Interrogating Individualism:
Philosophy in the Modern Canadian Novel

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ABSTRACT

The idea of the liberal individual that was developed in Enlightenment and nineteenth-century philosophy came under increased scrutiny in the early twentieth century. Modern novelists in Canada were active participants in this critical re-evaluation. They investigated both the individual and individualism as contested but enduring ideas in the modern world. "Interrogating Individualism: Philosophy in the Modern Canadian Novel" examines the ways in which Canadian novelists used the modern novel to pursue philosophical answers to their questions about the legacy and fate of individualism. These questions preoccupied diverse novelists in the early and mid-twentieth century, especially Frederick Philip Grove, Morley Callaghan, Irene Baird, Elizabeth Smart, Ethel Wilson, Sheila Watson, Ernest Buckler, Leonard Cohen, and Margaret Laurence. As these novelists investigated the challenges facing the individual in the twentieth century, they variously promoted, defended, and critiqued individualism as a good. In particular, they were drawn to five facets of the modern debate over individualism: responses to the death of God, the debate between determinism and free will, the crisis of liberalism in interwar politics, the political potential of authenticity, and the ethics of compassion. While modern novelists in Canada often engaged directly with individual philosophers, from John Locke and John Stuart Mill to Henri Bergson and Simone de Beauvoir, their novels show that philosophy in the modern Canadian novel was defined not by the influence of individual philosophers, but by novelists' desire to come to their own unique, nuanced, and literary understanding of modern individualism. Drawing on Enlightenment, nineteenth-century, and especially Nietzschean and existential philosophy, this dissertation argues that novelists developed an "interrogative mode"—a critical form of expression that unites philosophical questioning and modernist forms of fictional representation—through which

they reimagined the liberal individual not as a stable or fully formed character, but as a "figure of becoming," who is spontaneously unfolding and perpetually in process, and who might be capable of a more profound ethical response to the complexities of the twentieth century.

RÉSUMÉ

L'idée de l'individu libéral développée par la philosophie des Lumières et celle du XIX^e^ siècle a fait l'objet, au début du XX^e^ siècle, d'un examen critique approfondi auquel les romanciers modernes canadiens ont activement participé. Leur réflexion portait à la fois sur l'individu et sur l'individualisme en tant qu'idées contestées mais durables dans le monde moderne. « L'individualisme en question : la philosophie dans le roman moderne canadien » analyse les différentes façons dont certains écrivains canadiens du début et du milieu du XX^e^ siècle – notamment Frederick Philip Grove, Morley Callaghan, Irene Baird, Elizabeth Smart, Ethel Wilson, Sheila Watson, Ernest Buckler, Leonard Cohen et Margaret Laurence – ont utilisé le roman moderne pour trouver des réponses philosophiques aux questions qu'ils se posaient sur le legs et le futur de l'individualisme. Explorant les défis que doit relever l'individu au XX^e^ siècle, ces auteurs ont soutenu, défendu ou critiqué de diverses manières le bien-fondé de l'individualisme. Plus spécifiquement, ils se sont intéressés à cinq facettes du débat moderne entourant cette question : les différentes réactions à la mort de Dieu, le conflit entre le déterminisme et le libre arbitre, la crise du libéralisme dans la politique de l'entre-deux-guerres, le potentiel politique de l'authenticité et l'éthique de la compassion. Même si les romanciers modernes canadiens ont engagé un dialogue avec certains philosophes, de John Locke et John Stuart Mill à Henri Bergson et Simone de Beauvoir, leurs œuvres montrent que la pensée philosophique dans le roman moderne canadien ne découle pas de l'influence d'un penseur donné, mais du désir des romanciers d'élaborer leur propre définition – inédite, nuancée et littéraire – de l'individualisme moderne. Faisant appel à la philosophie des Lumières, à celle du XIX^e^ siècle et, surtout, à la philosophie existentielle et nietzschéenne, cette thèse soutient que les romanciers ont conçu un « mode interrogatif » – un moyen d'expression critique qui mêle le

questionnement philosophique aux formes modernistes de la représentation fictionnelle – grâce auquel ils ont repensé l'individu libéral, le dépeignant non pas comme un personnage stable et pleinement formé, mais comme une « figure du devenir » qui se déploie spontanément, qui ne cesse de se développer et qui serait en mesure d'offrir une réponse d'une grande profondeur éthique à la complexité du XX^{e} siècle.

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Introduction

Individualism and the Enduring Individual in the Modern Canadian Novel

When Abe Spalding, the protagonist of Frederick Philip Grove's *Fruits of the Earth* (1933), sets out to "impose himself" (20) upon the prairie, the year is 1900. It is a symbolic year for Grove, writing thirty years later about the dramatic changes wrought by the intervening decades. Straddling two centuries, 1900 signals a conflict between two world-views and their models of the individual: the self-possessed and self-making pioneer of the nineteenth century, on one hand, and the authentic and becoming individual of the twentieth century, on the other. Grove represents this conflict through his impressive and tenacious protagonist, for whom the challenges of the twentieth century await. Espousing values better suited to the nineteenth century and the Old World, Abe struggles to maintain his authority in his family and in the prairie community that bears his name. The development of the prairies, the First World War, the changing values of his community and children, and the advancement of machinery that fundamentally changes the pioneer's labour all trouble Abe's individualist self-possession. In conflict with himself and his world, Abe nonetheless persists in the new district and in Grove's novel. In fact, Grove's treatment of Abe exemplifies the representation of the individual in the modern Canadian novel, where, despite pressures to change, the individual never conforms easily or fully to the demands of the community and the modern world. Abe is thus a patriarch, not only of Grove's novel, but also of the individual in the modern Canadian novel, for his paradigmatically nineteenth-century individualism both engenders new forms of individuality in the twentieth century and serves as a marker against which the individuals who follow him can be measured and clarified.

Abe's fraught perseverance also signals the multivalent character of individualism in the twentieth century. The noted Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor calls individualism both "the finest achievement of modern civilization" and its "first source of worry" (*Malaise* 2). Taylor's description captures the tension within ideas of individualism and the individual in modern culture broadly and suggests that individualism itself inspires the ambivalence dramatized in Grove's novel. That is, individualist goods—such as autonomy, freedom, and self-expression—have been difficult either to abandon *or* to embrace fully in the twentieth century. This integral ambivalence demands attention to the individual in the modern Canadian novel, because it both suggests that individualism inspires its own critique and indicates the modern novelist's investigation of the individual as an enduring and contested figure in the twentieth century.

This dissertation attends to a long-neglected moment in Canadian literary history and to its equally forgotten protagonists, individuals like Abe, who attempt to reconcile their continuing experience of individuality and the changing social values of the twentieth century. Novels by Grove, Morley Callaghan, Irene Baird, Ernest Buckler, Ethel Wilson, Sheila Watson, Elizabeth Smart, Leonard Cohen, and Margaret Laurence variously celebrate, criticize, dismantle, and defend the individual and her individualist goods as they represent the unique challenges the modern individual faces in the twentieth century. Like Taylor, these novelists recognize the individual as an "achievement" of the modern world, a subject liberated by her mind and her interests to pursue her own goods and cultivate her best self. Also like Taylor, however, they contemplate the individual as a "source of worry," as potentially violent and selfish, working against herself and her world, or as indifferent and apathetic, distracted from social problems so long as her private tastes are satisfied. Investigating the individual from multiple perspectives, these exemplary modern novelists theorize not only an individualism capable of responding to

the complexities of the twentieth century, but also the fertile ambivalence such an individualism inspires. As even the most formally radical novels discussed here—Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*, for example—insist, however, no robust criticism of individualism can (or should) erase the individual altogether. The individual is "a figure deepened rather than displaced" (Willmott, "Postmodern" 893) by the debates she inspires, and the modern novel is defined in part by its ability both to "deepen" and to debate the "persistent individual" (*Unreal* 16) at its heart.

Studies of Canadian modernism have proliferated over the past fifteen years, but as Colin Hill notes in his indispensable book *Modern Realism in English-Canadian Fiction* (2012), "despite this recent attention (most of it concerned primarily with poetry) the study of modernist Canadian prose is still in its early stages" (5).[1] In fact, Hill's book and Glenn Willmott's *Unreal Country: Modernity in the Canadian Novel in English* (2002) remain the most thorough and invigorating recent additions to the study of the modern Canadian novel. Willmott notes the challenge critics have faced when they have attempted to theorize the modern novel in Canada: "Often seen as a lingering afterlife of Victorian literature, this period has always seemed a 'transitional phase,' as John Moss once put it, 'which vigorously resists definition'" (38). Despite this resistance, however, Hill insists that "[m]odern Canadian fiction needs an exacting and exhaustive re-evaluation" (13). Hill and Willmott have helpfully started this re-evaluation; primarily thanks to them, this apparently "transitional phase" of Canadian literary history can now be seen as an important moment in its own right. Together Hill and Willmott have established the early twentieth-century Canadian novel as aesthetically (Hill) and generically

[1] Hill's and Glenn Willmott's attention to modern fiction also introduces a number of new questions and ideas that similar studies of modernist poetry cannot address. For example, there is no poetic equivalent to the modern *Bildungsroman* that Willmott theorizes, and as I will suggest here, the way in which the novels of this study investigate the individual as a philosophical category benefits from novelistic rather than poetic attention. In other words, even a full recovery of modernist poetry in Canada would still obscure the modern individual in Canadian literary history and the important debates about individualism Canadian modern novels enact.

(Willmott)[2] unique and as consciously thinking about and representing modernity.

While Canadian novelists did not usually embrace the radical forms of modernist fiction commonly associated with writers such as William Faulkner and James Joyce, their experiments were similarly motivated by an attempt to represent and respond to modernity. Hill has helpfully revealed the similarities between modern realism, the predominant style of modern fiction in Canada, and international modernist aesthetics. He notes the modern realists' "direct, immediate, contemporary, idiomatically correct language," their "narrative objectivism and impersonality," and their "experimental interest in psychological writing and the epistemological representation of human consciousness" (7) among the characteristics they share with cosmopolitan modernists. Hill's aesthetic analysis leads him to the conclusion that "much as European and American modernists did, [the modern realists] explored the cultural conditions and great 'themes' of 'modernity'" (7).[3] As Taylor suggests, the individual has been a primary focal point of these great themes. This focal point appears as a site of contested value in "the psychology, large socio-political forces, and the general cultural conditions of the twentieth century" (21) that Hill also identifies as among the thematic interests of Canadian modern realists.

Because my interests here are not primarily modernist aesthetics or the development of international modernisms, I will continue, like Hill, to distinguish Canadian *modern* fiction from canonical examples of high *modernism*, even as I highlight their similarities. In what follows, then, "modern" refers to works of Canadian fiction that examine the "modernity" of the

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[2] Willmott argues that the "postcolonial bildungsroman" is a "dominant" genre in early- to mid-twentieth-century fiction (*Unreal* 23). According to Willmott, in this genre "an isometry of nation and narration authorizes the figure of the individual as a determining form, and authorizes his or her transition from youth to maturity as a determining paradigm, to carry, to plot out, and to resolve if possible [the] existential anxiety attending the making of a home, a belonging" (23). As Willmott emphasizes, in a young nation like Canada at the beginning of the twentieth century, the story of individual formation is also an allegory of the transition of the nation from youth to maturity.

[3] Hill lists a number of "great themes" that appear in the modern Canadian novel, many of which will reappear in discussions of individual novels here: "moral relativism, modern technology, the forces of urbanization and industrialization, modern social and political ideals, moral and religious change and decline, human sexuality, evolving gender roles, and modern historical events, including the Great Depression and two world wars" (7).

twentieth century without radically breaking the traditional form of the realist novel. I reserve "modernist" both for canonical figures and texts of modernism (Virginia Woolf or *Ulysses*, for example) and for works, such as Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*, whose investigations of modernity significantly break with realist convention. Maintaining this distinction allows me to use "modernist" as shorthand to indicate a similarity between the modern Canadian novel and the characteristics of the modernist novel, as when I note below the modernist plot of revelation or the modernist experiments with philosophy present in the novels discussed here.

I aim to extend the work of Hill and Willmott to a consideration of the philosophical investments of the modern novel in Canada. Hill's and Willmott's focus on aesthetics and genre has not addressed the deep philosophical engagement of many modern Canadian novelists, which reveals the complex relationship between the individual, modernity, and the novel, and, importantly, the ways in which the modern Canadian novel participates in debates about the individual and individualism that transcend the national and continental borders that usually determine their discussion in Canada. This extension introduces a link between Canadian modern novelists and their Anglo-European modernist counterparts that is driven primarily (although not exclusively) by philosophical content rather than aesthetic style.

My emphasis on the philosophical underpinning of the modern Canadian novel also extends Hill's work in time. While Hill focuses on a "movement" that ended in 1950 (218), my work demonstrates the philosophical links between novels as early as Grove's *Our Daily Bread* (1928) and as late as Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974). This extension, however, is supported by Hill, who shows that modern realism "ironically ceased to be a movement after 1950 because of its very success" (218). That is, although the unique movement Hill calls modern realism ended in 1950, the style it developed continued throughout the twentieth century.

The aesthetic values Hill discovers in the early decades of the twentieth century thus continue to contribute to the modern interests of the novels studied here and to reinforce their philosophical investigation of the individual.

The novel of course has a long philosophical history that links it to the individual and individualism. Ian Watt's canonical *The Rise of the Novel* defines the genre as generated by the "rise" of the individual in the eighteenth century: "the novel requires a world view which is centred on the social relationships between individual persons; and this involves secularization as well as individualism" (84). Furthermore, the development of both the individual and the novel has also been philosophical in nature. Watt notes that realist novelists of the eighteenth century—namely Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding—like notable seventeenth-century philosophers—including Descartes and Locke—aimed to produce "an authentic account of the actual experience of the individual" (27). In fact, Watt claims that "[t]he novel is the form of literature which most fully reflects [the] individualist and innovating reorientation" begun by Descartes' conception of truth as "a wholly individual matter" (13). Anthony Cascardi explains that Georg Lukács similarly "saw that the fate of the novel was inseparable from that of philosophical discourse" (608), a discourse Lukács described as "a symptom of the rift between 'inside' and 'outside', a sign of the essential difference between the self and the world" (*Theory* 29). Watt and Lukács reveal the deep philosophical underpinnings of the novel's history and its interest in the individual. Furthermore, despite the changes to the genre in the past three centuries, Nancy Armstrong has argued that the novel gives "form to the modern individual and continues to defend and update it" (135). While both the novel and philosophy have certainly changed since the eighteenth century, the individual in the novel remains a source of philosophical interest and commitment.

Canadian modern novelists' philosophical consideration of the individual and individualism emphasizes an important connection to their modernist peers. As both the modern Canadian and the modernist novel contemplate the ability of their philosophical inheritances to produce "an authentic account of the actual experience of the individual" in the twentieth century, they also question and renew the philosophical link between the novel and the individual. Like Anglo-European modernists, the novelists considered here contemplate the definition of the individual they inherited from their Enlightenment precursors and underline the instability of the individual as a category in the modern world. In fact, Philip Weinstein traces that instability in the modernist novel to its scrutiny of the philosophical contexts associated with the development of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century realist novel. Focusing on the influences of "Enlightenment knowing" ("Modernism" 302), many of which Watt also notes, Weinstein identifies four philosophers whose thinking structures the epistemological and ethical basis of the novel before modernism: Descartes, Newton, Locke, and Kant together produce a "liberated/liberal" subject (302) who may know both himself and the world.[4] This knowledge also allows the liberal subject to "tell" (306) a story about himself and his world. For Weinstein, modernist novels problematize the stability of earlier forms of knowing and telling, because "they dislocate the act of 'telling' so that it might better represent the unmasterable conditions of 'living'" (306). In the early twentieth century, then, the philosophical ground of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novel came under question, and so both the individual created by that

[4] According to Weinstein, Descartes conceives "the Western subject who would know […] in pure alienation from parents, siblings, church, state, and culture" (302); "Newton makes available a lawful, material cosmos, conceptually mastered and open to being known" (303); Locke "lay[s] out precisely the story of empirical trial by error […] that was to ground Western fiction" (303); and Kant's categorical imperative provides the moral rule (303-4).

structure and the novel form it called home were also opened to new interrogation.[5]

As a consequence of this new interrogation, the individual appears as a disputed and ambiguous figure in both modernist and modern Canadian novels. In *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality*, Michael Levenson observes the uncertain status of the modern individual:

> Ours may be the age of narcissism, but it is also the century in which ego suffered unprecedented attacks upon its great pretensions, to be self-transparent and self-authorized. It discovered enemies within and enemies without; walls within, mirrors without; it no longer perched securely on the throne of the self; it no longer sat confidently at the centre of the social world. (xi)

While Levenson illuminates the instability of the individual in the modernist novel, however, he also notes the fascinating attempt of modernist novelists "to recover some figure of the self, to preserve some vessel of subjectivity" even as they subjected that figure to "the heavy pressures of modern history and modern literary experiment" (xi). This ambivalence is best seen in the modern Canadian novel through a philosophical lens, which can illuminate both the individual at the heart of the modern novel and the pressures that dismantle and recreate her.

Attention to the philosophical underpinning of the modern Canadian novel, then, reveals a source of experimentation and modern engagement even where formal innovation seems to be lacking. In fact, Paul Sheehan argues that "[p]hilosophical anxieties are in a sense *formative* of modernism, whether precipitated by political disenchantment, technological change or spiritual penury" (17; original emphasis). Similarly, I argue that one of the main characteristics the

[5] Both Weinstein and Michael Levenson outline the ways in which the formal innovations of the modernist novel destabilize the individual. Levenson argues that "[one] of the great concealed dramas of the modern novel is the struggle between certain enduring traits in literary character and certain innovations in narrative structure, the contest between a notion of fictional self inherited from nineteenth-century precedents and the new literary forms designed to contain it" (xii). Weinstein further argues that it is precisely "the formal practices" of modernist novelists that "enact a philosophic stance" which renders the modernist subject a figure of "unknowing" (299).

modern Canadian novel shares with the modernist novel is its philosophical engagement with the issues Sheehan names. Like the modernist novels of Levenson's and Sheehan's studies, the modern Canadian novel attends to the individual as an unstable but unavoidable focal point of modernity, the examination of which transforms both the individual and the plot of the modern novel. "The fundamental difference between traditional (i.e., premodernist) narrative and modern (i.e. modernist and after) narrative," Sheehan claims, "is the difference between the plot of resolution and the plot of revelation" (14). As in the modernist novel, in the novels discussed here, "[e]vents are not resolved; instead, a state of affairs is revealed. Thus plot development in traditional narrative is an 'unraveling', and in modern narrative it is a 'displaying'" (14). The modern novel in Canada foregrounds uncertainty about the individual and individualism by "displaying" a set of unresolved problems. Like modernist novels, then, the novels considered here also disrupt conclusive arguments about the individual and her world.

The individual exists in these novels as a site of conflict and contest from within and without. The social and communal goods so often the focus of commentary on Canadian novels,[6] the heightened tensions of the twentieth century—manifested in world war, mass unemployment, and the loss of common cultural traditions—*and* the individual goods—particularly, autonomy, self-making, freedom, and self-expression—all contribute to the immense pressure under which the modern novel forges the individuals who populate its narratives. The individual embodies the tensions of modernity itself and persistently in the novels discussed here emphasizes individuality and individualism as necessary to the social goods seemingly opposed to them.

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[6] This emphasis has often eclipsed the complex image of the individual in Canadian fiction in order to promote a simple image of communal harmony. In "Disunity as Unity: A Canadian Strategy," for example, Robert Kroetsch claims that "[in] Canadian writing there is little sense of a privileged self at the centre" (28). In *Canadian Idealism and the Philosophy of Freedom*, Robert Meynell also notes the broader habit of defining Canadian culture through claims that it endorses the goods of the community over the goods of the individual: "Canada is commonly thought to be more collectivist than its chief partner, ally, and economic competitor. Canadians are described as more open to putting the common good ahead of individual self-interest" (6-7).

While Canadian novelists of this period also inherited conceptions of the individual from the Enlightenment tradition to which Weinstein and Watt refer, the individual developed in the philosophies of John Locke and John Stuart Mill has been the chief pre-Nietzschean philosophical influence on the characterization and debate over the individual in the modern Canadian novel. The liberal individual who appears through these philosophers is autonomous, free, self-possessed, and self-cultivating: "[o]ver himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign" (Mill 9). As C.B. Macpherson outlines in *Possessive Individualism*, Locke's individualism emerges from "the assertion that every man is naturally the sole proprietor of his own person and capacities – the absolute proprietor in the sense that he owes nothing to society for them – and especially the absolute proprietor of his capacity to labour" (231). Locke's is an expansive individualism, which, as I discuss in Chapter Two, unites the cultivation of property with the cultivation of a self. In contrast, Mill focuses not on possession in and through property, but on the freedom to cultivate one's interests: "The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way" (Mill 12). The novels discussed here scrutinize these definitions of the individual: while, in general, the novelists wish to preserve autonomy, freedom, self-possession, and self-cultivation as individual goods, they recognize the spiritual, political, and ethical challenges to these goods in the modern world, where the liberal individual has become synonymous with the bourgeois, capitalist, and colonizing individual.[7]

[7] It should be unsurprising that Locke's and Mill's philosophies of the individual appear in Canadian fiction, for both support the colonial projects that settled this nation. As Nigel Joseph has argued, the Lockean emphasis on property helps to define "the imperial self" (123), who expands his dominion across the colony. Mill's argument for the liberal individual's sovereignty—"[in] the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute" (9)—notably only applies in those cultures where equality among individuals is secure. Mill thus defends powerful colonial governments that aim to "improve" "barbarians": "Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement and the means justified by actually effecting that end" (10). While this dissertation attempts to define and deepen the understanding of the individual in Canadian fiction, it also opens up new categories for the on-going critical discussion of Canada's colonial history. Although some of the novelists discussed here may be perceived to support colonial projects, their engagement with and reconstruction of philosophies of individualism suggest a new way of understanding the nuances and criticisms of

Like their modernist counterparts, the novelists discussed here scrutinize the liberal individual as they experiment with different philosophies of the individual, individuality, and individualism that might be able to bear the weight of the modern world. These experiments lead the novelists to post-Enlightenment philosophers, namely Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, and the French existentialists—especially Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. In working through philosophies of the individual counter to those offered by their liberal inheritances, the novelists discussed here place different philosophies of the individual and her spiritual, political, and ethical relation to the modern world against one another. The contest over the individual in the modern Canadian novel thus occurs not only through the conflict between the demands of the community and the desire for private goods, but also through the conflict between individualist philosophies that contribute to the individual's characterization. For instance, in *Fruits of the Earth*, Grove delivers a Nietzschean critique of democracy even as he defends the Lockean individual's expansion through property.

In their turn to primarily post-Nietzschean philosophers the novelists studied in this project emphasize process and becoming rather than the stability of a rational ego, as Descartes posits it, or a universal ethical code, as Kant imagines in the categorical imperative, or even the utilitarian morality of Mill. The individuals of these novels undergo significant changes; yet, they do not arrive at a final, predictable, or universal self. As Chapter Four details, for example, Elizabeth Smart's unnamed narrator in *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* and Leonard Cohen's primary male protagonists in *Beautiful Losers* demonstrate not only the prevalence of a becoming self at the centre of the modern Canadian novel, but also the important political implications of such a changing and authentic individual. Smart and Cohen, however, are not the only novelists to foreground this fluctuating individual: the chief characteristic of

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Canada's colonial legacy in the twentieth century and today.

Maggie Lloyd's ethical philosophy in Wilson's *Swamp Angel* is a commitment to an autonomous, becoming self whose compassion occurs spontaneously in the undetermined present. Wilson emphasizes the unpredictability of a compassion that "perhaps" arises from autonomy: "Maggie was compassionate and perhaps she would be able to serve [her antagonist] Vera Gunnarsen in this way, forgetting that she did so, and expecting neither praise nor thanks… or perhaps she would not" (*Swamp* 115). Although this defining emphasis on becoming occurs through the novelists' engagement with Nietzsche and the philosophers who follow him, it also conserves the spontaneous originality of Mill's liberal individual, and is one source of the characteristic ambivalence over the individual in the novels discussed here.

Nietzsche's prominence in this dissertation and in the novels it studies reflects his wide influence in the twentieth century and strengthens the philosophical link between Canadian and Anglo-European novelists. An "immense" influence on writers in the early twentieth century (Hutchinson 59), Nietzsche was an unavoidable philosopher in the first decades of the twentieth century: "Anyone who came to intellectual maturity in Europe and much of the Americas between the 1890s and the 1930s would have had trouble avoiding contact, either direct or indirect, with his work" (Foster 3). Nietzsche's influence on the novelists discussed here varies. Some novelists—such as Grove, Watson, and Cohen—demonstrate a conscious interest in his philosophy. Others—such as Baird, Wilson, and Laurence—are less engaged with Nietzsche's philosophy, even as their novels depict a world and an individual it has transformed. Sometimes, Nietzsche provides the novelists with a powerful philosophical tool with which to criticize the modern world, as is the case when Grove, Callaghan, and Baird critique the political ideologies of the interwar period, which I discuss in Chapter Three. At other times, his philosophy is an antagonistic force that must be overcome, as it is most clearly in Watson's *The Double Hook*.

Nietzsche's broad interests and his wide influence, however, make him an unavoidable philosophical precursor to the novelists discussed here, who wished to investigate the individual and the modern world; any philosophical consideration of either of these topics must pass not around but through the work of this most famous German philosopher. In passing through, however, these novelists transform, overcome, and re-evaluate Nietzsche's philosophy so that both the novel and the philosopher are changed in the process.

In my attempt to illuminate the individual and the individualist goods in the modern Canadian novel, I have connected two seemingly disparate discourses. While "philosophy imagines itself as a form of discourse with *privileged* access to the truth" (Cascardi, "Novel" 164; original emphasis), philosophers tend to view literature as disrupting the very truth at which philosophy aims.[8] This traditional view of the difference between the two discourses establishes a firm hierarchy: while philosophy pursues eternal truth, literature is content with the representation of changing particulars. The objective style of the "professional philosophy paper" (Danto 5) supports this view, because it "implies a noble vision of [academic philosophers] as vehicles for the transmission of an utterly impersonal philosophical truth" (6). Of course, the post-structuralist and deconstructionist critiques of metaphysics in the late twentieth century forcefully challenged both philosophy's implied hierarchy and its apparently transparent style. The subsequent move to consider all things, including philosophy, as texts, emphasized not the

[8] As Anthony J. Cascardi explains in his introduction to *Literature and the Question of Philosophy*, "the problem of literature and philosophy in their relationship to one another may be seen as continuous with the entire 'history of Western metaphysics' from Plato to the present age, and as coextensive with those institutions (eg., 'literature,' 'philosophy') which that metaphysics found" (x). Cascardi refers to the "ancient debate" between philosophy and poetry that Plato begins in his *Republic*. There, Socrates explains that artists create imitations twice removed from truth, because they create representations of appearances rather than forms (268). For Socrates, artists and poets have "neither knowledge nor right opinion about whether the things [they make] are fine or bad" (272), and so their imitations can corrupt reason: "an imitative poet puts a bad constitution in the soul of each individual by making images that are far removed from the truth and by gratifying the irrational part, which cannot distinguish the large and the small but believes that the same things are large at one time and small at another" (276). In this founding text of Western philosophy, then, literature is philosophy's dangerous other, and the poet's representation of appearance rather than truth threatens reason itself.

philosophical character of literature, but the literary character of philosophy. Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe's opening question in *The Subject of Philosophy* sums up this shift: "What if, after all, philosophy were nothing but literature?" (1). It is worth noting the old hierarchy still present in Lacoue-Labarthe's "nothing but," which, while it attempts to knock philosophy from its privileged position, also suggests that, unlike philosophy, literature has no pretensions to truth. As the persistence of the "professional philosophy paper" and the waning popularity of deconstruction demonstrate, however, this effort to collapse the distinction between literature and philosophy has not necessarily brought the two discourses into a more intimate relation.

The relationship between literature and philosophy requires a definition that respects the distinctions between the two discourses while it also eliminates the implicit hierarchy that places philosophy above literature. I have attempted both to define and to honour such an approach in this dissertation; I treat literature and philosophy as analogous cultural discourses that engage in the investigation and representation of defining ideas in modern culture, especially ideas about the individual and her relationship to God, time, politics, and ethics. In doing so, I attempt to show that philosophy and literature may complement one another without sacrificing the unique character and perspective of either discourse. My approach takes up the spirit of Denis Dutton and Garry Hagberg's claim that "[p]hilosophy is about life from the broadest possible perspective, and so is literature. But how different the perspectives!" (iii). Philosophy need not be "nothing but literature" and literature need not be "nothing but" philosophy for the two discourses to illuminate the questions they both ask. In fact, as I hope to demonstrate, literature's most interesting philosophical ideas come into their best light when readers can attend to both philosophical content and literary form.

Despite the institutional differences that tend to keep philosophy and literature distinct,

they nonetheless both engage in questioning the world and the individual's experience of it. For Martha Nussbaum, one of the most influential advocates of the relationship between literature and philosophy, both moral philosophy and certain exemplary novels—Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* is a favourite of Nussbaum's—participate in similar acts of "searching" (24). For Nussbaum, the ethical impulse of the novels she highlights connects them at once to "our deepest practical searching, for ourselves and others" and "the searching […] with which the influential philosophical conceptions of the ethical were originally developed" (24). Nussbaum's emphasis on "searching" dislodges philosophy from its "privileged" position not by making it essentially literary, but by reinterpreting it as a practical activity rather than a discourse with unmediated access to a universal and hidden "truth." In this reinterpretation Nussbaum values "the pursuit of truth in all its forms" (27), which both philosophical and literary texts reveal. For Nussbaum, literature and philosophy investigate similar questions and problems; while each discourse offers a unique perspective on these questions, however, neither can claim to possess truth completely.

More recently than Nussbaum's influential work of the 1990s, Richard Eldridge has usefully described the intersections of philosophy and literature in terms of "attention." Eldridge insightfully views philosophy and literature "as imaginative disciplines [that] are forms of attention both to the generalities and to the difficult particulars of human life" (13). Like Nussbaum, who believes moral philosophy requires literature for its completion (27), Eldridge argues that both discourses benefit from one another. While "literature's attention to how any commitments might in particular be lived" can correct philosophy's habit of universalizing rationalization (4), "literature seems to need correction by philosophy's efforts to trace universals and to discern and specify ideal forms of commitment" (5). This mutual correction leads Eldridge to conclude that both discourses "at their bests [*sic*] have engaged with each other to

develop forms of attention to human life and human commitments and passions while avoiding both empty idealism and empty particularism" (5). Eldridge's astute definition of literature and philosophy as "forms of attention to human life" helpfully describes the link between them without fully collapsing either into the other. We may thus still say, with Nussbaum, that both literature and philosophy enact a kind of searching, but we can also say that philosophical and literary searching attend to their activities differently, and it is this very difference that creates a mutually fertile relationship between the two discourses.

In fact, the novel's creative language, use of irony, and dialogic structure, to name only a few of the literary characteristics that define its "form of attention," aid its contemplation of and debate over philosophical questions. For instance, the dialogic form of a novel means it can express contradictory positions, and its imaginative and narrative character often results in allusive philosophical resonances rather than the advancement of a directly stated philosophical argument.[9] Moreover, the novel's narrative form puts these philosophical resonances in motion in time. The very temporal nature of the novel suggests it is suited more to debate, experiment, and change than to the revelation of a stable and universal truth that one might reasonably expect from a more conventional genre of philosophy. Cascardi notes how the novel pays attention to "the *formation* (discursive and otherwise) of the insights that philosophy regards as achieved and, with that, articulates those things that philosophy tends to leave largely unspoken" ("Novel" 167; original emphasis). The novel's literary style and form definitively contribute to its original philosophical insights, which, in turn, might offer philosophy a new perspective on a problem or question otherwise unarticulated.

Furthermore, the novel is free to test and debate not only philosophical questions and

[9] Nussbaum similarly argues that the novel "is the only type of text that can state [plausible views about human life] fully and fittingly, without contradiction" (7).

arguments, but also their lived consequences for the individuals they involve. Invoking the philosopher Hans Vaihinger, Pericles Lewis describes this freedom as the novel's ability "to represent a world and a sensibility without asserting the truth-value of its propositions – to represent a world 'as if'" (50). This "world 'as if'" both characterizes the experimental nature of the novel's relationship to philosophy and makes the novel an ideal form for contemplating and representing the complexities of the modern individual, which Cascardi defines as "open to change within the context of a world that can itself be transformed by virtue of human action" (167). "Not surprisingly," Cascardi continues, "such ethical and existential interests are coincident with the formation and development of character in the novel" (167). As Watt notes, both philosophers and novelists aspire to represent authentic individual experience, but the novel's inconclusive nature, its exploratory and experimental character, makes it more capable of catching the nuance and difficulty of philosophical questions and themes for the individual who attempts to live with or embody them.

The many distinctly literary ways of debating philosophical questions, however, amplify "the difficulty of saying what is philosophical in a given work" (Duran 4). This difficulty in turn puts pressure on the small, mediating word between philosophy and literature, which condenses much of a critic's understanding of their relation. Eldridge's preference for "philosophy *and* literature," for example, reinforces his view that the two are unique but comparable discourses. In contrast, Lacoue-Labarthe's provocative question suggests that one should view philosophy *as* literature. Despite Eldridge's good illumination of the way in which the discourses complement and correct one another, the literary critic who desires to articulate the philosophical content of individual literary works faces a more particular challenge than Eldridge's phrasing can describe. Jane Duran rightly notes that most works of literature "fall somewhere between […] two

extremes: [w]ithout being as blatant in their construction as *Nausea* or *The Stranger*, many works will be driven by a philosophical sense that is perhaps larger than a mere *zeitgeist*" (4). That is, the variation in the intensity and mode of the philosophical interest of individual literary works creates an additional critical difficulty that requires careful methodological distinction.

In response to this difficulty I have adopted Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen's distinction between philosophy *in* literature and philosophy *through* literature to articulate the more specific philosophical commitments of the modern Canadian novel. For Lamarque and Olsen "[p]hilosophy *in* literature refers to an essential relationship between philosophy and literature. Philosophy *through* literature names a contingent relationship: it is incidental to their philosophical function that the texts used also have a function as literary works" (392; original emphasis). Philosophy *in* literature occurs when "literature and philosophy share common problems, but pursue them in different ways" (Skilleås 146). While the literary text may not have been consciously constructed with a philosophical problem or system in mind, it can nonetheless participate in a collective working-out of a philosophical question as it engages in what Nussbaum calls "searching." The search for the modern individual in which the novels discussed here engage occurs in the novel form. Because it puts characters in action over time and in conflict with perspectives other than their own, the novel both accommodates and demonstrates the challenges facing the individual in the twentieth century.

In contrast to philosophy *in* literature, philosophy *through* literature serves already established philosophical ideas or systems. Lamarque and Olsen define the relation as one in which "literary works are subordinated to the function and purpose of philosophical argument" (391) and which does not attend to "the way in which a literary work redefines and develops [philosophical] conceptions in a fundamentally different *literary* way. The focus is on features

that make the situation representative rather than the features that make it unique" (391-2; original emphasis). A good example of this relationship would be when a philosopher, like Albert Camus, writes a novel, like *The Stranger*, which demonstrates his philosophical system.[10] While philosophy *in* literature attends to the way in which an imaginative work complicates and transforms a philosophical idea, philosophy *through* literature assumes that philosophical ideas can be cleanly extracted from the creative pressure of literature.

