upon and then out again. I have never seen it, but I know exactly how it will look. I know exactly the house that we will someday own and live in upon the street will look. . . . we can look out the window and see the street, maybe even

the hoofmarks or their shapes in the air, because the same air will be there even if the dust, the mud, is gone. (483)

When he buys the house on the back street, the elders feel he has “accepted the money under false pretences,” so he insists they take back the “exact sum” of the collection they had given him “to the exact penny and in the exact denominations” (70); however, they refuse to take back the collection, perhaps seeing it too as now contaminated. The church elders thus attempted to deal with him in the first method delineated by Douglas, cancelling his presence—not by fixing anything, but by sending him far away. Their rejection of him as contamination is clear.

However, Hightower refuses to heed their rejection and continues to preach until he finds the church door actually locked against him. After Hightower insists on dangerously transgressing the internal boundaries of the church and community, the townspeople exercise their power by excluding him from their sacred space, and they no longer allow him to continue performing the sacred rituals of his sacred calling. He quietly hangs his sign advertising his feminine artistic painting skills, yet the people will not leave him alone out of fear of the danger caused by his mere existence as a marginal force and joke ironically that his D.D., or Doctor of Divinity, actually means “Done Damned” (57-61). They believe that his wife’s behaviour was a direct result of his own inhuman sexual nature. They see him as either impotent or worse, engaged in unnatural acts, and they fear his contagion. The Ku Klux Klan at this point scares off his black cook, after forcing her to say that Hightower had asked her to do something that was “contrary to God and nature” (61). By not naming the act, it becomes unquantified and immense, mysterious and evil. Through the invented sin, the power structure of the sanctified system increases Hightower’s supposed iniquity

by adding a suspicion of miscegenation, a racial contagion of intercourse with blacks, a definite act of impurity in the sanctified South. As the gossip spreads, the consensus becomes that “if a nigger woman considered it against God and nature, it must be pretty bad” and that through the contagion of her own sexuality, perhaps “the negro woman was the reason” Hightower had not been a natural husband in the first place (71). The K.K.K. is next so emboldened that they forgo masking their identities and whip a black man hired by Hightower to replace the female cook (72), though the townspeople may assume the man replaces the woman in the kitchen as well as in the bedroom, an assumption repeated by Grimm, whose fear clearly includes a homosexual invasion of his ordered Southern society, when he yells, “Has every preacher and old maid in Jefferson taken their pants down to the yellowbellied son of a bitch?” (464).

Hightower ignores the Klan's warning to leave town by midnight by a message which had invaded the sacred space of his study via a brick thrown through the study window at nighttime. Faulkner hides the response of the K.K.K., saying merely in the voice of town gossip that “on the second morning a man found him in the woods about a mile from town. He had been tied to a tree and beaten unconscious. He refused to tell who had done it” (72). This mercilessly beating of a man tied to a tree suggests an erotic position that is also clearly reminiscent of the crucifixion of Christ. Still, Hightower would not leave Jefferson. When he, fifteen years later, attempts to deliver a black woman's stillborn baby without any medical training beyond a textbook, town gossip makes his act of kindness unclean and speculates that the woman's baby was actually his own; though this occurs long after the scandal, the townspeople think “it was just too close to that other business . . . despite the fifteen

years between them” (73-74). While the reader can be expected to have some measure of sympathy for Gail Hightower, the townspeople certainly do not. Due to the almost hermetically sealed sacred society they seem to long for, they blame Hightower's troubles directly on what they characterize as his sexual misconduct or lack of virility. They cannot fix his actions or responses within the expectations of their society, so they invent vice for him, and although they are unsure of the nature of his exact vice, they are sure that he is unnatural and fear his ability to contaminate.

That this contamination should be expressed sexually is to be expected in the context of *Light in August*. The central characters, even beyond Hightower and his promiscuous wife, are considered profane due primarily to their aberrant sexuality: Lena is on the roads seeking the father of her unborn child; Brown, the baby's uninterested father, defends himself from prison by claiming Christmas was black and had sex with Burden, a moment which Krister Friday identifies as Brown branding Christmas as a scapegoat not to protect himself but to remove this contaminant “for the entire community” (46); the townspeople are not truly surprised about Burden's sexuality because she was the daughter of Yankee carpetbaggers and was long identified as a “lover of Negroes” (46) and, though they originally intend this insult figuratively, they are glad to mean it literally as well; indeed, their hatred for her makes them hope “that she had been ravished too: at least once before her throat was cut and at least once afterward” (288); Christmas cannot find peace because even he is unsure of the racial identity of the circus worker who impregnated his mother.

In Christmas' own sexual life, race and sex and violence pollution are intertwined intimately. He is about to lose his virginity in a gang rape on a back teenaged girl in a shed but beats her instead (156ff); he tells his waitress lover he is

partly black while stroking her thigh after sex (196-97); he later enjoys shocking white prostitutes with his hidden racial identity; as he moves northward in the US, however, he is the one who is shocked when he discovers white Northern prostitutes who do not mind transgressing the Southern taboo and do not care about his mixed race; he actually perpetuates the ingrained prejudices of Southern segregation with one such woman, whom he beats nearly to death until dragged off her by two policemen (224-25). Christmas' relationship with Joanna Burden is one of “wild throes of nymphomania” that would end with Joanna devolving to wildness, repeating “Negro! Negro! Negro!” during their sexual intercourse (259-60). Given Douglas' treatment of holiness and pollution, the connection is also the reason for Christmas' castration by Grimm, who is quite clear that the reason this must be done is that “We got to preserve order” (451) and so that, as he tells Christmas' lifeless body, “Now you'll let white women alone, even in hell” (464). These linkages among sexuality and race and land are central to the narrative's construction of sacredness and corruption. As Beth Widmaier notes, the abuse of the black female body pictures their abjection while the “chaste Southern lady” is kept pure and protected from sexual pollution because the white men “took out their lust on black women and prostitutes,” allowing white women to “stand unencumbered of the 'unfeminine' trait of sexual desire, placing her on the pedestal of pure, untainted femininity” (27).

One of the most explicit modernist linkages among sex, land, pollution, sacredness is found in John Steinbeck's *To a God Unknown* (1933). In Steinbeck's modernist conception, the sacred dwells outside the organized Church; sacred space is specifically centred on two sites within the text: a large oak tree that Joseph, the main character, believes to be inhabited by the spirit of his dead father, and a special grove

of pine trees protecting a small meadow with a deep spring that waters the green moss that grows on a large rock in the middle of the meadow. There is likewise a need to protect this nontraditional sacred space from pollution, as Joseph defends the tree until his Puritanical brother kills it, and he defends the grove from his wife, who eventually is tragically killed when she falls after trying to climb the rock, yet one feels that is somehow a punishment for her act of blasphemy, much like the priest Uzza who is killed after touching the Ark of the Covenant in 1 Chronicles 13. Quite specifically, a private faith is presented as valid while organized religion is seen as destructive, controlling, and wrongheaded in its notions of sex and nature and sacredness.

As he does in his presentation of Hightower's weaknesses, Faulkner likewise portrays the institutional Church as an unnatural institution, not only without relevance, but also without power. It dwindles because it is full of stories and myth and empty tradition, and it cannot reproduce itself. Its system of government falls apart as well, for the Presbyterian system was created with the specific aim to manage congregations in an orderly fashion. Instead, the congregation's baser claims have full sway, and they are a party to Hightower's misery and even to his beating. The Church cannot be removed from the people who constitute it, and those of Hightower's congregation are unforgiving, unloving, and non-Christian in their betrayal of their minister. The Church is so filled with its own problems that it cannot fulfil its stated mission of sharing the Christian message or of being a helping hand, physically and spiritually, to the world. It flounders in internal self-contradiction and so is as impotent as Hightower, whose wife dies with another man and who is lashed to a tree for his lack of virility.

After Hightower is sent away from his church, he is considered marginal and a failure. Some women eventually take at least a short measure of pity upon him, and they send him baked goods and dishes of supper, though it is only the second-rate sort of fare that they would send to poor mill families. The only role he takes in the life of the town is being a secret mentor to Byron Bunch, who comes to see him throughout the week. Yet, even here, Byron feels he can second guess his mentor and because he senses Hightower's feebleness, doubts Hightower even knows why he stays in Jefferson (65). Byron knows that he, Byron, is the one person that links Hightower with humanity, and Byron knows it is left to him to deliver news of the outside world, such as the murder of Burden, the capture of Joe Christmas, the introduction of Doc and Mrs. Hines, and the opportunity to help Christmas. And when Hightower receives such tidings, he does so with great anxiety, as if he also fears contact with the people who persecuted him. When Byron brings news of Christmas' dire plight, for instance, Hightower sweats like Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane yet has tremendous pity both for Christmas and for the townspeople, saying, "Poor man. Poor mankind" (87). It is only Byron's naïveté and childish faith that allow him to persuade himself that Hightower remains worthy of respect. He believes that Hightower is a very holy man and postulates therefore that he cannot understand his ways or the knowledge of the "books of religion and history and science of whose existence Byron had never heard" that crowd the shelves of Hightower's study (73). While Faulkner does portray Byron's trust as misplaced, Byron is the one character who responds positively to Hightower despite the fact that he has been pushed to the margins of society. This is compounded, for example, on one visit to the manse when Byron's nose balks at the smell of sweat and uncleanness that permeates the house, yet he

assures himself, “as though by inspiration, divination: ‘It is the odor of goodness. Of course it would smell bad to us who are bad and sinful’” (261). Hightower himself is oblivious to his rank odour, “that smell of people who no longer live in life: that odor of overplump desiccation and stale linen as though a precursor of the tomb” (278). He has the smell of an old man already decaying: full of knowledge and learning, but afraid of human interactions and of life. Elmo Howell says of Hightower that “In dying to the world, he achieves a kind of sanctity” (185). The smell of sweat and death then can be seen to operate as a hopeful foreshadowing of Hightower's eventual spiritual rebirth.

Faulkner sets Hightower apart in the sacred margins in a further sense in that, despite being removed from the actual action of the events that transpire in Jefferson, he is very perceptive about what is really happening—though he fails once again when his voice is ignored and he maintains his refusal to become involved in the affairs of the town. His valuable perception now appears when he can ascertain Byron’s true motivations in regard to Lena while Byron himself clearly does not. He challenges Byron’s decisions to support Lena, to move her to the Burden homestead, and to leave with her in a vain search for Joe Brown; Hightower puts Byron's position into spiritual language he can understand by arguing that Byron is being led into sin “by the devil” (269). Hightower knows the difference between evil and the appearance of evil, and he immediately comprehends Byron’s thoughts and actions. Although his advice is likely sound, it is ignored and so Hightower again fails. He cries in front of Byron and denies any responsibility to help after his congregation decided his fate. He claims, “I am not a man of God. And not through my own desire . . . It was the will of them . . . who put [Christmas in prison] to do their will upon, as

they did to me, with insult and violence” (319). Finally, Byron and Mrs. Hines come to him to beg that he help Joe Christmas by testifying that he was with him the night of Joanna’s murder. Doc Hines is of course absent, for he fears the miscegenation represented by Christmas. Hightower adamantly refuses to lie and so misses his chance to be of some use until it is too late and Percy Grimm slaughters Christmas in Hightower’s very house.

Similarly, Faulkner uses his critical characterization of Hightower to critique the Church by representing Hightower as its representative and also as its victim; Faulkner illustrates the sorrow caused by the Church's power of exclusion each time Hightower muses on the Church and on his former congregation. In a heartrending passage, Hightower sits yet again in his darkened study, waits by the window, and listens for the sound of the singing to begin. He imagines exactly what happens in the church at each moment as he remembers it, even to the point of the ladies fanning themselves in the evening heat and Miss Carruthers (who had actually been dead for twenty years) entering the choir loft. Very tellingly, Hightower reflects on the spiritual nature of the music he hears, for “the music has still a quality stern and implacable, deliberate and without passion so much as immolation, pleading, asking, for not love, not life, forbidding it to others, demanding in sonorous tones death as though death were the boon” (321-22). Faulkner identifies these Christians through their choice of worship music; their spiritual reality is that of a people who cannot embrace the extremes of ecstasy or of catastrophe, but they cannot escape them either, and so they take out their frustration upon themselves and each other. This is not a surprise to Hightower, who asks, “And so why should not their religion drive them to crucifixion of themselves and one another?” (322). Faulkner portrays the defrocked clergyman,

who has himself been victimized by society, as alone in grasping the full terror of what the people are about to do to Christmas because he alone realizes they do it gladly to deny the self-doubt and self-pity bred into them by their religion that still reassures them that they are living righteously as a sacred people.

Faulkner is criticizing a Calvinism that is clearly a caricature of the sixteenth century reformer's actual doctrines of election and predestination, yet he is accurate in picturing what it became within the context of the American South and other places. The basis of this sub-Calvinism was the tradition's "most notorious doctrine, that through Adam's disobedience the race of man became deserving of damnation . . . that all human effort is in vain, and that the corrupt state of society is always and everywhere the same" (Harold J. Douglas 38-39). However, the Calvinism of the Presbyterians in *Light in August* is not formed by doctrinal assertions but, as John Sykes observes, by "a certain kind of religious fanaticism which is simultaneously dogmatic and anxious. . . . Faulkner's Calvinists tend to be intensely driven men or women who are utterly convinced they know God's plan and are determined to play out their role in it" (45). It is Hightower's ability to rise above dogma that separates him from the other characters in the novel. His clearest opposite is MacEachern, who is severe and adheres to the strictest Calvinism. MacEachern's faith is summarized in his 1648 *Westminster Catechism*, which lays out all the problems and solutions to life in a simple question and answer format. His practical theology is one of hard work, self-denial, and beatings to keep down the sinful human nature, for he says, the "two abominations are sloth and idle thinking, the two virtues are work and fear of God" (126). Nor is Hightower like "Uncle Doc" Hines, a man driven by unthinking hatred. He despises all blacks and especially hates Joe Christmas, his own grandson through

the union of his daughter with a man he assumes to have been black or partly black; in fact, the only evidence that the man was partly black derives from the damaging suspicions of Hines himself. He sends Joe to an orphanage as a boy, and he is desperate to see him hanged as a man, so fully does he fear miscegenation. He preaches (his first name, "Eupheus" is an ironic derivative of the Greek for "good news" or "good preacher"), but his message is one of white supremacy based on his claim that "blackness" is a curse from God, and he even delivers this message in black churches. His connection of pollution and sacredness is very clear; he has conversations with God, and even after the boy is sent away, he "kept in touch with God," periodically asking him simply, "That bastard, Lord"; finally, after a particularly intense night of fear, he "wrestled and he strove," but God this time tells him to rectify the pollution represented by Christmas' miscegenation: "God said 'It's that bastard. Your work is not yet done. He's a pollution and a abomination on My earth'" (386). In this case, the misappropriation of sacredness reinterprets it in a racial sense, and Faulkner presents Hines as a delusional figure who believes God has commanded him to erase the pollution that the suspected miscegenation of Christmas represents to the racial purity he sees as violated in the body of his daughter and as essential for Southern society.

Conversely, Faulkner pictures Hightower as a man who is already removed from the sub-Christianity of these other characters, if only because he was pushed away from it for his overly romantic and convoluted notions of the Christian faith. He is intelligent, he is well-meaning, he is wise in the matters of human nature, and his justice is tempered with mercy. His failing is presented as residing in his deep self-pity caused by how he has been treated by life and by his fellow Christians and by his

belief that he does not need to engage humanity because he has already “paid his debt” through his sufferings. However, Faulkner criticizes such self-righteousness and self-pity by comparing Hightower to the Church through their shared glorification of self-crucifixion; indeed, Hightower is presented as finding pride in his mistreatment through the opportunity to make himself an immolated martyr for the honour of his long dead grandfather rather than face the more difficult task of engaging love and life. As Dorothy Tuck observes, “Hightower *chooses*, over and over again, to pursue his grandfather’s spirit at the cost of his own life” (97). And when he faces challenges in life, when he realizes that the Church, love, and marriage are not what he thought they were, he is driven “further into the security of the past, and marries [himself] more firmly to the ghost of his grandfather” (Tuck 97). He does finally realize his need to choose life and only in the end finds what he lacks, but he is nonetheless careful throughout to maintain at least a tenuous connection to his past ideals of ministry by counselling Bunch. Twice Bunch comes to Hightower in need of his wise assistance; twice Faulkner begins their meeting with Hightower's listening to the singing of his former congregation; and twice the narrator repeats the phrase, “The sound of music from the distant church has long since ceased” (78, 338). In that turn of phrase, Faulkner represents the rituals of organized religion as futile praising that eventually ceases while Hightower remains within the sacred margins of the study in his dark house and, importantly, does not cease in his attempt to minister to the needs of his friend. Faulkner's argument becomes that the sacredness found within the Church is dry and ritualistic whereas a true sacredness is found at the margins among those banished from organized religion. Thus, he displays the defrocked, suffering minister as having found a sacred purpose in continuing to serve even after he is

barred from publicly recognized sacred space and long after the sacred music of the congregation has ceased.

Faulkner is not content to leave Hightower high and removed, a resident of an intellectual and pitiful ivory tower, so he brings symbolic and actual sanctity into the character's life. In Tuck's words, Faulkner makes Hightower "a battleground on which his human and ghostly selves fight for supremacy" over his "intense compassion for Joe and . . . intense fear of his own involvement" (Tuck 99). David Minter likewise believes that Hightower will become a "moral hero . . . [when he] achieves a victory by travelling the moral distance from selfish immunity to redemption by the conviction that immunity cannot be bought" (105). In delivering Lena's baby before the doctor can arrive, Hightower is finally given a task in which he is competent and useful to others, even though it is outside his training. His success immediately has an impact on his self-conception. He finally feels like a human being again, and when he returns to his house, instead of reading the fluffy Tennyson, he proudly picks up Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, which he chooses because it is "food for a man" (355). He fantasizes that Lena might name the child after him, and he goes so far as to identify himself loudly as "the doctor" when he next goes to visit. He shaves, puts on clean clothes, and acknowledges that he should never have given up the twin duty-pleasures of praying and hiking. Hightower has discovered that he has a purpose and is useful to humanity and can still feel pleasure, cutting short his slow process of dry self-immolation. He is more surprised than anyone to hear himself say, "Life comes to the old man yet," and somehow thinks this task is his last chore and that he can now rest; however, the narrator again breaks in to warn us that this "is not all. There is one thing more reserved for him" (355, 363). That which

is reserved for him is in fact the opposite of what he has just experienced through the birth of Lena's child, but the narrator insists that it, like the other, is brought directly to him from something divine, something outside the human scope.

The narrator ominously identifies this God-like figure as "The Player," an identification by which Faulkner alludes to Thomas Hardy's similar presentation of God as the "President of the Immortals" in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Chillingly, after Angel watches the black flag rise in the tower to signal Tess' execution, Hardy ends the text abruptly with the line, "Justice was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess" (476). The parallels are evident in that Tess, like Hightower and Christmas, does not deserve the pain and the suffering and eventual execution that are given to her when society and the religious hierarchy see her as a contaminant who has transgressed their traditional conceptions of sacredness. If these people were representing God in their brutality, and if there were a just God in control, then for Hardy and for Faulkner, this divinity is a player, a gambler, or a sadistic torturer who enjoys hurting pure and good creatures. Tellingly, Hardy's subtitle for the novel was *A Pure Woman Faithfully Portrayed*, and in the novel as throughout his other texts and in his life, he demonstrated a belief in the sacred margins. Hardy emphasizes the human faculty of reason as that which allows us to reason through (or perhaps against) traditional theodicy. He plainly doubts whether, faced with the brutality of life, with sickness and death and violence, that there can be a good God who would allow this. He sometimes portrays God in a Deistic manner, in that he creates the universe, populates it, keeps it operating, but ultimately does not care personally for people. However, Hardy sometimes also speaks distinctly of God's coldness and the hypocrisy implied by his ultimate control.

In this sense, God does take a personal interest in the lives of his creatures, but his interest is evil and leads to decay. He is omnipotent but uncaring, and omniscient save in the area of human suffering.

Like Hightower and Tess, Thomas Hardy himself knew the suffering of being made unwelcome at church, even though he was employed in his early career as an ecclesiastical architect (much as his Jude was a ecclesiastical mason), and had a continuing love for church buildings, music, and ritual. The Church's rejection of Hardy was especially keen after his last two novels were published, which is when he decided to return exclusively to the poetry that he wrote for the last thirty years of his life. A low point for Hardy was when the Bishop of Wakefield publicly burned *Jude the Obscure*, though Hardy took the bishop's actions in stride and later remarked how irked he was that the bishop would go to the trouble and waste of kindling a special fire in the middle of the summer just to burn his book (Wilson 5). Hardy's response was that "it was the Bishop's intolerance that drove him [Hardy] out of the Church; that he would have been only too happy to continue with occasional church while keeping his own counsel about the verifiability of doctrine" (Wilson 5). Yet, it was perhaps the Church's self image as sovereign that would not allow it to give up authority over this one man's body and soul. When organized religion's absolute power clashed with the growing desire of the people for individual freedoms of belief and action, it was the unbending church that broke.

It is this misconception of traditional Christianity's God that produces a violent and terrifying sacred space when the Player reveals himself to Hightower through the crucifixion of Joe Christmas. It is the Player who brings Joe Christmas to Hightower's house in his flight from Grimm and his version of justice. It is the Player

who gives Hightower this last chance to stand up for the accused, a chance that he takes without hesitation despite being attacked by Christmas. And it is the Player who allows Grimm to discover and shoot Christmas with five perfectly grouped shots and then to castrate him as he slowly dies. It is on Rev. Hightower's kitchen floor that Christmas, the Christ-figure's "pent black blood" is split, and it is this blood that buys Hightower's redemption from the death that clings about his earthly frame. Just as the sending of Christ into the world is represented by the temporal sacred ritual of the Christmas celebration that gives Joe his last name, and just as Christ's death produces a sacred space through the meeting of God with humanity, replicated in the Eucharistic rituals of thousands of communitarian sacred spaces, Hightower's dark house and his dark life are finally infused with the bright light of the sacred through the needless and evil sacrifice of another human being who has been forced to the margins on the basis of a suspected miscegenation that at the same time demonstrates the unfixed nature of race as a signifier and of identity based upon racial origins.

It is only when the dust settles and the body is removed and the blood is wiped clean that Hightower's story starts again at its very beginning. In chapter twenty, Faulkner tells Hightower's story through his own stream of consciousness, which reveals that Hightower is the son of an angry man who learned to be a doctor during the Civil War, and the grandson of a war hero who died raiding General Grant's stores in Jefferson. As a boy, Hightower was raised by his father and mother, "though he was fifty and she past forty when the son was born" (474); both were reduced by the war to shades and phantoms of the people they once were. Hightower was also raised by an old black former slave who had been owned by his grandfather and who repeatedly and secretly tells him stories about his grandfather's exploits in the war

(466-71). Howell argues that this echoes Faulkner's own fascination with the continuing relevance of the Civil War in the life of the American South despite the more immanent importance of World War I to the Lost Generation of which Faulkner was a part (185). For Hightower, this dull life and these exciting stories that combine to make him the boy he was and the man he would become: rooted in the past and incapable of dealing with the present, which is an ironic situation in a novel mainly narrated in the present tense. Faulkner identifies Hightower as a man who “escaped into his past where some member of his family was brave enough to match the moment” (Gwynn 45), and that notion of escape from the present is clear. In the same way, Hightower recalls, he saw the Church and the seminary as protected and inviolable guardians of naked truth where he would find solace, peace, and life. Hence, it is a shock to Hightower to meet the woman who would become his wife, who “suddenly and savagely” forces marriage upon him so that she might “escape from her present life” in her father’s seminary, leaving Hightower dumbfounded by the idea that anyone could want to escape from the sanctity found in the Church; yet she is “blind, reckless, desperate” and has a knowledge and wisdom far beyond his own about the hardships of life and depression as well as about the political workings of the Church as an institution (480). Indeed, Hightower only achieves his goal of being called to Jefferson thanks to his fiancée's connections to the Church hierarchy through her father, one of the ministers who teaches in the college (479).

It is Hightower’s realization that the Church operates through an entanglement of politics and judgement that make his comfortable world of faith and order crumble around him like a child’s sandcastle. That which defines itself as sacred is in fact rotten, polluted, and corrupting. As mentioned earlier, Hightower's epiphany

following Christmas' death shows him that “that which is destroying the Church is not the outward groping of those within it nor the inward groping of those without, but the professionals who control it” (426). Such professionals propagate the decidedly non-Christian idea that there is only room in the Church for judgement of sin and that there is no forgiveness within its walls. Faulkner identifies this as a sub-Christian teaching that many segments of the Calvinist wing of the Church had adopted; questioned by a university student on this nature of the text's Calvinism, Faulkner was asked, “In *Light in August*, much of the action seems to stem from an almost fanatical Calvinism. Would it be true to surmise that you favour strongly an individual rather than an organized religion?’ [He answered,] ‘I do, always.’ ‘Then you think perhaps that man must work out his own salvation from within rather than without?’ ‘I do, yes’” (Gwynn 73). This form of “fanatical Calvinism” had accepted only half of its mandate: it convinced people of their sin and need for God, but it did not show them that forgiveness was offered freely by the gospel of grace. Faulkner's response to the question is therefore of theological intent. Calvinists believed in the total depravity of humans after the Fall, which meant that they could not actively choose God but he had to elect to offer them his irresistible grace; Faulkner rejects this and insists that, as the student put it, “a man must work out his own salvation from within” rather than trust in the organized Church. Faulkner has Hightower realize that he had believed this theology fully and that he had in fact “accepted that . . . I acquiesced. Nay, I did worse: I served it” (487). His Christian faith, in a simpler form akin to a spirituality apart from dogma, is only saved by rejecting the Church’s claim to his institutional allegiance and by attacking its professional clergy, and this choice finally severs Hightower's ties to it.

Faulkner does not clarify Hightower's official status in the eyes of the institutional Church, but he shows that Hightower is able to turn his back on the institutional Church after this epiphany. On a theological basis, Hightower compares the “churches of the world” to a “rampart, like one of those barricades of the middleages with dead and sharpened stake, against truth and against that peace in which to sin and be forgiven which is the life of man” (487). Very tellingly, the Church is portrayed as an aggressive fortress that constructs itself as the regulator of those who have access to grace and spiritual life. Hightower, who has been shut out of those walls and kept in the margins, fully rejects the claim of organized religion to authenticate or to validate his spiritual belief, and he recognizes that he and his life are sacred and his sins are forgiven on the basis of direct communication with God. In accomplishing this redemption, Hightower first imagines his preaching being rejected by the congregation as “a charlatan preaching worse than heresy” (488). He turns away from them in his imagination and sees the “final and supreme Face Itself,” whom Hightower at first attempts to convince of his innocence, having merely “accepted more than I could perform”; the Face rebukes him, saying the Hightower married and came to Jefferson “as a means toward your own selfishness” (489). Throughout this stream of consciousness section, Faulkner has a further narrator who characterizes Hightower's thoughts as a wheel; however, when he begins to enter this stage of imagination and communication with the Face, “Thinking begins to slow now. It slows like a wheel beginning to sun in sand, the axle, the vehicle, the power which propels it not yet aware” (488). Over the next few pages, the wheel gets further mired in the sand and progressively slows until Hightower is able to reach a stage of self-actualization after he stops suddenly; actually “aware of the sand now,” he sits

“Motionless, unbreathing, there comes upon him a consternation which is about to be actual horror” and, like Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, “sweat begins to pour from him, springing out like blood, and pouring” (490). At this point, the wheel is likened to “the slow implacability of a mediaeval torture instrument, beneath the wrenched and broken sockets of his spirit, his life” (490-91).

From this stream of consciousness, Faulkner aligns Hightower's religious epiphany with a personal insight that shows his guilt in mistreating his wife as “the instrument of her despair and death” (491). He further reasons that this circle of suffering in his life was caused by the pain of his parents' spectral generation, which produced in him a pathological identification with his romanticized Civil War grandfather. Hightower had allowed his personal being to live and die in the person of his grandfather, so he, in effect, became his “dead grandfather on the instant of his death”; hence, Hightower as his grandfather killed his grandson by not allowing him to live, and thereby became “the debacher and murderer of [his] grandson's wife” (491). Indeed, Faulkner uses the language of the spectre to describe the three people—his father, mother, and the former black slave—who had raised Hightower, and the boy himself becomes a phantom as obsessed as they are by the dead grandfather whose effects in their lives are more powerful than their own desires; as Hightower observes, “is it any wonder that this world is populated principally by the dead?” (485). Friday argues that, “by precluding his empathy with the present, Hightower's engagement with the past ensures the destruction of the present, and with it the possibility of continuity,” but this “history comes to Hightower in flux as the possibility of becoming something else” (60). Realizing these complex connections is the catalyst for the self-actualization that Hightower has been waiting his entire life to

reach. Schreiber again offers a Lacanian analysis by arguing that Hightower, though obviously unsatisfied with the results of his dependence upon the spectre of his grandfather, derives an “enjoyment [that] comes from the repetition of the past because doing so represses the anxiety of lack,” and so “the act of repressing a sense of lack gives rise to desire, which can drive subjects to repeat outmoded and even dangerous behavior” (71). As if counselling himself following the trauma he also suffered during the murder of Joe Christmas, Hightower verbalizes his repetitions of the past and so is given a newer perspective, closer to the ground of the real present.

Faulkner impresses the importance of that transformational realization by again returning to the image of the wheel that was previously stuck in the sand when Hightower was attempting to contemplate the meaning of his own life. Immediately after Hightower is challenged by the Face and realizes and then admits his guilt in mistreating his wife and further identifies the cause as the haunting traumas of the Civil War and his grandfather's death, the figurative wheel is freed. Faulkner's narrator observes that, at that moment, “The wheel, released, seems to such on with a long sighing sound. . . . The wheel whirls on. It is going fast and smooth now, because it is freed now of burden, of vehicle, axle, all” (491). As Schreiber argues, Faulkner moves the character beyond “blindly acting out a symptom” to “a state of knowledge [that] gives meaning to the symptom,” for “Only by reconfiguring one's relationship to desire and its implied lack can one let go of a dysfunctional past and create a different future” (74); Schreiber further posits that “Through naming the desire to reject the demand of the cultural symbolic, Hightower emerges as subject at the end of the novel” when he is willing to challenge the social order by lying on behalf of Christmas and then reinterpreting his life through knowledge of his meaningless

repetition (80-81). Faulkner is thus urging a reevaluation and reorganization of inherited conception of the social systems of community and of Church that for a long time society has simply accepted. It becomes necessary to transition outside of the system and to acknowledge its errors, and this reevaluation posits the worthiness of the people whom the system had pushed to the margins as worthless, polluting, or transgressive. Indeed, these people are now revealed to be sacred through the fact of their humanity, and their message is understood to be valid and even prophetic for those in mainstream society who had pushed them to the margins in the first place.

By obliquely invoking the title of the novel during the last three pages of Hightower's stream of consciousness as “the lambent suspension of August,” Faulkner shows that this realignment of the sacred towards the margins is the central aim of the argument of his text. Faulkner presents this argument through the new knowledge gained in Hightower's epiphany that finally helps him to realize the effects of the many ghosts who have haunted him since his childhood, to realize how this has turned him into a man who has not truly lived, and to realize that he has sinned by wronging himself, his wife, his congregation, and life itself. It is this realization that revolutionizes Hightower's view of those who are marginalized when he sees them enrobed in a sacred halo of light. As the thought wheel spins freely, Hightower envisions the actual “light of August” in the sense that Faulkner implies through his title. Faulkner explained that the “light of August” refers to a certain rare quality of the light in Mississippi that only appears during a couple of days each summer. This rare sight of that light of a “luminous lambent quality” always made Faulkner think specifically of the Classical pre-Christian world with its pleasant suggestion of “an older light than ours” shining in our present time (*University* 199). As Eliade would

have explained Faulkner's experience, the light represented access to a sacred margin between the two worlds and so offered a sort of peace and acceptance far beyond that of society or organized belief systems. This mysterious and sacred light that Hightower sees “seems to engender and surround itself with a faint glow like a halo,” and, following the earlier vision of the Face, Hightower see that this sacred and mystical light is actually a “halo is full of faces”⁷ (491).

These faces are those of all the characters of import in Hightower's life, and all are “a little alike” but clear and “peaceful” with the jarring exception of “that of the man called Christmas,” which is “not clear” and “confused” until Hightower sees that his vision has mentally compressed the faces of Joe Christmas and Percy Grimm into one. Minter reads this twinning as signifying Hightower's realization that his “own cowardice and his failure to save Christmas are somehow part and parcel of the guilt of Percy Grimm” (104-04), but this would indicate a larger conflation of Hightower with Grimm as executioner and with Christmas as victim. Krister Friday points out another mirroring in that Christmas and Hightower share a grandfather-son dynamic that cuts out the role of the father, for, with both men, “the (figuratively) absent father signals a disruption in historical transmission” from the grandfather and from social traditions (61); this links Hightower and Christmas as characters haunted by a past they cannot know. Though Faulkner represents Christmas as a man who falls into tragedy because he is not connected to his origins and could never know the nature of his birth for sure, the same can be said of Grimm, who misappropriates notions of ethics and righteousness to support his own racism in the name of purity

⁷ This suggests an interesting parallel to the epiphany and the vision that Kaspar has of the faces of the goddesses, marginalized by history and Christianity, who peer at him from the hair of Mary Magdalene in H.D.'s *The Flowering of the Rod*.

and the defence of white womanhood, which finally makes him nothing more than a symbol of evil, hatred, and violence that effectively cuts him off from fulfilment, forgiveness, and grace.

Hightower's vision continues with his spirit seemingly engulfing the universe and coming to a divine level of understanding and empathy for individual human lives. When "some ultimate dammed flood within him breaks and rushes away, he seems to watch it, feeling himself losing contact with earth, lighter and lighter, emptying, floating"; he thinks he is dying, and indeed may be dying, but his vision encompasses "all air, all heaven" where he sees the most pitiable of the marginalized, the "lost and unheeded crying of all the living who ever lived, wailing still like lost children among the cold and terrible stars" (492). As the thought wheel "turns on . . . spins . . . fading, without progress," Faulkner's character comes to terms with his own guilt and realizes that he can embrace the "Now" of life through the freedom of grace and forgiveness (492). Faulkner's narrative voice remarks that the spectres of Hightower's grandfather and cavalry, who had not appeared in the earlier halo visions, had waited for this moment to reaffirm Hightower "in triumph and desire" and in "honor and pride and life"; the chapter ends when they soon appear in front of Hightower's window, wildly galloping down his street "upon a cloud of phantom dust" (492-493). Faulkner gives the grandfather's spectral appearance only now, after Hightower's long wait, when he has come to realize that his life had been misspent by living in the past. In this final vision, Faulkner argues that Hightower's life will be transformed into one that celebrates the presence of the sacredness of human life but that is founded upon a privatized faith lived out as an individual who remains in the sacred margins and does not seek the approval of the institutional Church or of

society. Having started Hightower down the correct road, Faulkner leaves the character in his study where he was first introduced; the difference is that although nightfall has again descended, Gail Hightower remains awash in the sacred light of August.

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Instead of the insular American South that provides the context of William Faulkner's *Light in August*, Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* (1936) is set in the cosmopolitan centres of a Europe falling under the approaching shadow of a second great war. Similarly though, the text focuses on the lives of people who are no less pushed towards the margins by the sovereign will of society because their sexuality, ethnicity, faith, or mental illness makes them different and vulnerable to exclusion. However, by questioning the role of degeneration, atavism, melancholia, and madness in the lives of these people, Djuna Barnes also places them too within sacred margins that at once validate their otherness and critique the assumptions constructed by society about them and about itself.

Indeed, Barnes classified this exclusion of individuals or groups under what she called “disqualification.” Cheryl Plumb further defines the concept as “an awareness of a sense of public shame, a suggestion that individuals who incurred public dismissal or scrutiny suffered because of what had happened to them or what they were, that is, Jewish, homosexual, or alienated from the values of a dominant culture” (xviii). In this sense, Barnes intended to populate her text with characters who were disqualified. For this reason, Clare Taylor has called *Nightwood* a “sick text

obsessed with the physical and sexual body” because “all of its major characters suffer from sensory damage or hystericized symptoms” including blindness, sleeping disorders, “deranged equilibrium,” kleptomania, anguish, loss, depression, and unspecified mental disorders (155-56). Again, the text has been characterized by Dana Seitler as “a fractured, fragmentary tale of an assemblage of degenerates of multiple nationalities, sexualities, and genders who come together to restlessly celebrate the decay of the modern; each character couples with another in degenerate solidarity amidst the confusion and chaos of the stultifying, nocturnal landscapes of bourgeois modernity” (243). Barnes' critical engagement with degeneration⁸ reflects a wider social concern at the *fin de siècle* with an imagined devolution of humans that many feared was revealed in the crime, poverty, political turmoil, and homosexuality found in the crowded urban centres. This fear was taken as a medical surety following the publication of works like *The Criminal Man* (1876) by the criminologist Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909), who argued that criminals inherited their behaviours, and *Degeneration* (1892) by Max Nordau (1849-1923), who argued that immoral decadent art was quickening the degeneration of society.⁹ The invocation of medical science to marginalize was based in the related fear of atavism, which was originally used by medical science to refer to diseases or conditions that intensified over generations of the same family; in the sense of social deviance, atavism is, as defined by Alex Goody, “a contagion, an unnatural participation that fundamentally ruptures

⁸ Barnes invokes degeneration even in her chapter titles, including “Bow Down,” “The Squatter,” and “Go Down, Matthew.”

⁹ In his *Degeneration* (1883), Nordau suggested that “We stand now in the midst of a severe mental epidemic; of a sort of black death of degeneration and hysteria, and it is natural that we should ask anxiously on all sides: 'What is to come next?';” after criticizing the culture of his time for devolving rapidly, Nordau turns to argue against the ill effects of decadent literature: “it is fair to conclude that after some centuries art and poetry will have become pure atavisms, and will no longer be cultivated except by the most emotional portion of humanity—by women, by the young, perhaps even by children” (22, 26).

the central institutions of family, religion and State” (170). Erin Carlston highlights this connection by remarking that the “representations of the newly created class of ‘homosexuals’ were . . . modeled on familiar figures of Jews and Jewishness, as well as on prototypes of disease,” which add to *Nightwood’s* accompanying images of sterility, castration, impotence, abortion, and decline (19, 52). Belief in degeneration as a valid medical category lasted well into the twentieth century and influenced eugenics programs in several countries including Canada and, of course, Nazi Germany. Given Barnes' critique of this category of understanding, *Nightwood* is thus, as Jane Marcus posits,

a prophecy of the Holocaust, an attack on the doctors and politicians who defined deviance and set up a world view of us and them, the normal and the abnormal, in political, racial, and sexual terms, and a world that was divided into the upright and the downcast. (249)

Giorgio Agamben’s study of the relationship of sovereign power and human life, *Homo Sacer* (1995), interacts with three concerns central to *Nightwood*: the self-legitimizing power of sovereignty, the biopolitical creation of “bare life,” and the emergence of the camp as the modern paradigm of exclusion. Agamben proposes that biopolitics began before recorded history with a sovereign exercising power over life and death, that this process has intensified through the centuries, that we now have actual camps set up for the excluded, that any of us may potentially join them, and this presents a significant problem that must be rectified within human society.

Agamben first questions the logic of sovereignty and its relation to life, beginning the text bluntly with the statement, “The Greeks had no single term to express what we mean by the word, ‘life’”; *zoe* indicated the “simple fact of living common to all living beings” while *bios* referred to “the form or way of living proper

to an individual or group” (1). Hence, to restate this in its simplest terms, we can consider *zoe* the physical life and *bios* the ability to live in a cultured manner, a central characteristic of the human being.¹⁰ Agamben compares *zoe* and *bios* to the differences between voice and language, between *langue* and *parole*, and between humanness and citizenship. The body, then, is what Agamben will term “bare life.” This of course sets up an obvious dualism between body and spirit, which can end in terror.

This set-up is critical to Agamben’s subsequent presentation of biopolitics, a notion taken from Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*. Biopolitics is here defined as the process by which natural life (*zoe*) “begins to be included in the mechanisms and calculations of State power, and [through which] politics turns into biopolitics” (3), and so “the State decides to assume directly the care of the nation’s biological life as one of its proper tasks” (275). This constitutes the ancient problem of Western biopolitics, namely that we conceive of life in a fractured way and are unable to find or construct a link between *zoe* and *bios* that will heal the fracture. On this basis, Agamben is able to introduce his main characters: the sovereign and the *homo sacer*.

Agamben is here drawing upon the work of Carl Schmitt, who defines the sovereign as “he who decides upon the state of exception” (5), which Walter Benjamin reinterprets as “a real state of emergency” in his influential “Theses on the Philosophy of History” that I mentioned in Chapter II. As Andrew John Miller points out, Schmitt’s definition sets up a paradox, for the sovereign is therefore both the one

¹⁰ In philosophical terms, these two Greek concepts correspond to the Medieval doctrine of the bipartite human being: one who has both body and soul. Or, in tripartite language, the Platonic Great Chain of Being has at its lowest level living things like plants, which are composed of body alone, followed by animals, which have body and soul, and finally humans, who have body, soul, and spirit. In this sense, spirit is equivalent to *bios*.

who constitutes the Law and yet is set outside of it as an exception by himself or by whatever power is operating as sovereign.¹¹ Miller claims that the power of a sovereign whose decides the exception is, “in a symmetrical and circular fashion, defined by the ability to make—and enforce—that decision” (*MCS* xiv). In the third chapter of *Political Theology*, Schmitt identifies a massive change in the embodiment of the sovereign that moved from the sixteenth century's foundation on God and the Scriptures to the seventeenth's century's ideas of metaphysics and rationalism to the eighteenth century's ethical humanism to the nineteenth century's economics to the twentieth century's technology. This results in a “hollowing-out of political concepts” that may result in a further dehumanizing of sovereignty that will respect the margins even less (36) and thus produce what Miller calls “a zone not only of instability but of undecidability” (*MCS* xvi). One such hollowed-out concept was seen in the introduction of this chapter, which borrowed Mircea Eliade's definition of sacredness as a feeling of terror before the power of the “wholly other.” Carl Schmitt explains that the idea of the wholly other derived from the sixteenth century conception of God developed by Protestant theology that, in political liberalism, is the root of current obedience to the state and the political system due to a unquestioned belief that the system of the state is something wholly other that has the monopoly to make decisions and that has unlimited power that cannot be understood or challenged by an ordinary person because it presents itself as “the highest, legally independent,

¹¹ Thus, Schmitt pictures modern bewilderment before the state as “a huge cloak-and-dagger drama, in which the state acts in many disguises but always as the same invisible person” who makes the decisions (38). Miller sees this bewilderment as the source of Schmitt's later Nazism, for Schmitt saw in Western political systems “a kind of hidden god, immanent in everything, yet never discretely identifiable” (*MCS* 99), and he desired in fascism “a fully embodied form of sovereignty, one that would not rely merely on masquerade” (*MCS* 144).

underived power” (2, 10, 13, 17).¹² Schmitt cites Soren Kierkegaard to the effect that, to comprehend the general—in this case, the general state of law and politics that constitutes the very basis of modern life—one must only look for an exception to that general state, for “The exception . . . thinks the general with intense passion” (15).

The first of Agamben’s two explanatory exceptions is the sovereign. It is the sovereign who, as the exception to and the constitutor of the *Nomos* or the Law, seeks to embody as much as possible—whether the “much” refers to colonial land boundaries or the extent of sexual freedoms or the continuation of life itself.¹³ Yet, if a person or group of people cannot be internalized and localized, they are relegated to the margins of society where they are contained in a permanent and visible location by the sovereign, which Agamben argues in our age is “the camp.”¹⁴ If the sovereign has the power to say certain people are exceptions, not in the way that he or she is an exception above the law, but exceptions that have no power, then Agamben suggests that this power can be labelled the power of the *ban*, an old Germanic term used for exclusion from a community to an area of marginalization and control such as a concentration camp. The concept of a *ban* is used in the Mennonite faith as well as in

¹² Jacques Lacan offers a similar critique regarding the use of languages of power that reveals a further parallel between church and state: “It is the irony of revolutions that they engender a power all the more absolute in its exercise, not because it is more anonymous, as people say, but because it is more reduced to the words that signify it. And more than ever, on the other hand, the strength of the churches resides in the language that they have been able to maintain” (*Écrits* 72).

¹³ Indeed, Foucault’s discussion of capital punishment as the sovereign’s use of his biopower over his subjects leads him to remark that suicide was one of the first aspects of human conduct to be analyzed by sociology because it “testified to the individual and private right to die, at the borders and in the interstices of power that was exercised over life,” for suicide had previously been considered a crime chiefly because “it was a way to usurp the power of death which the sovereign alone, whether the one here below or the Lord above, had the right to exercise” (*HS* 138-39).

