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Initiation in the Novels of Carl Jonas

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of English

and the

Faculty of the College of Graduate Studies

University of Nebraska at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Pat Williams

May 1972

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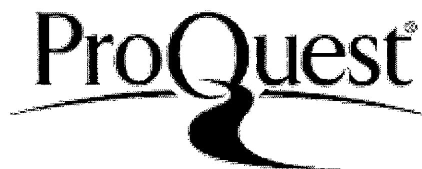

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Accepted for the faculty of The Graduate College of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

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Introduction

Carl Jonas is a native Omahan who writes of midwesterners in a setting strongly suggestive of Omaha. He satirizes the folkways and institutions of the breadbasket area, but he should not be categorized as merely a regional writer because he explores themes of universal concern to man. One of the most important of these themes is man's quest for meaning and dignity in a world which is often enigmatic and cruel. It is that quest with which all of Jonas' novels are concerned, and it is that theme--initiation--which forms the subject of this thesis.

Jonas deals in initiation as he follows his characters through crises and despair to demonstrate the changes which occur in man after he has emerged from these situations. In charting the trials that his characters endure as they reach new levels of understanding, Jonas thus pursues an initiation pattern--but not always in a traditional way.

Traditionally, the initiation theme in literature is thought of as relating to a young protagonist who experiences a significant change in character or who acquires a meaningful new insight into what the rest of the world already knows. Not so with Jonas. Although he does treat some young char-

acters, most of his protagonists are already mature in age. Nevertheless, Jonas shows them enduring crises which result in varying degrees of change, both in character and in knowledge.

Jonas' expansion of the traditional initiation theme to include characters of all ages contributes much to the genre. That his treatment of character change in older protagonists is soundly based can be supported by anthropologists who point to every man's need to search for transcendental meaning for his existence, by psychologists and psychiatrists who see initiation at the core of any human life, and by artists who keep initiatory themes alive in poems, film, works of plastic art, and novels. Jonas demonstrates then that man's capacity for change is not confined to the young, but that man continues to question, to reflect, to endure crises which alter his orientation throughout his whole life.

In this study two books have been enormously helpful: Mordecai Marcus' "What is an Initiation Story?" in Kumar's _Critical Approaches to Fiction_ and Mircea Eliade's _Rites and Symbols of Initiation_.

Marcus describes three types of initiation:

First, there is the tentative initiation in which the character is brought to the threshold of maturity. Second, there is the uncompleted initiation in which the character is left uncertain although he has crossed the threshold of maturity. Finally, there is the decisive initiation in which the character moves firmly into moral adulthood. These degrees of change will be noted in each of the seven Jonas works.

Eliade's book has been useful in providing a tangential relationship to the anthropological idea of initiation. Eliade maintains very persuasively that initiatory motifs "lie at the core of any genuine human life. . . . Any human life implies profound crises, ordeals, suffering, loss and reconquest of self, 'death and resurrection.'"[1]

From the social world which Carl Jonas knows intimately and of which he is still a part, he selects his characters and observes them as they move through initiation rites which may have their

[1] Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), p. 135.

roots in ancient myths. These initiation voyages once begun move the hero into successive phases of life. As Dorothy Norman points out in The Hero: Myth/Image/Symbol, the rites of passage cannot be hurried, must not be interrupted. "The hero is cast into the pit, abyss, chasm, cavern, ark, and tomb. But only in order to transcend them, reborn, redeemed."[2] The disasters that await the heroes in the chapters to follow are modern in nature, but no less menacing nor less catastrophic than the terrors of old.

In his first novel, Beachhead on the Wind, Jonas describes ordeals he survived as a boatswain's mate second class in the Coast Guard. Both Jonas and the sailor find that the only way to bridge the communication gap between the service man and those back home is to write a book. It is not surprising then, that as Jonas was himself initiated into new experience and knowledge of the world, that he would continue vaulting barriers with his writing.

In short, the initiation genre seems to have been the most natural--and surely one of the most

[2] Dorothy Norman, The Hero: Myth/Image/Symbol (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1969), p. 5.

significant--forms into which Carl Jonas might pour what he himself has been learning for fifty-nine years. He begins Beachhead on the Wind with an unseasoned young sailor, and shows in his last novel a middle-aged man, still learning, still changing.

Chapter I

Beachhead on the Wind

In *Beachhead on the Wind* Carl Jonas brings his protagonist, the young sailor, to decisive maturity. The sailor attains self-knowledge, an acceptance of his weaknesses and strengths, and a wider knowledge about how man reacts to crisis. The catalyst which drives him to this new level of maturity is the Second World War. The setting is the Aleutians where the wind and the sea work together in a two-pronged cruelty men fear more "than bullets." [1]

The process of the sailor's initiation unfolds as he explores his wartime experiences in San Francisco before heading for home. Slightly wounded physically and torn by some unknown, oppressive guilt, he begins to assess his experience. He avoids confronting the guilt at first. The guilt is so painfully vague in origin that the only outward symptom is his repeated, "anyway, I got up again." He recognizes his need to face the past which is eroding the joy of his homecoming, and he knows the guilt does

[1] Carl Jonas, *Beachhead on the Wind* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1945), p. 13. This and subsequent quotations are taken from this first edition.

not have its roots in the "lucky wound" that is sending him home. "It had come from something way back early in the war. From someplace out of the fog ahead. . . ."

As the sailor (He is never named, for he is all sailors, thus emphasizing this "civilian-serviceman barrier of unshared experience."[2]) begins his retrospective journey through "the fog," he feels almost hysterical with the need to communicate his war experience to the folks at home. And, although he is changed, he prays that things will not have changed too much there. As a child he had wanted everything to stay the same, for the furniture to be put back in familiar places after spring housecleaning. He feels that his family will not understand what he must tell them, if they are altered.

The sailor's introduction to the war had taken place before the invasion of the island of Tartu. He had joined a group of misfits--rejects from other ships--"the pimply-faced, the left-handed, the inept, the woe-begone . . . . tired, frightened birds with drooping feathers, nervous aquiline beaks, furtive eyes looking for an escape which was not offered." Their job is an equally miserable task:

[2] Time, (17 September 1945), p. 108.

salvaging boats, setting up a first-aid station for casualties, landing the cargo, setting up communications--all the mundane tasks dealt to the men who go ashore in the rear of the third wave of the assault.

In the sailor's beach party Jonas has placed men who "were only human. They were impatient, boastful, imaginative, unsure men . . .", and each plays an almost allegorical part in the young sailor's introduction to what the rest of the world already knows. The book is written in "the pattern of counterpoint: the various people and scenes of home continually touch off sharp recollections of a ship, its crew and a landing operation in the Aleutians."[3]

Chief Krotch, the harsh, pragmatic realist, maintains order on the beach, "and as long as there were men to drive he had driven them. If they couldn't stand up to it he shed no tears." He showed by example how to salvage life's necessities from the beach. His canniness about the ways of the navy enabled him to be first in scavenging, to sense the fury of a storm in time to secure the ship long before the ship's officers became aware of the on-

[3] Saul Levitt, New York Times, 16 September 1945, p. 7.

coming fury. In Chief Krotch "the instincts for the avoidance of pain" and "those for preservation . . . were nicely divided so that there was never any melodrama at all. He did what had to be done, no more, and in what little time was left pampered himself to the hard luxuries he could afford."

Krotch has a genius for creating "his island, his castle and shelter from the stormy blast" into which he can retreat after the most immediate problems have been met. Such an island can be a healthful resort for such a man. He does not run from his problems, but he has the awareness of the limits a man must place on himself in meeting crises--an animal-like intuition about when to call it a day.

Another kind of "island" exists for Lieutenant Flood--an island of escape from responsibility. In contrast to Krotch who faces, even anticipates trouble, Lieutenant Flood retreats. Thus, Jonas provides the sailor with two opposite models from which to choose, as he encounters both emotionally and physically threatening dangers. Krotch, profane, forceful as a plow, is at one with nature. Ratlike, he can adjust to whatever conditions he must. He can build a refuge in a hole on a bleak, windswept beach, or, always resourceful, he can drain the

alcohol from a compass to spike the homemade raisin-jack wine.

Lieutenant Flood, on the other hand, with his "romantic good looks," his sensitivity, and his inability to adapt to nature's brutality on Tartu, loses his grasp on self-control. Editing a literary magazine in an Eastern college for men has been poor preparation for coping with boats coming in "faster than he could get men to unload them." By nightfall on the day of the first landing and with the tide of spilled oil rolling onto the beach, "he was completely done." Sitting alone in complete dejection, he escapes to his imaginary isle of Shelley's lines:

> Many a green isle needs must be
> In the deep, wide sea of misery,
> Or the mariner, worn and wan,
> Never thus could voyage on . . . .[4]

Flood thinks about "a lissom girl with tanned calves and painted breasts," further demonstrating his immaturity, for men "who think about girls when they are in trouble aren't much good. There's too much else to think about." Krotch does not have this weakness. He attempts to force Flood to assume responsibility, calling him back from the green

[4]Percy B. Shelley, "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills."

isle "like an electric shock," pointing out the tired, hungry crew, which has worked past exhaustion in the icy surf and the oil. "These are the heroes," Krotch tells him. "The men got divided from the boys." Tartu forced growth from most of the misfits, but "Tartu did not make a man of Flood."[5] Under the guise of returning to the ship for relief troops and rations, Flood turns the group over to Chief Krotch and retreats to the mother ship where with the addition of liquor, he returns again to his isle. In Ensign Flood, the instinct for avoiding pain becomes paramount to the instinct for survival. Flood, with his soul "so beautiful that he had never been able to give any part of it to anyone . . . has always protected it with his life and other people had always helped him." He had never "intentionally hurt another person;" yet, when ill, he turns on his men and calls them "bloody, disgusting animals." He cries like a child and calls for his mother, and a helpless, lonely child he remains, "with a 'will to live' far in excess of what he deserved." His name symbolizes the kind of neurotic personality he is--unpredictable, potentially dangerous. Normal men cannot protect themselves

[5]*Time*, p. 108.

from the kind of destruction such people are capable of. Carl Jonas often positions such neurotic characters, who never change, who are never initiated into maturity, to dramatize the dilemma of "normal" men.

As the sailor heads for home, the faces of many other men come surging back. He knows they are lost forever, but "in every man there who had failed there was something of himself . . . and in all those who had come through too." He has learned from each of them.

O'Higgins, the eighteen-year-old Indian, comes through, and he does it with no illusions, no green isles. He alone refuses to share in the found payroll money. For the others, the money "seemed to give them a dreamy kind of hope for better days. . . . It was a kind of dope, the stimulus to illusion . . ." O'Higgins has a primitive innocence and honesty which forces him to repeat, "There isn't any gold" to Krotch when the Chief cannot realize he has fallen for a fool's gold trick. The Chief has been led to believe in a gold mine on Tartu because once the crew has tented down, they do not want to return to the Greeley. The dream of gold has made the Chief able to bear the hard work, the exposure, the unreasonable orders, the goading of unwilling men. But as for the men, "there isn't any gold."

Ironically, it is this gentle man, O'Higgins, who is the only one to kill an enemy soldier. After stalking him like an animal, he murders the Japanese, carries him back to the camp and dumps the blasted corpse at the feet of the General. "A Jap." This scene appears to be almost ritualistic. The presentation of the killed man at the feet of one of the war gods has its roots in primordial drama repeated during initiation rites.[6] In this novel, the death appears to form part of the process by which the men mature. Their voices sound "strange" and the soldiers are "awestruck" as they gather around the scene.

As Ramirez, the Spaniard with "gigolo manners" says to Krotch, "It's life." Men have illusions based partially on truth, and so Krotch is easily led to believe the fillings from the dead Japanese's teeth are nuggets from a mine. But what Ramirez meant was "that men go on from day to day getting along as best they can from hand to mouth, that nothing lasts very long, but that there is always something."

[6] Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), p. 131.

For Pegler that something is God. The trouble with Ensign Flood, he says, is "He ain't got no God to fall back on." Pegler makes no compromise with the discomfort of life on the beach.

Two other minor characters--St. Claire and Montillion--are a team. Together, these two are like mules--"hard, lean, vicious . . . ears laid back . . . they could work a horse to death." Their purpose in the novel sppears to be twofold. They represent society's beast of burden--"they had no vision." St. Claire's jaw is small, ratlike. He has a "hang-dog, kicked look . . ." And they find the real gold mine--the lost payroll money, but their stupidity results in Ramirez's discovery of the cache.

Ramirez has a talent for discovering and exploiting the weaknesses of others. New conditions challenge him, "because he knows instinctively that in confusion and breakdown of regularized authority a man of talent . . ." can do very well. After the landing he welcomes the forlorn soldiers to his little fire, and before long they are volunteering to put up his tent and get water for the coffee. He has "a knack of projecting an atmosphere of emotion," of philosophizing their experiences. As they gather about his fire and drink his coffee, he says,"'Well, we are

all in it together. . . . Soldiers. Sailors. Everyone.'" Whether the war is one of position or politics does not matter. Ramirez points in the direction of a Japanese-held island. "'And the Japs, too. . . . Same cold. Same wet. . . . Nothing to eat but rice. . . .'" He succeeds in uniting all, including the enemy they would be killing a few months later on Attu. "'All in it together. . . . All rowing up the same creek and all of us without the same old paddle.'" That night the seven of them gather around a stove brought from the ship; beef is frying in the pan.

> "You know," says Ramirez from the dark, "this morning we were poor. We were hungry. We were cold." He pauses. "Tonight we are rich. I think perhaps we are the richest men on the island."