Because it is possible that both relations are present in the same text, it is ultimately the literary critic who determines whether a work is best described as philosophy in or through literature (Lamarque and Olsen 392). In what follows, I have been guided by the presence of philosophy *in* literature, because in this relationship "philosophy is subordinated to the purpose and function of literature, and consequently the aspect identified as philosophical in a literary work can only be identified as an integral part of, or as partially constitutive of aesthetic value" (391). This approach has been important to the development of my project for two primary reasons. First, approaching the mutually stimulating relationship between literature and philosophy as philosophy *in* literature has allowed me also to consider the characteristics of the specifically novelistic form of attention. Secondly, the novels discussed here have guided me to the philosophies with which they are engaged. The modern Canadian novel is wide-ranging rather than systematic in its philosophical attention. Rather than representing a single system or philosophical position, the modern Canadian novel tends to bring conflicting philosophies into debate through fictional action. Emphasizing philosophy *through* literature would suggest that

[10] A writer need not be a philosopher to produce a work of philosophy *through* literature; Dante's representation of an Aristotelian cosmos in his *Divine Comedy*, for example, can be seen as philosophy *through* literature. The Open Court book series *Popular Culture and Philosophy*, which has recently published *Leonard Cohen and Philosophy*, also approaches philosophy *through* literature. This series uses texts from popular culture to explicate philosophical ideas without considering whether the idea is contingent or essential to the work in question. For example, the first essay in *Leonard Cohen and Philosophy*, "Leonard Cohen as a Guide to Life," uses Cohen's songs to explain themes of ancient philosophy only contingently related to the songs themselves.

the novels in this study exemplify philosophical ideas; my emphasis on philosophy *in* literature attempts to demonstrate how these novels debate, dispute, and create philosophical ideas.

Philosophy *in* the modern Canadian novel thus partially defines its plot of revelation and provocatively troubles several assumptions critics have had about the modern Canadian novel in general and the novels considered here in particular. Perhaps most importantly, the philosophical readings of the novels in the chapters that follow challenge the closure Christian, moral, and political readings have emphasized. Historically, when they have been asked at all, the questions addressed in the five chapters of this dissertation have been phrased as religious and moral problems, and so they have generated religious and moral readings. The consideration of compassion in Chapter Five, however, demonstrates the crucial difference between a religious and a philosophical reading of these novels. While implicitly religious readings of compassion have treated the emotion as a definitive source of *closure* in novels by Wilson, Watson, Buckler, and Laurence—as Donna E. Smyth does when she claims that compassion in Wilson's *Swamp Angel* signals the "fulfillment of the self in the essential Christian mystery" (95)—I show that attention to their philosophical contemplation of compassion *opens* those endings to on-going exploration. Similarly, ideological and political readings that concentrate on answers more than questions have also diminished the creative, philosophical investigation in which novelists have engaged—as Dorothy Livesay does when she complains that Morley Callaghan's and Irene Baird's Depression novels "offer no solution" (17) and so cannot be considered political. The distinction between religious and ideological readings of the novels, on one hand, and my attention to their philosophical investments and interests, on the other, reveals a central characteristic of philosophy in the modern Canadian novel: perhaps unexpectedly, it inspires questioning rather than explanation. Philosophy in the modern Canadian novel, then, enhances

rather than repairs literature's disruption of closure as the novels discussed here engage with the most difficult and undecided problems of their time.

As it attends to the philosophical searching in the modern Canadian novel, my work also aims to encourage a profitable direction that the relationship between philosophy and literature might take, one that Lamarque and Olsen suggest but leave unarticulated—that is, philosophy *out of* literature. Philosophy *out of* literature is not philosophy *through* literature, because it does not presuppose an already complete philosophical idea that is then represented in a literary example. This inversion of philosophy *in* literature however, is implied in Lamarque and Olsen's emphasis on the originality of the literary text: philosophy *in* literature is an "imaginative working-out of the theme incommensurable with philosophical deliberation on the theme: one cannot transfer insights from one sphere to another though it is quite possible that an insight in one field should *inspire* the development of an insight in the other" (391; original emphasis). Philosophy *out of* literature would be this potential literary inspiration of philosophy. I do not take the novels discussed here as pedagogical tools for philosophical explanation but as creative cultural products and forms of attention that participate in the articulation, representation, and shaping of ideas about the individual and her community in Canada. Undeniably, these ideas are also philosophical in nature. Philosophy and literature need not be seen as parallel discourses whose lines never cross, but as analogous cultural discourses that meet and foster one another in enlightening ways and places. I have thus attempted to illuminate how philosophy comes into the modern Canadian novel and to suggest how it might also come out of it.

While in what follows I take up my own investigation of philosophy *in* the modern Canadian novel, I also wish to stress the value of thinking about philosophy *and* literature. As Eldridge insightfully claims, philosophy and literature may complement and correct one another,

so long as their particular virtues are also recognized as distinct. The chapters that follow reveal the ways in which the philosophical legacy of Enlightenment and liberal ideas about the individual as well as the new ideas found in Nietzsche and the philosophers who follow him provided novelists with images, concepts, and systems variously to contemplate, debate, defend, refine, and renew individualist goods in the twentieth century. Attention to these philosophical influences also provides the literary critic with a vocabulary with which to articulate the "persistent individual" at the heart of the modern novel. Together the philosophic and novelistic forms of attention may give us, finally, a way of paying the attention due to the modern individual in Canada. The modern novel in Canada, however, also repays philosophy for its challenging gifts. Through their engagement with the difficult philosophical questions facing the individual in the twentieth century and their debate over the ambivalence-provoking goods of individualism in the modern world, the novels discussed here offer a new image of the individual as dismantling and reshaping her liberal inheritances to respond better to the spiritual, ethical, and political challenges of the twentieth century. Attention to this image of the individual—as debating but not totally discarding the individualist goods of Enlightenment and liberal philosophy—offers a powerful and often suppressed perspective on modern Canadian identity.

A number of unresolved and weighty philosophical questions face the modern individual and inform her spiritual, familial, political, and ethical life. The chapters that follow draw constellations of novelists together around philosophical questions and themes that demanded the individual's attention and constituted her reformation in the early twentieth century: they are the death of God, the debate between freedom and determinism, the political implications of egoism and authoritarianism, and compassion's conditions of possibility. Rather than focus on questions of singular influence—such as Nietzsche's influence on Cohen or Schopenhauer's on Buckler—

this constellational structure traces the dynamic philosophical engagements of modern novelists in terms of the questions that provoked and inspired them. This approach has two chief and easily recognizable advantages. First, it emphasizes the novels as actively contemplating and representing the defining philosophical questions of the modern world. Where merely tracing the influence of one philosopher on a novelist might suggest both a limited philosophical engagement and the kind of imitation implied by Lamarque and Olsen's "philosophy *through* literature," the structure of this dissertation underlines the way in which "philosophy *in* literature" can represent the complex competition between diverging philosophical claims and their implications for the individual who lives with and through them. Moreover, even novelists who are clearly influenced by a single philosopher—such as Cohen and Buckler—saw the philosophical problems of their time as open to investigation and experiment, and not conclusively solved through any one philosopher's insight. It is fair to say that no novelist represented here sought to *demonstrate* a philosopher's system; instead, close readings of the philosophy in their novels reveal modern novelists keenly debating and transforming their philosophical precursors.

Secondly, the structure of the chapters brings novelists into conversation with one another precisely through their interests in these central philosophical questions and so demonstrates the pervasiveness of philosophical engagement in the modern Canadian novel. The relationships between authors developed here also participates in the recovery of some lesser-known novels—such as Irene Baird's *Waste Heritage* and Frederick Philip Grove's *Our Daily Bread*. Perhaps most significantly, however, it casts fresh light on well-known novels—such as Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*, Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel*, and Elizabeth Smart's *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*—whose philosophical interests are clearest when

seen in relation to the engagement of other novels. Furthermore, although philosophical readings of the modern Canadian novel are sparse, their habit of focusing on male authors recapitulates an implicitly gendered distinction, which resists reading novels by women as philosophical.[11] As Duran notes with reference to considerations of Anglo-European modernists, "[it] is perhaps not surprising that in the canon of those authors whose work has already been labeled as conceptual, there are surprisingly few women writers" (3). An additional advantage of the constellational structure of this project has been the way it exposes the dynamic philosophical interests of women writers in Canada.

The first chapter, "Novel Individuals in a World without God," turns to God's death as a definitive event for the modern individual and asks, with Nietzsche, what kind of individual could be "worthy" (*Gay* 120) of surviving it. God's apparent death stimulates all of the novelists' attempts to recover and recreate an individual "worthy" of surviving not only God's death but also the changes to family life, political engagement, and ethics that accompany that death. The "tremendous event" (120) that is the focus of the first chapter thus also generates the philosophical debates of the chapters that follow it. Although each of the novels discussed here responds to God's death, the first chapter concentrates on the representation of God's absence in Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* (1959) and Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* (1966), two novels that foreground explicit responses to Nietzsche's announcement of God's death in *The*

[11] Although the critical interest in philosophy in the modern Canadian novel has been limited, the best, sustained studies have predominantly focused on male authors. See for example, Marta Dvorak's study of Ernest Buckler's idealism, *Ernest Buckler: Rediscovery and Reassessment*; Mark Migotti's explanation of Leonard Cohen's Nietzschean sources in "Nietzsche as Educator: Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* and the Achievement of Innocence"; Winfried Siemerling's discussion of Martin Buber, Immanuel Levinas, and Leonard Cohen in *Discoveries of the Other*; and Alex Knönagel's book-length study of Nietzsche's influence on Grove, *Nietzschean Philosophy in the Works of Frederick Philip Grove*. While critics have often ignored the presence of philosophy in modern Canadian novels by women—or stubbornly lamented its absence, as Frank Birbalsingh did in his appraisal of Ethel Wilson's work (36)—recently, in "Ethics, Spectres, and Formalism in Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*," Marlene Goldman has insightfully positioned Watson's novel in an illuminating conversation about ethics and literature. A special issue of *University of Toronto Quarterly* (76.3) devoted to Canadian literature and ethics—and edited by Goldman—takes up Nussbaum's claims about the relationship between literature and moral philosophy. The essays in this issue, however, predominantly offer post-colonial readings of contemporary Canadian literature.

Gay Science. Like Nietzsche and the existentialists who follow him, Watson and Cohen reject God's death as a banal outcome of modernity and instead investigate its consequences for the individual and her community. They demonstrate how the individual must confront fully both God's absence and the isolating freedom it produces. Such a confrontation, however, guides the individual through isolation to a new individuality and the possibility of a new community. In *The Double Hook*, Watson emphasizes the situated and existential freedom through which individuals may see the other as a ground to their own freedom. In *Beautiful Losers*, Cohen reveals the emphatic individual as the one who not only recovers the melancholic individual from his despair, but who also offers a style of individuality distinct from the liberal and bourgeois traditions that Cohen sees as promoting the deadening banality of God's death.

Chapter Two, "Ambivalent Inheritances: Free Will and Determinism," focuses on the anxiety about the determining power of inheritance in narratives of self-making by four novelists: Frederick Philip Grove's *Fruits of the Earth*, Morley Callaghan's *They Shall Inherit the Earth* (1935), Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley* (1952), and Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974). The representation of biological and material inheritances in these novels reveals the tension and creative affinity between an individual's desire for autonomous self-making and the burden of a family legacy for the formation of a self. Through the theme of inheritance novelists engage in the debate between free will and determinism common both to philosophy at the turn of the century and to the naturalist novel of the late nineteenth century. In particular, novelists figure the relationship between these two, competing understandings of self-formation in terms of an individual's relationship to family and to time. Henri Bergson's distinction between mechanical, predictive time and the experience of real duration illuminates the debates about inheritance and self-making in the modern Canadian

novel. While a deterministic model of inheritance suggests a mechanical and predictive temporality in these novels, the creative synthesis of inheritance and self-making suggests the individual has an innovative and durational relationship to time. Moreover, the modern novelists' interest in experimenting with attitudes toward temporality also reveals their further affinity with Anglo-European modernists, who, as Richard Quinones has argued, were inspired by Bergson to question the "repetitive sameness" of predictive time (38).

Chapter Three, "Liberal Critiques: Political Ideology and the Liberal Individual," considers novels that ask how the individual might engage in politics and maintain her unique individuality in the inter-war period. Focusing on Grove's *Fruits of the Earth* and *The Master of the Mill* (1944), Callaghan's *They Shall Inherit the Earth*, and Baird's *Waste Heritage* (1939), I examine the ways in which the representation of dominant political ideologies—democracy, communism, and fascism—and the individuals who are drawn to them reflect concerns about egoism and authoritarianism after the First World War. This chapter provocatively reconsiders the definition of "political" Canadian fiction in the early twentieth century, a category that has typically been reserved for novels of this period that promote "a revolutionary conclusion" (Livesay 175).[12] This chapter and the one that follows it open up the definition of "political" fiction to novels that examine the philosophical questions underpinning political ideology. In fact, the novels examined in Chapter Three suggest that deep political commitment resists the ideological answers that usually diminish the individual's capacities to create and measure his own values. Grove, Callaghan, and Baird attempt to separate and defend the principles of liberal individualism from the political ideologies that threaten the individual as such. In doing so, they

[12] As I discuss in Chapter Three, the term "political" usually refers either to novels that support a revolutionary political program or to novelists, such as Grove, who demonstrated some real interest in political action. Thus, in "I Was A Young Communist," Dorothy Livesay argues that "neither [Baird nor Callaghan] could be called political" because their novels "offer no solution" (17) to the political problems they nonetheless represent. On the other hand, Grove's "socialist sympathies" (McDonald 6) have encouraged political readings of *The Master of the Mill*.

offer a radical vision of the political potential of the individual and of the modern Canadian novel, both of which they see as engaged in an on-going process of self-reflection necessary for profound political commitment. Importantly, the novelists draw on philosophy—for the characteristics of Mill's liberal individual and for Nietzsche's criticisms of socialism and democracy—to aid them in their experimental questioning. The philosophy *in* the modern Canadian novel therefore also helps novelists address the complexities and possibilities of politics in the modern world.

Chapter Four, "Irony and Individualist Politics," focuses on two novels that amplify the individualist goods necessary to robust political commitment in Grove, Callaghan, and Baird: Elizabeth Smart's *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* (1945) and Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* expose the political potential in the personal (and often sexual) desires of characters preoccupied with their own authenticity. In Smart's and Cohen's novels, philosophical projects of authenticity serve both to criticize the ways in which hegemonic political systems devalue the individual and to reveal the very individualist methods of political critique and renewal. Smart and Cohen, however, also reveal the potentially violent and authoritarian edge of the authentic individual, who attempts to redeem the world by transforming it into the product of her own willing. Critical also of her authoritarian potential, Smart and Cohen ironically scrutinize the authentic individual and the world she aims to recreate; they portray the authentically political individual as one who engages in perpetual self-reflection and who is compelled by her desire for authenticity both to recreate the ruined world and to destroy that creation when it becomes unjust. Drawing on French existentialist definitions of authenticity and Zarathustra's definition of redemption as the individual's ability "to recreate all 'it was' into 'thus I willed it!'" (Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* 110), these novels emphasize the dramatic political

significance of individual desire, and their authentic and antagonizing protagonists uncover the individual as an integral (and dangerous) source of revitalization in the war-torn mid century.

Chapter Five, "Compassionate Ends: The Modern Individual and the Ethics of Feeling," investigates the challenges compassion poses to the individualist in novels that ask whether compassion can be a virtue for individuals seeking their own autonomy. Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel* (1954), Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley*, Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*, and Margaret Laurence's Manawaka series all present compassion as a complex emotional and ethical ideal. The philosophical reading of compassion in these novels counters the critical view of compassion as a tidy means of narrative and moral resolution, exemplified in John Grube's claim that Watson concludes her novel with James, who begins the novel by murdering his mother, "offering a […] compassion whose potency can regenerate the world" (82). In contrast to views like Grube's, this chapter emphasizes the way in which modern novelists engage with and develop their own theories of compassion that also mark the difficulty of the emotion for the modern individual. While these novels maintain compassion as an ethical and communal good, they also trouble the assumption that fellow feeling is always and only the ethical end the individual serves. Significantly, these novelists reveal what the compassionate individual—often vulnerable and marginalized herself—gives up when she feels with another. Attempting to assert their own independence from their roles as daughters and wives, Wilson's and Laurence's female protagonists, for example, underline the difficulty of compassion for the female individualist. In response to the challenges of compassion for the modern individual Wilson, Buckler, Watson, and Laurence engage in a philosophical effort to redefine the emotion in individualist terms, which emphasize both the autonomy of the compassionate individual and the spontaneous and present temporality of fellow feeling. In stark contrast to the assumption that compassion

describes the *end* of the modern Canadian novel, then, this dissertation concludes with the image of the compassionate individual as one who is always engaged in new *beginnings*, whose perpetual and autonomous becoming forms the very condition of her ethical feeling.

The individual persists in the modern Canadian novel not as a stable category but as a site of conflict and a figure of becoming. As modern novelists contemplate and reshape this "source of worry," they also represent the modern world and theorize modes of individual engagement with it. Individualism, which emphasizes "the primacy of individual states and interests" (Williams, *Keywords* 165), is a multivalent and disputed good in the modern Canadian novel. It is the subject of a productive debate that drives the modern novel's "plot[s] of revelation" and stimulates the creative transformation of the individual from her earlier, Enlightenment and liberal forms, to her modern, impermanent and becoming state. The novels represented here place increasing pressure on the individual to respond to—and sometimes even to rescue—the modern world. The liberal individual's spontaneity, self-reflection, and commitment to self-cultivation survive this pressure, and together with new understandings of freedom, autonomy, and ethics developed in late-nineteenth and early- twentieth-century philosophers, they reconstitute the individual as a figure situated in modernity and "worthy" of our attention. Rather than set the individual against the community, modern novelists suggest that precisely these individualist characteristics help her bolster and renew it. Abandoned by God, partially determined by her inheritances, committed to political engagement and critique, and aware of the difficulty in feeling for someone other than herself, the individual comes into view in the modern Canadian novel as a figure transformed but not eradicated in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER ONE

NOVEL INDIVIDUALS IN A WORLD WITHOUT GOD

"Though his death was published round and round the world the heart did not believe."
Leonard Cohen, *Beautiful Losers* (164)

This chapter begins with the death of a powerful authority intimately linked to the life of the individual. For many, God's is the most obvious and natural death in the modern world; a consequence of modernity itself, it has become so prosaic that it seems a truism. As René Girard states in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, "[f]or two or three centuries this has been the underlying principle of every 'new' Western doctrine: God is dead, man must take his place" (56). In *Five Faces of Modernity*, Matei Calinescu similarly situates God's "unthinkable yet already banal demise" as "a sort of cliché" (62) in the twentieth century. Despite his supposed death, however, God has had an active and important "afterlife" (Lewis 23) in the modern Canadian novel. As the epigraph above suggests, the novelists discussed in this chapter in particular and in this dissertation in general do not simply "believe" in the death of God; rather, as they develop a philosophically profound understanding of the modern individual, they confront, grapple with, celebrate, and mourn the apparent absence of divine authority in the modern world.

The search for the Canadian individual thus begins in the novelistic afterglow of "a world that has been abandoned by God" (Lukács 88). In this abandoned world, the individual must confront God's absence, even if she eventually wills his return to life. Sheila Watson in *The Double Hook* (1959) and Leonard Cohen in *Beautiful Losers* (1966) dramatize the polarizing individual responses to God's apparent death—violence and apathy, melancholy and joy—and the isolating burden placed on the individual ostensibly liberated by it. Engaging directly with Friedrich Nietzsche's pronouncement of God's death, Watson and Cohen trouble the assumption

that the individual can easily live without recourse to the divine. Both also question Nietzsche's answer to God's death; in God's absence the individual becomes his own absolute, but such freedom alone cannot be the ground of an individual's life in either *The Double Hook* or *Beautiful Losers*. Indeed, while confrontation with the absence of the divine defines the individualities of their characters, both Watson and Cohen also seek a model of individuality capable not only of facing God's absence but also of overcoming the isolating freedom that it creates.

In the modern Canadian novel God's death is an individual rather than an institutional concern. The emphasis on the individual rather than the church expresses both the long history of the individual as the centre of the novel genre and a shift in the religious landscape in Canada in the mid-twentieth century. In his "Conclusion" to *A Literary History of Canada*, Northrop Frye notes the important role of religion in Canada's cultural development until the first decades of the twentieth century. According to Frye, writing in 1965, "[r]eligion [specifically, Christianity] has been a major—perhaps the major—cultural force in Canada, at least down to the last generation or two" (227). During this period of religious cultural influence, Frye reports, "the effective religious factors in Canada were doctrinal and evangelical, those that stressed the arguments of religion at the expense of its imagery" (227).[1] In *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel* (2010), Pericles Lewis describes the shift from public to private religious experience as not only characteristic of secular modernity, but also especially appropriate to the representative force of the modern novel. According to Lewis, secularization "involves shifting the forces of enchantment from the public forum of churches to the private world of individual experience, which is the precinct of the modern novel" (22). While the contingent world that

[1] In *Locations of the Sacred* William Closson James further argues that until the 1930s, "religion in Canada […] was primarily a matter of individual intellect and conscience set in the context of moral and social values" (2).

results from God's death lacks a definitive order explained and upheld by religious institutions, the individual becomes the source of religious experience and meaning in the modern world and its novels. Unexpectedly then, the individual and the divine only become more firmly tied as spirituality and faith become individualist expressions in the wake of God's apparent death.

This chapter focuses on the individual experience of divine absence after "religion ceased to be a 'cultural force' in Canada" (James 12). The doctrinal and moral authority of religion before the 1930s supported the social and public function of religious institutions in the early days of Canadian confederation. In contrast, as Watson's and Cohen's novels demonstrate and as Charles Taylor has theorized, in the mid-twentieth century religious interest shifted from institutional moral doctrine to individual expressive faith (or, equally, the refusal of faith). In investigating the fictional individual's responses to God's supposed death, this chapter emphasizes the particular and personal experience of the divine that Lewis suggests rather than the religious "arguments" that had informed cultural production in the period Frye describes. The general, if critical, Nietzschean affinities of the novels discussed here reject institutional Christian morality on the grounds of its impersonal and life-denying character. Any God who survives in the modern Canadian novel, as Cohen's F. will teach, survives not in a church or a universal doctrine, but in and through the individual and her negotiation of her new and situated freedom.

In fact, Watson's and Cohen's novelistic meditations on the individual's experience of God's absence respond directly to Nietzsche's announcement of God's death and his call for the individual to replace him. Nietzsche's obituary to God—written over 130 years ago, in *The Gay Science* (1882)—remains the most famous and influential pronouncement of his death. While Nietzsche's announcement has become as commonplace as the death it announces, returning to it

once more illuminates the knotted nexus of ideas this chapter will discuss, ideas no slighter than God, the individual, and the novel. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche relates God's death through the voice of a madman "who in the bright morning lit a lantern and ran around the marketplace crying incessantly, 'I'm looking for God! I'm looking for God!'" (119).[2] Perceived as insane by the group of unbelievers he finds in the market, the madman explains God's absence as the consequence of his death: "'Where is God?' he cried; 'I'll tell you! *We have killed him* – you and I! We are all his murderers […] God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! […] Is the magnitude of this deed not too great for us? Do we not ourselves have to become gods merely to appear worthy of it?'" (119-20; original emphasis). The madman exemplifies Girard's description of "every 'new' Western doctrine" stated above; certainly for this famous Nietzschean figure, "God is dead, [and] man must take his place."

Nietzsche's market scene criticizes nineteenth-century secularism for its residually Christian morality and its inability or unwillingness to cultivate the individual strong enough to murder God. Despite the general atheism of the market crowd, however, the madman remains a prophet delivering a message of what is to come: "Finally he threw his lantern on the ground so that it broke into pieces and went out. 'I come too early', he then said; 'my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men […] *and yet they have done it themselves!*'" (120; original emphasis). Watson and Cohen investigate this untimely announcement when, although it seems to have been heard and accepted to the point of cliché, the individual still struggles to understand, and sometimes to overcome, its magnitude.

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[2] While this scene is certainly the most famous articulation of God's death in all of Nietzsche's writing, it is not the first. Nietzsche announces God's death in *The Gay Science* in §108, the first section of Book Three. Alluding also to Buddha and Plato's allegory of the cave, Nietzsche suggests that God will leave a long shadow: "After Buddha was dead, they still showed his shadow in a cave for centuries – a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way people are, they may still for millennia be in caves in which they show his shadow. – And we – we must still defeat his shadow as well!" (109).

This short scene, however, announces more than God's death. In fact, the popular association of Nietzsche with the death of God masks the real interest of the philosopher's claim. Importantly, the madman suggests that his is an era of transition: this is the afterlife of Nietzsche's God. Although he is dead, he will not be fully at rest until individuals recognize that God's death awards them the powerful freedom to refashion themselves. The madman's "*requiem aeternam deo*" (120) emphasizes this divine restlessness.[3] As Terry Eagleton has recently claimed, "[it] took the barefaced audacity of Friedrich Nietzsche to point out that the problem was less the death of God than the bad faith of Man […] men and women failed to see in the divine obsequies an opportunity to remake themselves" (207).[4] In a telling reversal, the madman's disruptive search seeks not God but the individual who is strong enough to replace him. Watson and Cohen both dramatize and problematize the individual's profound "opportunity to remake [herself]" after God's apparent death. Although God's death is in many ways the individual's absolute liberation, Watson's and Cohen's focus on the individual's experience of this apparent liberation reveals the burden and the stakes of life without a transcendent absolute.

The implicit philosophical ancestry of Nietzsche's madman further suggests that he seeks an individual as much as a god. Nietzsche's madman is an allusion to Diogenes the Cynic, who, according to Diogenes Laertius, "lit a lamp in broad daylight and said, as he went about, 'I am

[3] As Bernard Williams's explanatory note clarifies, the madman transforms "that part of the service for the dead which reads 'Requiem aeternam dona eis [scilicet, mortuis], Domine' ('Lord, grant them [the dead] eternal rest')" into "Grant God eternal rest" (120).

[4] In *Culture and the Death of God*, Eagleton notes the implicitly Christian character of Nietzsche's claim that God's death also means humanity's rebirth: "That the death of God involves the death of Man, along with the birth of a new form of humanity, is orthodox Christian doctrine, a fact of which Nietzsche seems not to have been aware" (159). Eagleton exaggerates here; Nietzsche, whose father was a Lutheran pastor and who studied theology (however briefly), certainly knew "orthodox Christian doctrine." Eagleton is right, however, to point out that Nietzsche masks general similarities between his philosophy and Christianity.

looking for a man'" (43).[5] This illuminating allusion associates the madman's critical performance in the market with Diogenes's public criticisms of his own world. Their lamps, seemingly unnecessary in the daylight, emphasize the absence of what they seek and their criticism of what they find. Moreover, Nietzsche's allusion to Diogenes tightens the knot that links the madman's search for God to his search for an exemplary individual: the reader familiar with Diogenes will hear his call for a man in the madman's cry for God. The philosophical history of this image, then, suggests that an investigation into God's death also necessitates a study of the individual who arrives to fill the space left by the absent divine.

In investigating God's death, Watson's and Cohen's novels also contemplate the kinds of individualities that death creates. Of the novels discussed in this project, Watson's and Cohen's most obviously respond to Nietzsche and Diogenes. For example, *Beautiful Losers* answers Nietzsche's claim that "God is dead" with a prayer—quoted in part in the epigraph to this chapter—from Cohen's own madman and well-read Nietzschean, F., who claims: "God is alive […] though his death was published round and round the world" (164). On the other hand, Mrs. Potter, who is murdered in the first lines of *The Double Hook*, is seen throughout her community in the interior of British Columbia "[h]olding the lamp and looking where there's nothing to be found" (22). Although Watson's critics have noted her allusion to Diogenes, no one has traced it through its Nietzschean intertext, which also sheds light on Watson's clear contemplation of a world abandoned by God in her novel.[6] The Nietzschean hinge between Diogenes and Watson also locates her novel—and the ceaseless searching of the murdered mother that begins it—in the

[5] Translators of Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* sometimes render this line as "I am looking for an honest man" in order to emphasize Diogenes's criticism of the men he does find. Laertius also recalls Plato's description of Diogenes as "A Socrates gone mad" (55); the emphasis on Diogenes's madness in this description further suggests that Nietzsche's madman is an updated portrait of the ancient Greek philosopher.

[6] John Grube, for instance, claims that Mrs. Potter's lamp "is a direct reminiscence of the Greek philosopher Diogenes, lighting a lamp in broad daylight for an honest man" ("Introduction" 80). In "*The Double Hook*'s Double Hooks" Arnold Davidson also notes Watson's reference to Diogenes when he asks why critics have not thought of Mrs. Potter as "a female Diogenes with her lantern looking for an honest man or even perhaps an honest son" (35).

philosophical contemplation of a specifically modern problem, while the allusion's origin in Diogenes complements the novel's abstract, ahistorical character, which Watson's biblical allusions also buttress.

Like Nietzsche's madman, the novelistic individual seeks God. In his canonical *Theory of the Novel*, Georg Lukács positions the novel as a genre born from a world in which God no longer serves as a definitive, organizing authority. "The novel," Lukács strongly claims, "is the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God" (88). This abandonment makes the world contingent; unanchored from the order of the Judeo-Christian worldview, both the world and the individual take on new and provisional significance. Lukács contrasts the novel with the epic, in which man and his environment existed in a "homogeneous world, and even the separation of man and world […] cannot disturb its homogeneity" (32). The novel, on the other hand, mirrors "a world gone out of joint" (17). Nietzsche's madman expresses this disjointedness when he notes the effects of God's death on the world: "What were we doing when we unchained the earth from its sun? Where is it moving to now? Where are we moving to? […] Are we not continually falling? And backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an up and a down?" (120). According to Lukács, this disruption to the world characterizes the hero of the novel as alienated, disoriented, homeless, and, above all, "problematic" (78).

Lukács's description of the novel illuminates the problem that modern Canadian novelists and the individuals who populate their texts face: "The novel is the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, yet which still thinks in terms of totality" (56). In other words, despite the contingency of a godless world that denies any stable and comprehensive order or understanding, the individual still seeks a full and synthetic relationship with the world. This residual totalizing

impulse characterizes part of God's afterlife in the modern novel: the individual's desire to apprehend a divinely ordered and immanent world lingers well after Nietzsche's announcement in *The Gay Science*. In fact, this desire permeates "I"'s sublime quest to "[f]uck a saint" (13) in *Beautiful Losers*.[7] What had once seemed the domain of God, however, collapses onto the individual, as "[i]ndividuality […] becomes an aim unto itself because it finds within itself everything that is essential to it and makes it autonomous—even if what it finds can never be a firm possession or the basis of its life, but is an object of search" (Lukács 78). In Lukács's view, then, the self becomes both the path to and the priest of totality.

Watson and Cohen, however, challenge this conclusion about the modern and novelistic individual. While Lukács captures the problematic occasion of *The Double Hook* and *Beautiful Losers*, both Watson and Cohen turn to philosophy in their novels in part to find a way out of the isolation and solipsism implicit in the "autonomous" and "problematic" individual Lukács describes. Lukács's explanation of the novel as "the process of the problematic individual's journey towards himself" (80) thus needs rephrasing if it is to account for Watson's and Cohen's discoveries about the individual in the afterlife of God. In *The Double Hook* and *Beautiful Losers*, the individual journeys *through* himself toward a renewed community. Individuality thus becomes a mode of confronting God's absence, but it is not, as Lukács suggests, the end for which the modern individual, in Watson's or Cohen's approximation, finally searches.

Chief among the philosophical problems to which the modern Canadian novel attends, then, are the public and private consequences of the death of God. These problems invite Watson and Cohen to contemplate not only the philosophical, but also the religious and human significance of God's death. As Lukács knew and Taylor and Lewis confirm, God's apparent

[7] Although the narrator of the first book of *Beautiful Losers*, "The History of Them All," is unnamed in the novel, I follow the critical convention of referring to him as "I," a referent that nicely captures his solipsistic nature and his Cartesian genealogy.

death becomes a point of definition for the individual in the modern novel; in the era of God's afterlife, "[t]he moral and spiritual order of things must come to us indexed to a personal vision" (Taylor, *Sources* 428).[8] Even as these novels take up spirituality as an individual expression, however, they also contemplate the effect this shift has on the communities once united by their shared religious belief. For instance, *The Double Hook* magnifies the difficulty of this shift by placing Christian and indigenous worldviews—both losing power in the twentieth century—in a fraught but compelling relation. The modern novel moves religion out of the church and into the domain of individual experience, but this relocation creates a new problem—"how to revive some conception of a sacred community in an era of purely private experience" (Lewis 22)—for the individuals who desire communion, not only with God but also with a human community. One of the most significant consequences of the death of God, then, is the challenge that the newly liberated individuals who arise in God's absence pose to the constitution of communities. As Watson, especially, attempts to show, however, the modern individual may find new faith precisely in her community and through her feeling of responsibility for it.

Watson and Cohen thus also forcefully reject the seeming banality of God's apparent death. Rather than the apathy of the market men, Watson's and Cohen's characters feel the freedom and the isolation of world without God. Like Nietzsche, then, Watson and Cohen contemplate what kind of individual would be "worthy" of living after God's death. Thus, they experiment with extreme reactions to this momentous event in the polarizing responses that

[8] In general, the death of God has inspired two contrasting readings of the individual during the last 130 years. For many prominent theorists in the twentieth century—including Michel Foucault and Theodore Adorno—the death of God also heralds the death of the individual. This interpretation focuses on the individual as the "craven, guilt-ridden dependent creature" (Eagleton 159) that Nietzsche criticizes. The alternative reading, also inspired by Nietzsche, emphasizes the increased freedom of the individual after the death of God. This reading has also been criticized, however, as later theorists also question whether an image of a cohesive and all-powerful individual is realistic, possible, or ethical. Neither of these interpretations seems wholly useful to describing the modern novel. A return to the early twentieth-century responses to the death of God and its consequences for the individual also returns us to a moment of debate in which God and the individual may be contested without being totally rejected.

come to define the individualities of their characters. Before reading from *The Double Hook* in 1973 Watson described these responses in her book as either "violence" or "insensibility" ("What" 15). Cohen, on the other hand, characterizes his two, primary male protagonists "I" and F. as melancholic and joyful respectively, notably the two reactions that Nietzsche predicts God's death will inspire in *The Gay Science*. These responses—violence, apathy, melancholy, and joy—characterize the intense individual experience of God's apparent death.

As *The Double Hook* and *Beautiful Losers* investigate these individual experiences, however, they also resist the polarization at their origin. Watson and Cohen reveal the porous boundary between violence and apathy, melancholy and joy, as they also trouble the definitive claims of both God's death and his life. The announcement of God's death, these texts suggest, inspires contradictory but related individual reactions, each of which confronts God's absence and leads, however tenuously, through the individual to "some glimmering" (Cohen, *Beautiful* 17) of new community. While both Watson and Cohen take up Nietzsche's philosophy and, especially, the figure of his madman in their novels, neither rests on the antagonism of his announcement. Rather, each novelist suggests that Nietzsche, while announcing the event that defines the modern individual, cannot guide that individual beyond the important recognition of God's death. Watson thus turns from Nietzsche to the existentialists of the twentieth century, especially Simone de Beauvoir, to translate the individual's new and isolating freedom into one situated within an intersubjective community of individuals. Cohen, on the other hand, revalues Nietzsche's ascetic priest and his God in order to affirm the divine magic of communion that arises through individual rather than doctrinal faith. In their philosophical answers to Nietzsche, then, Watson and Cohen discover the individual "worthy" of God's death to be the one capable of first confronting and then overcoming the isolation it causes.

EXISTENTIAL CONFRONTATIONS IN SHEILA WATSON'S *THE DOUBLE HOOK*

Sheila Watson's terse and challenging *The Double Hook* (1959) confronts contradictory individual and communal experiences associated with God's afterlife. Watson represents these experiences through a community in the interior of British Columbia that is paradoxically united through the alienation of the individuals it comprises.[9] Like the novels Pericles Lewis discusses in *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel*, *The Double Hook* focuses on "the difficulties of living in the visible world without recourse to the unseen" (51). Unlike the novels in Lewis's study, however, Watson's book answers these difficulties with the development of an existentialist ethics that positions individuals in a renewed relation to one another.