¹⁴ He of course deals mostly with the Holocaust era concentration camp as his paradigm, but it is just as applicable to the holding areas for refugees at Quebec’s Mirabel Airport, the “unclean” paths that the Dalit Untouchables were once forced to use in India, the veterans’ camp in Hemingway’s *To Have and Have Not*, Wyndham Lewis’ Spanish Civil War P.O.W. prison in *The Revenge for Love*, or the actual prison where Ezra Pound was kept under charge of treason while writing *The Pisan Cantos*.

the contemporary sense of banning someone from a public place. Yet, the old Germanic term *ban* also refers to the command or insignia of a sovereign, which is the root of the English word “banner.” The etymology implies an intimate relationship between both uses of the word *ban*, as well as between the winners and losers involved in any scenario where it is invoked.

Agamben traces this relationship to the ancient Roman Pindar, who shows that in his culture, as opposed to that of the Greeks, the concepts of justice and of violence were often one, both of which were under the authority of the sovereign, and somehow seen as indistinct by him. Hence, violence used by a normal person is *against* the law, but when used by a sovereign, who is *outside* the law, it is considered a legitimate form of justice. What is the logical result of this thinking? If violence and law be seen at first as totally distinct realms, the state of exception can be used by the sovereign to combine the two as far as certain people are concerned, but if this exception becomes the norm, then the two, as indicated by Pindar, become indistinct. The risk is that this may result in a last struggle between all, akin to the Hobbesian pre-social contract state of nature, but in this case, more of a post-contract violence wherein all are sovereigns justifying any act, as was found by South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This is one of the few areas where Agamben points to a path past the world’s current dilemma. His solution, reckoning first upon the evil results of making the sovereign’s exception the general rule, is to release humanity wholly from the sovereign’s *ban* and to reconstitute our *Nomos* under the authority of our shared *bios*-based ontology and our potential to be or not to be, to act or not to act. Presently, this remains unthinkable because only the sovereign dwells in this so-called “zone of

indistinction” (47). So, the challenge is set before us to “think ontology and politics beyond every figure of relation, beyond even the limit relation that is the sovereign ban” (47). This is particularly pertinent for us today, because all corners of the world are experiencing a “legitimization crisis,” questioning the validity of all sorts of sovereigns, be they secular, religious, fascist, or democratic. Walter Benjamin relates our need to realize that we are all under exception to the desire of monotheistic religions for a messiah who will fulfil the Law for us, thereby removing us from its power and giving us life. Margaret Somerville, in her influential bioethical text, *The Ethical Canary: Science, Society and the Human Spirit* (2000), ambitiously attempts to use the concept of sacredness to establish a new basis for matching the ethical concerns of our modern secular society with the tremendous advances of science. She bases her treatment of bioethics in what she calls a “secular-spirit” paradigm—the deep societal respect for the human spirit that, in a society that has rejected universal truth claims, she sees as a particularly useful adaptation of traditional concepts of sacredness that can construct a new collectively shared story for society’s ethical decision-making. Indeed as she develops this shared story, wrong is defined as any act that destroys a “profound respect for human life” or a “deep respect for the human spirit.”

The ethical problems represented by sacredness become clearer in Agamben’s second main argument, which centres on *homo sacer* himself, identified as the “protagonist” of the book. *Homo sacer* literally means “sacred person,” and, as I have outlined above, the term finds its origin in an ancient Roman law defining such a person as sacred after he had been judged by a plebiscite for committing a serious crime. That does not seem so unusual, but by definition, the person so judged

absolutely cannot be sacrificed to a god, yet, if someone kills him, then the killer cannot be charged with homicide. Quite apart from what we might imagine, *homo sacer* is sacred in the sense of being a bad or impure person. One explanation of this peculiarity is that the *homo sacer* was banished for some crime against the sacred, and this made him or her too impure for a sacrifice honouring a deity. Or, like the dishes and tools of a temple, the *homo sacer* might have been considered property of the gods anyway. Georges Bataille speaks of a similar sacrificial victim in economic terms as

a surplus taken from the mass of *useful* wealth. And he can only be withdrawn from it in order to be consumed profitlessly, and therefore utterly destroyed. Once chosen, he is the *accursed share*, destined for violent consumption. But the curse tears him away from the *order of things*; it gives him a recognizable figure, which now radiates intimacy, anguish, the profundity of living beings” (Accursed I:59)

Thus, *homo sacer*, who can be killed but not sacrificed, is situated in the sacred margins.¹⁵ Outside the borders of human and divine law, he is both holy, in that he belongs to the divinity and not to human society, and damned, in that he has been banished for a crime and can be killed without reprisal as representing something less than human life. Agamben reasons that this mysterious figure must have originated in a time before the distinction between sacred and profane or between religious and

¹⁵ Interestingly, Agamben also notes that, on the other end of the spectrum for a short period around 350 BCE, there existed a figure called the *devotus*, who, akin to the *homo sacer*, was considered sacred to the gods. Such a person devoted himself to the gods and asked for some large favour such as victory on the field of battle. If the man died in battle, that was considered a sign of acceptance from the gods, but if not, the man could not be punished and an effigy of him had to be created, immolated, and buried, whereas the actual physical person was afterwards outside of normal law and, for instance, could not perform any ritual function publicly or privately. In another variation of the theme, ancient athletes who cheated were banned and fined, with the proceeds funding statues of the gods. In yet another, Agamben notes the European legends of the werewolf: a man living beyond human law on the border of the animal world and hence more *zoe* than *bios*.

judicial, and, hence, it holds the secret to understanding not only the origins of current problems but also their solutions.¹⁶

As this model is enshrined through time, the sovereign becomes not only the man on the throne but the throne itself. The sovereign then becomes eternal and embodies two natures: divine lasting office and physical individual.¹⁷ Likewise, if one kills a king, it is not a mere homicide, but something more. In the decapitation of Louis XVI, what is most important is not his death, but that he was subjected to trial, condemned, and sentenced to capital punishment: a sovereign had become a *homo sacer*. Hence, in Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*, the doctor's story of the prince who carefully marks his page in the book he is reading—right before his execution—should not really be shocking; we are spared the real shock of seeing him pleading for mercy or attempting to defend himself in court against laws he was above.

Finally, Agamben ties up the two ends of his argument, in that he shows how modernity, which takes so much care for the lives of people, equates sacred life with that which must be banished to the margins of the camp. In other words, the state as sovereign cannot condone lives being sacred exceptions to its power, and yet, at the same time, it increases its power and makes all people potential *homo sacers* who

¹⁶ Agamben's position is that this pattern is rooted in families, and, much like Freud's definition of the primitive God as a spiritualized Father, Agamben sees the *pater familias* as the original sovereign and his sons as potential *homo sacers* if they displease him. On the other hand, the same power does not exist over the *pater familias*' wives, daughters, or servants, who may be killed outright but not declared sacred. This is likely because they would have been considered as property and because for a son to become a part of public life, he had to remain under the power of his father prior to becoming a citizen.

¹⁷ This is modelled on the two natures of Christ, fully divine and fully human in one person, which influenced political philosophy from Augustine's *Two Cities* to Luther's *Two Swords*. Agamben traces this through the Middle Ages, when in some cases, following the death of the king, his body was unceremoniously disposed of and replaced by a wax effigy that was treated as the actual king, embodying his royal dignity and mourned for instead of his physical corpse. The essence of this life of royal dignity, in both French and English Medieval rites, was then expected to be passed to the king's successor.

may be moved about according to its will. Thus Agamben comes to his most troubling section when he argues against the usage of the term, “Holocaust,” because it suggests sacrifice, and this he calls “an irresponsible historiographical blindness” (114). He believes that the Jew as such is the

privileged negative referent of the new biopolitical sovereignty [and] the truth—which is difficult for the victims to face but which we must have the courage not to cover with sacrificial veils—is that the Jews were exterminated not in a mad and giant holocaust but exactly as Hitler had announced, 'as lice,' which is to say, as bare life. (114)

Almost prefiguring this, Barnes' Jewish character, Felix, wanders from city to city and his attempts to fit into society are rejected, which characterizes him as a “Wandering Jew,” a figure which Barnes claimed “seems to be everywhere from nowhere” (qtd. in Trubowitz 320) and which she compounds by saying of Felix that “the step of the Wandering Jew is in every son” (7). The “Wandering Jew” was an European invention meant to explain the presence of the European Jewish minority through the story of a man who mocked Christ while he carried the cross. Christ replied that the man would pay for his sin by waiting until Christ returned, meaning the man was doomed to wander the earth until the Second Coming and the end of time.¹⁸ This became a further excuse for antisemitism that saw the Jews as guilty for the death of Christ so cursed by God to the extent that their lives were bare life and could be contained in a marginalized space or eliminated altogether.

The camp, Agamben then argues, is both the highest and the lowest point of biopolitical power, especially in fascist nations wherein state and religion are reunited through a sovereign whose every word is law. It is only in this context that biopolitics

¹⁸ For a fascinating argument that sees the “Wandering Jew” as not only as a figure echoed in Felix's character but also in Barnes' experimental style of prose, see Lara Trubowitz's essay “In Search of 'The Jew' in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*: Jewishness, Antisemitism, Structure, and Style.”

can transform into its much more destructive mirror image: “thanatopolitics.” This is the politics of death, wherein there is the necessary and troubling addition of a whole new range of what is sovereign, including “the doctor, the scientist, the expert, and the priest” (122). Here, Agamben returns to the beginnings of modern Western democracy with the *Magna Carta* of 1215 and the first writ of *habeas corpus* in 1679, which ensured free men that they had the right not be held unjustly and that the authorities had the responsibility to demonstrate that they had, not the correct citizen in custody, but the correct body—the correct *corpus*. And from then on, the *corpus* becomes the centre of both human rights and human vulnerability. The body becomes the location of the problem. Refugees, like the ones held at Mirabel Airport or in camps inhabited by the thousand in Africa, live in an in-between world where there is no physical sovereign to guarantee the so-called universal human rights bestowed upon them by the West in the United Nations declaration. Likewise, the 1789 French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* leaves the difference between the two unfortunately ambiguous. In a more recent text, Agamben identifies Jews in Nazi concentration camps with the detainees (not “prisoners”) of the American “war on terror” who are designated “unlawful combatants” and are so stripped of any human rights, even those assigned by the 1215 *Magna Carta* (SE 4). But of course, there is the liminal exception that proves how fully the power of the sovereign remains in the twenty-first century.

After the removal of a royal sovereign based upon divine authority and the intrinsic rights one has as made in the image of God, how does a national sovereign—democratic, communist, fascist, or other—declare its citizens to have rights? For, even if we follow Lincoln and say we will have “Government of the people, by the

people, and for the people,” not all of those people are really the same people (Agamben 177). The answer is obvious when we remember the shift to legitimating nationalisms in the early nineteenth century, the quest for “purity,” and the importance of territorial boundaries. Indeed, Schmitt pinpoints the 1884 Berlin Conference, called to divide Africa agreeably between fourteen European powers, and the 1890 Brussels Conference to end African slavery, as the moments when the decline of Eurocentric international law into “a universal world law lacking distinctions could not be stopped” (*Nomos of the Earth* 227). The idealization of a sovereign nation based on this new type of nationalism becomes the source of modern fascination with the body in the private realm, from televised famine victims to sadomasochism, both of which treat human life very clearly as bare life. These questions, abuses, and responses, both in totalitarian and democratic governments, result from, and are only possible in, a biopolitical world where the sacred margins are where the sovereign puts those it denotes as *homo sacers*, where we all potentially may end up, and most unfortunately, where any outrage becomes possible.

Barnes was very cognizant of this system of sovereignty and exclusion ordering her world and knew the tangible results of the thinking of the double nature of sacredness traced by Agamben, for *Nightwood* was published in 1936 amid the first soundings of World War II. The characters of *Nightwood* would have suffered in the near future since most of its characters—Jews, gays, transvestites, lesbians, blacks, and Catholics—would have been vulnerable to deportation to the Nazi death camps. Hence, *Nightwood* is, as noted above, identified by Marcus as “a prophecy of the Holocaust” (249). Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* demonstrates a particular fascination with these various types of people who are disqualified and exiled to the sacred

margins. She explores the reasons why they were marginalized by demonstrating the negative effects of life in the modern city and asks how it affects human relationships and reconfigures our notions of the human and the divine. In seeking the defining characteristics of those who are pushed to the sacred margins, Barnes chooses to focus on the specific images of the homosexual, the lesbian, the madman or madwoman, the melancholic, the sleepwalker, and the bestial.

These are people who are first marginalized by the opinions of their societies and who are then biopolitically marginalized in a formal way by governments who seek to control the pollution and contamination they represent through their difference that the sovereign believes limits his power. They become *homo sacers* when their lives come to be defined as bare life that can be taken from them at any time through the will of the sovereign who does not recognize their human rights or, indeed, any humanity within those margins. They represent only a threat that must be controlled, and, by accessing these biopolitical categories, the sovereign is free to do just that. And yet, the resilience of these people forced to the sacred margins reveals that they thrive in marginal communities and have a sacred message to deliver to the mainstream society that warns of the vulnerability of those who think they are safe from the sovereign's persecution and that urges changes within society that recognize the sacredness of all life through respect and justice.

Barnes' willingness to wade into arguments about psychology, sexuality, and spirituality is connected to her experiences as a lesbian writer although, in her later life, she reportedly said "I'm not a lesbian, I just loved Thelma." Her willingness as a lesbian, at least in her writing, to voice the struggles of lesbians—as well as bisexuals, homosexuals, and transvestities—is important, because, as Adrienne Rich

observes, “lesbian existence has been written out of history or categorized under disease; partly because it has been treated as exceptional rather than intrinsic” (322), and, as Shari Benstock adds, “the denial of all forms of lesbian experience, including artistic and aesthetic experiences, and the suppression of lesbianism by and within history have defined it as an excluded Other within cultural tradition” (183). This sort of patriarchal sovereign authority marginalizes lesbian voices by controlling them under the powerful discourse of medical science, and it is Barnes' unwavering response that demonstrates her willingness to seek liberation by transgressing the Laws of the Father. In her concerns with a European culture that would provoke world war and that apparently insistently aimed at self-disintegration, Barnes fought the sovereign opinion that belittled the existence and literary contributions of women and of lesbians as well as the other disqualified groups that she foregrounds in her text.

In this vein, the question of religion as a sovereign entity opposed to homosexuality must arise. In one of the more puzzling attributes of modernism, the first half of the twentieth century noted a significant number of writers who converted to Roman Catholicism or to “High” Anglicanism. The oddity of this trend is compounded by the decidedly strict moral judgements of the Church and the sexual freedom espoused by the literary culture of the time. Ellis Hanson argues that this was in fact an aesthetic choice first made by writers influenced by Decadence, such as Oscar Wilde, Walter Pater, and J.K. Huysmans, who were attracted by the aesthetic and erotic discourses to be found in the more formal forms of Christian worship that privileged medieval aspects of ritual and devotion. In explanation, Hanson posits that this was because the Church is

a relic of itself, and like all saintly relics demands devotion. The sheer excess of the Church—its archaic splendor, the weight of its history, the elaborate embroidery of its robes, the labyrinthine mysteries of its symbolism, the elephantine exquisiteness by which it performs its daily miracles—has always made it an aesthetic and fetishistic object of wonder. (6)

This source of attraction continued unabated, and Hanson notes that by the modernist period of the 1920s, the “notion of Anglo and Roman Catholicism as a magnet for homosexuals had passed from a running joke to a simple fact” (25). It is important to note that Barnes was not one of those who converted to Catholicism, nor was she a Christian, nor was she even religious in any traditional sense, although her biographer, Phillip Herring, states that she “was deeply respectful of religion and envied those who had religious faith” (305). Although Djuna Barnes did not convert to Catholicism, that religious tradition is central to *Nightwood* through the experiences of the doctor, Robin, Felix, and Guido.

As Dennis Altman observes, “Religion is central to sexual regulation in almost all societies . . . Indeed it may well be that the primary social function of religion is to control sexuality and gender in the interests of hegemonic masculinity” (6). And, during the modernist period, “Perhaps the most significant change for millions of people caused by greater affluence, urbanization, and foreign influences is the decline of marriage based on social and economic arrangements between families, versus the far more individualist assumptions about marriage as a way of achieving love and personal fulfilment” (Altman 43). Similarly, Carlston notes that many people identified strongly with Catholicism as “another ideology [that] rejected modernity while making the same romantic appeal to instinct, the beauty of form, and the quest for transcendence . . . while acknowledging the profound reality of human suffering

and mortality” (59-60). As Pericles Lewis argues, such religious experiences answered a “central concern with the question of the sacred and its forms in modern life . . . the modernists continually return to the problem of ritual and the question of what types of ritual are appropriate to the privatized and pluralistic (but not necessarily secular) forms that the quest for ultimate meanings takes in modernity” (“Ch” 688-89). Thus, Lewis argues that the modernist period, with its greater affluence and mobility, led to a culture that desired more freedom, sought authentic spiritual meaning, and yet rejected the regulations of a Church that was trying to hold onto the past for its own reasons.

An aspect of this seeming contradiction is explored by Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge* (1978). His interest is in the growth and “perverse implantation” of the thought patterns that eventually replaced more neutral characterizations of sex with new intimations of sin, profanity, and pollution that had to be controlled within the confines of marriage. Foucault asserts that what is important about the proliferation of discourse about sex in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was not that sex was discussed at all but “the forms of imperatives that were imposed on it by speaking about it” (*HS* 36). His message, in short, is that sexuality and power “do not cancel or turn back against one another; they seek out, overlap, and reinforce one another” (*HS* 48). Foucault posits that the Victorians were fascinated by sexuality, so they multiplied the definitions and classifications of sexuality as never before. Previously, sexuality was governed by the codes of the canonical law, Christian piety, and civil law, each of which determined the bounds of propriety. Acts improper included rape, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, and extramarital sex. This list exploded in the nineteenth century via a

“discursive explosion” that desired to define and explain all of these acts. Characters like Don Juan, who overturned both “the laws of marriage and the order of desires,” fascinated the public (*HS* 39-40). Indeed, Barnes participates in this move to open discourse about sex broadly. Plumb records that Barnes, during her conflicted editorial relationship with Eliot, argued on several bases that cuts he proposed were actually valid and innovative; in one of these arguments, she demanded: “Can you read that and not see that something new has been said about the very heart of sex—going beyond sex, to that world where there is no marriage or giving in marriage—*where no modern writer ever goes?*” (qtd. in Plumb xx-xxi; italics original).

Foucault argues that this transformation happened not in a long leap of simple prohibition but in a series of four discursive steps. First, the source of power in discourse was altered from law and Church to medicine and regimentation, and these new sovereigns used different tactics that left open “lines of penetration” through the past barriers of proper sexuality (*HS* 41-42). Second, medicine incorporated new specifications of individuals, making homosexuals not men who commit the “temporary aberration” of sodomy but “a species” of men who are homosexual because of an inner physical, medical cause (*HS* 43).¹⁹ Third, these Victorian classifications delved deeper into the psyche, permitting and necessitating

¹⁹ As Foucault makes this classic distinction, he argues that “As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. . . . We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized—Westphal's famous article of 1870 on 'contrary sexual sensations' can stand as its date of birth—less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself. Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (*HS* 43).

communication between physicians about their patients that really enshrines the mutual “pleasure and power” that comes from putting “old taboos” in the open (*HS* 44-45). Fourth, on this basis, sexuality was permissible to talk about and, though perversion was still perversion, its pleasure was afforded a measure of power through its formal recognition as an entity to be classified and understood, which has left our generation with a “sexual mosaic” of “manifold sexualities” (*HS* 47).

Sovereign power, then, must govern sex, so it allows discussion about sex because it is still in a position of control over it and may even be able to gain more control by naming certain acts and defining them as immoral or perverted. The state still defines what is legitimate and what is not. It still is the source of information to most school children, and it corrects deviant sexuality through the prestige of medicine or psychology. In *Nightwood*, as in George Orwell's *1984*, sex “is a political act” (126). The act becomes a site of political resistance in situations where it has been deemed deviant and even illegal by the sovereigns of the state, religious morality, or social opinion that work to push away these expressions of human sexuality or even to deny their existence. In turn, these sexualities form a hidden margin that Barnes identifies as an “underworld” where secrecy is necessary for freedom from persecution for following “the Love that dare not speak its name.”²⁰

Joanne Glasgow, in her essay on Radclyffe Hall and other lesbian Catholic converts, has convincingly argued that the reverse is true within the context of the Catholic church. As she explains:

²⁰ The expression is the final line of “Two Loves” (1894), a poem about homosexual love written by Lord Alfred Douglas, a lover of Oscar Wilde and son of the Marquess of Queensbury. Wilde sued Queensbury for libel for calling him a “posing Sodomite”; when Wilde lost the trial, the Crown charged him with sodomy and gross indecency. He was convicted of gross indecency and served two years' imprisonment with hard labour.

lesbian sexuality was seen as innocent by the church, Indeed, lesbianism did not exist as a Catholic reality . . . In simplest terms, the Catholic church of the early twentieth century had effectively erased lesbianism through the agency of language. Specifically, in Catholic popular teaching, sexual acts by definition required ejaculation by a penis. . . . If phallic agency is the reality denoted by the word *sex*, then acts performed by lesbians were not sex. (242)

Hence, lesbians were not having sex and so, unlike male homosexuals, were not under religious censure. This appears central to the identification of Barnes' characters with Roman Catholicism despite their sexuality; this in no way indicates that their sexual identity was validated by the Catholic Church, but this time period witnesses a gap between the thinking of the Church and that of medical science. As Glasgow argues, the Church maintained an

erasure of women as instrumental agents of sexuality, an erasure which is itself a result of deep misogyny in the church [through] the instrumentality of language itself in determining the reality of individual acts. The erasure of women as agents of sexuality . . . was accomplished by an almost total silence on the subject. (248)

While showing the turmoil caused by the church for Matthew, *Nightwood* also portrays it as a source of grace for Robin, who is the central character of the text despite the fact that Barnes does not explain Robin's traumatic past, her complex sexuality, or her links to Roman Catholicism. Robin, who is married to Felix and later has relationships with Nora and Jenny, frequently and mysteriously disappears for long periods of time. Barnes reveals that the character visits many Catholic churches, becomes known to and beloved by the nuns, prays and offers votive candles, and finally sets up her own Catholic shrine to the Virgin Mary in the chapel on Nora's property (45; 46; 167-70). The irony noted by Glasgow is that though the Catholic church

never ministered well to adult women, except as asexual beings—nuns, widows, virgin martyrs [. . . Yet,] in its phallogentric blindness, it made asexual beings of lesbians and created for some of them a refuge from the virulent homophobia and misogyny of the secular world. (252)

Another marginalized group that Barnes focuses on is that of the mentally ill. Indeed, following Michel Foucault's argument in *Madness and Civilization* (1961), the forcefulness of the novel must be linked with the manner in which madness or folly has been viewed in the West, and indeed, the source of our fear of what he calls the “frightening bestiality of the madman” (vii). This fear of the marginalized is due to their freedom from the constraints of what is believed to constitute the norm and their related existence apart from predictable, and therefore safe and expected channels of behaviour.

Foucault's four categories of madness are exemplified in *Nightwood*. First, madness by romantic identification, namely with the values of a past age as envisioned by the individual, is precisely the illness of the fake Baron, the unfortunately named Felix Volkbein (literally meaning “Happy Good People”). His Jewish father hid their true identity beneath a cloud of an invented aristocratic ancestry, even to the extent of fake portraits of fake grandparents, but dies some months before the birth of Felix, at which time the mother, pictured exactly as “a Viennese woman of great strength and military beauty” (1), delivers, pronounces the baby to be Felix, then thrusts him from her and dies. In fact, that scene of death and mourning occupy the first page of the novel, well setting us up for the plots and entanglements which follow and which aim to show that life itself is a long process of dying. By page seven, Felix has grown into a man who lives to honour the great past of Vienna and who seeks to live up to its traditions by taking a wife and producing

sons; tellingly, however, his inability to fit into society is mirrored by his odd clothes that are a mismatch of those appropriate for day and those appropriate for night because he mistakenly believes he will thus always be ready for any social occasion or event.

In chapter two, Felix believes he has found happiness by marrying Robin, whom Felix had mistakenly assumed he could do anything with because she was an American, for “With an American anything can be done” and he thinks her especially malleable to his aristocratic nature (39). After the miseries he undergoes in trying to mold Robin, he finally departs Paris for Vienna, never to return, with Guido, their wretched son at whom Felix cannot look. If born to anything, the child is born to “holy decay” as “Mentally deficient and emotionally excessive, an addict to death; at ten, barely as tall as a child of six, wearing spectacles, stumbling when he tried to run, with cold hands and anxious face” and always fearfully clutching a medallion of the Virgin Mary (107, 122).²¹ This fulfils the doctor's prophecy that “the last child born to aristocracy is sometimes born an idiot” (40). Felix slowly sinks into despair because of Guido and ultimately becomes an alcoholic. In Felix's last scene of the novel, he sits in a bar dropping his coins on the floor, mistakes someone for the brother of the deposed Czar Nicolas, and drunkenly genuflects in response to him as a last image of his madness of romantic identification (122-23).

Second, the brilliantly portrayed character of the doctor embodies the madness of vain presumption, both through his desire to be a woman, his identification as the father confessor of the Paris Left Bank, his wish to be the second lesser known son of

²¹ Guido is akin to Thomas Hardy's melancholy Little Father Time, the young son in *Jude the Obscure* (1895) who is a “preternaturally old boy,” who causes Jude great anxiety because he will not “kindle and laugh like other boys,” and who ultimately kills his two siblings and himself, “*Done because we are too menny*” (258; 268-69; 310-11).

Mary, and his clear links to Dante but more importantly, to Tiresias. His is a seriousness and a melancholy that Felix feels as a palpable thing “hidden beneath every joke and malediction” (39). Despite his medical learning, Doctor O'Connor himself claims that the “only people who really *know* anything about medical science are the nurses” and that a doctor is considered “a divine idiot and a wise man” (31), even though he himself is actually not licensed anymore, likely due to his speciality in performing abortions (35). Dr. Matthew-Mighty-grain-of-salt-Dante-O'Connor, as he once calls himself (80), was once a strict Irish Catholic who is now a transvestite alcoholic who performs abortions in convents. His faith has been called “a religion of withdrawal from the world” (Gunn 553) in spite of the ironic meaning of his name Matthew, which means “gift of God.” He occasionally privately visits churches, and it startles the Baron to know that “the reddest” of the roses placed upon the church altar by “the people of the underworld” was placed there by the doctor (30-31). His drunken confession scene occurs in the company of a less drunk excommunicated Catholic priest (158-66), and he cynically claims that “the Catholic [church] is the girl that you love so much that she can lie to you, and the Protestant is the girl that loves you so much that you can lie to her, and pretend a lot that you do not feel” (19-20).

The doctor is thus one of the most compelling of these characters forced to the sacred margins within Barnes' text. In him, Barnes offers a man who would have been marginalized as Irish, as a Catholic, as a sham doctor, as a homosexual, and as a transvestite. Laura Veltman and Ed Madden both especially emphasize the otherness of Irish Catholics that Barnes would have known well due to the American backlash against the massive influx of “post-1845 'Potato Famine' Irish Catholic immigrants” that was based in their strong ties to their home nation, their political allegiance to the

Pope, and their suspect sexuality during an age when *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* (1836) was the second-best-selling work of literary fiction (Veltman 207). Ed Madden further notes that both Jews and Celts had effectively been feminized by literature and then by psychological science (195-200). From this point, Barnes broadly seems keen to attack Freud, specifically for his views on women. The doctor, for instance, has a “womb envy” so pronounced that it “parodies Freudian penis envy mercilessly,” and the text paints Freudian psychoanalysis with the same brush as fascism in their “desire to 'civilize' and make 'normal' the sexually aberrant misfit” (Marcus 230-33).

Barnes portrays O'Connor blaming God for putting him in a male body and purposely feminizing God by calling God “she” and explaining that “because of the way she made me; it somehow balances the mistakes” (150). In the “Go Down, Matthew” chapter, he recalls the advice of his former priest, Father Lucas, to find a small church and think out the simplicity of the natural order of things; in the end, he attempts to masturbate in the church sanctuary and, after choosing his right hand as the most blessed, takes “Tiny O'Toole” out of his pants to “make him face the mystery so it could see him clear as it saw me” (132). Laura Veltman explains that Matthew is asking “What is this thing, Lord?” as if he has “disassociated himself from his phallus, presenting himself as a woman to God, who alone can see 'him' clearly. He later asks God, 'So tell me, what is permanent of me, me or him [Tiny O'Toole]?' Or, to put it another way, is gender performative or essential?” (219). In the end, it comes down to a difficult decision for him because, as he puts it, “The Bible lies the one way, but the night-gown the other” (80), although he knows that the Catholic church could never be his spiritual home again. In his pain and that of

others, he states his wish to institute “Meat-Axe Day,” when he says he would, “out of the goodness of my heart” whack off the heads of those he judged to be in need of relief from too much misery (128-29).

One such sufferer the doctor wants to put out of her misery is Nora, Barnes' alter ego in the novel, who suffers from the third Foucaultian type of madness—just punishment—whereby she meekly stands still to accept the abuses Robin heaps upon her through Robin's unfaithfulness, sexual affairs, betrayals, and stated goal of that she wants “to make everyone happy, . . . I want everyone to be gay, gay. Only you . . . only you, you mustn't be gay or happy, not like that, it's not for you, only for everyone else in the world” (155). Robin makes Nora suffer, and, oddly, it is to Nora that the new women lovers whom Robin takes and thoughtlessly discards go for comfort, which of course makes Nora's pain more acute. The doctor tells Nora that her devotion to the suffering forced on her by Robin will only result in a “post-graduate melancholy” (84). This advice is given during the “Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf” scene, in which Nora comes to the doctor's apartment and finds him in heavy make up, dressed in a flannel nightgown, and “extremely put out, having expected someone else” (79-80).

Though the long discussion between Nora and the doctor that follows is often read as a site of the text's satire on the Freudian talking cure, Laura Veltman points out that it also mocks the Catholic sacrament of confession by “refuting anti-Catholic stereotypes of the confessional as the site of sexual subversion by repeating, exaggerating, and thus exploding them” (215), which she in turn links to Foucault's belief that the sovereign commands: “Not only will you confess to acts contravening the law, but you will seek to transform your desire, your every desire, into discourse”

(*HS* 21). A parallel question Jacques Lacan raises several times in his *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* is that of why “the psycho-analytic community . . . is so reminiscent of religious practice?” (4). Lacan rejects a too simplistic view that the two should be so closely identified, and he insists that the only proper approach to misunderstanding psychoanalysis as a religion is to argue that in “every religion that deserves the name,” the major difference between it and other “modes at man's disposal for posing the question of his existence in the world, and beyond,” is that religion “is to be distinguished by a dimension that is proper to it, and which is struck by a kind of oblivion. In every religion that deserves the name, there is in fact an essential dimension reserved for something operational, known as a sacrament” (265). Barnes challenges the sharp distinction offered by Lacan when she figures the conversation as both a sacramental confession and a psychoanalytic session, thereby blurring any implied boundaries between the two acts and uses the doctor to question the privileged role given to priest and to analyst.

I read this behaviour and, more precisely, this speech, as an excess on behalf of the margins that spills over the margins and into the mainstream, thereby further marring the lines and deconstructing the metanarratives that first inscribed these boundaries. As Ann Martin notes, although the doctor, like the other characters, is at “the margins of a mainstream society,” his behaviour regularly “exceeds the boundaries of normalcy” (127). Indeed, this textual manoeuvre is what critics like Monika Kaup and Alex Goody identify as the neobaroque technique in Barnes. By multiplying meaning and words, she develops an excess that is aimed at deconstructing totalitarian structures and that is constantly in the process of building a basis for a community built in the margins. Mary Lynn Broe claims that Barnes “turns

the entire social order upside down, privileging the resistance of all outsiders” in a sort of permanent Carnavalesque (52). Melba Cuddy-Keane, writing on Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*, likewise see the permanent instability of these local borders as the key to just such a sort of new community that is not dominated by a single sovereign individual or group but rather “discovers how fragmentation is meaningful” (280-82). Ed Madden agrees when he points out how “truths that pretend to be timeless and universal may be based on quite particular ideological meanings and quite particular social bodies” (216). The multiplication of words, the campiness of the behaviour, and the embrace of the sacred margins all force a reexamination of the metanarratives that enshrine the boundaries enforced by the sovereign will of the mainstream and effect a new understanding of community and of inclusion.

Certainly though, the character who most exemplifies typical castings of madness, and yet who makes no move to change her situation in regard to the margins, is Robin Vote. Robin's madness is Foucault's fourth type of madness, the madness of desperate passion, which refers to the excess of love or love that lacks direction. This means it can be a love unrequited (here we think of those who fall in futile love with Robin, like the husband Felix she deserts, the baby Guido she rejects, the lover Nora she torments, or the mistress Jenny she mocks). However, like melancholia, this madness of desperate passion, according to Foucault, is most vehement when it is left to itself without an object and so “pursues itself in the void of delirium,” as is the case with Robin (*MC* 30). For Freud, certainly, this is the whole difference between “mourning and melancholia,” the title of his 1917 work. Whereas we mourn a person or state of being or thing that we consciously knew and which has been taken from us, melancholia does not long for a known object because it is

located in the unconscious mind. Hence, the ego is regarded as empty or desolate instead of the external life. There is a pain there, or a reproach, or an anger, that is internalized. Freud describes melancholia as a “profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment” (XI:248) caused even when “one cannot see clearly what has been lost” (XI:254). Whereas, for Freud, in mourning “it is the world that has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself” (XI:254). Indeed, Barnes' focus on melancholia in the character of Robin is not surprising since, as Barnes' biographer Phillip Herring found, one of her favourite books was Robert Burton's 1612 *Anatomy of Melancholy* (204), for which reason she had originally subtitled the novel “Anatomy of Night” (Madden 185). Barnes is also well known for her dour paraphrase of Thomas Hobbes that forms part of the long title of Hank O'Neal's memoir of her: “Life is painful, nasty, and short—in my case it has only been painful and nasty”; this adds more irony to Faulkner's question of whether she was alive or dead twenty-five years before her death.

Melancholia certainly reads as apt for the madness of Robin—the unknown, unknowable shadow of a human figure who is certainly the central character of *Nightwood* and yet is the one who is least seen in the book and who barely speaks. Robin is often described as asleep or as a sleepwalker or embodying bestial qualities that represent her mental or spiritual state as likewise drowsy and unclear. Indeed, when Robin is first seen, the doctor has been called to rouse her from a mysterious stupor. Unconscious, she is surveyed by her future husband and hence, as noted by

Jean Gallagher, “appears only as the object of the desiring, heterosexual male gaze, embodied in Felix” (285) as she lies on a bed surrounded by a variety of “potted pants, exotic palms and cut flowers, faintly sung over by the notes of unseen birds” as in “a jungle trapped in a drawing room” (34, 35) so that Judith Lee here makes a further connection with the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty (210). It is upon being revived that Robin speaks for the only time in the real-time of the novel, which is to say, simply, “I was all right” (35). Although Robin is, arguably, the main character of the novel—if not the sun around which the others revolve, then the black hole into which they try not to be sucked—that statement is the extent of her verbal expression in the text, excepting snatches of a conversation repeated second hand and of course the non-lingual barking in the fascinating interlude with Nora's dog that famously closes the novel.

This identification of Robin as bestial and not really human intensifies throughout the novel. Robin's apartment is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden, and Robin herself becomes Eve, or perhaps Lilith, within the peaceful state of nature, and so she insists that Felix meet her for their dates in the Luxembourg Gardens (40, 41). She is in fact described as “a woman who is a beast turning human” (37) who has unnatural dark eyes and walks with a clumsy animal grace, which, as Louis Kannenstine remarks, makes her “a study of mixed being, of the estrangement that is the state of being neither one thing nor the other” (92). What first catches Nora's attention about her future lover is that when they are at the circus, the “animals, going around and around the ring, all but climbed over” when they come close to Robin (54). When she returns to America, she wanders the countryside, “speaking in a low voice to the animals” (168). Yet, there is the odd reference by the Marchesa de Spada

that seems to say that Robin is actually at the end of her process of reincarnation and will return to earth no more, indicating that she had learned all there was to be learned from human life and was ready to join the source of all life (70).

As if Robin were indeed preparing for “that Good Night,” rudimentary medicine would have identified the melancholia that so fully marginalizes her with the state of sleep; hence, the title of “La Somnambule,” the sleepwalker, is apropos for the chapter of *Nightwood* that introduces Robin Vote. Barnes likely intends an intertextual link to the 1831 opera by the same name by Vincenzo Bellini, though there is no happy ending for this sleepwalker or the people around her. “Delirium is the dream of waking persons” says another eighteenth century French practitioner (qtd. in Foucault *MC* 103). In Robert James' 1746 *Dictionnaire universel de médecine*, he argues that melancholia makes sufferers “refuse to rise from their beds” as when Robin is first introduced, or “they avoid company, prefer solitary places, and wander without knowing where they are going,” as Robin does repeatedly throughout the novel (qtd. in Foucault *MC* 103). She finds herself wandering into churches in odd parts of Paris or Vienna, where kindly nuns look upon her as a touched soul or as a latter day “holy fool,” or getting on a train only to end up in a different country, or going from bar to bar and sexual conquest to sexual conquest and returning to Nora sometimes after months, only to leave immediately again if her love interest at the time happens to be away from the house innocently running errands.

Yet, if melancholia is an extended waking dream, its obvious cure was an awakening, which eighteenth century practitioners tried through such methods as startling someone by firing a gun just behind someone's head or branding them on the arm with a red-hot iron. The results were obviously quite temporary and often forced

ill people further into the margins when they found themselves experimented upon by science. Robin does appear to awake somewhat out of her sleep walking on a couple of occasions, those being when she has infuriated her lovers to the point that they attack her physically. It is Jenny's assault that makes Robin leave Nora, just as earlier, Robin had consented to act properly and lovingly toward Nora after Nora hit her (76-77; 144-146). Notably, Felix confesses that he felt tempted to hit his wife and felt moreover that she was willing him to do so especially after she “struck him across the face” while holding their baby Guido high in the air, claiming “I didn't want him” and threatening to throw the baby to the ground violently. Robin is unchecked in that instance by her husband, Felix, who is tall and muscled, so she leaves him and their son for good (49).

In the scene when Robin first opens her eyes, she is then staying at the Hôtel Récamier, an actual hotel that still stands in the shadow of Saint Sulpice, but also, I think, a reference to the well-known 1800 painting by Jacques-Louis David of Mme. Récamier on a particular sofa with a dazed or sleepy look in her eyes. This portrait fascinated Barnes, who referenced it here and in her *Creatures in an Alphabet* (1982) bestiary, where she comments that “she lounges like a bride, / Much too docile, there's no doubt; / Madame Récamier, on side, / (if such she has), and bottom out.” In another linked tale, from the posthumously published “The Hatmaker,” Barnes tells the story, not of a Mad Hatter, as one might expect from her title, but of a wealthy lady of class who finally has enough of the “overly superior” attitude of Miss Swann, her milliner, and drives a pair of shears through her chest up to the handles. She has her servant confess to the murder and as a token of thanks sends the imprisoned servant one of her favourite hats. It is this not-immediately-identifiable-as-mad

gentlewoman whom Barnes describes as looking exactly like Mme. Récamier and a bit like the Gioconda, both known for their sleepy expressions.

Foucault draws upon the work of Thomas Willis, the seventeenth century physician who wrote the earliest text on psychology in English. Willis argued that whether it is melancholia or its sister mania (characterized by fury or audacity) that is at play, “the cause of the disease is always in the movement of the animal spirits” (*MC* 125, 132). Hence, mania was then seen as the natural outgrowth of untreated melancholia after black bile was understood to have sat stagnant in the brain for too long, only to overflow and cause an outburst of a violent nature (*MC* 133). It is not only with Robin that *Nightwood* shows a fascination with anthropomorphism's opposite, zoomorphism—the representation of humans as animals or the almost literal degeneration of humans into animals. Foucault states that “Madness borrowed its face from the mask of the beast . . . But what is most important is that it is conceived in terms of an animal freedom” (*MC* 72-73). The narrator insists, as Robin opens her eyes when the doctor throws some water on her, that her eyes were those of “wild beasts who have not tamed the focus down to meet the human eye” and that she was therefore “a woman who is beast turning human” (37). Later, at the meeting between Robin and Nora at the New York circus mentioned above, a lioness in a cage sees Robin and falls on her belly in front of her with “its yellow eyes afire . . . , her paws thrust through the bars and, as she regarded the girl, as if a river were falling behind impassable heat, her eyes flowed in tears that never reached the surface” (54). Robin exhibits a desire, if not an actual ability, to speak to animals (168).

There are a few different explanations for the novel's title, which of course makes a further connection to the bestial, and, in fact, Barnes had considered naming

it “Night Beast” (Goody 171) or “Bow Down” (Madden 185). Barnes denied that the title had anything to do with her ex-lover Thelma Wood, upon whom the Robin character is mainly based, though that statement is likely unreliable given Barnes' penchant for *roman à clef*; however, the chapter entitled “Where the Tree Falls” does not show Wood's alter ego falling, but some of those she herself has hewn down. Barnes did refer to the text as the story of “my life with Thelma,” but, according to herself, it was a full five months after she settled on the title that she realized it echoed Thelma Wood's name; she wrote of this discovery to Emily Coleman in October 1936, saying “Nigh T. Wood—low, thought of it the other day. Very odd” (qtd. in Plumb viii-ix). She had first shared the title with Coleman in June when she wrote: “‘Nightwood,’ like that, one word, it makes it sound like night-shade, poison and night and forest, and tough, in the meaty sense, and simple yet singular” (qtd. in Plumb viii). Hank O'Neal records that Barnes told him that her title was actually taken from the second line of William Blake's poem “The Tyger”: “Tyger, Tyger, burning bright, / in the forests of the night” (104); this would indicate a fear of the violent, unpredictable animal nature that stalks us unaware at night. “The night of madness is thus limitless,” insists Foucault, who further shows the Western attempt to confine and institutionalize madness as a general desire to avoid the scandals of the activities of those who obey their animal natures in the dead of night (*MC* 284, 66).

Beyond these characterizations of those on the sacred margins as regards madness, melancholy, and degeneration, *Nightwood* privileges connected images that seek to explain how human individuals see one another and how they relate within an open community. This limited seeing has already been described in Scheiber's Lacanian terms as reading the subject linguistically in terms of significations that

represent them only in relationship to the socially constructed symbolic order, resulting in an inability to treat others as whole individuals. The images of this seeing in *Nightwood* are notably static and distorted and operate mostly significantly through the mirror, the doll, the stature, and the icon of the Virgin Mary.

Perhaps one of the most dominant symbols used in *Nightwood* is the mirror, which functions both as a machine in the text and as a guiding image in Barnes' act of writing. Avril Horner characterizes *Nightwood* as a work wherein “we are invited to read its protagonists as aspects of each other, a strategy of doubling which emphasizes the instability of the boundaries of the self” (84). Judith Lee observes that, through the mirror as producer of doubles that are like and yet unlike one another, “Matthew’s speech substitutes for Robin’s absence. In these two figures, Barnes parodies the idea of redemption; in Robin she treats ironically the idea of redemption through innocence, and in Matthew she treats ironically the idea of redemption through knowledge . . . Matthew and Robin appear most clearly as two forms of a single mode of consciousness” (Lee 214). This is echoed by Joan Scott: “everyone listens to [Matthew], particularly Felix and Nora, but no changes are ever brought about by the doctor’s advice” (109). Whether Robin’s path of action is more effective (or simply less ineffective) than Matthew’s, Barnes presents her nonetheless as an active creature of the night.

In Chapter I, I employed Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* to read H.D.'s use of the mirror as the ultimate palimpsest, “which, memoryless, forgetful of all traces and imprints, re-presents the image of things set before it” (308). Barnes uses the mirror in a different sense than does H.D. and is more concerned with the mirror as a tool that reveals or distorts something hidden from view. Ralph Ellison, in

his “Prologue” to *The Invisible Man* (1947), also uses this metaphor to call attention to the distorted way people see race as though through the distorting effects of mirrors. He writes, “I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you sometimes see in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or fragments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me” (3).

Barnes likewise constructs mirrors as tools of torture that distort or that reveal what is unknowable. Her two examples, both provided by the doctor, are of the boy who only knows the existences of his front and his behind as they are presented in the mirror (161) and the paralysed man on display at Coney Island who is dressed in jewels and finery and forced to look upon his reflection in a mirror constantly although the doctor says that the paralysed man looks in the mirror “to enjoy his own difference” (146). Both instances indicate a separateness, a distinction, a setting apart, a sacredness revealed by the tool of a mirror and the further threat of a vague curse if heteronormative roles are subverted. Barnes thus uses the mirror to illustrate that this “will to sexual knowledge,” to borrow Foucault's term. In retelling Plato's “Allegory of the Cave,” Irigaray reinterprets the cave's wall as a feminine tool that can reflect what is present and what is behind and so safely allows us to look upon the sun, Plato's Agathon, for “the sun, even in eclipse, must be observed only *indirectly, in a mirror* on pain of blindness, even so the spirit acts as an additional reflection that helps us to look upon the Good. In the strictest sense, mortals cannot look upon the Good” (350; 297; 147). This ability to use the tool of the mirror to gain this

knowledge is dependant upon overcoming the rules of sexuality and gender performativity that have come to be represented as sacred and inviolable.