And the sailor learns that having enough is not the nature of riches. "Having men about you more wretched than yourself, this is wealth indeed." Here Jonas points out explicitly that the sailor is acquiring knowledge about mankind, thus placing the novel in the initiation genre.

Later as he sails for home a strange soldier asks,

> "Do you think that we've

> changed? All of us, I mean?"
> The sailor shrugged his shoulders.
> "I think we must have," the soldier said.
> They were quiet another moment. "Do you think they've changed ashore?" the sailor asked.

The sailor is never a clearly delineated personality. He enters the navy a green, unskilled volunteer, "one of the ones who had to go ahead without any training." Not only is the sailor green, his ship, the Greeley, is an overhauled civilian cargo ship. The conversion from peace-time service to war was clumsy in both cases. "Perhaps that was what was the matter with the whole nation at the time. The conversion was incomplete." The beach party of which the sailor is a unit is "a nondescript lot, the runts of the whole litter of the ship." Lieutenant Ptoki tells them with pleasure that they are all expendable. The ship's division officers had culled their men and singled these out as the most easily sacrificed. The sailor, although one of the culls, is a sensitive observer, much like Ishmael, and he learns some important things about himself and about humanity. This knowledge parallels that which most men, if they are alert and absorbent, learn about mankind

under stress.

That he did not fully realize the danger he had passed through is not apparent to him until he sits on his park bench in San Francisco. The freedom and safety of his homeland seem at first strange to him. But now he can assess his failure and his success.

He has learned that men can live with fear always hovering, that men alerted for an air attack limit their fright to the time when planes are overhead; then pray, "'Please God, if some one has to get hit, have it be those fellows over there,' for even in air raids men are human." After the raid, men feel relief, then attend to their daily tasks. The sailor observes that it was "in the extraordinary that human nature was most human, that there was only a hair's difference between adventure and the necessity of living." He noted in savagely cold Tartu that the men endured "monotonous, deadening work" with man's "sturdy persistence in getting along for all of hell, high water, mumps, or measles." _Beachhead on the Wind_, then, is a paean for the natural dignity and purpose of man--"the way the fellows worked on Tartu said something hardy and eternal which declared

that men will never die." He learned much about human weakness too. As the little group listens to Ramirez justify keeping the payroll, the sailor realizes there is "something in all of us which feels beset, persecuted and wrong . . ." that "all of us are something less than we think ourselves to be and make our own right and wrong to fit our ends." But he also learns that while men may be "mean and foolish," they are "able to endure anything the universe could invent and still survive."

To be a sailor on a ship in wartime is to die "in many different ways," but then to rise only to die again. The deepest death of all is not the "homelessness and exile and wandering," however, but the discipline with its "bitterest pill of all"--the class system of officers and men, the rigidly enforced orders which artificially prop a man up, and when taken away, result in "some of the strangest behavior in the world." This experience of surrendering one's will to another results in the strange silence of servicemen when they come back "because there is no way for them to tell you what they mean." The cycle of "death and resurrection " which Jonas describes is typical of most human lives. "In such moments of total crisis,

only one hope seems to offer any issue--the hope of beginning life over again."[7] Such a transformation, the desire for an almost spiritual change, "constitutes the very goal of initiation."[8]

The sailor first attempts to tell his story to a girl in San Francisco. He wants to tell her that on Tartu "no one was what he thought he was and how it was to find out that you were better than some men but not as good as others" . . . that all men were different . . . that when worn down by "fear or weather or fatigue," your manhood ran thin, so that you "would take your luck and make a private peace with the enemy a hundred times in your mind." He fails. "It is inevitable that no one is interested."[9] She does not want to hear what he has to say. She wants love from him that until he is purged of his guilt, he is not able to give.

But the compulsion of the initiated sailor to tell another what he has learned continues. He tries again when he lunches with his uncle. He wants to talk "until the sea rushed up the bay and the heavens broke down in thunder." But his uncle

[7] Eliade, p. 135.

[8] Eliade, p. 135.

[9] New Yorker (15 September 1945), p. 84.

asks him if they fed him well, remarks on how well he looks, asks whether it is true about the hara-kiri, and how are the boys going to vote? The sailor sees him as "stranger than the men of Babylon," (The chapter is titled, "The Enemy.") and he realizes it is "not just for pleasure that a man must write a book." He is not able to spew out his confession until he gets drunk in a tavern and shouts his confession at strangers: that although he hid in his "grave" on the beach when he could take no more, he did get up and go back into the surf. The sailor has endured an initiation in its most dramatic pattern, a symbolic death followed by resurrection.

How can such men, misfits and rejects all, work interminable hours through a storm that drives broadsides of beach pebbles into their faces, whips them with snow and icy spray? Because, the sailor has learned, "We are poor, imperfect creatures, but, by God, sir, sometimes we can deliver."

The sailor has come to terms with the knowledge that the folks at home will be like his uncle. They will not have changed; therefore, he will not be able to tell them about his experiences because they too will be hiding behind their wall of inanities.

The initiation of the sailor, then, includes his change from self-doubt and uncertainty to self-knowledge and acceptance. He is, like all men, part Lieutenant Flood and part Chief Krotch, and in part all the others. The experience of war is one almost impossible to communicate to the stay-at-homes. But the sailor's mind absorbs the enormous significance of what he has confessed to strangers: the fact that all of them got up and went back into the surf, "the indomitable jewel-like hardihood of the whole human race. . . . Man, he knew, was immortal, could never be beaten by water or fire or war, was harder than glass, stronger than the wind, tougher than the toughest woods, and more indestructible than truth."

Beachhead on the Wind thus clearly falls into the initiation pattern. Jonas' protagonist, through the experience of war, is unalterably changed. His ultimate realization is that changed as he is, he can never convey what he has learned to those who have remained at home.

Chapter II

Snowslide

The characters in Snowslide differ from those in Beachhead on the Wind in that most of them have reached mature ages. Yet their knowledge about themselves, the world, and their relationships with others shows immaturity. Each arrives at his own critical point when Excelsior, a refurbished mining town, mobilizes to rescue a female movie sex-symbol who has been buried in an avalanche. "In the excitement a good many fairly ordinary consciences are left struggling in the open, and Mr. Jonas gives them a quick and quite skillful going over."[10] In so doing he shows that initiation is not a process confined to the young.

As he explores "these struggling consciences" Jonas continues his development of several initiatory patterns introduced in Beachhead on the Wind. Again he shows the urban man in his attempt to escape through illusion. In this case, instead of gold and green islands, Utopia is a town, Excelsior, and the mountains. Man's dream of attainable perfection sustains him at first, then deludes him,

[10] P. A. Sides, Books Section, The New Yorker, (20 May 1950), p. 118.

and finally turns to "fool's gold" when a crisis forces him to confront life's nightmares. Second, Jonas describes again the heavy burden of responsibility placed upon people with "common sense" to repair the damage done by neurotics like Lieutenant Flood. Third, he often shows his characters descending to the subconscious level in their attempt to understand the present through an exploration of the past. This search culminates at night in a crisis and is related in form to the archetypal night journey. The initiate then endures an initiatory "death" essential before spiritual regeneration can occur.

All these situations serve as steps in the initiation of many of the characters in _Snowslide_ as they did for the sailor in _Beachhead on the Wind_.

The cast, for they seem more like the actors Jonas once wrote radio scripts for than completely knowable characters, includes a comfortably successful, aging novelist, George Stackpole. Early in the book Stackpole appears to be self-assured, worldly-wise. He has a well-developed defense against manipulative people, for he has been inhabiting the jungle of the eastern seaboard. He has a sensitive

awareness and yet a wariness of mankind, and he views the inhabitants of Excelsior with all the objectivity of a scientist examining the wiggling cells of life. He admits that he is maliciously motivated in accepting Eleanor Geiger's invitation to vacation in Excelsior. He has taken advantage of her hospitality knowing she wants him to write a book about the place. He has no intention of fulfilling her wishes, and because he feels degraded that she assumes his favor can be bought, he has no conscience about deluding her. He feels reasonably comfortable in his middle age. "There didn't have to be any more growing up," he thinks. "One wasn't in the process any more. One was there."[11] Stackpole demonstrates early that he is a "formidable" in his ability to move around in the kind of web that people like Eleanor weave. However, he senses almost at once that in Excelsior "a cog is slipping," that there is something wrong which could be endangering to him if he becomes involved. Thus, Jonas

[11] Carl Jonas, Snowslide (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1950), p. 9. This and all other quotations are taken from this edition reprinted by Dell Publishing Company, Inc., New York.

shows a mature male at ease with his stage of growth, content, and apprehensive at the threat of any involvement which might disturb the status quo.

Playing the role of antagonist, not only to George Stackpole but to all the characters, is Eleanor Geiger. The coldly ambitious president of a cosmetics firm, she has bought Excelsior to create a perfect place. She expects Excelsior to be not only a successful ski resort and haven for creative people, but for the town to become her own "undying monument," a place where death cannot occur. Eleanor is a powerful, ruthless woman who has managed to live with the knowledge that she maneuvered the alcoholic old woman who founded Principessa into losing control. Eleanor symbolizes evil--one of the forces of existence with which man must either adjust or unite, if he is to propitiate the adult world. Eleanor refuses to intercede when her staff forbids the movie actress to ski on dangerous snow, thus propelling events toward a crisis situation for all.

The third major character is Sam Byams, who owns the local newspaper. He had brought his tubercular wife to Excelsior in 1940, a long time before Eleanor's arrival. He has acted as her agent,

acquiring the lots and building she has needed to build her "refuge from the strain and stress of living." His job printing business and newspaper have prospered in the booming economy she has brought to Excelsior. Early in the novel Sam begins his initiation journey with a visit to a psychiatrist in Salt Lake City. There he ventilates an almost irresistable passion he feels for Faith Hallowell, a neurotic and sensuously beautiful woman. The doctor categorizes her as a dangerous home-wrecker, and convinces Sam that he has too much "common sense" to upset his well-ordered life. "'You chose Excelsior because you thought that up there in the mountains in a little place you could be happy,'" he reminds Sam. He urges him to avoid Faith and to return to the "'work and the kind of living'" he had always believed in. Sam takes his problem to the mountain, a place he finds is "a thing of spiritual as well as physical meaning, a symbol, in a way, not only of beauty but of cussedness, a proposer and answerer of riddles." Sam's obsession with Faith cannot be erased with an afternoon on the mountain, however. He continues to desire her, and he wishes tho doctor had found him neurotic. Life is simpler for neurotics, he believes. "If you were neurotic

and did something wrong, selfish, or inconsiderate, no one could blame you. . . . But if you were completely normal you were still bound to hard and relentless responsibility." This mental turmoil marks the beginning of his initiation journey, for the painful ordeal of self-analysis must take place before a man can change. Sam envies Faith whose psychoses free her from the problems other people have to confront. He believes initially that falling back on socially acceptable, "civilized" behavior--the return to wife and work, the shunning of the seductress--will settle his confusion.

Jonas is describing the normal reaction of the non-neurotic person to a crisis situation. Then he proceeds to demonstrate that this civilized reaction does not represent a true initiation until the protagonist has stripped away the veil of his illusions. In the beginning Sam is attempting to scotch tape a gaping wound.

Faith has a gift for making "implausible ideas seem plausible," for her weakness has resulted in a special insight into the vulnerability of others. She exists like a mythic siren who tempts Sam. In wrestling with his temptation, Sam begins to inventory his past in an attempt to understand himself

and how he arrived at this place, a place defined both emotionally and physically. He realizes this journey, a frightening exploration through the mind, "seemed to be working toward making him positively decide something." The desire for "Faith" is therefore literally and symbolically the goal of his initiation.

Jonas also delineates another type of initiation in which the adult society attempts to indoctrinate the young. Walter Sieben plays a role juxtaposed to John Archer whom he sees as himself as a youth. The novelist, George Stackpole, says the two of them symbolize "sport culture," one the old, the other, the young. Sieben tries to educate Archer in the ways of the ski world: "'To get to the top and to stay there, you always got to be thinking . . .'" He suggests that Johnny should never forget that people like Chuchu, the movie star, can help keep him at the top of the profession because "'they got friends.'"

Johnny is an innocent, a willing student, but he is puzzled by the "mysterious intangibles" which move people to the top. (Though they are rich, famous, talented, exotic, they seem very much like

other people, yet with an aura of distinction.) Every day he goes from the simple house where he lives with his mother to the world inhabited by Eleanor's guests. The paradox of his mother's taking in washing while he teaches the famous to ski, makes him feel his whole life is pointless. That he questions the wisdom of Walter's advice without quite understanding why points up that "education is always important in an initiation story, but it is usually a direct result of experience rather than of indoctrination."[12]

All these characters are swept up in conflicting forces when the whole town flows up the mountain to the site of the snowslide. Each must face deeply submerged truths about himself. Each must confront these truths and change, or ignore them and refuse the opportunity for growth. By the time that Sam's steel prod finds Chuchu barely alive under the snow, every character in the novel has taken a retrospective journey. Most result in a significant change.

George Stackpole has always written a certain kind of a book, generally an "urbane satire" set in

[12] Mordecai Marcus, "What is an Initiation Story?" Critical Approaches to Fiction , ed. Shiv Kumar and R. McKean (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), p. 203.

the Eastern United States. His point of view has been fundamentally that of "sensible people," a point of view he gradually begins to associate with Eleanor's business philosophy. He recalls with additional pain that a young manuscript reader reported on his most recent novel to the publisher, "'This is essentially not a novel but an essay, brilliantly conceived and written. I predict a sale in six figures.'" Although he had pretended to be amused that his manuscript had mistakenly reached someone who would ordinarily be reading unpublishable, unsolicited writing, he had been deeply hurt by the report by the young "whipper-snapper."