Watson's novel is set in the disenchanted and alienated world after Nietzsche's announcement of God's death; however, its landscape remains haunted by the cruel and taunting figures of Mrs. Potter and Coyote. As Watson meditates on human life after the supposed death of God, Mrs. Potter and Coyote become representative figures of the existential predicament the modern individual faces. Despite the prompt death of the former and the fleeting appearances of the latter, both Mrs. Potter and Coyote antagonize the other characters in the book into recognizing their alienating forms of individualism. With these antagonistic recognitions *The Double Hook* challenges the assumption that God's death is either painless or complete; it also attempts to surpass the defiant, negative approach of Nietzsche's madman in *The Gay Science*, who is refigured in Watson's text as a murdered mother. Watson's novel belies "'the subtraction' accounts of modernity" (*Secular* 29) that Charles Taylor holds responsible for disenchanting the world. According to Taylor, eventually these subtractions inspire an addition: "modern humanism, in addition to being activist and interventionist, had to produce some substitute for

[9] *The Double Hook* is set in the Cariboo District where Watson was a schoolteacher between 1934 and 1936.

agape" (27).[10] In its last moments, as the community gathers to witness a birth, *The Double Hook* suggests that such a substitution will come in the form of an intersubjective community in which each member begins to overcome the isolating consequences of God's apparent absence through her recognition of her situated freedom—that is, freedom grounded within relationships with other people and within a particular socio-historical context. In dramatizing this important and difficult confrontation and renewal, *The Double Hook* moves from representing the Nietzschean individual's isolated and violent responses to God's apparent death to existential individuals' intersubjective and situated responses to one another.

During a discussion of *The Double Hook* in 1973 Watson revealed her interests in representing the particular challenges one faces in a world without the "mediating rituals" historically found in religion, nation, and art:

> there was something I wanted to say: about how people are driven, how if they have no art, how if they have no tradition, how if they have no ritual, they are driven in one of two ways, either towards violence or towards insensibility—if they have no mediating rituals which manifest themselves in what I suppose we call art forms. And so it was with this that the novel began. ("What" 15)

In these remarks, Watson positions *The Double Hook* as a work that responds to the cultural crises associated with the death of God and its accompanying loss of tradition and ritual. *The Double Hook* displays the negative consequences for individuals who respond to these losses with aggression and indifference, both of which drive characters toward narrowly individualistic lives. For instance, James's violence against his mother and Kip, the man who carries messages between James and his lover, Lenchen, becomes a form of chosen and destructive isolation, an

[10] *Agape* is the Greek word used in Christian theology to describe "Christian love as distinct from erotic love or simple affection" (*OED*). *Agape* refers both to God's love for man and man's love for God.

attempt to claim individual freedom by disburdening himself of his communal responsibilities. On the other hand, Felix's isolation seems to be the result of his apathy and laziness, his unwillingness to pursue his wife, Angel, even after she abandons him. Although Watson's claim that individuals become either violent or insensible after the loss of rituals illuminates much of the occasion and action of *The Double Hook*, it leaves the existential direction in which the text moves unarticulated. While the novel begins with the negative individualism expressed in violence and insensibility, it ends with a fragile image of community. These characteristics point to a third response to God's absence in Watson's novel—individual responsibility—that might sublate the negative responses to it and, crucially, redefine the position of the alienated individual within that fragile, final community.

For Watson, in the wake of God's death individuality becomes both more important, as Lukács claims, and a powerful liability. In her unpublished commentary on *The Double Hook*, Watson describes "the intolerable burden of I-ness" (qtd. Morriss 55) that accompanies the isolation of individuals and communities following the death of God. *The Double Hook* unfolds the difficulty of confident and stable individualism after the loss of a universal understanding of the world that might guide the individual and shape her community. Watson thus reflects not on the freedom of the individual to replace her lost God—as Cohen will—but on the burden of that freedom and its resulting isolation:

> If men are thrown back on their own nature alone and on the contemplation of natural or mechanical forces, if they have neither an image of church or state or even tribal unity, if they are cut off from a rooted pattern of behaviour… they respond to life with violence or apathy, because overwhelmed with a sense of isolation they attempt to wrench themselves away from human contact, to force

> themselves into conjunction with it, or retreat further into their own loneliness. They want to bear witness to the curious power which they feel in themselves and yet to shrink from the hostile attention of others. (qtd. Morriss 55-56)

As she will throughout *The Double Hook*, here too Watson avoids a singular reading of an individual's reaction to the disenchanted modern world. Instead, she claims that the individual's feelings of isolation inspire contradictory impulses: on one hand to assert, often through violence against others, her newfound individual power, and on the other hand to retreat, in apathy or insensibility, from the power of other individuals. These responses draw attention to the fact that each individual must compete with other, newly and equally empowered individuals, a prospect that only further complicates the possibility of community in the ethos Watson details. Watson's focus on the isolating effects of God's absence emphasizes her interest in the individual, for it is through and between individuals that the consequences of God's death are felt and overcome.

Through its focus on individual isolation, *The Double Hook* expresses a post-Nietzschean and existentialist concern for life after God's apparent death. Although Watson does not seek a wholly atheistic answer to the problems she identifies as the result of God's death, she nonetheless shares with twentieth-century existentialists the desire to confront the real pressures and problems of individual life in a world stripped of the benevolent and unifying power of the Christian God. Like Jean-Paul Sartre, Watson suggests that if God does not exist, "we must bear the full consequences of that assertion" ("Existentialism" 27). The isolation, violence, and apathy that Watson describes characterize not just a world that has lost its traditions and rituals, but also a world that challenges the secular assumption that God's death might be an unproblematic event for the individuals who survive him. "Existentialists," Sartre claims in "Existentialism is a Humanism," "are strongly opposed to a certain type of secular morality that seeks to eliminate

God as painlessly as possible" (27-28). Sharing the existentialist project to meet the challenges of a world without God, then, Watson reveals the painful consequences of God's death before she tentatively imagines an existential and individual recovery that unifies her alienated characters in a fragile community. Curiously, Watson does not highlight this recovery in her comments on the novel, which instead focus on the negative responses to God's death as the problematic occasion of the novel. As the reading below demonstrates, however, the novel does envision a third more positive and existential response that, although unarticulated in Watson's comments, nevertheless grounds its philosophical contemplation of the individual and her community in a world without God.

The movement of *The Double Hook* toward this tentative community also moves it away from the Nietzschean character of its opening. As I will discuss in some detail below, the novel begins with a violent conflict between two individuals—James and his mother—who attempt to assert their individual freedom and power without regard for the other. James and his mother are essentially Nietzschean characters, because their response to God's apparent absence is to affirm their individuality as its own absolute. Along with other nineteenth-century writers, such as Kierkegaard and Dostoyevsky, Nietzsche stands at the origins of the loose philosophical movement that would be called existentialism in the twentieth century. Nietzsche's proclamation of God's death in *The Gay Science* is an important moment in the story of existentialism's origins. This announcement helped Nietzsche promote the individual as the creator of his own freedom, an idea that later existentialists would pick up and modify in their theories of intersubjectivity. Although the association of a violent individuality with Nietzsche parodies his actual philosophy, I argue that Watson begins with violent Nietzschean figures not to represent accurately Nietzsche's philosophy, but to dramatize its limits. Nietzsche's strong individuals

remain eccentric and antagonistic, because they are prophets of the future that has not yet come into being. Watson exposes the limitations of continuing to follow Nietzsche's philosophy once individuals realize their freedom more broadly. An antagonistic presence, like Nietzsche's madman or Watson's Mrs. Potter, may reveal an individual's freedom from a transcendent absolute, but it also reinforces "the intolerable burden of I-ness" Watson lamented.

In contrast to Nietzsche, the French existentialists Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre offer a way out of the *burden* of individual freedom that does not simply insist upon a metaphysical relationship with the divine. Rather, these existentialists focus on the way in which individual freedom exists only in relation to the freedom of the Other. Beauvoir develops a theory of freedom in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* that illuminates the relationship between the characters at the end of *The Double Hook*. Like Sartre in "Existentialism is a Humanism," in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* Beauvoir counters the general accusation that existentialism is a nihilistic, solipsistic, and pessimistic philosophy with a claim to its optimism through the central terms of her title. Beauvoir argues that failure motivates both optimism and ethics: "the most optimistic ethics have all begun by emphasizing the element of failure involved in the condition of man […] One does not offer an ethics to a God" (10). For Beauvoir, the individual exists in an ambiguous state, because he is both a subject and an object: "This privilege, which he alone possesses, of being a sovereign and unique subject amidst a universe of objects, is what he shares with all his fellow-men. In turn an object for others, he is nothing more than an individual in the collectivity on which he depends" (7). Ambiguity is precisely this "tension between seemingly opposite experiences of the self as both a free subject and an object for others" (Keltner 201). This ambiguous human existence further inspires Beauvoir's optimism, for it is the way in which the individual maintains her freedom while also acknowledging the freedom of the other.

The ambiguity of the individual's existence moves existential philosophy beyond Nietzsche's affirmation of individual freedom. Beauvoir focuses on the intersubjective relation between individuals in their ambiguity, and this focus in turn inspires Beauvoir's definition of situated freedom. That is, on Beauvoir's view, freedom is never divorced totally from the world in which the subject lives: "to be free is not to have the power to do anything you like; it is to be able to surpass the given toward an open future; the existence of others as a freedom defines my situation and is even the condition of my own freedom" (91). Watson's novel also moves in this direction, from representing individuals who desire an un-situated and absolute freedom for themselves to a community of ambiguous individuals who recognize, albeit falteringly, the Other as the ground of their own freedom. In doing so, *The Double Hook* creates itself as a ground on which readers may recognize the freedom and subjectivity of historically oppressed others. While I primarily focus on women in my discussion below, many of Watson's contemporary critics emphasize her representation of aboriginal characters and culture.[11]

Although the existential interests of *The Double Hook* have not always interested Watson's critics, they have clear roots in Watson's cultural experiences during the time she was revising her novel. Watson completed her revisions to *The Double Hook* in 1955 and 1956, while she was living in Paris with her husband. Watson's Parisian experiences—which included reading existentialists, such as Beauvoir, and attending an intimate performance of Sartre's *No*

[11] See especially Marlene Goldman's "Coyote's Children and the Canadian Gothic: Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* and Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death by Lightning*" and *DisPossession: Haunting in Canadian Fiction*, Margaret Morriss's "No Short Cuts: The Evolution of *The Double Hook*," Glenn Willmott's "Sheila Watson, Aboriginal Discourse, and Cosmopolitan Modernism," and Steven Putzel's "Under Coyote's Eye: Indian Tales in Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*."

Exit—permeated the way she thought about her own work.[12] In a journal entry from April 21, 1956, Watson recollects her visit to Rousseau's cenotaph in the Tuileries and the meditation on existential freedom and Christian servitude in *The Double Hook* that followed: "I am working on the fourth part of the *Double Hook* [*sic*]. […] I ask myself if I have the power to make it come whole—to fuse completely character, event, setting. I couldn't help thinking that if inscriptions such as 'Nous avons choisi la liberté faisons lui confiance' become part of a person's iconography so to speak—that existentialism is an obvious step" (qtd. Flahiff 151). Watson refers to the inscription she read on Rousseau's monument: "We have chosen freedom, let's trust in it" (my translation). Her mention of the fourth part of *The Double Hook*—the section of the book in which James escapes to town—suggests she is thinking of James's "iconography" in particular. The journal entry positions James as an existentialist character, one who chooses freedom, and who, upon being robbed in town, is forced to confront the ramifications of that choice. James comes to see himself as a vulnerable individual whose violent power and confidence in his freedom diminishes as he recognizes himself as an object for others. This journal entry is initially interesting because it illuminates a philosophical interest of Watson's that is often lost in contemporary interpretations of her novel.

As she continues, however, Watson complicates this loose association of James with existentialism, and, by introducing Christian servitude to her thinking about freedom, she isolates a problem that informs the entirety of her novel. Just below the above passage, Watson writes: "I

[12] In her Paris journals Watson writes about speaking to Gabriel Marcel on the phone (qtd. Flahiff 99). She also commonly refers to Simone Weil. She reports attending a performance of *Huis Clos* in "a small theatre, five rows of seats" (153) sometime between April 21 and April 28, 1956. On May 18, 1956 she also notes her husband's complaint about the effect the books she was reading had on her: "W says that when I read certain books, they bring out the worst side of my nature—Lawrence at Goetts' and now Simone de Beauvoir" (156). Born in 1908, just one year before Watson, Beauvoir was almost exactly Watson's contemporary. While Watson read French, she would not have had to in order to read Beauvoir. Beauvoir's major philosophical works, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947) and *The Second Sex* (1949), were both available in English translation in 1949 and 1953 respectively, years before Watson's arrival in Paris. For more on Watson's time in Paris, see Stephen Scobie's *The Measure of Paris*.

thought of the phrase iterated and reiterated in Bede—'Servant of the servants of God'" (qtd. Flahiff 151).[13] Notably, Bede's language emphasizes *human* relationships: humans serve each other in service to God. Watson continues: "It seems to me that in some way the two concepts have to be welded into a single whole" (151). This image of welding servitude and existential freedom "into a single whole" illuminates part of Watson's philosophical project in *The Double Hook*, which attempts to imagine a way out of the violence and insensibility that result from God's apparent death. The existential ethics Beauvoir develops resonate with such a fusion, even as they insist on the absence of God. The image of "welding" also importantly recalls the image of fusion with which Watson begins to describe her insecurity about her revisions to *The Double Hook*: "Now I ask myself if I have the power to make it come whole—to fuse completely character, event, setting." Watson's images of forging a "whole" through *The Double Hook* unite the book's "character, event, [and] setting" with the broader philosophical ideas she desired to address. Beauvoir's philosophy aligns well with Watson's desire for wholeness, because the French philosopher believed freedom is always situated. Stephen Michelman insists that "Existentialist accounts of situation, like their accounts of freedom, are meant to recall the interdependence of self and world that cannot be further reduced without serious distortion" (302). Watson's task of revision, then, is one of welding a whole that synthesizes existential freedom and human community.[14]

Watson's recent critics have ignored or distorted the existential roots of *The Double*

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[13] Saint Bede (Venerable Bede) was a medieval English monk. He often added "Servant of the servants of God" to his addresses to clergymen. See *The Venerable Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England*.

[14] Watson also uses the image of a metalworker at a forge to describe a philosophy of life that resonates with existential ideas about situated freedom and personal change. On January 25, 1956 she writes: "I think of life as a piece of metal which must be shaped, not thrown away—the something to write once given or elected, turned until it has form—until it lives. One simply can't drop it and look for something else. This way man wears his life or his work like ready-made clothes. He shops around until he finds something that fits—that will do with a little adjustment here or there. It is life off the rack—work off the rack—not living or creating" (qtd. Flahiff 139-40). Watson emphasizes creativity in life, but that creativity is in part determined by one's mettle: one cannot live well, she insists, if one desires to escape the forge and simply wear a life "off the rack."

Hook. Often more interested in the context that led to her first draft of the novel than the context of its dramatic revision, Watson's post-colonial critics anchor their arguments in the genealogy of characters Watson later edited out of the final version of her book. Glenn Willmott, however, sometimes hints at Watson's existentialist interest.[15] In "The Nature of Modernism in *Deep Hollow Creek*," for instance, Willmott suggests that Watson turns from "the romance of an individual *subjectivity*" in her earlier novel, *Deep Hollow Creek*, to "the interdependent conditionality, or fate, of a fixed, physical *existence*" in *The Double Hook* (44-45; original emphasis). In "Sheila Watson, Aboriginal Discourse, and Cosmopolitan Modernism," however, Willmott's correction to Frederick Salter's early understanding of "a kind of modernist existentialism in [*The Double Hook*]" positions existentialism as "stripping away civilization to reveal a primitive essence" (109). This description ignores existentialism's insistence on situation and so obscures its usefulness as a lens into Watson's difficult work. Attention to the Parisian context of Watson's revisions to her novel, however, strengthens the connection between her novel and existential philosophy. Furthermore, rather than provide an escape from the situation of her characters that Watson's post-colonial critics rightfully foreground, existentialism helps Watson to meditate philosophically on both the particular, historical context of her novel and its resonances with the wider human condition in the mid-twentieth century.

With diction and rhythm that recall the Old Testament, the epigrammatic beginning of *The Double Hook* lays out the novel's setting and familial relations—its situation. In this poetic opening Watson obliquely introduces Mrs. Potter and Coyote, who force the other characters to recognize their existential dilemma:

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[15] In "Sheila Watson: On Soft Ground," Margaret Turner also touches upon Watson's existential themes, but she subordinates them totally to the problem of language in the New World: "It is precisely Watson's double focus – both on the theoretical and philosophical bases of new world discourse and culture and on the processes that fragment and reassemble modes of speaking and human existence – that makes new world discourse both the subject and the form of the novel" (66).

In the folds of the hills
under Coyote's eye
lived
the old lady, mother of William
of James and of Greta

lived James and Greta
lived William and Ara his wife
lived the Widow Wagner
the Widow's girl Lenchen
the Widow's boy
lived Felix Prosper and Angel
lived Theophil
and Kip
until one morning in July (11)

The "until" in the last line above signals a change in the order that the epigraph has outlined and catalyzes Watson's dramatization of the violence and apathy that she imagines as the two responses to the absence of God in her comments on the novel. Importantly, this change occurs when, in the first paragraph of the book, the old lady, Mrs. Potter, is "[p]ushed by [her son] James's will. By James's hand. By James's words: This is my day. You'll not fish today" (11). Despite her death, however, Mrs. Potter's menacing figure subsequently appears while fishing to the other people living in this isolated community. As the community gathers to complain about and then mourn the hostile Mrs. Potter, Watson depicts the destruction that lies in her wake:

James's violence continues as he blinds Kip and abandons Lenchen, who is pregnant with his son; Greta commits suicide in the fire she sets to the home she shared with James and her mother; and the anthropomorphic trickster god of many North American aboriginal traditions, Coyote, vehemently antagonizes the isolated community out of its apathy. The book ends with a brief reconstitution of order and the promise of change as James returns to his renewed community and it witnesses the birth of the child, Felix, born from Lenchen and James's affair. Yet, as the narrative ends and James remains unpunished for his mother's death, Coyote's fateful voice rings out once again and, in a passage I will return to below, describes the existential condition of the baby Felix: "I have set his feet on soft ground; / I have set his feet on the sloping shoulders of the world" (118). Watson's ending thus remains ambiguous but not without hope; she dramatizes the challenges of the individual in the afterlife of God and, through the presence of the trickster Coyote, she suggests a way in which a fragile community may be reconstituted.

Watson's allusion to Nietzsche's madman further suggests that *The Double Hook* will also critically reflect upon the responses to God's death that Nietzsche anticipates, and find them wanting. As mentioned above, Mrs. Potter's defiant habit of lighting a lamp in daylight recalls both Diogenes's search for a man and Nietzsche's madman's search for both God and the individual strong enough to recognize himself as God's murderer. As Angel and Greta clean the Potters' house, Greta explains her mother's subversive lamp:

> I've seen Ma standing with the lamp by the fence, she said. Holding it up in broad daylight. I've seen her standing looking for something even the birds couldn't see. Something hid from every living thing. I've seen her defying. I've seen her take her hat off in the sun at noon, baring her head and asking the sun to strike her. Holding the lamp and looking where there's nothing to be found. Nothing but

> dust. No person's got a right to keep looking. To keep looking and blackening lamp globes for others to clean. (22)

Greta's bitter recollection of her mother's routines condenses a number of the philosophical tensions implicit in the novel. For example, Greta's complaint about cleaning the lamps her mother darkens for no reason points to Mrs. Potter's selfish form of individualism; she cares little about her daughter's labour, just as she ignores the property lines that other characters believe should carve the land into private units.[16] Mrs. Potter's resemblance to Nietzsche's madman thus suggests that his legacy will be one of selfish individualism that *The Double Hook* works to overcome, most disturbingly through Mrs. Potter's murder.

This scene of domestic labour also foregrounds Watson's shift from a Nietzschean to an existential conception of freedom. While in Greta's narrative Mrs. Potter ignores her situation—that is, she seems only to care about "defying" an abstract absence—Watson carefully situates Greta's action and recollection. As Watson emphasizes the feminine and domestic work of Greta "polishing a lamp globe" and Angel "half squatting, to scrub the floor" (22) in the context of Greta's narrative, she transforms the symbolism of the lamp. When Mrs. Potter holds the lamp it appears as a symbol of defiance, an allusive link to her antagonistic philosophical precursors. For Angel, however, in Greta's hands the lamp is a symbol of her bad faith, her enslavement to domestic chores and her repressive family: "Why didn't you take your own lamp and go looking for something? Angel said. You've never all your life burned anything but a little oil to finish doing in the house" (22).[17] The domestic and feminine context of Greta's story importantly

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[16] The final chapter of this project discusses compassion in *The Double Hook* and its relation to individual property.
[17] Beauvoir would read Greta's limiting commitment to her domestic duties as her obsession with "immanence." For Beauvoir, immanence "designates the round of futile and largely uncreative chores necessary to sustain life" and is "a mode of existence marked by passivity, ease, and submission to biological fate" (Veltman 119). On this reading, Greta's desire to become the mistress of her own house is a kind of bad faith through which she perpetuates the traditional understanding of the domestic as the woman's domain.

highlights the way in which Watson's novel moves from an abstract contemplation of metaphysical absence to a representation of an existential (and feminist) situation.

Watson's allusion to Diogenes and Nietzsche invites a comparison between Mrs. Potter and the disruptive men who preceded her. Like Nietzsche's madman, Mrs. Potter searches for an unseen presence more powerful than herself: she dares God to declare his presence as he did to Jonah in Nineveh. As she defies the sun to strike her head, then, she also calls out for God to appear to her even in the punitive way in which he caused the sun to "beat upon the head of Jonah so that he was faint; and he asked that he might die" (*Jonah* 4:8). In Greta's recollection, Mrs. Potter holds God in contempt: "If God had come into the valley, come holding out the long finger of salvation, moaning in the darkness, […] asking where, asking why, defying an answer, she would have thrown her line against the rebuke" (11-12). Here it is important to recall that the madman seeks both an individual strong enough to take responsibility for God's death and the God who is apparently dead. The madman's presence disrupts the market men's assumption that they might excise God painlessly from their lives, that they might murder God without bearing the burden of such an act. Like this madman, Mrs. Potter antagonizes a community out of its complicity. The defiant figure of Mrs. Potter reveals the apparently total freedom of a world without God and, like Nietzsche's madman, forces the individuals in her community to confront God's absence and all the violence and apathy that result from it. Although Mrs. Potter haunts the valley of *The Double Hook* as the troublesome spirit of Nietzsche's madman, however, the narrative begins when she suffers from the violent freedom she inspires in James. Her murder thus suggests Watson's dissatisfaction with the Nietzschean response to God's absence in the world, which results, in the figure of Mrs. Potter, in a selfish and eventually destructive individualism that, while it provokes a response in others, refuses to respond to them.

Mrs. Potter haunts *The Double Hook* nonetheless, and interpretations of Watson's work tend to be divided on the significance of that haunting. Early critics of the novel often regarded Mrs. Potter as an oppressive force, whose banishment is necessary for a renewed community. D.G. Jones represents this interpretative line clearly: "As long as the members of the community remain under the old woman's spell they cannot act, they cannot love, they remain frustrated, isolated, divided from the other" (44). More recent critics, especially those sensitive to Watson's representation of patriarchal and colonial culture, regard Mrs. Potter as a victim with an uncanny power to defy the "tendency on the part of western cultures to suppress one side of the many perceived dualities, including male/female, civilization/savagery, and reason/passion" (Goldman, *DisPossession* 6). The important Nietzschean allusion in Mrs. Potter's characterization, however, suggests that above all she may be seen, like the madman, as a prophet who heralds an unwanted message. Mrs. Potter not only dares the sun to strike her bare head, she dares her family and community to acknowledge her devious presence as a symbol of their terrible freedom in a world without God—a dare that James takes up when he strikes her down.

Through Mrs. Potter's death and the eventual image of a fragile but renewed community, however, Watson significantly suggests that one must not linger too long in the responses Nietzsche anticipates the news of God's death will inspire: violent individualism and its apathetic alternative must be curbed in order to inspire new enchantments. In this way, Watson's text calls for recognition of God's absence and for the effort to move beyond the antagonized reactions of violence and apathy through a further recognition of an intersubjective community. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity* Beauvoir similarly corrects the idea that "If God does not exist,

everything is permitted" (qtd. Beauvoir 16).[18] For Beauvoir, rather than granting unbridled permission, God's absence limits individuals:

> far from God's absence authorizing all license, the contrary is the case, because man is abandoned on the earth, because his acts are definitive, absolute engagements. He bears responsibility for a world which is not the work of a strange power, but of himself, where his faults are inscribed, and his victories as well. A God can pardon, efface, and compensate. But if God does not exist, man's faults are inexpiable. (15-16)

Here lies the origin of Beauvoir's optimistic ethics: because in God's absence the individual gives himself permission, his ethical commitments take on a heightened importance. This ethical impulse also motivates the trajectory of Watson's plot and complicates a final reading of James's innocence upon his return from town. It is also absent from the model of individualism Mrs. Potter embodies; through her, Watson illuminates the enduring isolation and violent antagonism of a character who interprets God's absence as an alibi for absolute and unrestricted freedom. Mrs. Potter thus represents a Nietzschean model of individual freedom that Watson's other characters must surpass if they are also to escape their isolation.

While Mrs. Potter represents a Nietzschean claim to individual and absolute freedom after the death of God, Coyote signals the haunting presence of God in his afterlife. *The Double Hook* crucially begins with a description of the land as "under Coyote's eye" (11). This omniscient perspective positions Coyote in relation to a divine spirit who sees and controls the natural world and its inhabitants. Watson's critics have often argued that Coyote is a symbol of the otherwise absent Judeo-Christian God for whom Mrs. Potter ostensibly searches. These

[18] While this quotation is commonly associated only with Dostoyevsky, Nietzsche was also drawn to the idea that God's absence resulted in this total freedom. In *On the Genealogy of Morality* Nietzsche echoes Dostoyevsky when he claims that if "nothing is true, everything is permitted" (111).

readings are not unsupported in Watson's book; her characters similarly confuse Coyote and the vengeful, punishing Jehovah. For instance, when Ara describes God as "[n]ot coaxing with pans of oats, but coming after you with a whip until you stand and face him in the end," William corrects her: "Your god sounds only a step from the Indian's Coyote" (66). Coyote's omniscience, his abilities to comment on and change the action in Watson's narrative, and his frequent allusions to the Old Testament[19] all invite comparison with the Judeo-Christian God.

More recent critics have shifted the analysis of Coyote away from its comparison to God in an effort to avoid a simple appropriation, on their part and on Watson's, of an aboriginal figure into what has often been read as a Christian allegory. Goldman provocatively asks whether Coyote "necessarily become[s] God […] or does he function instead […] as God's uncanny double" ("Coyote's" 57). Steven Putzel also claims that we must see both "the Judeo-Christian God as Coyote and Coyote as the Judeo-Christian God" (15). Putzel's equation suggests that Coyote exists not as a mask for the presence of God in Watson's text, but as a description of God. In this alternative reading, God not only appears as a trickster—a more flippant and playful version of Jehovah—but also as one who may fail and, importantly, one whose culture is failing. Notably, it is precisely this potential for failure that generates ethics for Beauvoir, who compellingly locates ethics in the afterlife of God: "without failure, no ethics" (*Ethics* 10). While Goldman reverses the comparison in order to elevate Coyote to a more subversive and critical position than Christian readings of *The Double Hook* have allowed, this reversal also invites a reading at which Watson's post-colonial critics may bristle: God and Coyote are alike not only because each of their cultures is losing the "mediating rituals" Watson

[19] In "Under Coyote's Eye: Indian Tales in Sheila Watson's '*The Double Hook*'" Steven Putzel catalogues many of Coyote's allusions to the Old Testament. See pages 13-15. Putzel's article also details Coyote stories from British Columbia that imagine Coyote as both "meddling trickster and life-giving hero" (9). See also Beverly Mitchell's "Association and Allusion in *The Double Hook*" for a robust list of Biblical allusions in *The Double Hook*.

describes in her comments on the book, but also because the loss of those rituals implies a significant loss of authority on the part of the supernatural figures associated with each culture. In other words, because the significance of the divine figure is obscured in the modern world, it is also malleable. God may appear as Coyote and Coyote as God precisely because the meaning of both gods is no longer clear in the ethos Watson captures.

Part of the difficulty of reading Coyote, and God, in Watson's text occurs because Coyote signals an existential condition that, as Matei Calinescu claimed above, is "unthinkable yet already banal": that is, the condition of individuals living after God's death. Coyote embodies not God but his ghost, his lingering presence in a world that believes him dead. Moreover, like Mrs. Potter, Coyote forces the individuals in Watson's text to confront the consequences of God's assumed absence; as Ara imagines, both God and Coyote come "after you with a whip until you stand and face [them] in the end" (*Double* 66). This facing, however, also shifts the existential individual's focus from her isolation from God to her situated freedom. Watson dramatizes this shift when Coyote's storm, which attacks and tears up the dry land—with rain like "lariats" and "bullwhips" (26)—also forces the land's inhabitants into each other's houses. Ara, for example, seeks shelter in Greta's kitchen, and Kip and Heinrich meet James at the same house. In this tense gathering, it is finally revealed that Mrs. Potter is dead and, if she has been seen throughout the valley, it can only have been her ghost (37). This storm thus emphasizes Coyote's ironic function in renewing the community, for the "bullwhips" of Coyote's storm force Watson's characters to face not God, but each other.

These haunting presences therefore represent two distinct positions in relation to the individual's life after God's apparent death. On one hand, Coyote signals the loss associated with God's death, a loss that is present in each individual's life and demands a response. On the other

hand, Mrs. Potter represents a Nietzschean reaction to this loss that, counter-intuitively, still aims at the apparently absent God. Watson suggests that this reaction needs revision, because, for all of his railing against metaphysical ideas, Nietzsche does not provide a model of communal life after their destruction. Watson replaces Mrs. Potter's response with one that importantly shifts attention from God's absence to the other individuals who make up the community. While Mrs. Potter attempts to provoke God, daring him to strike her down while she ignores the needs and grievances of her family, the intersubjective community that develops in Watson's novel begins when God's absence inspires a response not to God but to another human. Perversely then, James's action against his mother, even as it moves to destroy the Other, begins Watson's novel with one individual's flawed reply to another. This reading of Mrs. Potter and Coyote further suggests the incompleteness of Watson's comments in "What I'm Going to Do"; while the violence and apathy that characterize the world after God's death occasion her novel, it moves philosophically through these reactions to a fuller and more ethical individual response.

Furthermore, because the appearances of Coyote and Mrs. Potter in the land signal God's absence rather than his presence, Watson's characters experience their remote setting as isolated from divine perception. Moreover, as it will for Cohen's characters, the way in which each character experiences his or her metaphysical isolation defines his or her individuality. Despite their feeling of the stifling proximity between the houses in the "folded" land, the characters often perceive their landscape in terms that recall the disenchanted settings familiar to Lukács's and others' descriptions of the modern world—as when Felix's "eyes looked out on an empty world" (61). Even *The Double Hook*'s biblical allusions emphasize the absence rather than the presence of either God or religious ritual. For example, Ara's comparison of the land to Nineveh underlines both the emptiness of the landscape and its distance from God: "Even God's eye

could not spy out the men lost here already, Ara thought. He had looked mercifully on the people of Nineveh […] But there were not enough people here to attract his attention" (14).[20] Ara's perception of the landscape underscores Watson's concern with individual isolation, here explicitly imagined as a consequence of the novel's "godforsaken" setting. Both Felix and Ara think of the emptiness of the land in terms of vision: Felix looks out and sees nothing; Ara fears that nothing sees her. Watson's community, however, comes into being when her characters begin to see each other as the ground of their existential fullness and annihilation. As the empty land breeds the apathy and violence Watson describes in "What I'm Going to Do," characters who transform and overcome their initial isolating responses will find new ground for their freedom in the other individuals who "fill" the otherwise empty land.

Felix and Theophil reveal the "insensibility" and "apathy" that result from the absence of God and Christian rituals in the valley of *The Double Hook*, and the dramatic difference between a character who overcomes his isolation (Felix) and one who fortifies it (Theophil). These characters negate the vitality of Christian faith and ritual through their parody of its conventions. Felix, whose wife, Angel, has abandoned him for Theophil, lives alone with his dogs and seems incapable of meaningful or even coherent interactions with the other people in the community. Among the "half forgotten" and "ritual phrases" that he calls upon in his conversations are incomplete references to the Catholic mass: "*Ave Maria. Benedictus fructus ventris. Introibo*"

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[20] *The Book of Jonah* reports that there were "a hundred and twenty thousand persons […] and also much cattle" (4.11) deserving God's pity in Nineveh. Ara's allusion to Nineveh also emphasizes the connection between Mrs. Potter and Jonah, the reluctant prophet who warned the people of Nineveh that if they did not seek God's mercy, they would feel his vengeance. Ara imagines "the old lady, lost like Jonah perhaps / in the cleft belly of the rock / the water washing over her" (24). This allusion to Jonah in the belly of the whale, sent there after "fleeing from the presence of the LORD" (*Jonah* 1.10), also recalls Mrs. Potter's defiant and Nietzschean daring of the sun to strike her bare head, as God has "the sun beat upon the head of Jonah so that he was faint" after he has again complained about his divine mission (4.8). These references to Jonah stress Mrs. Potter as a hostile prophet; but Jonah is the also the prophet who does God's work in his attempts to avoid it, as he does when he converts the men on the ship he has taken to flee from his calling. Like Jonah, Mrs. Potter sets her community on a more righteous path even as she suggests God's inexistence.

(41). That these phrases are incomplete and spoken by a man who has, for most of the narrative, isolated himself from the community suggests that Christian rituals are no longer relevant and comprehensible to that community—"What the hell" is Lenchen's confused response to Felix's Latin welcome to his home (41). Although Felix's Catholic Latin further demonstrates the failure of Christian ritual to communicate its significance in the valley, it also signals Felix's dim sympathy for the other people of his community; he chooses these rote, inexplicable phrases because the only other ones he remembers—"scatter, get-the-hell-out" (41)—are better suited to casting out unwanted animals. Felix's idiosyncratic use of a language that associates him both with a religious tradition and a metaphysical power ironically defines him as an individual. Watson also ironically figures Felix as the reluctant representative of a lost faith, as "Saint Felix," "anointed" and "[b]lest" (16), who will eventually deliver Lenchen and James's illegitimate child. Felix's phrases, however, initially reveal the fragmentation of a religion once seen as metaphysically whole and the isolated individual who remains after that whole breaks.

Theophil's apathy and aggression also define him as a unique individual rather than as the typological allusion to the Christian personality his name suggests. Theophil, whose name recalls the Theophilus to whom the Gospels of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are addressed, embodies the profound incongruity between the expectations of a divinely structured Christian world and the one in which Watson's characters find themselves. Not only is Theophil's name an allusion to a Biblical figure, it means "lover of God." The sharp contrast between the Christian significance of Theophil's name and his personality clarifies his distinct individuality and positions him in the estranged world Lukács describes. Theophil appears as a parody of someone who embodies God's love, as evinced in his crude dismissal of Felix's religious language: "And lead us not into temptation, Theophil said. His fingers curled into the palms of his hands. The

priest taught me the same way he taught you, he said. He spat on the floor" (68). Theophil's apathy grows into aggression: hands form fists—a violent inversion of hands palm-to-palm in prayer—and he spits out his contempt for the Lord's Prayer. While in Felix's mouth the old prayers serve as an attempt at human communication, in Theophil's they distinguish him as one who refuses both divine and human communion. Thus while Felix eventually becomes an essential member of the renewed community, Theophil remains isolated, abandoned by Angel and so unburdened by communion in any form.

Moreover, Theophil belongs to the disenchanted world of the realist novel that Lukács and Ian Watt theorize. Theophil's interpretation of Coyote suggests his significance as a realist and decidedly secular character. While Coyote haunts Watson's novel as a supernatural presence, Theophil insists he is only an animal to be hunted for reward. "There's no big Coyote, like you think," he tells Angel, "There's not just one of him. He's everywhere. The government's got his number too. They've set a bounty on him at fifty cents a bush. I could live well at his expense" (47). Theophil's utilitarian interpretation of Coyote magnifies the disconnection between his name and his character: he denies the existence of any presence that transcends human knowledge and utility and so remains in his disenchanted world at the end of *The Double Hook*.