Another of *Nightwood's* most resonant images is that of the doll, which actually blends the signification of the mirror with that of the statue by broadly representing innocence, children, barrenness, sterility, and the unliving self.²² Irigaray relates the doll to the mirror through reference to the unsatisfactory action of seeing one's reflection in the "image (of oneself) in a pupil [that] is always dependent upon a *korē* [a reflector], that is to say upon a *young girl*, a young *virgin*, or even on a *doll*."²³ A reduced image, then, which cannot satisfy someone who wishes to have knowledge of the All" (327). Irigaray is here relating the doll to an image of a person and the mirror to the pupil of the eye—"a *korē*—dilated to encompass the whole field of vision, and *mirroring itself*. Reflecting nothing (but) its own void, that *hole* through which one looks" (328), thus representing possibility but ultimate disappointment. Notably, Barnes was first visited in 1978 by her future biographer, Hank O'Neal, who in his survey of the rather sparse Greenwich Village apartment in which she had lived as a hermit for forty years, noted that "the top, right-hand drawer holds a special

²² Freud briefly discusses the doll as a site of the uncanny in his "*Das Unheimliche*" (1919); citing Jentsch, who first defined the uncanny in a 1906 essay, Freud notes that a doll "which appears to be alive . . . [creates] a particularly favourable condition for awakening uncanny feelings . . . when there is intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not, and when an inanimate object becomes too much like an animate one" (XVII:233).

²³ Mina Loy employs a similar image in "Three Moments in Paris," when she writes that
All the virgin eyes in the world are made of glass

Long lines of boxes
Of dolls

.....
All the virgin eyes in the world are made of glass
They alone have the effrontery to
Stare through the human soul
Seeing nothing
Between parted fringes (17; lines III:1-3, 15-19).

treasure: buried beneath assorted clothing is a small misshapen doll from the 1890s” (O’Neal 9).

The doll is first used as a reduced image by Nora and Robin as a symbol of the child they—or at least Nora—presumably wanted but could not have, and Nora cherishes the memory of what the dolls meant to them (141). Later, when Nora confronts Jenny, she finds that Robin has given her a doll also, and she finds this is the hardest part of Robin’s betrayal (142). Finally, in a fit of rage, and echoing what she had been tempted to do to her actual child, Guido (48), Robin destroys the doll she had given to Nora, symbolizing her desire to fracture their sexual relationship so that it might further resemble the mother and daughter relationship she desires and Matthew alone can understand (101) and that otherwise must be classified as incest (156). Given the fracture of their sexual connection symbolized through the breaking of the doll/mirror, Robin is free to exalt Nora even higher, and she does so by installing her as a substitute Madonna (147-48).

The use of the statue in the text corresponds to Robin's mental state, which Foucault relates to a passion inverted and turned inward where it mutates and results in the paralysis of melancholia. In one of the central texts of early modernism, James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914), paralysis operates as one of the main metaphors for Irish life in almost all of the stories. Joyce, whom Barnes knew from as early as 1922, was one of Barnes' closest literary friends and likely influenced her embrace of modernist techniques (Herring 98-99). At least a temporary paralysis was a normal reaction on the part of many of the characters in modernist texts who had suffered the removal of structures upon which they had relied, despite advice from those like the doctor, who feels that Nora should be able to give up now that she “know[s] what the world is

about, knowing it's about nothing" (124). The modernist topos of paralysis in these individuals represented that of wider society and was no doubt influenced by the rise of psychology and medical science but also from the memory of World War I shell shock and indecision in the midst of the chaotic overturning of traditional cornerstones of European society. That this perhaps unexpected paralysis would result from a lack of clear direction or desire was long known. Robert Whytt, in his 1777 *Traité des maladies nerveuses*, claims that "these passions, being very violent, generate a kind of tetanus or catalepsy such that the person then resembles a statue more than a living being" (qtd. in Foucault *MC* 90). The several statues of *Nightwood* hence bear a great importance as symbols of the depth of the madness present in its characters.

Hedvig, Felix's mother of a military beauty, is seen by her husband to be an exact, though somewhat smaller, replica of a general. Her exactness is compared by him to a doll's house, which he immediately realizes is sinister because of its ability to mimic reality (4). Another living statue is the "Tupenny Upright" the doctor meets on London Bridge, meaning she is a very old prostitute who can charge very little and who is known for "standing still, letting you do it, silent and as indifferent as the dead, as if they were thinking of better days, or waiting for something that they had been promised when they were little girls" (130-31). Yet another is the Coney Island paraplegic, who is dressed finely, laid out as a spectacle, and is forced to look straight up into a mirror at all times (146). In the doctor's last speech, he sees Death personified sitting in Heaven in front of a mackerel sky, "on her breast a helmet and at her feet a foal with a silent marble mane. Nocturnal sleep is heavy on her eyes" (163).

When Felix first meets the doctor, it is at the house of a Baron in Berlin where a number of circus performers have gathered. This baron is known for his possession of “living statues,” known at the time as *tableaux vivants*; though not really common in the 1920s, these were people in the nude or dressed like statues who held their poses for hours at a time. They are the originators of the tradition of modern day street buskers who appear as manikins or as a coin-operated superhero. When Felix hears about the living statue display, he is so shocked that he immediately drops his hat at the thought.

When Barnes first introduces the character of Robin, she is probably unconscious but nonetheless frozen in a pose that makes her appear to be dancing in her pair of “white flannel trousers” later identified as boy's trousers (34, 169); this image can be taken as an acknowledgement to the character of J. Alfred Prufrock invented by T.S. Eliot, without whom Barnes' might not have got the unconventional *Nightwood* published. Robin always wears second hand clothes that are usually quite old and out of fashion. Felix, maybe out of respect for “the great past,” finds this charming and sees her as “gracious and yet fading, like an old statue in a garden, that symbolizes the weather through which it has endured, and is not so much the work of man as the work of wind and rain and the herd of the seasons, and though formed in man's image is a figure of doom” (41).

Cassandra Laity has shown that statues were used by H.D. to encode “transgressive (homoerotic) desire” through what she identifies as “statue-love” (94-95) in her introduction to H.D.'s *Paint It Today*, which has several references to statues that encode same-sex desire. Laity argues that H.D. identified icons of “sister-love' in the androgynous Grecian 'boys' the Decadents had derived from Greek nude

statuary in their own coded poems to male transgressive desire” that was employed by Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater (xxviii-xxix). H.D. likewise “manipulates the Decadent code to articulate female desire” (xxix). Specifically, in her chapter “Sister of Charmides,” H.D. refers to her character Midge through references to Oscar Wilde's poem “Charmides,” which is about a man who falls in love with a statue of the androgynous Athena, though in Lucian's original, the statue is of Aphrodite. Midge contemplates the Venus de Milo, asking “Yet who has seen it?” (60) and later pauses in front of a statue of Hermaphroditus and was “startled by its beauty” (65);²⁴ as Midge tells herself, “We should be able, more easily, to fall in love with a statue than with any other work of art” (61).

By similarly reading Barnes' statues as the figuration of transgressive statue-love, they do appear to be connected to the spaces of lesbianism. Of central importance is the garden statue in Nora and Robin's house in Paris. The house has a long garden and a fountain with the figure of “a tall granite woman bending forward with lifted head held over the pelvic round as if to warn a child who goes incautiously” (55). It is at this statue that Nora looks one night after she has an odd dream about her grandmother and Robin in a taboo room. This textual dream echoes the fact that Thelma Wood looked strikingly like Zadel Barnes, Djuna's domineering grandmother with whom she shared a bed for several years and whose sexual connection to her granddaughter is not only uncomfortably vague but clearly points to what Ann Martin identifies as a “deeply disturbing” suggestion of sexual abuse or incest (120). Puzzled, Nora looks at the garden statue from a window and sees a

²⁴ Laity further notes that H.D. frequently visited the statue of the *Hermaphrodite* when in Rome and owned a reproduction (xxviii; 94-95).

double shadow and realizes that Robin is standing there when, like an animal at night, Robin's eyes reflect some distant light. In a further instant, Nora sees that Robin is with her new lover, Jenny Petherbridge, whose name can be read “pet her bridge,” in their garden by their statue (64).

Yet again with Jenny, Robin is likened to a statue or a sculpture. At the dinner table, for instance, they are pictured with Jenny leaning far inward to be near to Robin, and Robin leaning far outward to avoid too much contact; citing Keats' “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” “they were like [statues of] Greek runners, with lifted feet but without the relief of the final command that would bring the foot down—eternally angry, eternally separated, in a cataleptic frozen gesture of abandon” (69). There is also a purity, or as the doctor puts it, an innocence in Robin's madness; he thinks that she is “utterly innocent” which is “to be utterly unknown, especially to [her]self” (138). Again, this is illustrated through the statues when Robin, who has sought some sort of relief in Catholicism, obtains a good quality plaster cast of the Virgin. Jenny, identified throughout as a thief and an imitator, then purchases eighty-two similar looking, but cheap imitation statues, which she lines up in a row that is described as looking ridiculous.

Finally, the last statue and perhaps the most important one appears in the text in the last scene, in which a statue of the Virgin Mary is set up by Robin as a shrine in the chapel on Nora's estate (169). As explored earlier, many modernists, including homosexuals and lesbians, found a place of belonging in the Catholic church, even if they hid their lifestyles that certainly would not have been embraced by the Church. Yet, the central figures in Christianity, although theologically considered to be above

gender, have historically almost always been presented as males and of course arose in patriarchal cultures.

In Chapter I, I examined how H.D.'s *Trilogy*, written during World War II, invokes the images of the Virgin Mary, several pagan goddesses, and a Dream Lady in urging the spiritual and political empowerment of women during the modernist period. For Barnes, the transition was not easy, and so her use of Mary as an icon, while certainly more traditionally defined than that of H.D., likewise lacks as creative a solution to the tensions of prewar Europe. Barnes' Virgin Mary is denied any real presence, and, despite Mary's femininity, the characters use her to re-inscribe a patriarchal narrative to give sense to their various desires that rule their destinies; in fact, Phillip Herring goes so far as to argue that "at the core, *Nightwood's* major characters are thwarted by desire: the desire to change their essence or that of Robin" (207). Erin Carlston points out that Mary is "the focus of Guido's and all the characters' fantasies of immaculate love, and eternal intimacy without threat of loss, their quest for a reincorporation into the maternal body that would turn time backward in its course" (53). Guido haunts churches and his Virgin Mary medallion becomes an icon that he calls his mother and that he takes as Robin's replacement (123, 162), and the doctor dreams of being even Mary's "unknown beloved second son" (149-50). The statue of Mary that Robin sets up as an icon does seem to invoke a statue-love that illustrates Robin's love for Nora, yet Robin's actions show that she has moved beyond seeing Nora as a lover and has come to identify her as an incarnate Virgin Mary whom she then makes to suffer.

The Virgin Mary is essential for Robin because she is the one image of peace and hope to which Robin clings, and she is the one figure in whom Robin finds a

measure of comfort. Edward Gunn maintains this is precipitated by the baron's "attempts to make Robin, the beast, act out her chosen role as Baronin Volkbein, mother, noble, and saviour, [which] are met with indifference until she is confronted with pregnancy. [Robin] connects conception with divine creation, and turning to the Catholic church and the image of Virgin Mary, loses herself in wandering" (551). In this manner, the powerful image of the Virgin Mary becomes a role model for her understanding of what a mother is, and later, when Robin has left Felix and their son, an ideal of the mother that she wants to have for herself, which is what she finds in Nora, or rather, what she forces upon her. This in turn accords with both psychology and religion, wherein "the natural earthly counterpart to Edenic existence and identification with God is the child's experience of the mother. She represents security, power, and unity . . . But, in religion and psychology, the mother and God both have a dual nature, great and terrible, because they define our mortality" (Gunn 548). This sets up the tension and the climax of *Nightwood* and its concerns with death and rebirth through the advocacy of the mother.

For Robin, Nora becomes the incarnate Virgin Mary, yet not one removed from our time and place as most Catholics would understand her. Judith Lee, for example, positions this deified Mary "between the human and the holy, just as Robin is between the human and the animal" (214). As the doctor later points out, Robin uses everyone she sleeps with as a way of proving that she does not care, for by making her "escape" from them, she "fills her heart with peace and happiness"; since she found she could not leave Nora, "she put [her] cleverly away by making [her] the Madonna" (146). This could work as a corrective, as Foucault posits that the movement to institutionalize and to contain madness was paralleled by the abrogation

within Christianity of the sense of sacred madness that was a part of itself since the Early Church, for as the Apostle Paul neatly sums up his message in I Corinthians 1, “we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness” or madness (*MC* 79-81). Hence, Gunn can write that Nora afterwards becomes Robin’s “divine exception from the human predicament, yet fated to take on suffering [which] completes the imagery of the sort of atavism that lies behind the myth of rebirth” (555). Robin tells Nora that “I want everyone to be gay, gay, gay. Only you . . . only you, you mustn’t be gay or happy, not like that, it’s not for you, only for everyone else in the world” (155). So Nora is stuck deeply in love with someone who now refuses to acknowledge her as human, but Robin finds the stabilizing centre she was lacking. Thus, as Jane Marcus states, everyone in *Nightwood*, “all the wandering Jews, blacks, lesbians, outsiders and transvestites [come] together in a narrative that mothers the Other . . . remind[ing] us that the human condition is a sister- and brotherhood of difference, and that ideologies that seek to erase those differences and define only themselves as human are indescribably dangerous” (228, 250). *Nightwood*, then, is not only a protest against the abuses of sovereignty, but prescriptive in that it points to the image of an all accepting and welcoming Virgin Mother as the symbol of the way forward for wider society.

Yet the veneration of Mary becomes strikingly toxic between Robin and Nora as is figured through the scene with the two women and Nora's dog in the chapel in the final section of the text. Nora's dog discovers Robin's presence on Nora's property after several months' absence; this fulfils the doctor's prophecy that “Nora will leave that girl some day; but though those two are buried at opposite ends of the earth, one dog will find them both” (106). Nora runs to the chapel, bangs against the door, and

injures herself. The dog is bewildered by Robin and his actions reflect “terror,” “agony,” and “misery”; he barks and bites at Robin, and she responds with a frenzied state of “barking in a fit of laughter, obscene and touching”; finally, Robin “gave up, lying out, her hands beside her, her face turned and weeping; and the dog too gave up then, and lay down, his eyes bloodshot, his head flat along her knees” (170). This mystifying interaction with the dog has been regarded as everything from sexual bestiality to Robin's final devolution. In Barnes' words, which I think are of interest, she was copying something she had actually seen once when her friend Fitzzi became very inebriated and was on all fours howling; her dog reacted in a near panic, which she took as a lesson that animals react strongly to such situations when they find their masters in very unusual states through their emotional, and not rational, ingrained responses (O'Neal 36-37).²⁵

Barnes was always emphatic that the dog and Robin do not engage in bestiality or cunnilingus, writing once, “The dog is *not* being romantic towards Robin! It is furious at the mystery of her drunkenness, a kind of exorcism of what it does not understand” (Barnes, qtd. in Page 362). Yet, for Robin, who exists between the human and the bestial, there does not appear to be much hope that she will escape being “frozen, 'immortalized,' in that limbo state” (Scott 93). Hence, she becomes “a personification of abjection, defined by Julia Kristeva as that which 'disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite’” (Kristeva, qtd. in Horner 79). She is again La

²⁵ Fitzzi was Mary Eleanor Fitzgerald, a friend of Barnes' from Greenwich Village who was involved in the theatre scene and was, for instance, the general manager for the first production in 1924 of *All God's Chillun Got Wings* by Eugene O'Neill. There are several photos of Fitzzi in Barnes' papers held at the University of Maryland, including two with her dog Buff, one of which he, the dog, apparently signed.

Somnambule, a sexual predator and a creature of the night, which for Dana Seitler “designates both an atemporality and an aspatiality in which methods of categorization have difficulty maintaining social order, thus freeing the citizen-subject from notions of sexual civility” (548).

Nightwood's final scene shows Nora, the unwilling Virgin Mary, also taking on the role of Christ. The action of Nora, before the scene between her dog and Robin that ends the text, takes but a sentence: “She began to run, cursing and crying, and blindly, without warning, plunged into the jamb of the chapel door” (169). And that, oddly enough, is all that Barnes says about Nora’s fate. The reader is not told if Nora has hit the door so hard that she has been killed or rendered unconscious or if she merely bumped it and then witnessed the bizarre scene. Yet, what is clear is that the symbolic hitting of the door is a reference to her giving herself, once more, for her friend. In this manner, the remark by the doctor, that “If you really want to know how hard a prize-fighter hits . . . you have got to walk into the circle of his fury and be carried out by the heels, not by the count” is demonstrated (158). This action also references the sacrifice of Christ, patterned upon the Israelite sacrifice of the Passover lamb in Exodus 12. Here, the chosen people of God mark the jambs and lintels of their doors with the blood of a lamb, which saves their houses from the Angel of Death who slaughters the firstborn sons in all the unmarked houses throughout Egypt that night so that the Israelite people can finally be free. This was taken as a type of Christ and his death as the lamb of God whose blood was shed on a cross to provide salvation. Nora has learned from Matthew that people are “passionate and bright because they want to love and be loved” by others to whom they then give the power of “death and a sword” (146-47). By willingly submitting to Robin’s power, Nora

hopes to save her, and hitting the door, though accidental, shows that she has indeed given all that she can, and will be confident of being with Robin because she believes that by having loved Robin until the dualism of the lover and the beloved breaks away, they can become one. Nora's contact with the door, her role as the Virgin Mary, and her deep, sacrificial—even if mad—love for Robin make her the Christ figure of *Nightwood* whose love and redemptive qualities are able to overcome the beast of the night in the sacred margins to inscribe a new understanding of justice and inclusion for all people apart from the commands of the sovereign and the traditions of mainstream society.

— § —

The sacred remains an often elusive category that continues to intrigue and influence. Following its development as delineated by the anthropology of religion, sacredness and pollution have maintained their evocative power and vulnerability to misuse long after the social structures of organized religion began to decline. During the modernist period, which was witness to this decline and to the biopolitical turmoil caused by war and epidemic and eugenics and political unrest, the sacred was called upon both for good and for evil, but perhaps nowhere more so than when the sovereign enshrined the sacred to manipulate people to fight on the battlefield or when he excluded people who did not fit properly into his constructed society to the margins. Yet, in the marginalization of these *homo sacers*, they found a sacredness of a different type, through which their experience of life became a critique and a

warning to the wider human community if it heeds their message from the sacred margins.

One of the most cogent Christianity symbols for the sacred that the modernists inherited is the white lamb, which is mentioned specifically as a sacrifice to God more than eighty times in the Hebrew Scriptures; as already mentioned, the Christian New Testament uses the lamb as a symbol of Christ, whose death is a sacrifice for sin. The rules for offering a sacrificial lamb, mentioned throughout Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, stipulate it should be pure white and without blemish or injury. This image is skillfully inverted by Charlie Chaplin in his classic *Modern Times* (1936), whose opening credits are flashed on the face of a ticking clock. As the film begins, there is a very quick image of a flock of sheep crowding through a small passageway; they are uniformly white except for a single black sheep. This image is quickly replaced by a shot of a group of factory labourers ascending from an underground subway station to go to work. Throughout the film, consciously or not, Chaplin's character takes up for the marginalized and the downtrodden, and his sanctity is that of the single black sheep who defies the commands of the sovereign, the factory owners, the police, the immigration and welfare officers, and even of democracy and the system of language. In the margins, he finds a sacredness not controlled by the sovereign.

On the other hand, many invocations of the sacred during the modernist period may now appear to be unthinking abuses enacted by the guardians of traditional power structures, but their echoes are still heard. One such misuse of the sacred was by the Canadian Presbyterian minister the Rev. Dr. Charles William Gordon, much better known by his pen name as Ralph Connor, one of the world's best

selling authors at the turn of the century. With the rise of World War I, Gordon was one of those who convoluted the military concerns of state with the spiritual concerns of the Church by eagerly recruiting young men for Winnipeg's Cameron Highlanders Regiment from his church pulpit; nearly all of the first men who volunteered under his sermonizing and who had been convinced by the rhetoric of the sacred sacrifice for God and country were soon killed at a rate three times the Canadian average (McLean).²⁶

Much modernist art tried to break away from this enshrinement of war and violence as sacred. These include such masterpieces as *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), wherein the boys of a German village are inspired to enlist and fight for the Fatherland. One by one, they die until the last is killed by a sniper as he reaches outside his trench to touch a butterfly. Upon the last camera shot of his corpse is superimposed the earlier picture of the boys triumphantly leaving their town in single file, not knowing that they were marching to death. Ernest Hemingway, who is often seen as glorifying war himself, was actually quite careful about his presentation of it,

²⁶ Gordon reported being “overwhelmed with speaking engagements” and was happy to turn the basement of St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church into a temporary barracks (McLean). Over the course of the war, the entire regiment suffering thirty percent casualties, compared with only ten percent in the Canadian Expeditionary Force as a whole (McLean). Yet, a hundred years later, the regiment itself still uses sacramental language, claiming on their website that they were “Baptized in the mud, blood and fire of France and Flanders” (Cameron). Indeed, they saw action at Ypres, where poison gas was first used as a weapon, at the Battle of the Somme, where 1,265,000 men died, at Vimy Ridge, the first battle where all Canadian divisions fought as one and which was later the site of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial which Hitler personally visited in 1940, and at Passchendaele, the four month slogging battle on top of swampland that became the subject of Paul Gross' 2008 film, ostensibly made to celebrate Alberta's centennial, to honour war dead, and to educate the present generation. Through it all, there is an unquestioned sense of loyalty to the use of sacredness within the military's rhetorical posturing. It is incredible that, in the early twenty-first century, speaking about human beings, the regiment still finds its identity in a 1848 historical text that refers to how its parent Cameron regiment in Scotland was decimated at the Battle of Waterloo: “a good regiment, like the 79th, may be destroyed—it cannot be defeated” (Gleig 189). These misuses of the sacred to add prestige to the neocolonial wars of the present do no honour to the reality of war or the experiences of those who die.

and he clearly opposed such easy characterization of war as sacred. In *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), he wrote scathingly that

I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain . . . I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of the places were all you could say and have them mean anything. Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates. (185)

The sacred is a fluid category, but it is not a powerless one. Certainly, in the excitement and terror of war, it has often been used to manipulate. In other circumstances, however, it has given an uneasy basis to ethical concerns about how society treats individual human lives.

The issue is succinctly summarized by Walt Whitman in his poem “I Sing the Body Electric,” where he insisted that “If anything is sacred the human body is sacred” (134). Inherent in these words is a mistrust of the sacred because of what it can be remolded into. It is for this reason that Somerville's bioethics falls short of the bios-based ontology offered by Agamben, and her formulation might stand more ground if the concept of the sacred had not, in only the past one hundred years, been changed into the notions of ethnic and physical and ideological purity that led, at the insistence of self-serving sovereigns, to prison camps, sterilization, censure, displacement, or death for groups as diverse as Boers, Armenians, Jews, Roma, Poles, homosexuals, Palestinians, the mentally ill, unlawful combatants, those lacking the proper documents. Yet, Whitman takes the category and celebrates it in the human individual and his or her body. That is sacred to him—human life as I live it and not

as the basis for a shared story that can so easily be co-opted by those who want to manipulate. This leads to a desire to erode the centre, to allow the sacred margins to grow, and to form a willingly fractured community.

In *Nightwood* and in *Light in August*, those who dwell in the community of the sacred margins have the possibility to embrace a Whitmanesque sense of the sacred for themselves by stepping outside the bounds of the sovereign by their own will and not by his order. This may mean a reevaluation of the cogs of production, of the military-industrial complex, of mass consumption, of exported democracy. This argues for a recognition of the forced marginalization of many in society, which has been achieved through a misuse of categories of pollution and sacredness that serve the vested interests of self-serving sovereigns; however, those on the margins are enabled to offer a message and a critique to those in the mainstream society about their own vulnerabilities and about the true source of sacredness within human life itself, which points to the possibility of a society based in a greater understanding of equality and justice. As Barnes' Doctor O'Connor, who forms a fine counterpart to Faulkner's Hightower, puts it, the matter is to "Let go Hell; and your fall will be broken by the roof of Heaven" (124). In a world whose meaning is often defined through the metanarratives offered by the religious, political, and economic sovereigns who seek to guard and maintain their own power, those who are excluded, disqualified, and marginalized are put in a hellish position of terror. It is a terrifying act to reject that metanarrative, but, by reasoning against that construction, by testing its limits, by arguing on the basis of the sacredness of all life, by letting go the sovereign's Hell, Faulkner and Barnes point to the possibility of thinking outside the bonds of the sovereign's system and thereby heeding the message of the sacred

margins that urges the human community to work toward the Heaven of a society with respect and justice for all human beings.

Chapter IV:
Spectres of Crisis in James' "The Jolly Corner," Joyce's *Ulysses*,
and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*

“the dead can often be more powerful than the living”

—Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*

The recent discovery of the oldest known human artifact has delivered new insights into the centrality of death to human culture. The small object, found by a team of Spanish archeologists in 1998, is a beautifully flaked quartzite hand axe of a distinctive pinkish hue; nicknamed “Excalibur,” it is considered to be the oldest evidence of human creativity (Carbonell). It was unearthed during a large excavation of a 14 metre deep pit inside a network of limestone caves by a team led by Professor Eudald Carbonell in Atapuerca, Spain. In one of these caves, the scientists found a burial pit containing the remains of at least 27 ancient humans, and the team soon came to believe that the stone axe, the only man made object remaining in the pit, was placed with the bodies as part of a funeral rite; although there may be other plausible explanations for the hand axe, the archeologists characterized it as proof of ancient human symbolic thought, specifically about life and death (Carbonell 11-12).

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the find is that, although scientists have conventionally held that symbolic thought and funeral rites most likely only appeared with modern humans some 50,000 years ago, these Spanish remains have been reliably dated to more than 350,000 years ago. Subsequent testing showed that the remains were those of *Homo heidelbergensis*, a human species that dominated Europe around 600,000-200,000 years ago and that is believed to be an ancestor to both Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens* (Carbonell 12). Beyond the importance of this find to our knowledge of the past development of our species, it is intriguing to realize that the oldest known human artifact most likely survived specifically because it was used in a prehistoric ritual to honour the spirits of the dead.

Human beliefs about death, the return of the dead, and the methods for dealing with death changed radically during the violent traumas of the modernist period. In

naming the differences between the treatment of death in different cultures and time periods, Jacques Derrida emphasizes what he sees as “a sort of disappearance of death in the modern West and in industrialized societies. . . . For us, in the West, within our borders, death would be, and increasingly is, almost prohibited, dissimulated, disposed of, and denied” (*Aporias* 57). At stake here is the question of whether the West has secularized itself to the degree that it has lost traditional means of dealing with death that religious rituals and beliefs of a heavenly paradise after death once gave. Further, since what replaces traditional forms of religious belief for most Westerners is a faith in science and, increasingly, technology, a taboo around death emerges because despite the rapid expanse in life expectancy in the West over the last century, death still looms large in the minds of our proportionately ageing populations.

For this reason, Pericles Lewis, in his *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel* (2010), identifies death as a major concern of modernist spirituality as portrayed in literature, wherein the representation of death takes on a whole new level of meaning compared with earlier literatures. Although Lewis agrees that the “uneasy combination of fear and desire that we display towards the dead has driven many beliefs and rituals from the dawn of religion” (192), he argues that modernists “frequently deny the consolations of immortality” in terms of traditional beliefs in “the promise of personal immortality or bodily resurrection” (189-90); yet, the “cycles of birth and death, and the mysteries of sexuality,” even after communal belief in God or the supernatural has disappeared, “retain their mystery” (21). Thus, Lewis sees the modernists as resisting the comfort in the face of death that religion offered while maintaining a sense of awe toward the experience of death. Lewis

therefore insists that though death, along with life and sex, are main subjects of the literature of any age, “in modernism, they constitute the sacred” (21).

In this chapter, I argue that the modernist period was haunted by a multitude of spectres and that modernist writers used the topos of the return of the dead to give voice to the abiding spectres of the crises of rapid social change and lost cultural moorings that occurred as their era bore the trauma of world war, the end of colonial empires, and the decline of traditional sociocultural foundations once found in family, religion, or the nation state. Yet, it was by giving voice to these spectres that the modernists were in turn able to accept the traumas of the past and to move toward healing and regeneration; thus, the literary return of the dead is not primarily meant to honour the dead or to show a literal belief in their return but to illustrate the crises and frustrations of a modern industrialized urban life often scarred by war and economic hardship for so many. The modernist project emphasized experimentation with language to overcome the crisis of representation, and this chapter will likewise emphasize the questions of language and representation that surround the modernist spectre; the image of the spectre appearing to break free from death to speak of society's crises is an especially privileged site wherein the modernists likewise attempted to break free from the prison house of conventional language that falls even shorter of adequacy than elsewhere when treating the mysteries of life and of death, crisis, trauma, and loss. In three specific sites of inquiry, this chapter will argue that Henry James gave voice to the spectres of the crises of rapid social change and a loss of cultural moorings, James Joyce gave voice to the spectres of the crises of the colonial enterprise of religion and state, and Virginia Woolf gave voice to the spectres of the crises of the Great War and the end of Empire.

This central human cultural concern with other humans who have died is one that fascinated Jacques Derrida, who, especially near the end of his own life, returned to death and the spectre repeatedly in his writing. In his sustained treatment of death in *Aporias: Dying—Awaiting (One Another at) the “Limits of Truth”* (1993), Derrida claims “There is no culture without a cult of ancestors, a ritualization of mourning and sacrifice, institutional places and modes of burial . . . The very concept of culture may seem to be synonymous with the culture of death” (43). Importantly, Derrida argues that human culture originates in our sense of aporia—specifically, our doubt and anxiety about death and the question of life beyond death. This is because “the questions and answers that concern survival, immortality, the beyond, or the other side of this side” depend upon “what one should do or think *down here* before death (ethical, juridical, and political)” (*Aporias* 52). Our ancestors did not doubt the continued existence of the dead, who appeared to them in dreams and who were thought to maintain the ability to interfere in the affairs of the living, so they lived in such a way so as to cultivate a good afterlife for their families and themselves, to gain the good will of good spirits, and to escape the influence of evil spirits; this method of life eventually developed into patterns of culture. Indeed, citing Paul Valéry and Sir James Frazer, Derrida believes that the beginning of what we would call the political “in its essence” is found in the “ancient belief *that the dead are not dead, or are not quite dead,*” and this determines a certain “relation with the spirits of the dead” that early and “primitive” people expressed through their understandings of economics, organization of time and space, and hospitality “to the ghost as guest” that Derrida

insists is a relationship that “always describes a crossing *of* borders” (61-62).¹

Elsewhere, Derrida admits that

What has, dare I say, constantly haunted me in this logic of the specter is that it regularly exceeds all the oppositions between visible and invisible, sensible and insensible. A specter is both visible and invisible, both phenomenal and nonphenomenal: a trace that marks the present with its absence in advance. The spectral logic is *de facto* a deconstructive logic. It is in the element of haunting that deconstruction finds the place most hospitable to it, at the heart of the living present, in the quickest heartbeat of the philosophical. Like the work of mourning, in a sense, which produces spectrality, and like *all* work produces spectrality. (*Echographies* 117)

This work of the dead who are “not quite dead” has been seen to be inspiring the living to a more ethical, juridical, or political life,² and this understanding is rooted in the appearance of dead ancestors in the dreams of the living, for which reason the first section of this chapter will employ a methodology for decoding the spectre that relies on Freud’s notion of dreamwork accomplished through displacement, condensation, and wish-fulfilment. Indeed, Derrida himself not only draws on Freud in speaking of the instability or indecipherability of language, he seemingly analyzes the spectre of Freud in *Archive Fever*, which he subtitled *A Freudian Impression*. Ostensibly, *Archive Fever*, according to its section called “Theses,”³ provides Derrida’s reading of Freud’s interpretation of Wilhelm Jensen’s novel *Gradiva* (1903), in which an archaeologist idealizes the figure of the Gradiva, a Roman bas-relief of a walking woman. Freud wrote a study of the dreamwork of the

¹ The spectre is thus a concept Derrida will privilege because it (like his categories of *différance*, the undecidable, the trace, or the pharmakon) resists patterns of binary thought.

² This use of the dead to motivate the living continued in forms enshrined, for example, in the call to duty in militaristic cultures based on the expectations of the ghosts of the warrior ancestors or, as urged by the author of the Book of Hebrews, as a call to Christians to “run with patience the race that is set before [them]” because they believe they are literally “compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses” of the Christians who have already died (Heb 12:1).

³ *Archive Fever* is written in sections that Derrida calls “several lengthy preliminary excursions,” and so are titled “Note,” “Exergue,” “Preamble,” “Foreword,” “Theses,” and “Postscript.”

novel called “Delusion and Dream in Jensen's *Gradiva*” (1907); he also owned a copy of the bas-relief itself,⁴ which still remains in his private study where he died in his house at 20 Maresfield Gardens in London, which is now the Freud Museum under whose auspices Derrida first gave the lecture upon which *Archive Fever* is based.

Throughout the section called “Foreword,” Derrida refers repeatedly to the spectre of Freud and, recognizing Freud's importance to the study of dreams and of phantoms, warns, “Now let us not forget, this is also the phantom of an expert in phantoms” (61). The importance of Freud to a study of the return of the dead is that his methods of understanding the interpretation of dreams lead to greater understanding of the truths spoken by the phantoms that appear in dreams. Derrida links language and the spectral when he argues that Freud's characterization of the *Gradiva* is of a “mid-day ghost” that “appears for us in an experience of *reading*, but also, for the hero of the novel, in an experience the *language* of which, indeed the multiplicity of languages, cannot be abstracted away to leave naked pure perception” because “hauntedness is not only haunted by this or that ghost, *Gravida* [sic⁵] for example, but by the specter of the truth which has been thus repressed. The truth is spectral, and this is its part of truth which is irreducible by explanation” (86-87).

Derrida argues that the truth embodied in the spectres of dreams insists that

The experience in which we meet specters or let them come visit us remains indestructible and undeniable. The most cultivated, the most reasonable, the most nonbelieving people easily reconcile a certain

⁴ A picture of Freud's copy of the *Gravida* can be found at the Freud Museum website at <<http://www.freud.org.uk/photo-library/detail/67734/>>.

⁵ While likely a simple typographical error, the substitution of “*Gravida*” for “*Gradiva*” is intriguing in that it replaces the Latin term for a “walking woman” with that for a “pregnant woman,” an error that evokes the wish fulfilment of the dream of Norbert Hanold, the archaeologist who is the protagonist of Jensen's novel and who idealizes the *Gradiva* and dreams of her walking the streets of Pompeii just as it is overcome by Vesuvius—on the rim of which Derrida claims to have been when he wrote the “Postscript” to *Archive Fever* (97).

spiritualism with reason. . . .Freud had his ghosts, he confesses it on occasion. He lets us partake of his truth, He had his, and he obeyed them” (88-89).

There is then a message brought to the living by the return of the dead, though, as will be shown, the spectre is of course an entity constructed by the individual or the community to embody their own anxiety that arises from social and cultural crises. As Harold Bloom says of the spectres of earlier poets that return, the “mighty dead return, but they return in our colors, and speaking in our voices, at least in part, at least in moments, moments that testify to our own persistence, and not to their own” (141).⁶ Slavoj Žižek goes further in arguing that

Perhaps the best way of encapsulating the gist of an epoch is to focus not on the explicit features that define its social and ideological edifices but on the disavowed ghosts that haunt it, dwelling in a mysterious region of nonexistent entities which nonetheless *persist*, continue to exert the efficacy. (*Fragile 1*)

Although in earlier cultures the return of dead ancestors could be interpreted as a need to uphold traditions or to renew rituals, the topos of the return of the dead within modernist literature does not reassure or comfort those facing the period's intense turmoil through war, urbanization, or colonialism; instead, the return illuminates the lack of traditions and rituals suitable for the modern age and the sense of aporia that surrounded their present and future.

Derrida's choice of aporias for the title of his study of the concept of death as the root of human culture is notable. H.G. Liddel and Robert Scott, in their etymological dictionary of Classical Greek, trace *aporos*, the Greek root of the English word aporia, to the Greek negative prefix “*a*” and the word “*poros*” meaning

⁶ See Pound's early poem “The Return” for his presentation of the “tentative” and “uncertain” return of the souls of those who were once strong and mighty (*Poems* 244).

a path or passage. Literally, then, *aporos* means not having a passage or path, or to lack a way in, out, or through, which eventually came to mean a figuratively impassible state or circumstance (215). This is mirrored in the English usage of *aporia*, which references a state of anxiety about what choice to make or doubt about what to believe. Within deconstructive thought, *aporia* refers more specifically to the point at which a text is indeterminate. Derrida uses the term to refer to death itself for good reason: death always retains a sense of secrecy because, although all people will die, we can never truly know what happens next or analyze the event of our own death or fully experience it in the sense of being able to reflect back upon it.⁷ In another sense, Georges Bataille reveals the self-contradiction of death's affirmation of life: "Death actually discloses the imposture of reality, not only in that the absence of duration gives the lie to it, but above all because death is the great affirmer, the wonder-struck cry of life" (*Theory* 46). Elsewhere, Bataille speaks of death as a luxury that humans regard as similar to sexuality: "first as a negation of ourselves, then—in a sudden reversal—as the profound truth of that movement of which life is the manifestation" (*Accursed* I:34). Even here, the literal sense of "*aporos*" reappears when Derrida speaks of death as transgressing a border: "Every culture is characterized by its way of apprehending, dealing with, and, one could say, 'living' death as trespass" (24). In this fashion, he identifies death as both the root of human culture in general and one of the chief reason for differences between cultures.

⁷ In this manner, death carries a Conradian horror that is perhaps best described in Leo Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" (1886), whose titular character is consumed with terror as his body wastes away and he tries to conceptualize his approaching demise: "Why deceive myself? . . . I'm dying. . . . There was light, and now there is darkness. I was here, and now I am going! Where?" (180).

In light of Lewis' definition of death as a modernist sacred category, Derrida's identification of death as aporia takes on a new significance in that it expresses a confusion arising from a human inability to understand what we cannot experience. Speaking of death leads to a conjuring of the spirits of the dead and asking them to speak to us; when this happens, as in the modernist literary texts considered in this chapter, it leads over an uncertain path to a place where the language to deal with the unknown is not familiar. Texts dealing with the return of the dead thus reveal a deep concern with literary experimentation and questions of representation that lie at the heart of the modernist project. Since the modernists experimented with language to test the awkwardness of moving through language and communicating meaning with certain words placed together in certain ways, then the image of the spectre appearing to break free of death to speak is significant. As Derrida's aporia, the return of the dead in modernist literature represents both the problems of language and the repressed problems of society in the same way that Derrida uses the spectre as a site of unfixed temporality and ontology that illustrates the inherent instability of language and text. As he states at the outset of "Plato's Pharmacy," "A text is not a text unless it hides from the first comer, from the first glance, the law of its composition and the rules of its game. A text remains, moreover, forever imperceptible" (63). Therefore, Derrida is concerned not only with the spectre as a symbol of the past haunting the present but with how the spectre represents transgressions within a text or within the language system's attempts to signify our comprehension of life and of the hidden systems that order the world in which people trust too fully and too readily. As Fredric Jameson explains, "Spectrality does not involve the conviction that ghosts exist or that the past . . . is still very much alive and

at work, within the living present”; instead, insists Jameson, the message of the spectre is that “the living present is scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be; that we would do well not to count on its density and solidity, which might under exceptional circumstances betray us” (39). By looking beyond the polished surface of representation to the gaps and fissures in language, Derrida argues that the spectres haunt the text to show both the instability of language and the attempts to avoid death through the constructions of human institutions.

Derrida expands his ideas on death in *Aporias* in his *Specters of Marx* (1994), though his concern in the latter focuses on the spectres of the dead instead of primarily on death itself.⁸ His goal is to reveal the connections between the spectre, the political, and human responsibility, and, to this end, Derrida introduces the concept of hauntology. Hauntology is a neologism that Derrida forms to incorporate “haunting” and “ontology,” forming a homophone with “*ontologie*” in French. Derrida's hauntology posits the importance of the spectres of the past and future to the intellectual conceptions of the present. As Derrida argues, “To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time” (*SM* 202). Using his concept of hauntology, he argues again that the role of spectres is to illustrate a transgression of borders to teach the living about life:

To live, by definition, is not something one learns. Not from oneself, it is not learned from life, taught by life. Only from the other and by death. In any case from the other at the edge of life. At the internal border of the external border, it is a heterodidactics between life and death. . . . If it—learning to live—remains to be done, it can happen only between life and death. Neither in life nor in death *alone*. What

⁸ Derrida worked on both texts at the same time, and both were originally published in 1993 (*Spectres de Marx* in French and *Aporias* in English); *Specters of Marx* appeared in English in 1994, and *Aporias* was published in French in 1996.

happens between two, and between all the “two's” one likes, such as between life and death, can only *maintain itself* with some ghost, can only *talk with* or *about* some ghost. So it would be necessary to learn spirits. Even and especially if this, the spectral, *is not*. Even and especially if this, which is neither substance, nor essence, nor existence, *is never present as such*. (*SM* xvii)

Derrida is thus presenting the spectre, something the individual or the community has itself constructed, after all, as a teacher or instructor. In fact, the only other time Derrida returns to the concept of “heterodidactics” is in his *Eyes of the University*, wherein he gives an academic Ten Commandments. The seventh is that the university professor must “initiate, introduce, and train” the student, just as he was trained himself, and so the teacher “remains an other for the disciple. Guardian, guarantor, intercessor, predecessor, elder, he has to represent the speech, thought, or knowledge of the other: *heterodidactics*” (172).⁹ As a construction, the spectre as teacher must embody the transgressive knowledge that permeates the borders and margins and so is not integrated into the wider body of knowledge of the living and whose too urgent suppression in the past could not be accomplished. The spectre does not exist independently of our construction of it as a placeholder for the crises of our own ontology and cultural history and language. As Jean-Michel Rabaté discerns, it is “an archetypal configuration: the ghost is a product of discourse for, if nobody or almost nobody has ever seen one with his own eyes, everybody is at least familiar with the widely circulated rumour. The spectre is a discursive being” (217). Yet, this discursive category is not empty, and the spectre further represents the responsibility of the living, through heterodidactics, to learn from those beyond the borders of our own

⁹ Likewise, Derrida actually ends his study of spectres by turning it into an admonition to academics: “Could one *address oneself in general* if already some ghost did not come back? If he loves justice, the 'scholar' of the future, the 'intellectual' of tomorrow should learn it and from the ghost” (*SM* 221).

visible ontology, those who have died or who are not yet born, and so to live in light of the mysteries and fractures of our attempts at a field of knowledge and to live out our responsibility to them to act justly and ethically now.

Indeed, Derrida wrote his study of the spectre and of Marx and of Marxism in part to challenge the premature quelling of spectres that he identified in Francis Fukuyama's declaration of the "end of history" following the fall of the Berlin Wall and of Soviet Communism. Fukuyama believed this signalled the *telos* of human history in the final triumph of American style liberal democracy.¹⁰ Derrida himself, in *The Gift of Death*, identifies what he would see as the end of history: he writes that "The moment the problem [of history] were resolved that very totalizing closure would determine the end of history . . . History can be neither a decidable object nor a totality capable of being mastered, precisely because it is tied to *responsibility*, to *faith*, and to the *gift*" (*Gift* 7). He urges that the mysteries of human culture and history must remain mysterious, and so an aspect of his hauntology looks to the spectre of the past to prove the instability of categories that are argued to be complete or finished or closed or sealed. Derrida's issue with Fukuyama's "end of history," then, is that it tries to master history by controlling it and quashing its mystery and exorcising its ghosts with the assumption that global capitalism and liberal democracy have won out.¹¹

¹⁰ In a fascinating turn, deconstruction, which has itself been prematurely declared dead in our so-called "post-theoretical" context, has become something of a spectre, filling a similar role to that claimed for Marx by Derrida. In Jodey Castricano's in-depth analysis of Derrida's ghost writing, she does not use his concept of hauntology but allows it to haunt her own concept of "cryptomimesis" that further invokes Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's influential work on haunting based on their ideas of the phantom and the crypt. Although Derrida only passingly refers to their work in *Specters of Marx*, he wrote a foreword, "Fors: The English Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok," to their *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* (1976), a literary analysis of Freud's "Wolf Man."