"'Maybe you need a new kind of a book, George,'" his wife had said at the time, and he thought that perhaps he did, but he was unsure whether a book about Excelsior should be that book. Nevertheless, the feeling grows that the young reader may have been right. His "sense of sin within himself" makes him feel compassion for Eleanor and whatever it is she is trying to escape. Her cavalier attitude toward the truth subsequently snubs out this compassion, however, for she insists upon concealing the truth about Chuchu's death. She believes the truth may be bent at will to justify her goals.

George intuits that her fear of death, particularly of suicide, is one of the furies pursuing her and concludes that she has placed her dream of Excelsior before truth. Excelsior "was a refuge for her from these furies, and what she wanted from it was a refuge for all who could afford to escape from their furies . . ."

George's conviction grows almost obsessively that the truth ought to count for something in this mountain Shangri-La, "even if it doesn't anywhere else in the world." He attempts to persuade Eleanor that in making herself and Excelsior a symbol of perfection, she has committed herself to valuing human beings more than corporations. He becomes aware that he believes in the idea of Excelsior and that the concept had always been inside him, "as it was probably inside of all men." Jonas illustrates here the revelation of fresh insight which leads George toward initiation into the general knowledge of the adult world. George argues with Eleanor that the truth of Chuchu's death cannot be concealed or changed. To deny this truth would be to deny meaning to Excelsior. As he attempts to convince her, he is also trying to force her growth from child to adult at the same time the town is

"moving onward from chaos to order." He has "the sense of dealing with a moral embryo." Here again an effort to indoctrinate fails. Eleanor cannot change without discovering herself. She would have to allow herself to experience in order to grow. Instead, she always evades a confrontation with any fact which might compel her to change.

George recognizes, as she parries his argument, that the idea of accepting Chuchu's suicide is inadmissable to her because suicide is part of the sin for which she needs to atone. Fear of death dominates her maze. He recognizes that she is in fact the epitome of ruthlessness, and in so doing he acknowledges the existence of evil in all settings--the snake in every garden. This knowledge marks additional growth for him, as he loses innocence about the nature of evil. Then, when he fails in his attempt to produce proof of Chuchu's intent to destroy herself, he also gives up his dream: belief in Excelsior.

His wife "who has always known the little boy" beneath his urbane exterior, tries to moderate his reaction, "'This doesn't mean that you're wrong. . . . It just means that you've got to go farther into it.'" She attempts to show him he is needed

to stand for truth wherever "'people say that the truth doesn't matter.'" But she sounds to him like a trite last-act speech, and he says truth does not really exist anywhere. There is no escape. They will not build a house in Excelsior because "'there ain't no Shangri-La.'" In the morning they will return to Boston.

George makes a partial initiation journey. He faces some painful truths about his own integrity and about the universal existence of evil. He knows he has not written the kind of books that require intense personal involvement. He has learned anew about people like Eleanor and their manipulation of truth. He has backed away from believing anyone is completely evil, but he does finally see her clearly. No matter what motivates her, Eleanor is the world, and he has failed to recognize her in Excelsior. Recognizing his own inadequacy to cope with her evil, he will return to Boston where he can be more sure of the rules. Is he a changed man after passing through a shocking crisis--a shake-up in his values and his picture of himself? Not in any outwardly noticeable way. Perhaps his next book may reflect some reorganization of priorities. Surely he will find difficulty in turning out

another "essay." But although he has had a learning experience, he still avoids commitment. He still appears to be "enmeshed in a struggle for certainty"[13] typical of the partial initiation.

Eleanor, on the other hand, remains uninitiated. She returns painfully to the event in her past for which she is atoning, but she does not face the nature of her fear of men, her fear of failure, her fear of her own death. Events do not force her to change. She does not have to admit Chuchu is a suicide.

Eleanor is, as George says, a symbol. She sees herself as something beyond other mortals. No person and no event can force her to change. As her brother Will once said to her, "'You represent the things in the world that makes evil have no meaning'" When she presses him to define "the thing," he says it would not do any good to tell her. Here Jonas reemphasizes that initiation does not take place by indoctrination. Eleanor simply denies what others say to or about her. The people of Excelsior who telephone anonymously in the night, George, Will. All are wrong. She is,

[13] Carl Benson, "Conrad's Two Stories of Initiation," PMLA, 69 (1954), 49.

after all, a goddess of beauty, and she has bequeathed to herself godlike powers--the establishment of a perfect realm with beautiful people and life everlasting. Thunderously certain of the rightness of her goals, she would strike down any obstacle. Jonas shows, therefore, a type for which any initiation rite is fruitless. George cannot teach her, events cannot persuade her, her own loneliness cannot move her.

Sam Byams, only too aware that he is human, does complete his initiation journey. His change is a gradual one beginning with his attraction to Faith, supported by his resistance to Eleanor's threats, and completed when he makes his night journey to the site of the disaster. This trip up the mountainside at night with its tension, eery lighting and atmosphere of death marks a critical stage of initiation for Sam.

Although he has spoken cynically about journalism, he finds he respects his profession highly enough to withstand Eleanor's threats. "'You know, Eleanor, I've always wondered what you would be like when you tried to put on the pressure. Now I know. And my answer still is no and God damn you.'" Sam begins his active confrontation with evil.

He does not mention the snowslide nor his confrontation with Eleanor to his wife. Even though she is now fully recovered, he still follows a habit of censoring any upsetting news. He recognizes this practice had begun long before they had come to Excelsior--"the idea that if you didn't mention a thing it somehow wasn't . . ." He takes his first honest look at his wife, and he is acutely conscious that while she is a good woman she is "not the woman he wanted and that nothing else in his life seemed to be what he wanted either." When she tells him that she is well enough to leave Excelsior, if he wants to, his reason for the retreat from the city is gone. Sam begins to feel the permanence of his way of life is being threatened. But what permanence has he in Excelsior?

The answer is none--not the newspaper nor the house with its make-do furniture. He knows events are dragging him toward action. The snowslide is making it impossible for him to ignore the fact that he has been running. He knows it would be pointless to run again when he has not faced what he is running from and what he would be running to. When a call comes for the village men to aid in the rescue attempt, Sam makes his first commitment.

He volunteers to go up the mountain. On the lift, his act of lighting a cigarette at the same time as the others is his first feeling of belonging to other people. He is finally touched by his kinship with all humanity, and he is filled "with that sweet, smarting feeling of crying," an indication of basic change. Sam's introspection has an existential quality--including a search for himself, a self as buried in coldness as the actress, and a search for "something which might not be there." He recalls his first love, Anne, whom he made excuses for not marrying. "'A newspaperman should never get married,'" he had said, and he had always blamed her for leaving him. Now he recognizes he had done the leaving because "there had been things to find." Once he had asked her,

> "Why is it mostly when you're young that you try to change things and make things better? Is it because age and success corrupt?" and she had answered, "No, it's partly being tired but mostly that as you grow older you learn how to ignore. For a lot of people growing up is just training in not seeing."

Sam knows he has not been seeing for a long time. Now, however, everything "seemed to be shutting

out the possibility of a continuation of ignoring." He understands that the important people in his life have revealed themselves to him, and he has ignored them. He sees these people as players in a match game, "all opening their fists to show how many matches each one held." He alone is afraid to open his hand because of his long practice in ignoring "his own personal meaning." When anyone has ever demanded love or action from him, he has always run. He realizes part of the reason is fear. To open up, to commit himself might mean a final confrontation with nothingness. Excelsior has been a place for him where he though he could keep running forever. But falling in love with Faith, Irene's recovery, and Chuchu's death force him to stop running. Finally, when he finds the actress under the snow, she is not dead.

The possibility of life instead of death as the meaning of the whole night's work shifts the conclusions he has been making about himself into new relationships. Chuchu's being alive is proof that "effectiveness is not a myth." There is still a chance for him to take action, to change the course of his life. In addition, his survival of a ritual death--the descent into the subconscious--has led to his

conquest of the fear of real death and he is freer to face life. Now he sees his real problem: that he has refused to share Irene's daily offering of intimacy and love, that he has refused to commit himself to anyone. He decides Excelsior Mountain has meaning: "a kind of inescapable ethic which remained immovably at the end of all escaping." Excelsior Village, he concludes, is "nonmeaning," and he does not want to return there. As an act of emancipation from his old ways, he agrees to help Walter and Johnny prove Chuchu's ski trip was intentionally suicidal. Sam's initiation is a decisive one. Although he will leave Excelsior, he retains the ideals which the mountain experience revealed.

Johnny Archer's initiation is equally decisive. He rejects the principles Walter Sieben follows. He recognizes Eleanor as evil and acts directly to thwart her.

> She was a spider, it now seemed to him, a big black spider and was repulsive. And yet she was the world, the world he had chosen to live in. Up there when he had been on the mountain there had been a clear-cut knowledge of what was expected of him, but somehow this thing down here seemed to make him nonexistent although he was not trained enough in thinking to

> state it or to say where
> the non-existence or the
> wrongness lay.

He takes his initiatory night walk through the streets of the village and concludes he is "young enough to get into that other world, not trapped yet, unless he wanted to be trapped." Johnny with this self discovery finds the strength to turn away from the kind of success offered by Eleanor, "the side which common sense told him to move toward." In deciding the truth counts for more, Johnny moves firmly from "egocentric youth to human solidarity,"[14] a common pattern in the initiation story.

In Snowslide Jonas has thus related varying forms of initiation stories. His characters are less like the "real people" he will explore in later novels, but substantially, his method of following them through crises to self-knowledge and change has been set. In this book Sam Byams and John Sieben show a significant change in character. George exhibits a partial change. He has thrown out his ideal of truth for the time, but one feels he is still uncertain, and further change is possible. Eleanor refuses to change. As Sugden Tilley summarizes in

[14] Marcus, p. 204.

The New York Times: "Life as we create it merges with death as we shape it. This would seem to be the terrifying moral of Snowslide."[15]

[15] Sugden Tilley, New York Times Book Section. (4 May 1950), p. 21.

Chapter III

Jefferson Selleck

In *Jefferson Selleck*, as in all his novels, Carl Jonas further explores his belief that life's crises do not really change the course of a man's future in any dramatic fashion. Unlike some fiction or most TV drama where "truth" is blindingly revealed, is learned from, and which changes personality and life style, change in real life may be disclosed in only the slightest alteration in direction. This change takes place quietly, not with physical action and public oratory, but with cleaning out the desk, picking up the coat, and a quiet goodbye. In *Snowslide*, for instance, Sam Byams and George Stackpole leave Excelsior quietly, but with varying degrees of change in their characters. Their alteration--an initiation change from one orientation toward life to another--occurred without histrionics. Yet neither would ever be the same again. Jefferson Selleck is this kind of a man.

Jefferson Selleck goes only part way toward achieving self-knowledge because his search begins too late in life to take him beyond an uncompleted initiation. As Doc Crocker said to Jefferson when he had his coronary, " 'Remember, you didn't get this way all at once. And you aren't going to get

well all at once either.'"[16] It is at this moment that Selleck begins his initiation journey, a self-analysis which later takes the form of a tape-recorded memoir. For him, to get well requires a change both physical and mental, and like many men who begin to realize their identity in late middle-age, he finds himself trapped in his environment. He can only fall back on what Mordecai Marcus describes as "the formalized behavior of so-called civilized people."[17] For a man of the upper-class of Gateway City this behavior is usually a retreat into busy-ness. Jefferson begins his search because Doc Crocker says he must understand the forces which brought on his heart attack, the world around him, where he came from, where he is, and where he hopes to be going. Jeff asks himself almost plaintively, "Have I lived, or have I existed?" That he waited so long to ask demonstrates how effectively his busy-ness has defended him from the truth of his life. His escape from death has given him the opportunity to resurrect his life, a process of self-analysis which

[16] Carl Jonas, Jefferson Selleck (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1952), p. 97. This and all other quotations are taken from this edition.

[17] Marcus, p. 202.

puts the novel firmly in the initiation genre. In the course of cataloging his past, he reveals much more to the reader than he does to himself, for he believes he has had a much happier life than he actually has had. Jeff has spent his life making ritualistic responses to despair, instead of using a crisis as a chance to assess his position and to change.

In the ancient past, man's rituals and ceremonies marked moments of crisis and transition. In _Jefferson Selleck_ some of these rituals are also followed, but they are sterile experiences because Jeff sidesteps the intensity of feeling which should accompany them. The hunt, for example, is a traditional initiation ritual, a confrontation with the mystery and reality of death which marks the transition from innocence to maturity. When Jonas describes the Big Elk Hunt, he shows a ritual robbed of meaning. When the fellows of the Chowder and Marching Society go to the mountains to hunt, they can "breathe deeply, laugh heartily, and feel the greatest affection for each other," but they do not confront the reality of death or their own mortality. (Jonas shows again that man feels freer to be himself in a mountainous environment than he can be in the city, but freedom for these men is still

constrained by the mores of Gateway City.)

Jeff meets the cowboy guide, January, and sees him as "really happy" because he does the kind of hard work "fitting to a man" and walks "with freedom." Jeff has always envied men like January, for he "always felt an irony in the fact that men like myself work hard all year to be able to do for two weeks what he does all the time for nothing." January symbolizes for Jeff all that he does not possess:

> He comes and goes as he pleases. He works only when he wants to or needs the money. He is drunk or sober according to his inclination. He lives in the out-of-doors. . . . He has a wife somewhere, but . . . neither she nor his children are much cause for worry.