Through James Watson meditates on the individual's violent response to God's absence and on the faulty conception of freedom it inspires. James imagines that his mother's death will grant him the total freedom that "his old lady" (50) and Nietzsche's madman before her see as the product of God's absence. As Kip warns early in the novel, however, James "doesn't know you can't catch the glory on a hook and hold on to it. That when you fish for the glory you catch the darkness too. That if you hook twice the glory you hook twice the fear" (50). Kip's poetic warning articulates James's initial desire to assert his will violently across the valley and to

escape his familial responsibilities. Kip's reference to glory further suggests that James desires, like Kip (48), to claim the absent God's glory for himself. In God's absence his power seems up for grabs, and in attempting to claim it James desires "to bear witness to the curious power which [he] feel[s] in [himself]" (Morriss 56). James's violence against his mother and Kip suggests that the isolated individual desires the glory of the creator, the power to "trample His enemies underfoot and terrif[y] men" (Burtchaell 514). Notably, James's violence toward Kip, Greta, and Lenchen occurs when he is holding a whip and a lantern, objects associated with Coyote and Mrs. Potter respectively—"He came one hand swinging the lantern, the other trailing the rawhide whip he used to break his horses" (*Double* 56). James uses the whip, associated with both God and Coyote and so an instrument of "glory," to blind Kip and abuse Greta and Lenchen.

James's abuse of other individuals suggests that he imagines a negative form of freedom. That is, he imagines freedom as liberation *from* responsibility, *from* the presence of other individuals who have expectations of him, and *from* the valley where he feels his community as an oppressive burden. This freedom directly contradicts existential freedom, which Beauvoir claims sees the freedom of others as "the condition of my own freedom" (*Ethics* 91). This existential understanding of freedom and, especially, the look of the Other integral to it, however, help to explain the threat James perceives in the people he abuses. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre describes the way in which the look of the Other destroys the individual's solipsistic expectation of a totally free subjectivity. Sartre explains the appearance of another as "an object […] which has stolen the world from me […] The appearance of the Other in the world corresponds […] to a fixed sliding of the whole universe, to a decentralization of the world which undermines the centralization which I am simultaneously effecting" (255). This confrontation with the Other reveals to the individual that he is not the only subjectivity in the

world; in fact, the world is also centred around the Other as a subjectivity. As this abrupt encounter reveals the Other as a subject, it correspondingly reveals the individual as an object for the Other: "[it] is in and through the revelation of my being-as-object for the Other that I must be able to apprehend the presence of his being-as-subject" (256). From an existential perspective, then, James's violence may be read as an attempt to reserve glory for himself alone, to negate the possibility of becoming an object again by refusing to recognize the Other as a subject.

This reading of James's freedom casts new light on his violence against Kip and deepens Watson's apparent existential meditation in *The Double Hook*. James blinds Kip in an act of aggression against the witness to his transgression with Lenchen and as a warning to God: "If you were God Almighty," James yells at Kip, "if you'd as many eyes as a spider I'd get them all" (*Double* 55). Kip, who has carried messages between James and Lenchen, becomes a menacing presence on the day of Mrs. Potter's murder, when he rides around the valley "[l]ooking" (18). Like Mrs. Potter, Kip threatens James not only because he knows of James's transgression, but also because he is a persistent Other whose presence reminds James that his will is not the only one in the valley. Kip appears even when James believes he and Lenchen are well hidden from the eyes of others: "when [James would] look up he'd see Kip standing in the pines" (32). James's blinding of Kip, then, functions not only to assert his power over a menacing enemy, but also to negate the look that reminds James he is an object for others. In this way, James's violence also negates the subjectivity of anyone but himself and so asserts his total freedom as the only agent in the valley.

Watson continues the trope of the look in her description of James's interactions in town. First, however, she suggests that from its beginning James's attempt to escape the shaming looks of his community will result in his forfeiture of his violent claim to glory. As James leaves the

valley, he implicitly acknowledges that he needs other people in order to claim his freedom. He dares someone to witness him: "Let the world see me now if it cares, he thought" (79). This dare, much like his mother's daring of the sun to strike her, suggests that despite his desire to negate violently the perspectives of the people in his community, James's freedom requires a witness to give it content. Moreover, James casts away a whip—analogous to his bullwhip, an instrument of violent glory—because it begins to hurts him: "He felt the quirt which he had shoved under his belt pressing into the soft edge of his ribs. He pulled it out and threw it into the scrub" (79). This action highlights James's new vulnerability when he leaves his community; he will enter town without the glory he had claimed for himself. Moreover, the whip hurts James: as Kip forewarns, glory does not serve the individual without also wounding him.

In fact, James's experience in town annihilates his absolute and violent subjectivity. After withdrawing all of his money, James is robbed by Traff, a false friend, and Lilly, his prostitute accomplice. This robbery forces James to realize fully that his freedom is contingent on others', that his individuality does not exist outside of his intersubjective relationship with people other than himself. As Sartre's theory of intersubjective freedom emphasizes, "[t]he other is essential to my existence, as well as to the knowledge I have of myself" ("Existentialism" 41). James's brother, William, similarly notes that individuals are defined by their relation to one another: "A man needs living things about him, William said. To remind him he's not […] just one lone bull who can put down his head and paw the bank and charge at anything that takes his fancy" (113). James also seems to recognize the necessity of intersubjectivity when, as he is leaving town to return to the valley, he claims that "[u]nless a man defaults […] a debt is a sort of bond" (106).

In a scene that echoes Sartre's explanation of how the Other transforms the subject into an object, Watson describes James realizing that Traff and Lilly have robbed him: "Through

Felicia's window he saw Traff sitting at Felicia's table counting a handful of bills […] Lilly was sitting on the edge of the table resting back on her hands. In one of them she held a wallet. He put his hand up to his pocket. His wallet was gone" (94). This scene resembles the famous scene in *Being and Nothingness* in which Sartre describes an individual watching a couple through a keyhole and experiencing "a pure mode of losing [himself] in the world" (259), a mode that transforms Others into objects. Suddenly, however, someone sees the individual spying through the keyhole, and, Sartre claims, this external observation changes the way in which the individual relates to himself—"I see *myself* because *somebody* sees me [...] I have my foundation outside myself. I am for myself only as I am a pure reference to the Other" (260; original emphasis). In Sartre's scenario, in being caught peeping, the individual no longer escapes his existential condition, "losing [himself] in the world," but sees himself as an object for the Other.

Watson's representation of James watching Traff and Lilly through the window dramatizes a scene, similar to Sartre's, in which the moment of James's looking is transformed into his being looked at. Through a dynamic displacement of gazes, James moves from an unreflective subjectivity to one aware of his ambiguous nature as an individual. The scene begins with James looking at Traff through Felicia's window. Much like Sartre's peeping Tom, James's initial look escapes a reciprocal gaze and so positions him as the kind of subjectivity that can imagine freedom as a total escape. James, however, does not escape the look of the Other. His money and wallet serve as a metonymy for his whole self, established when, upon his arrival in town, James withdrew all his money from the bank and wondered out loud "how little a man adds up to" (82). As he watches Traff and Lilly count his money, then, James is also forced to see himself as an object for the Other—quite literally here, as James sees himself as the money in Traff's hands—and to negotiate his freedom. Watson's metonymy illustrates the power of the

Other's look. By robbing James of everything he has, Traff and Lilly convert his subjectivity from an unreflective surplus into the nothingness that constitutes situated freedom.

On the level of plot, Traff and Lilly's robbery of James occasions his return to the valley—"[t]he price of his escape lay snug in one of Traff's trouser pockets" (95). From an allegorical and philosophical perspective, however, James returns to the valley after he has been the object of the Other's powerful and annihilating look.[21] In a puzzling turn of phrase the narrator describes James as "freed […] from freedom" (106) after the robbery. This existential allegory suggests that the look of the Other frees James from the impossible total freedom he had imagined for himself. The robbery leads James to a subtle recognition of himself as an object, a recognition that also transforms his notion of freedom. Following his failed escape, Watson's existential allegory implies, James must recognize the Other as the ground of his own freedom. James's return thus underscores Watson's apparent dissatisfaction with the Nietzschean response to God's absence in the world. James returns not as the individual strong enough to murder God (and his mother), but as a man "alone and without excuse" (Sartre, "Existentialism" 29), and, as Felix puts it, with "more than a porcupine has to answer for" (Watson, *Double* 117). Although *The Double Hook* ends ambiguously and without a clear indication of James's answer to his violence, the movement of the novel toward an existential recognition of both ambiguous existence and situated freedom suggests that James's redemption, if it occurs at all, rests on his realizing the nothingness that replaces God and is the ground and potential of his existence.

Watson's synthesis of existential freedom and human community similarly hinges on the transformation of isolated individuals into ones who recognize their freedom as situated within a community and their existence as fundamentally ambiguous. In general, the women in *The*

[21] James is the object of this look throughout his time in town, where he is often watched or surveyed, as when "from Pockett's window eyes watched him through the crotches of hanging chaps" (86) and "through the opening [of the bar door James] saw Paddy looking at him" (90).

Double Hook face a different challenge from the men to becoming existential individuals. As Beauvoir explains in *The Second Sex*, "[w]oman's drama lies in [the] conflict between the fundamental claim of every subject, which always posits itself as essential, and the demands of a situation that constitutes her as inessential" (17). "How, in the feminine condition," Beauvoir asks, "can a human being accomplish herself?" (17). This challenge for women permeates Watson's text as it highlights the value of an existential answer to God's apparent absence. Despite her husband's death, for example, the widow Wagner is still known by her husband's name alone. Furthermore, Theophil refuses to recognize any freedom particular to woman herself, despite his relationship with Angel, who, more than other women in the text, is characterized by her independence and practical action. Theophil's response to Angel cleaning the Potters' house for money is to forbid *his* woman from acting on her own volition: "A woman has no call for reasons, Theophil said. Not when her man treats her good. I make up the minds here" (47). In Greta, Watson demonstrates the destructive nature of a woman who refuses to recognize her freedom. Greta's resentful desire to continue imagining herself only in terms of James's appreciation of her dramatically constitutes her desire to remain, in bad faith, her brother's domestic caretaker; to borrow Beauvoir's description of the woman living in bad faith, Greta "makes no claim for herself as subject […] because she […] derives satisfaction from her role as *Other*" (10; original emphasis). Thus, when James, the subject who creates meaning in her life, abuses and abandons Greta, she annihilates herself.

Although Watson does not emphasize this challenge in her comments on the novel, in general the women in her novel must break out of their isolation as objects so that they may actively and compassionately recognize each other as subjects. In particular, the widow's and Ara's changed behaviour illuminates Watson's existential meditation on the condition of women.

The widow moves from a paralyzing obsession with religious and marital traditions to ethical action. Ara, on the other hand, can be seen as an allegory of the existential philosopher, who claims her individual freedom by moving within a community.

Although the widow still values marriage traditions and fears God, the human situation in the valley displaces her concern about both marriage and God so that she can help Lenchen. The widow struggles throughout the novel to abandon her shame in her daughter's illegitimate pregnancy; she fears that God will enact vengeance on her for her seeming failure as a mother. The widow remains attached to both an Old World materialism and to the God to whom she constantly calls. In fact, she often combines the two references: "Dear God, she said […] I've things for starting a girl. Things belonging in my family for years. Things laid by. The spoons. The sheets. The bedcover" (20). In the isolated valley, however, the widow's calls to God and her obsession with the things she might have offered as a dowry for Lenchen appear out of date and out of place. Barbara Godard reads the widow's collection as a symbol of "her attachment to Europe and its traditions, for the 'things' have come with her, and the country where, alienated, she is living is to her a negation of all these cherished objects. They also refer to all the traditions of marriage, evoked by the trousseau, which, because of Lenchen's recklessness in becoming pregnant, have been negated" (162). Both the widow's materialism and her residual faith in God displace her connection to other humans and deflect her attention from Lenchen's present suffering to her own shame in the eyes of a God who does not answer her. As Margaret Turner puts it, the widow "calls on God while denying communication and contact" (68).

Despite this deflection, however, the widow's calls to God often reinforce her earthly situation by evoking impatient responses from the people around her. For example, it is Lenchen, not God, who answers the widow's first emotional prayer. The widow ends this prayer with an

explicit insult to her daughter: “The shame. A fat pig of a girl, Almighty Father. Who would want such a girl?” (20). To this question Lenchen answers “I could tell you” (20). In answering the question her mother poses to God (and blasphemously eroticizing the meaning of “want”), Lenchen insists that the widow focus on the individuals to whom she has some responsibility. Lenchen’s answer thus displaces God with a call for her mother to respond ethically to the suffering she witnesses on earth. This displacement foreshadows Angel’s castigation—“There’s no use wailing on God” (109)—when the women are finally on their way to help Lenchen in her labour. These interactions with Lenchen and Angel suggest that the widow must face her daughter’s situation as one for which the widow has some responsibility and that her ethical existence comes, as Beauvoir argues, not through the approval of a distant God but through “engaging [her]self in the world: to such an extent that [the human’s] project toward freedom is embodied for [her] in definite acts of behavior” (*Ethics* 78).

Watson corrects the widow’s religious and materialist views by transforming her into a “servant of the servants of God”. The widow abandons her initial materialism by cutting up the blanket she had kept in her hope chest to make “a baby’s singlet” (102). This act characterizes the change in the widow, who commits herself to her family by sacrificing her objects to make clothing for her new grandchild. The “Widow’s lamentations,” Turner notes, “come to be directed outward, signaling determination and action rather than despair” (74). So, when the widow enters Felix’s house, the locus of new communal existence, her “Dear God” is not so much an invocation of God, as it is a call to concrete action: “Dear God, she said, the latch needs oil” (115). Like her decision to make the baby’s singlet, here the widow signals her new participation in an earthly community; the emphasis falls not on God, but on the latch that, with some oil and human attention, will make this home even more open to a renewed community.

The widow's participation in the community in turn highlights her individual power, for in helping Lenchen the widow exchanges her lamenting passivity for an intersubjective activity.

Ara stands out in Watson's novel as a woman who breaks with the feminine conventions that Beauvoir argues in *The Second Sex* keep women in bad faith much like Greta's. William, Ara's husband, notes that Ara changes on the day of Mrs. Potter's death (65), which suggests that Mrs. Potter's death also leads to an increased meditation on feminine existence. In a conversation with William about their marriage and the nature of existence, Ara diagnoses the precarious position of women: "Your mother hated me and you pity me. Where can a woman lift herself on such ropes. One pulling her down. The other simply holding her suspended" (64). Ara describes the stasis of women whose existence is defined only by the expectations of other people. Beauvoir also diagnoses this static position of the woman as an obstacle to her realizing herself as a subject: "an attempt is made to freeze her as an object and doom her to immanence, since her transcendence will be forever transcended by another essential and sovereign consciousness" (17). This image of stasis recurs in William's description of his wife as a stone: "It's like a man who stands on a rock looking over a valley. He doesn't notice the rock, he said. He just stands on it" (Watson 66). Here, William positions Ara as a fixed object; because he looks beyond the rock he stands on, he is never subject to its subjectivity. Ara, however, rejects William's constant philosophizing, his perpetual explaining as if his position on that rock grants him a perspective that sees the universal truth of things—"There's too much supposing, Ara said. Yet how can a man escape it since he can't hold and shape the world" (66).[22] This rejection and concession suggest Ara's new resistance to her position as a fixed object even as she recognizes

[22] In *Figures Cut in Sacred Ground* Angela Bowering reads this scene as dialectical and supportive: "The dialogue between William and Ara becomes, through its homely metaphors, a dialectic that resolves and dissolves the destructive tension between them" (26). Bowering's rather optimistic reading, however, does not consider the fact that the conversation ends with William complaining that Ara "might have baked something" (Watson, *Double* 67).

the human desire to know and describe individual experience in universal terms.

In fact, Ara's movement throughout the day of Mrs. Potter's death emphasizes her freedom, her ability to philosophize like her husband, and her individual independence. The potential and eventual paths Ara takes when she leaves her own house signal both her freedom and her commitment to an intersubjective community. Ara "had thought of going up the hill into the clump of jack pines," where "she might have seen something to think about as William saw things" (23). Ara's potential ascension to a location where she might, from "the rock rise" (23), see as her husband sees echoes the ascension of the philosopher toward knowledge—and, significantly, the universal and stable form of Being and God—that has been an image of philosophical progress since Plato's *Republic*. The fact that Ara *might* have ascended suggests that William's mode of contemplation is also available to her. This potential movement *up* heightens the significance of Ara's eventual movement *down*, further into the valley. She "cut[s] down from the hill because she had to talk. She had to talk to some living person" (23-24). Ara's appearance at Greta's home, then, is a result of her free movement toward a situated community, and away from Coyote's position in "the hills" (11). Although Ara is an uninvited guest in Greta's home, Watson suggests that even this unwelcome appearance has an ethical content. Ara's decision to move toward community foreshadows the decision of many of Watson's characters as they break out of their isolation and attempt to renew their community.

Isolated but neither violent nor apathetic, Ara seems to be an allegory for the existential philosopher. Along with her diagnosis of the feminine condition, she also describes the existential dilemma: "I never see baby-clothes, she said, that I don't think how a child puts on suffering with them" (105). Although Watson grants Coyote the last words of her novel, it is Ara who hears them: "I have set his feet on soft ground; / I have set his feet on the sloping shoulders

of the world" (118). Beverly Mitchell reads this scene as one of "Messianic prophecy" given to Ara in whom "are embodied progressively the attitudes of the Old Testament prophets, ranging from gloom and pessimism at the lot of mankind, to joy and hope in the promise of redemption" (66).[23] While Watson certainly alludes to the Judeo-Christian prophetic tradition, these allusions neither negate the force of Ara's existential understanding nor announce God's return to full and active life. Rather, in these references Watson suggests the continued relevance and appeal of the Judeo-Christian tradition for some individuals while also signaling a broader existential situation.

Coyote's last words, and the last words of Watson's novel, more forcefully communicate that existential situation, which Ara expresses in her interpretation of the newborn child as a symbol of human suffering. Coyote's last words resonate with Ara's perception of the human condition as one of suffering; however, as the figure of God's absence—the absence that generates existential ethics—Coyote delivers a message that suggests both human suffering and an existential situation. Coyote's emphasis on the baby Felix's body and his corporeal metaphor for the world—"sloping shoulders"—underline the human and worldly condition rather than a metaphysical other realm. It is within this world, without God and open to failure, that the individual relieves suffering through a synthesis of freedom and human community, or, as Watson suggests in her journal, the unity between existential freedom and human servitude. While Ara does not "want to look at James" (118) when he returns—a denial that emphasizes the ambiguity of Watson's ending—her earlier conversation with Heinrich overcomes William's oppressive expectations of women and insists on communication that, as Heinrich notes, "might make things straight somehow" (71). Ara's character reveals both the existential dilemma of

[23] Ara's association with prophecy, and especially the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah, occurs through her redemptive vision of "a great multitude of fish, each fish springing arched through the slanting sky" (100) and her allusion to Ezekiel, "the prophet who looks out over the valley of dry bones which are the evidence of the 'fire of righteousness'" (Bowering, *Figures* 74), when she says "[p]rophecy upon these bones" (Watson 99) after Greta destroys herself and her "rebellious house" (*Ezekiel* 17:11).

individuals in a world without God and the particular challenges to recognizing their own ambiguous nature facing women in such a world.

To borrow Watson's diction from "What I'm Going to Do," God's death shifts the ground on which the individual recognizes herself; it emphasizes intersubjective rather than human-divine relationships. As I discuss in the last chapter here, this shift still maintains the possibility of transcendent experience: but rather than an escape from responsibility, these experiences occur when the individual's escape from her isolation takes the form of feeling with another. Felix's feeling for Lenchen during her labour exemplifies this compassionate transcendence: "His eyelids dropped. His flesh melted. He rose from the bed on soft owl wings. And below he saw his old body crouched down like an ox by the manger" (110). Like Ara's allusions to Judeo-Christian prophecy, Watson's allusion to the nativity scene here also suggests that the old traditions may remain compelling for some individuals. This continued relevance forms part of God's afterlife in the world of *The Double Hook*, where fragments of the Christian tradition may still sustain a few individuals but the broader interaction between individuals articulates existential freedom rather than a complete revelation of God's continued life. In fact, while Watson certainly alludes to Christ's birth in this scene, the relationship between Lenchen and Felix, importantly catalyzed by Lenchen's human suffering, suggests Watson's interest in intersubjectivity as a third response to God's absence. If Mrs. Potter embodies the defiant and isolated reaction to the disenchanted world that Nietzsche's madman announces, the community that forms at the end of Watson's book represents the intersubjective synthesis of enchantment and disenchantment. That is, rather than continue to dwell in the apathy and violence that result from the "empty world" Felix witnesses at the beginning of *The Double Hook*, those who gather at Felix's house begin to recognize both that the old rituals have receded and that the world

nonetheless remains enchanted through human relationships between free individuals.

Coyote remains in the landscape of *The Double Hook*; significantly, the last words of the novel are his. They are an inhuman cry that demands the human recognition of individual freedom and responsibility, for Coyote promises the ambiguity that Watson's characters have realized. Baby Felix will suffer on the soft and sloping earth, but as the action of Watson's narrative suggests, such suffering forces individuals to bear the consequences of God's death to their fullest degree and to find their freedom within a community. The softness of the earth may suggest that Felix could either fall comfortably or climb easily, but it is the fact that neither movement is determined, that the individual's action gives his freedom content, that constitutes both the pain and the optimism of his existential condition in *The Double Hook*. One of Watson's many double hooks is thus her paradoxical expression of God's afterlife and its consequences through the figure of Coyote, whose last cry articulates the spiritual state of the modern world.

In documenting an isolated community as it develops an intersubjective ethics, Watson, like Nietzsche, Beauvoir, and Sartre, suggests that the modern individual forges her individuality in the way she confronts the challenges of life after God's death. Individuals, Watson claims, respond to God's death through violence or apathy, but each of these responses may lead them out of isolation and into a third, more positive and existential response that is surprisingly absent from Watson's comments on the novel. In order to find new mediating rituals after the death of God, however, individuals must feel the burden of that death, a burden that Watson's characters do not fully feel "until" James's action against his mother breaks open the fixity of their relations "under Coyote's eye" in the novel's epigrammatic beginning. Mrs. Potter, who, like Nietzsche's madman, defiantly seeks an individual strong enough to murder God, is cast out of Watson's final vision, perhaps because her responses to God's death focus too strongly on isolation and

selfish freedom rather than its potential to inspire renewal. Watson rewrites Nietzsche's madman in Mrs. Potter as a prophet who arrives not too early but too late: while recognizing God's death is essential to *The Double Hook*, perpetuating the isolation that follows it, Watson suggests, only resentfully perpetuates pain. Although *The Double Hook* begins as a Nietzschean response to the death of God, it ends with the image of a fragile intersubjective community forged under the pressure of its existential dilemma. Watson thus finds not the individual capable of God's murder, but a community that acknowledges Coyote's lingering presence as an initial call to recognize the existential ethics of situated freedom.

Madmen in Search of God: Cohen's Nietzschean Revaluation of the Divine

In his best-known novel, Leonard Cohen dramatizes the difficulty of the search for "the perfect immanence of the transcendent" that Lukács describes as the genre's defining quest (59). If this search remains implicit in other novels, in Cohen's it explicitly drives the plot and defines the experiences of his characters, most spectacularly for "I," an "old" historian who seeks sexual union with a dead Iroquois saint, Catherine Tekakwitha, and F., his friend and a political radical with a revolutionary vision. In *Beautiful Losers* Cohen seeks a model of individuality capable of responding to the death of God and the violence and destruction that follow it in the twentieth century. In "I" and F. Cohen imagines diverging models of individuality—closed and emphatic respectively—which are crystallized and revealed through the characters' responses to the perceived death of God. Like *The Double Hook*, *Beautiful Losers* attempts to transcend the limitations of Nietzsche's madman's defiant reaction to God's death, which, as in Watson's novel, in Cohen's leads to polarizing responses in individuals living in God's absence. Through "I"'s and F.'s spiritual and existential meditations, Cohen revalues Nietzsche's conception of the

divine so that God's life becomes the product and expression of Nietzschean individuality.

The quest for an earthly and embodied life that would nonetheless possess knowledge and assurance of the divine unites Cohen's work across the decades, genres, and media of its production. Later critics attend to the spiritual quest in Cohen's work as it appears in the texts themselves, but his earlier critics usually speak of this quest as Cohen's own. For example, Desmond Pacey notes that as early as his first book, *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (1956), Cohen is searching "for a lost or unknown God, mysterious, elusive, but compelling" (75). Similarly, Sandra Djwa finds "an unsatisfied search for an absolute" (94) in the first half of Cohen's career. For many of his fans, precisely this attempt to find God, so often transgressively combined with eroticism, constitutes what Joel Deshaye calls Cohen's saintly celebrity persona (80). Cohen's articulations of a desire for the divine, and for the peace that would accompany its presence, are no less present in *Beautiful Losers*, even as his critique of the possibility of that presence and its redemptive potential incites a radical reconsideration of the relationship between the individual and the divine in the post-Nietzschean context. In *Beautiful Losers*, Cohen's representations of failed revelation focus on the individual's experience of God's absence and contemplate possible responses to God's supposed death. This focus illuminates a central philosophical question in *Beautiful Losers*—can the individual re-enchant the disenchanted world and redeem its legacy of violence and exploitation?—and exposes the formidable pressure Cohen places on the individual, whose individuality (or style) becomes the potential source of redemption not just for himself, but also for God.

Cohen's contemplation of closed and emphatic models of individualism, and his promotion of emphatic individualism in particular, are the culmination of his general interest in the exceptional and radical individual in the mid-1960s. In this period Cohen imagines the

eccentric individual as a correction to the alienated disengagement produced by the legacy of fascism and the politics of the Cold War. Admonishing his brother-in-law's bourgeois politics in a letter written in November 1962, Cohen proposes a new kind of individuality that resonates with his work at the time, his later characterization of F., and, no doubt, also with his vision of the potential in and importance of his authorial persona. "The wild, obsessed, inspired, gifted, talented individual," Cohen bombastically asserts, "resists everything that is smug, comfortable or respectable."[24] This wild, talented individual seems also to be the "front-line writer" of *Flowers for Hitler*[25] and the speaker of "What I'm Doing Here," the first poem of that book. *Beautiful Losers* combines these two lines of creative investigation—the spiritual and the political—in the certain energy of the emphatic individual, whose political and social lives are correlatives of his quest for an absent divine. The individual is significant to Cohen, because if the individual can become a "prophet [who] resists the dogmatists,"[26] he may also open the space for something original to happen. Moreover, Cohen's objection to dogmatism importantly nuances the emphatic individual's relation to the divine in *Beautiful Losers*.

It may seem counter-intuitive to focus on the individual in a novel that most critics read as dissolving, or at least problematizing, the individual as a coherent category. Certainly, as all of the critics of the novel note, *Beautiful Losers* does not belong to the tradition of realism that introduced and buttressed the relationship between the novel and the individual. Eager to stress the postmodern and experimental quality of the novel, many critics emphasize how Cohen's characters merge into one another—a transformation most dramatically represented in "I" and

[24] Cohen's letter can be found Box 11, Folder 9 of the Cohen fonds at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto. The letter also describes Cohen's motivations for going to Cuba during the Cuban missile crisis in 1961 and his experience there. Ira Nadel details Cohen's trip to Cuba in *Various Positions* (91-97).
[25] In a letter to Jack McClelland that was later published on the back cover of *Flowers for Hitler* Cohen describes the book as moving him from "the world of the golden-boy poet into the dung pile of the front-line writer" (qtd. Abraham 124).
[26] In the same letter Cohen also imagines "the prophet [who] resists the dogmatists" as a particular form of the general individual who "resists everything that is smug, comfortable or respectable."

F.'s amalgamation in the Old Man in the Epilogue—and resist any stable identity. As Frank Davey rightly points out, despite readers' willingness to read F. as French Canadian and "I" as English and Jewish, the text itself offers no definitive corroboration of those assumptions, especially of "I" as either Jewish or English (15-16). Davey emphasizes F.'s and "I"'s shared childhood as orphans and argues that "[o]rphanhood disconnects the subject from both family and community history and destabilizes personal identity" (20). In *Discoveries of the Other*, Winfried Siemerling focuses on Cohen's use of "linguistic shifters (rather than the stability of names)" (24) to render identity impermanent: "Cohen's paradigmatic pairs, I and you, self and other, writer and reader, master and slave, pupil and teacher: as soon as they are posited, neither of these identities seems to remain in place for long" (27). Davey, Siemerling, and critics like them underline the difficulty of pinning down the identities of Cohen's characters. Indeed, just the absence of proper names for the characters, one of the first indicators of the novel genre's interest in the individual for Ian Watt (19), suggests that this experimental novel problematizes identity.[27] The unfixed nature of the individual in Cohen's novel is a difficulty I also wish to acknowledge, for in *Beautiful Losers* Cohen is thinking critically about the obstacles that interfere with identification in a group, the implicit violence of that identification, and the potential for an individual to change profoundly (a potential which signals the essential instability and incompleteness of any one individual). While Davey's and Siemerling's approaches are, of course, powerful ways of thinking about modern individuality, Cohen's critique of the individual assumes an engagement with, not an indifference to, the category.

Linda Hutcheon's influential reading of *Beautiful Losers* as a postmodern text similarly stresses its challenge to the individual as an absolute category. In her canonical study, *The*

[27] Watt contrasts the individuating effect of naming in the novel to the allegorical naming in genres preceding it: "early novelists […] made an extremely significant break with tradition, and named their characters in such a way as to suggest that they were to be regarded as particular individuals in the contemporary social environment" (19).

Canadian Postmodern, Hutcheon notes that postmodern novels "question whether there can ever be such a thing as a final, definitive 'inscription' of selfhood or subjectivity in fiction" (8). Hutcheon sees *Beautiful Losers* asking this question through its foregrounding of its relationship with its reader—"readers of the postmodern novel (like the modernist one) must *participate*, even if we do not *identify*" (27; original emphasis)—and through Cohen's ironic reflections on creation itself—"[t]he writer of postmodern metafiction wants to lure readers into the act of meaning-making, to tantalize us with our own expectations—if only ironically to thwart them" (42). For Hutcheon, subjectivity is a product of "the Western liberal humanist tradition [that] has been defined in terms of rationality, individuality, and power" (5). Given these terms and the way Cohen's novel persistently questions "definitive" readings, it is easy to see how *Beautiful Losers* challenges notions of subjectivity: for instance, the distracted meditations of a nameless narrator, whom critics call "I", suggest both a failure of the rational mind and of individual identity in its simplest articulation (that is, the proper name). On Hutcheon's reading, *Beautiful Losers*, like subjectivity itself, is incomplete, indefinite, and open to external influence, which undeniably complicates any discussion of the individual or individuality in the novel.

Complication, however, need not result in evasion. Rather than encourage critics to avoid Cohen's representation of individuality, its very complexity ought to inspire a more careful analysis. The reasons to pursue the individual in *Beautiful Losers* belong primarily to two categories. First, Cohen's creative attention continuously falls on the individual as a source of revolutionary potential in the mid-60s. Second, the individualities of the characters, especially of "I" and F., reveal and develop Cohen's philosophical interests and argument.

Even as he appears to critique the definition of the individual in the "Western liberal humanist tradition," Cohen still returns to the individual as a source of inspiration and promise.

Recall, for instance, his exaggerated description of "[t]he wild, obsessed, inspired, gifted, talented individual" as a figure of resistance in his letter to his brother-in-law. Or the speaker of "What I'm Doing Here," the first poem of *Flowers for Hitler* (1964), who evokes this defiant resistance in his refusal of "the universal alibi" (13) that excuses and justifies Allied hatred during and after the Second World War. Both the poem's lyrical "I" and that "I"'s insistence at the end of the poem that "*each*" (13; emphasis added) of his readers confess imply that singular individuality is possible and even necessary for conscious political engagement.[28] Similarly, in "Loneliness and History"[29] Cohen examines the figures of the priest and the prophet, both exemplary individuals who are necessary to the survival and evolution of a community. Cohen's definition of the prophet in this context is particularly revealing, for his loyalty to an "original [and divine] idea" (b) leads him away from the community he nonetheless serves through his absence. As Cohen writes in his notes for the speech, the prophet "follows [the idea] into regions of danger, so that he becomes alone, and by his nature becomes unwelcome to the community" (b). Yet, in Cohen's estimation, the prophet, like the artist, performs the more important task, because his loneliness precedes and inspires renewed communion: "A man must be very alone / Before he can declare: / We are not alone" (f). The prophet, like Cohen's resistant individual and the speaker of "What I'm Doing Here," is a singular and eccentric individual whose very position outside of the dominant and conventional community allows him to critique and reform it. From this, the perspective Cohen was contemplating in the mid-60s, individuality, rather than

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[28] Cohen uses images of wakefulness and sleep throughout the collection to critique the way historical narratives strategically remember and forget. For example, in "On Hearing a Name Long Unspoken" Cohen describes history as a narcotic: "History is a needle / for putting men asleep" (27). In this collection, the absence of individual consciousness appears as a threatening disengagement from and indifference to historical events that require attentive ethical resistance. The speaker of "What I'm Doing Here" and his confessing reader, then, suggest that one can awake from an ideological history only individually; while "men" are asleep, the poet and the reader he accuses might still wake up to their own participation in injustice.

[29] This essay, notes from a speech Cohen gave at Montreal's Jewish Public Library in 1963, can be found in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto, MS Coll 122, Box 9, Folder 1. The pagination used here corresponds to the way in which Cohen has marked the pages of his speech.

signal finality or completion, becomes the essence of potential change: the individual's existence outside of the community's stable forms prefigures any critique of finality or completion.

Cohen's emphasis on exceptional individuals, who controversially force a revaluation of the uncontroversial values of a community, illuminates a driving question that seems to motivate his representation of the individual in *Beautiful Losers* and other writing of the mid-60s: is it possible to think about the individual apart from its liberal history and its current bourgeois associations? Hutcheon's definition of selfhood in terms of finality and completion certainly describes the individual defined in the "Western liberal humanist tradition" she invokes; but Cohen centres his attention on the individual as a source of resistance and correction to the bourgeois culture and values that tradition produces. Notions of finality, completion, and stability apply more accurately to the market men who hear the news of God's death as a banality than they do to Cohen's "I" and F., whose extreme responses to the news evince the difficult loneliness of the individual in a world without God. Cohen's critics rightly point out the challenge he poses to assumptions about the individual and individual identity, but that challenge aims to correct those assumptions rather than universally to assault the individual as such.

Cohen's desire to think about individuality outside of its liberal humanist connotations leads, vexingly, both to Nietzsche and to God, and through them to the heart of Cohen's philosophical project. The individual is not only the subject of Cohen's philosophical inquiry; it is the object through which that inquiry is legible. In other words, Cohen's engagement with Nietzsche on the question of God's death and his experimentation with individuality occur predominantly through his characterization of F. and "I". Notably, this period of Cohen's interest in the individual as a source of resistance to bourgeois comfort coincides with the period of his engagement with Nietzsche's philosophy. This engagement further suggests that, outside of

Cohen's own amendments to Nietzsche's project, the German philosopher offered him a fertile way of imagining the individual's potential apart from the tradition Hutcheon describes.