¹¹ Derrida is very sensitive to Fukuyama's quasi-religious presentation of the triumph of liberal democracy and characterizes it as a "gospel," "good news," an "evangelistic figure," "emancipatory

The spectre, as a figure that transgresses borders by being neither alive or dead and neither physical or immaterial, pictures the lingering of other politics, other histories, and other ideologies. This certainly includes Marxism and, in a different form, Marx himself, that still do challenge the “ideal” of Fukuyama's globalized American liberal democracy. In such cases, Derrida sees indeed an attempted conjuration or exorcism that acts as a “deafening consensus that what is, it says, indeed dead, remain dead indeed”; this loud talk meant to keep the dead dead on the contrary “arouses a suspicion. It awakens us where it would like to put us asleep. Vigilance, therefore: the cadaver is perhaps not as dead, as simply dead as the conjuration tries to delude us into believing” (*SM* 120). And yet, this move to convince ourselves that the dead do not and cannot haunt does “no more than disavow the undeniable itself: a ghost never dies, it remains always to come and to come-back” (*SM* 123).

The question then becomes, what is the work of the spectre within Derrida's conception of a hauntology? Žižek has famously called the return of the dead “the fundamental fantasy of contemporary mass culture,”¹² and, citing Lacan, he argues

promise,” “a structural messianism,” and “eschatological” (*SM* 70-75). Derrida argues that Fukuyama represents “a dogmatics [attempting] to install its worldwide hegemony in paradoxical and suspect conditions” through repeated incantations meant to lay the spectre of Marxism to rest: “it proclaims, Marx is dead, communism is dead, very dead, and along with it its hopes, its discourse, its theories, and its practices. It says: long live capitalism, long live the market, here's to the survival of economic and political liberalism” (*SM* 64).

¹² For his part, Colin Davis argues that “the history of Europe can be understood as the failed endeavour to rid itself of ghost. We may for the most part no longer believe that the dead return, but we have not entirely given up on them either. . . . We are not yet ready to give up on our dead. And perhaps modern Hollywood serves as a place where what we no longer (think we) believe in nevertheless kept real for us” (8). In other words, Davis believes that people do not believe in ghosts “officially,” but they do maintain a real belief “unconsciously” so as to “reassure” themselves that “there is something outside ourselves, some sense or order that surpasses us even as it remains impenetrable to us” (16, 156). Davis seems intent on proving a real, if unconscious, belief in ghosts; but this is not necessary, for, I argue, the use of the topos in contemporary popular culture and in modernism indicates only be a symbol or image being used in a new way primarily to embody aporias about ourselves.

that the dead return “*because they were not properly buried*, i.e., because something went wrong with their obsequies. . . . the dead return as collectors of some unpaid symbolic debt” (22, 23). Esther Rashkin focuses on the secret when she argues that “What returns to haunt us is the 'unsaid' and the 'unsayable' of *an other*. The silence, gap, or secret in the speech of someone else 'speaks' in the manner of a ventiloquist” (28). Jean-Michel Rabaté argues specifically that

modernism is systematically “haunted” by voices from the past . . . this shows in an exemplary way the ineluctability of spectral returns. What returns in a classically Freudian fashion, what has not been processed, accommodated, incorporated into the self by mourning: the shadow of the lost object is still being projected onto the subject. (xvi)

For the modernists then, the concepts of death and the return of the dead remain central to human culture although the boundaries of the concepts are significantly altered. This centrality is greatly affected by the removal of traditional religious forms for dealing with death, for beliefs about the afterlife, and for methods of memorializing the dead. Thus, even at the turn of the century, modernist writers like Edith Wharton and Henry James, despite their disbelief in actual ghosts, continued a tradition of haunted fiction seen in Charles Dickens and Edgar Allan Poe through their own ghost stories that ask how to deal with the ghosts of the legacy of the past generation. Others, however, did seek to communicate with the literal spirits of the deceased; these spiritualists include figures as diverse as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Harry Houdini, W. B. Yeats, and Ezra Pound.¹³ Helen Sword argues that

¹³ Scholars who have treated the early twentieth century fascination with spiritualism and the occult as represented in the literature of the time include Leon Surette in *The Birth of Modernism* (1993), Timothy Materer in *Modernist Alchemy: Poetry and the Occult* (1995), J. M. Winter in *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (1995), Helen Sword in *Ghostwriting Modernism* (2002), and Demetres Tryphonopoulos in *The Celestial Tradition: A Study of Ezra Pound's The Cantos* (1992). Rabaté has examined the ghost as a metaphor apart from the modernists' historical content; other scholars have looked at the spectre as a metaphor for sexuality (Terry Castle), for past writers (Brenda Maddox and Marjorie Garber), or for minority writers (Kathleen Brogan).

interest in spiritualism was widespread in the nineteenth century and peaked in the 1860s and 1870s; notably, the extent of the popularity of such efforts to contact the dead had actually cooled before death touched modernism as fully as it did through the horrors of two world wars, localized conflicts and genocide, and epidemic, yet the image of the return of the dead abides.¹⁴ The three authors who form the basis of study in this chapter, Henry James, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf, did not believe in an afterlife nor did they exhibit the intense interest in spiritualism held by some of their colleagues.¹⁵ Yet, in an age with so much death, the return of the dead quickly became a widely used image of the return of the repressed crises of the past.

Whether as a response to the crises of war dead, victims of epidemic, or the effects of losing a highly ordered society, the return of the dead became a central modernist topos; it appears in ghost stories, mythological referents, war poetry, and tales intertwined with mourning rituals or All Souls' Day. The list of literature in the modernist period that uses or even centres on the metaphor of the return of the dead is vast but some of its categories warrant mention. Those that centre on the ghost or the undead include turn of the century classics such as Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). A mythological treatment of the dead drawing on Classical Greek literature is seen in several texts; these include the appearances of Tiresias and the spirits of Hades in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the descent to Hades in the first canto of Pound's *Cantos*, and the palimpsest divinities of H.D.'s

¹⁴ Sword's study, for instance, investigates both the actual uses of spiritualism by modernists, such as H.D.'s R.A.F. seances or W.B. Yeats' spirit writing, and the metaphor of haunting, such as (following Harold Bloom's anxiety of influence) the influence of Shakespeare or of Victorian writers on the modernists.

¹⁵ And indeed, they sometimes mocked it, as in the humorous section in *Ulysses* wherein Paddy Dignam's spirit is contacted. After he asks for buttermilk (not blood), he communicates that "his peace of mind in the other region" was "greatly perturbed" over his son's search for a missing boot; Paddy's ghost says that the lost boot is behind the commode and that the pair need only to be resoled since the heels are still good (289).

Trilogy. Though Oscar Wilde is not especially known for his tales of the supernatural, one of his masterworks is *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), and his first published story was “The Canterville Ghost” (1887).¹⁶ An interest in foreign customs for dealing with the spectres of the dead can be seen in the Mexican rituals on the Day of the Dead in Lowry's *Under the Volcano* (1947). Modernist poems on the war dead are significant, as in the World War I verse of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen or the poems of a scandalized Thomas Hardy, who in one poem imagines the spirits of the dead from past wars being awoken by the sounds of the big guns practising for the new wars and complaining that men make “Red war yet redder” (“Channel Firing” [305]). One of the most ambitious and most experimental modernist works, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) is a book of the night that begins with the death and Irish wake of Finnegans, the Hod Carrier Extraordinaire, and his replacement by Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker. William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) focuses on what the narrator terms the ghosts of the American South, and his *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) is structured around the motif of Easter Weekend, which of course commemorates the death and resurrection of Christ. Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930) recounts the journey of the Bundren family to bury Addie Bundren in Jefferson, and the text includes a chapter narrated by the ghost of the deceased mother who does not remain a silent corpse but delivers a mock elegy on her own behalf; likewise, Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* (1922) reads as a loosely structured multivocal elegy for Jacob, who is killed in the war.

¹⁶ Wilde comically writes of the ghost of an ancient English mansion who haunts an American family that is not frightened and offers him the latest American technologies in the form of oil for his loud chains and special detergents for the blood stains he leaves in the carpet.

The ghostly or gothic elements within the early modernist period do reflect “advances” in science and psychology. Charlotte Gilman Perkins' “The Yellow Wall-paper” (1892), for instance, twins elements of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) through the motif of the madwoman in the attic with the technique of the rest cure then proscribed to treat female hysteria by the expert in the field, Silas Weir Mitchell, who was also Perkins' physician. Hugh Kenner identifies the urban centre as a haunted space when he refers to Joyce's portrayal of a paralysed Dublin as “a ghost, not a heap of bones: the ghost of the great conception of the City which polarizes the mind of Europe” (48). Edith Wharton's series of ghost stories are likewise brilliant in their adaptation of traditional gothic forms into the modernist setting. These include “Kerfol” (1916), wherein an abusive husband is attacked and killed by the ghosts of his wife's dogs. Wharton also has an interest in the important motif of the Day of the Dead or All Souls' Day,¹⁷ first in her 1908 poem “All Souls'.” More than thirty years later, she returned to the motif with her short story “All Souls” (1937), wherein a widow's Connecticut mansion is visited by a supernatural entity from the Scottish Hebrides that somehow makes all the servants vanish on All Souls' Day, though, eerily, the electric appliances seem unaffected and the servants are returned the next morning with no memory of what had transpired.

The question then becomes how the modernists used the motif of the return of the dead when most of them did not believe in such a possibility in a literal sense. As the following study will show, the modernists used the figurative return of the dead in the same way early humans used a literal belief in the afterlife: the return of the dead

¹⁷ This important topos will be examined in the section of this chapter treating Virginia Woolf's use of All Souls' Day as the chief leitmotif of *Mrs. Dalloway*.

inspired the living to deal with the crises of modern life by living ethically and justly within the human community on the basis of a shared belief in the sacredness of life itself. Of course, it is not necessary to write about the return of the dead to inspire the community of the living to change, but what Lewis calls the sacredness of the mysteries of life, death, and sex adds a certain urgency to the arguments based on the use of this motif.¹⁸ While living, humans suffer the chaos of the world and the crises of civilization, and though the dead are dead and have no knowledge or interest in life, the living use their image to urge a better and more fulfilled life here on earth before the inevitability of death ends all possibility of love and creation. However, Lewis urges caution when he criticizes “the way that the living put the dead to their own use. To do so seems to trivialize the dead by relegating them below our own (usually fairly petty) goals; it also falsifies the experience of death by allowing us to imagine that the afterlife is not ultimately so different from our own life” (*Religious* 191).

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer add, in their critique of the social arrangement of global capitalism, that this treatment of the dead is really based in the

¹⁸ A good example of this type of urging the adoption of a better life is seen in the poetry of Wallace Stevens; assured by science, he makes several allusions to death as the end of existence: when the poor woman in “The Emperor of Ice-Cream” dies, her “horny feet protrude” to “show how cold she is, and dumb” (50). Badroulbador is “resurrected” only when she leaves her tomb within the bellies of the worms in “The Worms at Heaven’s Gate” (40); Stevens asks if “the darkened ghosts of our old comedy” actually believe that they can visit the earth or if they realize death brings them to the “spiritous passage into nothingness” (“Of Heaven Considered as a Tomb”[45]). And yet, Stevens is no less assured that the sacred mystery of death can inspire us to a better life. In Stevens’ well known poem “Sunday Morning,” the woman imagines “The pungent oranges and bright, green wings” as items from “some procession of the dead,” yet she asks “Why should she give her bounty to the dead?” (53). Nonetheless, she feels the “need of some imperishable bliss,” and she reasons that “Death is the mother of beauty, mystical” (55). Just as Derrida argues that death is the basis of human culture, Stevens’ narrator desires to overcome the permanence of death by leaving behind something imperishable that is rooted in an acceptance of death through a life well lived, perhaps, like Stevens’, in the artistic creation. Stevens sees the afterlife as “perfect” and “unchanging” and “waiting, sleeplessly” for us, but the earth as “chaos . . . dependency . . . island solitude, unsponsored, free . . . inescapable” (55-56). In this reversal, although death remains the catalyst to artistic production, it is the living who haunt and envy the dead.

frustrated concerns of the living whom the modern age has reduced to “a mere sequence of instantaneous experiences which leave no trace”; they argue that this dehumanization means that “What a man was and experienced in the past is as nothing when set against what he now is and has and what he can be used for,” and this is the reason that “Men have ceased to consider their own purpose and fate; they work their despair out on the dead” (216). As one of Malcolm Lowry's characters in *Under the Volcano* cynically says of Mexico's celebration of the Day of the Dead,

it is as if, upon this one day in the year the dead come to life, . . . by some contrariety we have been allowed for one hour a glimpse of what never was at all, of what never can be since brotherhood was betrayed, the image of our happiness, of that it would be better to think could not have been. (111)

Unlike the early human concern to honour the dead so as to ease their afterlife and ensure blessings for those the dead left behind, the modernists made the return of the dead into a topos that primarily makes an argument about the experiences of the living. The spectre embodies the traumas of the early twentieth century and allows the moderns thus to speak to the crises that were ever present.

In the three literary instances of the return of the dead to which this chapter will now turn, the motif functions as a literary prosopopeia wherein the spectre takes the place of the crises of language and of modern life that haunted the modernists. The first section treats Henry James' short story “The Jolly Corner” (1908), wherein the central character is actually haunted by his own ghost, or rather, by that of the man he might have become. Henry James forms an important part of this study in that he wrote during the earliest part of the modernist period and was keenly aware of developments in psychology because of his older brother William James, and, like his character, he had great misgivings about the rapid growth of New York. Further,

James' writing style is self aware of the slipperiness of language and of the intersections between spectres and the problems of reading; this makes his tale of a man haunted by his own ghost an especially fertile ground for an analysis, drawn from Derrida's concept of hauntology, of the manner in which James uses a dream narrative to frame the ghost story and to identify the crisis of language, representation, and reading during the modernist period. Therefore, James' spectre represents both the character's crisis of rapid social change and the elusive nature of meaning obtained by reading the language of a text or of a dream.

Methodologically, this first section is informed by examples, within deconstruction, queer theory, and James scholarship by scholars like Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Kathryn Bond Stockton, and certainly Derrida himself, of producing a critical text in a language and creative form that consciously mirror the critic's treatment of the slippery language of the text itself.¹⁹ Although in my study I incorporate other secondary texts, with a particular concentration on the deconstruction and textual theories of Paul de Man, I foreground my reading of one section of "The Jolly Corner" as a dream sequence, and this study interacts significantly with Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1913),²⁰ and, as a critical text, it adopts the style and format of Freud's writing to engage with the creative and secondary texts in a manner informed by hauntology's concern with the condition of language. It is therefore important to note that my study of Henry James's story interacts with the text itself and is constituted, following Freud's three stage method

¹⁹ I believe such a critical stance to be at the heart of hauntology and of deconstruction. As Davis observes, the "attraction of hauntology" for the critic is found in the links between the spectre as a theme and the spectre as a privileged symbol of "insight into texts and textuality as such," so as a result, "the most committed work in this area combines close reading with daring speculation" (11, 12).

²⁰ First published as *Die Traumdeutung* in 1899.

of presentation in his accounts of dream analysis, by a short introduction of the context of the dreamer in the story, a brief account of the subject's dream, and a detailed analysis thereof. This first section, then, will first discuss Freud's methods for reading dream language and proceed to relate those difficulties to the problems of reading language.

The second section deals with James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and uses the haunting of Stephen Dedalus by his mother's ghost to figure the crisis of authenticity in an Ireland positioned between the colonial constraints of the Roman Catholic Church and the British Empire. Through art, Stephen seeks his own path forward past the claims of a mythological past to a new modernized voice. Third, in my reading of *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), I return to the intertwining of the spectre, society, and reading by demonstrating how Virginia Woolf illuminates the various crises caused by the Great War by employing multiple layers of the modernist trope of allusion. Along with organizing the novel around the topos of All Souls' Day and its flowers, Woolf introduces an intriguing figure in the person of the singing beggar woman who represents pagan, operatic, and mythological influences that come to the surface in a society greatly ruptured by the horror of war and ill prepared for the spectral visitations of the return of the dead.

— § —

“Un rêve c'est un réveil qui commence”

—Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*

In the autumn of 1908, a man dreamt that he was on a hunt, within the house of his birth, for the spectre of what he considered to be his *alter ego*. This vague

“Form” he believed to be that man whom he would have become had he stayed in New York and not sojourned in Europe for some thirty-three years.²¹ Having “stalked” this ghost for some nights unsuccessfully—in effect, not having spotted it—he plotted to catch it unawares. This he effected by being absent for a succession of three nights, and, when he had so lulled it into a false confidence, he planned to rouse it from its apathy and so come face to face with it, whatever the outcome. On the evening of his return, the man, Mr. Spencer Brydon, entered the house and upon reaching the first staircase and putting his hand to the banister, received a firm premonition that the spectre had indeed roused itself, and, thus angered, would fight. This produced a surge of great anxiety: he began to sweat profusely and felt a racing pulse accompanied by the feeling that he was falling. Indeed, he fainted dead away, and after perhaps striking his head in falling to the floor, fell unconscious and was himself only roused from the same position several hours later with the worried arrival of a lady friend accompanied by the cleaning lady. What is of interest here is what transpired within the dream work of Brydon as he lay unconscious, for the ghostly presence exemplifies the condensation and displacement of the symbols of wish fulfilment that occur within dreams as elucidated by Sigmund Freud in his work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and the spectre likewise presents an opportunity to demonstrate a theory of reading based upon an understanding of language's similarities to dreams.

²¹ To a certain extent, “The Jolly Corner” parallels the experiences of its author, Henry James, an American who considered himself to be a willing exile in Europe for most of his adult life. When he came to write “The Jolly Corner,” James had moved back to New York and was approached by F. N. Doubleday to produce another volume of ghost stories after the success of “The Turn of the Screw.” The first image that came to James' mind was “the picture of three or four 'scared' and slightly modern American figures . . . in search of, in flight from, something or other” (qtd. in Edel 503). This image became the impetus behind a novel, *The Sense of the Past*, which was to remain unfinished, but which in turn became the basis of “The Jolly Corner” (Edel 506, 621).

This similarity between the language of dreams and conscious language was argued by Jacques Lacan in his own attempts to come to terms with the Freudian comprehension of the unconscious. Ironically, Lacan is thrown back on the system of metaphor that is language itself in order to offer a metaphor illustrating his definition when he begins one seminar with the words: “Most of you will have some idea of what I mean when I say—*the unconscious is structured like a language*” (*Four* 20; italics original).²² Developing his definition, Lacan posits that the point at which the human infant becomes intellectually aware is when the “primary classificatory function” that organizes language “inscribes its initial lines of force . . . [b]efore any experience, before any individual deduction, even before those collective experiences” (*Four* 20). Following Claude Lévi-Strauss in arguing that language gives structure to the unconscious itself, Lacan asserts that the relations of linguistic signifiers to language and to thought are provided in our natures “before any formation of the subject, of a subject who thinks, who situates himself” to organize thought or, subsequently, to organize human relations (*Four* 20-21). From Lacan's supposition that language forms thought, the structure of the unconscious mind that produces dreams can be read through the language of the dreamwork's displacement and condensation, and this urges a similar recognition of the problems of conscious communication. Lacan sees the Freudian unconscious as

situated at that point, where, between cause and that which is affects, there is always something wrong. . . . For that which the unconscious does is to show us the gap through which neurosis recreates a harmony with a real—a real that may well not be determined. (*Four* 22)

²² Cementing his stance on the links between the unconscious and language, and at the same time insisting that God had no place in the equation of human existence or knowledge, Lacan also remarked that “In a private conversation, someone asked me (this was how he put it) whether to speak for the blackboard did not imply belief in an eternal scribe. Such belief is not necessary, I replied, to him who knows that all discourse has its effect through the unconscious” (*Écrits* 324).

This gap in the language of the unconscious, which he identifies as “Impediment, failure, split” is mirrored in conscious language when “In a spoken or written sentence something stumbles” (*Four* 25).

Brydon's dream begins as a seamless continuation of feeling himself fainting in waking life.²³ He “awakes” in his dream by closing and then opening his eyes. He is at once amazed that in his dream world—though he does not recognize it as such—even the light had changed. He remarks that it was so bright he at first took the change for day. Mr. Brydon nevertheless takes up his seemingly useless candle, mounts the stairs and paces through the four stories of his old house, exploring its corridors and rooms in his hunt for what he is now sure is present. He consults his watch and finds the time is quarter past one, and, although fearful, he refuses to leave until the hour nears his usual time of departure, which is two o'clock. As this hour nears, he returns to the room wherein he had deposited his candle, and he is here afforded an unbroken view of four rooms that were connected by a series of doors so as to form one long corridor. With astonishment, he notes that the door to the fourth room, which he had left open, was now shut. This, he reasons, can only be interpreted as a movement by the spectre of his *alter ego*. The dreamer reasons further that this door is placed before him as a challenge that asks whether or not he will have the courage to open it and view his double. He responds with the adoption of “Discretion” as his mode, and makes a speech to his double, saying,

²³ Indeed, readers typically misread this feeling as nothing more than a momentary fainting spell, but James' hidden intent is to introduce an actual dream sequence, as is seen by Brydon fainting and then being roused in exactly the same position at the bottom of the staircase. Although Brydon's dream environment is further evidenced by various odd circumstances, such as the change of light, it is only in the dream work that he is actually able to see his *alter ego* face to face, just as Miss Staverton had seen him earlier.

If you won't then—good: I spare you and I give up. You affect me as by the appeal positively for pity: you convince me that for reasons rigid and sublime—what do I know?—we both of us should have suffered. I respect them then, and, though moved and privileged as, I believe, it has never been given to man, I retire, I renounce—never, on my honor, to try again. So rest forever—and let *me!* (360)

Brydon takes up his candle and notes suddenly that it has burnt almost to the wick. He opens a window “to break the spell” and realizes that the time has apparently passed very quickly: he has mistaken hours for minutes. He returns down the stairs and is careful not to check if the closed door has been reopened, fearing what his response to that circumstance might be, even to the point of envisioning throwing himself from the window. He comes to the last staircase, when he notices that the inner foyer doors, which he left closed, are now open. This portent he takes for proof that he is the immediate occult presence of what was once his ghostly prey. As he advances to the bottom step, where he had earlier fainted, the spectre suddenly looms before him. It is Brydon's size and shape, is dressed in incredibly consummate evening dress, wears a double eyeglass and covers his face with his hands, one of which had lost two fingers “as if accidentally shot away” (364). The spectre drops his hands and Brydon, in shock, determines that it cannot truly be his *alter ego* because the ghost's identity “fitted his at *no point*” (365). Brydon is then overcome by the aggression of the evil apparition. He immediately gives ground, and, as he had done earlier, he feels himself falling. In his dream, he faints and falls to the floor, landing in the same location in which his body actually lay.

In analyzing Brydon's dream of the spectre haunting his childhood home, the emphasis must be on the knowledge that the wish to grasp the fullest possibilities of meaning is the wish that drives dream analysis and all forms of communication such

as reading and writing. And yet, that wish, or the wish, is also the essence of the dream or of the text itself, for as Freud states in his famous dictum, “*When the work of dream interpretation has been completed, we perceive that a dream is a (disguised) fulfilment of a (suppressed or repressed) wish*” (IV:160). Humans have a certain fascination with the meaning and interpretation of dreams as one of the most common and odd forms of communication, and the methods used to understand dreams usually follow either the “symbolic” or the “decoding” method. A symbolic reading approaches a dream as a whole and superimposes a possible “meaning” on top of it that fits real life. This is the method employed by imaginative writers who compose dreams whose meanings will be obvious to their readers. As an example, Freud mentions the dreams that Joseph interprets in the Bible as prophecies of seven years of good harvest and seven years of famine. This symbolic method of dream interpretation accords with the imposed reality of patriarchal centred language that defines the meaning of a text as explicitly unequivocal.²⁴ It therefore reads reductively, as if reading can only be done in one way, as if meaning is tangible and can be held in one's hand, and as if to suspend any challenge to tradition. Such a reading does not account for the haunting complexity or for the gaps and shortcomings of language, and, as Jodey Castricano argues, whenever any “text 'calls' to us, it is for the purpose of (doing) dreamwork with ghosts, phantoms, spectres, revenants: all those whose return prompts us to remember that dreamwork is also memory work which manifests itself in terms of haunting” (17).

²⁴ Or, as Paul de Man would say, this betrays a “resistance to theory” based in “a resistance to the use of language about language” and “a resistance to the rhetorical or tropological dimension of language” (RT 12, 17).

Conversely, Freud offers the decoding method. This too sees dreams as symbols, but stresses that what these symbols signify embodies plurality. Using this method, a dream is broken down into its several parts, and each individual aspect is understood to stand in as a “tangible” dream signifier for an unseen signified. That which is latent, Freud refers to as the dream-thoughts, and that which is manifest he calls the dream-content; these two aspects together are termed the dream work, and determining their relation to one another is dream interpretation. For Freud, then, a dream is a “script, the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of the dream-thoughts,” which, although at first nonsensical, may be rearranged “to form a poetical phrase of the greatest beauty and significance” (IV:227-28). This method rejects outright the expectations of metanarrative found in the symbolic method, and it realizes that a dream can be saying many diverse things that are not readily apparent and likewise do not necessarily connect with one another. As a result, an interpretation of dreams or a mode of reading based on the decoding method is a corrective to patriarchal centred reading and the power structures it seeks to enshrine. Decoding embraces a language in which a multifaceted reading and, therefore, a multifaceted articulation are possible. Hence, whether in a dream analysis or in the reading of a text, one finds what Paul de Man identifies as “a paradox: all literature . . . gains a maximum of convincing power at the very moment it abdicates any claim to truth” (*AR* 50). This alone can express the true plurality of life's peculiar essence, hoping to fill the gaps left in a language that can never communicate as much as we wish it could.

The hardest part of coming to terms with this situation of the language of dreams or of a text is letting go of the desire to control and mandate meaning. This

reading goes beyond simply trying to equate signifier with referent; it implies and indeed embraces not only the possibility but also the assured and persistent presence of multiple meanings located along a chain of referents. This lack of control over meaning makes Brydon very uncomfortable, and he wonders uncontrollably what it—staying and working in New York—would have done for and to him when he is faced with not one but dozens of possibilities that he gathers from the lives of his contemporaries (348). This he says is akin to the “small rage of curiosity never to be satisfied” caused by actions like burning an important letter unopened (349). The discomfort that comes from acknowledging you can never know what was in the letter and that it could have been most anything is felt as keenly as sending a letter and knowing its language cannot fully express.

The paramount example of dealing with uncertain and even horrifying content is the question of anxiety dreams like Brydon's that embody a decidedly negative content through a malevolent spectre and so do not appear to accord with Freud's definition of all dreams as wish fulfilment. When a dream leaves a dreamer troubled, how can the meaning be so different from the manner in which it was presented? In offering an explanation, Freud centres on the distinction between the manifest and the latent content of dreams (IV:134-36). While a dream may indeed manifest itself as quite anxiety ridden and as such may create severe fear, its latent content must be understood in a positive light that exists to fulfil wish desires. Just as Freud argues that the dream-thought will and must distort itself, de Man argues that the work of following the chain of signifiers in a text is complicated in reading because it does not necessarily preserve the integrity of its origin (*AR* 59). This act of dream censorship accords with the practice of a writer who must soften and distort what she writes in

order, for example, to escape persecution from civil authorities. And in dreams or in novels, “The stricter the censorship, the more far-reaching will be the disguise and the more ingenious too may be the means employed for putting the reader on the scent of the true meaning” (Freud IV:142).

These types of dreams are broadly grouped together as “counter-wish dreams” because their content *appears* to go against wishes or even produce something entirely not wished, such as the horror that Brydon feels when stalking and then meeting his own ghost.²⁵ A multifaceted reading centred on the latent content of a dream may lead to an interpretation that is the exact opposite of the manifest content, and, because it is the latent content that is the essence of the dream wish, wading through the visible surface of the manifest dream-content is important in accessing the kernel of meaning which exists within the nut of the dream. Hence, the pleasure of interpretation lies in expanding avenues of interpretation and enjoying the somewhat unsettling assurance that there is no definitive transcendent referent of meaning to be found. Dreams are so broad, in fact, that while their material is almost always linked to the events of the day previous, they may also contain material that originates as far back a forgotten childhood experience. In linking this dream work to the work of reading, one understands that the question becomes not “what words mean but how they mean” (*AR* 5).

²⁵ Apart from the usual work of decoding to find the wish in an unsettling dream, Freud otherwise accounted for these dreams as either wishing to prove one's analyst wrong, or expressing a masochistic wish in regards to sexual pleasure or to a needed punishment (IV:157-59). Those who wish to fool the analyst are comparable to those who insist on only one way of reading, who in their naivety read a text expecting or even forcing a transparent meaning. If dream distortion has occurred, it may distort things to the extent of a manifestly negative result, producing an anxiety riddled dream that still serves to disguise something that is indeed wished for.

“How dreams mean” is equivalent to Freud's term “dream work,” a task that is exercised in two ways: condensation and displacement. The work of condensation simply implies that a single dream can speak of, and refer to, many different dream-thoughts at once in a single dream or even in a single image. An instance of condensation may be found in as simple a situation as passing two or more experiences suitable for producing a dream in a single day; instead of dealing with the issues separately, the dream work may actually combine them into one unity (IV:178). Freud can then write that, “Dreams frequently seem to have more than one meaning . . . not only may [they] include several wish-fulfilments alongside the other; but a succession of meanings or wish-fulfilment may be super-imposed on one another, the bottom one . . . dating from earliest childhood” (IV:219).

In this context may arise a “collective figure,” such as Brydon's spectre, which may stand in for several different people, things, ideas, words or names; it represents several intangible entities in a tangible form, for a dream deems even the intangible as that which is capable of being represented tangibly (Freud IV:293, 295-96; V:339-40).²⁶ This leads to a verbal distortion of the dream, allowing the dream to express itself again in multifaceted ways and in some sense make its statements without even an intention of being understood. Hence, any dream-element can be intended in either a positive or negative sense, or it can be a historical recollection or a symbolic representation, or its meaning may depend on its wording (V:341). Thus, a dream employs the literary devices of conscious language, namely irony, metaphor, simile, prosopopeia, and catachresis, all of which effect a similar doubt in the mind of the

²⁶ As will be discussed later, a dream naturally produces the figures of prosopopeia and catachresis and frequently uses them to express intangible dream-thoughts. Freud argues that words, as the “nodal points of numerous ideas, may be regarded as predestined to ambiguity” (V:340).

reader as to the existence of a transcendent meaning. They, like distorted dream-content, can spawn a chain of referents that demonstrate the difficulty, or rather the impossibility, of obtaining a certainty of knowledge and understanding, which returns to Derrida's sense of *aporia*.

The story of Spencer Brydon is one that condenses many issues and various concerns that speak to the modernist condition, even apart from the psychological insights that frame the narrative. As Earl Rovit explains, the story discusses “Europe and America, the past and the present, culture and commerce, sensibility and power, the isolation of consciousness from communal life, the ambivalences of sexual life, the illusory promise of a second chance [and] the ultimate equation of aesthetics and morality” (“Language” 162). In condensing all of these issues into one figure, the spectre of the dream becomes “metafigural,” in that, as de Man would assert, it figuratively portrays figures for a wide range of issues (*AR* 14). Brydon's dream work condenses anxiety caused by his absence and his questioning of the value of his time spent in Europe; sexual anxiety caused by Miss Staverton's obvious pursuit of him; anxiety because of a changed New York wherein he only recognizes things he thought ugly in his youth; anxiety over the question of “what if?”; and deep anxiety because of the pressure he is feeling over the possibility of parting with the “jolly corner” property—the last remaining symbol of his childhood innocence and a more genteel America before the modernist era irrevocably changed everything that had been familiar and good—for the sake of money. Similar questions about relating to one's past are probably pertinent for any person at any age, but for a man of Brydon's years and specific time period, as posited by Eric Erikson, such questions will become normal as he looks at how he spent his life thus far. His main questions will surround

the matters of generativity versus stagnation and a desire for a general satisfaction arising from what Erikson calls the integrity of his life as a whole (135-41). Brydon is obviously not entirely satisfied, or, at least as he words it, he has not yet satisfactorily “put himself the question” (353).

Brydon's anxiety begins when he returns to find the rapid modernist expansion of New York,²⁷ and he finds its values have all turned upside down; the things he detested in his youth are now his only source of comfort; his greatest dismay is effected by the “swagger” of the monstrous modern mechanisms that had made the city famous; in short, he is “put off” by “the whole show” (342). For instance, while in his dream, he ponders the electric streetlights of New York, another tangible symbol of its growth and modernization. By the time Brydon returned to the city of his birth, he would find 17,000 streetlights, a number far above that reached by any European metropolis of his day (Tambling 207). With Alice Staverton, he bemoans the passing of the old order that dated to their “antediluvian youth,” yet he must deal with a conscience that knows that, had he remained, he would have been a part of the modern flood of bright lights and tall buildings; he himself might have “anticipated the inventor of the sky-scraper” or he would have chased some other new “architectural hare” until it “burrowed in a gold-mine” (344). He knows that there is something in him that would have flourished under such conditions and would have embodied power and potency, and, in this knowledge that he could have led the revolution of the New York he now despises, he finds great discomfort. As Brydon falls back in revulsion before the spectre of himself he encounters in his dream, so he

²⁷ Certainly, however, he would have experienced a similar impetus to modernization in Europe; the 1889 Paris World's Fair, to cite a prime example, heralded the coming age of technological advance, steam power, steel, and the knowledge of exotic cultures.

finds himself repulsed by what New York, and by extension America, has become; yet, he also knows that modernism is nevertheless a part of him.

Derrida treats this aspect of being haunted by something that seems foreign and is nonetheless a part of one's self. In making his own connections between haunting and hunting, he offers a close reading of a passage from Marx's *The German Ideology* wherein Marx is captivated by ghosts all around him. Derrida asks "Why such relentless pursuit? Why this hunt for ghosts?"; Derrida reasons that such a sustained hunt for ghosts, like that of Brydon, must be because the

prey captivates him . . . since everyone reads, acts, writes with *his or her* ghosts, even when one goes after the ghosts of the other. My feeling, then, is that Marx scares himself, he *himself* pursues relentlessly someone who almost resembles him to the point that we could mistake one for the other: a brother, a double, thus a diabolical image. A kind of ghost of himself. . . . And the ghost does not leave its prey, namely, its hunter. (174-75)

Thus, Brydon's spectral *alter ego* is a "fanged," "antlered," "awful beast," just as Brydon himself exists very well on "beastly rent values"; the beast "bristles" as do the "two bristling blocks" west of the jolly corner; the figure itself is looming, erect and rigid, as are the "rising" skyscrapers of New York. As Russell Reising notes, the figure is "vulgar," "monstrous," "hideous and offensive," all of which are terms Brydon uses to describe New York, its inhabitants, and his entire view of modernist life (123). This characterization is accompanied by the pressure he feels to make up for lost time and commit his course to the best utilization of his properties. He is already in the process of rebuilding the lesser of the two in the new fashion. The jolly corner he maintains, although realizing he is without the "ghost" of a reason to do so, when the only reasons that count for anything in New York are those of dollars and cents (346-48).

The perplexing condensation of these dream-thoughts, stemming from so many sources of anxiety, is greeted by several other factors in the life of the dreamer that are then displaced into new symbols. Condensation's partner in governing the form of dreams is displacement, which shifts the dream-thoughts, now condensed, to censure and disguise their true content from the earnest reader. Freud explains that in this way “what is clearly the essence of the dream-thoughts need not be represented in the dream at all” (IV:305). Due to this work of displacement, it becomes necessary in reading or interpretation to note all the further associations that may arise from any one element, for, as in conscious language, signifiers can endlessly multiply themselves in search of, or in the hiding of, a transcendent modifier. It is this process that ultimately creates a connection between dream-content and latent dream-thoughts leading to a final analysis if possible. Even here, when the analyst has come to his or her conclusion on the meaning of a dream, that conclusion is one that specifies that the meaning may always be plural and that some significant meanings may never be known. As de Man argues, the interpretation of a sign may never lead to a meaning but to another sign *ad infinitum*, creating a “temporal void . . . implying an unreachable anteriority” because the authentic referent is always elsewhere (*AR* 9; “Rhet” 222). Freud mirrors de Man in writing that dream displacement can consequently be traced along “a chain of associations” almost infinitely in search of a transcendental modifier (V:339).²⁸ This is why the self of the sleeper can sometimes

²⁸ The aim of displacement in such dreams is “to free us from [daily life, for] . . . a dream will do no more than enter into the tone of our mood and represent reality in symbols” (Fichte, qtd. in Freud IV:7). Yet, the work of the dream always revolves around the dreamer, and Freud accentuates this by stating that this is a rule “to which I have found no exception, that every dream deals with the dreamer himself. Dreams are completely egotistic” (IV:322). So, although Brydon deals with some concerns outside himself in his dream, he does so in expressing his own wishes for their reality. When relating this egoistic centre, the dream then becomes a prime context for transference.

be present “physically” in a dream, but is actually represented in the figure that opposes it, just as the repressed returns in the spectre, the figure of the other, through a complex system of reversals produced by the work of displacement.²⁹ These details may also be false leads within the dream in one's search for meaning because they are caused by somatic factors and do not represent actual dream-thoughts. A corresponding danger lies in assuming details may actually be somatically caused when in fact they are dream-thoughts, though context will often offer the explanation. Details or scenes in the texts of dreams may also represent a character's connection to daily life and not bear any great import, but a multifaceted reading will always be aware of the possibilities of their origination.

A sensation of this aporia finds Spencer Brydon when he freezes and stands aloft by a window for some time, not knowing the best course of action.³⁰ Brydon is locked in his dream between opening the door and descending the stairs, and for a long time, he does neither. After having made his speech and noting how much time has elapsed, he does descend the stair, having seemingly come to peace with his decision not to open the door. Yet, the dream work would not be accomplished in such an instance, and the dream ordains that the spectre will meet him and unveil its meaning at the bottom of the stair, having planted itself near the outer door, Brydon's only escape from the house to the waking world. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick establishes this liminal space as important to the conventions of the gothic when she claims that

²⁹ Or even, a physical malady affecting the sleeper may appear in the representation of him or herself or another figure in the dream (Freud IV:329). One may dream that a drink of cool water has been obtained from the kitchen and enjoyed after eating some salty food before going to sleep, or may, upon becoming cold, put on a sweater. In this way, a physical sensation affecting the body has produced a corresponding reality in the dream. Could the severed fingers of the *alter ego* be effected by the pain caused to Brydon's own hand when he falls, still gripping the banister as he faints?

³⁰ These dialogues of freezing and inaction Freud explains as strong contradictions between the dream-thoughts—in other terms, they represent a conflict of the will (IV:337).

violence in these stories occurs not in the depths of the interior of a building, but at the site of “an approach—from within or without—to the interfacing surface” (24). As Eric Savoy explains, a common feature of American gothic tales “is a narrative site that tends to be an epistemological frontier in which the spatial division between the known and the unknown, the self and the Other, assumes temporal dimensions. The gothic cannot function without a proximity of Otherness imagined as its imminent return” (6).³¹

The difficulty of reading dreams lies within their fecund production of symbols and in their inability to represent conjunctions that show cause and effect, which are the logical relations that language presents (Freud IV:312). Language assumes a knowledge of cause and effect that is applied to what is read. Language presents X as caused by Y, and it does not allow for interference in the relationship. Dreams, however, through their work of condensation and displacement and their inability to represent causality, automatically increase the already large plurality of meanings that they afford. Utilizing this freedom, dreams can present complicated intellectual operations, seemingly contradictory assertions, or statements weighed by the value of their own set of assumptions and their own representations of logic with or without representations of causality. The language of dreams is their own.³²

Although Freud states that “the more one is concerned with the solution of dreams, the more one is driven to recognize that the majority of the dreams of adults

³¹ John Fletcher, for his part, identifies this narrative site in “The Jolly Corner” as the closet, which he claims figuratively “begins to materialize as the geography of the homospectral” (60).

³² As he decodes this language throughout his work on dreams, Freud is openly sceptical of “dream-books” that seek to give an authoritative reading of what symbols in a dream “mean.” These books, of the type which are now found at the checkouts of grocery stores, equate dream-content with waking-life meanings on a one-to-one ratio, and do so on a decidedly unscientific and unhelpful basis.

deal with sexual material and give expression to erotic wishes,” he also warns that a proper interpretation can only be given when an analyst has the opportunity to interview a patient in depth so as to determine the most likely source of his or her dream-content (V:396). However, he is content to agree that certain dream-thoughts that are common to most adults are repeatedly expressed in the same dream-content, some of which is to be found in Mr. Brydon's dream. Thus, in interpreting dream work, an analyst must depend upon both the dreamer's stated memories and context and his own knowledge of common symbols that, for Freud, almost always refer to a sexual referent (V:353).³³

Part of the fulfilment of Brydon's dream is in the nature of his search as a hunt and his idealization of himself as a proud hunter. This may be taken as a symbolic reference to gaining levels of consciousness and enlightenment that would likely

³³ Two such symbols that Freud would infer from Brydon's dream are the staircases and the hallways and doors that are so instrumental to the plot. Freud would first infer that “Staircases, or, as the case may be, walking up or down them, are representations of the sexual act” (V:355). Freud clarifies that staircases are “unquestionably symbols of copulation . . . we come to the top in a series of rhythmical movements with increasing breathlessness . . . thus the rhythmical pattern of copulation is reproduced in going upstairs” (V:n.355). He continues by asserting that this reality of symbol is reproduced in linguistic usage, in which terms like “mount” are used in sexual situations wherein one partner mounts another and also in the common manner of mounting the stairs (V:n.355). Given Brydon's mention that his hand was on the banister as he fainted, we are again reminded that this is an early symbol of childhood sexuality for boys, who often receive their first sexual pleasure by sliding down on top of them (Rank, qtd. in Freud V:370). The stairs of the dream refer to the four levels or stories that Brydon ascends and descends. In Freud's dream lexicon, the long hallways and doorways are also sexual symbols. Freud, in his rather problematic view of women and sexuality, saw women and the uterus as represented by box-like objects such as cases, ovens, ships and cupboards, while “rooms in dreams are usually women; if the various ways in and out of them are represented, this interpretation is scarcely open to doubt. In this connection, interest in whether the room is open or locked is easily intelligible” (V:354). A shaft or long corridor would likely represent a vagina or anus, as would the aligned string of rooms found in Brydon's dream. Genitals can be signalled by other body parts, such as the nose or fingers for a penis, or the lips for the labia (V:389), and any object used as a tool, a long sharp weapon, or almost anything fashioned in an elongated shape can stand in for the penis (V:354). If sexual themes are present in the dream, for Brydon, the phallic is certainly represented by his candle. This is all the more convincing because Brydon claims that when he first opens his eyes, it is so light that he takes it for day; the candle's light is therefore unnecessary, but his action of keeping it compounds its significance. Another reference to the candle is as a “drawn sword” makes its significance certain (James, “Jolly” 357-58).

duplicate boyhood games where he jumped out from behind corners stalking imagined game. Twice, Brydon evaluates the quality of his ghostly prey, and he estimates that the *alter ego* is simply a lesser him. This accentuates his desire to know that he, as the resistant inhabitant of modernism that he is, is a better man than he would have been. This point of the dream is, indeed, the wish it fulfils for Brydon. The dreamer exercises his own strength and gains a victory of self-validation. The importance of the sexually referential surroundings in the dream deals with the sexual anxiety that Brydon, like everyone else, feels. Considering the Freudian significance, that the door is shut is not an act of the spectre, but of Brydon himself, who has the ability in his dream to shut the ghost inside. That the door is closed may be an act of placing sexual closure upon the possibilities of the message of the spectre—perhaps it is Brydon's attempt to close off the compulsory heterosexuality that the spectre represents to him. This rejection of the life of the *alter ego* is doubly expressed by Brydon's decision not to open the door and by his speech telling the figure that he has rejected its claim on him.

Brydon's speech to his *alter ego* is a moment of power and decision for him, though the nature of the speech remains ambiguous, just as Derrida urges the necessity of listening to the spectre and not telling it what to say.³⁴ What the dream

³⁴ Freud writes that “The dream-work cannot actually *create* speeches” and may repeat a full sentiment it recalls from waking life or integrate several bits of speech into one (V:418). Hence, “speeches in dreams have a structure similar to that of breccia, in which largish blocks of various kinds of stone are cemented together by a binding medium” meaning that “a dream is a conglomerate which, for purposes of investigation, must be broken up once more into fragments” (V:419, 449). The ideal reader, then, must concentrate on the constituent pieces of language that have been fitted together in a dream, and he must evaluate a speech such as that of Brydon on its own, independent of the items surrounding it. Looking at the speech entirely out of context, one wonders where Brydon first made, or, more likely, heard, the parts of this speech. Although currently unknown to the analyst, a knowledge of that circumstance and of who presumably took pity upon Brydon and desired his co-operation would undoubtedly shed much light in interpreting his dream.

seems to reproduce exactly is a sense of power in acting as the speaker and the consequential affect caused by such an act.³⁵ In suppressing his fears and deciding to speak to the spectre without looking at it, the unconscious dream language has allowed Brydon a victory by giving him the choice of rejecting what he might have become and so accepting who he is even without seeing the ghost. That it all occurs in his childhood home is fitting primarily because that is where he is actually sleeping at the time but also because the home symbolizes his security in the world of his youth and his displeasure with what it has become. This setting in a haunted house would seem to invoke Freud's category of the *Unheimliche*, but, as Derrida emphasizes, Freud himself reverses this expectation through a reference in “*Das Unheimliche*” (1919) wherein he “recognizes that he should have begun his research (on the *Unheimliche*, the death drive, the repetition compulsion, the beyond the pleasure principle, and so forth) with what says the 'es spukt' [the spectre]. . . . He goes so far as to consider it the *strongest example of Unheimlichkeit*” but he ultimately steps back from beginning with or even considering the spectre with the admission that with the spectre, “One scares oneself too much” (*SM* 217-18). Although the house and its liminal spaces maintain their importance, the central focus must remain on the language of the dream work and message of the spectre.