Jeff concludes that "It's enough to make a businessman almost disbelieve in the system which he lives in," but Jeff sticks with his belief in the American Dream. He does not see that he is in a snare. The folkways of Gateway City, the system of rewards, the pressures of material needs--all combine to keep him from striving for some of January's brand of freedom. In Gateway City, disagreement and controversy, strong beliefs and first-hand experience are either evaded by most people or are considered in

bad taste. The old myth-based rituals which once "marked moments of crisis and transition, thereby helping men to accept such moments"[18] have often become debased. In their place are a new set of rituals aimed at "ironing things out." What follows is "neither a sense of social release nor a feeling of personal joy; instead people become increasingly aware of their social dependence and powerlessness."[19]

When the hunt reaches the moment of climax, and Jeff attempts to aim his gun at a buck, his set of social responses is not adequate to intercept a sick feeling of reluctance. He ascribes his inability to aim at the animal to "buck fever." January kills the animal for him, but Jeff continues to feel "sickish" and recalls the animal's eyes "as blue as emeralds." In an effort to help him overcome his "buck fever," January takes him hunting again, and they find a big snow-covered elk. Jeff is able to kill this time, and he sees the old bull "like a ship sinking slowly at first and then faster and faster." When he reaches the animal,

[18] Robert Scholes, <u>Approaches to the Novel</u> (San Francisco: Chadler Publishing Company, 1961), p. 277.

[19] Scholes, p. 277.

it is not quite dead, "but he looked as though he knew quite well that in a moment he would be." Jeff puts another bullet into the elk and he dies. Selleck does not conclude that his inability to shoot the first animal relates to any identification with himself or to the realization of his own mortality. The details he chooses to recount when he recalls the incident for his memoirs, however, show that he was deeply affected. Nevertheless, at the time, he does not pause to contemplate an experience which might have prolonged his life. He and January hurry back to camp for a noisy and liquid celebration of the successful kill.

In commenting on Jeff's description of the hunt, Doc Crocker says that Jeff's preoccupation with his illness "became a symbol of his own success or failure in generalizing on life in toto." In the hunting chapter Jonas shows that civilized rituals--the drinking joking, horseplay--obfuscate the underlying meaning of the first kill. All the "values" that Jeff finds in hunting combine to steal from him a decisive initiation: the recognition of the nature of death and a forewarning of his own. He says the old bull elk "raised his head proudly and almost as though he knew exactly what was going to happen." Ironically,

Jeff does not recognize this foreshadowing of his own death, and he goes back to Gateway City still not understanding his own life or the burdens he has shouldered. Jonas has described in this chapter a tentative step toward initiation. The protagonist is led to the experience but does not make the new knowledge a part of his personality.

Civilized rituals and responses can also stultify a relationship. Jeff's description of some of the crises in his marriage demonstrate how effectively socially patterned reactions can seal out the fresh breath of honesty. On their wedding night when Gertrude tells him that she didn't want to marry him at all, that she really wanted to marry Henry Burton, Jeff recalls:

> I have taken a great many blows during my lifetime, but I doubt if I have ever taken another one like that one. I don't know what I did or said, but probably I did nothing and said nothing.

They proceed to submerge their despair by passing a bottle back and forth between them until they are drunk enough to pass out. And from that night, Jeff is proud to say, "we were able to go on, build a house, raise children, and take our places in the world . . ." Jonas' people have much in common with John P. Marquand's people who "when they face

the emptiness of their lives, take less spectacular courses than do the standard existential heroes . . . they respond with a private school's 'stiff upper lip' and sense of duty and dignity."[20] Selleck's concentration on what they do after such an experience, not on what they feel, is typical. His pattern: to say nothing when first facing a crisis, to wait, to observe one's commitments, to avail oneself of a socially accepted panacea--liquor --and to do one's duty, is a pattern he follows in varying degrees throughout his life. He allows his freedom and his lifetime to erode by avoiding honest confrontation with painful experience.

Additional evidence of his habitual response to crisis comes at the reunion of the Forty-second Division. When Gertrude and Henry Burton disappear together, Jeff experiences "that awful deep feeling of despair." He wonders, "But what does a man do about that? What is there for him to do about it except sit there and wait there?" He believes moments such as this "are matters which a man can never mention except in a work of this nature." These moments--he calls them pauses--are the hardest part of his life. At these timos he simply sits on

[20] C. H. Holman, John P. Marquand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), p. 8.

his pain, stifling it until he can move toward recovery by more acceptable means than roaring out his agony. What he does not say then is that if a man keeps his life filled with clubs, hunting trips, civic activities, and maintains a constantly amiable facade, there cannot be too many of these agonizing pauses. He can also count on Gertrude's being guided by the same ritualistic sense of duty. She comes back to the reunion without Henry, invites Jeff to sneak away from the party with her, and as Doc Crocker points out in a footnote, "Apparently this is Mr. Selleck's delicate way of saying that this was when Tom was started . . ."

As he recaptures the events of his past, Jeff does occasionally allow himself a glimpse of feeling stripped clean of his illusions. He once believed his marriage had ended when Gertrude discovered a harmless golf course flirtation. He identifies his emotion as one of relief at the time, "as though there had been something I hadn't cared for very much and which now was ended."

> "This is it," I found myself saying, and the strangest part of that was that rather than being sad, frightened, or desperate about it I suddenly felt quito elated. And although I describe this emotion I am in no way proud of having possessed it.

Jeff allows himself to feel in this passage, then apologizes for having such an emotion. He realizes he is sick of all the rewards that Gateway City offers to the man who observes their rituals. He is sick of the crowd, the Sleepy Hollow Club, the house in Fleetwood, the cocktail parties, dances, drinking, "even sick of business." He has an almost overpowering impulse to run away, to begin again under a new name, to follow his dreams. But he does not run, of course. He is not actually free to go to the Klondike, not until he has faced Gertrude. Part of the upper-class ritual in Gateway City is that one delivers oneself up to the one victimized. Gertrude tells him that although she will never forget what he has done, she will shoulder her "Christian duty" and forgive him. He realizes "what she was saying was only good common sense," and he appreciates the fact that women seem to handle these emotional situations better than men. He is silent--"stunned" is the word he uses. He feels he had need to be jolted "out of that extremely peculiar way he had been thinking." He rationalizes in his memoirs that "there is something of the original Adam in every man which on occasion wants freedom from even the best of wives and families." And so another crisis passes. His

adjustment to his need to be free is one of complete capitulation to a sterile marriage and an existence he finds enslaving.

Jonas demonstrates in these incidents that Jeff's self-discovery is so compounded by other feelings--fear, insecurity, cultural conditioning--that his protagonist is unable to proceed across an initiation threshold. He retreats from the self-knowledge he is so close to realizing and covers his retreat with moralizing. "'I am not the kind of a person to make a bargain and then back out,'" Gertrude tells Jeff. He does not back out of his bargains either. In order to live with his commitment, he devotes himself to his business. The only freedom he wins is the freedom to give up the real estate business in exchange for the manufacture of musical automobile horns.

Jeff is always conscious of the duties and responsibilities of his social class, narrow and discriminating as those commitments may be. "A man assumes a certain station in life," he states, "a certain picture of himself, and he must live up to it or else pull down his colors. And I will say this for myself, that nowhere in my life have I ever pulled down my colors." He arrives at a

philosophy of fatality much like Harry Pulham's, that "there is some needle inside everyone which points the way he is to go without his knowing it."[21]

His thirty years of marriage he describes as "a business" which might take many years to build, but at which he and Gertrude have not yet arrived. Gertrude maintains her position in the center of the stage throughout. She has a purebred family background and a cultural education with which she not so subtly holds superiority over him. Even when he is hospitalized with his heart attack, she visits him with her arms full of self-interests, impractical ideas for "cutting down," and "facing facts." Jeff realizes he will always have to take care of her.

And so his life goes, to the sad, happy, plucky lyrics of Irving Berlin tunes. The colors fly as he sends his children east to school for "assurance," underwrites an extravagant wedding for Tinker, pays off his son's blackmailing seductress. "He cannot understand, even in the face of death, that the ever-expanding Coolidge economy was not a divine

[21] John J. Gross, John P. Marquand (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1963), p. 80.

fact. . . . In more irascible moments Selleck blames the Democrats and the devil, but he has graver hours and more penetrating doubts."[22]

"The subject of death and sickness brings in its wake a certain gravity which a man cannot ignore at this point," he says as he begins his recovery from the heart attack. He realizes these questions about who he is and where he is going are belated ones for a man of fifty-five to be asking. He finds himself alone, and he is not accustomed to being alone. He decides that all he has learned in his lifetime is "that there is truth behind all the cliches." He feels that "somehow he has never grown up." When Gertrude visits him in the hospital and attempts to make him "face the facts" about the severity of his illness and the changes they must make in their lives, he discovers facts are "slippery things" which you cannot hang on to. They do not know how to change their life style. Jeff has the illusion that they are "two little children . . . lost in the woods, tired, frightened, and bewildered." He realizes "there would be more peace of mind in going into debt than in

[22] Howard Mumford Jones, "Middle Class, Mid-Western Life," Saturday Review, 26 January 1952, p. 10.

trying to make the budget balance." The only answer is to make more money.

Doc Crocker feels that Jeff was beginning to find himself by the end of his narrative, that there were "indications that he was arriving at some kind of answer to all the intangibles which oppressed him."

These indications show he was reaching the threshold of maturity. He was beginning to add up some positive feelings about himself. As a conservative, he thought he had been useful in slowing down a world that moves too fast. As a businessman, he had found in work "salvation . . . when all else seemed to fail me." As a husband, he recognized that although he and Gertrude probably did not love each other at the time of their marriage, that now "it would be extremely difficult for us to live without one another." He was unsure about the existence of God, but one thing he was sure of: "courage is one of the few things in the world which are absolutely lovely." He defines this courage: "to keep the whole show running."

These conclusions are conclusions he had been arriving at all his life, but they do not "pop out" until "they are all concluded nicely." He decides that "all the elements of your salvation may be

right around you, but you don't put them together until a special moment arrives . . ."

In the final chapter, Jefferson and Gertrude are beginning to move away from their protracted childhood toward a more mutually supportive maturity. But not completely. In the face of financial disaster they exchange expensive Christmas gifts, still counting on a rainbow around the corner. Jeff returns to his business against Dr. Crocker's advice, and dies, thereby completing an idea he expressed early in the book: "The price of liberty is progress, but after all it seems to me to be as good a thing as anything else to lay your life down for."

When he is near the end of his life Jefferson Selleck is beginning to achieve the self-understanding typical of the decisive initiation. Whether he would have been able to use his discovery to change to a more healthful life style is questionable. As his publisher said, "his second attack was caused by the same things as his first one, the attempt to juggle more things than a man is supposed to juggle."

Whether Jefferson Selleck's story is a tentative or uncompleted initiation is problematic. He had made some self-discoveries, but they are more philosophical conclusions about human life in general

than about his own character. He does not honestly calculate the price he has paid for his social position and his material possessions. The discoveries he makes are so compromised by the society of which he is a cog that he does not have the freedom to put his discoveries to work. At the end he appears more serene and self-assured, more comfortable in his relationships with Gertrude and his children, and one feels he would continue to try for additional understanding. Both he and Gertrude are able to throw out one traditional Gateway City ritual: the family Christmas dinner. They honestly admit to each other they have always hated those dinners at the McCulloughs. So in the simple act of serving old-fashioneds before a send-out chop suey dinner on Christmas day, Jeff "could suddenly see the beckoning of the future . . ." He realizes there are some questions a man cannot answer, that some times a man must wait, "for even now I cannot say that in life I have ever arrived at anything which is final." He sees himself at the end as a child--still finding many questions beyond his awareness.

Jefferson Selleck stands outside the familiar pattern of initiation which Jonas has followed in

his earlier novels and to which he will return in the next one. There is no symbolic Utopia, nor archetypal night journey. There are no neurotic characters providing critical situations, nor is there a discovery of fool's gold at the end of the dream. Jefferson Selleck does examine his past in order to understand his present, and in so doing he fulfills the requirement that such an examination results in some degree of character alteration. Thus, *Jefferson Selleck* may be considered a novel in the initiation genre.

Chapter IV

Riley McCullough

The initiation of Riley McCullough is unlike the changes which take place in Jonas' protagonists in his earlier novels because Riley appears from the beginning to view the world and his own character through clear glass. Highly confident and sure of what he wants and who he is, he begins the first chapter promising to tell the story of his quest. This quest then follows an almost archetypal pattern of the crusading knight who endures the fire of repeated ordeals in order to win his lady. These trials, which are also typical of the initiation pattern, result in his changed character and new knowledge about the world he had seemed to know so well.

Riley announces in the second chapter that he is describing his own quest--a quest for someone who, like himself and all men is "lonely and unique." [23] He sees himself as a battler: "taking up arms against a sea of troubles . . .," encountering "innumerable slings and arrows . . ., unscrupulous women, middle-

[23] Carl Jonas, Riley McCullough (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1954), p. 12. This and all other quotations are taken from this first edition.

class folkways, editorial comment, public exhibition, growing pains, psychiatrists, and all the other evils of our age." At the end, as he promises, he finally gets what he wanted all along: marriage to his cousin, Anastasia Westward.