Cohen's contemplation of individual responses to the death of God in *Beautiful Losers* is a significant part of his Nietzschean investment in the mid-60s. While this dissertation generally discusses authors whose philosophical interests remain implicit in their novels, Cohen includes an important, although long-unacknowledged, allusion to Nietzsche in *Beautiful Losers*. Although Cohen's commentators have found it rhetorically powerful to allude to the underlying Nietzschean character of F.'s aphoristic and radical pedagogy, until Mark Migotti, none had correctly located the direct quotation from *The Gay Science* that Cohen places in *Beautiful Losers*.[30] In "Nietzsche as Educator: Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* and the Achievement of Innocence," Migotti points out that F.'s often cited and enigmatic advice that "I" "learn to stop bravely at the surface" and "learn to love appearances" (4) is borrowed from Nietzsche's 1886 preface to *The Gay Science*—notably the same book that contains the philosopher's famous pronouncement of God's death. In his second preface Nietzsche exclaims: "Oh, those Greeks! They knew how to *live*: what is needed for that is to stop bravely at the surface, the fold, the skin; to worship appearance, to believe in shapes, tones, words – the whole Olympus of appearance!"

[30] Until Migotti, Cohen's critics had been imprecise with their treatment of Nietzsche's presence in Cohen's work. Probably taking his cue from Dennis Lee, who claims that F. repeats "several direct quotations" from *Twilight of the Idols* (125), Ira Nadel identifies F. as a "Nietzschean character" and claims that Cohen quotes Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols* in "several statements by F." (73). While Cohen's meditations on broken systems and on beauty, as well as the Dionysian character of F.'s pronouncements, certainly have parallels in *Twilight of the Idols*, his quotations of Nietzsche do not come from this work. Migotti points out allusions to "Homer's Contest," *Human All Too Human*, and "On Truth and Lying in the Non-Moral Sense," which he builds into his reading of a Nietzschean model of education in *Beautiful Losers*. Nietzsche has been present throughout Cohen's career. Cohen includes references to the philosopher in poems addressed to Irving Layton, such as "To I.P.L" from *Let Us Compare Mythologies*, and "Irving and Me at the Hospital" from *Book of Longing*. Furthermore, Nietzsche appears twice in Cohen's unpublished papers from the mid-60s: once in a reading list of proto-existentialists and once as a named precursor to an unfinished novel, "The Famous Havana Diary." Both of these documents can be found in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto, in Box 5 Folder 5 and Box 1 Folder 18 respectively.

(8; original emphasis).[31] While this quotation is the longest allusion Cohen makes to Nietzsche in his published work, its length is not the only sign of Nietzsche's importance for Cohen at this moment of his writing. In fact, *Beautiful Losers* embodies the tension evoked in this quotation: the struggle between stopping at and transgressing the surface catalyzes the action of the novel. Moreover, this struggle comes to define Cohen's model of emphatic individuality; in the end, divine revelation occurs to those who affirm the profundity of the surface.

Like Nietzsche, Cohen insists upon the individual's embodied response to his immanent life. Cohen's inquiry into the death of God refuses to escape from immanent and individual life by appealing to the alibis of conventional morality and demands instead that the individual confront pain and injustice sensually. Yet, as the epigraph to this chapter—"Though his death was published round and round the world the heart did not believe" (*Beautiful* 164)—suggests, like Watson, Cohen also seems dissatisfied with the banality of God's *death* and insistent upon the individual's *life* as a continuous confrontation of the consequences of God's shadow. Thus, while Cohen undoubtedly takes up many of Nietzsche's criticisms of God, and while "I" and F. mourn and celebrate God's death, *Beautiful Losers*, like *The Double Hook*, aspires toward a renewed community of post-Nietzschean individuals who, having confronted God's absence, may now declare his renewed presence, however complicated, in the modern world.

Cohen develops his robust response to Nietzsche through the diverging individual styles of "I"'s and F.'s responses to God's absence. In the preface to *The Gay Science* from which Cohen borrowed the lines he would quote in *Beautiful Losers*, Nietzsche explains that "Gay Science" "signifies the saturnalia of a mind that has patiently resisted a terrible, long pressure –

[31] It is difficult to know what translation of Nietzsche Cohen used. Migotti notes that, if Cohen indeed read Walter Kaufmann's popular translation, he changed it in interesting ways: "he changed Kaufmann's 'courageously' to 'bravely' […] 'adore' to 'love', and 'what is required' to 'we've got to learn'" (Migotti 55n3). Interestingly, in her more recent translation (quoted above), Josefine Nauckhoff, like Cohen, opts for "bravely" over "courageously."

patiently, severely, coldly, without yielding, but also without hope – and is now all of a sudden attacked by hope, by hope for health, by the *intoxication* of recovery" (3; original emphasis). The hopeless despair and its joyful cure that Nietzsche suggests through his title also resonate in the melancholy and joy he identifies as the two, seemingly contradictory responses to the death of God (Williams, "Introduction" xii). "Melancholic" and "joyful" also aptly describe Cohen's two protagonists in *Beautiful Losers*. An implicit desire for God's presence in "I"'s life on earth marks the scholar's melancholy and inspires his longing for miracles and obsession with the past. When "I" breaks out of the paralyzing pressure of his melancholy and humbles himself in silent prayer at the end of his narration, however, Cohen foreshadows his joyful recovery in the figure of the Old Man in the novel's apocalyptic epilogue. In contrast, F.'s implicit recognition of God's absence, which allows him to become his own god, marks his joy, which he in turn triumphantly expresses in his assertions of sensual life and his own "total vision" (Purdham, *Encyclopedic* 151). In stimulating "I" and F. to move toward the extremes of their particular personalities, God's absence seems to kindle individuality itself; "I"'s and F.'s responses to God's apparent death reveal and test individuality. The style of these responses, then, attests to Cohen's engagement with Nietzsche as a source of his inquiry into the individual and her potential to "recover" from everything that is "smug, comfortable, or respectable."

While for Nietzsche melancholy and joy are individual expressions of the realization of God's death, the melancholic and joyful natures that characterize Cohen's protagonists describe their perception of God's apparent *absence* in the world rather than the ultimate recognition of his death. For "I" and F., whose desire for mystical experience defines their very characters, God cannot be dead, but he may have receded from earthly life. F.'s powerful assertion that "God is alive […] [t]hough his death was published round and round the world" (164) signals Cohen's

response to Nietzsche's pronouncements in *The Gay Science*: through both "I" and F. Cohen confronts, as Watson does in *The Double Hook*, the full consequences of God's perceived death for the individual and troubles its finality as a source of individualist renewal. Further complicating Cohen's response to Nietzsche, however, is F.'s more typically Nietzschean resolve for an earthly and embodied life, a resolve that he maintains even in his declaration of God's life. In order to understand both Cohen's philosophical response to Nietzsche and F.'s declaration of individual faith, then, we must ask, with Cohen, if one can believe both in God and in Nietzsche.

The answer to the above question exists, at least partially, in F.'s Nietzschean revaluation of the ascetic priest, an "apparent enemy of life" (Nietzsche, *Genealogy* 88), and of his God. As I will discuss below, F., like the ascetic priests Nietzsche decries in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, attempts to justify human suffering; however, while Nietzsche's ascetic priest points the soul away from life, F.'s method emphasizes embodied life as the portal to encounter the divine. F.'s claim that "God is alive" offers another dimension to the principles he has upheld throughout the novel; rather than reasserting a conventional credo of an orthodox faith—which may become an oppressive doctrine—F.'s declaration affirms the mystic potential of individual life. While Cohen certainly responds to Nietzsche's claims that God is dead, and Nietzsche's description of the ascetic priest at times seems similar to both F. and "I" (although in very different ways), Cohen's response subtly adjusts Nietzsche's description of the ascetic's principles so that God is alive in the body and not in its denial. F.'s mystic conclusion thus endows the individual with a kind of mortal divinity that opens him to the potential for communion with others; F.'s merger with "I" in the figure of the Old Man serves as a compelling image of this porous communion.

It bears observing that for Cohen in the mid-60s God's potential life or death is necessarily coupled with a response to the Holocaust. For many survivors of the Holocaust, the

death camps confirmed what Nietzsche's madman had declared in the preceding century.[32] Michael Greenstein describes "a poetics of absence" (2) that defines Jewish Canadian poetry in the second half of the twentieth century, "a period of God's eclipse when absence dominates the universe," in which "the question of God's whereabouts may be displaced by the poet's linguistic question about the words to express this absence" (1). Michael Q. Abraham further describes the difficulty of Cohen's project at this time: "Writing out of the desolation that follows the holocaust, Cohen struggles to discover meaning in an environment that has none" (92). Similarly, Norman Ravvin finds in *Beautiful Losers* "an examination of the role of the Holocaust in contemporary culture, and […] a call to heed the lessons from the Nazi victimization of the Jews" (22). Ravvin names Cohen's "examination of the role of the Holocaust" the "ethical centre" of his experimental novel. Cohen's investigation of the potential death of God thus reflects the renewed urgency of Nietzsche's madman's proclamation in the mid-twentieth century; Cohen locates this urgency within the individual, whose response to God's absence, Cohen suggests, may also become the mode of God's reappearance.

During his long, predominantly stream-of-consciousness narration of the first book of *Beautiful Losers*, "The History of Them All," "I" desperately reasons: "if I'm empty then I can receive, if I can receive it means it comes from somewhere outside of me, if it comes from outside of me I'm not alone" (40). This reflection conveys "I"'s loneliness and his model of individuality; "I" exemplifies the closed individuality of a melancholic response to God's absence. "I"'s isolated character laments the loneliness of a world without God, but his despair only further underlines his melancholy. Although "I"'s desire for some ordering principle or divine revelation to add structure and significance to his life—to show him that he is not alone,

[32] In his account of the weight of the Holocaust on twentieth-century Jewish theology, Steven T. Katz explains that one interpretation of the events concludes that "belief in God is no longer possible" (411). For example, Richard Rubenstein, finds the "'Death of God' theology" the "only honest response to the death camps" (qtd. in Katz 415).

to move him from the outside—defines his personality, his desperation suggests that he is guided by the strong fear that no such principle is available to the modern individual. In "I" the modern individual appears pathetically solipsistic, narcissistic, and self-gratifying, a subject who turns the ascetic's "self-preservation" (*Genealogy* 88) into an extreme and destructive self-enclosure. This style of individuality causes F. to revalue God's absence into a presence that can combat the closed individual's ascetic withdrawal from the world. "I"'s melancholic mood, however, already suggests the possibility of F.'s revaluation; its desperate, hysterical style begins to break up the apparent fixity of the ascetic ideal, and the very closed individuality that is a symptom of God's absence functions as the *via negativa* on which "I" prepares for F.'s lessons and moves toward the possibility of a new communion.

"I" experiences God's absence as an essential and isolating loss, one that he expresses in his distracted history and in his vacuous desire for Catherine Tekakwitha, who, as an impossible object of erotic desire, stands in for the absent divine.[33] In "The History of Them All," "I"'s frantic prayers and melancholic meditations on his place in the universe consistently interrupt his narration of Catherine Tekakwitha and the A----s, a tribe whose history "I" aims to correct with his own expertise. For example, "I"'s narration moves chaotically from "old books on Catherine Tekakwitha" to remembering that he "never learned to play the harmonica" to a meditation on his constipation and its prevention of his communion with God (39). Despite a "dusty mind full of the junk of maybe five thousand books" (3), "I" cannot write an ordered history that would "rescue" his beloved Catherine "from the Jesuits" (5) who have constructed her history to date. The chaotic character of "I"'s narration suggests the loss of the divine principle he hopes to discover "under [Catherine's] rosy blanket" (3). God's absence drives both "I"'s historical

[33] Pacey similarly views loneliness as the link between sexual and divine desire: "These twin quests for God and for sexual fulfillment are motivated by the recognition of the individual's vulnerability, by an agonized sense of loneliness. Loneliness and the means of escaping it […] form one of the [novel's] basic and recurrent themes" (6).

project and his spiritual longing. In fact, "I"'s attempt to escape the loneliness occasioned by God's absence articulates itself in his narrative's proliferation of possibilities and regrets.

A symptom of both his spiritual predicament and his inability to accept F.'s embodied philosophy, "I"'s constipation physically communicates his closed individuality. "I"'s bound up bowels become a sign that God cannot enter him, and his cries for relief from his constipation lead him to question God's responsibility for the world and to fear apocalypse as a personal threat. "I"'s desperate reasoning quoted in the introduction to this section spirals into an existential and spiritual plea: "Please make me empty, if I'm empty then I can receive, if I can receive it means it comes from somewhere outside of me, if it comes from outside of me I'm not alone! I cannot bear this loneliness. […] Does God love the world? […] This is the way the world is lost" (40-41). "I"'s constipation denies him the chance to receive assurance of God's existence and, in an ironic refiguring of T.S. Eliot's line from "The Hollow Men" that reveals the extent of "I"'s solipsism, it threatens to annihilate the world itself.[34] While the absence of the divine only affirms "I"'s desire to feel its presence, his lament reveals that he expects God to pierce and liberate him. "I"'s prayer is thus narcissistically circular; its style mimics the self-enclosure also present in his constipation: he pleads for God to empty him so that he may receive God from the outside. Furthermore, as Medrie Purdham points out, the solipsistic nature of "I"'s lament reinforces his alienation from any divine principle: "in creating living conditions in which he no longer can be led or tutored by anything outside himself, 'I' ironically reinvents the self as

[34] "The Hollow Men" ends with a counter-intuitive description of the end of the world: "*This is the way the world ends / Not with a bang but a whimper*" (59; original emphasis). Eliot's hollow men make a powerful visual antithesis to "I"'s full and constipated body.

an absolute category" (*Encyclopedic* 154).[35] God's absence fills "I" with a loneliness, characteristic of God's afterlife, in which there is no metaphysical other outside the ego who may order and justify its existence. This loneliness likewise binds "I" to his quest for God; having survived the deaths of his wife, Edith, and F., his only friend, "I" longs for a divine presence to prove that he is not alone in the universe. Yet, as each prayer is met not with a revelation but with the nagging presence of a history "I" cannot order and the constipation from which he can find no release, the possibility of the divine recedes and "I"'s closed individualism advances.

"I"'s melancholy manifests in his contemplative nature, his desire for a remote God, and his sexual desire for an equally inaccessible dead saint. In theological terms, "I" suffers from *acedia*, specifically an *evagatio mentis* (wandering mind), "the flight of the will before itself and the restless hastening from fantasy to fantasy" (Agamben 5). In *Stanzas*, Giorgio Agamben develops a genealogy of melancholy that includes the Church's interpretation of melancholy as *acedia* or sloth. Agamben notes that ancient thinkers included constipation, hysteria, and suicidal mania (11) among the symptoms of melancholy. Furthermore, in a description that illuminates "I"'s pensive state and desire for union with Catherine, Agamben explains that "[in] the stubborn contemplative vocation of the saturnine temperament appears the perverse Eros of the slothful, who keeps his or her own desire fixed on the inaccessible" (14). According to Agamben, these conditions create a *via negativa* on which the subject who desires communion with the divine but

[35] "I" is stuck in a Cartesian moment in which he knows he exists but does not know if anything exists outside of himself. In his *Meditations*, Descartes desires to discover what he can know for certain. Using systematic hyperbolic doubt as his epistemological methodology, Descartes concludes that "I am a thing that thinks" (20), or, as he puts it elsewhere, "I think therefore I am." This moment in Descartes' *Meditations* suggests a solipsistic *cogito*, who only knows his own existence. "I"'s meditations similarly lead him to doubt whether anything exists outside of himself. Crucially, however, Descartes escapes his solipsism by way of his proof of God's existence; he finds that God's existence makes his own existence possible, because the idea of God "is innate in me, just as the idea of myself is innate in me" (34). Finally, this innate idea proves to Descartes that the world is not a product of his imagination; God's existence gives Descartes back the world that he has subjected to doubt. "I", however, seems fixed in the solipsistic first moment of the *cogito*: because "I" cannot prove the existence of God, he fears that nothing exists outside of himself.

not the way that leads to it finds itself. Agamben outlines the cycle in which a subject like "I" is caught: "Since its desire remains fixed on that which has rendered itself inaccessible, *acedia* is not only a flight from, but also a flight toward, which communicates with its object in the form of negation and lack" (7). Although the melancholic may reject the prescribed path to God, his desire for divine communion still motivates him; in the words of Agamben, "every gesture that [the melancholic subject] completes in its flight [away from its object] is a testimonial to the endurance of the link that binds it to its object" (7).

"I" is caught in a similar melancholic position in which every prolonged moment of God's absence reconstitutes his desire for Him and sends him in "howls and laments" (qtd. Agamben 7) after such communion. This, finally, is "I"'s condition: every prayer that goes unanswered, every moment of constipation, every time he cannot touch Catherine strengthens his desire for a divine intervention, his need to be moved from the outside. Thus, while his melancholic nature is a response to his perception of God's absence, "I" nonetheless desperately clings to his desire to confirm God's presence.

Through "I"'s melancholic and closed individuality Cohen contemplates the appeal and limit of the ascetic ideal. In his introduction to *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Keith Ansell-Pearson describes how the ascetic ideal "has added new dimensions and layers to suffering by making it deeper and more internal" (xxvi). "I" embodies this internal suffering. That is, his constipation physically signals the inward character of his suffering; however, while the ascetic priest creates "a trick for the *preservation* of life" (Nietzsche 88) by giving himself a metaphysical "goal" and end to suffering (Ansell-Pearson xxvi), "I"'s melancholy points to the destructive rather than preserving force of the ascetic ideal. "I"'s habit of complaining and his apparent desire to discover the divine by way of his erotic fantasy of Catherine Tekakwitha seem

to articulate the desires of the ascetic priest, who for Nietzsche is "the incarnate wish for being otherwise, being elsewhere, indeed, he is the highest pitch of this wish, its essential ardour and passion" (88). "I"'s desire to escape into the history of Catherine Tekakwitha and to have her "love [him] in [his] way" (Cohen, *Beautiful* 26) certainly expresses a "wish for being otherwise."

For Nietzsche, the ascetic wields an alluring power that explains the pervasiveness of the ascetic ideal. Unlike "I"'s, the ascetic priest's wish demonstrates this power: "the *power* of his wishing is the fetter which binds him here, precisely this is what makes him a tool, who now has to work to create more favourable conditions for our being here and being human" (88). The ascetic's deep, inner suffering, then, takes on significance outside of himself as "the wound itself […] forces him to *live*" (89; original emphasis) and he becomes a model for weaker individuals. "I" suffers and desires much like the ascetic, but it is Catherine, the saintly object of his desire, who represents the appeal and power of the ascetic priest.[36] "I"'s melancholy, on the other hand, keeps him focused on the conditions of his own suffering, rather than on creating a "more favourable" present for himself or others. In this way, "I"'s melancholy inverts the ascetic ideal. Both the ascetic and the melancholic are on a similar negative path or *via negativa*, but they move in opposite directions. The ascetic's attempt to look beyond life grounds him more firmly in it. The impossibility of the melancholic's desire, on the other hand, seems to bind him to his earthly life, but that very impossibility reorients his desire back to God.

Cohen's investigation into closed individuality ends with the suggestion that such an individual may open himself to the world through his radical acceptance of his situation and by

[36] F. details Catherine's self-inflicted and physical penitence in his letter to "I". Catherine "branded herself a slave to Jesus" by spending "several slow hours caressing her pathetic legs with hot coals" (203); she "prayed and fasted" and "cut her stomach with stones" (203); she and her friend "prepared for Confession by whipping each other with birch switches" (208); and she sewed "thousands of thorns into her blanket and mat" so that "[e]very movement of her body opened up a new source of outside blood" (211). In these acts Catherine demonstrates the control and power of the ascetic. Moreover, the obvious erotic nature of these punishments (at least from the perspective of "I", F., and the Jesuits) demonstrates how the ascetic's wound also binds her to life by giving her power over it.

way of a strange new style of prayer. "I"'s narration culminates in a prayer that affirms the desperation of all of his earlier cries and also signals a change in his approach to God: "O God, O God, I have asked for too much, I have asked for everything! I hear myself asking for everything in every sound I make. […] I did not know how much I needed. O God, I grow silent as I hear myself begin to pray" (148). This prayer offers a way of understanding the cycle of "I"'s desperation. "I"'s awareness of having "asked for everything" returns to the circular logic of the prayer discussed above and suggests that he had desired God's presence as a miracle that would transform both him and the world, and as long as that transformation did not occur, God's absence defined "I"'s individuality. "I"'s totalizing desire, his "asking for everything in every sound," also echoes the narcissistic character of the closed individual, who confines himself and the world within his despairing ego. Finally, however, "I" suggests that he has humbled himself before God and no longer insists on approaching the divine in his own way, or, as his use of F.'s Greek phrasebook suggests, in his own language. In contrast to the desperate cries that resound throughout "I"'s "History," "I"'s last prayer arises from silence. This transformation in "I"'s prayer suggests that he might overcome his melancholy by opening himself up to a being outside of himself; this potential opening could penetrate the shielded individualism that has made "I" "the sealed, dead, impervious museum of [his] appetite" (41).

These final prayers, however, occur through strange, imaginary conversations "I" has with Catherine using the Greek phrase book that F. gives him with the explanation that "[p]rayer is translation. A man translates himself into a child asking for all there is in a language he has barely mastered" (58). Pointing out the "portentous last two words" of "I"'s narration—"*eucharisto*/thanks"—Migotti reads these prayers as "I"'s triumph over his resentment "against life in general, modern life in particular, and his own life specifically" (51). This affirming

"thanks" echoes the prolific acceptance in "I"'s penultimate chapter. There, in an address to Catherine that prophesies the end of the book, "I" seems to accept the world as external to himself: "fake proof accepted, plastic birchbark accepted […] movie seat rubbing accepted […] gratefully accepted, astrology boredom accepted […] calling you now, all reasons accepted" (Cohen, *Beautiful* 143). The repetition of "accepted" in "I"'s still chaotic stream-of-consciousness narration suggests both affirmation and reception: "I" receives the world that is offered to him and through that reception he also affirms it. From this perspective, "I"'s final prayer appears as a moment of opening in which "I" overcomes his closed individuality.

Importantly, however, "I"'s phrase book is flawed by "execrable" English (58), and the prayers themselves are banal scenes of quotidian life, not poetic images of mystic revelation. Thus, while Cohen suggests that "I"'s closed individuality opens through prayer, he also suggests that the language of this prayer is flawed and prosaic. Still, "I"'s prayers indicate his overcoming his melancholic mood, which as it demanded miracles and perfection also transformed the world into an image of his empty despair: "me has sneaked outside into the furniture, inside smells are outside, bad to be so big […] stop my invasion of the world" (66). "I"'s translation through prayer reorients his individuality and its desires: "I" opens to the world and, as the next section will detail, prepares for F.'s revaluation of the divine.

Both the ascetic and the melancholic travel on a negative path: the ascetic rediscovers the earth by attempting to deny it; the melancholic, on the other hand, approaches the divine by way of his encounter with its absence from earthly life. Through "I"'s melancholy Cohen tests one of Nietzsche's predicted responses to God's afterlife and finds within it the destructive extreme of the ascetic's profound internal suffering. As "I"'s personality begins to open, Cohen also prepares for a new test case which will attempt to change the path of internal suffering on which

both the ascetic and the melancholic move. This new individuality will venture to revalue divine absence as joyful presence; that is, Cohen tests the healing, corrective potential of F.'s emphatic individuality—"now all of a sudden attacked by hope, by hope for health, by the *intoxication* of recovery" (Nietzsche, *Gay* 3)—as an alternative response to God's apparent death.

If "I"'s melancholic contemplation is one of Nietzsche's predicted responses to God's absence, F.'s characterization as a man of action who preaches "the jubilation […] of a sudden sense and anticipation of the future" (Nietzsche 3) is the other. Although F. admits some of his mistakes in the second book of the novel, "A Long Letter from F.," "I"'s portrait of his friend in "The History of Them All" presents him as a systematizer with a "universal vision" (Purdham, *Encyclopedic* 142). The absence of an immanent order that would signal a divine presence in the world, precisely what makes "I"'s history so desperate and chaotic, makes it possible for F. to step in as a system creator for other "losers." In contrast to "I"'s closed individualism and its obsession with "internal suffering," F.'s emphatic individualism directs an approach to the modern, godless world that is both superficial and external. Like Nietzsche, whom F. quotes in his telling imperative that we "learn to stop bravely at the surface […] learn to love appearances" (Cohen, *Beautiful* 4), F. attempts to rescue the profundity of the surface from the rampant asceticism and melancholy of the modern world. Through this model of emphatic individualism Cohen expresses the challenges and stakes of the individual as a joyful creator; F.'s model of individuality energetically and forcefully conveys that, in God's absence, the individual becomes his own absolute. Finally, however, it is this very style of individuality that is strong enough to revalue divine absence as a magical presence.

A telling interruption of prayer in F.'s "long letter" expresses the crisis of the individual who has become his own absolute. This prayer reveals F.'s early actions—especially his attempts

to alleviate human suffering by perfecting physical appearance—as motivated by his keen perception of God's absence. Addressing God rather than "I" at this moment, F. confesses: "I tried to create Grace to prove that Grace existed. […] Dear Father, accept this confession: we did not train ourselves to Receive because we believed there wasn't Anything to Receive and we could not endure with this Belief" (186). Like "I", then, F. also desires to receive a sign from outside of himself that will humble him with the recognition that the world is not entirely his creation or, in F.'s case, responsibility. In F., however, God's absence burdens the individual with the task of creating and implementing systems of value that do not have a metaphysical guarantee. As was the case with "I"'s closed individuality, F.'s confrontation with this loneliness defines his emphatic individuality.

This forceful, confident, and ultimately Nietzschean individuality, then, is also the product of F.'s existential freedom, which, as Beauvoir and Watson demonstrate, is grounded in the freedom of others. F. takes this injunction literally, even superficially. His role as the leader of a decidedly physical program of redemption begins when he and "I" are adolescents. Following the "Charles Axis" program of muscle building for "fifteen minutes a day" (75), F. embraces the individualist principle of self-making and turns his fat body into a muscular and strong one. Like "I"'s constipation, however, F.'s relationship to his own and other bodies reveals a defining aspect of his individuality and his understanding of the individual more generally: in the absence of God the individual is a regenerative and physical force. F. attempts to bully "I" into following the program as well, but in his characteristic demand for miracles, "I" admits that "[to] become a New Man in just fifteen minutes a day meant absolutely nothing to [him]" (122). In the absence of miracles, F. forms his own destiny by perfecting his body and those of others. Unable to "endure" the possibility of not having anything to receive, F. turns

himself into a god who gives. His gifts, though, often become disasters, as they do for "I"'s wife, Edith, whom F. transforms from "an ugly mess" to a woman with "perfect skin" (140). F.'s commitment to the surface, his "love [of] appearances" (4), makes physical appearance the beginning and end of his idea of redemptive freedom. In these representative examples of F.'s program, the emphatic individual embraces existential freedom in the most superficial terms. He exercises his own divine liberation through his attempt to become a "magician" (172) capable of alleviating the burden of existential isolation by transforming ugliness into shallow beauty.

For Nietzsche, suffering creates the conditions for belief in God. In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche emphasizes the human need to explain suffering as a cause of religious feeling: "[w]hat actually arouses indignation over suffering is not the suffering itself, but the senselessness of suffering" (44). Suffering without reason so threatens humans that they were "practically […] obliged to invent gods" (44). Cohen seems to have this Nietzschean argument in mind when he has "I" remember F.'s claims that "[n]ew systems are forced on the world by men who simply cannot bear the pain of living with what is […] Jesus probably designed his system so that it would fail in the hands of other men" (56-7). As Nietzsche follows the invention of gods to what he considers to be its most life-denying iteration in the ascetic ideal, he outlines a shift in the causal justification of pain in Christianity, in which pain becomes not only the repayment of the debt of creation,[37] but also the means of redemption. Furthermore, love of the pain that promises redemption cleverly maintains a hierarchy in which "even the lowliest use

[37] As Keith Ansell-Pearson explains, Nietzsche "is keen to draw the reader's attention to what he regards as an important historical insight: the principal moral concept of 'guilt' (*Schuld*) descends from the material concept of 'debts' (*Schulden*)" ("Introduction" xxii). The ascetic priest interprets the guilt of human life and shame of creation as evidence of a debt owed to God. "*Christianity's* stroke of genius," Nietzsche argues, is "none other than God sacrificing himself for man's debt, none other than God paying himself back, God as the only one able to redeem man from what, to man himself, has become irredeemable – the creditor sacrificing himself for his debtor […] out of *love* for his debtor" (*Genealogy* 63; original emphasis). At the end of an unpublished poem included with drafts of those found in *Flowers for Hitler* (1964), Cohen suggests such a Nietzschean reading of pain and debt; he asks of the reader, "Is your pain valuable?" (Thomas Fisher Rare Books, Box 7, Folder 3). This question returns in the poem "It Uses Us!" in *Flowers for Hitler*, where the speaker asks, "is this death unusable / alien and new?" (14).

piety in order to situate themselves in an illusory higher order of things, and in so doing stay satisfied with the actual order, in which their lives are hard enough" (Nietzsche, *Beyond* 55). By the logic of divinely justified pain, Nietzsche observes, the weak remain weak; this is precisely the hierarchy that F. and "I" must transgress if 'losers' are to become 'beautiful' not in some inaccessible and supersensible realm, but in their embodied and sensual lives.

The Christian interpretation of pain culminates in the ascetic ideal. The ascetic priest teaches people to find the cause of their pain in themselves and then offers eternal life in heaven as the reward for earthly suffering. In Nietzsche's words, "first [the ascetic priest] has to wound so that he can be the doctor" (*Genealogy* 93). Through this reversal of *ressentiment*[38]—which locates the origin of pain in man himself—humans turn away from earthly life and will their own suffering: a "*will* to set up an ideal – that of a 'holy God' – , in order to be palpably convinced of [their] absolute worthlessness in the face of this ideal" (64). Viewing life as the cause of his pain and shame, the ascetic "treats [it] as a wrong path that he has to walk along backwards till he reaches the point where he starts" (85)—his eternal heavenly life. For Nietzsche, the ascetic ideal then, causes the hatred of life that permeates the modern world. The denial of sensual life, along with the perpetual displacement of joy and forgiveness to a transcendent realm accessible only through an unknowable God, characterize the ascetic ideal and its will to nothingness:

> this hatred of the human, and even more of the animalistic, even more of the material, the horror of the senses, of reason itself, this fear of happiness and beauty, this longing to get away from appearance, transience, growth, death, wishing, longing itself – all that means, let us dare to grasp it, a *will to*

[38] Nietzsche defines *ressentiment* in *On the Genealogy of Morality*: "This reversal of the evaluating glance – this *essential* orientation to the outside instead of back onto itself – is a feature of *ressentiment*: in order to come about, slave morality first has to have an opposing, external world, it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all, – its action is basically reaction" (20; original emphasis).

> *nothingness*, an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental prerequisites of life. (120; original emphasis)

The ascetic attempts to escape the world by denying it. For Nietzsche, this denial of sensual life found most explicitly in Christianity, but also present in other religions including Judaism and Buddhism, must be overcome so that individual, embodied life can be valued.[39]

It is this ideal that F. attempts to correct, in part in order to help his suffering friend: F. aims to reorient back towards sensual life the negative and life-denying path on which both the ascetic and the melancholic move. While Purdham has pointed out the similarities between "I" and Nietzsche's ascetic, whose denial of life simultaneously hopes to exert control over life (160), F.'s position as "I"'s teacher and spiritual doctor qualifies him for the role of the priest. In fact, Nietzsche's description of the ascetic priest fits F. and his understanding of his actions well:

> *Rule over the suffering* is his domain, his instinct directs him towards it and his own special skill, mastery and brand of happiness are to be had in it. He must be sick himself […] but he has to be strong, too, more master of himself than others, actually unscathed in his will to power, so that he has the trust and fear of the sick and can be their support, defence, prop, compulsion, disciplinarian, tyrant, God. (92; original emphasis)

Although this description seems to suit F.'s role, however, it does not describe his lesson. The ascetic's pain is justified when it is interpreted as spiritual and thus non-sensible. In other words, even if the catalyst of pain is sensual, it is in its interpretation as a supersensible quality (as a sign of spiritual failing) that God becomes its guarantor. The ascetic priest may wound so that he can become a doctor, a characteristic that better fits F. than "I," but his wounds and their cure are

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[39] As I discuss in Chapter Three, in *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche extends his criticism of Christianity to democracy, which he argues replaces Christianity with "a stunted, almost ridiculous type, a herd animal, something well-meaning, sickly, and mediocre" (57).

pointed at the soul, not at the body. F. acts as "I"'s doctor in the sense that he wounds his friend in order to provide a specific cure, but with an important difference from the ascetic priest: F.'s medicine is not a denial of life, but an affirmation of sensual experience—for F., transcendence is necessarily immanent. Thus, F.'s painful methods are often physical and anchored in the senses. Like the ascetic priest, F. is "the *direction-changer* of *ressentiment*" (93), but in this reorientation, F. rescues existential suffering from the ascetic's metaphysical alibi. F. thus revalues the role of the ascetic priest in his attempt to rediscover the divine in earthly life.

F.'s response to the warts from which both he and "I" suffer exemplifies his approach to suffering. While F. bites his off, "I" insists on waiting for his to "clear up" (*Beautiful* 105) in the same way that he later prefers to wait for a miracle both to transform his body (rather than using the Axis program) and to relieve his constipation. In a process of beautification like his own transformation and the one he inflicted upon Edith, F. insists that "I" be rid of his wart quickly. With a brutal "Slice! R-i-i-i-p!" (108), F. removes "I"'s wart with his penknife. If, according to Nietzsche, God was invented to make sense of suffering (*Genealogy* 44) and to excuse earthly pain through the promise of heaven, F.'s project is to make suffering sensory again, to anchor life in bodily pain without the alibi of heaven so that orphans can be heroes even on earth.[40]

Such a project, however, requires a further ethical and political response on the part of the individual. If the emphatic individual aims to redeem the world by making suffering sensual, he must also confront the terrible history of that suffering and its culmination in the Holocaust, an event incomparable to "I"'s warts and incurable by the swift action F. takes to eradicate them. In fact, F.'s commitment to the surface leads him to the provocative and appalling bath he and Edith share with Hitler, who "lathered [them] from head to foot, proclaiming all the while the special qualities of the soap, which, as you must now understand, was derived from melted

[40] Notably, each of Cohen's primary characters—"I", F., Edith, and Catherine—is an orphan.

human flesh" (190). Here, as he is gruesomely baptized by flesh itself, F.'s affirmation of the sensual surface reaches its ethical nadir. As this disturbing scene with Hitler indicates, the emphatic individual's temptation to transform his individual freedom into a system for others often unfolds as a dangerous failure in *Beautiful Losers* as Cohen demonstrates the ethical stakes of a decidedly Nietzschean response to God's apparent death.

Indeed, F.'s potential to become his own god has devastating consequences for the people he tries to help, and even his realization of the suffering inherent in his attempts to end Edith's and "I"'s pain does not stop his process. Recalling his exchange with Edith in Argentine, where the two have retreated to try to heal Edith's now sexually broken body, "go[ne] all the way" and "no good to anyone" (174), F. explains his desire to end the suffering he witnessed:

> Confronted with your pus, I could not stop to examine my direction, whether or not I was aimed at a star. […] Call me Dr. Frankenstein with a deadline. I seemed to wake up in the middle of a car accident, limbs strewn everywhere, detached voices screaming for comfort […] and all I had in the wrecked world was a needle and thread, so I got on my knees, I pulled pieces out of the mess and I started to stitch them together. I had an idea of what a man should look like, but it kept changing. I couldn't devote a lifetime to discovering the ideal physique. All I heard was pain, all I saw was mutilation. (183)

F. can only truly acknowledge the failures of his system in this way years later, when he interprets his actions as motivated by a desire to feel God's presence in the world, "to create Grace to prove that Grace existed." In Argentina before Edith's death (28),[41] F. cannot explain

[41] Just how much time passes between Edith's trip to Argentina and her death is unclear. F. suggests that Edith dies four years after their trip; he reports that Edith was twenty when they went to Argentina (*Beautiful* 187) and "I" writes that she was twenty-four, the same age as Catherine, when she died (28). "I," however, suggests that Edith dies one week after her trip (116).

the motivation of his desire to end Edith's and "I"'s suffering by trying to perfect their bodies. Furthermore, although he suggests in this passage that he was mistaken in his "vile ambitions" (183), he neither admits when this revelation occurred nor seems changed by remembering it. For example, he continues to guide "I" after Edith's death; in fact the night of Edith's death F. proudly tells "I" of his Telephone Dance with her and insists on the "eternal" and "beautiful" (35) potential of the body: "All parts of the body are erotogenic. […] Down with genital imperialism! All flesh can come!" (34). More importantly, however, here F. again reveals the crisis of the individual in a world without God: in this description F. is moved to alleviate existential suffering by creating a new image of human wholeness, but without a stable ground or metaphysical ideal on which to build that image, even his best intentions are doomed to failure.