Having defeated his anxiety caused by the spectre's embodiment of his self-doubt, Brydon decides he can part with the old house. However, the dream work is not finished, so it creates another meeting where Brydon can be assured his initial choice was undoubtedly correct. When he sees the spectre, it is both like and unlike

³⁵ However easily the dreamer can calm him or herself down after even a frightful dream and dismiss its content, he or she may not be able to dismiss its affect as easily. The dream work itself has an ambivalent relationship to affect. A dream cannot invent affect, but it can suppress it, which is to be considered as another effect of censorship, even as is the initial displacement (*V*:467-68).

what he expected: it is rich and aggressive, but maimed and weak at the same time, symbolized by the wounded hands with which he hides his face. And, when that face is revealed, it is one that Brydon cannot recognize as his own, so he insists that it fits him at no point. Having so rejected any identification with the spectre, Brydon is finally able to repudiate the claim that his anxiety held over him and insist on the proper range of choices open to him in the early twentieth century by fully integrating the ipseity that is his as a man who left his homeland to embrace art and culture instead of business and finance.³⁶

When Brydon comes face to face with the *alter ego*, he notes that it is missing two fingers.³⁷ This is undoubtedly a reference to something of import because Freud sees numbers in dreams as usually representing something very specific and unambiguous. And, since Alice Staverton has seen the same detail in her dream, it is probably a reference to something in their shared experience. Building on Freud's idea that a dream takes its material from the previous day, condensed and mixed with other dream-thoughts that reach back as far as childhood, and de Man's chain of modifiers, it is possible to show how even such a small linguistic detail can be traced back to a multiplicity of influences. At some point adjacent to the night of the dream, Brydon and Staverton are once again discussing his absence and its consequences. He tells her that his trip to Europe was at first something of an escape “almost in the teeth

³⁶ A possible source for this “turning of the tables,” recorded in James' memoir, *A Small Boy and Others* (1913), is an undated dream that James calls “the most appalling yet most admirable nightmare of my life” (347). In the nightmare, James dreams that he is desperately bracing his shoulder against a door in order to keep out some “awful agent, creature or presence,” but, through an “act indeed of life-saving energy, as well as in unutterable fear,” James wildly opens the door and suddenly pursues a now “just dimly-described figure that retreated in terror before my rush and dash”; James expresses his “triumph” in that the figure had been “Routed, dismayed, the tables turned upon him by my so surpassing him for straight aggression and dire intention” (347-48).

³⁷ Leon Edel nicely interprets the missing fingers as James' belief that if he had stayed in New York, while he might have been a rich innovator of the new America, “the hand that held the pen might have been crippled” (622).

of my father's curse," as it were, and being a very young twenty-three, he could not judge "*pour deux sous*" (349). A good Freudian guess is that there are two injured fingers in the dream firstly because of the mere recent reference to "two cents" expressed in such a notably European fashion. Since a great deal of the anxiety that haunts Brydon stems from his initial departure, he refers to federal theology and the teaching that sinfulness and bad decisions are an effect of the Fall passed down from father to son. Yet, Brydon has of course inherited much more from his father than human nature.

The mention of *deux sous* is ironic in that Brydon knows that his trip to Europe did not leave him with only two cents but with a great fortune. When he left America, it was as a younger son who probably could not rely too long on his allowance. Yet, Brydon becomes the sole inheritor of his family's fortune after the deaths of his two older brothers (342). This fortune avails him of the ownership of two impressive, well-situated properties that set him up for life through their lucrative rents. It is therefore suggestive that Staverton dreams twice of the spectre and that Brydon twice dreams of himself in the presence of his duplicate. The manner in which Brydon suspects the removal of the fingers—they looked "as if accidentally shot away" (364)—further implies a violence associated with the image that may indicate a fear of castration, or, given the deaths of the two brothers, it may refer to their deaths that left Brydon in a position of control and luxury. Conversely, it is apt that the castration of the spectre, further signified by the stump of candle, represents Brydon's feelings towards modern New York as a city trying to make up for its impotence of refinement by erecting streetlights and huge edifices of supposed grandeur. This puts the stigma onto a society Brydon has almost come to despise, a

clear fulfilment of a wish. That the spectre has a double eyeglass is taken as indicative that he has also ruined his sight. This, coupled with his injury and great wealth, suggests a life in pursuit of power and money that has left him an empty and impotent man. This may be the indication of a wish fulfilment on the part of Brydon to show that his choice to tread the road less travelled has made all the difference, and he is whole man who has not wasted his life in vulgar pursuit of filthy lucre but has learned from and enjoyed all the pleasures of refinement in Europe. Hence, it would be an errant reading to suggest that the two injured fingers or the double eyeglass are suggestive only of one possible referent, whereas they clearly refer to a multitude of meanings.

Symbolically, Freud writes, a dream may represent several persons by “identification” into one figure, or it may represent several things by “composition” into one material entity (IV:320). This raises still more questions about reading Brydon's spectre that haunts the old mansion. It undoubtedly contains something of Brydon's father, for dream ghosts and burglars roaming through a house are most often connected with the presence of parents checking on their sleeping children in their youth (V:403-04). Similarly, Freud maintains,

in dreams, the personality may be split—when, for instance, the dreamer's own knowledge is divided between two persons and when, in the dream, the extraneous ego corrects the actual one. This is precisely on a par with the splitting of the personality that is familiar to us in hallucinatory paranoia. (IV:91)

Dreams, then, are likened unto the hallucinations of waking life in that they also take figures to which they add flesh, personality, and agency. Dreams dramatize an idea. As a result, prosopopeia gives a face to ideas and concepts that are incarnated by becoming tangible for the duration of the dream. De Man argues that “in linguistic

terms . . . it is impossible to say whether prosopopeia is plausible because of the empirical existence of dreams and hallucinations or whether one believes that such a thing as dreams and hallucinations exist because language permits the figure of prosopopeia” (RT 49-50). Either way, the perceiver cannot determine the difference between reality and hallucination or between reality and a dream because in each situation one perceives one's self to be lucid or awake.³⁸ Savoy likewise sees prosopopeia as “the master trope of gothic's allegorical turn, because prosopopeia—the act of personifying, of *giving face* to an abstract, disembodied Other in order to return it to narrative—disturbs logocentric order, the common reality of things” (10). Brydon's story is not only about confronting the spectral methods by which he unconsciously represents himself. Reading the dream shows the impossibility of accurately or authentically accounting one's self on paper, and, as Karen Smythe observes, this may ultimately lead to a confused intersection of the self and the other (381). Yet in dreams this intersection is the point and the path to the fulfilment of a wish. Brydon's situation can be summarized by saying that through his fascination with what he might have become, he gives so much power to that unknown, unreal entity that he produces a catachresis by giving it a reality it does not have. Yet, through the dream work of condensation and displacement, he is enabled to meet this literalized catachresis face to face as it were, and, so doing, he fulfils his dream wish of standing up to and overcoming all his anxieties and questions about the crises caused by the rapid changes in modernizing American society and finding himself equal to them and to the future as the man he actually has become.

³⁸ This difficulty is also present in the composition of autobiography, in which the self who speaks splits into the empirical, comparatively inauthentic self and the self that exists only in the form of language (de Man, “Rhet” 214).

Thus, the symbols of Brydon's dream are in fact honest literalizations of a figure suggested by the dream work itself. Prosopopeia gives a face to that which is missing its original face or did not have one at all, and catachresis coins a name for that which is still an unnamed, unknown entity (*RT* 44). De Man refers to these tropes as “fictions,”³⁹ yet these fictions have the remarkable power to confer upon “an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity . . . the power of speech” (“Auto” 76). This ability, however, shows that “language, as trope, is always primitive” because its figure is “indeed not the thing itself but the representation, the picture of the thing, and, as such, it is silent and mute as pictures are mute” (“Auto” 80). In applying this to writing (or dreaming) about the self, de Man's point is that the self that is produced on paper is a prosopopeia, an entity that lives only on paper.

Other thinkers take a decidedly negative view of prosopopeia and catachresis. J. Hillis Miller has termed catachresis that “which poisons the anthology of tropes, the odd man out . . . that procedure . . . to name in figure, by a violent, forced and abusive transfer, something else for which there is no literal name, and therefore, within the convention of referentiality . . . no existence” (“Figure” 176). Another view is offered by Patricia Parker, who illustrates the nature of catachresis by using the image of an empty house. If the house (functioning here as the referent), is indeed empty (or unknown), then a catachresis is that which moves in and acts as a placeholder until the face of the figure reveals itself, if it does indeed have a face; otherwise, the catachresis will remain indefinitely. The metaphor, conversely, is an usurper, who stands in, or takes the place of, a known proper term (63).⁴⁰ At issue are

³⁹ And of course they are: the sun does not literally have a face, a Grecian urn cannot listen to an ode, and the unknowable spectre of what we might have become cannot appear to us.

⁴⁰ Interestingly, Parker's use of the image of a house is made to correspond with that of the ancient Greek and Roman rhetoricians culminating with Quintilian.

the terms “*oikos*” and “*oikonomia*,” the first referring to a house itself, and the second to the notion of managing a house, from which we receive the English derivative, “economy.” While a metaphor is only managing a house, standing in for a proper, known signifier, catachresis must always remain to fill the void and is constrained in representing that unknown, unnamed, faceless thing. This continues in the high style of the late sixteenth century, wherein a metaphor is reckoned as a “friendly and neighborly borrowing,” while a catachresis is “somewhat more desperate” (Hoskins, qtd. in Parker 67).

Brydon's dream clearly shows the limits that must be placed upon a figure. De Man insists that a lack of limits on a figure “is error because it believes or feigns to believe in its own referential meaning. The belief is legitimate only within the limits of a given text,” so, although Achilles is a lion to Homer, naming one's son Achilles will not make him brave (*AR* 151). Likewise, in a dream the presence of lions is often very frightful, but, as in one of Freud's examples, they actually represented close friends and family members of the dreamer, who, prior to Freud's examination, was puzzled by her lack of fear in the dream (V:462). This figure then acts as a catachresis in that the fearful image of a lion does not correspond to the pleasant dream-thought. The catachresis does not refer to a known entity, but our desire is to attach one to it, to match a figure with a figure of speech, and to agree that this face belongs with this entity that has none. Brydon's misreading of the message of the spectre means that he cannot treat the catachresis as such, so he cannot tell the difference between the figure of the spectre and the figure of his anxiety. Deborah Esch's argument is that Brydon cannot tell the difference between the *alter ego* and the prosopopeia because he cannot differentiate between the literal and the figurative, and “he has forgotten, if he

ever knew, that the figure of his *alter ego* is a figure by virtue of the linguistic process of figuration” (595). When he discovers his mistake, the irony of his first identification of it as “the quaint analogy” (James 344) becomes all too clear.

How could Brydon's dream express this sentiment more fully than by allowing him to face his condensed catachresis “looming,” “glooming,” rising up before him and advancing with aggression (364-65)? While the catachresis of the spectre does correspond to Brydon's wish to face it, it also scares him because it embodies the entirety of his fear in one form.⁴¹ According to de Man, the wish and desire of the reader is to understand and to “determine the referential mode of a text” (*AR* 201). The assumption is that this is a simple task, for, even when faced with a metaphor, readers can trace it back to its proper referent even if, as in poetic language, a figure is “polysemous and engenders several meanings” (*AR* 201). Yet, this assumption is the very thing de Man attacks by presenting the trope of allegory as an allegory of reading itself and catachresis as “an aberrant trope that conceals the radical figurality of language behind the illusion that it can properly mean”; hence, “all readings are in error because they assume their own readability . . . the need for verification is itself unverifiable, and therefore unfounded in its claim to truth” (*AR* 202).

This is the stance taken by Alice Staverton, who appears to be located at the periphery of the story quietly acting out her role as confidante and holder of wisdom. Her frame of mind is that “of a man who is reflecting [and so] is totally different from that of a man who is observing” (Freud IV:101). She exercises her critical faculty,

⁴¹ Indeed, an allegory, in the sense of an extended metaphor, states the imperative for interpretation, for the distance, in both a temporal and a spatial sense, warns against mere equation of sign to antecedent. De Man sets allegory and symbol against one another, writing that allegory is “a sign that refers to one specific meaning and thus exhausts its suggestive potentialities once it has been deciphered” whereas a “symbol is founded on an intimate unity between the image that rises up before the sense and the supersensory totality that the image suggests” (“Rhet” 188-89).

which Brydon does not do, and realizes that while the spectre is not Brydon, it is a part of him, and he of it. Hence, she can reassure the upset Brydon that he is right to say that “the awful beast . . . brought to bay” was not him because “it wasn't to have been,” for “the whole point” was to know how different he might have been and to see how far his supposed control of language and figure really went (367-68). In this manner, the wish fulfilment expressed in dreams is irrevocably linked to time. Dreams picture wishes as being fulfilled and thereby lead to a vision of a happy future in the present based upon a perfect likeness with the past (Freud V:621).

Alice Staverton is a remarkable person in Brydon's opinion because she “listened to everything; she was a woman who answered intimately but who utterly didn't chatter” (347). Yet Staverton is not uninfluenced, for she does participate in Brydon's wish fulfilment although she does undoubtedly invoke the spectre in fulfilment of her own dream wishes.⁴² The difference is that she maintains a critical mind that she exercises quite willingly. Esch notes that Staverton consistently allows the spectre its own life, story, and independent existence (602), which Brydon cannot do while still believing that he is the master of the spectre and at the same time not realizing that it is just that: a spectral figure that he has literalized.

How then is the spectre called into being? Prosopopeia may be accompanied by personification, in which a non-tangible entity is given physical dimensions, often by anthropomorphism, in which it receives human qualities. It is only thus that apostrophe is made possible and the spectre can speak. However, the risk of the failure of prosopopeia remains as in Keats' “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” in which an

⁴² Rovit raises the interesting possibility that Staverton may actually be “regarded as a third part of a single total consciousness” (“Ghosts” 66). If she is, then she acts as a combining force, lighting Brydon's path to integration and acceptance.

ancient urn, having become the recipient of *prosopopeia*, is addressed and yet remains a “still unravish'd bride of quietness” and a “foster-child of silence and slow time.” Although Keats has given the vase a face, a story, and a history, it cannot respond to his address, and the *prosopopeia* fails. Likewise, though aggressive, Brydon's spectre cannot speak, is surrounded with symbols of castration, cannot remove itself from behind a door the dreamwork has closed, and covers the distorted face it knows Brydon has bestowed upon it while at the same time covering its own eyes from looking upon its inventor who is in the very process of retaking the temporary power of literalization he had allowed to the spectre. It is this quality of mimesis of that which is real or of that which might have been that intersects the reading of tropes, for, in copying a *prosopopeia*, it becomes the figure of a figure and as such has only what power it is given.

Brydon's dream reality is that he cannot read the *catachresis* that he has produced, and, in actualizing it, he invests it with a meaning that does not exist. Society, generally awake, duplicates this error by not reading with a critical eye to language and the limitations thereof. This lazily mistakes the impersonal *prosopon* or mask for a personal being with agency and volition. In Brydon's dream, this causes a total loss of mastery over his own discourse that allows his metaphor to gain its independence, as it “refuses to be restricted to the significance assigned it by Brydon” (Esch 599). For this reason, when his own spectre of modernism appears to him, he is amazed that it is so disfigured, so beyond all his recognition, and yet is rendered in such clear sensory detail.

When Brydon finally awakes from his dream, he does so believing he has come to knowledge like a man who has slept and dreamt away “a great inheritance”

but awakes to find it is still in his possession and enjoys the “serenity of certitude” (366). Since, when one is asleep and dreaming, one always dreams that one is awake, and, when one is mentally disturbed and hallucinating, one hallucinates that one is lucid, perhaps Brydon is still believing in that which is unreal. If he has the courage in waking life, his next task will be to actualize the self-validation of who he is despite the turmoil of a rapidly changing New York that altered everything he had relied upon in his homeland, for that was indeed the wish expressed by the spectre he addressed in his dream. Hopefully, his adventure has accomplished more besides momentarily disturbing his “serenity of certitude,” even if that accomplishment is only to demonstrate the reading of a dream and the dream of reading.

— § —

“His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.”
—James Joyce, “The Dead”

James Joyce frequently employed the spectre and the return of the dead throughout his writing career; their representation in his body of work is evident from *Dubliners*' “The Dead” (1914) to the waking of Finnegan, hod carrier extraordinaire, in *Finnegans Wake* (1939), Joyce's so called book of the night. Yet, the return of the dead is just as central in *Ulysses*, and this section concerns itself with four specific occurrences of two interrelated musical texts that, although interwoven within the warp and woof of the text, reveal a motif of the spectre standing in for language meant to deal with personal and national griefs.

Although Jacques Derrida has written extensively on the spectre as a literary, historical, and political entity, one of his most intriguing tales of haunting language

concerns his own mother. Like James Joyce, Derrida had a strained relationship with his mother over the question of religious faith. When Derrida notes in “Circumfession”⁴³ that “nobody understands anything” about his religion, he included his mother, “who asked other people a while ago, not daring to talk to me about it, if I still believed in God” (154).⁴⁴ As Derrida was writing “Circumfession,” he was waiting for his mother's imminent death from Alzheimer's Disease in a hospital in Nice. He mourned for her already, saying,

I am writing here at the moment when my mother no longer recognizes me, and at which, though still capable of speaking or articulating, a little, she no longer calls me and for her and therefore for the rest of her life, I no longer have a name, that is what is happening, and when she nonetheless seems to reply to me, she is presumably replying to someone who happens to be me without her knowing it, if knowing means anything here . . . (22-23)

In a fascinating reversal of haunting, Derrida takes his mother for a walk near the hospital. He asks if she is in pain and when she replies yes, he asks where. Derrida writes of his mother's reply that

she had in a rhetoric that could never have been hers, the audacity of this stroke about which she will alas, never know anything, no doubt knew nothing, and which, piercing the night replies to my question: I have a pain in my mother, as though she were speaking for me, both in my direction and in my place . . . (23)

Even as Derrida writes for his mother and mourns her coming death, she, in a moment of convoluted clarity, speaks for him and mourns for him and his pain caused by her pain. In similar fashion, Joyce wrote for his mother as a part of his mourning

⁴³ This appears in the self-titled *Jacques Derrida*, wherein, on the bottom third of each page, Derrida writes a loose stream of consciousness “response” titled “Circumfession,” which meant to escape the measured systematization of his life's work written by Geoffrey Bennington that appears on the top two-thirds of each page.

⁴⁴ Derrida continues by insisting: “but she must have known that the constancy of God in my life is called by other names, so that I quite rightly pass for an atheist, the omnipresence to me of what I call God in my absolved, absolutely private language being neither that of an eyewitness nor that of a voice doing anything other than talking to me without saying anything” (“Circumfession” 154-55).

for her and in doing so gave her a spectral voice to mourn for him and for his loss of faith.

Haunted by such intimate spectres, James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) is both a text haunted by many ghosts and a ghost itself that forms an apparition around a skeleton exhumed from the structure of Homer's *Odyssey*. This chapter section closely examines the further allusions in Joyce's *Ulysses* to Yeats' "Who Goes With Fergus?" and to the Roman Catholic "Ordo Commendationis Animae."⁴⁵ Throughout *Ulysses*, these two songs reappear in reference to the deathbed of May Gouling, Stephen's mother. By piecing together clues found throughout the novel, we find that as she lay dying, Stephen's mother pleaded with him to return to the Catholic church and renew his faith. This he refuses to do. She requests a song, and he sings "Who Goes With Fergus?" to comfort her. No doubt, he does this in love and respect, but he knows it is far below what she desires of him. The "Liliata rutilantium" was within Stephen's ability to sing through his Jesuit education, but he refuses. Instead, the priest who came to administer the Last Rites would have sung it to her as a part of the subsequent liturgy, and so Stephen remembers it throughout the day in his stream of consciousness.

Joyce's uses of these two songs represents the task of the modernists in coming to terms with the problem of what they owed earlier generations. Pericles Lewis sees *Ulysses* as concerned precisely with "the problem of what we owe the dead—or, more accurately, of the demands they place on us: our need to come to terms with the importance the dead hold in our mental and spiritual lives" specifically through "processes of forgetting and mythologization with which the living try to

⁴⁵ See Appendix A.

come to terms with the dead” (185).⁴⁶ This is undoubtedly true, despite Bloom's graveyard assertion that “Once you are dead you are dead” (102), yet Joyce clearly figures Stephen's obedience to, for example, the expected rituals of wearing mourning black as too little too late to have pleased his mother as she lay dying, which is why Joyce uses the songs and all they symbolize to haunt Stephen a year after his mother's death.

This context was based upon Joyce's own experience of the death of his mother. Despite his disavowal of the Catholic Church, he was attending Good Friday mass at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris when a telegram from his father arrived at his hotel that said simply, “Mother dying. Come home. Father” (*JJ* 133; Ellmann, *L* 20). Richard Ellmann records that May Joyce's “fear of death put her in mind of her son's impiety, and on the days following Easter she tried to persuade him to make his confession and take communion”⁴⁷ (*JJ* 134). Later, he actually sang his version of “Who Goes With Fergus?” for her, as he had for his youngest brother George who died at the age of fifteen of peritonitis, which would eventually be James Joyce's own cause of death (*JJ* 97-98, 141; Russel 62). When Joyce's mother died four months later, she was unconscious during her last hours, and so did not request that Joyce pray for her as happens in the novel; however, her brother, John Murray did order James and his brother Stanislaus to kneel by her bedside, and both refused. Yet, like Stephen, Joyce felt guilty for openly rejecting his mother's beliefs so close to her death, and Ellmann argues that her death therefore “seemed a punishment”; when he

⁴⁶ Oddly enough, Nora Joyce found herself in a similar position of questioning how to honour the dead correctly after Joyce's own premature death following complications of surgery on a perforated ulcer. When urged to have a Catholic service for his funeral, Nora refused outright so as to honour his wishes. In her case, as Lewis remarks, “Sometimes, perhaps, the kindest way to remember the dead is to ignore the expected rituals of remembrance” (192).

⁴⁷ Joyce later wrote that she also called him a “mockler” of the Church (*SL* 132).

confided this to Nora, she could not comprehend why he would not give in to his dying mother, and she reproached him and called him a “Woman-killer” (*JJ* 304).

Joyce uses these two songs to represent the spectres of his lingering mourning and remorse for the choices he made in the face of his mother's suffering by transferring them to the choices before Stephen. Will Stephen honour his dying mother's requests instead of his own decision to reject Roman Catholicism by singing the “Liliata rutilantium,” or will he choose his own ideals and sing Yeats, which ironically speaks of love's bitter mysteries? Stephen's thoughts a year later reveal that the question of what he should have sung to his mother is still one of his greatest quandaries, and the periodic appearance of the songs in the text attests to Stephen's continuing grief and his doubt over his choice, until his regret wins out and Stephen seemingly changes his mind to seek peace with his mother's spirit—and with his own.

Indeed, in *The Portrait of the Artist as Young Man*, Joyce pictures a conversation between Stephen and his friend Cranly soon before Stephen leaves for the Continent (259-65). Stephen recounts the “unpleasant quarrel” he had earlier with his mother, who urged him to make his “easter duty,” the once a year taking of the Eucharist obligatory to all observant Catholics (259).⁴⁸ Stephen's explanation for why he will disappoint his mother is simply “I will not serve,” words taken from the Catholic Douay-Rheims English Bible's translation of Jeremiah 2:20, wherein God condemns Israel; however, the retreat preacher had, years earlier, taught the boys that the defiant assertion “I will not serve” truly belonged to Lucifer (126). His position, then, is that he cannot be observant because he will not bow to the twin masters of the

⁴⁸ Interestingly, E.M. Forster uses this same situation of a devoted mother insisting that her son take Holy Communion, required three times a year in the Anglican Church, as the catalyst for Clive Durham's public break with the Church at Christmastime in *Maurice*, his homosexual novel completed in 1914 but not published until 1971 (44).

Catholic Church and the British Empire.⁴⁹ Cranly argues that he should overcome his doubts so as to ease his mother's suffering because “Whatever else is unsure in this stinking dunghill of a world a mother's love is not” (263). But Stephen is adamant that such would be a “false homage to a symbol” that would make him subservient to “twenty centuries of authority and veneration” (265).

In Stephen's regret and grief for his mother's death, Joyce is reflecting his own concerns with the Catholic Church's abuses in Ireland. In an early letter to Nora, he tried to explain why he did not have a religious faith, and one of the reasons was that he saw in his mother “the face of a victim” of a society and Church that made her bear seventeen children. He writes that “I cursed the system which had made her a victim” (*JJ* 175). Joyce deeply felt his mother's passing; as he once told his brother Stanislaus, “There are only two forms of love in the world, the love of a mother for her child and the love of man for lies” (qtd. in *JJ* 303).

In expressing his love and mourning, Joyce turned to music, which has long been an integral part of communal life and religious ritual. In many cases, the songs one sings or refuses to sing indicate the choices and ideological stands one has taken. Joyce takes such a stand when he decides to sing W. B. Yeats' poem, “Who Goes with Fergus?” instead of a part of the Roman Catholic *Ritual*, “Ordo Commendationis Animae,” to his mother as she lay dying. When he writes of Stephen's mourning, the character's thoughts a year after his mother's death reveal that the question of what he should have sung to his mother is still one of his greatest quandaries. In *Ulysses*, James Joyce uses the musical debate between Yeats and the *Ritual* to indicate the guilt

⁴⁹ Joyce defined the Church as “the enemy of Ireland,” and he believed in 1906 that in its present form it would be conquered by “*Sinn Fein* or Imperialism” (*SL* 125).

Stephen caused himself by choosing his principles over his mother at her deathbed, a decision he ultimately rejects in order to make peace with his mother and with his own soul.

“Who Goes With Fergus?” was written by W. B. Yeats as a part of his play, *The Countess Kathleen*.⁵⁰ It appears in the second scene, during which Oona, Kathleen's foster mother, attempts to cheer her up by making her forget the famine that is currently wreaking havoc among her people. Oona's subject is Fergus, a legendary character from Celtic legend whose adventures are detailed in the tales of Deirdre. He was a king, but was more renowned for his skills as a poet and a great lover. He married Ness and gave up his throne to one of her sons from a different marriage so as to live out his days in the forest pursuing love, hunting, fighting, and feasting (Jeffares 24-25).⁵¹ The poem itself is an invitation and, at the same time, an accusation. Yeats asks, who now goes with Fergus in these modern days? Who will go to the woods and spend his or her days in the labour and leisure that only a return to the pastoral and primeval forest can provide? At once, Yeats uses the ideal of Fergus to glorify both the rural past of Ireland and to criticize the modern world of machinery and numbers that lacks meaningful personal relationships. Yeats' modern world was the noisy, dirty, crowded city, far away from the woods and the seashore. Hence, Yeats offers an invitation to young men and young maids to look up from their work, and “brood on hopes and fear no more.” They are to stop living their lives by

⁵⁰ See Appendix A.

⁵¹ In Harold Bloom's estimation, Yeats alters this earlier depiction of Fergus by making him a “poet-king of wish fulfilment, who has pierced the wood's mystery and danced upon the shore, in defiance of the sea's old cry of uncaring” (112). However, the lyric does not achieve its goal of cheering Kathleen, who later in the play remarks, “My heart is longing for a deeper peace / Than Fergus found amid his brazen cars” (Bloom 119). Stephen will find that his mother is likewise looking for a deeper peace.

the rules of the modern city and the heartache it causes. They are to turn their backs on “love's bitter mystery” and embrace the true love that the world of Fergus offers.

The world of Fergus, Yeats insists, is a world that modern people can still escape to and where he still rules. Fergus rules the “brazen cars,” a reference to old fashioned chariots. Fergus is powerful, but the source of his power, while glorious and brazen, is natural and depends on materials taken from nature unlike the rapidly increasing technology of Yeats' day. Given Fergus' retreat to the woods, A. Norman Jeffares posits that these chariots would be used not for war, but as transportation for peaceful purposes (34). Fergus also rules “the shadows of the wood, / And the white breast of the dim sea / And all dishevelled wandering stars.” By giving an account of the areas of nature ruled by Fergus, Yeats repeats his earlier insistence that Fergus is to be found in the peaceful quietude of the pastoral setting. The addition of the dishevelled wandering stars to his domain is not a reference to the physical stars but to the souls of those people who are courageous enough to abandon the modern world for the idyllic forest and seashore of the old. They remain dishevelled after the negative influence of the new world and wander in a desperate search for the old. Yet they are stars that still shine brightly because of their courage, and it is this that attracts them to Fergus and Fergus to them, binding them to him as his subjects.

On May 8, 1899, the night that *The Countess Kathleen* opened in Dublin, a young James Joyce sat in the audience, mesmerized by the poem as sung by the actress Florence Farr. He later referred to the poem as “the best lyric in the world” (*JJ* 69). Joyce took the poem and added his own music to the lyrics, and, as mentioned, he later sang it for his younger brother and mother as they were dying (*JJ* 97-98, 141; Russel 62). Although it was not composed for use at a deathbed, its applicability is

found in its lightness, its encouraging melody, its beckoning to leave the troubles of the world behind, and its promise of a better world ahead.

Contrasted with the simplicity of Yeats' poetry is the “Ordo Commendationis Animae,” or the “Commendation for a Departing Soul.”⁵² After the Last Rites, this liturgy may be performed and when the individual has died, the “Chorus Angelicum” is sung, representing the welcome of the person's soul into heaven by choirs of angels (*New Catholic Encl.* IV:8). This liturgy is about thirty pages long and includes “a litany of the saints, nine special prayers, a gospel lesson, the story of the passion, three Psalms, several recitations of the Our Father and the Hail Mary, and concludes with three final prayers” (McNelly 291). Hence, Stephen's reference is only to a very short section of the liturgy, the Latin prayer, “Liliata Rutilantium.”

This important sung prayer reads, “Liliata rutilantium te confessorum turma circumdet: iubilantium te virginum chorus excipiat” (*Breviarium Romanum* 191). These words are repeatedly sung during the actual process of dying, and so it is often the last thing one hears. The Roman Catholic *Book of Ritual* of the time translated the lines from Latin as, “May the lily throng of radiant confessors encompass thee; May the choir of rejoicing virgins welcome thee” (V:7). The words, in effect, are wishes for the departing soul to find its way quickly to the heavenly realm where it will be greeted by the heavenly population of those who have gone before. The lily throng of confessors refers to the martyrs of the church. The Greek word “martyr” means “one who witnesses” and is given here as a confessor, one who has witnessed and later confesses. The lily has long been a Christian symbol of purity and innocence, and hence is associated with martyrs. The same group is alluded to in the next line as

⁵² See Appendix A.

the “choir of virgins.” Martyrs were often considered virgins, even if they were not during their earthly life. This was a means of emphasizing their devotion to God and to Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church.

Although these images all link the body of martyrs to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is considered by the Catholic church to be ever virginal and is often represented by the white lily, Joyce certainly intends a reference to the “Mother Ireland” figure that is vital to understanding the role of May Goulding's ghost. Martha Fodaski Black argues that incarnation of the Mother Ireland image in Irish literature came from a syncretism of the Virgin Mary with the ancient Celtic mother goddess Dana (143-44).⁵³ Dana, the mother of the ancient Irish gods, was the central goddess in ancient Irish belief who was variously represented as the goddess of fertility, youth, knowledge, and of disintegration and death; she is the root of the figuration of Ireland as a mother throughout the island's literature.⁵⁴ Linked in the Irish mind to the Mother Ireland figure that incorporates aspects of Dana and the Virgin Mary, Joyce may be implying that the Irish interpretation of the “Liliata” saw its chorus of martyrs not as individual Catholics going to Heaven but as an emphasis on the surety of honour for those who remain faithful to Ireland in the fight for independence, even to the extent of giving their lives. Indeed, Black refers back to Yeats' play wherein the elderly

⁵³ Black makes a further connection between Mother Ireland and the Joyce canon in his choice of names and characters in his short story “A Mother”; she posits that the story was inspired by Yeats' play from which Joyce derived the song “Who Goes with Fergus?” Black's argument is that Joyce makes his Mrs. Kearney into an incarnation of Mother Ireland who is “trying to facilitate the Irish cultural renaissance through her daughter Kathleen while she is herself thwarted by a dishonest functionary named Holohan,” making Joyce's argument that “romantic nationalism is undercut by vulgar reality” (144-45). To this, I would add Anna Livia Plurabelle, HCE's wife in *Finnegans Wake*, whose representation of Dublin's River Liffey makes her a symbol of Ireland's natural world and enduring past.

⁵⁴ “Dana” is the modern Irish spelling of her name as used by Joyce in *Ulysses*. The older form is “Danu.”

mother figure clearly represents Mother Ireland by, for example, persuading a young man to fight and die in the 1798 rebellion.

In *Ulysses*, Joyce makes several references to mother figures and to Mother Ireland as sources of wisdom and life. Stephen, perhaps glorifying rural life, remarks that the Irish peasant sees the earth not as “an exploitable ground but as the living mother” and that their subsequent “dreams and visions” while working on the hillside birthed “the movements which work revolutions in the world” (179).⁵⁵ It is in this vein that Stephen identifies the old milk woman who comes to the Martello tower. Although he knows she appears to be a “wandering crone,” Stephen guesses that beneath her “lowly form” is “an immortal” who, in serving the Gaelic speaking Englishman Haines and the obnoxious Mulligan, is “serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer” (14). He feels snubbed by this incarnation of Mother Ireland, much as he identifies religion as his “mother Church that would cast him out of her bosom” (372). Later, while in Eglinton's office, Stephen argues that Socrates did at least learn dialectic from his notoriously difficult wife, Xanthippe, but that the more important lesson of “how to bring thoughts into the world” he learned from his mother (182-83). At the office Stephen overhears a mention of Dana, an Irish intellectual journal⁵⁶; in his stream of consciousness, Stephen compares himself as an artist to the mother goddess of Ireland, arguing that the way “the artist [can] weave and unweave his image” corresponds to how “we, or mother Dana, weave and unweave our bodies”

⁵⁵ Derrida speaks of these peasants of the land who become the political movers of history; invoking what he says is a Kantian distinction, Derrida insists that “All nations . . . are born in the bosom of nature, in the bowels of Mother Nature. This is why they are in need of historical development” (*A* 172).

⁵⁶ *Dana* was the journal to which Joyce first sent an essay called “A Portrait of the Artist” that would eventually grow into *Stephen Hero* and then be revised into *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; the editors rejected it although they would later publish some of Joyce's poetry (*JJ* 149; *SL* 4, 46, 222).

(185-86, 840, 186n.30). By having Stephen reject both the religious and the national Mother Irelands though these instances and again through his repeated denials to the spectre of his own mother, Joyce repudiates the claims of Church and State upon him and asserts his independence as an individual and as an artist.

This assertion of Joyce's rights is seen in the mocking tone with which he speaks of those honoured by the Church and State as martyrs.⁵⁷ Joyce plays with this notion in the "Cyclops" chapter, wherein he alludes to the chorus of the "Liliata" by detailing a long procession of what he calls "all saints and martyrs, virgins and confessors" (324f). This immense list includes such pillars of the faith as St. Stephen, Stephen's namesake and the first Christian martyr, St. Thomas Aquinas, the great Medieval theologian, the biblical Mary and Martha, and then made up "saints" whose names, like Dedalus, play on Greek sounds, such as St. Anonymous, St. Eponymous, St. Pseudonymous, St. Homonymous, St. Paronymous, and St. Synonymous. Since the soul of the dying person will only eventually be greeted by these choirs, the purpose of singing these words at death was to focus the person's hopes on this promise during their last moments so that they might have peace and comfort as they died, but Joyce's list of false saints suggests that this belief in an afterlife is just as false.

In this fashion, Joyce's obvious preference for Yeats' poem has a different spiritual function. The poem does not indicate an embrace of Irish nationalism but, like many rituals, a nostalgic glance back towards the past. In part, this is, as Walter Benjamin argues, due to our belief that a purity existed in the past that we have lost,

⁵⁷ The "Liliata," in fact, singles out martyrs from among the entire body of the Christian deceased because only martyrs and departed saints are ushered immediately into heaven. All other Catholics must first undergo Purgatory to be further purged of their iniquity before entering heaven.

which is coupled with the human tendency to endow the future with at least a weak Messianic belief. This stands out as a rare moment in this very urban novel by a very urbane writer, in that there is an appeal to an almost Wordsworthian type of Romanticism that would tear down the smokestacks of the Industrial Revolution to return to the purity of the pastoral streams and fields. There is certainly a return to nature urged by the poem, but, as Joyce is here employing it, the song moreover edifies us in looking at death, first, as a natural occurrence, and second, as a gateway to a wider existence ruled by Fergus—a symbol of unity not necessarily with nature in terms of plants and birds but in terms of nature as the ground of our being. There is hence an ontological basis to the comfort the song offers the dying.

Arguably, the “Liliata” speaks in ontological terms as well, but those are terms of a Christianized Platonism that identifies the true being with the higher levels of the rational spirit and castigates the physical body as crass, deformed, or totally depraved. The comfort of the “Liliata” is that the true believer can leave all of that behind and embrace the new purity, symbolized by the virgins and the white lilies, of eternal life in Heaven purchased through the sacrifice of Christ. Yeats' poem is far more dependent on the choice of the individual to leave the mindset, if not the spatial domain, of the urban waste land. This at once involves us in the desire for more authentic human relationships; it cannot be lost on Stephen that such an authentic relationship might demand an ethical decision that negates his steadfast rejection of having any outward appearance of acquiescence to the Catholic faith. Perhaps by the end of the day, he has learned his own lesson from Yeats' poem and has shown it through his reversal of a decision he made a full year previous.

At the same time, the choice of the poem performs a specific function: as a language act, it is doing the spiritual work of voicing grief and mourning. In a post-Christendom society, Joyce uses a pagan-themed song to stand in for the Christian. That is clear by the constant tussling between the two songs in Steven's unconsciousness in his dreams and hallucinations and in his waking consciousness throughout the day. Personified in this fashion, the two songs jockey for position and supremacy, both clearly desiring to perform the work of mourning as speech acts through their claims about the essential being of humans and their connection to being as being in the widest sense. Joyce thus addresses the question of the uses of language to enunciate loss, a central question in the text since his characters address great personal or societal trauma. Freud's observation, in "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), that in mourning a person "knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him" is key (XIV:245). A lasting inability to come to terms with the unknown aspects of a lost object or thing, he argues, confounds the work of grieving and turns the process of mourning to the deadlock of melancholia, which is when a spectre can appear. This remains true on the scale of mourning a death, a lost personal religious faith, or an entire set of structures that once girded a society.

Colin David suggests that this very deadlock is that which produces the aporia Derrida seeks to reveal in his hauntology: "Derrida wants to avoid any such restoration and to encounter what is strange, unheard, *other*, about the ghost. For Derrida, the ghost's secret is not a puzzle to be solved . . . it cannot (yet) be articulated in the languages available to us. The ghost pushes at the boundaries of language and thought" (13). Derrida walks a line that embraces the ghostly secrets of what is lacked or unknown because the spectre's action of making "established certainties vacillate"

(Davis 11) makes us aware of that lack, although, as Castricano observes, “the secret best kept is the one from ourselves” (18). Therefore, a willingness to listen to the figure of the spectre, to accept but not necessarily know its secrets, and to try to converse with it is not “undertaken in the expectation that they will reveal some secret, shameful or otherwise. Rather, it may open us up to the experience of secrecy as such: an essential unknowing which underlies and may undermine what we think we know” (Davis 11). Not knowing what we have lost in jettisoning traditional forms of organized religion, there are certain aspects that constantly return because of our human need. Since the purpose of ritual is to mark transitions in human life and community, it has been argued that myth and religion actually developed out of ritual instead of the other way around. This argument, derived from the anthropology of religion, posits that ancient peoples performed rituals in response to events or changes in their natural environment, and only much later began to offer explanations of their reasons for doing so.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Greek fertility rituals provide a good example of rites surrounding the work of harvest and cultivation that only later were reinterpreted as expressions of a divine interplay in earthly affairs. Robert Frost’s “Mending Wall” can be invoked as another modernist reinterpretation of this ancient theme because he there appears to be manipulating the ancient rituals of marking boundaries with a neighbour. Again, we can see how a ritual meant to indicate the boundaries of territory to keep the peace between neighbours was later fortified by a myth expressing the notion that both parties must maintain this boundary and not violate it because a divine figure had set the boundary. As regards rituals of death, archeological evidence has shown that early humans treated the corpses of their family members with respect, sometimes even burying their bodies beneath the dirt floors of their homes. If one wonders how the loss of religion and the loss of rituals dealing with death have affected our belief in the dignity afforded our deceased ancestors, a sad reply could be found in the businesses now competing internationally to exhibit plasticized human corpses divided piecemeal to display the inner organs or, in one case, a foetus, or arranged in what are to be understood as “natural” poses: playing chess or hitting a tennis ball or having sexual intercourse. The lack of dignity and the loss of ritual in that case has been further shown by proof that these unregulated industries first acquired human remains by buying them from China, which, despite claims of informed consent, had in fact been acquired after executions of criminals and Fulon Gong members. We need not be conversant in Kantian categorical imperatives to realize that this outright violation of human rights and dignity based on the potential to rational thought in another human being for the purpose of cash profit and human voyeurism weakens our respect for the humanity of those who are so displayed, for other human beings, and for ourselves. There is a necessity for human beings to grapple honestly with death.

This ritualized comfort was of a very traditional sort that at once invokes the problem of language and specifically the problem of how to speak of death. One of the many illuminating conversations in Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* (1924) is occasioned when Hans Castrop and his cousin view the corpse of the recently deceased Austrian horseman and visit with his widow to deliver their condolences. Hans, “satisfied with their visit and spiritually moved by the impressions it had left upon him,” responds to the emotion and gravity of the moment by pronouncing: “*Requiescat in pace. Sit tibi terra levis. Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine.*”⁵⁹ Hans explains to his cousin:

You see, when it comes to death, when one speaks to the dead or about them, Latin comes into its own. It's the official language in such cases, which only points up how special death is. But it is not out of humanistic courtesy that people speak Latin in their honor. The language of the dead is not the Latin you learn in school, you see, but comes from a totally different sphere, from just the opposite direction one might say. It is sacred Latin, the dialect of monks, a chant from the Middle Ages, so to speak, a kind of muted, subterranean monotone. (288-89)

Notably, a language most people could not comprehend becomes the “language of the dead,” not because the dead speak Latin, but because the living must use this dead priestly language to refer to the reality of something beyond the ability of the living to experience fully for themselves. In a different sense, the modernist realization of the crisis of representation meant that the language used to voice grief and loss was seen as particularly problematic. The ritual work of the removed and academic priestly Latin was trusted by the common people, but the secularized modernists revealed how insufficient that ritualized Christian language was to deal with grief by figuring the spectres in their attempts to communicate with the living; as we have seen, James'

⁵⁹ “Rest in peace. May the earth be light to you. Grant them eternal rest, O Lord.”

ghost is not empowered to speak at all, whereas Woolf's beggar woman discussed in the next section of this chapter announces the return of the dead in apparently nonsense phrases that only a few can understand.

Joyce first introduces the reader to the Latin language of the priests in the "Liliata" and to the Yeatsian language of the Celtic Twilight in "Who Goes With Fergus?" in the very first chapter. Stephen and Mulligan are not getting along well in the Martello tower, and Stephen reveals his disgust at Mulligan's description of him once as "only Dedalus whose mother is beastly dead" (8). Mulligan defends himself by insisting that death is a common, beastly thing, and Stephen only feels guilty because he would not kneel down and pray as his mother asked him to do, crossing "her last wish in death" (8). Mulligan descends the stairs to meet their English guest and as he goes, sings Yeats' "Who Goes With Fergus?" Joyce has not yet revealed that Stephen sang this to his mother as she lay dying, but Mulligan's pointed use of the song so dear to Stephen echoes his insensitive character. Mulligan insists that Stephen quit brooding on his mother; he says, "Don't mope over it all day . . . Give up the moody brooding" (9); however, it is clear he means the song in a secondary way as an insult to what he sees as Stephen's fickle sensitivities. Similarly, Joyce comments on the hypocrisy of following religious rituals when Mulligan remarks on Stephen's admittedly odd code of conduct that makes him refuse to give in to his mother and yet later makes him refrain from wearing black pants with a strip of grey in deference to society's regulations for mourning; Mulligan retorts: "Etiquette is etiquette. He kills his mother but he can't wear grey trousers" (6). Despite these charges against him, Stephen's immediate stream of consciousness reveals that he keeps brooding on the

song and on his mother, as the unacknowledged line “White breast of the dim sea” (9) is actually from Yeats' poem as well, though Mulligan does not sing that line.