Because the quest is an integral part of the initiation motif, Riley's tribulations through which he emerges a changed man clearly place the novel in an initiation genre. As Eliade points out, "C. G. Jung has stressed the fact that the process that he terms individuation . . . constitutes the ultimate goal of human life."[24] Jung views this goal--the determination of one's indentity--as one achieved through a series of ordeals of an initiatory type. These ordeals may involve crises, suffering, "loss and reconquest of oneself, 'death and resurrection'"[25] There may also be the conviction that one has "betrayed the best that was in him." Having undergone such a crisis, the man centers his dreams on a new life, more "fully realized and significant." Such a renewal may result in a genuine religious conversion, although, as Eliade says, such definitive conver-

[24] Eliade, p. 135.

[25] Eliade, p. 135.

sions rarely happen in modern life. Riley McCullough does emerge at the end of his trials with more profound knowledge, and he does identify the experience as religious, himself as a prodigal son. In addition, he associates his need for someone with a universal need--"Everyone is homeless most of the time, and that's why everyone is lonely." In Riley, Jonas has chosen another universally symbolic character, as he did with the sailor in Beachhead on the Wind.

Riley survives the first of his related series of ordeals in the summer that he is sixteen. At this time he writes in his diary that he does not want to grow up. To be grown up, he feels, seems too final, too completed. Everything from that time on is "repetition." He feels much older than his parents and most other grown ups; therefore, he has to pretend to be only his real age. At this point he has already learned to smoke and to drink whiskey. The next step, he anticipates, is the necessity of losing his virginity. Having discovered "sex and time which is the same thing as poetry and love," he writes, "you are in all ways a man. You are way way out on the ledge, and you sense that there is some unattainable ledge above you." Here Jonas

makes clear the steps a young man climbs in what a boy like Riley defines as "grown-up." Riley has planned his own initiation journey and is actively cooperating in each event. During this summer, although Riley does not lose his virginity (Stasie accused him of not being "'old enough or something'" to awaken her passion) he does face the truth about his relationship with his father. B. P.'s reaction to Riley's wrecking the car and spending the night in jail strikes Riley as that of a "small soul." He sees his father as a nineteenth century man whose conception of Riley's world is an erroneous one because B. P. is a "kangaroo puppy still in the pouch and not used to the cold outside air, yet." Riley does not see anything Oedipal about their relationship. "It was just that the mature and the immature can never quite see eye to eye with each other." So Riley settles for telling his father lies. When his father asks how long he has been drinking, Riley explains his thinking to the reader, ". . . the fact was that I had a brain now, enough of a brain at least to know that the way to answer grownups was to tell them more or less what they wanted to hear." This experience with his father further confirms what Riley has always known about

him; therefore, he does not really arrive at a fresh conception of B. P. He does feel, however, the need to pass on what he has learned about their generation gap, and he has arrived at a threshold of maturity and independence which will allow him to further increase his knowledge of the world. The crisis is also a traumatic one because it leads to his taking the job at Padua, an encounter which he often refers to as a critical one.

Riley does not see the crash of Padua on the Pawpaw as having any moral-ethical component. The capsizing of W. W.'s scheme is a "chain reaction typical of the times." In addition, his low opinion of his father is reinforced: "it was typical of him that his moment of greatest triumph and confidence, his moment for dreams of wealth, his great euphoria should have been this moment when everything, hidden behind the tinted glasses he wore, was in the final stages of crumbling." For Riley, the summer at Padua was everything which W. W. had promised in the prospectus. The drama which unfolds when the sheriff's man comes for his uncle, however, opens Riley's mind to a new evaluation--the meaning of dignity. He sees their little picnic group as a gathering of giants, "either the last of the

giants of the olden times who had shaken the world or else the first of the new giants who would shake it again." He watches W. W. offer a toast to the "'inviolate human soul, to beauty, courage, and wonder.'" And to "'the tightrope,'" which all daring men walk. Then W. W. picks up his coat, straightens his tie, brushes his hair, and singing "Here's to Good Old Yale," he walks to the sheriff's man. " I suddenly thought of Socrates drinking the hemlock," Riley says.

Sixteen years later Riley returns to the ruins of Padua, builds a fire of the remains of Notre Dame, and sums up: "Here was the best summer of my life all gone. Here was my personal Midsummer Night's Dream vanished with that of all the others." Riley's initiation at this point is one of knowledge about himself and the world--that the dreams of "Our Revels Now Are Ended" are as fanciful for him as they were for Nick Bottom, and that while the world may need new giants to shake it, the world has a way of smashing its giants. Jonas shows with Padua and later with Nonesuch that the monuments man builds do not last, so man should not pin his dreams to them. Riley's immediate response to his uncle's calamity is to face a reality: "I had lost

everything except my virginity which was the only thing I profitably could lose." He is beginning to regroup his priorities, and he realizes that " all of us were out on the ledge now." Jonas shows in this passage that Riley has acquired a cruel lesson about life: man's hold on existence is precarious, and man's hold on dreams and possessions is even less sure. All a man can really hope for is that he will be able to accept the crash of his dreams with dignity.

The "ledge" of his early statement is metaphoric. Later, as the whole citizenry of Gateway City looks upward, the ledge becomes a reality. What seems to Riley an embarrassing inconvenience takes on cosmic proportion. Riley has always seen himself as ahead of his time, but as he stares down at the throngs awaiting his suicidal leap, he finds he cannot escape the twentieth century, for its representatives are out to destroy him. The people who come to reason with him--a policeman, a priest, a psychiatrist--refuse to believe his story but insist upon psychological or metaphysical solutions.

Jonas in these chapters demolishes these spokesmen and their professions with satire, and Riley finds they are figureheads representing the portion

of humanity which would destroy the nonconformist while appearing to help him. The mob promises him all the fruits that middle-America works to earn: a new wardrobe, a vacation at the Broadmoor, a GE refrigerator, a Roper Range, a set of luggage, but Riley knows he is confronting evil:

> Yes, it was very much the way it must have been when the devil took Christ up onto a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world. Yes, hideously that way, for every man at some time in his life becomes for himself at least his own Christ figure. All that the devil asked of a man was to bow down and worship him and, likewise, this was all that the twentieth century asked also, the worship of it, which was one kind of worship I could not engage in.

Riley senses that no matter how much they seem to be shouting "'don't jump'" they are actually ordering him to jump, and he knows he is being tested. What does a man do, he asks himself, "when faced with intolerable mutually exclusive alternative conclusions?" He finds the pressure of the mob's unspoken desire, the presence of Stasie down there looking up at him through opera glasses and smiling, have already killed him symbolically. Although he does not want to die, he feels as though he is already dead, for they have refused him what he wants

most--his identity. His realization of the high value he places on his unique self is an important initiative step toward greater maturity.

This sequence of Riley's initiation crises has more than one setting. Once he has escaped the ledge, he, like the knights of old, has other dragons to conquer. The mob disappears along with its bribes, but the jail remains, as does the psychiatrist who want to administer shock therapy. Surely, if the crowds represent evil to Riley, their spokesman, Dr. Gigg, the police psychiatrist with his fondness for heat is the devil.

When Riley is stranded on the ledge he imagines that every man at some time in his life becomes his own Christ figure. Jonas continues this analogy as Riley appears in court before his own father who sits in Godlike judgment--"Poor foetal creature." Riley sees the trial as farcical--"no jury of my peers." His father refuses to recognize him as his son, and Riley pleads guilty, "because in a police court . . . all courts . . . one always pleads guilty. He knows Gateway wants him to feel like a prodigal son who has "wasted his substance in riotous living." They want him to humble himself and accept their gifts. But Riley refuses the part. While in jail he turns his attention to "what I should do

next," further evidence that his ordeals have been the crucible through which a stronger individual is emerging. He draws both inspiration and direction for his plans from Iago: "'Come, be a man. Drown thyself? Drown cats and blind puppies . . . Put money in thy purse . . . Traverse. Go. Provide thy money!'"

Riley up to the time he is marooned on the ledge has had no childish illusions about the world. He understands his parents who in their refusal to be a part of the twentieth century have remained embalmed in the nineteenth. He sees the folkways of Gateway City as symbolized in Em--her bookcase of Great Books, chintz slipcovers, plastic place mats, the pressure to "'straighten out and be like everyone else.'"

"The world he lived in provided every possible thing for satisfaction except satisfaction for the psyche, everything except the Holy Grail." But up there on the ledge above the heat of the crowd, Riley has added to his wisdom and in jail he composes a fresh list of guidelines:

> <u>Axiom Number One</u>:
>
> If you are good-natured people step all over you.
>
> <u>Axiom Number Two</u>:
>
> If you make an ass out of yourself, people will ride you.

<u>Axiom Number Three</u>:

If you are a revolving door
you never get no place.

He decides these axioms add up to one conclusion: "if you have money you don't get pushed around, ridden, stepped on, or get no place." In setting down what he has learned, Riley demonstrates that he has supplemented his education about the nature of the world and the people in it. What he has compiled is his own survival kit. He is demonstrating not only an urgent need to survive but a resolution to beat the world of Gateway City at its own game. He plans to do all this while retaining what he values most: his identity. This experience might be termed a religious experience, for he has identified himself with Christ and also with the prodigal son. He has been harrassed by a throng from whom he felt "a hot glow like the glow off of molten metal." His feelings at this time might be said to be a continuation of the patterns of beliefs and ideals of the religious man of ancient times. Even though Riley is a modern man and non-religious, he has reached deep in a time of stress to pull out fragments of forgotten beliefs, which are a part of mankind's ancient initiatory patterns.

His imaginative process of devising an "initiatory scenario"[26] answers a deep need in man, as he experiences hazardous situations.

In the ledge scene Riley survives one of the most dramatic of the initiatory patterns: the symbolic death ("It was more as though I were dead already.") followed by resurrection (". . . I was still alive and not, as I had come to think, dead at all yet."). Riley's initiatory death then becomes the essential condition for his survival and spiritual restoration. In addition, his appreciation for Stasie as the one force which has saved his life becomes a powerfully restorative conviction. He turns back his depression and turns toward constructive action again. "The hope and dream of these moments of total crisis are to obtain a definitive and total *renovatio*, a renewal capable of transmuting life."[27] So Riley, instead of slipping off the edge as he had been about to, takes a deep breath and dashes down the ledge to the open window. That the police are waiting to trap him only reinforces Jonas' emphasis of the perils that lie in wait for the man who attempts to be himself.

[25] Eliade, p. 126.

[26] Eliade, p. 135.

Reviewers of Riley McCullough almost without exception describe the novel as a satire and Riley as a black sheep. In their assessment of his character, they usually align themselves with the world of Em. "Gateway City's" own critic has this to say about Riley:

> Mr. Jonas set out to portray Riley as the exceedingly black sheep of a good, middle class family. That would be all right except that what emerges, (if anything actually emerges) is a hollow-headed, stupidly rebellious, glib, cheap, amoral, anti-social wise guy. Any misfortune that befalls him he earns; he doesn't even rate the sympathy you'd give a Dead End kid.[27]

If one accepts the premise that a serious author does not satirize anything he does not care deeply about, and that he hopes his words will bring about a change--perhaps a world initiation rite; then one must conclude that Carl Jonas feels the Riley McCulloughs of the world are its catalysts. Riley is not a simple black sheep; he is much more completely delineated than such a stereotype.

When Stasie's phone call informs him that W. W. is dying, he begins the last lap of his initiation journey. He realizes that "just as he was for

[27] Victor P. Hass, "'Riley' Fails to Take Fire," Omaha World-Herald, 16 May 1954, p. 36-G.

me, W. W. was also the axle around which her life spun." As he taxis through the night to be with the two people he loves, he knows that W. W.'s death will mean the end of their dreams. This thought "took the loveliness out of the night, and snakes and eels replaced it." Jonas again employs the archetypal night journey as the point of crisis for his hero, as the beauty of the night is transformed by ugly reality.

Riley's confrontation with W. W.'s death changes him from his complete concentration on self to concern for another--Stasie ("I knew how much she needed help."). He even feels compassion for Bullet who has lost her. "I wanted to do something for him, find him a girl, do something to set him again in motion. I certainly had no rancor left now." Here Riley, as the initiated, wants to apply to Bullet the formula which has helped him: the necessity of action to replace despair. In the hospital Riley, who has always appeared so cocksure, confesses that he feels ill-equipped to deal with the realities a hospital stands for--life and death. All he has to deal with in a crisis, he feels, is the _New Yorker_ and Cogitology, the antithesis of superstitions, and "where had the anti-

thesis of superstitions led me?" At this moment of despair, when all he has wanted is about to happen, he finds what he needs is integrity. He makes a choice that would please B. P. He will do the "right thing"--even though it "seemed to be the death of wonder." He will marry Em. Here he falls back on the ritualistic behavior of the civilized people of Gateway City. He is also forced to recognize that despite his doubtful guilt, he is responsible for his own moral life. These conclusions come at the end of his night journey during which he has descended to the depths of his unconscious.

With W. W.'s death and the collapse of Nonesuch, another of Jonas' symbolic dream Utopias, both Riley and Stasie give up the last of their illusions. Riley says of Stasie: "Something had happened to her in the last twenty-four hours, something which had altered her and everything else completely."

Riley and Stasie know their dreams of Nonesuch are exactly that--there is no such place. "This was the moment which some people call 'growing up,'" he concludes, but it was the moment also which some other people call "heartbreak." Stasie's initiation story follows Riley's in a pale duplication which is not closely explored. As with Gertrude in <u>Jefferson</u>

Selleck, Jonas does not analyze the female initiation as exhaustively as he does the male. Both Riley and Stasie are rebels against Gateway City's pressures to conform. Both resist, and in their resistance have to endure a series of crises.