Despite F.'s reluctance to change his methods, his recognition of himself as a "frantic Frankenstein" makes the human perfection of the body, insofar as it arises as a substitute for divine perfection, unattainable in the end. Instead, the very magnitude of suffering in the world he intends to reshape defeats the Axis model, which has provided F. with his own makeover. As I discuss in detail in Chapter Four, the social, political, and historical suffering that haunts the twentieth century exceeds any one individual's redemptive power, and F.'s superhuman ambitions eventually reveal his very human limitations. This defeat also signals Cohen's criticism of the 'Axis' model of totalitarianism and the American ideal of manhood that replicates its brutality. For Peter Wilkins, F., in seeing himself as a kind of Frankenstein, "recognizes that the social body is also wounded in a way that is too complex for any individual to heal by mapping his own vision of wholeness onto it. In the Charles Axis model, the relationship is between the individual and his ideal of himself – that is, a relationship between

the one and the ONE" (42).[42] God is notably absent from the Axis model; and without God, the individual becomes his own absolute. Following the Axis model, F. thinks he can lift himself into the position of a god, an impulse Nietzsche's madman suggests is the only way of fully acknowledging God's death: "Is the magnitude of this deed not too great for us? Do we not ourselves have to become gods merely to appear worthy of it?" (*Gay* 120). F.'s failure, however, signals Cohen's critical contemplation of the aftereffects of Nietzsche's declarations. Cohen points to the ethical burden of the individual who attempts to fill God's absence with his own individuality and thus also attempts to transform that individuality into something divine. As was the case in the conclusion of *The Double Hook*, *Beautiful Losers* also emphasizes increased (and *fallible*) individual responsibility as a consequence of God's absence.[43]

In an explicit refutation of Nietzsche's madman's claim of God's death, F.'s admission of failure (Hutcheon 34) culminates in his realization that "what [he] had to tell" "I" all along was an affirmation of God's presence that re-enchants the world with mystical magic: "God is alive. Magic is afoot" (*Beautiful* 164). In his letter to "I," F. retrospectively interprets his own transformation as a teacher: "[all] my speeches were preface to this, all my exercises but a clearing of the throat" (164). At this pivotal moment on his deathbed, then, F. becomes the madman who proclaims God's survival: "God is alive. […] Though his death was published round and the round the world the heart did not believe" (164). In his invocation of the

[42] Wilkins implies a conflation of the Neoplatonic model of transcendence—in which the many return to the One—and the Axis model of perfection—in which the individual and the ideal can be made the same.

[43] This fallibility comes out not only in F.'s attempts to cure others, but also, importantly, in reference to himself. Cohen illuminates the fragility of even the most celebratory responses to God's death and so reveals both the complicated individual experience of God's absence and the permeable border between melancholy and joy, desperation and freedom, closed and emphatic individualism. In his commitment to the body and to the future, F. first responds with a kind of jubilation to his freedom to become his own god, to be a master in his own right. Explaining his plans for the factory he buys, F. imagines the joyful redemption of a space of exploitation: "I'm dancing on the scraps! I've turned it into a playground!" (*Beautiful* 43). Unlike "I"'s melancholy, F.'s joy attempts to refigure loss into celebration and pain into orgasm, but Cohen reveals the instability of that joy. F.'s visit to the factory, for example, concludes with tears and "a forlorn embrace" (44) with "I." This embrace with "I" suggests Cohen's skepticism about a purely joyful response to God's absence.

"publication" of God's death, F. directly rebuts Nietzsche's madman with the affirmation that God is, indeed, alive. Curiously, then, Cohen puts some of his least Nietzschean words in the mouth of his most Nietzschean character. Yet, the forceful confidence of F.'s assertion still echoes the style of his emphatic individuality and his pedagogical relationship to "I." What, then, does this certain prayer suggest about F.'s individuality and its relationship to the divine?

F.'s credo should not be read as a simple reversal of his position. In fact, his claim that the credo articulates "what [he] had to tell" "I" all along suggests that it is the crystalizing culmination of his position more than it is a strikingly new one. In his assertion that "God is alive," F. has not forgotten his own *via negativa* that has led to his deathbed confidence in God's life. If F. were simply to re-establish the Judeo-Christian God (and the traditional moral values that accompany him) that Nietzsche declared dead, Cohen's criticism of the Jesuits and of religiously justified imperial ideologies in the novel would be in vain. F.'s challenge—and one of the important characteristics of Cohen's philosophical contemplation of the individual in his forsaken world—is to proclaim God's life without simply becoming a priest like those who disrupted the immanent unity of Catherine's and her tribe's relationship with the world and introduced them to "a new kind of loneliness" (86) characteristic of the novelistic world in which "the perfect immanence of the transcendent" no longer seems possible.

Unlike the priests who convert Catherine, F. does not make a moral assertion in the Christian sense. Instead, in his emphasis on "Magic" and the enchantment of the material world with a spirituality that could unite it, F. attempts to restore God in a way that cannot be appropriated as doctrine. The elusive nature of this passage, in part a result of the abstract and extreme positions presented within it—"Magic is afoot. God rules. Alive is afoot" (165)—and its chiasmic logic—"God is alive. Magic is afoot. God is afoot. Magic is alive" (164)—prohibits it

from gaining the authority of scripture. F. insists on God's presence, but he no longer offers a clear system for gaining access to it; the absence of this final system affirms the individualist character of F.'s ultimate faith. As Taylor has rightly argued, after the perception of God's absence from the world, "[t]he moral and spiritual order of things must come to us indexed to a personal vision" (*Sources* 428). F.'s affirmation of God's life articulates his personal vision without demanding that it become universal. Furthermore, F.'s declaration implicitly warns against the use of God (and Magic) as a tool, as the Jesuits do in their moral and imperial missions: "But Magic is no instrument. Magic is the end" (165). F. concludes by emphasizing the divine nature of the body: "This I mean to serve till service is but Magic moving through the flesh, and flesh itself is Magic dancing on a clock, […] and time itself the Magic Length of God" (165). Put simply, F.'s affirmation of God does not turn him into "I," who so desperately wants God to exist that he turns himself away from life; F.'s lesson (and his correction to "I"'s despair) is precisely that if God is alive, he is alive in the individual negotiations and pain of earthly life.

"I" and F. are madmen looking for God. Cohen's protagonists embody the two responses Nietzsche predicts the death of God will cause; however, while they feel God's absence, neither can ultimately declare his death. F.'s assertion that "God is alive" does not revive a cure for existential suffering that justifies the denial of life. F.'s declaration expresses the logic that differentiates his embodied spirituality and the ascetic ideal: God does not merely exist—he is *alive*. If God is alive, he is not the eternal principle of order removed from earth; instead he is "afoot" in the world itself. In a Nietzschean way, when F. proclaims that God lives he asks "I" to love the sensual experience of life—to feel "Magic coursing through the flesh"—which he has been preaching since his youth. Thus, F. does not wish to reaffirm a transcendent excuse for pain, but to recognize the possibility of joy even on earth. In Cohen's hands, then, the emphatic

individual is the direction-changer, the direction-corrector, of *ressentiment*. He reorients the negative path of the ascetic and the melancholic by revaluing both the role of the ascetic priest—who, notably, Nietzsche figures as a "magician" (*Genealogy* 93, 104)—and Nietzsche's conception of the divine as an alibi for pain, a metaphysical mistake that inspires us to deny life.[44] The revaluation of all values, an act that Nietzsche calls "humanity's highest self-examination" (*Ecce* 144), requires the emphatic individual's strength, confidence, and hope, but he is not ultimately its priest. Rather, as Cohen and Nietzsche agree, such a revaluation and such a faith in the world is not given by a priest, but won by each individual.

In his *Theory of the Novel*, Lukács defines the novel as a form determined by its quest for a totality not immediately given in modern life, for "the perfect immanence of the transcendent" (59) that Lukács finds absent from the modern world at least since Cervantes chronicled Don Quixote's absurd adventures. "[T]he fundamental form-determining intention of the novel," Lukács claims, "is objectivized as the psychology of the novel's heroes: they are seekers," who desire "to uncover and construct the concealed totality of life" (60). As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, however, any revelation or construction of life's totality in the disenchanted world of the novel occurs through the individual himself; it is "the process of the problematic individual's journeying toward himself" that eventually reveals a short glimpse of the "immanence of meaning" for which both the individual and the novel search. This individualist quest is a consequence of God's absence from the material world, and it also signals the individual's search for precisely the absent divine. In *Beautiful Losers* Cohen brings this individual and his search to their extreme articulation; both "I" and F. seek totality in a world they fear has been abandoned by God. Unlike the novelistic individuals Lukács has in mind,

[44] In the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche credits Plato as the originator of this error: "it must nevertheless be said that the worst, most prolonged, and most dangerous of all errors to this day was a dogmatist's error, namely Plato's invention of pure spirit and the Good in itself" (4).

however, "I" and F. do not journey toward themselves in any essentializing way. In *Beautiful Losers*, individuality is not something to be accomplished; rather, it is the mode, the "style"—"Do not follow. Go beyond my style" (171), F., the good Nietzschean, commands "I" in his letter—through which any search or revelation occurs. While their search comes to a momentary completion that fleetingly reveals life's totality and its divine possibilities in the "Epilogue" to the novel, this revelation reinforces Cohen's initial project: it tests the experience and limits of individuality outside of the liberal and bourgeois tradition usually associated with the novel.

In the Epilogue to *Beautiful Losers* an Old Man who resembles both "I" and F.[45] achieves "the perfect immanence of the transcendent" that Lukács claims the novelistic individual seeks. After his sexual encounter with the Blonde Housewife,[46] an Isis figure who incorporates the female characters, the Old Man begins a public performance that leads to his surreal transformation into "Clear Light!": "he dissolved from the inside out. […] His presence was like the shape of an hourglass, strongest where it was smallest. And that point where he was most absent, that's when the gasps started, because the future streams through that point, going both ways" (253). The Old Man's transformation reveals the limit of the novelistic individual's search

[45] Cohen indicates that the Old Man is both "I" and F. in many ways. For example, we first encounter the Old Man in the tree house that F. leaves "I" in his will (242; 42). All three men are missing thumbs: F. lost his when he tried to blow up a statue of Queen Victoria (192), "I" burns his thumb severely playing with the firecrackers F. sends him (65), and the Old Man is recognized as the "Terrorist Leader" who has no thumb (251). The Old Man's missing thumb also suggests that he is in part the Jesuit Father Jogues, who has his thumb "sever[ed] with a clam-shell" by "an Algonquin slave" (129). The Old Man lists the translations of Iroquois names in English and French, which demonstrates his knowledge of the topics of "I"'s research as well as an interest in translation that is similar to F.'s (245). Furthermore, the Old Man instructs the boy who visits him to be careful of the way he squats (244), just as F. comments on "I"'s squatting position (167). Finally, the blonde housewife drops the Old Man off at the System Theatre (247), where F. and Edith had performed the Telephone Dance. Catherine's uncle is also part of the figure of the Old Man, who is called "Uncle" by the boy who visits his tree house (244). Scobie argues that the combination of "I" and F. signals the dissolution of boundaries into an ultimate "IF" of infinite possibility in which the Old Man "becomes both the projector (machinery) and what is projected; subject and object, victor and victim, Magic itself" (*Intricate* 121).

[46] Just as the male characters merge into the figure of the Old Man, the female characters merge into the Blonde Housewife in Cohen's Epilogue. Many of Cohen's critics have commented on the merging of the female characters into the blonde housewife. See, for example, Hutcheon, "*Beautiful Losers*: All the Polarities" (52) and *The Canadian Postmodern* (38-39); Paul Nonnekes, "Beyond Mommy and the Machinery: Leonard Cohen's Vision of Male Desire in *Beautiful Losers*" (50-53); Ravvin, "Writing Around the Holocaust: Uncovering the Ethical Centre of *Beautiful Losers*" (24); Siemerling, *Discoveries of the Other* (41).

for God, an apotheosis that effectively erases the individualities of each of the characters the Old Man encompasses. As "I" and F. fulfill their desire for a divine encounter, they combine into an image of a radically porous individual: the Old Man not only clears "I" and F. of their individualities, but his point of absence, like God's, is also a point of presence: "the point of most absence was the feature of the evening" (254). The Old Man thus becomes an image of the totality that "I" and F. have sought, but it is a totality that erases the individual who seeks it.

As this apparent image of transcendent union reveals not divine unity, but continued human suffering that requires an equally human response, however, Cohen returns his reader to the challenges of individual and immanent life: "Quickly now, as if even he participated in the excitement over the unknown, he greedily reassembled himself into – into a movie of Ray Charles" (254). As Wilkins argues, the unveiling of an image of Ray Charles, figured as a slave in the epigraph ("Somebody said lift that bale. – Ray Charles singing 'Ol' Man River'"), demonstrates that "revelation gives way to a labour that is necessarily blind, with no Absolute to guide it" (45). Without God to justify the pain of labour and the suffering of the victimized, revelation leads only to a vision of the victimized in the world. The image of Ray Charles thus confronts the crowd that gathers to witness it with a call to individual responsibility in the face of suffering. Unable to appeal effectively to any transcendent power, the people of the crowd should turn to each other and recognize pain and victimization as human problems; however, they only recapitulate the indifference of Nietzsche's market men. For the crowd at the end of Cohen's novel, the bravery of the emphatic witness seems unbearable. They escape into the belief that this revelation is "only a movie" (254), a belief that they feel excuses them for their "willed evasion of participation in life" (Hutcheon, *Canadian* 34), and that also reinforces F.'s call for an individualist faith that does not deny the real suffering of human life.

The crowd's avoidance of this image of Ray Charles, however, confirms Taylor's observation that in the twentieth century, religious faith is the product of a personal and individual vision: this revelation is the Old Man's, not the crowd's. Moreover, the crowd's "willed evasion" confirms that F.'s credo of earthly Magic has not become a doctrine that any individual could use to explain what she witnesses. Any explanation of suffering, *Beautiful Losers* suggests, must be the product of an individual vision that also affirms life: therein lies the potential for God's continued existence. Lukács argues that the novel remains an individualist genre because in it any vision of totality is momentary; any continued vision of that totality, in contrast, would signal a world in which God's presence was felt on earth. The last words of Cohen's novel belong to an unidentified first-person narrator, who predicts that total knowledge of the other or of the divine is impossible: "Welcome to you, darling and friend, who miss me forever in your trip to the end" (255). So Cohen concludes his novel on this ambiguous and evasive note. But within this prediction also lies the continued life of the novel and the individual, and the spark of ethical potential located in both. "I"'s and F.'s transcendence occurs only after they have overcome their individualities and merged into one; but that transcendence also reveals the continued work of the earthly individual, who must learn to confront the pain and freedom of human existence. The last words of Cohen's novel thus reveal the perpetual cycle of both the novel and the individual as they seek a divine and just totality.

Cohen's experiment with individuality in *Beautiful Losers* positions the individual in the afterlife of God as a being whose existential freedom may be strong enough to revalue the divine as a presence in earthly life. Such a reconfiguration relies on the individual's Nietzschean affirmation of life. Cohen thus revalues both Nietzsche's God and his ascetic priest in *Beautiful Losers*. Cohen's characters can reclaim the divine only when they affirm embodied human life.

In this way, Cohen responds to both Nietzsche's announcement of God's death and the history of violence so near to the individual in the mid-twentieth century. While the God of the moralizing ascetic priest may be dead, a new God—one whose insistence that the individual's melancholy may become joy in *this* life exposes the poverty of the market men's banal atheism—comes momentarily into being precisely through Cohen's Nietzschean individual.

Conclusion: Life after God's Apparent Death

If this chapter began with God's death, it ends with his continued life refracted through the experiences and expressions of the individuals who confront his absence. Both *The Double Hook* and *Beautiful Losers* dramatize the polarizing responses to God's absence in the world and suggest that renewed faith is born in the individual's confrontation of God's absence. When Nietzsche's madman disrupts the market he appears as an eccentric individual defined by his insistence that the market men realize that God is dead but not fully put to rest. Watson's and Cohen's texts suggest that such insistence on confronting God's apparent death in all of its significance no longer marks the modern individual as mad. Rather, in the spirit of Nietzsche's existentialist heirs, both Watson and Cohen imply that each individual must confront God's absence and bear both its liberating and burdensome consequences. *The Double Hook* and *Beautiful Losers*, however, also express the limits of the madman's methods, which inspire the polarizing responses that both texts work to overcome. Violence and apathy, melancholy and joy: these responses emphasize the individual as an eccentric, as outside the centre of his community. As this and the chapters that follow demonstrate, however, the individual developed in the modern Canadian novel persistently negotiates his relationship with a community to which he feels responsible. As *The Double Hook* and *Beautiful Losers* expose the limitations of the

individualism born from Nietzsche's madman, then, they also imagine the individual in a tenuous relationship with his community. God's apparent death significantly contributes to the definition of the modern individual; it is through the polarizing responses to this absence that the individual refines his own personality and, Watson and Cohen suggest, moves toward new experiences of communion.

CHAPTER TWO

AMBIVALENT INHERITANCES: FREE WILL AND DETERMINISM IN GROVE, CALLAGHAN, BUCKLER, AND LAURENCE

In a word, if it is agreed to call every act free which springs from the self and from the self alone, the act which bears the mark of our personality is truly free, for our self alone will lay claim to its paternity.

Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will* (172-73)

Familial inheritances and narratives of familial belonging seem to contest the individualist desire for self-making. Whether they are material, aspects of an individual's character, or the stories a family tells about itself, inheritances insert the individual in a genealogy that reminds her of the familial community to which she belongs. In the first half of the twentieth century, narratives of inheritance in the modern Canadian novel conveyed the implicit conflict between the individualist's project of self-making, palpable in the stories of Canada's pioneers, and the continuation of a self-made family line after the first generations of Canadians had settled the land. The novelists discussed in this chapter—Frederick Philip Grove, Morley Callaghan, Ernest Buckler, and Margaret Laurence—express ambivalence about the determining power of inheritance in narratives of self-making. This ambivalence might be phrased as a question and so incorporate the sentiment of the quotation from Henri Bergson above: is the self ever so free from its inheritances that it can lay claim to its own paternity? And if not, can an individual with inheritances ever be free? In the representative novels discussed here, inheritance functions thematically to bring into relief the tension and the fruitful mutuality between free will and determinism, between the possibility of self-making and the burden of a family legacy in the individual's formation of a self.

Frederick Philip Grove's exemplary pioneer novel, *Fruits of the Earth* (1933), Morley Callaghan's *They Shall Inherit the Earth* (1935), Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley*

(1952), and Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974) participate in the literary currents that, in the early twentieth century, increasingly scrutinized the determinist narratives of literary naturalism. Grove, especially, was a critic of Émile Zola's naturalism, which imagined literary characters as the products of scientific determinants based on heredity.[1] Rather than function as a moralistic curse of heredity, as they had conventionally for naturalists following Zola, in these Canadian novels, inheritances insert the individual in a line, imply an experience of time, and provoke characters to question and assert their freedom in their bid at self-making. The theme of inheritance in these novels also importantly implies the philosophical confrontation of two opposing world-views: that of the determinist and that of the free and self-made individual. This confrontation inspires an ambivalent presentation of inheritance as characters undergo reversals, sometimes tragic and always transformative, of their initial assumptions about inheritance. In this way, these modern novels appropriate the vestiges of determinism from naturalist narratives of inheritance as a means of philosophically questioning individualist ideals.

In their philosophical questioning, these novels take inheritance as a broad and symbolic idea that surpasses the limits of genetics and biology. For this reason, the interests of this chapter lie beyond the scope of studies popular at the turn of the twenty-first century that focused on heredity and biological determinism, especially in nineteenth and early twentieth-century novels.[2] This critical trend, which often draws out the Darwinian logic of inheritance in the

[1] In "Realism in Literature," Grove doubts that Zola's characters would act in the way he represented them: "rarely do we feel that, under the same circumstances we, the readers, should have acted in the way his characters act" (58). Despite Grove's criticisms of Zola, however, his own novels often rely on naturalism's deterministic logic. As Colin Hill explains, "Grove's comments suggest that a conventional view of naturalism only partially defines his aesthetic and does not wholly account for his particular brand of determinism" (126). Irene Gammel notes that twentieth-century and North American naturalism shifts "from an interest in heredity and degenerescence to psychology; from physical (animal) need to (human) desire; from genetic bloodlines to parental authority; from venereal diseases to psychological problems; from an instinctive body to a body constructed through clothing and practices" (23).

[2] See, for example, Goldie Morgentaler's *Dickens and Heredity: When Like Begets Like* (2000) and Michael Wainwright's "Oscar Wilde, the Science of Heredity, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*" in *Toward a Sociobiological Hermeneutic: Darwinian Essays on Literature* (2012).

novels it analyzes, focuses on explicating the scientific and biological determinants that contribute to characterization and character development. While the authors I discuss are certainly interested in some of the questions such studies address—such as the question of familial resemblance—in general they focus more on the conflict between an individual and those inheritances, like property and character traits, that are not biologically determined. In fact, these authors attempt to transcend the limitations of the determinism such studies take pains to trace; the novels also increasingly demonstrate, most effectively in *The Diviners*, the power of narrative, rather than biology, in shaping both an inheritance and an heir. Therefore, while some of the discussions of this chapter—such as the consideration of mechanistic inheritance in Grove's novels[3]—might parallel those set forth in studies of heredity and biological determinism, as a whole the chapter traces the treatment of inheritance in modern novels that present diverse inheritances in conflict with individuals' desires for freedom and self-making.

The French philosopher Henri Bergson helpfully provides a way of characterizing the conflict between the limiting and deterministic nature of inheritance and the creative freedom of self-making in the modern Canadian novel. Bergson illuminates the tension between these opposing philosophies of determinism and freedom in his book *Time and Free Will* (1889), where he states that "the question of free will brings into conflict these two rival systems of nature, mechanism and dynamism" (140). According to Bergson, the determinist, who is also a materialist, "claims that, given a certain antecedent, only one resultant action was possible" (174). This position is mechanistic, because it assumes that "there is not an atom, either in the

[3] Grove's mechanistic treatment of inheritance in *Fruits of the Earth* resonates with Morgentaler's description of the Victorian approach to familial resemblances: "For Victorian authors, tracing resemblances between generations became a way of internalizing the godhead, locating not only the power of creation but also the ability to determine and predict future conduct within the invisible and mysterious processes of biological inheritance" (22). That Grove's patriarchs who embody this view of inheritance are also shown to be outmoded emphasizes both their Victorian character and the limitations of such an approach to the modern novels discussed here.

nervous system or in the whole universe, whose position is not determined by the sum of the mechanical actions which the other atoms exert upon it" (144). Although Bergson primarily engages with the scientific debates of his time, his philosophy also responds to the way in which these debates had entered everyday life. In fact, Suzanne Guerlac notes that in the early twentieth century "[t]he mechanistic epistemology of the physical sciences became generalized into a paradigm of rationalist thought seemingly unlimited in its range of application" (20), and G. William Barnard explains that for Bergson "this belief in determinism has [wrongly] infiltrated not only our understanding of the external world, but also our understanding of ourselves" (44). Thus, Bergson's description of the mechanistic worldview illuminates the naturalist model of inheritance, which assumes an individual's character and actions—even her past failures and future successes—can be predicted with knowledge of her genealogical inheritances.

In opposition to the predictive character of the mechanistic world-view, Bergson defines a dynamic world-view, which is spontaneous and free. This world-view is the one attuned to "*durée*" (duration), the lived experience of time that Bergson continuously opposes to mechanistic, predictable, and successive time, best represented as quantifiable clock time. If the mechanistic world-view implies a particular concept of inheritance, so too does the dynamic world-view. Dynamic inheritance asserts the individual's freedom in time; it views inheritance not as a means of prediction and determinism, but of the "voluntary" and "spontaneous" (141) appropriation of the past into the individual's personal narrative. Inheritance, no longer a deterministic force that places individuals in a predictable, mechanistic world, becomes the spontaneous assertion of freedom in moments of duration, when we "grasp our inner states as living things, constantly *becoming*, as states not amenable to measure, which permeate one another and of which the succession in duration has nothing in common with the juxtaposition in

homogeneous space" (231; original emphasis). For most of the characters in the novels discussed here, inheritance maintains a mechanistic structure in which the freedom of Bergson's duration remains an ideal of autonomous self-realization that can only be experienced momentarily, if at all.

The novels considered here exhibit an ambivalence toward inheritance and self-making and eventually, with *The Diviners*, reveal and promote a dynamic synthesis of inheritance as essential to self-making. The progression from Grove to Laurence represents a shift from the deterministic readings of heredity in nineteenth-century novels to a more modernist view of inheritance, which recent critics have theorized as non-linear and creative. For example, Allan Hepburn argues that "in the designation of successors," modernists "prefer affiliation rather than filiation" and "affinity rather than lineage" (19), and Christine Maria Connell notes that modernists "shift […] perceptions of genealogy from the linear and social to the anachronistic and symbolic" (1). Bergson's philosophy helps both to define the shifts in the construal of inheritance that Hepburn and Connell have described and to relate these shifts back to the significant tension between free will and determinism to which all of the novelists discussed here respond. Moreover, because duration offers an experience of time in which affinity and lineage are creatively and freely interwoven, it synthesizes Hepburn's subtle dualism.

Nearly a century after the height of Bergson's influence, scholars of both philosophy and literature have recently renewed their interest in the philosopher. Although this renewal is partially due to the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's promotion of Bergson,[4] for literary scholars, Bergson's name still resonates strongly with the formal innovations of modernism, in

[4] *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism* (2013), a recent collection of essays, credits Deleuze and his book on Bergson, *Bergsonism* (1966), for the renewed interest in Bergson over the past two decades (5). In her introduction to Bergson's philosophy, *Thinking in Time*, Suzanne Guerlac explains that "Bergson enables us to return to questions associated with temporality, affect, agency, and embodiment that were bracketed within the structural/post-structuralist context" (4).

particular those of imagist poetry and stream-of-consciousness narration.[5] Apart from the innovative narrative style of Laurence's *The Diviners*, however, Bergson's philosophy may at first seem inessential to the detached third-person and omniscient narration of Grove's, Callaghan's, and Buckler's novels, despite their complexities of point of view. Yet invoking Bergson's philosophy as a means of illuminating the shift in understandings of inheritance from Grove to Laurence reveals the participation of Canadian novels of this period in a current of thought that was met with the explicit experimental vigour among the European modernists.

Inheritance provokes the antagonism between free will and determinism in the works of novelists who, like Bergson, found themselves at a point of "historic dislocation" caused by the "shift from the certainties of mechanism to the anxieties of indeterminacy" (Guerlac 17).[6] In *Mapping Literary Modernism: Time and Development*, Ricardo J. Quinones identifies this historic crisis point and "the opposition to [the] overwhelming triumph of the mechanistic, or predictive" (7), in work by thinkers such as Bergson as essential to the philosophical development of modernism. Quinones theorizes the "paradox of time," which he argues "triumphed in the late nineteenth century" and to which modernists respond: "Predictive time without innovation or simple freshness of human appeal leads to a kind of repetitive sameness, and this is what we mean by the paradox of time" (38). Importantly, Quinones applies his theory of the modernist break-up of predictive (or mechanistic) time to the "break-up of the world of the

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[5] Mary A. Gillies's book, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism*, details Bergson's influence on British modernism. Rebecca Beasley's *Theorists of Modernist Poetry* also gives an account of Bergson's importance to the development of modernist poetry, most obviously his influence through T.E. Hulme, who was among Bergson's first English translators and one of the early innovators of imagism.

[6] Guerlac notes the intellectual crisis between 1890 and 1930 caused by "a new physics of subatomic particles [that] called into question the well-established mechanistic model of the universe" (16). Contributing to this crisis was Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle (1927), according to which "the uncertainty confronted by microphysics was not simply the result of inadequate tools of measurement; it is inscribed in the natural world itself" (17). This shift created a decisive tension in Bergson's thought between "a sense of wonder at the efficacy of science and its visible mastery over the physical world [… and] a profound sense of crisis, not only because Europe finds itself heading for war (again) but also because science, the very foundation of that mastery which has so transformed the world, appears to have come unstuck from the world and to have left it in chaos" (17).

fathers" (154): "along with the concept of temporal linearity [which predictive time supports], the values of family and continuity through children – lineality – must also suffer" (53). In the novels discussed here, these dislocations and break-ups bring the tension between determinism and freedom dramatized in narratives of inheritance to the fore of familial relationships.

This chapter examines three unique perspectives on inheritance and self-making: the future-oriented determinism of Grove's pioneering patriarchs, the sons' fear of a determining past in Callaghan and Buckler, and the creative appropriation of the past into the present in the orphaned daughter of Laurence's *The Diviners*. That the point of "historic dislocation" and "break-up of the world of the fathers" Quinones notes occurs during the crucial early days of settling and structuring the prairie was a point of considerable anxiety for Grove. In Abe Spalding of *Fruits of the Earth* Grove expresses nostalgia for the stably deterministic model of inheritance that would keep the pioneer's sons on their father's farms. Abe, however, is a conflicted character, as the strength of his pioneering spirit and his own narrative of self-making prohibit his son, Jim, from striking out on his own. Grove reveals the features and inadequacies of the mechanistic world-view through Abe: he expects his children to adhere to his will; he persistently sacrifices his present happiness for the promise of fulfillment in the future; and, most importantly, he imagines the legacy he will leave to his children—the farm house Abe toils to build and the land he painstakingly cultivates—as a guarantee of his continued life *through* his children. For the early twentieth-century Canadian pioneer, inheritance creates a promising vision of the future that the social and industrial changes of modernity will perpetually threaten.

Desiring to assert their own freedom in apparent acts of self-making, the sons in Grove's, Callaghan's and Buckler's novels nonetheless reassert the deterministic logic of inheritance in their attempts to deny their fathers' inheritances. Motivated by their fear that they are cursed to

become their fathers, these sons reverse their fathers' future-oriented inheritances and insist on individualist principles of self-making not in order to originate a new line, but to transform the self-eradicating curse of an old one. In doing so, however, they affirm an unresolved dichotomy between determinism and freedom. Callaghan's novel, in particular, exemplifies the complex transition from the determinism of the pioneer's model of inheritance to Laurence's dynamic synthesis of inheritance and self-making. While Callaghan anticipates Laurence in his demonstration of the power of narrative in shaping an individual's experience of his inheritance, Mike's violent creation of an inheritance he chooses importantly retains the deterministic logic and linear structure of inheritance in Grove. That is, by insisting that his father become the father he desires, Mike affirms the deterministic logic that insists on static and predictable inheritance.

Laurence's *The Diviners* develops a dynamic model of inheritance that, rather than assuming rigid tensions between self-making and inheritance, formulates an individual's choosing of inheritances as crucial to self-making. Laurence's last novel overcomes the burdensome linearity of the deterministic model common to novels by Grove, Callaghan, and Buckler, and asserts a dynamic model of inheritance that is suggested but not as fully embraced in the other novels discussed here. Morag, an orphan and a woman with feminist goals of autonomous self-definition, embraces her creative inheritances when she claims her adopted father, Christie, as her (symbolic) father. She also accidentally inherits two talismans—Hagar Currie's plaid pin and Lazarus Tonnerre's knife—whose associations with acts of self-making, freedom, and the possibility of alternative genealogies characterize Morag's creative and narrative inheritances. *The Diviners* synthesizes the dualistic view of inheritance and self-making in the novels discussed here, and, in doing so, it exemplifies Bergson's dynamic philosophy.

In the progression from Grove's pioneer novels through Callaghan and Buckler to

Laurence's last novel the relationship between inheritance and self-making transforms from one of essential and irresoluble conflict—between fathers and their children, and mechanistic and durational temporalities—to one of productive and creative synthesis. Laurence's intervention in the conflict between inheritance and self-making reveals that the two terms of the seeming binary can be joined through the addition of a powerful third term: narrative. For Laurence, both self-making and inheritance are the products of creative narratives that, like Bergson's "*durée*," synthesize the past and the present and promise an original, unpredictable future. In fact, the problematic binary of inheritance is also a problem of narrative in Grove, Callaghan, and Buckler. Grove's patriarchs accept narratives that have already been determined for them. In particular, they accept what historian Allen Smith calls the Canadian "myth of self-making," a narrative that despite its clear appeal to the freedom of self-creation paradoxically denies the novelty of reflexive self-narration that might overcome the otherwise strict binary between determinism and self-making. Mike Aikenhead, the protagonist of Callaghan's novel, creates a new narrative of inheritance for himself by recreating his father as his own determining origin. In the process, however, Mike affirms the linear course of inheritance and the dualistic opposition between inheritance and self-making; his father must be either transformed or rejected. Buckler demonstrates the creative stagnation in a life too determined by the repetitive temporality of rural living. By injecting reflective self-narrative into the ostensible binary between inheritance and self-making Laurence transforms the dichotomy into a powerful and productive synthesis. This synthesis nonetheless underscores the individualist interests of the modern Canadian novel: for Laurence, the Canadian individualist affirms her freedom in her ability to create and renew her spontaneous, narrative inheritances for herself.

Patriarchal and Pioneering Inheritances

In his essay "The Novel," Grove develops a tragic theory of the genre through a reading of the destructive struggle between generations in *King Lear*.[7] For Grove, this conflict, "even more dramatic" than that of man against nature (McCourt 62), is the source of tragedy: "Every father is a King Lear. The eternal conflict between parents and children results always in some sort of tragedy. If the children are vitally stronger, the tragedy is that of the parents; if the parents are vitally stronger, the tragedy is that of the children" ("Novel" 125). The tragedy of the father is to see his power over his children reversed, to have them gain power over him by rejecting him as a determining force. In Grove's *Fruits of the Earth* this reversal occurs as the result of an irresolvable tension between self-making and determinism: Abe Spalding sees his patriarchal desire to determine his children's lives negated as they reject the deterministic power of inheritance and insist on their own self-making. Grove's novel thus dramatizes the conflict between a Lockean patriarch, who desires a mechanistic universe in which fathers determine sons, and his son, who desires the perpetual freedom of self-creation that Bergson advocated at the turn of the twentieth century (Barnard 51). Despite brief moments of resolution, Grove maintains a dualistic understanding of inheritance and self-making and so suggests that an individual is either determined by his inheritances or the product of his own self-making.

Grove's prairie patriarchs express the pioneer's logic of inheritance that, in its mechanistic unfolding, appears regrettably out of keeping with the changing world of the twentieth century in which the novels are set. Grove's early critics recognized that "the problem of *Fruits of the Earth* is […] the individual standing out against changing society" (Ayre 153). Abe exemplifies this apparently unchanging individual in conflict with a rapidly changing world.

[7] Grove's critics have long associated his novels with tragedy: Eric Thompson notes that Grove saw "the assertion of manhood in the Prairie [as] tragic; man is physically and spiritually crushed" (19), and for Desmond Pacey, Grove relies on "the Greek conception of Fate [rather than] the scientific determinism of the naturalists" (46-7).

Although many aspects of "changing society" break into his life—for example, the First World War, wild dances at an abandoned school, and the farming machinery, which he is initially enthusiastic to adopt—Abe's children, in their differences from and challenges to their father, are the most explicit harbingers of change on the Spalding homestead. E.A. McCourt compares Abe to John Elliot, the patriarch of Grove's earlier *Our Daily Bread* (1928): they "are both resolute men who dream of owning vast tracts of land, not so much for the wealth inherent in possession as for the satisfaction of an obscure desire for power and permanency" (61-2). McCourt's description of the patriarchs' quest underlines the forceful relation between possession and power. For Grove's pioneering patriarchs, as for John Locke, possession is clearly tied to freedom and individualism, and to the success of their own quests of self-making. Read through a Bergsonian lens, the conflict between self-making and inheritance occurs not only between two generations, but also between two philosophical narratives. That Abe is a self-made man who, as a father, subscribes to a determinist philosophy heightens his inner conflict, which, in turn, maintains the dualistic view of freedom and inheritance.