As Mulligan leaves, Stephen's mind focuses on his mother. He remembers his house before her death, and the little comforts they made for her as her senses departed. Yet, his thoughts then take a nasty turn. Stephen remembers nightmares he has been having of his mother's decaying corpse coming to his bed. He can smell her, hear her trying to speak, and see her eyes peering into his. She comes to him alone, and uses her hands not to touch his body, but to shake his soul. He says that her eyes stare into his, “to strike me down,” while everyone else is on their knees praying except him. What is their prayer? The “Liliata.” This is the only time that Joyce writes the prayer in its full and correct form, because in this scene, Stephen is only remembering a bad dream and is fully conscious of what actually happened when his mother died. However, Joyce presents the following occurrences of the prayer in fractured versions that are meant to represent Stephen's continued mourning and his very different psychological states throughout the day. This first sequence ends when Stephen repeats the words from his dream: “Ghoul! Chewer of corpses! / No, mother! Let me be and let me live” (10). Stephen woke up from his nightmare with these words and thinks upon them once more in the daylight. He has revealed that his problem is as Mulligan put it: he is not upset over Mulligan's callous words as much as he is tormented by his mother's spectre that is visiting his guilty subconscious.

Joyce keeps the song foremost in Stephen's mind until the end of the chapter. The men eat and walk down to the seashore for a swim, and, as Stephen leaves them, he decides he cannot sleep under the same roof with “the usurper” for another night. In parting, his mind sings, “Liliata rutilantium./ Turma circumdet./ Iubilantium te

virginum” (23). This is not the complete prayer and would be translated into nonsense phrases such as “The liliated radiant . . . encompass thee . . . rejoicing virgins . . . thee.” In the first appearance of both songs, Stephen does not acknowledge the Yeats poem; instead it is the usurper Mulligan who does. Yet, Joyce also presents the “Liliata” as foreign: in no circumstance would Stephen sing it, even if it did comfort his mother. Oddly enough, he thinks about other emollient acts he performed to comfort her, like getting a glass of water or roasting an apple with brown sugar; however, when it comes to what mattered most to her, he will not budge. This reticence remains, even though she visits him from the grave in his dreams. Yet, as he departs along the seashore, the song Stephen's mother wanted him to sing is in his mind, where it will stay throughout the day.

The second appearance of the “Liliata” is during “Scylla and Charybdis.” Stephen is in a debate about literature when something that is said makes him remember his mother's death. In this section, Joyce represents a common homosocial gathering that turns to an argument about literature. Stephen has been defending his thesis about Shakespeare. He believes that Shakespeare used his family and his real life as the subject of much of his drama, and he argues that Anne Hathaway was actually much beloved by Shakespeare, a notion that his opponent, Eglinton, dismisses. Stephen defends her importance as one who saw Shakespeare through life itself and was there when he died to weigh down his eyelids. As soon as he has spoken, his thoughts return to his mother's death and he thinks, “Mother's deathbed. Candle. The sheeted mirror. Who brought me into this world lies there, bronzedlidded, under few cheap flowers. Liliata rutilantium. / I wept alone” (182). He recalls how she lay on the bed with a single candle nearby. The mirror was already covered,

indicating she had died. She, like Shakespeare, is bronzed with pennies to hold down the eyelids. On her chest, cheap flowers have been placed, which reminds Stephen of the lily through that is hoped will welcome his mother into heaven, and hence the prayer reappears in his thoughts as he recalls his tears shed later in private.

Stephen still affirms his choice of song in this section. Eglington states that the literary world believes Shakespeare's marriage was a tremendous mistake that he left as quickly as he could and, hence, Stephen is flying in the face of three centuries of literary criticism. Stephen rudely rebukes the opinion of tradition, because "A man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery" (182). He argues that if Shakespeare's marriage was a mistake, then it was committed on purpose and was used by him to discover and to learn for the sake of his art. In this context, Stephen is identifying himself with Shakespeare, as he seeks justification in adapting real life to art in literature. He aligns his genius with Shakespeare's own, and, by recalling his guilt in ignoring his mother's dying request, he also aligns his mistakes with Shakespeare's. Joyce is suggesting that, at least at this point in the day, Stephen is cognizant in a half-hearted manner that he did make a mistake in not comforting his mother by praying for her. Even as the "Liliata rutilantium" comes to his mind once again, Stephen is aware that it is what he should have sung, yet he is proud and insists that he did it volitionally to some ill-defined end. Yet, Joyce uses the next occurrences of the "Liliata rutilantium" to show that such an intransigent position in dealing with the spectre of guilt cannot be maintained as absolutely or as firmly as might be wished.

The third appearance of the songs is in the “Circe” chapter, which is rich with layers of allusion, especially to Homer’s *Odyssey*.⁶⁰ Joyce often alludes in “Circe” to aspects of transformation, metempsychosis, and the search for escape from seduction’s clutches. In this chapter, which Joyce presents as a complex 150 page play, the reader follows the continuing adventures of Bloom and Stephen after they met up at the hospital. Stephen announces he has money, and his friends leave with him to spend it by getting even more intoxicated and visiting a brothel. Bloom is delayed with Mrs. Purefoy and must run to find Stephen, as he is unwilling to leave Stephen to such low company. For a long while, Bloom cannot find Stephen and must face his own drunkenness, so this chapter is full of illusions and drunken visions. Bloom first sees himself accused of several crimes by citizens of Dublin, mostly women who say he wronged them. Then his mind twists and he is made the new king of Ireland and goes about being lauded by the crowds. Bloom finally finds the correct brothel and is set upon by Bella and the prostitutes. Bloom finds Stephen once more, and he quickly realizes that Stephen is quite drunk on absinthe, which Joyce knew to

⁶⁰ The motif of metempsychosis in Joyce’s *Ulysses* readily parallels that of metamorphosis in Homer’s *Odyssey*, in which the sorceress Circe transforms Ulysses’ men into pigs on her island home, which is already populated by various stranded sailors who have been transformed into one type of beast or another. Due to a powerful plant given to him by the god Hermes, Ulysses is immune to her powers and after convincing her to release his men, lives with her for a year before deciding it is time to continue homeward. She instructs him to go first to Hades to meet with the spirit of the famed prophet, Tiresias, who will predict how his journey will unfold; in this guise, Tiresias also appears in Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and in Pound’s Canto I. When Ulysses is in the Underworld, he sacrifices several animals and collects their blood in a broad trench. The ghosts then surround him, but he allows only Tiresias to drink, who is then enabled to give him guidance. Tiresias also says that Ulysses can then choose which spirits may drink the blood and then speak with them. In Homer’s account, Ulysses then speaks with several great men and women of Greece’s past, including Achilles, Agamemnon, Jocasta, Sisyphus, Ajax, and, finally, Hercules, most of whom are alluded to in Joyce’s “Circe.” Yet, the first person to whom Ulysses gives the blood and empowers to speak is Anticleia—his own mother. His first question to her is how she died because Ulysses is ignorant till that moment that she had passed away while he was fighting to return from Troy. Her answer is that she died of heartache and longing for her son. Ulysses is overcome with guilt, knowing he caused his mother’s death through grief, and he attempts to run to her and hold her three times before giving up in despair. After leaving Hades, Ulysses and his men return to Circe’s island and continue their voyage.

be the drink of choice among Parisian poets that was also notorious for causing hallucinations. The women of the brothel have just relieved Stephen of a good deal of money, and Bloom's avuncular intercession spares him from further loss. He counts Stephen remaining money, which he keeps for him; when Bloom counts to eleven, meaning eleven pence, Stephen recalls the riddle he told his students in the "Nestor" chapter about the fox burying his grandmother, yet intertwines that with Mulligan's tainted barb that Stephen has killed his mother, Stephen remarks that the fox probably also killed his grandmother.

Joyce's chapter necessarily includes the appearances of the spectres of many dead people representing the religious, ethnic, national, and personal pasts of the characters. Virag is closest to Tiresias in his advice to Bloom. Elijah appears as an ancient Jewish hero, perhaps also announcing the coming of the Messiah. Kevin Egan of the Wild Geese and the fabled Croppy Boy arrive as heroes of Irish nationalism. Shakespeare appears to lend his poetic voice. In the resurrection sequence, quoting from the New Testament account of the resurrection of Christ, many people rise from their graves and wander the city. Bloom sees his father, Rudolph, and his mother, Ellen. The chapter ends with Bloom's vision of the spectre of his son, Rudy, who appears to be reading in Hebrew and is in a state of stupor similar to that of the spectres in Homer who are not at rest or who have not been given access to the trench of blood and therefore cannot speak or recognize living beings. The death of Bloom's son is his greatest personal tragedy, and Joyce's representation of him as a spectre that cannot talk or even recognize his father speaks again to the insufficiency of the language of religious ritual to give Bloom healing.

Joyce presents Stephen differently. He is still focused inward, where he tries to work himself out of the unexplainable complexities he has found for himself. In another expression of transformation, for instance, Stephen wonders again about the “Ineluctable modality of the visible” (37, 522), or his inability to explain why everything he sees keeps changing, which is how his stream of consciousness in “Proteus” commences. As Stephen's condition seems to worsen, he claims the Dedalus power of flight, dreams of his foes beneath him, and, again quoting from the Gospels, proclaims that they ever shall be, world without end, and he calls upon his father, “pater” in Greek. Unexpectedly, his actual father, Simon Dedalus, whom Stephen despises, appears and commences to ramble unintelligibly. However, he immediately falls silent and does not speak again until much later when Stephen is dancing wildly and falls out of control. Simon's only other line is “Think of your mother's people”; this is spoken as a reproach to quiet his unruly, recalcitrant son, but Stephen has actually been thinking of his mother quite often throughout the day. Stephen replies, “Dance of death,” which immediately conjures up the spectre of his mother (538).⁶¹

Joyce now presents May Goulding in the middle of the brothel scene as a horrifying image.⁶² She is emaciated, wears “leper grey with a wreath of faded

⁶¹ In tracing the cultural history of the appearances of the dead, R. C. Finucane explains that the “dance of death,” also known as the “*danse macabre*,” originated in Europe in the thirteenth century concurrent with the Black Death. In its earliest form, the dance of death was called “Three Living and Three Dead,” and it figuratively represented “a confrontation of men [the Three Living] with their own corpses [the Three Dead]” (51). In its origin, then, the dance of death invoked by Joyce would have indicated that Stephen's partner would have been his own corpse.

⁶² This intimate and troubling connection between sexuality and the decaying corpse of the mother is also stressed in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, wherein, after Victor has given life to the “demoniacal corpse,” he falls into an anxious sleep and dreams of Elizabeth, his intended: “I though I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss of death on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the

orangeblossoms and a torn bridal veil, her face worn and noseless, green with gravemould. Her hair is scant and lank. She fixes her bluecircled hollow eyesockets on Stephen and opens her toothless mouth uttering a silent word” (539). She is a terrifying sight to the drunken Stephen, but, most interestingly, he sees her accompanied by a great choir of virgins and confessors who sing voicelessly. Their words, of course, are “Liliata rutilantium te confessorum . . . / Iubilantium te virginum . . .” (539). When Stephen hears the song this time, they have already encompassed and greeted his mother. The fragments Joyce uses show that they are actually singing to Stephen. Their words are “The liliated throng of radiant confessors . . . / The rejoicing virgins . . . You?” Joyce nicely has them leave out the parts of the prayer that state they will encompass him and welcome him because they would not consent do so until he accepts the Catholic faith and makes peace with his mother.

Although Joyce does indicate that the spectre at first “utters a silent word” akin to James' spectre that never speaks, he allows the spectre to speak when Stephen's mother begins to compel him to return to the faith of his youth and, at the same time, rejects the petty comforts he offers. It is clear that he has no intentions of returning to the faith, so his mother's pleading and promises of hell and judgement become futile. Stephen's reactions instead reveal that he is seeking to expunge himself of his guilt. He cries, “(Choking with fright, remorse and horror.) They say I killed you, mother. He offended your memory. Cancer did it, not I. Destiny” (540). Finally able to explain himself face to face with his mother's spectre, Stephen defends himself against the charge that he broke her heart and killed her. Her response? “You sang that

_____ folds of flannel” (59).

song to me. *Love's bitter mystery*" (540). She was not pleased with Yeats' poem, and even as she says these words, a green rill of bile begins to trickle from the side of her mouth.⁶³

Joyce's spectres relegate the words of "that song" to an ineffectual corner with the glass of tap water and the roasted apple. She knows what she wants and has brought her own choir to demonstrate her song of choice, the only measure of true comfort that he could have given to her but which he denied. In all her deadly power, she continues to preach to Stephen that he might repent and she calls upon Jesus to have mercy on her son. Obviously, she desires both the language of the old ritual and wants Stephen to return to the Church as an observant Catholic. Joyce shows a Stephen who is very troubled emotionally by his mother's distress that, in effect, shows her spectre mourning for his and what she sees as his spiritual death, yet Stephen stands for his beliefs in the new realities of his belief and argues with her until he finally gives into violence, smashing the chandelier in front of which her spectre appeared. Joyce shows that the spectre's attempt to evangelize Stephen, although it certainly embodies and gives voice to his crisis of personal guilt in a striking manner, drives him away from her and then into violence when he hits the chandelier, is escorted out of the brothel, and fights two British privates on the street.

After these events, with the memory of the terror of the spectre fading, Stephen lies on the ground and is aided by a protective Bloom. He repeats Stephen's

⁶³ Stephen seems to recall the sermons recounted in *Portrait* of the special retreat preacher, who, in his attempts to shock the schoolboys into Christian observance, admonishes them to "Imagine some foul and putrid corpse that has lain rotting and decomposing in the grave, a jellylike mass of liquid corruption" (129). The bile also correlates to the fits that Joyce's mother, May, experienced before her death (*JJ* 134) and that Joyce writes into Stephen's earlier memory of "A bowl of white china [that] had stood beside her deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had torn up from her rotting liver by fits of load groaning vomiting" (*Ulysses* 6).

name again and again to get him up. Joyce uses Stephen's response to fracture language yet again, with Stephen heaving a long sigh, a stretch, and then, in a murmur thick with prolonged vowels, "Who . . . drive . . . Fergus now / And piece . . . wood's woven shade . . . ?" (564). Joyce ironically makes Bloom realize that Stephen is reciting poetry and think it a pity that an educated young man should be so troubled, but of course, he does not know the meaning and the sorrow and the guilt behind Stephen's fractured words. Drunkenly, Stephen continues to murmur, "shadows . . . the woods / . . . white breast . . . dim sea" (564). Bloom hears this next part of the Yeats poem and wrongly thinks that, yes, all Stephen might really need is a girl with "deep white breast[s]" that he could take "in the shady wood" (565). "Best thing could happen to him," Bloom admits, and he even mistakes the name of Fergus for the family name of the presumed girl, whom he imagines to be a Ferguson. And yet, remarks Bloom as the "Circe" chapter is about to close, "[His] face reminds me of his poor mother" (565). Oddly, Bloom's own spiritual nature is again clouded when he begins to recite "swear that I will always hail, ever conceal, never reveal, any part or parts, art or arts" and speaks of the death penalty and the curse of having one's heart buried "in the rough sands of the seas... a cabletow's length from the shore... where the tide ebbs... and flows..." (565); these are words from the Masonic oath, which Bloom would not be expected to know, and in which the inductee promises never to reveal the secrets of the Lodge. It is presented in an ironic and mocking manner that identifies hermetic knowledge with the official Roman Rite but that does recognize other avenues of knowledge.

Throughout this section, an important device used by Joyce is a characterization-identification mirror. Ellmann writes that Joyce is playing "Stephen's

youthful point of view against Bloom's mature point of view, often confronting them with the same places and ideas. . . . They repeat each other, and then the events are recapitulated" (*Joyce* 369). In terms of personal experiences outside of Bloomsday, Joyce also links Bloom and Stephen. He mirrors their experiences of mourning when Bloom explain to Stephen that he missed Stephen's mother's funeral because it was "the vigil of the anniversary of the decease" of Rudy. Akin to Stephen's rejection of his mother's faith, Bloom recalls his father's suffering before his suicide and feels "a sentiment of remorse" when he remembers that "in immature impatience he had treated with disrespect certain beliefs and practices" dear to his father, such as kosher laws, circumcision, the Scriptures, and the Sabbath; again mirroring Stephen's eventual maturation, Bloom as an adult now thinks such beliefs are "Not more rational that they had appeared, not less rational than other beliefs and practices now appeared" (676). Just as Joyce pictures Bloom as that which Stephen might become, to Bloom's mind, Stephen is much like what Rudy might have become as a young man. When "Circe" ends, Bloom is holding Stephen and unbuttoning his waistcoat, and he is rewarded with a vision of a fairy boy, the young Rudy, studying at Eton; he is well dressed and reading books presumably in Hebrew. Stephen has become the real Circe in the sense that Homer's nymph, who wanted to marry Ulysses and who turned several of his men into pigs (hence the manifold pork references in the chapter), ultimately shows him the way home. Stephen is the unwitting catalyst that finally reminds Bloom of his love for his family and then gets him home at the end of a very long and frustrating day.

Joyce then moves the action of the plot to the comfort and safety of the hearth when the two men get to Bloom's house; after cocoa, they sit and talk, and, when

Stephen decides to leave, the two songs appear for the final time. As they exit Bloom's house, they are amazed by “The heaventree of stars hung with humid nightblue fruit” (651). Joyce moves their concern from their daily troubles and their personal tragedies to a consideration of the universe as a whole. They consider the nature of the stars and the possibility of life on other planets; the dimensions of far away suns are given, and their distance from Earth is calculated in light years; the stars are referred to as “evermoving wanderers from immeasurably remote eons to infinitely remote futures in comparison with which the years, threescore and ten, of allotted human life formed a parenthesis of infinitesimal brevity” (651). Joyce carefully couches these astronomical observations in terms of Yeats' poem. The beauty of the ever moving, wandering stars, to which the men have returned and are enjoying, is of the world of nature ruled by Fergus, and human life is inconceivably brief in comparison. The last celestial sight they witness is a shooting star, a very fast wandering dishevelled star that travels between the Lyre and the Leo—in other words, between the sign of the poet and the sign of Leopold (656).

The men urinate in unison, which may be one reason their attention is upward, and they are about to take their leave of one another when they react to “The sound of the peal of the hour of the night by the chime of the bells in the church of Saint George”; the narrator then asks and answers, “What echoes of that sound were by both and each heard? / By Stephen: / *Liliata rutilantium. Turma circumdet. / Iubilantium te virginum. Chorus excipiat.* / By Bloom: / Heigho, heigho, / Heigho, heigho” (656). Bloom and Stephen both immediately think of death when the church bells ring. Bloom's expression, “Heigho, heigho,” is not sophisticated in any way but

is his rendering of the sound the bells make as he has described them since 8:45 a.m. when he first thought of his friend Paddy Dignam who has died.⁶⁴

When Joyce has Stephen hear the “Liliata” for this final time, it is heard in its full form, representing his acceptance of it. A translation of his thoughts would read, “The liliated throng of the radiant ones. / May they encompass thee. / The rejoicing virgins. / May [their] choir welcome [thee].” The only clause Joyce omits is the participle that defines the radiant ones as “confessors,” and indeed, Joyce may have divided it this way to measure the sound of the words against the four peals of the church bells. Yet, even without the inclusion of the one word, Stephen gives the full original meaning of the song for the first time since he remembered his mother's deathbed in the Martello tower. Stephen, who is now calmly sober, is able to sing the song in his head, hoping his mother might indeed rest in peace. He gives a new and more mature voice to his desire to, as he puts it in *Portrait*, “encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race” (275-76) by now replacing the ascetic language of religious ritual with the aesthetic language of poetry,⁶⁵ for the aesthetic theory that Joyce adopted is actually theologically Catholic in the Thomistic tradition.⁶⁶ Though

⁶⁴ When the bells of St. George's church first ring out in the morning, they remind Bloom of “Poor Dignam !” (67). When scanning his *Freeman* newspaper in anticipation of writing to Martha Clifford as Henry Flower, he sees Dignam's obituary and again thinks “Heigho! Heigho!” (267-68). When they ring again during the Nighttown scene, they immediately precede Bloom's visions of the return of the dead, beginning with Paddy Dignam (446) and ending with his son Rudy (565). The bells even echo in Bloom's mind when the bracelets of one of the prostitutes speaks (536).

⁶⁵ Though the church is no longer of central importance to Stephen, it is a comforting and inescapable reminder of his cultural background, much as it proves the solution to Mr. Kernan's alcohol problem in *Dubliners*'s “Grace” or gives the peace of a “beautiful death” to the dying priest in “The Sisters.”

⁶⁶ In a very telling conversation with one of the college's priests in *Portrait* while they practice the “useful art” of lighting a fire, Stephen shows how he is finding his own aesthetic through the guidance of Aristotle and Aquinas by reshaping the theology of the church into a form he can use as a poet; the men discuss words and terms as used in art and in the market place, in Ireland and in England, and Stephen realizes how his lips and hand and soul still stutter over the words physically imposed upon his ancestors by the English (*PAYM* 155-59). It is this physical necessity of using the

he has not and will not return to the Catholic faith, Joyce has journeyed with the spectres, just as Stephen has journeyed with these two songs throughout his day. Through their influence, Stephen is better able to achieve a balance in reference to his mother's death. Without offending his principles, he now realizes that he could have sung the prayer to his mother in good conscience to give her a better measure of comfort. Finally, Stephen is able to think about the Yeatsian wandering star that his mother has become and sing her the song she desires.

Joyce shows the transformations wrought in Stephen through his experiences with the spectre and his final choice to sing the “Liliata.” In fact, Joyce emphasizes the importance of Stephen's work of the spectre in that the words of the “Liliata” are the very last words attributed to Stephen in *Ulysses*. Thus, Joyce has masterfully used the haunting of a spectre to symbolize a way forward that integrates the two world views in the words of two songs, and he has used Stephen's struggle between them to illumine his subsequent process of maturation signalling that he has finally made progress in his work of mourning through the spectral languages of grieving.

— § —

“By truth we are undone. Life is a dream. Tis waking that kills us.”
—Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*

“Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself”: with these famous words, one of Virginia Woolf's best known texts begins. These words, however, are words of allusion that immediately offer a key to the book's many doors. For the modernists generally, games with allusion were a tremendously important part of

body to speak or to comprehend the words of another culture that make Joyce see himself as an artist who, in embracing his aesthetic, must reject the claims made upon him by the spectres of religion and of the state.

literary experimentation, and many such devices lay undiscovered in their works for several decades. Indeed, part of the continuing work of modernist scholars is in identifying and deciphering still untouched allusions that the modernists used to give form and structure to their texts or to develop their plot, characters, or themes. Woolf used allusion to link *Mrs. Dalloway* with epic poetry, drama, opera, symphonies, religious liturgy, paintings, and even the aesthetics of natural beauty or of the fast moving urban cityscape, and these linkages are key to the text's focus on the haunting crises of the war and the collapse of Empire as represented by the return of the dead on All Souls' Day.

Within that fast moving environment, Woolf presents characters who are haunted by griefs that language has failed to heal in a secularized society removed from the traditional Christian rituals for dealing with death, though those traditional rituals were clearly not intended to face death on the immense scale of the Great War. The stagnant spiritual paralysis Woolf represents in the text necessitates a humanizing change that could lay the ghosts of the Great War to rest. The larger argument of her text uses the modernist technique of allusion in regard to central images, namely a myriad of floral references, the Richard Strauss song "Allerseelen," and the Anglican feast of "All Souls' Day" to which his song refers. This hidden topos is the explanation of an otherwise incomprehensible section in the middle of the text, but, more importantly, it is the explanation of the beggar woman's song that invokes the annual All Soul's Day as the moment when the war dead would be free to return, and, thus, Woolf makes their spectral return and the flowers of Strauss' "Allerseelen" central to the healing and redemption that she indicates as possible after the horrors of the Great War.

In *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Woolf's method is to open door after door in quick succession, echoing the momentum and kinetic power of the urban London environment. The narrative follows one character and then opens a door upon another by, for example, dropping the narrative arc of one character and picking up that of another when Woolf pictures them crossing paths in the park. These doors open on city people who make purchases in shops found only in the city, who visit highly regarded medical specialists, have no small measure of national power, can entertain the prime minister himself, and, during the same day, can walk past a beggar singing a German opus written decades earlier by Richard Strauss (1864-1949) that enshrines the mystery of the Christian festival of All Souls' Day. Out of all these powerful figures within the fast moving urban London environment, Woolf uses a beggar woman and her song about flowers and love to herald the return of the dead that secretly haunts her text.

Among the topoi of the return of the dead, the Christian festival of All Souls' Day was a favourite of the modernists. As mentioned earlier, Edith Wharton used the motif in one of her better known ghost stories. W.H. Auden's Pulitzer winning *The Age of Anxiety: A Baroque Eclogue* (1947) is likewise set on the night of All Souls' Day, which acts as the springboard for the wartime musings of four characters about issues such as the nature of humanity, memory, happiness, and the modern soul.⁶⁷ Malcolm Lowry's novel *Under the Volcano* (1947) recounts the events of an All Souls' Day that had culturally been merged with the traditional Mexican Day of the

⁶⁷ John Berryman gave his less than approving notice of this trend when he wrote in a 1948 review of Auden's verse play that Auden had copied recent novels that “for no reason that appears sufficient” chose to set their action on All Souls' Day. I argue that the importance of the topos of the return of the dead to modernist writers would of course draw them to its most focused expression on the one day when the dead were foremost in the celebrations of the Church.

Dead.⁶⁸ Importantly, the modernists did not always differentiate between the different festivals that honour the dead. October 31 is of course called Halloween in the West, and it traditionally proceeded All Saints' Day, also known as All Hallows' Day, on November 1, which commemorated the lives and examples of the Catholic saints; All Souls' Day was on November 2, during which prayers were offered for the Christian dead still in Purgatory.

Through a process of syncretism, the Eve of All Hallows' Day was merged with the Celtic festival of Samhain, which marked the harvest and end of summer, to produce the modern Halloween. The Celts believed that the spirits of the dead were able to visit the world of the living on that one day, so the traditions still seen today originated with their festival. The Church never taught that the dead returned to the world of the living on All Saints' Day, or on any other day, but the Catholic and the Celtic ideas became mixed and confused. During the Protestant Reformation, the Christian calendar was reworked, and, since a central Protestant belief is that all Christians are by definition saints and that Purgatory was a false doctrine, All Souls' Day was merged with All Saints' Day; this meant that there was now only one holy day on November 1 called All Souls' Day, which was celebrated in Protestant denominations like the Church of England that still observed a liturgical calendar. The Day of the Dead that frames Lowry's novel is again a traditional pagan celebration to honour the dead that merged with Catholic teaching. Since Latin America was colonized by Spanish Catholics, a difference remained between All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, so November 2 is the date of the Day of the Dead. Importantly, then, a

⁶⁸ Lowry, like Woolf, uses All Souls' Day as a literary frame of experimentation as well as an indication of the novel's plot line. The present time frame of Lowry's narrative is the Day of the Dead 1939, and the tale told inside the frame is set exactly a year previously, on the Day of the Dead 1938.

belief in the return of the dead on All Souls' Day or the night before is not an actual Christian doctrine but the result of syncretism with either Celtic beliefs, resulting in Halloween, or Aztec beliefs, resulting in the Day of the Dead.⁶⁹

Yet, the modernists freely manipulated the imagery that circulated around these four distinct concepts to illustrate their concerns with the return of the crises of Western civilization. Even Lowry, who sets his novel in Catholic Mexico on the Day of the Dead, also frames his text with a more European version of All Souls' Day. The protagonist, a washed out alcoholic British consul, seems to mourn his estranged wife Yvonne, saying, "I am so haunted continuously by the thought to your songs . . . Do you remember the Strauss song we used to sing? Once a year the dead live free for one day. Oh come to me again as once in May" (41). The song to which he refers is of course the same Strauss song that Woolf uses to frame the text of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Julia Briggs has found that Woolf most likely knew the song through Leonard, who was apparently "impressively well versed in German poetry and music" and who even sang the "Allerseelen" for a family party in 1931 (150).⁷⁰

That song, the "Allerseelen," is a part of Strauss' first great set of songs, *Acht Lieder aus Letzte Blätter*, which was published as his Opus 10 in 1885 but mainly composed two years earlier when he was only 19. The words are not his own, but those of the German poet Hermann von Gilm, who died in 1864, the year Strauss was

⁶⁹ Annual celebrations to commemorate the return of the dead within Western culture has been traced back to an ancient Greek festival called "Anthesteria," a Greek word which indicates the new flowering blossoms of the vineyard. The festival was meant to honour Dionysus, to celebrate new life in the field and the family, and to control the return of the spirits of the dead, thereby "protecting not only the individual citizen but the vitality of the whole citizenry from damage that might be done by the dead" (Johnson 70).

⁷⁰ Briggs further claims that Leonard more likely sang the 1894 version composed by Eduard Lassen, which she claims was popular in its day. However, the Strauss version not only influenced Lassen's a decade later but was much more widely known—not that one can tell which version was intended from the written *Mrs. Dalloway*.

born. The opus is a collection of eight songs, and “Allerseelen,” the one alluded to when sung by Woolf’s mysterious beggar woman, is the final song, also known as an “outer song” because it closes the set of eight. Taken together, the poem-songs tell a story of love and loss (von Gilm). The opus begins with “Zueignung” (Dedication), which dedicates the entire set of lyrics to the beloved, who freed the narrator through her love, but is now far from him for a as yet unknown reason. “Nichts” (Nothing) claims that the lover, while madly devoted to his beloved, believes that he can really know nothing about her because she, like the life-giving sun, is too powerful and perfect to be truly known. “Die Nacht” (Night) is a song of fear and dread, for the lover knows that the blackness of night steals everything from view and perhaps will also take away his beloved. “Die Georgine” (The Dahlia) uses the rather intense imagery of an unopened flower bud to recount the agony and delight of the first days of love before it is sexually consummated. “Geduld” (Patience) is the reply of the beloved, but she is silenced by the lover who argues that they must seize the day and love one another, for death comes all too rapidly and unannounced and cares not for the unpaid “debts of the heart.” In “Die Verschwiegenen” (The Silent Ones), we learn that the beloved has indeed died, yet the lover is empowered by memory of their (perhaps still unconsummated) love and speaks of it in both whispers and shouts to several varieties of flowers. “Die Zeitlose” (The Forget-Me-Not or Meadow Saffron) compares the beauty of the deceased beloved to the last flowers of the year. Finally, in “Allerseelen” (All Soul’s Day),⁷¹ the lover has strewn the grave of the beloved with just some of the types of flowers mentioned in the poem and waits for her spirit to

⁷¹ See Appendix B.

return to earth so he can speak with her and touch her and look into her eyes, not caring who sees them as they relive the early days of their courtship in May.

Woolf's experimental modernist method, arguably, does not crystallize the meaning of the text nor assume that language can clearly and directly deal with grief, but it complicates language by adding multiple layers and voices. It is further evident that Woolf, as J. Hillis Miller demonstrates, alludes heavily to the Strauss piece in depicting the old woman and does so “unostentatiously, even secretly” to provide a not readily visible key perspective for reading the novel via Woolf's own experimental technique she called the “tunnelling process” that only gradually told the story of the past by “instalments” (“*MD*” 189). The allusion noted by Miller is certainly a difficult one that has in fact remained veiled. Miller suggests that not only is the Strauss allusion subtly employed by Woolf, it is also meant to be a secret (“*MD*” 189), suggested perhaps by the fact that it remained unidentified until his own article, some forty-five years after the novel's publication.⁷² Since that time, in fact, no scholar has returned in depth to Miller's claim,⁷³ but if the symbol of the beggar woman is the hidden key to the novel, it is necessary to go beyond Miller's simple identification to use that key in offering a fuller reading of the text's other key

⁷² Miller's essay was first published in 1970 as “Virginia Woolf's All Souls' Day: The Omniscient Narrator in *Mrs. Dalloway*” in Melvin J. Friedman and John B. Vickery's *The Shaken Realist: Essays in Modern Literature in Honor of Frederick J. Hoffman* and then again with slight changes as “*Mrs. Dalloway: Repetition as the Raising of the Dead*” in his own collection of essays entitled *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* in 1982.

⁷³ For instance, Bonnie Kime Scott's 2005 edition of *Mrs. Dalloway* footnotes “the battered woman” by mentioning that “Her song's evocation of a dead lover returning on All Souls' Day has been likened by J. Hillis Miller to the Richard Strauss song 'Allerseelen’” (n.206), but a “likening” downplays and even ignores the central importance that Miller argues Woolf placed on the topos. Two short accounts have recently appeared in the *Virginia Woolf Bulletin*: Tadanobu Sakamoto's “The Significance of the Old Woman and her Song in *Mrs. Dalloway*” in 2005 and Stuart N. Clarke's “The Old Woman's Song in *Mrs. Dalloway*” in 2004.

symbols of flowers and the return of the dead as embodiments of the crises of politics and society in England following the war.

Miller identifies the appearance of the old woman as “odd and apparently irrelevant,” yet “a clue to the way the action of the past is to be seen as the occasion of a resurrection of ghosts from the past” (“*MD*” 189). Hence, the motif of resurrection is present, in which “the dead” of Clarissa's past, Sally and Peter, are allowed one day to return to life and visit the living.⁷⁴ Likewise, Evans is able to return and is constantly being seen or imagined by Septimus. Thus, the beggar woman is not a spectre herself, but she uses her song to announce the return of the dead generally in postwar London and in the text and Clarissa's life in particular. She appears to sing nonsense words, but, through paraphrase, variation, and direct quotation, Woolf makes it obvious that the woman is singing Strauss' “Allerseelen”; indeed, Miller suspects this most likely is from Woolf's own translation (“*MD*” 190). Many lines and phrases from the poem are alluded to in the text surrounding the old woman's appearance, but Miller claims that the most important are those not actually named (such as “One day in the year is free to the dead”), and it is those hidden lines that are the “key to the structure of the novel,” representing “the day of a collective resurrection of spirits” (“*MD*” 190). Hence, wherever flowers and people from Clarissa's past appear, representing the spectres of the Strauss song, Woolf is using these allusions to develop her themes of past and lost loves, and future and present hopes. Woolf's message is not fully found in the sounds made by the woman, nor in

⁷⁴ Although Woolf presents the one day of the text as an All Souls' Day, it is actually set not on November 1 but on a hot Wednesday in June (4, 14, 94).

the select phrases offered from the poem, but by applying the meaning of the original source to the alluding work.

In her use of allusion, Woolf presents a beggar woman who produces a cacophony in her attempt to sing “Allerseelen.” Bonnie Kime Scott has traced the appearance of this woman to an actual experience Woolf had of seeing a blind woman begging while holding a dog and singing on June 8, 1920; Woolf wrote briefly in her diary: “It was gay, & yet terrible & fearfully vivid” (qtd. in Kime Scott, Notes. n.206).⁷⁵ Presumably, Woolf’s fictional representation of the beggar woman sings for money, although her indigent figure is such that her true motive may reflect a chronic outpouring of grief and a perpetual passion for a deceased lover. The battered woman is frail and her voice lacks direction and vigour as she sings, at least in Peter’s estimation, “weakly and shrilly and with an absence of all human meaning” behind the sounds “*ee um fah um so / foo swee too eem oo*” (69-70). She stands in front of the dark cave of a subway station. She is tall and quivering, ageless and sexless, though she is presumed to be both old and female from her clothing: “for she wore a skirt” (69). She has stood there “through all ages,” from the primordial days of swamp and mammoth, and she sang, or “crooned” of “love which has lasted a million years” and of “her lover, who had been dead these centuries” and who had walked “with her in May”; yet, the narrator insists that when the woman sings “the ancient song,” “still the earth seemed green and flowery” (69).

Woolf uses the way passersby relate to the language of her song to show the “knotted roots” of their inner beings as her music touches them. When Peter Walsh

⁷⁵ Three years before *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf used this same memory in crafting a very similar character in *Jacob’s Room* (1922). This character is an “old blind woman” who sings in front of the “Union of London and Smith’s Bank . . . clasping a brown mongrel tight in her arms and singing out loud, not for coppers, no, from the depths of her gay wild heart—her sinful, tanned heart” (56).

hears her, it is as if “A sound interrupted him”; he hears her as “the voice of no age or sex, the voice of an ancient spring sprouting up from the earth,” and he compares the old woman to “a funnel, a rusty pump, a wind-beaten tree for ever barren of leaves” although he does give “the poor creature a coin as he stepped into his taxi” (69). He has of course just awoken from a nap on a park bench with the odd words “The death of the soul” (50); Woolf argues that someone not in tune with the rhythms of life, like Peter, does not see the woman as a person and cannot understand the reason the spectres of the dead are returning. On the other hand, Woolf portrays Rezia, who comes along in Regent's Park immediately afterwards, as deeply touched by the woman's song. Rezia is the shortened name of Lucrezai Smith, who is Septimus' young wife; originally a carefree Milanese milliner, she is isolated and feels alone in trying to help her husband through his post-traumatic stress disorder. She sympathizes with the beggar woman and wonders where she can sleep when it rains, yet Rezia also feels immediately and for the first time in “weeks and weeks” that “everything was going to be alright” because she is so inspired by the woman's courage to live as she wants and “if some one should see, what matter they?” (70). Crucially, Peter cannot make sense of the woman's words and hears only the nonsense syllables, but Rezia, who has been unhappily trying to help Septimus, hears the lines clearly, feels inspired, and so reacts strongly and positively to the woman's spectral message.

Woolf's beggar woman speaks, as does Strauss' “Allerseelen,” of love in May, the red asters, and the purple heather, and of the burial place growing colder with the approach of winter. She sings through a “rude” mouth, a “mere hole in the earth” much like a grave. She remembers the bright petals of the flowers her lover gave to her. She asks him to “look in my eyes with thy sweet eyes intently” once more. She

implores, "Give me your hand and let me press it gently, / And if someone should see, what matter they?" Her song rises on the air cheerfully and almost gaily despite her destitute condition. Her words are likewise compared to smoke from a cottage chimney that mounts heavenwards, a peaceful image of the family hearth and the smoke from the home fires following the souls of the departed heavenward.

The identity and character of Woolf's beggar woman is intriguing. Since Woolf links her with the soil, she is often seen, as by Jean Wyatt, as an earth-mother figure, and her song as a lament wherein the union of the two lovers happens in accord with the seasons of the year (442-43). The lovers are together in spring and part as winter draws nigh, yet there is always the promise of the eternal regeneration brought by spring. Such a position wrongly ignores the singer's hope that the lover will return then, in the fall of the year. Specifically of course, the spectre's return would be on November 1, All Souls' Day. The beloved is not asleep or away on a journey but is cruelly dead. The lover in the song is in fact standing by the beloved's grave waiting for the ghost's return on the one day all the dead are free.

Another identity offered for the beggar woman is based on the Demeter/Ceres character of Greek and Roman myth, which Woolf alludes to many times in the text. As the ancient Greek or Roman goddess of corn, she was responsible for the fertility of the land and was a symbol of human sexuality and love. Yet, she was also involved in rites of life, death, and rebirth, all of which combine in Woolf's allusions and application of Ceres to the lives of the novel's characters. Beverly Ann Schlack has traced Ceres to several appearances in *Mrs. Dalloway*, such as in a literal plaster cast in the garden of Septimus' employer, where she is symbolically destroyed during the war (73), and in the figurative presence in the person of Miss Isabel Pole, who wears

a green dress (a colour almost attained by Clarissa's green dress that loses its colour in the sunlight [32]), who meets with Septimus in gardens to “give him a taste of *Antony and Cleopatra*” (72) and whose name is an allusion to the fertility rite of the Maypole (Schlack 53). Schlack sees Septimus' wife Rezia as an Italian representative of Ceres, though a diminutive one, for she wishes to bear her husband a son but cannot. After his suicide, Rezia imagines herself running through fields of corn and hears many sounds including the rustling of dried corn kernels. As in “Allerseelen,” she thinks these sounds are being strewn around her like flowers scattered on a grave.

Combining Woolf's various presentations of earth-mothers and fertility goddesses in the text with the “Allerseelen” and the return of the dead in All Souls' Day, the old woman's role itself becomes clearer as the focal point of these very redemptive images; the apparently old, destitute woman becomes a fertile being who has lived and is reborn for millions of years, and yet is seeking her beloved who was taken from her in the remote past. Woolf then suggests this woman as the bearer of the message of the dead or as an announcer of the coming of the spectres on All Souls' Day, and their message urges society to face the past to heal the pain and suffering caused by the war and to find renewal and redemption by integrating that mourning for the war dead and for a society that could never be the same.

Taking this incident in the middle of the book as the allusion-laden key to the novel's many doors, the plot, characters, and themes now reflect a different focus that is ordered by flowers. Why does Woolf famously begin with Clarissa saying that she would buy the flowers herself? It is not, as the text says, that Clarissa's character is concerned that poor Lucy has “her work cut out for her” (3), but because Woolf will use the flowers as a symbol of Clarissa's offering, supplication, and fragrant links to

her past with Sally Seton and Peter Walsh. Like the mourned in “Allerseelen,” Clarissa is surrounded by flowers and, in a sense, haunted by the disembodied fragrances of these soon to be dead plants all day. She first goes to a Bond Street florist, where she selects her purchases from among delphiniums, sweet peas, lilacs, carnations, roses, irises, cheery pies, and evening primroses (11). In a sense, Woolf also presents Clarissa as knowledgeable and even comfortable with the notion of the dead. When the party is interrupted by news of Septimus' suicide, Clarissa reacts with an inner conflagration that makes her feel she knows the power of death, and, as she recovers, she feels glad that he had the strength to commit suicide. She reflects that he will never grow old and that he has defied the rules and requirements of life and society through a viable door of communication (154-58). Clarissa knows that “there was an embrace in death,” a sentiment perhaps echoed in the confessions of Peter and Sally that they (“the dead” of Clarissa's past) have never stopped feeling, and indeed, believe their passion has increased with their age (156, 164).

The war dead themselves visit often in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Woolf presents postwar London society as preoccupied with the question of, as the rhetoric of the pompous Conservative Hugh Whitbread puts it, “what we owe to the dead” (93). Woolf describes Clarissa's experience of seeing a car pass with a royal or governmental coat of arms on the side for which reason “strangers looked at each other and thought of the dead; of the flag; of Empire” (15). Near Whitehall, Peter Walsh bizarrely follows a group of “Boys in uniform, carrying guns, marched with their eyes ahead of them, marched, their arms stiff, and on their faces an expression like the letters of a legend written round the base of a statue praising duty, gratitude, fidelity, love of England”; for them, the traffic stops as they cross to a cenotaph to lay

a memorial wreath, but Peter's feelings are not clear since he admits that “One had to respect it; one might laugh; but one had to respect it” (43-44). Doris Kilman passes what she calls “the habitation of God,” the Roman Catholic Westminster Cathedral, and instead enters the Anglican Westminster Abbey where she pauses in front of the tomb of the Unknown Warrior (113), which, inaugurated on November 11, 1920, was the first of its kind in the world. Woolf of course focuses on the post traumatic stress disorder of Septimus, who is haunted by his friend Evans and by others he refers to as “the dead” who “sing behind rhododendron bushes” (125). Woolf figures Septimus as abandoned by all except his wife, who is powerless to help him, and insulted by Dr. Holmes, who insists “There was nothing whatever the matter” (77) and whose proposed rest cure does not offer Septimus the healing he needs. Septimus feels instead that “The War had taught him,” and his stream of consciousness reveals that he proposed to Lucrezia “one evening when the panic was on him—that he could not feel. For now that it was all over, truce signed, and the dead buried, he had, especially in the evening, these sudden thunder-claps of fear. He could not feel” (74). Although Septimus is haunted, Woolf presents his pain as something that has in fact numbed and deadened him, leading ultimately to his suicide.

Woolf introduces another allusion when she has Septimus' “sudden thunder-claps of fear” mirror Clarissa's own fear, a characteristic that binds them together. Clarissa recalls throwing a shilling into the Serpentine, which is actually a latter day ritual emptied of its original Celtic beliefs surrounding the sacredness of wells as sources of healing. Thinking of that ritual makes Clarissa think that “every one remembered; what she loved was this, here, now, in front of her . . . did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent

it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely?" (8). She argues that somehow the city itself makes the people who have lived in it survive and asks "was she dreaming as she looked into Hatchards' shop window?" where she "read in the book spread open: Fear no more the heat o' the sun / Nor the furious winter's rages"; Clarissa returns to the image of the well, musing that "This late age of the world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears. Tears and sorrows; courage and endurance; a perfectly upright and stoical bearing" (8).