In the end both recognize the gossamer fabric of their dreams. Riley shouts at God, "I don't want the walls of Jericho pulled down. And I don't want the sun and moon to stand still. I just want a little civility, that's all." As though in answer, a rainbow appears after the storm, and while Riley at the time can see nothing to hope for any more, "that rainbow . . . as it always had . . . seemed to spell 'Hope' somehow."

Chapter V

Our Revels Now Are Ended

In Our Revels Now Are Ended Jonas contrasts neurotic characters with "normal" personalities and reveals how neurosis can prevent the completion of an initiation journey. His focus, as the title suggests, is upon man's illusions, how he may make up a life for himself completely stripped of reality. If he can replace these dreams with fact, he may complete his initiation and emerge a more mature person, knowledgeable about his identity and his place in the world. Some people can never accomplish this kind of growth, however, because they have permanently harnessed their lives to their dreams. They are like Siamese twins with vital organs attached. To end the connection with unreality must mean an end to life.

Wesley Warren, for whom complete initiation is possible, changes from a man who trusts people, who believes in the American Dream, who cherishes a romantic vision of love, and who maintains that one can solve all difficulties by loyalty to one's commitments. As the "normal" character, he eventually frees himself from believing implicitly in all these ideals in order to survive.

Wesley's strongly defined sense of "rightness" and "wrongness" has governed his decisions successfully until he falls in love with Mildred. His puritan orientation toward life restrains him from making love to her before their marriage, even though both desire it very much. "'Everything's got to be right in our marriage, Mildred,'"[28] he tells her. His conviction--that a man can always manage events to be "absolutely right" if he follows an ethical plan--seems to be rooted in his Methodism and onetime goal of becoming a minister. He does not allow himself to fall in love, for example, until he has first achieved his goals in business. When his business success is assured and he meets Mildred, he feels the time is propitious for romance. He knows he is in love because he recognizes a feeling "about which people never seemed to become tired of describing," and he knows he is "about to live for the first time." Mildred is the prize at the end of "a journey he had been making for years." In reality, however,

[28] Carl Jonas, Our Revels Now Are Ended (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1957), p. 54. This and all other quotations are taken from this first edition.

he is beginning an initiation journey which ends in the death of his love, his revels (illusions) destroyed.

Wes's friendship with Ben exemplifies a part of his delusion. They have been friends since boyhood. Both feel in the beginning that they are "best friends." Although Wes is Ben's boss, Ben feels they "just work for the same company, of which he [Wes] happens to be owner and president." When Wes must share the crisis in his marriage with someone, he chooses Ben: "'I need you, Ben. I need you in more ways than you know. . . . On the surface everything looks good. . . . But I need people I can count on around me.'" He has not at this point taken an honest appraisal of the nature of his need or the nature of the people--Ben and Mildred--whom he has chosen to bear the weight of his deficiency.

He admits to Ben and later to Senator Keester that he has political ambition, for he believes the Midwest is the world. What other logical step could there be after ownership of an influential newspaper? So intense is his drive and so naive is his trust, that he believes the senator's promise to deliver a cabinet post in exchange for the

political support of his publications.

He also deceives himself in love. With all evidence to the contrary, he cannot accept Mildred's inability to give love. Even when his agony becomes so great that he nearly kills himself, he refuses to reconcile himself to the truth of her condition. Instead, he sets for himself a policy of containment: "One drew a line and then held it, and if one held it long enough the sickness inside, the devil inside, whatever it was inside would destroy itself as all unnatural things had to." To make this policy, which he admits is a negative one, endurable, he vows to "work harder, throw more energy into everything." At this time Wes begins his initiation journey toward reality.

His first step is to admit he knows "almost nothing about love." He realizes his early vision of "the boy and the girl in the canoe shooting the rapids together" is incredibly naive. His near escape from death, his comprehension that his despair is potentially suicidal, and his emerging realization of the degree of his own innocence also demonstrate that Wes is embarked upon the road to greater maturity. He realizes as he drives on after his accident that having a policy does not insure secur-

result in a decisive initiatory change.

Mildred, on the other hand, knows that she does not want to "go back to that place where they loaded more and more things on you," which is the adult world. As she struggles back from death, she sees the people trying to save her as symbols of all the things she hates about life. She sees life as "ruthless, remorseless, inept and critical as it slapped one side of your face and then the other and demanded that you 'Wake up! Snap out of it! Get wise to yourself! Get in there and start pitching!'" She feels her problem is that although she does not really want to murder herself, she does want to destroy life which does not see her as she is but continually insists that she be "something else." This "something else" appears to be that she be grown up. Mildred does not really want to be an adult. She wants someone else to solve her problems for her.

Jonas points out repeatedly the childlike qualities of Mildred. Although she is twenty-six, she is still tied to her mother; she is both virginal and sheltered. Twice a day someone tidies her room, which looks like one in a sorority house complete with college pennant. Her mother calls

ity and that all his accomplishments add up to "absolute pointlessness." He understands his need is to "go home," although at this time he does not really know where "home" is.

That Wes begins to change after his confrontation with death links his story symbolically with ancient initiation rites in which a youth endures a ritual death prior to a rebirth and the emergence of a new personality.[29] His experience of near-death followed by his expressed desire to live: ". . . you're lucky to be alive, Wes"--results in a change in his mode of thinking and living, and in the ancient sense, "reveals to him the sacredness of human life and of the world. . . ."[30] The highway becomes symbolic to him of the road he must stay one--his commitment to remain with Mildred--and he sees his accident as "going off" that road. Despite his problems, he knows he wants to live, but his whole careful system of standards and goals is shaken. His sense of security at his escape is only a momentary relief. He knows his destination is uncertain. This ordeal then is a way of preparing him for a series of crises which will

[29] Eliade, p. 89.

[30] Eliade, p. 19.

her "baby," and Mildred sees herself as "just a little girl from Gateway City . . . and I've never been anywhere or seen anything." She is not happy about this condition, but lethargy overcomes her whenever she considers changing her state. If she cries with anger and desperation about her unworldliness, her mother comforts her saying, "'Baby, my baby. There. There baby.'" There is no response in Mildred, only coldness.

She wants Wes because she thinks he will protect her from all the things she fears--loneliness, the panic at not being able to act, the need to rely on anger to hide her insecurity. She feels that when she entrusts herself to a psychiatrist that he will be able to ferret out the source of her illness. But, as her analyst points out, "'there's a difference between _getting_ well and wanting to _be made_ well . . .'" and he finally severs his connection with her.

As he explains to Wes, "'When we have a fairly mature person with an island of immaturity here and there we get along quite well, but when almost the entire personality structure is childish it makes it very hard to find a place to start from.'" His attempts to help Mildred see that her problem is rooted in her childhood relationship with her father fail, as she retreats into fits of asthma or verbal

parrying. The problem as she sees it is that there is nothing wrong with her love, but that everyone else "seemed to want something for love."

When her mother questions Mildred's need for psychiatric therapy and suggests she have a baby instead, Mildred is enchanted: "one's big stomach was an unmistakable badge that one without question had finally joined the grown-up ones." When Wes concurs, she has to return from her romantic dreams of beautiful children to the necessity of going to bed with her husband in order to conceive a child. She responds with anger at his taking her fantasy so literally. Once again she retreats from the opportunity to grow up. Maturity, Dr. Edwards explains, is reality, "'the things with which you have to come to terms: sex, love, money, beauty, time, justice.'" Mildred visions maturity as something she can have if someone will tell her exactly what a mature person looks like.

Mildred's psychoanalysis is abortive. Although she makes a "descent into the depths of the psyche, peopled with monsters,"[31] she refuses to talk about these horrors with her doctor. She never assumes her own responsibility for making the

[31] Eliade, p. 165.

analysis a success. Mildred, like Lieutenant Flood and Eleanor Geiger, is unable to change because she expects the world to do the changing to accommodate her dreams. Jonas demonstrates again how destructive such a neurotic person can be, how heavy a burden of despair he inflicts upon the conscientious people who love him, and how impossible it is for him to change.

Mircea Eliade states that psychoanalysis can be considered a "secularized form of initiation, that is, an initiation accessible to a desacralized world."[32] He compares such an analysis with the ordeals of traditional societies. A successful analysis results in a transformed personality just as the initiate emerges from his descent to the Underworld a changed person. Analysis fails for Mildred, however, as it failed for Faith in Snowslide because they never really take part.

Ben is another neurotic character, even though he is able to funtion creatively in the world. His relationships with people are as immature as Mildred's, and he compounds the burdens inflicted upon Wes by Mildred. As Julia tells him, "' . . . all your life you've refused to be a whole man, Ben.'" His doctor adds, "'You don't participate.

[32] Eliade, p. 165.

Even your business isn't really participation. It's only reporting. And that's only observing, Ben.'" Like Mildred, he feels some "unfair thing" has "decreed that he should miss" tender domestic scenes such as he sentimentalizes Wes and Mildred and all young married couples have. Mildred becomes a love symbol to him, the "essence of what men longed for." His sense of reality is as defective as Mildred's, and so he encourages Mildred in her flight from truth. He persists in treating her like a normal woman, which she is not. When she discovers he is not going to rescue her, is not going to accept her "no," she is overcome with fright at "the implacable turning of the world." She realizes she cannot have the world changed for her, that the world is hammering at her to do the changing. Childlike, she runs from Ben, and it is to her childhood home--to her own room which her mother "had kept the way it always had been"--that she escapes. She feels confident when she swallows the sleeping pills that she can "show them all whether or not the earth could turn without her." When she realizes her error, it is too late.

Jonas brings Mildred to the threshold of initiation, but because of her illness, she cannot

cross. "She loved the power that this necessity for being rescued from situations gave her and . . . getting well was the last thing she wanted."[33]

The world catches up with Wesley at the party in the beautiful glass house he had dreamed would be the setting for his perfect life. When he must confront the knowledge that his wife, his best friend, and the senator have betrayed him, he realizes that "he was alone and always had been so." He vomits, literally, "everything that had happened . . . everything he believed in." He had made his commitment to love Mildred forever even though it might conflict with his political ambition, and even though she perhaps might not ever love him. Now he describes the glass house as a "house of cards," evidence of his disenchantment with the dream and his complete initiation. Mildred, he decides, is on her own, wherever she is and whatever she has done.

In exploring the character of Wes, Carl Jonas has followed him through profound crises, all typical of an initiation journey: intense suffering, the loss and reconquest of self, symbolic death and resurrection. The hope which lies at the core

[33] Victor P. Hass, "Something for Love," _New York Times_ (13 January 1957), p. 5.

of any human life is that the soul can renew itself after such despair. Jonas leaves his protagonist shaken. But having acted with strength to rid his life of its illusions, both in philosophy and in human relationships, it is probable that Wes will be able to rebuild his life on healthier foundations. Wes, then, is an example of a mature man emerging stronger and wiser after having weathered soul-trying experiences.

Philosophically, this novel may be placed with Jefferson Selleck, for Jonas is writing about mature characters who are a part of the Gateway City establishment. Even though their lack of clear vision of Gateway City's environmental pressures results in pain and disillusion, they remain a part of the social structure. Wes certainly achieves more self-awareness than did Jefferson, but both appear to support the theory that it is "the moral element in life, individual responsibility, that gives life its significance."[34] Unlike Riley McCullough who wants to shake the supporting pillars, they will stay on, "sadder but wiser." These are the people about whom Jonas continues to write in his next two novels.

[34] Orville Prescott, "Books of the Times," New York Times (16 January 1957), p. 29.

Chapter VI

Lillian White Deer

In Lillian White Deer Carl Jonas explores three related themes: hope, time, and love. All of these are interwoven into a single dominant initiatory theme: man's search for his own "story." For, as Jonas concludes, "To have no story at all, that would be the most awful thing of all."[35] In the search for their "stories" each character endures a series of crises from which he emerges with hope of "a more realistic and creative brand." Such a search--pursued to find additional self-knowledge and the meaning of existence in an enigmatic world--becomes a quest, an important part of the initiation genre.

All the characters in this novel are mature in years, yet they may be said to be demonstrating a concept of initiation mentioned in Joseph Campbell's The Hero with a Thousand Faces. Campbell describes initiation as a stage in all human life. He derives his description from myths of the hero's quest for accommodation and union with the temptations and forces of existence, some of which are

[35] Carl Jonas, Lillian White Deer (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 288.

evil.[36]

Most of the characters in _Lillian White Deer_ do have stories, stories in which they have "made themselves up" as certain types who behave in certain ways under certain conditions. Their problems develop when they begin to discover the characters they have made up for themselves are not in harmony with "the growling thing underneath" that forces itself into the open. Initiation takes place then when the character recognizes and accepts this submerged part of his identity and becomes a more comfortably integrated personality. In so doing, both Robert and Lillian reject a society whose values do not allow them to exist with dignity and self-respect.

Lillian White Deer has "made herself up" into a woman who does not fall in love, but she does fall in love and with someone (Richard) who cannot love anyone. A warm, honest, sensual woman, she is an archetypal earth mother. She is also a woman who trusts those she loves; like a gentle doe she walks into Richard's snare. Although she provides him with the heat of her passion and the

[36] Joseph Campbell, _The Hero with a Thousand Faces_ in Marcus, p. 202.

warmth that accompanies acceptance and understanding of his needs, she cannot hold his loyalty. He betrays her faith in him and disillusion follows. When she discovers his infidelity and loses his child, she runs to Fool's Gold and the mountains to reexamine her life and values.