Although Grove's critics quickly recognized this central tension in his novels, apart from Irene Gammel, few have theorized the underlying assumptions of his sustained interest in generation conflicts. With the help of Michel Foucault's theories of sexuality, discipline, and power, Gammel positions Grove as a twentieth-century and North American naturalist. Gammel concentrates on the relationship between his dominant and conservative patriarchs and the wives and daughters who challenge their (sexual) authority. For Gammel, Grove's sexualized conflicts both define his place as a naturalist writer and suggest his innovations in the genre: "By rebelling against the determining structures of the patriarchal family, the daughter […] simultaneously challenges the naturalist conceptualization of the female as always already seduced, enchained,

and […] rendered docile" (208). Gammel further explains that Grove's naturalism "highlight[s] the father's inflexible language of authority through which he establishes himself as the representative of a rigid patriarchal law" (210). While Gammel's Foucauldian insights into the nature of Grove's naturalism articulate the dimensions of sexual conflict in his novels, they offer little insight into the pioneering model of inheritance and its participation in the debate between free will and determinism. Furthermore, in emphasizing the relationship between the sexes, Gammel ignores the defining conflicts between Grove's patriarchs and their rebellious sons.

Grove's explicit representation of John Elliot's desires for his family in *Our Daily Bread* clearly reveals the mechanistic model of inheritance more subtly represented in Abe Spalding. Grove directly states the individualist authority John expects to assert over his children: "To him, John Elliot, his children, still unborn, had seemed to be a re-birth, a re-creation of himself. In them, his ideas and ideals would be multiplied; they would convert that of his dreams into reality which he himself might fall short of realizing in full. They would be a means of multiplying his own personality" (*Our* 9-10). John imagines his children in strictly self-centred individualist terms: they will finish his work; they will be an extension of himself; most importantly, they will secure his permanence, power, and stability on the prairie even after his own death. Much to John's disappointment, however, his children do not become mere repetitions of either himself or their mother; instead, "[in] each of them a third thing had appeared, their individual being, with inclinations and desires which seemed to be without derivation from himself or his wife" (12). John is thus a disappointed determinist, one who expects to fully determine the personality and life pursuit of his children by the simple fact that he is their father. John's descent into an unfulfilled old age in the novel thus suggests not only that he is a "patriarch born out of due time" (McCourt 67), but also that his failed model of inheritance is deterministic and oriented

toward a future that he believes should reflect his will.

As Abe will, John positions himself as the *origin* of a line and obscures the fact that he too is a pioneer's son, who left his family farm to make a name of his own. Such obscuring efforts emphasize John's understanding of himself as a self-made man without inheritances of his own. When an historian in Winnipeg tells John he wishes to write a history of the prairie that includes "the Elliots of Arkwright," John corrects him: "Now of Sedgeby, Saskatchewan […] the Manitoba line became extinct with the death of my older brother" (181). Here, John reveals the fate of family farms when the children leave; he has helped to eradicate his family's presence in Arkwright. John's story thus deepens the "eternal conflict between parents and children" that Grove explores, for in their pursuits of self-making, children not only overcome the father, but also erase him as their origin in order to assert their own willful self-creation in his place.

Supported by their mutual attempts to obscure their own pasts, John and Abe remain "pioneers of the first generation" (McMullin 13). Each cultivates his own prairie claim, builds a house, and starts a family. As "pioneers of the first generation" John and Abe subscribe to one of Canada's strongest narratives of self-making, as historian Allan Smith describes it:

> As the figure who had been most intimately associated with one of the central features of Canada's existence – the clearing of the land – the pioneer farmer received particularly close attention from Canadian acolytes of the self-made man. By his hard work he at once advanced himself and gave content to his country's development. He was, claimed his literary friends, in the fullest sense his own master, free of all constraint and interference, quite literally able to shape

his world as he wished, the heir to an abundant and fulfilling future. (192)[8]

Smith's historical claims illuminate the narrative of inheritance—and its tension with freedom and self-making—in Grove's novels. Smith describes pioneers of the nineteenth century as the exemplars of the Canadian self-made man, an ideal that started to lose its ideological force after the First World War and during the Great Depression (218).

This historical context helps to explain why Grove's "pioneers of the first generation" are also "patriarch[s] born out of due time." Abe settles in Manitoba in 1900, a year that positions him strategically as a hinge between two centuries and, essentially, two world-views. *Fruits of the Earth* begins in the early twentieth century and ends a few years after the end of the First World War; furthermore, published in 1933, it appeared after the individualist ideals of the self-made pioneer had been dealt "a serious blow" by "the vast collective efforts necessary" to the war effort (Smith 218). Despite this blow, however, Grove demonstrates the pervading potency of the narrative of self-making in the years following the First World War and so supports Smith's final claim that the "new collectivism" of the 1930s "succeeded in complicating [the myth of self-making]" but "did not, in the end, extinguish its appeal" (219). Although this narrative was increasingly scrutinized, it remained a persuasive motivation in the development and characterization of protagonists in novels by Grove and the other novelists discussed here.

Abe believes himself to be fulfilling the pioneer's individualist narrative of self-making. Smith's claim that the pioneer was seen as "his own master, free of all constraint and interference, quite literally able to shape his world as he wished" resounds decisively in Abe's

[8] Smith draws his literary evidence from nineteenth-century works; he quotes, for example, Isabella Valancy Crawford's poem "A Hungry Day." Alexander McLachlan's poem, "The Man Who Rose From Nothing" (1874) also promotes the image of a nation formed through the hard work of self-made men who also cultivated their own inheritances. The last stanza of McLachlan's poem suggests that a population of men "who rose from nothing" had become a defining characteristic of the nation: "Here's to the land of lakes and pines, / On which the sun of freedom shines, / Because we meet on all our lines / The man who rose from nothing" (25-8).

patriarchal intentions. Abe certainly and individualistically believes that he is his "own master." Abe's neighbour and constant supporter, Nicoll, who often articulates the unspoken significance of Abe's thoughts and actions, claims that the humble farmer remains "free": "While you do your own work, farming is bound to pay […] You make better wages for your labour than anywhere else and remain your own master" (*Fruits* 47). Moreover, Abe literally shapes the aesthetic arrangement of Spalding District: "Down to the nature of the wind-breaks, the district bore the imprint of Abe's mind" (208). Abe imagines himself as his own master; but, as the unified vision of Spalding District as the product of Abe's mind suggests, his mastery transcends his individual life and presumes control over his community and, most forcefully, his children.

Notably, Smith's mildly ironic description of the pioneering farmer invokes a kind of spiritual and unexplained inheritance, which the pioneer's hard work cultivating the land proves he deserves. The pioneer, Smith argues, was seen as "the heir to an abundant and fulfilling future" (192) and "the creator of the nation's wealth, the builder of his own world, and a natural aristocrat unrivalled by those whose position was owing solely to lineage and descent" (n. 11). This vision of the pioneer recasts inheritance as the *product* of self-making and so synthesizes the seemingly antithetical dualism between self-making and inheritance; to be an heir of the prairies meant not to be born into an inheritance, but to make a future, to turn oneself into a "natural aristocrat"—one with a self-justifying lineage—through hard work. That the pioneer inherits a future rather than a past unexpectedly articulates the logic of inheritance of Grove's patriarchs; believing that hard work will be rewarded in and will serve to determine the future, Abe, who "was everlastingly living in the future" (100), narrates himself as the origin of a new line. He believes that his children will inherit the farm that he has made; he does not, however, account for their also inheriting his individualist personality and values of freedom and

independence. Notably, Abe's expectation re-inscribes the heirs of the prairie in an Old World and aristocratic inheritance based on "lineage and descent." Thus, the ambivalence toward inheritance and self-making recurs as "first generation pioneers" prepare for a future they will inherit through their children.

Grove clearly characterizes Abe as a man with aristocratic and economic aspirations. For example, Abe ambitiously claims and cultivates the largest plot of land in the undeveloped county.[9] "[A] man of economic vision" (13), Abe plots his future—and that of his children—in his land purchases. Crucial to his plan to own "two square miles" (12-3) of land, Abe claims a plot that is surrounded by land owned by the Hudson's Bay Company, which he might buy rather than acquire through "homesteading" (13).[10] Despite his scorn for merchants, "who ma[k]e money by calculation" (14), Abe's "economic vision," plans for the future, and later borrowing of money to buy more land characterize him as an individualist with capitalist ambitions. In fact, Abe's brother-in-law, Dr. Vanbruik, who is characterized as a man of great perception and acuity in his judgements, suggests that Abe aspires to be a "landowner" (27) rather than a farmer. By exposing Abe's aristocratic desires, Grove maintains an ironic distance from his protagonist from which he offers a subtle critique of Abe's dualistic understanding of freedom and inheritance.

Abe's "economic vision" and "land hunger" (12) position him as a Lockean imperialist

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[9] Grove ignores the presence of indigenous peoples in his novels. His presentation of the prairie as uncultivated land also reflects the philosophies of colonization that help to characterize Abe. For example, in his defense of colonialism, John Locke argued that "labour, defined as agrarian cultivation, is the only rational justification for property in products of the earth" (Arneill 137). According to Locke, "this Law of reason makes the Deer, that *Indian's* who hath killed it; 'tis allowed to be his goods who hath bestowed his labour upon it, though before, it was the common right of every one" (qtd. Arneill 136; original emphasis). The absence of agrarian cultivation, then, left the prairie "the common right of every one" and open to anyone to transform it into private property through labour.

[10] The Dominion Lands Act of 1872 outlined the conditions for settling the prairie and for acquiring the ownership of land there. After making a claim on a plot (over 1.25 million plots existed), any male settler had three years to "prove up" by putting a house on the land (Wishart) and therefore consolidate his ownership of the property. Jeffrey S. Murray notes that "the concept of individual land ownership had existed for a little over a century prior to the introduction of the *Dominion Lands Act* in 1872," and so property ownership for most settlers was a novel concept. That Abe could purchase property rather than claim it meant that he could take his time cultivating the land and that he did not have to put a house on it to solidify his ownership. It was precisely Abe's speculative methods of land accumulation that the homesteading laws were put in place to prevent.

whose property defines his selfhood. In "Locke's Disciplined Self: A Postcolonial Perspective," Nigel Joseph argues that "imperialism [is] quite simply the consequence of the desire for property" (122). Like the Lockean imperialist, Abe "expand[s himself] into property" (131).[11] The Spalding farm expresses Abe's will; consequently, his sons' inheritance of it would signal the expansion of Abe's self not only into space, but also through time and into the "fulfilling future" that Smith notes. Moreover, Abe's future-planning is essentially that of the liberal capitalist, who Cam McEachern argues "must steward wealth, husband it, accumulate it, anticipating for a future day. Capitalization enhances the process and is essentially 'future' gathering, for it endeavours to assure the individual of future income or material property, property that is not presently available but will be" (271). Thus Abe's accumulation of property and his desire to leave it to his sons function as means of self-expansion rooted in individualist, imperialist, and capitalist narratives of possession.

Significantly, Abe's perpetual planning for the future—for which "he slaved from dawn till dark" (71)—by buying and farming land spatializes time. Bergson's theories of time—of the spatialization of time represented in the clock and of internal time or duration—clarify the relationship between the pioneer's extension of himself into space through his cultivation of land and through his children, and, in turn, the competition between free will and determinism. Bergson contrasts the spatialization of clock time with duration: "Outside of me, in space, there

[11] For Locke, every individual possesses his own labour and may sell it for a profit. As C.B. Macpherson famously argued, however, this seeming egalitarian claim creates a rigid class system: "The core of Locke's individualism is the assertion that every man is naturally the sole proprietor of his own person and capacities – the absolute proprietor of his capacity to labour. Every man is therefore free to alienate his own capacity to labour. This individualist postulate is the postulate by which Locke transforms the mass of equal individuals (rightfully) into two classes with very different rights, those with property and those without. Once the land is taken up, the fundamental right not to be a subject to the jurisdiction of another is so unequal as between owners and non-owners that it is different in kind, not in degree: those without property are, Locke recognizes, dependent for their livelihood on those with property, and are unable to alter their own circumstances" (231). By acquiring property and employing his neighbours, Abe asserts himself as a Lockean individual. Moreover, as Cam McEachern clarifies in his study of liberal ideology, "Time's Grip Along the Athabasca, 1920s and 1930s," "[t]he link between possession and [liberal individualism] is strong, since a right to material and to spiritual self-possession enables one to flourish" (268).

is never more than a single position of the hand and the pendulum, for nothing is left of the past positions. Within myself a process of organization or interpretation of conscious states is going on, which constitutes true duration" (*Time* 108). The spatial conception of time creates the repetitive, predictive time that, according to Quinones, "triumphed in the late nineteenth century, and triumphed so thoroughly and one-sidedly, it paradoxically produced its opposite effect, the triumph of space" (38). Abe, displaced from the nineteenth century, but nonetheless a product of it, understands time through his ability to acquire, cultivate, and leave property as an inheritance for his sons. Thus, space itself predicts the future under Abe's surveying eye: "With his mind's eye he looked upon the district from a point in time twenty years later; and he seemed to see a prosperous settlement there" (*Fruits* 12).

Abe's reliance on his watch symbolizes both his inability to enjoy his experience of the present and his persistent understanding of time as predictable and homogeneous. For example, Abe times his trips to town to the second: "As he drove to the house, Abe looked again at his watch. He had made the trip in thirty-three minutes and thirty-five seconds, cutting twenty-five seconds off his last record" (30). Abe's experience of time is thus doubly spatialized: first in his watch and second in the amount of space he can travel in a given time. This second spatialization is crucial to Abe's predictions for his farm and to the usefulness of new farming machinery. The pioneering farmer views his land in terms of the time it will take to cultivate and farm it, as well as the profit it will bring. That profit, however, is also contingent upon time, and so early in the novel Abe imagines a time when he will be able to purchase new mechanical farming equipment

and so will be able to plow "an acre every two minutes" (39).[12] Abe's spatialization of time structures his vision of the future. As he extends himself into space by buying and cultivating more land, he more intensely desires his land to become his sons' inheritance, which will mark the success of his own self-making. Furthermore, for Abe, the boundaries between space and time seamlessly blur as he measures space by the amount of time it takes to harvest it or to travel through it, and he measures time by the amount of space he can "conquer" (38) in it.

Abe's linear and predictive understanding of time, as well as his ability to make space and time conform to his will, suggest that his is a deterministic logic of inheritance. Mary A. Gillies explains Bergson's contrast between quantitative (clock) time and qualitative time (duration): "Measured by external units […] time neither flies nor crawls but continues to move in its well-regulated manner. Bergson's view of time removes the external standard and replaces it with what the internal sense of time reveals: real time is that in which people live; it is qualitative, not quantitative in nature" (12). Abe's understanding of time as calculable, recurring units undergirds a deterministic logic of inheritance that assumes that new generations should be reiterations of their predecessors. Bergson's view of a mechanistic universe as one in which "[n]othing new is created […] just different forms of what has always been and always will be" (Barnard 39) further clarifies the negation of novel individuality at stake in Abe's narrative of self-making. Just as the hand of a clock sweeps predictably and in equal intervals around the clock's face, so children are to become as their parents were.

Abe suggests that pioneering patriarchs desire repetitive homogeneity through

[12] After he has purchased this equipment, Abe feels the pressure of time differently, for he realizes that although machines make his work easier, they do not make it faster: "Labour-saving devices galore; and they did save labour; but did they save time? There was less hard work; there were more errands to run; there was more fixing to do" (149-50). Time plays a grave role in the farmer's financial success: months of labour are wagered on a short window in which crops may be harvested and sold before they spoil. Abe's overwhelming success results from his ability to predict correctly the changes in weather and to shift his harvesting and storage methods so that his crops remain top grade in a season when his neighbours' suffer.

generations, a desire that obscures their own freedom from their fathers' legacies. On the level of plot, children, in their insistence on their freedom from their fathers, disrupt that desired homogeneity. Similarly, modernism unsettles any narrative reliance on linear or predictable time. As Quinones argues, for modernists, the repetitive nature of predictive time leaves it stale: "[p]redictive time, without innovation or simple freshness of human appeal, leads to a kind of repetitive sameness" (38). Furthermore, Quinones aligns modernism with innovative time and its forceful reaction against predictive time: "If the predictable rules too rigorously then that which is unexpected, not willed or predetermined, assumes value. Surprise carries the imprint of authenticity" (89). Thus, as a determinist attempting to predict both time and his children, Abe remains a product of the nineteenth century, a patriarch "out of due time," and a protagonist apparently out of touch with the innovative time of the modernist novel.

Abe briefly experiences durational time with his son Charlie, and so Grove anticipates Laurence when he suggests that the apparently rigid dichotomy between inheritance and self-making may be creatively transformed when injected with an innovative, durational experience of time. When Charlie interrupts Abe's calculated time to show him a sparrow's nest, Abe uncharacteristically allows the disruption and is rewarded with an experience that brings him closer to his son and "redeem[s] the workaday week" (114). The surprising redemption of Abe's week in this "magic […] hour" (114) testifies to the momentary break-up of quantitative time and the generous pleasure of its qualitative opposite: "When they entered the yard, Abe felt a poignant regret that the hour was over" (116). Charlie's surprising disruption of Abe's predictive time, however, extends as Abe begins to take his son to town with him and, contrary to past trips, is "in no hurry" (117). Abe's growing relationship with Charlie suggests that his character is undergoing a change in explicitly Bergsonian terms: Abe appears to welcome the qualitative

time he spends with Charlie, which in turn frees Abe from the deterministic character of his relationship with his farm. Abe's relationship with Charlie, however, is still bound to his desire to secure his legacy through his children. Charlie impresses Abe with his similarity to his father: "The boy was himself rearisen; finer, slenderer, more delicate, more exquisitely tempered. It affected him like a miracle bursting on earthly eyes" (114).[13] Here, Charlie powerfully and momentarily synthesizes inheritance and self-making. Charlie is Abe, but better, and he both exhibits a desire to take on his father's farm and the potential to assert his own freedom on it.

Abe's tragedy, however, begins when his commitment to his crop and his desire for Charlie to become his heir unite to rob him of the son who "was himself rearisen." Abe's connection with Charlie and his "dream of the time when his boys would be able to assist in the field" (151) lead him, in desperate fear of losing the crop he had calculated and conscious of the quantifiable time it takes to get to town, to turn to young Charlie for help bringing the grain to town before it spoils. Abe's dream of having Charlie help with the farm ends with brutal irony on the day it becomes manifest: in an accident crossing the bridge, Charlie dies. Notably, the apparent natural heir to Abe's farm, the one whose redemption of "the workaday week" promises also to redeem Abe's hard work by continuing it in the future, dies at the moment he symbolically takes his place as that heir. Thus, while Grove includes a moment of innovative time and a promise of a redemptive synthesis through Abe's relationship with Charlie, *Fruits of the Earth* nevertheless maintains the tension between freedom and inheritance that is central to Abe's individualist philosophy and his narration of himself as the origin of a new family line.

Charlie's death exposes the stakes of Abe's philosophy of inheritance. Abe's unconscious

[13] In fact, the language of Abe's observation figures Charlie as the redemptive image of Christ after his resurrection. This figuration makes Abe both the suffering martyr of Christ on the cross and the father who forsakes his son, a telling foreshadowing of Abe's part in Charlie's early death. Abe also sadly completes the Biblical Abraham's charge when Charlie dies as a sacrifice to his father's faith in his farm.

assumption and motivation for building his farm had been to leave it to its rightful heir—and so, in the manner described by Smith, inherit his own past through his children in the future—but, with Charlie's death, Abe begins to realize that his children may not become his heirs: "The children, he felt, would drift away; for whom should he go on working on that large scale on which he had worked in the past?" (134). This realization, however, only further establishes Abe as a Lockean pioneer who is defined by his property and its inheritance through generations; Abe imagines that without an heir "[he] might just as well have 'mined' the soil and taken from it what it would give. Instead, he had built house and barns and acquired two square miles of land, to be divided among his descendants!" (283). Abe's great need for an heir suggests the high stakes of his individualist philosophy of selfhood and inheritance, for without an heir to justify his work and maintain his property, Abe risks his position not just as a father but as an individual. Thus, his anxiety after Charlie's death leads Abe to commit more definitively to his Lockean model of self-possession through property. Abe continues to farm his land with the expectation that Jim, his surviving son, will become his heir.

If Charlie functions to introduce Abe to the surprises of qualitative time, Jim serves to remind his father of the contradiction in his deterministic dream and his own experience of self-making. In refusing to inherit Abe's farm, Jim secures the end of his father's dream for the future of his farm and, importantly, his legacy. Abe interprets his essentially individualist and capitalist motivations as self-sacrificial: "I've built this house and these barns to keep my children on the farm. If you go, [Jim,] my work is for nothing" (286). As Bergson argues, the determinist finds relief in visions of the future, "sometimes, assuming in advance that the act is already performed, he claims that it could not have taken place in any other way" (*Time* 173). Abe builds his farm in order to determine the inheritance of his sons and to justify retrospectively his own individualist

pursuit from a moment in the future. Abe's narrative of self-making, then, would reach its confused but successful conclusion in the moment when his heirs take over his property and he, confident that they are reiterations of their father, would recede into a now-justified past.

While Jim rejects Abe's narrative of pioneer inheritance by refusing the family farm, when he accepts Abe's money to start a mechanic's shop, he actually repeats Abe's experience of self-making. Jim's explanation that if he "cared for a farm, [he would] take up a homestead [him]self, to build a place of [his] own" forces Abe to recognize that "[t]hat was the way he had felt himself" (287) when he moved to Manitoba with the profit that he made from selling his inheritance, his father's farm (14). Jim thus inherits the capital to start a business of which, significantly, Abe will be a silent partner. Abe, the first and the last in a line of pioneering patriarchs, nevertheless, continues a line of silent, capital inheritances that encourage freedom and self-making rather than deterministic planning. If, from the perspective of a pioneering patriarch, one is *either* determined by his father *or* the product of his own free self-making, insisting on self-making over determinism effectively eliminates the father. Tellingly, Jim's inheritance essentially silences his father as Abe provides capital but not advice for his son's new business. The great irony of Grove's book, then, is that Jim's rejection of the Lockean pioneer's future-oriented model of inheriting land perpetuates his father's narrative of self-making.

Fruits of the Earth illuminates Grove's anxieties about the legacy of the pioneer's narratives of inheritance and self-making in the twentieth century. Although it includes suggestions that experiences of durational time might transform the binary between freedom and determinism, it ultimately maintains Abe's conflicted dualism. *Fruits of the Earth* presents the strange conception of an inherited future that Smith argues helped to define the pioneer's narrative of self-making: on this view, the pioneer earns his inheritance in the future rather than

receiving it from the past. But it is precisely this narrative that is problematic for Abe. As Smith explains, after the First World War, self-making lost some of its appeal as communal efforts became necessary for individual flourishing in the early decades of the twentieth century. Insofar as Abe accepts the narrative of the self-made pioneer in the place of his original narrative of self-making, he finds himself and his model of inheritance obsolete in the twentieth century. The persistent interest in self-making in Grove's novels, and the novels discussed below, however, underscores the accuracy of Smith's hypothesis that the changes of the twentieth century "complicat[ed]" the narrative of self-making but "did not, in the end extinguish its appeal" (219).

The generational conflicts Grove notes in "The Novel" and returns to in his prairie novels suggest a competition not just between fathers and sons but also between orientations to time and narratives of self-making. In the end, Grove suggests that the pioneer's legacy results not in the image of a static family line, but in the narrative of individualist and capitalist self-making. The dichotomy between inheritance and self-making in Grove's novels maintains the tension between determinism and freedom through a series of reversals that offer only temporary resolutions. From the point of view of Grove's patriarchs, however, inheritance points forcefully toward the future that in the beginning of the twentieth century no longer offered the stability that Abe desires. Grove's portrayals of his pioneers as the first and the last of their lines are themselves an ambiguous prediction for the future of a nation that was built by pioneering farmers. Callaghan, Buckler, and Laurence address this ambiguous prediction in the novels discussed below.

Recognitions and Reversals of Inheritance

> And when Andrew Aikenhead saw how poor his son was and that he lived in this plain room, he sighed and was deeply embarrassed and he could not look up, even though he knew his son preferred this poverty to the comfort of his father's house.
>
> Callaghan, *They Shall Inherit the Earth* (9)

In contrast to Grove's novels, Callaghan's *They Shall Inherit the Earth* and Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley* focus on the desire for self-making from the perspective of sons who feel burdened by their experience of the determining force of inheritance. Both novels also partially anticipate the dynamic and narrative inheritance that Laurence will develop more fully in *The Diviners*. From this intermediary position between Grove and Laurence, Callaghan, in particular, forcefully communicates the ways in which a son may violently reverse his inheritance to create himself (and his father) anew. Buckler's representation of David's desire to escape his family farm, on the other hand, offers an alternative example of a son effectively paralyzed by the tension between self-making and inheritance.

Callaghan's *They Shall Inherit the Earth* begins with a father "seeking his son" (7), who has rejected him by symbolically refusing "the comfort of his father's house" (9). Like Grove's prairie novels, *They Shall Inherit the Earth* portrays a definitive clash between generations and a pervasive tension between a determinist view of inheritance and the possibility of self-making. As the epigraph above hints, Andrew Aikenhead's son, Mike, has broken decisively from his father before the novel's action begins. While *Fruits of the Earth* focuses primarily on the conflict from the perspective of the outmoded father, Callaghan's novel of dispossession focuses on Mike and his rejection of his father, which, importantly, occurs during the Great Depression, an historic period of general dispossession. Mike's denial of his role as his father's heir and his preference for his own poverty are also the basis of his claim to freedom and to his own self-making. As Lockean patriarchs like Abe reveal, property is deeply connected to self-possession and patriarchal will. Mike's initial choice to live in poverty rather than in "the comfort of his father's house" thus symbolically suggests his desire to transcend his father's influence in his

claim to freedom and his process of self-making. That Mike has no property of his own, that he lives in a rented room and cannot collect capital because he cannot find a job, further suggests that from a Lockean point of view, he does not yet fully possess his own selfhood.

Mike's refusal, however, also reiterates the deterministic logic of inheritance to which Abe subscribes: Mike's actions suggest that his freedom is contingent upon a definitive break with his father; that unless he exclude his father from his life, he will become him and thus never become his own self. This paradox of self-making only heightens Mike's predicament: in excluding his father, he also assumes his father's mantle as a self-made man. This reiteration reverses the temporality of inheritance from the perspective of the son. While the pioneering patriarch's deterministic model of inheritance forever projects itself into an "abundant and fulfilling future," Mike's model of inheritance perpetually relates itself to the past. Afraid that he might become the father he disapproves of, Mike's fear of the past determines his destructive actions in the present. Significantly, Mike's rejection of his inheritance stems from a moment of psychological trauma as a young boy when his stepbrother, Dave Choate, symbolically claims his right to inherit Mike's family home. Moreover, as Mike struggles to avoid facing his part in Dave's death, he excuses himself from responsibility on mechanistic grounds and therefore denies the freedom he has insisted on for years: Mike holds his father responsible for Dave's death, because Andrew, by marrying Dave's mother, had been the one to put the conflict between Mike and Dave in motion. Unconscious of his own motivations, Mike nonetheless undergoes a series of reversals that suggest a more dialectical relationship between inheritance and self-making than Grove's novels offered. In keeping with Frederic Jameson's claim that in the dialectic "the problem becomes its own solution" (4), Callaghan's novel creates a narrative of inheritance out of a chosen disinheritance, of self-possession through the dispossession of

property, and of freedom by way of determinism. Such is the form of a novel that, through Mike's multiple reversals, develops an ambivalent vision of inheritance and self-making.

Drawing upon the biblical allusion of the novel's title and Christ's parable of the prodigal son, Callaghan's critics have often concentrated their readings of *They Shall Inherit the Earth* on its Christian themes. Fraser Sutherland, for example, argues that the novel "finds its wellspring in Christ's Sermon on the Mount and the parable of the prodigal son" (66). Similarly, Patricia Morley rather uncritically argues that Callaghan's novels of the 1930s "celebrated a relatively orthodox and traditional interpretation of Christianity" ("Morley" 59). More recently, Barbara Pell calls the novel "Callaghan's most coherent 'parable'" and argues: "there is some sense that the conclusion of the plot is not so much an inevitable product of the characters' actions as the resolution of a theological debate" (88). Despite the Christian intertexts of Callaghan's novel, these readings of it have significantly limited the scope of discussions of Callaghan's work.

Colin Hill compellingly argues that Callaghan's direct prose style is in part responsible for the reception of his narratives as didactic Christian parables. According to Hill, a fundamental misunderstanding of Callaghan's "detached, omniscient, third-person perspective" (196) has caused these straightforwardly moralistic and Christian readings: "Callaghan's stories very often have an underlying philosophical concern or social comment guiding the narrative. Yet […] Callaghan is not telling the reader what to think, or raising a moral question and then answering it. Callaghan is guilty, instead, of telling his reader, perhaps too bluntly, not what to think, but rather what his characters are thinking" (211). Hill rightly articulates the source of modernist difficulty in Callaghan's novels: their philosophical interests are so couched in the perspective of their characters that—despite the efforts of the critics mentioned above—it is difficult to attribute a didactic moral argument to Callaghan himself. Callaghan's ambivalent and

obscure presentation of a philosophical problem accords with the contested character of inheritance in modern Canadian novels, because the literary presentation that makes claiming a didactic message difficult actually signals the thoughtful treatment of a philosophical problem.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Ina Ferris and Robin Mathews attempted to reposition Callaghan as an individualist rather than a Christian writer. Ferris argues that the critical emphasis on Callaghan's Christian allusions eclipses his "commitment to fierce individualism" as well as his persistent interest in the individual as a subject of creative inquiry: "Biblical titles and dramatic social content obscure what the larger corpus of Callaghan's work makes apparent: the primary impulse of his narrative is an asocial, secular obsession with the assertion of the self" (13). While Ferris invites new readings of Callaghan's novels by freeing them from moralistic readings, Mathews, limited by his preoccupation with America's cultural domination of Canada, reductively replaces one didactic reading of Callaghan with another. In his uneven and notably defensive essay, "Morley Callaghan and the New Colonialism: The Supreme Individual in Traditionless Society," Mathews emphasizes Callaghan's interest in individualism while also accusing him of falling victim to cultural colonialism by the United States. According to Mathews, *They Shall Inherit the Earth* dramatizes a battle between "good" and "bad" individualism that he sees as notably void of philosophical dimension or merit:

> The final philosophical position the protagonist takes is a position of individualistic, sentimental, Christian religiosity devoid of institutional and, therefore, of historical basis, and connected to an uncomfortable concept of social Darwinism. Michael possesses "good" individualism as distinct from his father's and Dave Choate's "bad" individualism. The novel […] provides the victory of "good" individualism over "bad" individualism, and to that degree it adopts a

major theme of U.S. culture and literature. (87-8)

In deflating the conflict in Callaghan's novel to a contest between "good" and "bad" individualism, Mathews, like many of Callaghan's early critics, assumes that it serves a didactic and moral purpose, and therefore he also simplifies or ignores the crucial, notably philosophical, ambivalences expressed in the novel.[14] Mathews also assumes, mistakenly, that only Americans can write about individualism. Here, I adopt Ferris's reading of Callaghan's interest in individualism and recast it in terms of a philosophical debate between determinism and freedom.

Like Grove, Callaghan was sometimes considered a naturalist.[15] Moreover, as in Grove, the persistent power of determinism as a scientific and psychological influence on characters signals a naturalist legacy in Callaghan's novels. Gary Boire, for example, identifies Callaghan's early novels as the works of an "American naturalist" (62)[16] and argues that in *A Broken Journey* (1932) "Callaghan examined (sometimes awkwardly) the determining effects of history and biology" (65). The plot structure and self-knowledge of characters in *They Shall Inherit the Earth* demonstrate the continued potency of determinist ideas in Callaghan's fiction. As Gammel noted in her discussion of naturalism in Grove's novels, however, determinism affects psychology more than biology in *They Shall Inherit the Earth*. Characters become determined through their own recognition of and negotiation with their part in a line of inheritance. Significantly, this empowering of determinism by way of a character's conscious recognition of

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[14] Interestingly, Mathews's plain adjectives, "good" and "bad," inadvertently mimic Callaghan's style, which Hill describes as using "deliberately bland adjectives ('good job,' 'bad reputation') to convey a sense of the utterly ordinary, of narrative detachment, objectivity, and impersonality, and to avoid creating the impression that words have done more than signify a given situation or subject" (194). While Callaghan's readers might admire his direct prose style, they nonetheless expect more from a critic such as Mathews, who is charged with the task of elucidating just how words signify more than they may claim.

[15] Hill discusses the generic definition of both Grove's and Callaghan's novels at length in *Modern Realism in English-Canadian Fiction*. Hill's identification of Grove and Callaghan, among others, as modern realists is motivated by the fact that early twentieth-century Canadian novelists adapted various prose styles and forms—including those borrowed from "romanticism, naturalism, modernism" (219)—into their novels.

[16] Although Boire, like Mathews, characterizes Callaghan as an "American" writer in this quotation, he does not scorn Callaghan's "American" style in the way Mathews does.

it emphasizes the method in which Callaghan builds his fictional world almost wholly through his characters' perspectives on it. Thus, Callaghan does not suggest that a determining force exists beyond each character's control, but that so long as a character believes in any narrative that situates him as the product of determining forces, he will be such a product.

Mike's sister, Sheila, exemplifies a character whose family "history and biology" governs her only after she comes to believe in a determinist narrative of inheritance. Moreover, Sheila's belief and intervention in her determined future suggest that narrative structures inheritance and so anticipate the narrative inheritances in *The Diviners*. Convinced by Dave, who desires to seduce her, that her mother went insane before her death and afraid that she has inherited that insanity—"that something was buried in her that would always set her a little apart from other people" (*Inherit* 84)—Sheila refuses to have children. Although Mike and others claim that the first Mrs. Aikenhead did not suffer from a hereditary mental illness—"It's not like something in the family" (65)—Sheila, who does have the "eager, simpler nature of her mother" (55), proceeds as if a deterministic model of biological inheritance were the only model available for her self-understanding. By allowing the threat of an inherited mental illness to determine the course of her life, Sheila effectively ensures that she has been determined by her family's past. Furthermore, by rigidly accepting the narrative of her identity from Dave Sheila denies herself the freedom of self-authorship and views her life dualistically: either she will wholly reject her family's past or it will wholly determine her. Therefore, Sheila's eventual attempt to reverse her inheritance—to assert her freedom by denying her mother's ability to define her life—nonetheless reveals her deterministic logic.

Callaghan subtly psychologizes the familiar tension between a son's desire to be free of his father's house and the persistent deterministic pull that binds characters to their familial

history, whether positively or negatively. In Bergsonian terms, Callaghan psychologizes the tension between mechanistic determinism—the idea that someone "who knew the position and motion of a human organism at a given moment […] could calculate with unfailing certainty the past, present, and future actions of the person" (Bergson, *Time* 144)—and duration, "whose very essence is freedom and unforeseeable creativity" (Barnard 51). In fact, a symbolic disinheritance causes Mike's initial break with his father. After he senses that his father has betrayed his mother by relegating her to a locked room and bringing Marthe Choate and her son, Dave, into the Aikenhead's summer home, an adolescent Mike attempts to assert his right as the sole heir to his father's house. In response to Dave's threat that Mike would not be allowed back into the home unless he included Dave in his afternoon activities, Mike claims the property as his own: "I guess I can come back to my own house. I guess I can go home whenever I want to. It's not your place at all" (68). Dave's counterattack explicitly reveals his stake in the Aikenhead home and his threat to Mike's agency within it: "It's my house as much as it is yours. My mother said so" (68). This exchange between the young boys determines the course of their lives: Mike, threatened by Dave's presence in his family home and disapproving of him on moral grounds, rejects his claim to his father's house and asserts his own independence. Dave, in contrast, becomes an unwanted and disappointing heir: he quits his job with his step-father's firm "because they had insisted that he take it seriously" (17) and, despite not working, he insists on Andrew's financial support (21).