The lines that Clarissa reads and thinks of often during her day are from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* IV:ii:258-59, the first two lines of a funeral song that continues till line 281. At this point in the play, Cymbeline's daughter Imogen, disguised as a boy, has fled from the court and, lost in Wales, she unwittingly meets Guiderius and Arviragus, her two brothers who had been kidnapped years previously. Imogen falls ill and drinks a sleeping potion; when Guiderius and Arviragus find her, they assume her to be dead and sing this elegy on her behalf as they lay her body out in the woods though she awakes later during the Roman invasion of Britain. The elegy is a prayer addressed to the spirit of the dead, and it, somewhat ironically, rejoices that the dead have gone "home" and are now free from the struggles of the living. The song recounts the multitude of evils that can befall the living but urges the dead to realize that they should "fear not" any of these evils and struggles because they no longer have to worry about them. In this manner, Shakespeare's verse speaks not to the condition of the dead, which remains unknown and unknowable, but to the sad condition of the living, which includes the heat of the sun, the furious winter, the abuses of the rich and powerful, social censure, and witchcraft.

The lines come to Clarissa's mind when she is frightened at Lady Bruton asking Richard to lunch without her (25), and, indeed, the last words in Clarissa's stream of consciousness refer again to this Shakespearean refrain: "Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him — the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away" (158). Clarissa, distressed that the suicide is mentioned at her party, links her ritual action of throwing the coin in the well with Septimus throwing life away:

He had killed himself — but how? . . . He had thrown himself from a window. . . . She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he had flung it away. . . . A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death. (156)

Unexpectedly, Woolf had also introduced the line into Septimus' thoughts: "Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more" (118), directly echoing Clarissa's earlier invocation of the heart when she said "Fear no more, says the heart" immediately before Peter Walsh rings her doorbell (34). Importantly, Woolf's layers of allusion point to death as an attempt to communicate; Clarissa calls Septimus' action in taking his own life a defiant embrace that tries to reach out for some evasive centre impossible to reach where, it is expected, a "thing there was that mattered." Woolf questions the modernist scepticism that posits the existence of something that matters beyond human experience but which then, after her disavowal of the answers of traditional religion, could not be named except with the ultimate and vague catachresis of the word "thing." Woolf presents Clarissa as almost envious of

Septimus, for Clarissa both “felt somehow very like him” and “felt glad that he had done it” (158).

Hence, Woolf parallels Shakespeare in making the allusion akin to his poem in that it speaks mainly to the troubles of the living as opposed to suppositions about the condition of the dead. It is death that makes Clarissa see life anew when she recognizes that her sense of the “thing that mattered” was drowned out in her own life through chatter, corruption, and lies, and it is this that makes her reconsider the “perfectly upright and stoical bearing” in Lady Bexborough that she had so admired in seeking resolution of her own grief and hauntings. In Clarissa's relationships with the living spectres of her past, which are once again each represented through the integral floral pattern of the text, Woolf does point towards the possibility of reconciliation and healing.

On the All Soul's Day of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the dead are able to return with all their past emotional connections intact, summoned as they are by the corresponding continuing emotional connections of the living, hushed though they may be. Woolf illustrates these allusions further with Sally Seton, one of the returning ghosts from Clarissa's past, by ensuring that she is often mentioned in conjunction with flowers. Clarissa reflects on the love she had felt for Sally and how she always admired Sally's power, especially her adroitness and “her way with flowers” that could dream up unheard of combinations that were “extraordinary” in their effect (28-29). Hence, it is fitting that “the most exquisite moment of [Clarissa's] whole life” occurs when she and Sally are passing a stone urn and Sally stops, picks a flower from the urn, and then kisses Clarissa (30). When Sally unexpectedly appears at the party, Clarissa sees her in a confusion of “her rooms . . . the roar of voices . . . the candlesticks, the

blowing curtains and the roses which Richard had given her” (145). When Sally later sits waiting for Clarissa with Peter, she says that she always remembers Clarissa “all in white going about the house with her hands full of flowers” (160); as she summarizes her own life, it revolves around her husband, her five “enormous boys” and “her plants [including] hydrangeas, syringas, [and] very very rare hibiscus lilies that never grow north of the Suez Canal” (161-62). She confesses that whenever she despairs “of humans (people were so difficult), she often went into her garden and got from her flowers a peace which men and women never gave her” (163).

Likewise, Woolf portrays Peter Walsh as a spectre coming back to see Clarissa; he remembers how much she hurt him, as perhaps the lover felt whose beloved kept urging him to quell his passions and be patient. When he first sees her, he immediately obeys the request of the “Allerseelen,” although he will later ignore the same words from the beggar woman, by taking Clarissa's hands in his own (34). He later goes to Regent Park, where he follows a woman he is very attracted to, a woman wearing red carnations, and he fantasizes about undressing her, veil after veil, till he found what he wanted, although he notes unscrupulously that she is dressed in a discreet black (45). The flowers and the woman's black veil suggest yet another mourning lover waiting for the spectre of her beloved. Peter, as a figurative ghost, is immediately attracted to her as he wends his way through London on his one day of freedom. Eventually, however, he roams back to Clarissa, who introduces him at her party to her Aunt Helena with the remark that he has been in Burma.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ This connection produces another association with flowers, for Aunt Helena once wrote the definitive volume on the spectacular orchids of Burma (151-52).

Septimus, who is subject to the most explicit spectral visitations, is surrounded with flowers throughout his day. He is startled when suddenly, “red flowers grew through his flesh; their stiff leaves rustled by his head”; he next imagines a shepherd lad with “roses hung about him—the thick red roses which grow upon my bedroom wall” (58). Rezia rouses Septimus from the park bench so they can visit Dr. Bradshaw, at which point Septimus hallucinates a visitation from the spectre of his dead war comrade Evans (actually Peter Walsh), who springs up from behind a tree amid a bed of orchids (59). Woolf represents the constant effects of post traumatic stress disorder when Septimus attempts to rest at home and is again haunted by the spectre of Evans appearing and speaking; Septimus begins shouting back, frightening the servants. At that moment, Rezia arrives home with a bundle of roses that she just bought from a poor man on the street. They were nearly dead already, she says. Septimus presumes that the man is Evans, that he picked the roses in the fields of Greece, and walked to London to deliver them, so of course they were no longer fresh. This he sees as communication from Evans' spectre—and he gladly thinks that “Communication [with the spectre] is health. Communication is happiness” (79).

When he momentarily acts as he used to, much to Rezia's delight, Septimus helps her with the flowers she is sewing onto a hat she is making for a customer. The flowers again trigger his hallucinations, and he cries out after Evans, who has disappeared (121-23). When Rezia sorts through Septimus' writings and drawings, one of his essays is on “how the dead sing behind rhododendron bushes” and another details various “messages from the dead” (125). Septimus dies by throwing himself through a window and ends up impaled upon an iron fence,⁷⁷ representing his

⁷⁷ This offers an interesting connection in terms of common imagery between Joyce and Woolf, for as

challenge to the barriers the world has set before him. After Septimus dies on the railing, Rezia is finally able to hear some of what Septimus has heard when various sounds appear to her to be that of “flying flowers over some tomb,” another direct allusion to the Strauss opus. Perhaps the implication is that she will take Septimus' place in scattering flowers and hoping now for his return.

Woolf positions Clarissa's husband, Richard Dalloway, as a man of the old Empire who needs emotional awakening but is ignorant of his lack. When he hears at his luncheon that Peter Walsh is back in London, he immediately becomes jealous and decides he will find Clarissa immediately, give her flowers and tell her that he loves her. He marches off with “a vast bunch,” a “great bunch,” of red and white roses, that he bears “like a weapon,” and which Clarissa gladly accepts, though “he could not bring himself to say he loved her; not in so many words” (97-100). Woolf criticizes the old Victorians like Richard, for whom emotion remains something foreign that must be controlled for the sake of duty, discipline, and profit. The source of Septimus' pain, as articulated by Louise Poresky, was that he could no longer feel due to the power of “the world's life-denying forces” like war and forced conformity to these phantoms of native soil and blood (117-18). Derrida argues that the proliferation of “Inter-ethnic wars (have there ever been another kind?)” is “driven by an *archaic* phantasm and concept, by a *primitive conceptual phantasm* of community, the nation-State, sovereignty, borders, native soil and blood” (102).

Bonnie Kime Scott points out, both use iron railings to depict social boundaries (*Refiguring* 180:n.21). In “Araby” and “Eveline,” Joyce sets women behind these black iron barriers. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf has another character, Maisie Johnson of Edinburgh, stand behind an iron railing twisting one of its knobs and bemoaning the “horror” of living in London where everyone and everything is “so queer” (22-23).

Woolf uses Clarissa's psychic link with Septimus to show that not only is she able to meet those dead lovers from her past, but she can finally allow herself to heal by feeling dead emotions once more. This implies Woolf's break with the stoic mourning expected of a British woman of her class typified perfectly by Lady Bexborough during the war, "who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed" (4).⁷⁸ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) pinpoint mourning as a site that highlights the inhumanity of the dominance of the capitalist system. They argue that the mourning process indeed shows that

The respect for something which has no market value and runs contrary to all feelings is experienced most sharply by the person in mourning, in whose case not even the psychological restoration of labour power is possible. It becomes a wound in civilization, asocial sentimentality, showing that it has still not been possible to compel men to indulge solely in purposeful behaviour. That is why mourning is watered down more than anything else and consciously turned into social formality; indeed, the beautified corpse has always been a mere formality for the hardened survivors. (216)

If Lady Bexborough's stoicism in the face of tragedy reflects the Empire's expectation that "every man should do his duty," then Woolf is presenting characters who are haunted by grief they have not felt, and their slow process of healing shows that they are in need of a humanizing change in their lives that could only come by laying the ghosts of war to rest. Finally, when Woolf has her protagonist embrace the message of the spectres vicariously through Septimus, Clarissa is enabled to give new life to her old emotions, and, through this epiphany, she echoes the joyful love she once had with Sally and Peter by alluding to *Othello* and saying, "If it were now to die, 'twere

⁷⁸ Peter wonders at Clarissa's admiration for Lady Bexborough, whose character is seen in her physical posture, for she "held herself upright," as did Clarissa, who "never lounged in any sense of the word" despite what Peter sees as the "great deal of Dalloway" that had "grown on her" such as "the public-spirited, British Empire, tariff-reform, governing class spirit" (65).

now to be most happy” (30, 156), indicating that, even after the death, horror, and trauma of the Great War, listening to the spectres of the past can bring healing and redemption that can show a path forward past the aporias of the present.

— § —

Derrida ends *Specters of Marx* with a charge to the scholars of the future to learn to live from spectres. He urges that the task is “not how to make conversation with the ghost but how to talk with him, with her, how to let them speak or how to give them back speech”; he sees the spectre as a site of communication and hospitality, “even if it is in oneself, in the other, in the other in oneself [because] they are always *there*, spectres, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer, even if they are not yet. They give us to rethink the ‘there’” (*SM* 221).

In order to find a path forward, the modernists had to acknowledge that the spectres of the past that haunted their society were “there,” and, as Derrida urges, they had to communicate with them to realize their own mourning and attempt to overcome the shortcomings of language in voicing their grief. Modernist literature thus speaks in a ghostly language haunted by these spectres of crisis. The return of the dead in modernist literature does not reassure. The lingering problems of language and society remain, and the writers cause their readers to live in anxiety when seeing the apparitions of the tasks that still lie before them; the challenges laid before them are those of human rights, international peace, friendship, hospitality, family relationships, and the use of language in a context where the modernists were greatly affected by its limitations to give voice to grief. If, in mourning, one internalizes the

spectres of the dead, this internalization is an idealization that welcomes their message; but if we mourn unsuccessfully, and if we are unsuccessful in facing the challenges of the modern era, then spectres will continue to haunt.

Epilogue:

The Liturgy of the Imagination in Stevens' *Harmonium*

“All men by nature desire to know.”

—Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.1.980a1; the opening line

“Regarding the nature of truth, we must maintain
that not everything which appears is true.”

—Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4.5.1010b1

Through the medium of his poetry, Wallace Stevens revisioned the fascinating connections between metaphysical belief and the role of the poet during the modernist period.¹ Especially in his first collection, *Harmonium* (1923),² these concerns are represented deeply and complexly, and, though their declaration is perhaps more explicit in his later poetry, it is the early work that best expresses the liturgical role of poetry and of the poet that this epilogue investigates. Stevens must be reckoned as a poet who expressed the concerns of metaphysics, which again, always after Aristotle, is a term that acts as a placeholder for concepts that are themselves placeholders: truth, philosophy, anthropology, religion, the sacred, faith, prayer, God. Just as the other modernists in this study reinterpreted Christian themes or symbols in their writing, so Wallace Stevens similarly repositioned liturgy in order to rethink the roles of poetry, the poet, and the imagination in a way that was appropriate for his own day. Though the argument of this chapter draws upon several texts from *Harmonium*, my primary focus is on a close reading of Stevens' early poem "Peter Quince at the Clavier," which is especially significant to my investigation of modernism, poetry, imagination, and faith because, in it, Stevens presents a poetry that manipulates the

¹ Even a summary list of the classic and contemporary criticism of Stevens reveals a widespread recognition of this interplay by stressing either the mystical or the cerebral nature of his verse. Some of these critical titles, sometimes seemingly contradictory though often in fact drawn from Stevens' own verse, include: *Wallace Stevens and the Question of Belief*, *Wallace Stevens and Poetic Theology*, *The Fluent Mundo: Wallace Stevens and the Structure of Reality*, *Wallace Stevens' Supreme Fiction*, *Wallace Stevens and the Actual World*, *Wallace Stevens: A Mythology of Self*, *Wallace Stevens and the Apocalyptic Mode*, *Wallace Stevens: Imagination and Faith*, *The Fiction of the Poet*, *Wallace Stevens: The Comic Spirit*, *The Shaping Spirit*, *On Extended Wings*, *Words Chosen Out of Desire*, *Musing the Obscure*, *The Clairvoyant Eye*, *The Transparent Lyric*, *Mind of Winter*, *A Cure of the Mind*, *The Act of the Mind*, *The Never-Resting Mind*, and finally, *The End of the Mind*.

² Notably, though *Harmonium* was largely panned by critics in 1923 and in fact was soon remaindered, its future as a touchstone text of modernism is perhaps seen in that it was published only one year after the modernist "Annus Mirabilis" of 1922 that saw T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. David Perkins argues that *Harmonium* "may have been lost in the dazzle" of these texts and others by Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams, and D.H. Lawrence that were released between 1918 and 1923 (II:278).

gaps of language and knowledge in order to allow his readers a privileged view “through the bushes” of the poet sitting at his typewriter and working to uncover metaphysical truths that result from the “The poem of the mind in the act of finding / What will suffice” in the turbulent twentieth century (“Of Modern Poetry”; *CPP* 218).

As a poet of this sort of modernist spirituality, Stevens is well placed within the poetic tradition. As a medium reaching back thousands of years, poetry not only has its roots in music, dance, and human breathing rhythms, but also in ritual, liturgy, healing, notions of the sacred, and, therefore, in religion. Etymologically, the Latin “religare,” indicated “to tie” or “to yoke,” joining the visible to the invisible, the “relative” to the “absolute,” the human to the divine, and members of the community to one another. Aristotle's two remarks about the nature of knowledge and truth that form the epigraph to this epilogue are taken from what is indeed the founding text of Western metaphysics—Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, after all, is the origin of the term “metaphysics”: the consideration of “being qua being” and the postulation of a divine figure as the “Prime Mover.” The title of his text, by tradition at least, is believed to have been coined well after Aristotle's death because there was no good existing term to denote the material of the book and because in some early collections of the works of Aristotle, this book immediately followed his *Physics*.³ I mention this because the poetry of faith in the modernist period, or any period, is an attempt at metaphysics, a grasping at the eternal, a search for a sacred reality, and a belief in belief, which is often rooted in a guesswork based upon snatches of glimpsed knowledge of what were taken to be ultimate truths.

³ Hence, “metaphysics” was not so named primarily because it deals with subjects beyond our physical world nor beyond our realm of knowledge, but because of where these words of Aristotle's fell in an ancient table of contents.

During the ages of Christendom, the convergences between poetry and belief within a community of faith was shaped into a formal public “liturgy,” which in Britain used the poetic language of the Age of Shakespeare and the King James Bible to codify a distinctly Anglican understanding of theology and worship. The use of a poetic liturgy to express beliefs in important truths must have deeply influenced the Anglophone poets of the following centuries, with the Metaphysical Poets and the Romantics being prime examples.⁴ Indeed, by the late sixteenth century and especially due to the influence of Richard Hooker (1554-1600), the English word “liturgy” chiefly came to mean the specific *set form* of public worship in the Christian service, which was formalized during the Reformation in England through the various editions of the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer*. Yet, the term “liturgy” has a much broader range of meaning; it comes from the Greek “*leitourgia*,” which incorporates *leitōs* (“public”) and *-ergos* (“who does ” or “who works”), meaning the person who acts in the public interest or the duty that they perform or, in a communal sense, the work of the people in honouring a divinity. Liturgy therefore refers to the acts of service performed either by a religious leader or by individual believers in order to honour a god or to serve the public, and these acts often depended on the poetic language used for praying, singing, preaching, or the sacraments. Certainly, Stevens reflects a Protestant as opposed to a Roman Catholic comprehension of liturgy and, moreover, a Reformed as opposed to an Anglican commitment to a privatized faith since he was raised as a Presbyterian and came of a Dutch Reformed family. For such Protestants, who can be considered almost anti-ritual, the religious

⁴ Indeed, early recordings of modernist poets reading their verse aloud begs a comparison with the style and intonation of Anglican priests reading Scripture from the pulpit as a part of the Christian liturgy.

emphasis is not on the sacraments⁵ but on the preacherly address to the inner soul; Protestant ministers preach in public as a function of public ritual, but the performance of the liturgical practice of the congregation is done privately. Stevens' spiritual beliefs, apart from organized religion, were defined by his embrace of the imagination and his experience of the natural world that tended to prize solitude over community, yet he clearly invested in the idea of poetry as the modernist substitute for religion, and he saw the poet as the composer of a new liturgy of the imagination that could impress itself on the imaginations of readers in a manner akin to the Christian liturgies created for private devotions or for prayer. This parallel vision of the importance of language and the manner in which the liturgy was to be performed indicates an overlay in the modernists' understanding of the roles of priest and poet, as well as between liturgy and the language of verse.

When Stevens came to poetry at the turn of the twentieth century, he did so in the midst of the massive sociocultural shifts of the modernist period typified by war, epidemic, new technologies both curative and deadly, Matthew Arnold's quickly receding Sea of Faith, and plummeting Christian religious observance due to a God already declared dead in the nineteenth century and in the midst of what A.N. Wilson calls his long funeral in the twentieth century; Stevens found himself in a period of burgeoning literary experimentation that arguably posited a split between signifier and signified that denied language any unifying function. It is this split that lies at the basis of Neitzsche's famous claim that his society was “not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar . . .” (*Twilight* 48; ellipses original). It had become

⁵ Protestants of course only accept two sacraments (baptism and Communion) instead of the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. Likewise, the ecclesiastical architecture of a Protestant church adheres to iconoclasm and emphasizes the supremacy of the preached word through the elevation of the pulpit.

difficult for poets to embody their earlier functions as, for instance, the “unacknowledged legislators of the world” or “the poet as seer” or “the poet as healer,” which all may now seem baldly ridiculous. Yet, the turmoil of the same period likewise allowed a crossing of traditional boundaries that resulted in unexpected forms of spiritual belief or exploration with unorthodox syncretisms and cultural cross-fertilizations.

These concerns are very real to Wallace Stevens, who saw himself as just such an explorer or mystic or high priest or seer or even just a common person looking for something extraordinary in his quotidian experience. It is this last avatar that is specifically expressed in Wallace Stevens' poem “Peter Quince at the Clavier,” a poem published in August 1915 in the New York “little magazine” *Others: A Magazine of the New Verse*⁶ edited by Alfred Kreymborg and subsequently printed unaltered in Stevens' first book of verse, *Harmonium* (1923). The poem consists of four stanzas in which Peter Quince, the common workman who acts as a concert conductor of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, sits at a piano type instrument and finds himself enraptured as he plays a song about Susanna, the heroine of an apocryphal book of the Bible. Within *Harmonium*, Stevens explores the role of the poet through various poetic figures. Critics have identified Stevens with masks as diverse as the victim in “The Plot Against the Giant,” the watcher of “The Snow Man,” the glass jar in “Anecdote of the Jar,” and, of course, Crispin in “The Comedian as the Letter C.” Yet, I argue that there is a case for setting apart another well known poem, “Peter Quince at the Clavier,” as an instance of Stevens being

⁶ Stevens published “The Silver Plough-Boy” in the same issue

especially vocal about his role as a modernist poet consciously exploring the nature of metaphysical belief.⁷

Stevens is clearly cognisant of these connections, and in “Peter Quince,” he actively draws upon a number of peculiar approaches to the topics of poetry, music, the imagination, and language. One of the most immediate of these is found in the title, which invokes the problem of language itself. Quince sits at a “*clavier*,” which I argue is an initial site of polysemous action within the text, although the denotative meaning of the word is most often taken at face value. That oversight is perhaps due to an overlooked connotation within Stevens' use of the French term.⁸ A “*clavier*,” in English, is a general term for any keyboard instrument and can refer indiscriminately to the harpsichord, clavichord, piano, piano-forte, pipe organ, and so on. Obviously, this family of instruments includes the “harmonium” itself, the title instrument of Stevens' collection of poems, which he chose never to clarify. A harmonium was smaller and more affordable than an organ, and it could be found, for instance, in the parlour of a well-to-do family.⁹

⁷ Likewise, Joseph Riddel insists that “Peter Quince” should really be seen as “a major thematic chord,” “an introduction” to Stevens' corpus, “most pertinently, . . . a poem about poetry,” and Stevens' “first really noteworthy poem” (73) as well as the “first poem truly in his personal idiom” (55).

⁸ The polysemous uses of this term are perhaps more visible in Montreal in the early twenty-first century than in New York in the early twentieth.

⁹ The harmonium was further responsible for revolutionizing church music; a small rural congregation in America or a mission outpost almost anywhere in the world could have its own harmonium to enrich liturgy by providing accompaniment to sacred music, and this effectively democratized church worship. Indeed, almost forgotten now, the “Church Organ Controversy” was actually quite contentious, especially in the Reformed tradition in which Stevens was raised; it centred on the question of whether it was theologically proper to worship God with anything other than the human voice.

Given Stevens' notable interest in the French language,¹⁰ he was well aware that the term “clavier” in English, etymologically, comes, first, from the Latin “clavis” or “key” and, second, from the French “*clavier*,” which refers specifically to the actual *keyboard* of an organ, pianoforte, or harmonium. Moreover, a *clavier* in French, during Stevens' time, referred to the keyboard of a *machine à écrire*—a typewriter.¹¹ It seems obvious to suggest that Stevens intends his title to mean that the poem references not only a so-called “mechanical” sitting at an archaic organ, but an insurance lawyer sitting at a typewriter. Indeed, Stevens' later poem, “Mozart, 1935,”¹² draws the same connection in its first line: “Poet, be seated at the piano” (*CPP* 107-08). Thus, “Peter Quince” should not be solely interpreted by critical paradigms that focus on the musical or philosophical aspects of the poem but by a central focus on the arguments Stevens makes about the role of the poet himself.

The title primarily alludes to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and to Peter Quince, a carpenter who works in ancient Athens.¹³ He is one of the six craftsmen, or “mechanicals,” who put on a play, *The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe*, for Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding. Quince goes to the woods to rehearse the play with his working class colleagues: Nick Bottom the weaver, Francis Flute the bellows-mender, Tom Snout the tinker,

¹⁰ Although Stevens never did fulfil his great desire to travel to France, he kept in contact with friends in Paris and wrote of his 1903 trip to Canada that “My eye was particularly taken by . . . Montreal's Frenchness” (qtd. in Holly Stevens 118). Gordon Munson, in a 1925 review of *Harmonium*, further argues in fact that “The whole tendency of [Stevens'] vocabulary is, in fact, toward the lightness and coolness and transparency of French” (79).

¹¹ Currently, the same French word refers to the keyboard of a computer.

¹² “Mozart, 1935” is from *Ideas of Order* (1936), the volume that followed *Harmonium*.

¹³ Joan Richardson draws a further connection to Bliss Carman and Richard Hovey's poetic letter “Quince to Lilac: To G.H.” (*More Songs from Vagabondia*. Boston: Copeland & Day, 1895), which discusses the nature of poetic language and a copy of which Stevens had given to Elsie for Christmas in 1907 (280; 556n5, n16). Richardson also notes that Peter Quince's name makes “sexuality apparent from the first” because it refers “in veiled slang to both male and female parts” (283).

Starveling the tailor, and Snug the joiner. In the play, Quince recites the prologue but struggles to manage the poetic meter and rhyme, which later leads to him being mocked by the Royals; this inability, though, is a characteristic lauded by Wallace Stevens, who takes Quince as a suitable role model for the comic, gaudy anti-poet, whose poetry may be below his intent. Due to his blatant lack of what the Royals see as poetic sensibility, Quince is a symbol of a dogged, democratic insistence upon the necessity of giving space to even a doggerel poetics, in the sense of achieving a deliberate effect¹⁴; in the case of Stevens' poem, he has Quince start with a rather clumsy connection but conclude with a deep realization about truth and human beauty. What remains unaltered in his attempts at poetry is a deep emotional—in fact metaphysical—inward music that points to a sense of harmony with what the Greeks literally regarded as the Music of the Spheres. Stevens reflected that intimate connection in the long poem “The Man with the Blue Guitar”: “Poetry / Exceeding music must take the place / Of empty heaven and its hymns” (V:8-10; *CPP* 136-37). If Stevens intends Peter Quince at the clavier to mirror the modernist poet at the typewriter, then Stevens intends that the language of poetry enlivens desire for something beyond physical experience.

It is there, with this concern with the Invisible beyond human knowledge or experience, that Stevens' seemingly peculiar choice of the story of “Susanna and the Elders” arises,¹⁵ for the book is, properly speaking, Apocryphal. The term

¹⁴ Georg Luckács' historically orientated view of the novel as epic, which argues that the novel is the “epic of a world that has been abandoned by God,” identifies the type of tone here used by Stevens as a writer's “irony” that becomes “a negative mysticism to be found in times without a god” (88, 90). Luckács would then identify Stevens' conscious and ironic use of doggerel as a statement about finding overlooked avenues of knowledge in an age that lacks certainties. Milton Bates, in his *Wallace Stevens: A Mythology of Self* (1985), suggests this irony also reflects Stevens' unease with the role of a “serious poet” in his early career, which is why he resorts to a “sort of ventriloquism” that adopts the voice of a burgher, a yeoman, a fop, an aesthetic dandy, or a clown (117).

¹⁵ Why, after all, would someone raised as a Protestant in upper middle class Reading, Pennsylvania

“Apocrypha” is used with various meanings from the Greek, including “hidden,” “esoteric,” and even “unimportant” in terms of writings that are not readily included in the biblical canon.¹⁶ Apocryphal books, including the story of Susanna and the Elders, are of questionable authenticity.¹⁷ For some segments of the Church, these books are simply considered Apocryphal in the sense of “hidden away” and as such are indeed canonical although they were not recognized as such until a later date.¹⁸

It is in this type of hidden intertextual intersection that Stevens locates metaphysical truth. On the one hand, as Joseph Conrad insists, “art itself may be defined as a single-mined attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect” (145). Conrad continues in what are now famous words when he insists that

My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see. That—and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm—all you demand—and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask. (147)

even know this tale or have any interest in the Apocrypha? This is likely simply because Stevens was knowledgeable of the visual arts, and the story was frequently painted during the Renaissance due to the common image of a female nude. Susanna was in fact painted by Sir Peter Paul Rubens, Sir Anthony Van Dyck, Tintoretto, Rembrandt, and Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, and her tale was put to music in 1749 by George Frideric Handel.

¹⁶ The term “canon” comes also from the Greek, and it signifies a “rod length,” a “measurement,” or “standard.” The literary idea of a canon comes from the biblical or theological idea of canon, which indicated the books of the Bible that the Jewish or Christian communities believed to be inspired by God.

¹⁷ The short biblical account is one of two additions to the canonical book of *Daniel*. “Susanna and the Elders” is considered non-canonical by Protestants, but included as Daniel 13 by Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. Textually, it is suspect. The only ancient texts are in Greek and not in Aramaic as would be expected, and the Greek text only survives in the two versions used by the Septuagint and Theodotion. It is not referenced by ancient Jewish manuscripts, and Jerome included it in his Latin Vulgate only with a cautionary footnote.

¹⁸ Dean Wentworth Bethea claims that, since Stevens considered all Scripture apocryphal (in the sense of not being divinely inspired), Stevens thinks it is “not the literality of this incident, whether or not it can be proved, that renders it important, but the 'truth' of its critique,” which, in Bethea's opinion, makes the poem “an early example of deconstructionist reading” (217). Incidentally, Stevens was quite unimpressed when someone objected that there were no Byzantines in Susanna's time though he uses the term in the poem. Stevens told another correspondent that he hoped “that bit of precious pedantry will seem as unimportant to you as it does to me” (*L* 250).

On the other hand, however, the concept of truth itself has become a contested category. For Stevens, like Conrad, truth remained a useful construction that could be sought only by finding a new freedom to see in a new way. For Stevens, then, truth is to be brought to light by peering into the most difficult spots. Roland Barthes argues that

If you hammer a nail into a piece of wood, the wood has a different resistance according to the place you attack it: we say that wood is not isotropic. Neither is the text: the edges, the seam, are unpredictable. . . . So structural analysis (semiology) must recognize the slightest resistances in the text, the irregular pattern of its veins. (*Pleasure* 36-37)

Here, Barthes compares the place of the seam to the true source of pleasure when he asks, “Is not the most erotic portion of a body *where the garment gapes?* In perversion (which is the realm of textual pleasure) there are no 'erogenous zones' (a foolish expression, besides); it is intermittence, as psychoanalysis has so rightly stated, which is erotic” (*Pleasure* 9-10). Stevens believes in the value of these erotic gaps as the loci of knowledge and truth and imagination, and Stevens must thus be read through the gaps in his verse as expressed through the liturgy of “Peter Quince.”

Martin Heidegger, in “On the Essence of Truth” (1930), identifies this desire for finding truth in the gaps as a move based in freedom; he argues that “*The essence of truth is freedom*” (330; italics original), and he further defines this freedom to seek truth as “the letting-be of what-is . . . the unconcealment and revealment of what-is” (336). Likewise, he argues that “‘Truth’ is not the mark of some correct proposition [but] rather the revelation of what-is, a revelation through which something overt comes into force” (336). This is the manner in which Heidegger reintroduced the Greek understanding of truth as *aletheia*, which literally meant to uncover something

hidden.¹⁹ In *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger likewise speaks of truth as *aletheia* by arguing that to say “an assertion ‘*is true*’ signifies that it uncovers the entity as it is in itself. Such an assertion asserts, points out, ‘lets’ the entity ‘be seen’ . . . The *Being-true (truth)* of the assertion must be understood as *Being-uncovering*” (261; italics original). Although it is actually unlikely that Stevens ever read Heidegger, at least until the fifties, he was influenced by similar currents of European and phenomenological philosophy and so did see the imagination as key to constructing “what-is,” and he relied upon poetry to communicate this construction.

In Stevens' constructed meeting place for “what-is” in regard to story, metaphysical truth, and language, he expresses the central concerns of the poem “Peter Quince at the Clavier.” Within the poem, Stevens dedicates only the first few lines to Quince himself, or, rather, the lines appear to be spoken by Quince as he thinks about how “my fingers on these keys / Make music,” and he argues that “so the self-same sounds / On my spirit make a music, too” (lines 2-3).²⁰ Stevens reflects on the power musical language has by comparing it to a “feeling, then, not sound” (4). This he further compares to the feeling Quince has for an unnamed “you”; Quince sings of “your blue-shadowed silk” that “Is music” also, and he then compares this

¹⁹ In “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger chides the popular usage of “truth” as “slight” and “stunted” as “shown by the laxity we permit ourselves in using this basic word” (P 48). Indeed, he proves that the meaning of “truth” must be deferred because it also “is un-truth, insofar as there belongs to it the reservoir of the not-yet-uncovered, the un-uncovered, in the sense of concealment” (P 58).

²⁰ Holly Stevens has suggested that the first seven and a half lines may actually portray the early harmony of her parents' marriage after Stevens was financially able to purchase a long desired piano for Elsie; thus, Quince's improvisational outpouring of emotional song would in fact represent an addition (258-59). Although Holly Stevens does not mention it, Stevens strikes a similar chord in a 1905 letter to Elsie: “I thought today that our letters were like some strange instrument full of delicate and endearing music—music just a little haunting, one which we played for each other in turn” (L 81). On the other hand, Stevens' biographer, Joan Richardson, draws the connection not to Stevens' wife but to his mother; she claims Stevens often remembered his mother playing hymns on the piano on Sundays while “looking into an unseeable distance with an abstracted, faraway look in her eyes” and that his mother's playing and staring are what link the two images in “Peter Quince” (50).

pure desire to the sordid sexual desire the Elders felt for Susanna.²¹ Stevens pictures the body of the poem, which deals exclusively with the story, as Quince's improvised song upon the clavier. Indeed, the very form of the poem indicates a somewhat unskilled improvisational nature, as the four sections have varying stanza lengths, line lengths, rhythms, rhymes, and voices.²²

The short story recounts the tale of the beautiful Susanna, the wife of a Hebrew judge in Babylon during the Captivity. She is falsely accused by two respected Elders, who become more and more smitten with Susanna's beauty. They start spying on her from a gap between the bushes while she bathes in what she assumes is her protected and screened garden. One day, after Susanna has sent away her attendants, the Elders leave the bushes, reveal themselves, and threaten to denounce Susanna for illicitly meeting with a young man in the garden unless she has

²¹ For a sustained look at the role of sexuality and the wider implications it may have in the poem, see B.J. Leggett's "Apollonian and Dionysian in *Harmonium*: 'Peter Quince at the Clavier'" (52-82) in his volume *Early Stevens: The Nietzschean Intertext*. On the other hand, however, Frank Lentricchia asserts that this view of sex was simply a part of Stevens' technique in *Harmonium* to "form bawdy critiques of middle-class Christian piety [through] outrageous sexualizations of Christianity" (143).

²² I agree with Robert Buttel, who argues that we should avoid the "strong temptation" to identify the poem with one particular musical form; Buttel refers to Marianne Moore and Clay Hunt as two people who have drawn various parallels to set forms or even specific pieces of classical music, while Buttel himself prefers to identify Stevens with specific composers, namely Mozart and Debussy (138-40). Joseph Riddel calls this a casual use of the sonatina form (which itself is very broad in form), with an exposition, development, and recapitulation with a coda (73). For more on the improvisational nature throughout Stevens' poetry and its relation to jazz music, see Corey M. Taylor's "Blue Order: Wallace Stevens's Jazz Experiments."

However, an interesting argument is offered by James Longenbach, who sees the development of the musical forms of the poem in a primarily philosophical light; Longenbach insists that Stevens was just beginning to write with his philosophical "post-Romantic ambition," so the first three stanzas embody his "hesitation" through their "delicate" and "imagistic" language, but, by the final section, Stevens "open[s] all the stops to make a statement of scope and permanence" (77-78). Longenbach compares "Peter Quince" to "Sunday Morning," which, despite being first published in the same year (1915), is philosophically confident as is seen in its "opulent pentameters" and "great singing lines" (78). Although Longenbach does not mention it, the 1915 version of "Sunday Morning," published in *Poetry* (Nov. 1915), was shortened and printed with the stanzas in a different order at the request of Harriet Monroe; Stevens published the unedited version in *Harmonium* (L 182-83).

sex with them. She refuses to be blackmailed and is charged with adultery, so the people prepare to put her to death by public stoning for promiscuity.²³

Unexpectedly, a very young Daniel interrupts the judgement by exclaiming that Susanna's blood would not be on his hands. The people ask for an explanation, and Daniel claims he can reveal the hidden (Apocryphal) truth of the situation. He separates the two Elders and cross-examines them. His question is basic: under which tree did Susanna meet her lover? Here, Stevens was no doubt equally intrigued, as a lawyer, by the courtroom strategy, and, as poet, by the language plays and puns. The first elder says she was "*upo scheenon*"—beneath a type of mastic shrub. Daniel replies that an angel of the Lord is waiting to "*scheesay*" the elder—to cut him in two. Daniel separately cross-examines the second Elder, who says that Susanna was "*upo preenon*"—beneath a large oak tree. Daniel this time says that the angel of the Lord is coming to "*kata-preesay*" the elder, meaning to saw him up into pieces. In each case, there is, first of all, the rather obvious nature of the lie (was Susanna beneath a little shrub or a huge oak tree?) and second, the clever word sound play between "*scheenon*" and "*scheesay*," and then between "*preenon*" and "*preesay*." The Elders are revealed to be false accusers, are judged, and are put to death, and Susanna's virtue is hailed and praised.²⁴

In the poem, Stevens intertwines epistemological concerns with liturgical music; he voices specific concerns with writing, with using it to reveal what is

²³ Thus, the Elders seek to pollute the sacred space of the garden and try to sexually assault the sacred space of Susanna's own body through rape or intimidation based on the threat of death through stoning, which is, as discussed in Chapter III, effectively meant as a communal purging of pollution. In the biblical narrative, Daniel's imagination is the key to uncovering the falsity of what appears to be real and leads thereby to an exorcism of the actual pollution of the hypocritical Elders.

²⁴ In Hebrew, Susanna's name is "*Shoshana*," meaning a "lily," which, as mentioned in Chapter I, later became a Christian symbol of the Virgin Mary and of purity itself.

apocryphal or hidden, and with revealing the hidden inner immortality and beauty of the human spirit. Stevens inserts this liturgical element throughout the text with a multitude of musical references, beginning with the titular image of the poet playing at the keyboard of a *clavier*²⁵ that produces music from these keys and words that flow into poetry or that, in fact, become poetry themselves. This method of composition Stevens would later identify with “pure poetry,” which, in his definition, meant poetry that dealt with “the idea of images and images alone, or images and the music of verse together” (*L* 288) or simply as “imagination, extended beyond local consciousness” (*L* 370).²⁶ This dedication to a “pure poetry,” a short lived European articulation of poetry that centres on forms of thought, phenomenal reality, and the sublime, likely became one of the reasons *Harmonium* was not immediately popular,²⁷ and it doubtlessly did set Stevens aside from the dominant experimental

²⁵ I was struck by this similarity when I heard the account of an acquaintance who is a symphony pianist but makes his living in an office building. Like Stevens, he would easily identify the *clavier* keyboard of a piano and the *clavier* keyboard of a computer. Others in his office often remark on his bizarre typing style, which is rather that of a concert pianist playing with a flowing rhythm to his hands that produces a real music through his remarkable tapping.

²⁶ For a sustained study of pure poetry's influence on Stevens and T.S. Eliot, see Leon Surette's “The Function of Poetry: The ‘Pure Poetry’ Debate” in his volume *The Modernist Dilemma* (2009). Surette traces the formal articulation of pure poetry to Abbé Bremond's *La Poésie pure* (1926) and argues that Stevens was drawn (retroactively) to the concept “as a way of retaining the spirit of Romanticism without the label” (237) and so used the concept, perhaps independently, in the way Bremond defined it: “a poetry concerned only with its expression of the poet's vision, to the exclusion of political, social, economic, philosophical, and religious issues” (270). Joseph Carroll differentiates “pure” from “normal poetry,” which is more concerned with “personality” and “the relation of the self to the social and political world” (19).

²⁷ For instance, in his *New York Times* review of the 1931 edition of *Harmonium*, which added fourteen new poems and omitted three, Percy Hutchison rejects Stevens' pure poetry as a “hazy notion,” based in an impersonal presentation of the “rhythms and the tonal values of the words employed” instead of ideas (Hutchison). Hutchison therefore sees Stevens' verse as nothing more than “a 'stunt' in the fantastic and the bizarre” which cannot “arose emotion.” His review also pillories Imagism, Vorticism, and Cubism, “and many more 'isms' besides” for not producing enduring poetry based in life experiences and emotion: “For the most part,” he claims, “these schools have died the death which could have been prophesied for them.” Infamously, Hutchison's critique comes down to the line: “The volume is a glittering edifice of icicles. Brilliant as the moon, the book is equally dead,” and he concludes, almost ruefully, that “Wallace Stevens is a martyr to a lost cause.” Yet, he does recognize the musicality of the verse, and he singles out the poem “Hibiscus on the Sleeping Shores” for praise as what he calls “a musical attainment not before guessed at.”

currents of modernist poetry. In a 1923 review of *Harmonium*, John Gould Fletcher picked up on the figurative sense of harmony when he identified Stevens as an aesthete but “at all events an honest aesthete” and on this basis argued that Stevens is “definitely out of tune with life and his surroundings, and is seeking an escape into a sphere of finer harmony between instinct and intelligence” (46). Likewise, essayist Llewelyn Powys pursued this same notion in 1924 by arguing that within Stevens' poems, “each unexpected verbal manipulation conceals some obscure harmony of sense and sound which not only provokes intellectual appreciation, but in the strangest possible way troubles the imagination” (65).

In “Peter Quince,” Stevens further coordinates this musicality with metaphysical poetics by making an improbable link with the sordid desire the Elders felt for Susanna. Their desire is described as a “strain”²⁸ making them “red-eyed,” “watching,” and a throbbing in “The bases of their beings”—not in their bases (foundations) but in the bass of deep, masculine voices (6, 12-14). Their chords are “witching” and their pulses are “pizzicati,” meaning plucked (14-15). Susanna as she bathes hears the water and the springs, and she sighs, making her voice blend into those harmonies and symbolizing her connection to the physical world of her supposedly protected garden—a second garden of Eden into which sin and evil is about to incur. Stevens pictures her maids who come “like tambourines” with Susanna's scarves (41), but a pause just before their coming “Muted the night” (37),

²⁸ Literally, this would be the strain of sexual excitement the Elders feel, but it also refers to a musical strain. Eleanor Cook notes that Stevens also may mean “the strain of this astonishing simile” (74). Surette identifies the “throbbing” with the “tinglings, the raising of the hair on the back of the neck, and so forth, that the arts produce in their audience. In the last tercet . . . , Stevens conflates sexual excitement with religious transport” and this leads to a celebration in the poem of “the permanence of beauty despite its evanescent instantiation in such fragile vessels as Susanna's body, and the elder's lechery” (292).

and the elders suddenly and violently strike out as if “A cymbal crashed” with the sound of “roaring horns” (39-40), and the “simpering” maids “Fled, with a noise like tambourines” (49-50). The sound of whispering becomes that of a willow tree singing a refrain as it is played, not by the wind, but by the rain (45-46).

The focal point of the poem becomes the oblique, the hidden, the connoted. The Elders hide, leering through the gap in the bushes. The green water hides Susanna's nakedness and her beauty, as she believes the garden does as well. The scarves brought by the maids offer no aid. In the final stanza, Stevens skips over the trial, referring to it too in a hidden way. It is here that he hints at the larger metaphysical meaning of the text, when he compares Susanna's beautiful body to another covering that hides what is truly beautiful underneath—her memory, her immortality, her soul, her spirit, her breath, her music, her grace. This points to a continual process of unveiling, which is also presented when the Elders are unveiled, first from the bushes, second by Daniel's examination, third by revealing their true character, and fourth when they are cut or sawn in two. Their shameful ending does make a false music in that Death makes an “ironic scraping” as they are executed by the community (63). Stevens links the process of unveiling to the death of each day, the death of the garden, the death of Susanna, and the death of us all.²⁹ Stevens thus links these things that have a determined life cycle and die but ultimately point to the unveiling of the truth of new life or a new beginning.

The trees of the garden, which Stevens draws from the sylvan puns of the Susanna story, typify this process of life and death and rebirth while recognizing its necessarily hidden nature. The garden is still, green, and enclosed. It is very leafy,

²⁹ Stevens may be implying a further connection with Shakespeare's “Sonnet LXXIII.”

cool, and dewy. Finally, the garden and the trees too die as winter comes on, covering the vegetation with the “cowl of winter” (58).³⁰ The parallelism is clear—there is a covering of day, of the seasons, and of human life; but, just as surely, death or covering points to new life. The sun will rise again; the winter will give way to spring; the trees will bud new leaves; likewise for the human, truth and beauty do not die but survive, or are even set free when the crass physical body, no matter how seemingly beautiful, is set aside to reveal true human beauty. Finally, music and immortality combine in “the auroral / Celebration of a maiden's choral” as the song of “Susanna's music” is eternally played as a “constant sacrament of praise” to her honour and inner beauty “On the clear viol of her memory,” a viol being an instrument made, notably, from a dead tree that has been given the new life of music (59-66).