The town Fool's Gold, a recurring symbol, like Excelsior in Snowslide or Padua in Riley McCullough represents "the sentimental windy pale of abstract perfectionism" in contrast to Gateway City's "pragmatic vulgarity." Old George had hoped to "create a town where the best of everything in the world could be enjoyed." But like any Garden of Eden, "there are a few unexpected terrors in the shrubbery." In her time of despair Lillian analyzes her love for Richard and concludes that while she is grateful he has shown her that she is capable of love, this capacity has made her too vulnerable. "'It's the thing that makes you willing to let yourself be used to mop the floor with,'" she tells Robert.[4] This knowledge--that love can be a barbed hook, painful and difficult to disengage--is the final extension of Lillian's ordeal. Her inability to have a child, the violation of her trust by Richard, the frustration of her attempt to dupli-

cate the oil spot of Temmoku ware--all culminate in the decision she makes when Richard is pulled from the smashed cockpit of his car. She knows she does still love him, that he needs her, and that she must return to him.

In recognizing the nature of her love, Lillian completes a decisive initiation. Her pinpointing of Richard's "monstrous unfairness" as typical of those who seem to live "beyond consequences" coincides with Robert's earlier characterizing of his brother. She sees Richard clearly at last and knows the additional pain inherent in continuing to be his wife. Although she was not "'brought up to forgive or forget anything,'" she realizes now that her love is "'the thing that makes you willing to forgive everything that's wrong with someone else. It's the thing that makes it so you don't care whether you understand someone or not.'"

When Lillian returns to Richard, Robert endures the nadir of his hopes. His despair forces him to acknowledge Lillian's enduring love for his brother, and he is bemused that such an ordeal need not be a dramatic thing. As he watches Lillian comfort her husband in a "quietly professional manner, he feels the "full measure of despair

is simply the realization that there is no one to love." When she looks at Robert--a look which says good-bye--he is happy that he "had been offered a bed of thorns to lie on." This bed of thorns, a painful substitution of martyrdom for love, is the work which becomes his hope, the hope he knows always follows despair.

Robert's journey to this crisis is one that has taken more than forty years. He has always been the good guy, forever "involved in Richard's cleanup work." He has confronted falsely pregnant schoolgirls, cleared the way for the marriage of Richard and Lillian, and whisked Inez away from their wedding. When he reluctantly transmits Richard's request that Lillian return to him, she analyzes Robert: "'You take your mission seriously. . . . You do what they tell you to do, but I don't see why you're willing to.'" Even Richard senses in him the "growling thing underneath" which he is not himself aware of until Lillian "explores" him, and he begins to recognize his own needs. As Robert changes from scapegoat to hero, he does battle with the monsters, Richard and Dorothy, and the rapacity they represent. Robert's initiation journey thus parallels the mythical quest

which ends in greater understanding of himself and his life and a recognition of the universality of evil.

In juxtaposition to Robert's life is the book he is writing. As Robert investigates the Tory, he is at the same time exploring himself, for he is a Tory too--"a strongly bourgeois character." A Tory's troubles, he decides, arise from naivete and over-simplification. (Robert arrives slowly at a true image of Richard, of Dorothy, and even of Old George.) A Tory's (Robert's) unwillingness to compromise (to divide the farm, one-half for housing, one-half for parks) may be suicidal (loss of job, position, money, family). He may realize too late the consequences of requiring unconditional victory, but believes implicitly in the excellence and possibilities of life after despair. When Robert understands that these truths about the Tory apply also to himself, he is able to come to terms with his life, to turn away from Gateway City and to reconstruct a new life in Fool's Gold.

When he must return to Gateway City, however, he learns that while he has approached a state of idyllic timelessness in the mountains, time has

continued to pass in the real world, and he must face the consequences of an irreversible action. He thus comes full circle from the time that he escaped from dancing class as a youth: he is once more isolated and stranded. But now, as an adult, he can draw a conclusion: "Knowing that what has been done cannot be undone is what the knowledge of time is, and this is not the pleasantest kind of knowledge to come by." He emerges from his ordeals: the loss of his job, his father, his marriage, his mistress, his political dream, the threat to his financial security, and the assault upon his idealism, still believing in "excellence and possibility." He knows he can even endure more because there is this possibility, more realistic and creative after despair.

Robert's initiation is a decisive one. Not only does he make radical changes in his life style and geographical location, from marriage to divorce, from respectability to disreputability, from Gateway City to Fool's Gold, but he is making a valiant attempt to listen to the growling thing underneath.

Robert's wife, Dorothy, contrasts strongly with him in her philosophy of life and in what she finds beautiful. Her homes always smell of cleaning--furn-

iture polish, disinfectant, and wax. She is pictured most often with hard, mechanical things--pens, heavy eye glasses, telephones. When she talks, her words din rhythmically and metallically, like "peas shelled into a pan," and she has about as much sensitivity to others as a pea. "'Here is everything you need,'" she tells Robert in what she assumes is a reconciliation scene, and she points to orderly rows of shoes, suits in plastic bags, and drawers with clean piles of underwear. What she understands and needs and loves is money and power, and what she feels for Robert and June is pride of ownership. They are reflections of her success as wife and mother. In the end, her own father blames her for authoring the tragedy which finally garners in the whole family. "'You made it up from first to last,'" he says. "'You are responsible for all of it.'"

At the scene of Richard's accident Dorothy encounters despair when she must see what she has done to her own life and the lives she has tampered with. The fact that she does at last accuse herself, "'My God, what have I done . . .,'" implies the possibility of her change. Jonas does, then, bring her to the point of tentative initiation. She has lost her husband, the uncritical love of

her father, and her supportive alliance with Richard. These conditions alone will force change. In addition, her acknowledgement of evil in herself is so overpowering that she runs "blindly out of the hospital into the deepening summer twilight."

Richard's reclamation, however, seems impossible. He is "a smasher of beautiful things." His life has been studded with "amatory mischances," and he does not recognize love when it happens to him. Richard's plunder of the farmland to build cheap housing developments makes him a symbol of an insistent fact of modern life--the violation of nature for profit. He is equally ruthless with Lillian's love, fighting it, suppressing it, blaspheming against it. He cannot even accept the reality of his approaching death but attempts to use his cancer to win back his wife. When he is smashed up in the wreck, he finally does reach out his hand to her, "instinctively and blindly," the only evidence that there may be hope for change in him.

Old George, whose dream for Fool's Gold becomes more realistic, is a character who arrives at a new conception of himself, thus demonstrating that humans are capable of change at any age. George has always been a meddler in the lives of others.

His formula for correcting any undue deviation in others is to "straighten them out," a process which is a civilized ritual that still endures in Gateway City. In the character of George, Jonas explores still another kind of despair, which is directed against people who try to change those who "march to a different drummer." The author demonstrates that interference with the destiny of others results in disaster, as old George, Richard, and Dorothy all disrupt the lives of others. Jonas also shows how futile their attempts can be, thereby again supporting Marcus' theory that people must learn from their own experiences. George does realize at last that he has "'made such a mess of things'" and, ironically, asks Robert to "'help get me straightened out.'" Not even then does he recognize the destruction such a method can create in another person. Robert does know, however, that there is no use in telling George. By the end of the story, "all the growling things" emerge from their shadowy homes in the unconscious, despair is seen as a reality, and there is for all the possibility of hope.

For all, that is, except Inez, "who really had no story." Her position in the novel illumin-

ates the ruthlessness of Richard, as he uses her, maligns her, and humiliates her, and through her degrades Lillian.

In Lillian White Deer Jonas employs several of the concepts of the initiation story. Robert's journey to Fool's Gold after his break with Dorothy represents the descent into the unconscious of the mythical night passage. He drives through the darkness in a near trance because of illness and fatigue. "Except in shreds and patches here and there, it is hard for me to remember that trip." Because of the snow storm he does not know whether he is "going anywhere at all." When he does arrive, the town is "calm, snow-covered but quiet," the cottages "white like gravestones in a graveyard." This association of his journey with the unconscious and with peace and death clearly indicates the traumatic nature of the trip--a journey both emotional and physical:

> At this point in a passage across the plains, that self, that personality subject to the possible which one has found, one again loses. Identity seems to explode. One is again pulverized by limitlessness and eternity, and there can come sensations of terror.
>
> . . . .
>
> For finally, at long last, the great plains do end, and there are white and shining mountains of hope ahead. They come like symbols of life.

Another incidence of the night journey takes place in South Station which epitomizes for Robert the "midnight of the soul," a despair that "seems to have to come before one can begin to hope." When he feels trapped in the circular argument of Richard and Dorothy, his desperation centers on the need to leave the circle, "to get this South Station out of my mind."

Robert begins his interlude with Lillian in an almost halucinatory state. Although he is not virginal, this sexual relationship lifts him to a new plateau of sexual knowledge that fits the initiation theme. He realizes that his life before Lillian has been one of getting "along very well with the images of meaning until one has . . . encountered the real thing." Such an encounter, he finds, is "shattering and enigmatic," and he questions other "images of meaning" in his life.

Robert thus achieves a new self-awareness which critic Carl Benson says must occur "before one can discover how much that self is limited and shaped by the community."[37] Although Robert has much struggle and pain ahead, at this point he is

[37] Carl Benson, "Conrad's Two Stories of Initiation," PMLA 69 (1954), 46.

moving rapidly to embrace new knowledge and understanding of himself and the world. Again, Jonas' exploration of the male protagonist is far more intuitive, sensitive, and probing than is his treatment of the female, but Lillian is more carefully delineated than any other female figure in his fiction.

Jonas follows Lillian's developing awareness of the tragic nature of her love for Robert, but because one sees her through Robert's eyes and cannot therefore identify with her feelings, one sees her at a distance. Although Lillian's initiation is decisive: she accepts that, willingly or not, her life is yoked to Richard, her position in the novel is clearly as the catalyst. "In _Lillian White Deer_ he [Jonas] tries to come to terms with a family ethic threatened by an invasion of new ideas and people from beyond the prairie horizon."[38] It is Lillian who brings those new ideas to the prairie, and in so doing, she sets in motion the machinery of change.

[38] Conrad Knickerbocker, "Creator of Alarums and Excursions," _New York Times_ (23 February 1964), p. 31.

Chapter VII

The Observatory

In his exploration of man's confrontation with crisis, his immersement in despair and his emergence with hope of a more "realistic and creative kind," Jonas has, in his first six books, followed separate casts of characters, as they reach various degrees of initiation. In this, his seventh novel, Jonas stays with his protagonist of Lillian White Deer--Robert Jointer--and shows where Robert's new insights lead him.

On a lesser scale, he also details Dorothy's journey as she crosses the threshold from tentative to decisive initiation. All the characters and dramatic events are designed to compel Robert to experiment with his new knowledge and to arrive at the kind of life in which he feels most at home.

Robert begins his story on an optimistic note: "It is with that 'reflowering of hope'--if there be such a thing--that I would like to concern myself now."[39] Here he is referring to the hope that follows despair, "'so that in the end the unconvinc-

[39] Carl Jonas, The Observatory (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1966), p. 11. This and all other quotations are taken from this first edition.

ing and broad smile [the all-purpose American smile] may be replaced with one which is certainly a little sadder, but more direct and genuine!" At the point where Jonas picks up his life, Robert is in the process of divorcing Dorothy and is working as director of the Fool's Gold Academy of Extended Research. He explains that his life with Dorothy had "seemed surrounded by vast irrelevance." A moment had arrived when "nothing in my life seemed to be what I had had in mind when I had started out with marriage."

The words of Thoreau which appear on the letterhead of the Academy also inspire Robert as he begins his life at Fool's Gold by building his own house:

> I went to the woods because
> I wished to live deliberately,
> to front only the essential
> facts of life, and see if I could
> not learn what it had to teach,
> and not, when I came to die, dis-
> cover that I had not lived.

In Robert's words, ". . . I imagined that if I had to construct my life all over again, as one who is divorced must, I would do it more soundly if I started at the back-and- hand level." But building his own house in this mountain Garden of Eden does not insulate him from despair. He finds that he often feels like weeping, and he soon learns

the cathartic effect of purging his pain by confiding in his new friend, Walter. Walter appears to symbolize the philosophy Robert will eventually embrace when he has completed his own explorations of himself. In the meantime Walter gives him hope and courage to go on creating his new life. In the following months at Fool's Gold, Robert begins to reach into his subconscious for threads of earlier tentative initiations which brought him close to new knowledge, and he blends those with new discoveries to synthesize a new philosophy. As he reconsiders his past, new catalyses occur in both Fool's Gold and in Gateway City to which he returns in order to see his lawyers.

When he prepares to take his daughter, June, out to lunch, for instance, he finds he is afraid. He feels untested and juvenile as though he is on a college date. His role, the divorced father, is one he has not yet learned. In his awkwardness he wants to tell her something important: the relationship of the midwestern countryside to his feeling about life--"that it was flesh of my flesh, or earth of my earth. I wanted to say that all of us were made out of it: me, her mother, herself." He restrains the urge to tell her why life is as it

is because he feels he is behind "the Corn Curtain" --the generation gap that separates them and makes communication unlikely. At this point Robert is acutely aware of his oneness with nature and all of mankind in his need to communicate what he has learned.

Later, when he and Dorothy have their first meeting after deciding upon divorce, he is surprised to discover "the telepathy that exists between people who have been married for a long time." He admits there is a great deal about divorce he does not know, "that love or no love--for one comes not to know what love means--the thing does not happen simply with the intention of it or with the taking of oneself elsewhere." At the end of their talk he thinks the tears will fall again, "but this time they didn't come." He has completed this painful part of the separation.

His observations extend outside himself to the community of Fool's Gold. He senses the community feels "let down and vaguely angry" with Forrest when he executes his dog for killing sheep. Robert recognizes that Forrest has simplistically believed the unwritten law of the West that sheep killers be killed, but in Fool's Gold "there was no folklore

. . . nor were there any folkways except those we had read about. All the stories about the feuds between cattlemen and sheepmen, the women beyond price, the dance-hall girls with hearts of gold were false. . . . Men's honor could be bought," Robert knows. "Out there we tried to march to too many drums and dance to too many tunes." In demonstrating his recognition of evil in the world wherever it is, he is repudiating his quest. A quest is a turning away from the values of one's home, and through Forrest's tragedy Robert sees the universality of the very ills he is trying to escape.

On the day of the divorce hearing, he realizes he has been naive in thinking his life would become different at once, "but the truth was that a judge can no more make a divorce than a priest can make a marriage." He finds he is bewildered and depressed. There is no new sense of freedom; life is unchanged. He has divorced his wife and his hometown, but the "old inner monologues and dialogues still go on. A vacuum has not been filled." He proceeds to fill the emptiness with work: planning for the new telescope.

Old George's death then requires him to con-

front additional truths about his life, for even in death George continues to usurp lives. "Here I was," Robert says, "after having refused to be taken over by Gateway City, being taken over by Fool's Gold and him." Robert is put in charge of a vast project, and he does not "like any part of it." For the first time he realizes he may be trapped for the rest of his life. This conclusion marks his unwilling initiation into the business world. When old George first tried to educate him about the stock transfer, it was "as though I were a child; and if I am honest I have to say that I felt like one." Now he must resolve his conflict between his duty to George and his dreams and the pursuit of his own destiny. He forces himself to keep his commitment to the Observatory.

Whether this commitment is worth keeping begins to occur to him as he observes the town's reaction to murder. When Forrest shoots himself on the mountain, Robert is not certain a mighty principle is involved and asks, "Is there a difference between the maintenance of dignity, no matter how small, and the sweeping of dirt under a rug?" He decides then that there is "some measure of maturity to be found in a willingness to reject that blame-

lessness only saints . . . are capable of." He remains noncommittal about Forrest's sacrifice, a sacrifice he sees as one more absurdity in an absurd world.

At the end, he accepts a fellowship offered by Tess with the purpose of ensuring his silence. Her attempt to buy him convinces him he does not belong in Fool's Gold any longer: "They had misjudged me in thinking that there had to be a bribe, and for that misjudgment they could at least pay." He is tempted to create a poetic justice by leaving Norman as the "keeper of the asylum" but responds to Walter's letter warning him against cynicism. As he prepares to leave, he agrees with Walter that most men do not make dramatic exits; they leave and enter in an orderly manner. At the end, then, his final initiation is one of increased knowledge of the value of dignity and one's responsibility to oneself, the same conclusions at which Riley McCullough arrived.

Dorothy's decision to leave Fool's Gold takes place earlier. She realizes her new clothes and hair-do are not going to win back Robert. She confesses as she leaves that she "'did a great many wrong things. But the reasons I did the wrong

things weren't bad. I did wrong things for right reasons, but then I thought about you, and it seemed to me that you have done right things for all the wrong reasons. It's something to think about, isn't it?'"

When Robert and Dorothy have their affair, she is initiated into a wider knowledge of sex and sexual desire, and learns to communicate with a man on a more honest and mature level. At the end of the summer she decides to leave Fool's Gold because "'this isn't the way to be good. You just can't be good unless you are good to someone.'" She foresees that life in Fool's Gold is wrong for Robert too. In addition, she admits the marriage is really over; she will not wait for him any longer. When she suggests that they ought to write off the Fool's Gold project, she is making another break --a cutting away from old George and his plans for her life. She begins her search for her own identity. As she goes out she says, "'No, I've liked this summer with you, but it's all over, and I don't know how adult this kind of entertainment has been, but it hasn't done any harm. But the thing is, that no matter how adult the entertainment is, you get where you want something serious after awhile.'"

In achieving a comfortable sense of her identity and her place in the world, Dorothy has achieved a decisive initiation. Except for Lillian, she is the only female character in Jonas' works to do so.

Like Robert and Dorothy, Forrest has seen Fool's Gold as a place to begin a new life. His election seems to him like the first installment toward fulfillment of his dream, but his confrontation with the drunken revelers is a forewarning of his symbolic crucification. He has always believed wrong must be punished, so he executes his dog for killing sheep. On the mountain he is willing to lay down his life "for a personal dignity that demanded that Howard and Tess do something dignified for once in their lives." They cannot meet his test because, like Richard, they have gotten by with things all their lives. Forrest then feels he has no choice but to shoot himself. Robert sees Forrest's dilemma as "absurdity to the point of nausea."

In the end, Robert diagnoses himself as no longer needing Fool's Gold, which he labels a "universal suburb to which people from other places move." Norman defines it as "'more of a super-duper Hartford Retreat . . . only the lunatics

diagnose themselves. And when they do, they leave and make room for the incurable ones.'" Robert cannot deny that what Norman says is true, and he prepares his exit: "What I was beginning to realize was that there were never any final curtains and that to get on or off stage you had to plan your entraces and exits." His revels ended, Robert has no further use for Fool's Gold. He has finally put himself and his world into a perspective with which he can live. Perhaps perspective is Jonas' goal for his initiated. That he has chosen an observatory as the title of the novel and as its focal symbol leads one to several conclusions.

Although an observatory permits an extensive view of natural phenomena, the observer is at the same time separated from the objects examined. Such a view, both comprehensive and objective, can correlate a meaningful interrelationship of ideas and of people. Carl Jonas has thus chosen as his central symbol both a place and a process by which he can observe mankind as man discovers for himself what is good, what is evil, and what balance is most healthful for his life. When man has made this

discovery, he may be considered to be initiated. Once the man has endured a period of ferment and has resolved his uncertainty, he often needs to communicate what he has learned to the rest of the world.

The observatory then symbolizes not only the means by which Jonas' characters extend their vision, it symbolizes Jonas' method of communicating this perspective to his readers.

Conclusion

Carl Jonas, as he expands the traditional initiation patterns, exposes his characters to critical situations that force confrontation with themselves and with the world. Many of these situations, which are contemporary in nature, have parallels in ancient myths. They become familiar as they recur throughout many of the novels:

1. The urban man often attempts an escape to some kind of Utopia in his quest for new values and a new identity. His dreams, which sustain but delude him, turn to "fool's gold" when he is forced by a crisis to face life's nightmares. Usually, this confrontation results in a more honest appraisal of life, and the character is initiated. Jonas' characters, like Babbitt and Apley, sometimes attempt to escape their social worlds, but their revels end. They find value in a sense of duty and dignity.

Utopia exists in an idyllic mountain comunity in _Snowslide_, in _The Observatory_, and in _Lillian White Deer_. The dream is Padua and Nonesuch in _Riley McCullough_; the dream is the glass house in _Our Revels_. The men dream of the payroll money, the goldmine, the Green Island in _Beachhead_.

Jefferson Selleck believes in a concept just as amorphous: the American Dream.

2. Jonas places a heavy burden on his heroes to repair the damage done by irresponsible people. In all but one novel, these characters interfere destructively with the lives of others. They become, then, one of the cataclysms the hero or heroine must endure before he can complete the initiation journey. In Beachhead the neurotic is Lieutenant Flood; in Snowslide they are Eleanor, Faith, and Chuchu. Dorothy meddles in the lives of others in Lillian. Mildred in Revels, Tess and Howard in The Observatory are like careless children who leave destruction behind. W. W. is a manipulative character in Riley. He escapes into senility and death, leaving behind a collapsed empire.

3. Jonas shows his characters as reaching a plateau of new maturity after they have taken a look backward in memory. These formative experiences, which were at some earlier time partial initiations, acquire new significance when reappraised at a mature age. The new self-discovery then often results in change. This descent into the subconscious recaptures the character traits which led

to the protagonist's crisis and forces him to alter these traits. That the process is often extremely painful places it in the archetypal pattern of ordeals to be endured before change can occur. In all seven novels Jonas shows both major and minor characters examining the past as a key to the present.

4. Such a self-exploration usually includes an archetypal night journey in which the protagonist nearly loses touch with reality, as he travels through the night alone with his thoughts. The sailor's most critical ordeal takes place at night in the storm, as does Robert's journey to Fool's Gold, Riley's drive to Nonesuch, Wes' trip home from Mandan, and Sam's journey up the mountain. All become lonely Odyssean experiences followed by enlightenment.

5. Finally, Jonas' initiated characters usually find absurdity in the world. Robert, Riley, Wes, Lillian, Sam, Jefferson--all experience the loneliness that closes in when one questions traditional beliefs and values. The nature of the quest implies the rejection of old beliefs and a search for a new identity, and all these characters experience this kind of alienation. Hell is sometimes other people, and Jonas does create some demonic people. However,

once Jonas' heroes have evaluated life, they reaffirm its potential meaningfulness. As Robert says, the smile becomes "a little sadder, but more direct and genuine." Initiation then becomes a confrontation with reality, the realization that after despair comes hope.

The seven novels examined for this study all have an initiatory scenario. That is, each shows characters enduring desperate situations before awakening to a new life or before becoming more themselves. In concluding, one might take a backward look at how each of Jonas' works follow or diverge from a traditional initiation theme.

Beachhead on the Wind pursues a traditional initiation theme. The sailor is young, green, unskilled, naive in the beginning. He endures the classical initiatory ordeals: confrontation with death, a ritual death in the sea and resurrection from the grave on the beach, a mythical night journey from the beach to the ship and the attendant horrors: nature's fury plus his own cowardice, his search through past events for self-understanding, and finally, his emergence as a man so changed that he feels compelled to pass on to others what he has learned.

In Beachhead Jonas' writing is intense and spare, the tension sustained effectively from beginning to end. The focus is on the sailor's experience as a universal one, and Jonas' writing is strongly disciplined, so that no superfluity detracts from his picturing man's dignity and courage under stress. That he did not choose the war as man's biggest obstacle, but a foe that can never be beaten--the weather--is particularly apt. Man's attempt to be victorious over himself is sometimes equally elusive.

Snowslide diverges from the traditional initiation pattern in that the characters range widely in age from the young ski instructor to the middle-aged novelist. But all change in some degree. Otherwise, Jonas follows a traditional pattern in detailing both natural ordeals--the snowslide--and the sort of hell created by people. His characters examine their pasts to find the roots of their present problems, and this painful descent to the subconscious results in new understanding. An important part of the initiation of Sam, George, and John is the discovery of evil, symbolized by Eleanor, their coming to terms with this confrontation, and the resulting increase in knowledge of

the world.

Jonas has concentrated on plot and symbolic characters in this novel but begins to develop a philosophical attitude which questions some twentieth century values that he will continue to explore in later books. The novel thus contains more complex underpinnings than one might infer from a superficial reading.

Jefferson Selleck departs radically from a traditional initiation pattern. In probably his most successful book, both artistically and financially (it was a Book-of-the-Month Club selection), Jonas examines the life and character of a man in late middle-age. Yet he shows Jefferson changing in character during his last months of life. Two ties with the traditional initiation pattern are apparent: the retrospective look Jefferson takes into his past and his compulsion to follow the socially formalized behavior of Gateway City. These rituals may be said to parallel the ritualistic behavior of primitive people, and Jonas makes original and effective use of this similarity to underline the bareness of Selleck's life. That Jefferson sums up what he has learned during his lifetime, passes it on through his memoir, and continues to change up to the time he dies, demon-

strates that Jonas does not believe the possibility of initiation ends with any particular calendar year.

Riley McCullough closely follows the traditional initiation theme. Riley not only announces his quest and enumerates the steps he will take toward maturity, he also describes his thoughts and feelings along the road. Jonas further intensifies the theme with his use of symbols having both mythological and sacred roots. Some of these characteristic patterns include a symbolic death followed by resurrection, the quest, the descent to Hell and ascension to Heaven, and his adjustment with such forces as the tempting woman and the threatening father. Riley's self-analysis also represents a descent to the subconscious, a dramatic part of the initiation pattern.

Diverging from the traditional initiatory pattern again in Our Revels Now are Ended, Jonas concentrates on characters in their twenties and thirties--mature in age but not in knowledge of themselves or the world. In this psychological novel, the monsters to be overcome are problems in personality and relationships. Jonas shows that some people can never change, are forever immature.

Traditionally, Jonas follows the death-resurrection pattern in Wes' initiation, and he reveals that change itself may be a monstrous ordeal.

Jonas continues to vary the traditional treatment in Lillian White Deer and The Observatory, as he explores mature characters struggling through modern ordeals. In these two novels the problems become nearly as important as the characters wrestling with them. The fact that Jonas is concerned about new values, or the lack of them, shows in his use of proportion in these novels. He devotes much space to philosophical dilemma. As his characters meet, recognize, and survive encounters with universal evils and are changed by them, Jonas defines these problems as ongoing, unyielding dilemmas. The protagonists must accept what they cannot change, and in achieving a decisive initiation, they attain a more realistic perspective.

That these last two volumes did not receive the warm critical response of his earlier works may be laid in part to Jonas' disproportunate concentration on the nature of the problems. Jonas' gift with humour, with satire, and with delineating male characters are his strongest assets. He puts across his serious messages best when he lets

the message develop through his characterizations, as he does with _Riley_ and with _Jefferson_. Perhaps one additional lesson from the observatory symbol might be gained: a detached and all-encompassing view prevents close personal involvement. Riley on his ledge teaches more eloquently than does Robert's scholarly writing about the Tory. In both cases, however, Jonas makes one lesson clear: that whatever the obstacle, man need never cease to learn, to change, to hope.

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