“Peter Quince at the Clavier,” then, is a representation of desire for metaphysical knowledge and truth and life. It is therefore remarkable that Stevens, in looking for knowledge and truth, looks for it intertextually through these references to Shakespeare and the biblical Apocrypha. As Aristotle elsewhere argued,

The investigation of the truth is in one way hard, in another easy. An indication of this is found in the fact that no one is able to attain the truth adequately, while, on the other hand, we do not collectively fail, but every one says something true about the nature of things, and while individually we contribute little or nothing to the truth, by the union of all a considerable amount is amassed. (*M* 2.1.993a30)

³⁰ Robert Sukenick argues that this is the cowl of a monk who, in line 58, is “done repenting” (71). However, a physical “cowl,” as Stevens most likely knew from his New England setting, was often regarded by certain ethnic groups as a sign of the ability to have supernatural knowledge in a baby born with one. Although the baby's face was covered by the cowl, it was thought to signify that the child would grow to be able to see things others could not. My own Highland Gaels, in fact, call this ability by the Gàidhlig term “An Dà Shealladh,” literally, “the second sight.” So a covering, a cowl, a hiddenness, somehow leads ultimately to a greater ability to see.

To cite a closer contemporary of Stevens, William Faulkner, fielding a university student's question about Stevens' well known poem "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird,"³¹ likewise argued:

I think that no one individual can look at truth. It blinds you . . . It [is], as you say, thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird. But the truth, I would like to think, comes out, that when the reader has read all these thirteen different ways of looking at the blackbird, the reader has his own fourteenth image of that blackbird which I would like to think is the truth. (*University* 273-274)³²

Regarding a similar line about human perceptions of reality in "The Emperor of Ice-Cream,"³³ Bart Eeckhout explains that "To seem is to be *to a perceiver*, and Stevens, early and late, was fascinated by the freedom (both opportunity and danger) that the human mind is left with in the act of perceiving, as well as by the strictures that operate upon (both limiting and enabling) this freedom" (144).

Along similar lines, Stevens' August 1902 journal expresses his understanding of the differences between the truth found in organized religion as opposed to that found through the freeing explorations of the poetic imagination. His account is of a walking journey in the countryside that ended with him joining his conceptions of priest and poet.³⁴ He wrote of his belief that "the true religious force in the world is

³¹ Incidentally, "Thirteen Ways" immediately follows "Peter Quince" in *Harmonium*.

³² In part, Stevens seems to offer "Thirteen Ways" as the imagination's rebuke to Imagism: the imagination's process of creation and recreation necessitates that the mind's conception of the image is too broad and too fractured to be contained so simply. Likewise, "Metaphors of a Magnifico" centres on an image "That will not declare itself / Yet is certain as meaning . . ." (*CPP* 19; italics original). Carroll identifies this as Stevens' position on "poetic belief" itself in an age when "absolute belief . . . in the absolute validity of any proposition, is obsolete. He believes that the single most distinctive feature of the modern mind is its recognition that all propositions are hypothetical, approximate, conjectural" (25).

³³ The line in question is "Let be be finale of seem" (*CPP* 50; line 7). See Warren Carrier's "Commonplace Costumes and Essential Gaudiness: Wallace Stevens' 'Emperor of Ice-Cream'" for his study of yet another of Stevens' intertextual references to Shakespeare, this time to the line "Truth may seeme, but cannot be" in "The Phoenix and the Turtle."

³⁴ Akin to Hightower's observations about the twin duty-pleasures of walking and praying in Faulkner's *Light in August* discussed in Chapter III, Stevens likewise twinned walking and poetry. Perkins notes that when Stevens was younger, he would take weekend walks of up to forty miles and would later record his impressions in letters or his journal (II:285). His later practice was to

not the church, but the world itself: the mysterious callings of Nature and our responses”; he found this contrast to be such that “Two different deities presented themselves The priest in me worshipped one God at one shrine; the poet another God at another shrine. . . . as I went tramping through the fields and woods I beheld every leaf and blade of grass revealing or rather betokening the Invisible (*L* 58-59).

Reflections like these have caused Stevens to be identified so often as a later day Romantic poet.³⁵ If Stevens is to be seen as a Romantic, it is in his belief in the primacy of poetry itself. He may, in this sense, see the imagination as a faculty that has the ability to somehow free itself of a certain fallibleness that trusts too naively in reality and in the ability of language to communicate or to create reality.³⁶

Imagination, for Stevens in the Romantic sense, is a natural human ability that if exercised and developed can reveal truths about the realities of human existence. As David Perkins points out, the “enormous difference” between Stevens' view of

walk the two miles from his house to his office at the Hartford Fire and Indemnity Insurance Company daily; he would compose poetry as he walked and would have his secretary type it when he arrived at the office. This he jokingly identified as a “small way of beating the system” (Murphy 27).

³⁵ Stevens does continue the Romantic tradition, but in his own manner. He does not have Wordsworth's concern with Nature and innocence, nor Keats' vision of the Classical world, nor Shelley's interest in the political, nor Coleridge's call to uphold the Judeo-Christian God. Stevens does not comment at length on the machine or on politics, and he in fact resisted the socialist turn in literature during the 1930s and was criticized for it. Despite his acquaintance with many other writers, he is not identified primarily with any poetic school of movement, and his *Letters* even reveal that he called few of them by their first names; unlike his fellow modernists, he never travelled to the Europe that was clearly central to the world of his imagination. Consciously implemented or not, these traits of personality effectively liberated Stevens' imagination as the ultimate source of his identification of the sacredness of life and art. However, the extent of Stevens' connection with, or continuation of, elements of the Romantic tradition can be oversimplified in the same way as identifications of him as a poetic representation of philosophers (as diverse as Martin Heidegger, Plato, Giambattista Vico, Friedrich Nietzsche, Immanuel Kant, William James, Ralph Waldo Emerson, or George Santayana, whom Stevens did in fact know well from Harvard) or French poets (especially Paul Valéry, Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, Charles Baudelaire, and Jules Laforgue). In all three cases, Stevens is no doubt deeply influenced in his thought by these other figures, but he voices his own constructions of imagination, reality, order, and idea.

³⁶ Robert Pack used this aspects of Stevens' lexicon to define his sense of “Nothingness,” as in “The Snow Man”: nothingness “represents the reality one would see with the perfect perceptual eye devoid of all imagination. It is the reality of the world stripped of all its 'seeming'” (121).

imagination and that of the Romantics was that they “held, though with many doubts, that the imagination could embody knowledge, whether of immediate, particular things or of ultimate truth. A hundred years later, Stevens could seldom credit this. The purpose or end was imagining, the activity itself, not whatever might be imagined” (II:292).

In the place the Ancients had ascribed to the Muses, the Romantics enshrined the role of imagination in the creation of poetry as understood through the categories of *afflatus* and *genius*.³⁷ Both concepts heavily influenced Stevens in terms of how he saw the poetic enterprise and the nature of the actual poems he wrote.³⁸ Again, Stevens invokes imagination when he ends both editions of *Harmonium* with “To the Roaring Wind” (CPP 77), a comment on Keats’ “To the West Wind” that at the same time invokes the Aeolian Harp, the Romantic symbol of poetic inspiration in the harp that is played by the wind alone. Stevens then seeks an expression, through the language of poetry, of human spiritual nature as created through the imagination, which he calls “the supreme fiction” in “A High Toned Old Christian Woman” (47).³⁹ Helen Vendler likens Stevens’ musical methods as a modernist response specifically

³⁷ *Afflatus* was understood as an outward and somewhat mystical source of inspiration that gave creative impetus to the poet. *Genius* was comprehended as the affect of the environment, both physical and cultural, in producing the special flavour of poetry characteristic of a nation or geographical area. In this vein, Harold Bloom’s treatment of Stevens, *Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate* (1980), emphasizes the influence of Emerson and Whitman on Stevens as a poet of America.

³⁸ For instance, in “The Comedian as the Letter C” (CPP 22-37), “*afflatus* . . . first drove Crispin to his wandering” (IV:79-80); it is *genius* that Crispin seeks in his projected poets’ colony, wherein poets from each region of the Americas would be spokesmen for their regions, such as Georgia, Florida, the Sierras, or Brazil (IV:48-75), for, as Stevens says in his modified refrain, “Nota: man is the intelligence of his soil” (I:1) and “Nota: his soil is man’s intelligence” (IV:1).

³⁹ Though my concern is with Stevens’s early poetry, he did return in a fuller way to the supreme fiction in the long poem “Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction” (CPP 329-53), which is arranged around the three tenets “It Must Be Abstract,” “It Must Change,” and “It Must Give Pleasure.” For a reading of the role of the concept in Stevens’ later poetry, see Frank Doggett’s “This Invented World: Stevens’ ‘Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction.’”

aimed at Keats' Romantic challenges⁴⁰ to move toward a sensual poetry that both sees and hears in new ways.⁴¹ Conversely, Stevens criticizes the results of a weak imagination, seen in the hypocrisy of the Elders or the pessimism of the central character in his poem "Gubbinal" (*CPP* 69). The title refers to a "gubbin," an archaic term for a bumpkin or a dullard. The narrator judges the imagination of the gubbin as sadly lacking but not worth correcting. The gubbin has no command of metaphor with which to see the hidden realities of the flower/sun, the fire/seed, or the tuft of feathers/eye. This produces a weak imagination and, therefore, a weakness of sight and of knowledge that is the fault of the gubbin himself.⁴² The poem just previous, "Colloquy with a Polish Aunt," clarifies that "Imagination is the will of things. . . ." (*CPP* 68; ellipses original). Thus, the will of the gubbin makes him miss the beauty of life and mistakenly abandon hope by claiming that "The world is ugly, / And the people are sad" (*CPP* 69).

Stevens' positing of imagination as the interpreter of reality was a meeting place for the several strains of Stevens' interests in philosophy, poetry, Romanticism, and modernist experimentation. Perkins argues that Stevens employed what he calls a "descriptive-meditative tradition" stemming from the Romantics, specifically from

⁴⁰ Like some other critics, Vendler reads "Anecdote of the Jar" as an answer to Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and "The Snow Man" as an answer to "In Drear-Nighted December"; she further argues that this is a typical "modernist strategy" seen more often in painting, wherein known content is redone "with violently altered lines and colors," and she offers the further example of Stevens' "The Paltry Nude Starts on a Spring Voyage," which retells Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (44-50). Richardson links Stevens' lines "Beauty is momentary on the mind— / The fitful tracing of a portal; / But in the flesh it is immortal" (IV:1-3) to Keats' "A thing of Beauty is a joy forever," the opening line of "Endymion" (1818).

⁴¹ Vendler observes that because of this technique, for Stevens, "looking and hearing, imagery and musicality, occupy equal ground in the conception of lyric" (48).

⁴² For Frank Kermode, this corresponds to Stevens' later conception of "poverty"—meaning the absence of a fruitful union between imagination and reality—that meant the poor in imagination inherently could not see past the "real world" and into the world of poetry, a world which Stevens would later differentiate by the term *mundo* (24-25).

Coleridge, Gray, Wordsworth, and Keats.⁴³ This method “describes what is seen” and proceeds to “a train of thought and feeling” that depends on thought; however, Perkins argues that Stevens manipulates the Romantic method by leaving the description oblique and depending on the imagination for the meditation, which “embodies Stevens' central theme, the relation between imagination and reality” (I:543-44). In this way, imagination was not seen by Stevens as opposed to reality but as the actual “reordering of reality” (I:544). Perhaps because of the oblique nature of Stevens' verse, Perkins characterizes Stevens' “allegiance to 'reality'” as a result of “only vague and inconsistent notions of what he meant,” and Perkins claims that efforts of “Admiring critics . . . to make him precise and consistent” actually violate the truth of the matter (II:288). J. Hillis Miller argues that there is good reason for this vagueness, as “Existence is neither imagination alone nor reality alone, but always and everywhere the endlessly frustrated attempt of the two to cross the gap which separates them” (*Poets* 233).⁴⁴ Reality for Stevens is something more than the facts of modern life because it is the mind that imagines and orders the outside world, which Stevens understood to mean that our imagination produces “our subjective version of what really is” (II:290). In another poem from *Harmonium*, “Another Weeping Woman,” Stevens calls imagination “The Magnificent cause of being” and “the one reality / In this imagined world” (*CPP* 19). Thus, Stevens urges an embrace of the powers of the imagination in dealing with reality because the imagination is always

⁴³ M.H. Abrams further traces the descriptive-meditative lyric back to the earlier genre of “local poetry,” which drew social or political implications from the sustained contemplation of a locality (329-30). For a decidedly Catholic view, see Charles M. Murphy's “The Religious Imagination in a Secular Age” (83-97) in his *Wallace Stevens: A Spiritual Poet in a Secular Age* (1997); he argues that Stevens' use of poetry consciously equated it with meditation and prayer.

⁴⁴ To picture the relation between reality and imagination, Miller uses the metaphor of “two charged poles which repel one another as they approach and can never touch, though the relation between them creates a vibrant field of forces” (*Poets* 233).

already forming our perception of reality. Perkins writes that Stevens uses this to pose a choice between either using the imagination to “heroically strive for truth,” as Daniel did, by stripping away the illusions that cover the harshness of reality or using it to “heroically assert our own creativity,” as Quince did, through a “transformation of the world” into something more humanized (II:291).

Stevens is seeking not to undermine reality but to uncover more of its essence; in “Tea at the Palace of Hoon,” Stevens strongly identifies the imagination with the subjective experience of reality, and he claims that reimagining it leads to new discoveries about the self that further uncover hidden truths: “I was the world in which I walked, and what I saw / Or heard or felt came not but from myself; / And there I found myself more truly and more strange” (*CPP* 65). The choice that Stevens is presenting, then, is between using your own imagination and accepting the “world of the unimagining,” by which he means an acceptance of the “common imagination” that he identifies as “remarkably unorganized, inert, unconscious, sordid, and clichéd”; Stevens argues that those with a “strenuous imagination” live in a world that is “fresh, ordered, meaningful, and essentially happy. The difference imagining makes is between vivid life and living death. Poetry is imagining” (II:291).⁴⁵ This is why imagining becomes the central tenet of Stevens' supreme fiction: he does not imagine a new religion like William Blake or W.B. Yeats, but he embraces a belief in the poetic act of imagining itself. As he writes in “Asides on the Oboe,” earlier beliefs have become “prologues” that are “over,” pushing toward “a question, now, / Of final belief. So, say that final belief / Must be in a fiction. It is time to choose” (*CPP* 226).

⁴⁵ Stevens may possibly be invoking Samuel Taylor Coleridge's distinction between “fancy” and “imagination” in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817). For an theory that connects Stevens to Coleridge through the critical work of I.A. Richards, see B.J. Leggett's chapter “Why it Must Be Abstract: Stevens, Coleridge, and I.A. Richards” (17-41) in his text *Wallace Stevens and Poetic Theory*.

The idea of “final belief” and the “supreme fiction” returns in the *Adagia*, when Stevens writes: “The final belief is to believe in a fiction, which you know to be a fiction, there being nothing else. The exquisite truth is to know that it is a fiction and that you believe in it willingly” (*CPP* 903). In a 1942 letter, Stevens recorded a conversation with a student from Hartford's Trinity College who objected to his belief in a supreme fiction and called it an impossibility. Stevens replied that “believing in something one knew was not true” depended on being open to the “instinctive . . . will to believe,” and “we can willingly suspend disbelief with reference to a fiction as easily as we can suspend it with reference to anything else”; in the same letter, Stevens admits that he had “no idea of the form that a supreme fiction would take. . . . Of course, in the long run, poetry would be the supreme fiction” (*L* 429-31). Charles M. Murphy posits that Stevens is using the positive sense of the word “fiction,” drawn from the Latin “*fingere*,” which could mean “a calculated invention to reveal something true that could not otherwise be expressed . . . a 'living changingness' that points beyond itself to a reality which human reason finds impossible to pin down” (57). Similarly, David Jarraway argues that Stevens' “preoccupation with belief” originates in “an almost atheological stance, from the point of view or belief framed in the form of a question or quest” (21); this preoccupation “becomes an absolute question simply as a violence perpetrated against absolute Truth” (166) that must therefore reject the inherited imaginings of Christianity⁴⁶ as insufficient. Thus,

⁴⁶ Remarkably, Stevens' Dutch ancestors had a long heritage in Christian ministry in America. Despite calling himself “a dried-up Presbyterian” (*L* 792), Stevens was proud that he was a descendant of the first white child born in New Holland (*L* 472), and he remarked that one ancestor, Abraham Stevens, was married in the First Presbyterian Church at Philadelphia “in 1732, the year in which Washington was born” and may have been involved in the pious Presbyterian based founding of Princeton University in 1746 (*L* 672). Nonetheless, he chides people who have given over their imagination to the traditions of religion, as in the poems “The Doctor of Geneva,” “The Curtains in the House of the Metaphysical,” “Six Significant Landscapes,” or “A High Toned Old Christian Woman.” He singles out a particular Christian attitude in the later poem “The Blue Buildings in the

Stevens instead embraces this world, this reality, and this life as the sole moment of human existence; by reimagining them, they take on a new sacredness and truth that leads Stevens to posit the imagination as the very source of existence when he claims “I am the personal. / Your world is you. I am my world” (“Bantam in Pine-Woods”; *CPP* 75).

Stevens made a remarkable number of statements about how his poetry coincided with a quest for metaphysical truth. Stevens saw both his difficulty and his response as a desire to recognize and to assuage the trouble caused by society's loss of belief in God. He wrote that thinking of “some substitute for religion” had become “a habit of mind”; he clarifies that he does not mean to replace the church, for “no one believes in the church as an institution more than I do,” but actual belief in something beyond ourselves, for, he says, “My trouble, and the trouble of a great many people, is the loss of belief in the sort of God in Whom we were all brought up to believe” (*L* 348). Stevens seems sincerely to mourn the loss of belief in a personal god, and he acknowledges his search for something that is more intellectually satisfying. This source was dependant upon the centrality of the imagination in constructing reality.⁴⁷ In “An Ordinary Evening in New Haven,” Stevens' poetic mediator explains that “We seek / Nothing beyond reality. Within it / Everything” (IX:11-12; *CPP* 402) and later insists that “The search for reality is as momentous as / The search for God” (XXII:1-3; *CPP* 410). This reality was to be found in the same experience of art linking emotion and immortal beauty delineated by Quince, for, as Stevens writes in

Summer Air,” wherein he portrays the influential American Puritan Cotton Mather (widely known for his involvement in the Salem Witch Trials) as constantly facing doubts about Christianity “That made him preach the louder” (*CPP* 196) so as to overcome his lack of faith and convert others.

⁴⁷ The relationship between the imagination and reality was a chief concern of Stevens; his 1951 collection of essays, *The Necessary Angel*, was subtitled *Essays on Reality and the Imagination*.

his *Adagia*, “After one has abandoned a belief in god, poetry is that essence which takes its place as life's redemption” (*CPP* 901). As he posits in another poem, “God and the imagination are one” (“Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour”; *CPP* 444; line 14); therefore, God is a human creation dependant upon human imagination, but the feelings offered by belief in God can be found anew, and better, through what Stevens calls the “supreme fiction”—to believe in something created by the imagination that one knows to be a creation of the imagination and yet that one consciously decides to believe in anyway. Joseph Carroll illuminates Stevens' “distinction between God as a fixed, traditional image⁴⁸ . . . and the self-renewing power of pure poetry” (92), and, further, he insists that Stevens believed that “the imaginer is God' because in writing poetry the poet shares in the sentient principle that creates the world and that achieves self-recognition in human thought” (27). As Judith Butler argues, Stevens' move toward a supreme fiction becomes “a performative moment in a language, an occasion in which the loss of metaphysical moorings clears the way for a poetic affirmation of what is” (269).

This affirmation of “what is” is meant in fact to question the assumptions that have, on the one hand, buttressed traditional sociocultural understandings of life and, on the other hand, have produced the tensions and inconsistencies that have led to metaphysical questions. This hypothesis asks what effects would be enacted in our experience of life and in our range of metaphysical questions were our language and thought structures radically different, or, to put a finer point on the question, radically

⁴⁸ Morris summarizes Stevens' objection to this image of God as threefold: “as a wish-fulfilling projection of the human on the nonhuman, God is a confusion of two distinct realms; as a dogmatic concept, He is constantly outdated; as a ruling power, He usurps the prerogatives belonging rightly to the imagination” (*Wallace Stevens* 96).

more advanced.⁴⁹ Heidegger, however, in his move to illuminate the shortcomings of the phenomenology of his mentor, Edmund Husserl, turned to the language of poets, especially Rainer Maria Rilke and Friedrich Hölderin. This move is a tacit admission of poetry's privileged place in the search for a new basis for epistemology.⁵⁰ Given poetry's ancient links to ritual, animist and then religious, it seems it must now operate alongside the continued evolution of humanity in urging progression, some real state “of emergency,” that leads to a real emergence of that which is not new but has remained hidden or marginalized.

Indeed, Heidegger, in his essay “Hölderin and the Essence of Poetry” (1936) sees the poet, not the philosopher, as the translator between the human and the divine: “the essence of poetry is joined on to the laws of the signs of the gods and the voice of the people . . . The poet stands between the former—the gods, and the latter—the people. He is one who has been cast out—out into that *Between*, between gods and men” (312). This marginal between space, then, is a place where literature can rightly speak its criticism of theory and of philosophy. The task of the academic then becomes to read the philosophy and the theory through the poetry and not the other way around.⁵¹ Walter Biemel, the Romanian phenomenologist translator of Heidegger and Husserl, interprets Heidegger's idea to mean that since poets once stood between humanity and the gods, they are now the most clear headed users of language; that

⁴⁹ This annoyance with the limits of language, then, must apply not only to quotidian speech but to the forms of philosophical metalanguage that are traditionally held to be the highest forms of human communication and used by the individuals we have regarded as our greatest thinkers.

⁵⁰ Elsewhere, Heidegger argues that this is a basic purpose of language itself, which is, he says, “not only and not primarily an audible and written expression of what is to be communicated. . . . language alone brings what is, as something that is, in to the Open for the first time” (*P* 71).

⁵¹ This may partially explain why Paul Ricoeur identified Stevens as his favourite poet in an interview. He called Stevens' poetry “a kind of philosophy” and specifically applauded his “re-creation of reality” that comes as “an unexpected gift from someone who seemed first to be in search of a quality of language, a way of saying” (461).

they typically speak in a mode of language unlike everyday speech refers to their sacred function, though this sacredness is now an indication not of any divine mediumship but of a connection to Being (81-82).

In Stevens' quest for a specifically modernist belief, the poet importantly becomes the philosopher and high priest and creator in one.⁵² Indeed, Stevens' use of Quince, a carpenter, as a poetic role model evokes the classical Greek etymological roots of the word "poet" in "poesis," signifying one who creates or makes. In this task of remaking belief, the poet is indeed a maker and a creator. And indeed, it is courageous of Stevens to insist that there must be a belief and this belief must be fitted for the twentieth century. Heidegger sees the poet's quest as a result of "the default of God" that brings the world to spiritual night and destitution.⁵³ The poet, who has a keener imaginative faculty, is able to reorder reality, much as the jar in Tennessee is able to order the "slovenly wilderness" when "It took dominion everywhere" ("Anecdote of the Jar"; *CPP* 76). Although Stevens writes of that default by saying "The death of one god is the death of all" (*CPP* 381), he also insists that "If one no longer believes in God (as truth), it is not possible merely to disbelieve; it becomes necessary to believe in something else" (*L* 370).

And what is that "something else"? For Stevens, faith is expressed through, in, and as poetry itself.⁵⁴ As he expressed it in a letter,

⁵² This identification, I suggest, is akin to the hero, the "major man," or the "MacCullough" of Stevens' "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" (*CPP* 329-53).

⁵³ For Heidegger, this default of God "means that no god any longer gathers men and things unto himself . . . the divine radiance has become extinguished in the world's history. The time of the world's night is the destitute time, because it becomes even more destitute. . . . To be a poet in a destitute time means: to attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods. This is why the poet in the time of the world's night utters the holy" (*P* 89, 92).

⁵⁴ J. Hillis Miller identifies "Stevens' problem" as the realization that "Nothing will suffice" in his goal of reconciling the "endless intercourse" between imagination and "the barren external world," so his "endless seeking" for a solution "is the motive and life of his poetry" ("Wallace Stevens" 145-46).

The idea of God is a thing of the imagination . . . The idea of pure poetry, essential imagination, as the highest objective of the poet, appears to be, at least potentially, as great as the idea of God, and, for that matter, greater, if the idea of God is only one of the things of the imagination. (*L* 369)

Here, Stevens challenges the philosophers, saying indeed that “it must be an odd civilization in which poetry is not the equal of philosophy” (*CPP* 807); against the grain of thought in his time, Stevens insists wholeheartedly that the “modern imagination” of poetry trumps the rationalism of philosophy every time. Stevens argues that

The major poetic idea in the world is and always has been the idea of God. One of the visible movements of the modern imagination is the movement away from the idea of God. The poetry that created the idea of God⁵⁵ will either adapt it to our different intelligence, or create a substitute for it, or make it unnecessary. (*L* 378)

Likewise, in his essay, “A Collect of Philosophy,” Stevens argues that poetry is supreme over philosophy because we owe the idea of God to poetry and not to philosophy, and God is after all the “world's capital idea,” which in turn argues that “the imagination is supreme because its powers have shown themselves to be greater than the powers of reason” (*CPP* 865). Stevens admits that God, based in religion, philosophy, or poetry, is an illusion, but he just as surely insists that “Poetry as a narcotic is escapism in the pejorative sense. But there is a benign escapism in every illusion. . . . I believe in benign illusion. To my way of thinking, the idea of God is an instance of benign illusion” (*L* 402).⁵⁶ And referring, for example, to seeing “half of

⁵⁵ Stevens may have been picking up on the sentiments of Santayana's philosophy when he likewise speaks of ancient links between the metaphor of God and belief in truth when he argues that “Truth is one of the realities covered in the eclectic religion of our fathers by the idea of God” (*SAF* 268). Santayana further posits that “religion and poetry are identical in essence, and differ merely in the way in which they are attached to practical affairs” (*IPR* v).

⁵⁶ Morris in fact sees that “Much of Stevens' ethics depends on his poetics: the rightness of the 'right sensation' exists in the equilibrium of reality and imagination” (*Wallace Stevens* 7). Hence, Stevens' ethics, based on a supreme fiction, would be more truthful but just as moral of those of these Christians who depend on the tradition of their benign illusion.

the able-bodied men” of a Florida town exiting a meeting at the town's Presbyterian Church, Stevens—more than a little enviously—refers to their God as a “potent illusion” (L 236-37).

Stevens argues that the reality of his supreme fiction, which is no less real or unreal than the fictions of traditional Christianity,⁵⁷ is also no less powerful as an impetus to a centred life that urges change in the world based upon human choice. Stevens pictures himself as a poet in Peter Quince, who from the beginning of the poem is clearly enraptured following a moment of spiritual epiphany through poetry that is akin to the communion with the divine experienced by Christian mystics. Quince claims that the story makes music “On my spirit” like his “fingers on these keys,” and he realizes that this inner music is “not sound” because, in essence, “Music is feeling” (1-4). Citing William James's landmark investigation on the purpose of religion, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), this inner music is what James defines as true prayer. For James as for Stevens, prayer should not be narrowly defined as petitional prayer (for good health or good weather) but as “every kind of inward communion or conversation with the power recognized as divine” (James 454). It is important to emphasize that the vagueness implied by “the power recognized as divine” is intentional: James does not refer to, for instance, the particular god of any sect, but to “the supreme reality,” which accords neatly with Stevens' conception of the supreme fiction; it is through the act of our consciousness, identified through the placeholder word “prayer,” that we meet the divine at “the further limits of our being . . . [in] an altogether other dimension of existence from the

⁵⁷ Leggett suggests this rejection of past forms is the reason that the supreme fiction “must be abstract”; abstraction guards against a similar solidification of the new fiction and ensures the ability to see “the world afresh” (*Wallace Stevens* 25).

sensible and merely 'understandable' world" (506); James uses the word "God," therefore, as a further placeholder for the "higher part of the universe," and following Plato, although with different terminology, James can state that "We and God have business with each other" (507). Likewise, Iris Murdoch identifies prayer as the most widely practised and "most profound and effective of religious techniques" that, even in "a world without God," can be employed as "a form of love" that focuses on "the idea of grace" ("OG" 335-56, 344).

Stevens would agree with James that prayer, or poetry as prayer, becomes an access point to knowledge and truth through "the very movement itself of the soul, putting itself in a personal relation of contact with the mysterious power of which it feels the presence . . . even before it has a name by which to call it" (James 454).⁵⁸ This act of the imagination, then, is what James and Stevens would agree is "the very soul and essence of religion . . . the vital act by which the entire mind seeks to save itself by clinging to the principle from which it draws its life" (454-55). Stevens linked poetry and prayer intimately, claiming in the *Adagia* that they are both "most effective in solitude and in the times of solitude as, for example, in the earliest morning" (*CPP* 903); he later remarked that "After all, I write poetry because it is a

⁵⁸ Citing his contemporary James H. Leuba, James insists, very much as Stevens would, that questions of the existence of a personal god are irrelevant—not just to his analysis but to the act of "prayer" by the believer—because the central goal of the consciousness is not to communicate with a god because, at base, "life, more life, a larger, richer, more satisfying life, is, in the last analysis, the end of religion. The love of life, at any and every level of development, is the religious impulse" (Leuba, qtd. in James, 497). In this sense, James argues that belief must always have a "permanent function" for human beings, regardless of whether the belief is true or false. One is here reminded of Derrida's fascinating account of prayer at a Toronto conference of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature. He argued that his own personal prayer life was "something secret . . . absolutely secret," but he shared that prayer was his method of "meditating about the who that is praying and the who that is receiving the prayer" and that "questions are a part of my experience of prayer"; Derrida clarified that his prayer was based on a "suspension of certainty, not of belief," yet "something happens, even if there is no God . . . When I pray I experience something strange" ("EF" 30-31).

part of my piety” (L 473). Adelaide Morris argues that Stevens most often addresses the power of the “imagination [as] the creator of the fictive, the origin of belief” through prayer, the rhythms of which “seem to preoccupy” Stevens as “markedly seductive” (*Wallace Stevens* 26-27). For Stevens, then, a poet of deep philosophical study and deep existential questions, the links between poetry and liturgy represent a martlet like search to connect with the sources of knowledge and of truth and of beauty and of life itself through the avenues of belief that depend upon the poetic imagination.

In “Peter Quince at the Clavier,” Wallace Stevens announces a new vision of the poet's vocation in relation to spiritual belief when he allows his readers to peek through the bushes at the poet sitting at the clavier—watching him play out a liturgy of the imagination in search of a harmony that allows access to spiritual knowledge and truth. In so doing, Stevens, like the other modernists in this study, echoes the metaphysical challenge of Walt Whitman, who argues for a poetic vocation of spiritual belief by insisting “we too announce solid things . . . And our visions, the visions of poets, the most solid announcements of any . . . our visions sweep through eternity” (lines 8, 15, 20).⁵⁹

⁵⁹ These lines are taken from Chant 21 of “Chants Democratic 4” in Whitman's 1860 Edition of *Leaves of Grass*. The poem was later altered and appeared independently under the title “As I Walk, Solitary, Unattended” in the 1867 edition and then as “As I Walk These Broad Majestic Days” from the 1871-1872 edition onward.

Conclusion:

Modernist Spirituality

In his *We Moderns: Enigmas and Guesses* (1920), Edwin Muir, the Orcadian poet, novelist, translator, and professor, realizes that the turmoil of the early twentieth century had produced a “whirlwind of modern thought” akin to a “fever” or an “honourable sickness” (103-04); the response of too many, he declares, was to seek solace within modes of thought that would actually entrap them, whether of a political, philosophical, ideological, or religious nature. To the contrary, Muir sees the problem as “that of clearing a domain of freedom . . . [g]reater freedom, and therefore greater responsibility, above all greater aims, an enlargement of life” (104-05). The chief entrapment that Muir treats is Christianity, or rather, the religious dogma that he sees as something quite apart from true spirituality and which he in fact defines as a “drug,” a “remedy,” or “religion for the irreligious” (106-07). Muir identifies organized Christianity, then, as a “fount” that has “dried up” and that was “being defended on grounds neither religious nor theological, but secular and even utilitarian”; yet he does not lose hope for a framework of modernist spirituality to face the challenges of his day, and he realizes that what he sees as “real religious impulse is now to be found in the movement outside [the Church]” (108-09).

In each of the chapters of this dissertation, I have contributed to knowledge by looking, as did Muir, outside of organized religion to the literature of the modernist period in order to find that religious impulse. I have argued that some modernists consciously used traditional Christian categories by adapting them to the concerns of their period. The concepts I have highlighted are those of redemption, community, sacredness, the spectre, and liturgy, and, in each case, I have shown how these categories were reinterpreted to treat issues according to the sensibilities of the early twentieth century that would now be categorized as feminism, ecology, biopolitics,

crises, and the role of the poet. In so doing, I have shown that, contrary to the secularization hypothesis, many modernists, although they too reflected widespread sociocultural doubts about the traditional organized Christian religion as an expression of the values of the past, were keen to maintain the images of their cultural imagination by manipulating what these concepts represented under the old paradigm, thereby adapting Christian symbols instead of Christian dogmas to work for ethical change.

The modernist writers in this study reflect what I have called “modernist spirituality,” which of course does not envision a unified body of theological answers to the questions posed by the modernist era—it does not, for that matter, envision a unified body of questions. The writers involved in my project are hence very diverse in terms of nationality, religious upbringing, life experience, and the eventual answers at which they arrive during the process of their quests for modernist spirituality. Where one writer will urge a return to traditional religion, another will be emerging from the religious cocoon, while another will look to Buddhism, another to Greek paganism, and yet another to the tradition of Western philosophy. Of the writers I have presented, for some the problem of modernist spirituality is tracing a road map to comprehending our place in the cycle of history, while others seek a new sense of organic community apart from the hierarchies that institutionalize power, while others seek an authentic basis for ethics in a time of evil, war, racism, and sexism, and others try to form an understanding of our basic human essence by looking to the events surrounding death, and still others frame new rituals expressed through poetic language that pertain to the quotidian and are based in our limited ontological and epistemological comprehension of our experience of the world.

That these modernists display such a broad and expansive vision of what spirituality means is perhaps an attribute of their generation's growing distrust of political, social, or spiritual authorities. True to the best characteristics of modernist literature, these questioners and questors embody a desire to experiment, a broad knowledge of past literatures in English and other languages, an interest in the Medieval and Classical worlds, and a deep dissatisfaction with maintaining the status quo. Despite social turmoil and religious division, many individuals sought to develop new forms of spiritual life that were specifically appropriate to the needs of their generation and which have undoubtedly influenced our current comprehensions of spirituality.

In many ways, this continued reformation of Christianity by the modernists is reflected in earlier challenges to embrace the supremacy of the individual's human nature in finding spiritual fulfillment. Ralph Waldo Emerson, the Boston Unitarian, developed the philosophy of American Transcendentalism after a long period of increased religious doubt. His message was to spurn the dry and hardened teachings of the organized Church that taught there was no new revelation to modern individuals and that all ancient revelation was guarded by the Church hierarchy as a dogma that is theirs alone to interpret. Instead, Emerson urged people to employ reason in comprehending the nature of human life and its place in the universe. For example, in his well known "Divinity School Address" (1838), Emerson argues controversially that God's revelation was available to all those who relied on their "divine and deifying religious sentiment" (75), for the divine nature is immanent within nature, so humans not only have divinity within them, they are divine and are capable of sublime intuition. Hence, Emerson's challenge was to "go alone," to turn

away from the rituals of the past, and to “refuse the good models,” even Jesus, for “Imitation cannot go above its model” (87); Emerson clearly believed that people could supersede past models and find true spiritual wholeness if they rejected the “flock” mentality and adopted self-reliance in order to find the sublime within themselves.

Similarly, D.H. Lawrence, in his evaluation of American culture, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), summarizes his spiritual position with the credo “Believe in your own Holy Ghost” (102). Employing a very fitting metaphor for the time, Lawrence warns that there “comes a new generation to sweep out even the ghosts, with these new vacuum cleaners. No ghost could stand up against a vacuum cleaner” (104). Nonetheless, against the scientific and technological currents of the time, which Lawrence sees as despiritualizing and dehumanizing forces, he argues that people must continue to cherish their spiritual natures and to find fulfillment apart from organized religion. Likewise, the Irish born poet Louis MacNeice, echoed this sentiment when he said simply that “To shun dogma does not mean to renounce belief” (113). These modernists were very much aware that organized Christianity, controlled by a hierarchy and by dogma, was not the same thing as spiritual belief located in the individual and community that plainly answered human spiritual impulses. Even the task of identifying these spiritual impulses was considered an important task by the science of the early twentieth century, as is reflected in the ideas about the purposes of religion identified by Sigmund Freud, William James, and Émile Durkheim, whose writings were explored in my own introduction.

As the Christian existentialist theologian Paul Tillich would later claim, there is an important distinction to be made between “eternal truth” and “temporal

expressions” of that truth; Tillich saw Christian fundamentalism as a flawed expression “eagerly grasped in a period of personal or communal disintegration” and claims that such people “confuse eternal truth with a temporal expression of the truth” and this thereby “destroys the humble honesty of the search for truth” (I:3-4).

Modernist spirituality is keenly aware of this distinction, even during one of history's most intense periods of social disintegration, yet maintains a belief in creative answers to human dilemmas. The neo-Platonist philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch argued, from her perspective in the decades following the modernist era, that such moves to renew a sense of spiritual belief did not merely select “an empty receptacle into which the arbitrary will places objects of its choice”; instead, Murdoch sees this renewal of belief, even in very novel or syncretic forms, as “a creative force” based in “metaphysics, which sets up a picture which it then offers as an appeal to us all to see if we cannot find just this in our deepest experience” (*M* 507).

Importantly, Murdoch, like many of the modernists of this study, acknowledges that “God does not and cannot exist. But what led us to conceive of him does exist and is *constantly* experienced and pictured. That is, it is real as an Idea, and is *also* incarnate in knowledge and work and love” (*M* 508; italics original).

Murdoch echoes Paul Tillich's definition of theology as the response to “the totality of man's creative self-interpretation in a specific period” (I:4). Yet she argues further that people “need a theology which can continue without God . . . as long as it treats those matters of 'ultimate concern,' our experience of the unconditioned and our continued sense of what is holy” (*M* 511-12). By insisting that people “need” belief because they “constantly” acknowledge it as a part of their “deepest experience” through knowledge, work, and love, Murdoch argues that belief is integral to humanity and

will always abide with us, though, like Tillich, she sees truth, the object of belief, as an entity both eternal and temporal.

On the same grounds, Jacques Derrida demands “Why is the phenomenon, so hastily called the 'return of religions,' so difficult to think? Why is it so surprising?”; at heart, Derrida is most critical of those who cannot believe that spiritual belief has any place in our time period and who disavow even the trace of belief in modern life: “Why does it particularly astonish those who believed naïvely that an alternative opposed Religion, on the one side, and on the other, Reason, Enlightenment, Science, Criticism . . . as though the one could not but put an end to the other?” (A 45). In recent years, literary criticism has worked to uncover the traces of dominant structures within texts, including, for instance, the Marxist critique of economic structures, the feminist critique of patriarchy, and the postcolonial critique of imperialism. My study points to the need for a similar critique to show the traces of religious structures and of spiritual beliefs within literary texts. Within the academy, there has been a tendency to look past a text's religious discourse, but I would ask what such criticism might be able to show about the nature of literary texts, of language itself, and of our world's current religious tensions. Certainly, spiritual belief is an active force within the lives of the writers I have examined, though in ways that are fascinatingly diverse. Given the sharply divisive, prejudicial, and even violent ends to which religious power has been put throughout history and given its continued presence as a motivating force within individual and communal life, the academy cannot ignore what Derrida has called religion's “ethical and political urgencies,” which clearly “do not permit the response to be put off” (A 64).

A doctoral dissertation, like any study, has limitations in regards to scope; while my aim has been to show how specific modernist writers continued to employ certain religious concepts in a reworking suited for their temporal context, other questions and goals have arisen out of my project, and I will briefly name but five of these. First, although I have chosen to concentrate mainly on positive reworkings of positive concepts, especially due to my research in the work of Jacques Derrida, Carl Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben, and Georges Bataille, it is evident that some others who likewise reinterpreted traditional religious concepts did so to political ends that led to violence, dehumanization, fascism, fundamentalism, or racism. Second, I have raised questions about the changes in the religious conception of inner human emotions after Freud; how do modernists texts treat these central religious concepts, such as sin, guilt, remorse, grace, and forgiveness? Third, I have noticed a provocative interplay in several modernist texts that treat religious and other sociocultural concerns within the genre of a multigenerational saga, which raises the question of conflicts between the generations as they respond to the interlinked issues of religion, class, race, and sexuality; such concerns seem a preoccupation for writers like Virginia Woolf, Evelyn Waugh, or D.H. Lawrence. Indeed, the idea of generations, in a literal sense, further illustrates the question of how writers separated by the main modernist generation treated spiritual belief at the “hinge ends” of modernism; a comparison between, say, Thomas Hardy and Iris Murdoch, would demonstrate just how rapidly and to what degree life and society had changed.

Fourth, poststructuralist thinkers have posed the fascinating question of how far modernist spiritual reinterpretations really lie from Christianity itself—if Christianity be understood not as dogma but as an organic cultural expression. For

example, Jean-Luc Nancy's recent *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity* (2005) attempts to read Christianity as the self-deconstructing "exit from religion" through its focus on Christ, who was fully god and fully man and who lived in the past, intercedes in the present, and embodies hope in a *parousia*, a return, in the future. Derrida likewise regarded Christianity as "totally unpredictable," on the brink of an "earthquake," and as "the religion that is more prepared, more apt, to transform itself than any other" ("EF" 33). If these changes, which may look like disbelief, are actually new forms of Christianity, what does this mean for our understanding of religion and society? And fifth, my research presented in Chapter IV on the spectres of crisis has revealed the centrality of this modernist topos. The return of the dead in modernist literature uses a symbol that is widespread throughout cultures, geographies, and times and that has been used to represent crises of either a personal or a communal nature. Further, the spectre is an evocative metaphor that embodies several aspects of transgression and undecidability, which is why it has become a site for poststructuralism's investigation of the slipperiness of language. Given the widespread use of the spectre within modernist texts, it is apparent that a further literary study is warranted that would offer an in-depth analysis of the commonalities of this topos as it was employed by various modernists.

This conclusion began with Edwin Muir's challenge to his readers to see Christian hierarchy and dogma as a dried up fount; however, Muir goes further than that in constructively seeking a solution from those he calls the "new soothsayers" of the modernist period; these individuals, Muir writes, have the true "religious feeling" that inspired the founders of religion, the saints, the prophets, and those who had "the genius for religion" (108-09). In looking to the prophets of modernist spirituality,

Muir issues a further challenge by asking, “Are not the believers in the future, then, the creators of the future, and the true priests of progress? When we can envisage a future noble enough, it will not then be weakness to believe in it” (112). Each in his or her own way, the modernists of this study were noble enough to disavow easy escapes from the dire turmoil of the early twentieth century and to envision a way forward by seeking to express the spiritual categories of the past in a manner that befitted the struggles of their present and urged the possibility of a more humane and noble future informed by their modernist quest for spiritual meaning.

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Appendices

Appendix A

“Who Goes With Fergus?”

W.B. Yeats

Who will go drive with Fergus now,
 And pierce the deep wood's woven shade,
 And dance upon the level shore?
 Young man, lift up your russet brow,
 And lift your tender eyelids, maid,
 And brood on hopes and fear no more.

And no more turn aside and brood
 Upon love's bitter mystery;
 For Fergus rules the brazen cars,
 And rules the shadows of the wood,
 And the white breast of the dim sea
 And all dishevelled wandering stars.

From the “Ordo Commendationis Animae”

The Roman Ritual V:7:

“Liliata rutilantium te confessorum turma circumdet:
 iubilantium te virginum chorus excipiat.”

“May the liliated throng of radiant confessors encompass thee;
 May the choir of rejoicing virgins welcome thee.”

Appendix B

“Allerseelen” by Hermann von Gilm.

Stell auf den Tisch die duftenden Reseden,
 Die letzten roten A stern trag herbei,
 Und laß uns wieder von der Liebe reden,
 Wie einst im Mai.

Gib mir die Hand, daß ich sie heimlich drücke
 Und wenn man's sieht, mir ist es einerlei,
 Gib mir nur einen deiner süßen Blicke,
 Wie einst im Mai.

Es blüht und funkelt heut auf jedem Grabe,
 Ein Tag im Jahr ist ja den Toten frei,
 Komm an mein Herz, daß ich dich wieder habe,
 Wie einst im Mai.

English translation by Emily Ezust.

Place on the table the fragrant mignonettes,
 Bring inside the last red asters,
 and let us speak again of love,
 as once we did in May.

Give me your hand, so that I can press it secretly;
 and if someone sees us, it's all the same to me.
 Just give me your sweet gaze,
 as once you did in May.

Flowers adorn today each grave, sending off their fragrances;
 one day in the year are the dead free.
 Come close to my heart, so that I can have you again,
 as once I did in May.