In the first part of the novel, the second Mrs. Aikenhead, Marthe Choate, prophesies the deterministic force that dictates the actions of the characters. Marthe's presence implies that Mike and Dave cannot co-exist, because Andrew may only have one son. When she hears that Mike will join them at their summer home after his many years of absence, she voices her concern for her son to Andrew: "you've been quarrelling a lot with Dave and I've often

wondered if you wanted your own boy back. Sometimes you seem to hate Dave. I think he drives you crazy just being in the house" (21). After Dave's drowning during that trip to the summer home, Marthe quickly blames her husband and restates her fear that Andrew did not accept Dave as his own son: "Andrew, you wanted that boy to go; you wanted to get rid of him; you wanted him to die […] I can remember how you promised me over and over again that you'd make him like your own […] He had to die just because he was my son. That was the only reason; he was my son, and you didn't want me to have a son" (91). Marthe's language reveals her deterministic logic: her feeling that Dave *had* to die confirms her own belief in mechanistic and determinist motives for his death. She blames Andrew, as Mike will, for purposefully initiating a line of events that could only culminate in his willing of her son's death. Marthe thus follows the determinist's logic as Bergson describes it: "Sometimes [the determinist] transfers himself in thought to some earlier period and asserts the necessary determination, from this very moment, of the act which is to come; sometimes assuming in advance that the act is already performed, he claims that it could not have taken place in any other way" (173).

Marthe's fear that Dave and Mike cannot coexist proves to be symbolically true and inscribes the plot of the novel in a complex tale of inheritance that has gone largely undetected by its Christian critics. Mike rejects his father after Dave claims the Aikenhead house and, when he returns years later, he plays a crucial part in Dave's untimely death, which drives the action of the rest of the novel. Dave's death occurs when, during Mike's first night at the summer home, the two sons argue while they are on the lake in a boat and Dave jumps into the water. "[B]linded by the surge within him of all the hatred of Dave he had ever had" (*Inherit* 77), Mike at first attempts "to hook" Dave with his oar, then "jab[s] at him with it and pushe[s] him under" (76), and eventually leaves Dave, exhausted and injured, to swim to shore on his own. Despite Dave's

"one pleading cry […] 'Help, help,'" Mike convinces himself that Dave is "a real good swimmer" (77) and returns to the house where he waits "longing desperately for some consoling sound to come from the water that never did come" (78). Importantly, Dave's body, which "looked as if he had been hurt before he was drowned because there were bruises on his shoulders made by some heavy instrument" (88-9), evinces Mike's malicious role in his death. The first part of Mike's transformation of his father, Dave's death violently reinstates Mike as Andrew's rightful heir (although he will not identify himself as such).

Notably, Marthe's accusations of his father give Mike "a naturalistic excuse" (Pell 85), a deterministic means of displacing his own guilt over Dave's death: "it seemed to Michael […] that [Marthe] was getting at the truth with an uncanny penetration, that every word she said was absolutely true, that it was a much higher truth than could be got in the simple fact that he, himself, had let Dave drown" (92). In this way, Mike undergoes a second reversal, from his conscious and exaggerated insistence on his freedom to his unconscious denial of it in his self-exculpatory appeal to determinism. Mike does not recognize that his belief that his father should be blamed for Dave's death also negates the freedom—"the feeling […] of being creators of our intentions, of our decisions, of our acts, and by that, of our habits, our characters, ourselves" (Bergson, *Creative Mind* 110)—that he had claimed from his father. Rather, Mike excuses his own part in Dave's death because he believes his father's past has determined it. Mike therefore adopts a deterministic logic of inheritance that, as stated above, is oriented to the past: according to this logic—strikingly, the same logic that Abe hoped would apply to the choices of his sons—Andrew's actions in the past determine his son's actions in the future.

When Mike returns to the city after Dave's drowning he attempts to continue his life free of his father's legacy, but his "naturalistic excuse" infringes upon his freedom. Despite his

appeal to a determined vision of the world as one of mechanistic and inevitable reactions, Mike proves incapable of recognizing his own place within the determined line that has led to Dave's death. In contrast to his sister, who accepts Dave's narrative of determinism inspired by her resemblance to her mother, Mike cannot or refuses to recognize his resemblance to his father and, therefore, he cannot enact a further reversal that would negate and correct that recognition. Significantly, Mike's friends notice a resemblance between father and son when Andrew's picture begins appearing in the newspaper. This recognition suggests that Mike might be more like his father than he wishes to admit. Nathaniel Benjamin, for example, tells Mike: "your father looks like you in his pictures" (110). Nathaniel's phrasing subtly reverses the direction of inheritance: Andrew looks like Mike rather than Mike looking like Andrew. This reversal indicates Mike's part in his father's transformation into a criminal—now Andrew looks like the person for whose crime he is blamed—and foreshadows Mike's eventual recreation of his father into someone from whom he can accept an inheritance. Moreover, the novelty of the resemblance—"Nobody ever said I looked like him before" (105)—suggests that Dave's death and Mike's appeal to its deterministic cause have brought Mike and Andrew into a new relationship, one that will make Mike's resemblance to his father undeniable.

While Mike appeals to Marthe's deterministic logic as an excuse that *frees* him from his part in Dave's death, he refuses to acknowledge that this logic also brings him closer to his father. In appealing to an excuse that denies his actions as "spring[ing] from the self and the self alone" (Bergson, *Time* 172), Mike further denies his freedom, while also aligning himself ironically with the father he wishes to reject, and who had similarly evaded his responsibility both in his first wife's depression by locking her in a room and in the subsequent breakdown of his relationship with Mike. Moreover, this deterministic logic, as Grove's pioneer novels show,

implies that the father determines the son, that the son is not a self-possessed individual. Mike's future thus becomes in his own logic the product of his father's past. Mike may almost believe that he is free of criminal responsibility, but he unwittingly sacrifices his freedom from his father in his determinist's alibi. Even fully armed with "naturalistic excuse[s]," however, Mike knows he is "not free" (*Inherit* 139), but is doubly constrained: his guilt imprisons him psychologically and, because of his appeal to deterministic logic, he incoherently denies his own self making.

Mike's heated and one-sided debate with Nathaniel Benjamin, a Jewish intellectual newly converted to Christianity, demonstrates the power of his "naturalistic excuse"; having fully displaced his agency onto other people, Mike cannot recognize or admit to his own egoism. Acting as if Nathaniel's Christian faith in free will were an accusation made explicitly at Mike's alibi—which, implicitly but unwittingly, it is—Mike wants to know if Nathaniel "believe[s] there's usually a chain of causes going way back that shape the most trivial event" (111). But Mike shows his lack of self-knowledge in this exchange with Nathaniel, who refuses to participate in a conversation that has turned into an attack against him. Once Nathaniel has left, Mike uncritically thinks to himself, "[i]magine a guy like that, the greatest egoist in the world, telling me to stop thinking of myself. He knew that I wiped the floor with him intellectually. I wish I could have told him that the real cause of Dave's death could be found way back in my father's life, and that I was full of economic resentment" (114). Mike reveals his selfish egoism as the source of both his initial bid for freedom from his father and his capacity for unreflective cruelty. As he does to his father, so Mike also dismisses Nathaniel for traits he might recognize in himself, if he were capable of such conscious self-reflection. Mike is unable to recognize himself as an "egoist," just as he also "doesn't realize that his individualism is of the same order as his father's" (Mathews 89). Furthermore, Mike reiterates his belief that the cause of Dave's

death must be found in an action in Andrew's past; more importantly, however, Mike's expression of his "economic resentment" suggests that his part in Dave's death was also determined by his financial struggles during the Depression and Dave's displacement of Mike as the heir to his father's wealth, which meant that, according to Mike, "[my] father and Dave belonged in another world than mine" (112).

Structurally, then, the second half of the novel, in which Mike first avoids facing his part in Dave's death and then comes to accept it, corrects an initial reversal, by reinstating Mike as Andrew's son and rightful heir. Strikingly, through this reinstatement Mike also recovers his freedom by recovering his inheritance. It is also in this second half that Mike develops his romance with Anna Prychoda and thus prepares gradually to reconcile with his father. Anna, in giving Mike a child, contributes to his redemptive transformation from son into father. This transformation, however, transcends Mike's relationship with his son. In fact, as Nathaniel's remark on Andrew's likeness to Mike suggests, Mike reverses the determining power in his relationship with his father and so becomes the determining force in his father's life. Mike's relationship with his father is only redeemed after he has taken on his father's power and thus transformed him into a humbled father to whom Mike may claim to be a son.

Mike's new role as a father coincides with his increased feelings of guilt about his own father; he confesses his part in Dave's death and his father's downfall to Anna, who advises him that "[t]he only justice you owe is to your father" (313). In a reversal of the first scene of the novel, then, Mike seeks out his father to confess and to ask his forgiveness. He finds his father reduced to poverty, a physical testament to the dispossession of the falsely accused: "It was hard for Mike to see in this thin, nervous man with the frightened blue eyes and such an unrestrained eagerness, an image of the father of his youth" (318). Significantly, as Mike confesses he admits

both his deterministic self-exculpatory logic and the fact that he had not been able to accept Andrew as his father: "I felt you were to blame for the bad things that had happened to us all. It was hard to think of you as my father. I couldn't feel like a son" (319). Mike's admission exposes the paradox in his logic: in blaming his father as the cause of the "bad things that had happened" he has attempted to deny his place in a line he recognizes his father as having begun. Furthermore, he suggests that he is now ready to recognize Andrew as his father and to "feel like a son." Andrew's forgiveness and his refusal to let Mike confess to the police because "I'm his father and I mustn't let him do anything foolish" (321) confirm their new relationship. Mike thus becomes a son and an heir (however penniless) in a moment in which he balances the tension between his freedom—in his acknowledgement that his father did not fully determine his actions—and his determined place in a family—in the fact that Andrew is his father and has the authority to forgive his son absolutely.

This new and climactic father-son relationship inverts the dynamic with which the novel opens. Through the course of the crisis surrounding Dave's death, Mike has reinstated himself as Andrew's heir, but he has also transformed his father into the one he desires at the beginning of the novel. No longer living in "comfort," Andrew is now one of the dispossessed whose inheritance of the earth remains a promise to be fulfilled in the future.[17] Thus, Mike's acceptance of his father is a perverted step of self-making that orients inheritance to a (now transformed)

[17] From a moralizing Christian perspective, Callaghan's title suggests that in losing his wealth and renewing the relationship with his son, Andrew joins Mike as one of the meek who will be rewarded with a heavenly inheritance. But the creative violence with which Mike constructs his inheritance—and in so doing forces Andrew into a position of meekness—does not support the peaceful image that Christ delivers during his sermon on the mount. The recent translation of the word "meek" as "gentle" (*World English Bible*) strongly contrasts the passivity of the "meek" and Mike's violent intervention in the structure of his inheritance. Thus, while Callaghan's novel certainly privileges dispossession and criticizes the relationship between property and selfhood found in Locke and Grove, it also displaces the passivity associated with the biblical verse from which Callaghan takes its title. Mike does not wait for an inheritance, but actively creates it; similarly, he does not allow a father (or the Father) to determine him, but claims his freedom through his ability to make himself by remaking his father. With this significant change to the structure of inheritance, Callaghan also suggests a reading of Matthew 5:5 that is in line with Nietzsche's criticism of Christianity's promotion of slave morality in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morality*.

past. Strikingly, Mike effectively makes himself through a deterministic model of inheritance by creating a father who originates a line whose determination Mike accepts; in creating a father who cannot offer wealth or property to his heirs, Mike violently changes the narrative of his inheritance and denies Abe's Lockean connection between property and self-possession. Mike feels in possession of himself only when he has transformed his father through a violent process of material dispossession. While this balancing of inheritance and self-making anticipates their synthesis in Laurence's dynamic model of inheritance, however, Mike's resolution of the tension between the two terms remains deficient, precisely because it strongly recapitulates the predictive logic of a determining inheritance. In other words, although Mike reverses the determinist's logic of inheritance, he does not fundamentally change its form.

Two challenges remain to the picture of redemption at the end of Callaghan's novel. First, given Mike's initial fear of his father's legacy and his seemingly purposeful denial of the similarities he shares with Andrew, the birth of Mike's son, "Little Mike" (300), appears ominous. What inheritance does "Little Mike"'s name burden him with? In naming their son, Mike and Anna suggest that they in fact share a deterministic logic of inheritance with Grove's pioneers. As the repetition of his father rather than exclusively a figure of redemption and resolution, Little Mike also promises a volatile future ironically prophesied in Anna's playful comments during her pregnancy: "He's a regular villain. He's going to be bold and strong like his father. He's rough with me, too. He's simply kicking me to pieces" (267).[18] Secondly, the last image of Andrew returning with Anna and Mike to their rented apartment remains ambiguous for, despite their newly reformed family, "they all felt a little shy with each other" (323). As Ferris puts it: "the final lines concentrate on the Aikenheads' silent climb up the stairs […] so

[18] The baby Felix of Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* is also a namesake who promises both redemption and violence. See Chapters One and Four for readings of *The Double Hook*'s similarly ambiguous ending.

dissolving the newly discovered social unit into its separate individual components once more" (14). This last scene also underlines the participation of the reader; "the very lack of detail, the refusal to draw a clear, precise portrait of a situation," Hill explains, "suggests that Callaghan was […] demanding that his readers fill in the blanks" (198).

In the end, Callaghan's novel presents an ambiguous picture of the modern individual and his attempts at self-making; a picture that, despite its many reversals, redraws the dividing lines between self-making and determinism. Hardly an example of didacticism, *They Shall Inherit the Earth* participates in an active and unresolved philosophical and literary-historical debate about inheritance and, in particular, its relationship to freedom and determinism. That the dichotomous relationship between inheritance and self-making remains unresolved even as it is recast in the psychological experiences of the son—a recasting that orients inheritance towards the past—testifies to its continued appeal as a novelistic and philosophical subject.

Buckler's portrait of David in *The Mountain and the Valley* further exemplifies the tension between inheritance and self-making for sons who desire to distinguish themselves from their fathers. Much like Grove's and Callaghan's novels discussed here, Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley* contains suggestions of naturalism that position the individual in tension with his inheritances. Buckler restructures these naturalist suggestions in a tragic and psychological mode; according to Maia Bhojwani, "Buckler's novel is naturalistic, but it still gestures toward a mysterious fatality – a determination beyond that of heredity and circumstance – located within the dark tangle of impulses and emotions in the psyche that remain forever inaccessible to knowledge" (111).[19] While Joseph Canaan, David's father, is a son still farming his own father's land and the epitome of the deterministic hopes of Grove's patriarchs, David experiences

[19] Buckler's description of Ellen's rug in a letter to Dudley H. Cloud further asserts the tragic structure of his novel: "it exists to show how the apparently blind and capricious turns of [the characters'] fortune are the inevitable outcome of circumstance and inheritance" (qtd. Young 202-3).

inheritance as a limitation of his individual and creative potential. Although his greatest wish is to become a writer, he is bound to his family's farm—where his father believes "[s]omeone of my own name will always live" (Buckler 156)—out of his love for his family and because of a heart condition that prevents him from joining the war effort in later years. Staying on the farm, however, clearly comes at the cost of his literary ambitions. Like Mike, David undergoes many reversals that continually redraw the dualistic tensions between inheritance and self-making.

For instance, in a dramatic episode of Buckler's novel, David attempts to break free of his father and to become his own person. While he helps his father move a large rock—which for Joseph signals his active role in a long line of Canaan men that extends from his father in the past to his grandchildren in the future (159)—David rebels against the tedium of his rural life: "Anyone to spend their youth in this God-forsaken hole instead of the city… the same damn talk… the same damn faces, every day and every day… the same coop of trees to look at… walking over and over your own tracks, like a damned ox. In the city there'd be movement, and something to feed your mind all the time" (162). David's clearly idealistic vision of city life as the refreshing opposite of the dull repetitions of his country life contests Joseph's own idealistic vision, which revels in the continuity of the Canaan line on the land that "fits [him] loose and easy, like [his] old clothes" (157). David's desire to break out of that monotony thus rejects both the deterministic logic of inheritance that would make David a reiteration of his father and the rural way of life that valourizes it. Instead, David glorifies the durational and creative potential he imagines he would find in city time in terms similar to those with which Milič Čapek describes Bergson's *durée*: "it is a *continuous emergence of novelty*" (90; original emphasis).

In the argument with Joseph that follows, David undergoes two reversals that express the ambivalent forces of inheritance and self-making: first he asserts himself against his father and

then, reminded of his love for his family, he denies himself his escape to the city. David, "using [words] against" (163) his father, asserts his individuality in order to distinguish himself from Joseph and break free of the inheritance that would slow his life to "the pace of an ox" (158). David leaves the farm after his decisive argument with Joseph and soon catches a ride to the city with a couple who are out in their car. This departure from his family home marks David's desire to free himself of the burden of his inherited life in the country. David imagines that the city will offer him another temporality, one that would constantly renew itself and through that renewal replenish David's imagination, "feed [his] mind." But David's second reversal comes quickly; reminded of his family's long history in Entremont—"'Has your family *always* lived here?' the man [driving the car] said" (169; original emphasis)—and moved by his deep compassion for Joseph, who David fears has become the object of the pitying gaze of the driver's wife—David asks the couple to stop the car and returns home. I show that this scene illuminates both David's aesthetic desires and his compassion in Chapter Five. Here, it is sufficient to add that David's inability either to be happily in the country or to escape to the city reinforces the ambivalence over inheritance common in modern novels. David is bound to a family that determines him even as he sees himself as alienated from that family because he desires to create himself as a writer of new narratives apart from his rural community.

Furthermore, this conflict inspires an alternative narrative of inheritance that David fails to develop fully. Ellen's gift of her locket with a photograph of a sailor to David upon his return to the farm, however, suggests both an alternative inheritance of which he knows nothing and the dynamic model of inheritance that Morag will celebrate in *The Diviners*. The sailor in the photograph resembles David: "he knew where he'd seen a face like that. He was looking at it right there in the mirror. This locket had something to do with what had happened today. She'd

sensed somehow what had happened. She'd sensed it because she too knew what it was like when […] everywhere was somewhere else" (172). As do the keepsakes inherited in Laurence's novel, David's keepsake inserts him in an alternative line of inheritance, one that frees him from the limits of his family farm; the sailor, a mysterious and rootless figure with whom Ellen may have had an affair that led to Joseph's conception, symbolizes an imaginary inheritance and the exciting pace of travel, contrary to "the pace of an ox" on the farm. Much as Mike and Sheila create their inheritances by recognizing themselves as heirs, David finds momentary comfort in an inheritance that is, as Hepburn says of modernist inheritances, one of "affinity." Importantly, neither David's nor Morag's keepsakes follow a straight path, and so they are emblems of a dynamic and narrative conception of inheritance. Although, unlike Morag, David does not cultivate this alternative narrative, Ellen's gift nonetheless introduces, for the first time in the novels discussed here, the potential of an alternative and creatively received inheritance that does not merely reaffirm the antagonism between freedom and determinism.

The sons in Callaghan's and Buckler's novels desire the novelty of self-making. It is this very desire, however, that motivates their essentially determinist narratives of inheritance. Importantly, while fathers project a determined line into the future, their sons' attempts to escape it suggests they are oriented to the past. Secured in their individuality through an experience of time as external, neither fathers—who measure themselves *through* their sons—nor sons—who positions themselves *against* their fathers—fully achieve the self-possessed freedom they both desire. Grove, Callaghan, and Buckler suggest but do not develop an answer to this generational bind: self-creation through narrative. This kind of self-creation occurs internally and through the creative appropriation of the past by the present. Furthermore, it suggests a more individual and internal style of self-making than the determinism of either the fathers or sons discussed here. If

Mike's synthesis of determinism and self-making is imperfect because it is violent, then David's is partial because it is promissory, bound up with the alternative but undeveloped history of Ellen's locket. Thus, while Callaghan's and Buckler's novels retain the determinism that places inheritance in an unresolved dualism with self-making, they also subtly anticipate Laurence's fuller, more thorough-going synthesis of determinism and self-making in *The Diviners*.

Dynamic Inheritance in *The Diviners*

Margaret Laurence's comments about time in "Time and the Narrative Voice" resound with Bergsonian significance. Like the French philosopher, who claimed in *Creative Evolution* that "*the present contains nothing more than the past*" (14; original emphasis), Laurence believes "the past and the future are always present, *present* in both senses of the word, always now and always here with us" (156; original emphasis).[20] So far, this chapter has demonstrated the mechanistic logic of inheritance implicit in the conflict between generations in novels by Grove, Callaghan, and Buckler. Such mechanistic and deterministic logic also implies a rigidly linear relationship between the past, present, and future that, although represented with deep ambivalence and subject to reversals, nonetheless accentuates what Bergson referred to as quantitative time, rather than its durational opposite. Yet, as Abe Spalding, Mike Aikenhead, and David Canaan reveal, the individualist is unhappy when he feels that a deterministic inheritance limits his freedom to shape himself. In these novels, the drama of inheritance is thus cast as an apparent opposition between determinism and freedom, which find their temporal equivalents in Bergson's distinction between spatialized clock time and pure duration respectively. The Bergsonian resonance in Laurence's description of time, then, suggests that her narratives

[20] Laurence's remark also resonates with T.S. Eliot's presentation of time in *Four Quartets*. Following an epigraph from Heraclitus (another philosopher interested in the nature of time), Eliot's begins "Burnt Norton": "Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future / And time future contained in time past" (1-3).

promote the freedom of Bergson's duration, but also that the durational synthesis between past, present, and future overcomes the rigid tension between freedom and determinism. Both Laurence and Bergson present a model in which the individual becomes deeply attuned to the past as she recognizes it as constantly shifting and ever-present. Laurence thus fully synthesizes the dualistic tension between inheritance and self-making by demonstrating that the past is perpetually present, and that one accepts her dynamic inheritances in moments of self-making, rather than forcing them to conform to a deterministic model.

Laurence's last novel best expresses her Bergsonian theory of time and its synthesizing power in narratives of inheritance. *The Diviners* develops a theory of dynamic inheritance through which Morag creates herself through her narratives of spontaneous and unpredictable inheritance. The narrative style of *The Diviners* exemplifies the durational temporal model of Morag's inheritances; moreover, Morag both asserts her independence and claims her heritage through narrative. The narrative style of the novel thus sustains a durational temporality that affirms freedom and self-making as it appropriates the past into the present and projects this dynamic appropriation into an ever-changing future. As I have noted throughout this chapter, Bergson argues that we are free only when we can proclaim our own genesis through the experience of time as duration: "the free act takes place in time which is flowing and not time which has already flown" (*Time* 221). Thus, Bergson's model of freedom synthesizes both the individual's deep connection to the past, her understanding that the past is "always present," and her forceful desire for the freedom to forge a self, to act "from the self alone" (172-73).

The celebrated narrative form of *The Diviners* weaves the past with the present as the older Morag comes to understand how her past and inheritances have formed her personality, all the while recognizing that the past and the present are constantly changing as they flow together.

The first lines of the novel introduce the synthesizing power of its form: "The river flowed both ways. The current moved from north to south, but the wind usually came from the south, rippling the bronze-green water in the opposite direction. This apparently impossible contradiction, made apparent and possible, still fascinated Morag" (3). This opening image of a river paradoxically flowing both ways serves as a metaphor for the flashbacks and reminiscences—Morag's *Snapshots* and *Memory Bank Movies*—that take on a present life in the narrative structure of the novel's plot. Moreover, according to David Lucking, "the river […] becomes emblematic of the dialectical process that has been described in another context as one of 'self-fashioning'" (197). Lucking refers to Paul Hjartarson's argument about Laurence's narrative form:

> The river becomes a figure for the dynamic and apparently contradictory process by which […] Morag Gunn appears, on the one hand, to shape and give meaning to the life story she tells, and on the other, to be entirely shaped, to be herself composed by the stories told. The river that flows both ways becomes, that is, a figure for the fascinating process by which Morag designates herself and is designated as a speaking subject. (43-4)

The river—also one of Bergson's favourite metaphors to "convey simultaneously the continuity and novelty of life" (Gillies 144) and the image in one of Heraclitus's most famous fragments—thus signals the "apparently impossible contradiction" of the present life of the past, which forcefully describes the process through which Morag comes to know herself as a self.

Laurence's sentences also flow both ways: her use of past and present tenses throughout the novel subtly reinforces the present and influential life of the past. Noting "Laurence's seemingly perverse decision to write of Morag's past in the present tense, and of Morag's present in the past tense" (48), Barbara Hehner explains that

> [t]he past tense narrative, in much of Laurence's work, suggests an achieved personal equilibrium, and this Morag possesses. On the other hand, Morag has experienced a difficult journey to her present autonomy, and she vividly recalls her earlier struggles; indeed, she feels that she is constantly reworking her past […] in order to link her past life to her present life in a meaningful way. (48)

An early passage in which Morag looks through photographs of her childhood clarifies her understanding of the past and Laurence's use of the past tense to narrate Morag's present life: "Morag put the pictures into chronological order. As though there were really any chronological order, or any order at all, if it came to that. She was not certain whether the people in the snapshots were legends she had once dreamed only, or were as real as anyone she now knew" (*Diviners* 7). Here, the past tense that is used to narrate the present emphasizes the way in which Morag's past and the present are interwoven. Morag's present, flooded by the flow of time, is already her past in that each moment is shaped by what has come before it. Importantly, however, this past-in-present narration does not imply a simple ordering of the past, as the quotation above proves in its criticism of mere chronology. Morag is perpetually aware of the shifting nature of time. Reflecting on the constructedness of the past, she thinks: "*A popular misconception is that we can't change the past – everyone is constantly changing their own past, recalling it, revising it*" (69; original emphasis). Laurence's verb tense emphasizes the dynamic and creative nature of time that, like the river, flows both ways.

Narrative defines both Morag's inheritances and her self-making. Morag, a young orphan adopted by Christie Logan, Manawaka's garbage man, and Prin, Christie's obese wife, searches for her biological and cultural inheritances from a young age. Taken from her family home and placed with the Logans, who live on Hill Street—"*the Scots-English equivalent of The Other*

Side of the Tracks" (31; original emphasis)—after the deaths of both her parents, Morag desires to define herself as a Gunn and, in doing so, deny her shameful adopted position as Christie's daughter. Thus, Morag's quest for the freedom to make herself originates in her refusal of a father whom she views as only a stand-in, and in her search for an authentic familial history in which she can claim her place. In this way, the young Morag *hopes* to have been determined by her genealogy, because it will allow her to know, through her experience of her own character, the family she has lost; moreover, her perceived resemblances to her biological family allow Morag to distinguish herself from the Logans' poverty and crassness. But, as Neil ten Kortenaar has pointed out, "[in] the New World […] populated by younger sons and bastards, and by non-English speaking subject peoples, the connection between name and intimate self is broken" (26). Inasmuch as it exists, however, Morag's family history exists as narrative, as the stories about the Gunn clan that Christie, her unwanted father surrogate, tells Morag when she is young.

Christie's stories, then, provide the content and form of Morag's inheritance. When Morag looks up her family name, Gunn, in Christie's *The Clans and Tartans of Scotland*, she finds that "[t]he chieftainship of Clan Gunn is undetermined at the present time, and no arms have been matriculated" (*Diviners* 55). ten Kortenaar describes this moment in which Morag finds a disappointing gap in her history as an allegory of the children of the New World: "Young Morag is a typical New World figure, the orphan without a past or a guarantee of meaning. Not only is Morag without parents, but her name itself is without content" (16). In the absence of an ancestral history, Christie gives content to Morag's name and empowers her in his fictional tale of a history that he creates. Furthermore, Morag adds to Christie's tales, thus finding the bravery she desires in an ancestral figure whom she has helped to create: "Once long ago there was a beautiful woman name of Morag, and she was Piper Gunn's wife, and they went to the new land

together and Morag was never afraid of anything in this whole wide world" (59). Here, Laurence develops a deterministic logic of inheritance that is clearly a fiction; nevertheless, deterministic inheritance endures in the potency of Morag's appropriation of it, without, however the negative impact its endurance has on Mike and Sheila. Morag confirms her fictional ancestors by claiming their characters as her lived inheritances; her earliest inheritance is self-narrative itself and she receives it, unknowingly at the time, from Christie Logan.

Although these narrative inheritances initially work deterministically—in that Morag relies on them to explain and define who she is—Morag quickly recognizes their constructed, partial, and biased nature. Notably, this recognition distinguishes Morag's narrative inheritances from the narratives *of* inheritance that characters in Grove's, Callaghan's, and Buckler's novels accept as fully true. Morag's own claims to the truth from which Christie derives his tales assert her independence not from the family Christie has created for her, but from the adopted father of whom she is still ashamed. For example, an older Morag's corrective voice breaks into Christie's tale about Piper Gunn's part in subduing Riel:

> (The government Down East sent out the Army from Ontario and like that, and Riel fled, Christie. He came back, to Saskatchewan, in 1885.)
>
> Well, some say that. Others say different. Of course I *know* the Army and that came out, like, but the truth of the matter is that them Sutherlanders had *taken back the fort* before even a smell of an army got there.
>
> (Oh Christie! They didn't. We took it in History.) (151; original emphasis)

Morag corrects Christie not to question her family's history—she knows by this point that it has been Christie's creation and gift to her—but to assert her knowledge over his. Morag thus claims herself as further distinct from her adopted father; she knows how to pronounce Riel—instead of

Christie's "Reel" (150)—and she knows the Sutherlanders did not subdue the rebellion.[21]

Jules Tonnerre's history of his ancestor, also named Jules Tonnerre, has a similar mythological and narrative form to the tales Christie tells of Morag's ancestor, Piper. In fact, according to Jules's and Christie's separate histories, when he was subduing Riel, Piper Gunn was also fighting against Jules Tonnerre. While ten Kortenaar and Hjartarson have rightly read these stories as allegories of the constructedness of history and cultural identity, they are also the inheritances of the dispossessed. Morag, the adopted daughter of the town's "Scavenger" (41), and Jules, heir to a "collection of shacks" (158), find their inheritances in and through narrative. Moreover, the stories, which celebrate the original Morag and Jules as brave and heroic, help both Morag and Jules escape the judgment of Manawaka and support their future calling as narrators, Jules as a singer and Morag as a novelist. Their creative inheritances thus provide them with a past that makes their distinction from the other people in Manawaka the result of inherited greatness rather than their class and race.

Like Mike, Morag feels that she must definitively break with her (adopted) father in order to claim her own freedom. Despite her creative inheritances, Morag desires to assert herself as self-made and therefore distinct from the poor Logans who have raised her. She thus leaves Manawaka to attend university and pursue a career as a writer. The essential relationship between narrative and self-making is nowhere clearer than in Morag's failed marriage to her English professor, Brooke Skelton. This relationship is discussed in detail in Chapter Five, but it is worth noting its primary features here. Crucially, Morag initially denies her past in her relationship with Brooke, who asks her only to be "as you are now, my tall and lovely dark-

[21] As I emphasize in Chapter Five, however, Morag struggles throughout her relationship with her lover Jules to pronounce his name correctly. Still, Morag often uses language in this way to deny her similarities to both Christie and Prin. The most forceful example of this betrayal of her adopted family is Morag's marriage to her English professor, Brooke Skelton, to which she did not invite the Logans. Morag's alliance with Brooke, a man of great linguistic authority, marks her strong break from Christie and Prin.

haired Morag […] Never be any different" (230). Morag's willingness to be the version of herself that Brooke desires effectively erases her past and, although she has desired all her life *not* to be Christie's daughter, Brooke robs her of the freedom she had imagined in her break from Christie. Brooke gives Morag the clean slate, the effaced history, she desires, but he also provides her with the image that she is to become and thus denies her freedom to make herself further. Initially, however, Morag's marriage to Brooke is a victory over Christie as a father who might determine her; no longer the Scavenger's daughter living on Hill Street, she becomes the professor's wife living in an apartment in Toronto. But Brooke's imposed denial of the continued presence of her past in her life also denies Morag her freedom, as Bergson might have predicted, for Brooke asks Morag not only to repress the facts of her past, but also their continued power in her present. Importantly, Morag can no longer repress her past once she begins to write seriously. As I discuss below, Morag's writing ensures her autonomy and self-making: she publishes her novel under her maiden name and does not let Brooke offer advice on her manuscript.

Morag's repression of her past comes to a telling breaking point in an outburst in which she performatively claims Christie as her father and in which she might be said to act freely, "to recover possession of [her]self, and to get back into pure duration" (Bergson, *Time* 232). Morag responds to Brooke's demeaning pet name, "*Little one*," in "Christie's way of talking":

> Brooke, I am twenty-eight years old, and I am five feet eight inches tall, which has always seemed too bloody christly tall to me but there it is, and by judas priest and all the sodden saints in fucking Beulah Land, I am stuck with it and I do not *mind* like I once did, in fact the goddamn reverse if you really want to know, for I've gone against it long enough, and I'm no actress at heart, then, and that's the everlasting christly truth of it. (300)

Morag unconsciously claims the language of her (adopted) father in this moment of freedom and self-assertion. This language marks the past's breaking into the present and frees Morag as she expresses what she "mean[s]" (300) and, unwittingly, claims Christie as her father.

Indeed, it is in the process of writing her novel, of constructing a narrative of her own creation, that Morag comes to reject her complicity in Brooke's denial of her past, which had once seemed to her the ultimate sign of her successful self-making. In particular, Morag's work on her first novel brings the past into the present through her creative reimagining of moments from her life in Manawaka. While she is writing, Morag loses awareness of the clock time that structures her day and reinforces her submissive position in her relationship with Brooke, from whom she must hide her emotional responses to her writing, and instead experiences the creative freedom of duration that forcefully attunes her to her past.[22] For example, although "Morag usually stops writing about four" (268), the fact that she sometimes "forgets that time, outside, is passing" (268) emphasizes the durational intensity of her creative reawakening of her past. Therefore, Morag cannot conclude her day's work on schedule when she turns to writing about an abortion similar to that of Eva, Morag's friend while she was growing up in Manawaka:

> This afternoon she has forgotten, because Lilac has aborted herself in a way that Morag recalls from long ago. And yet it is not Eva for whom Morag experiences pain now – it is Lilac only at this moment. Morag finishes the episode, moves away from the typewriter, walks around the apartment, smoking, trying to shed the tension instantly, which is impossible. It is five minutes to six. (268)

Morag's experience of writing connects her past with her narrative inheritances as well as her

[22] Morag's day is structured by Brooke's workday and his demand that she fulfill her domestic duties. Although Morag may write undisturbed while Brooke is at work, she must also keep to a rigid schedule to ensure both that her writing does not disrupt Brooke's schedule—that dinner is ready at six (268)—and that Brooke has no opportunity to ridicule her ambition. In this way, Laurence associates clock time with a restrictive authority that disrupts Morag's freedom to cultivate herself as an author.

narrative self-making. Importantly, then, Morag's experiences are also durational in their ability to attune her to the present life of the past and free her from the clock time that symbolizes Brooke's authoritative suppression of that past.

Morag's greatest moment of defiance and self-making in her marriage, however, occurs when she publishes her first novel, an accomplishment that is truly her own, "under the name of Morag Gunn, not Morag Skelton" (307).[23] In publishing her novel under her maiden name, Morag further affirms her agency in her own self-making and her renewed experience of her past as part of her present. No longer willing to allow Brooke to shape her personhood, Morag testifies to her independence. Moreover, when she attempts to explain to Brooke her reasons for using her maiden name, Morag suggests that her decision is related to her inability to repress her past now that she has appropriated it into new narratives. She simply states that her motivation "goes a long way back" (307). In this way, Laurence connects self-making and the freedom it requires to the continued life of the past in the present, to the fact that one cannot repress the past definitively, and to the individual's creative and narrative power. Morag symbolically inherits this narrative power from Christie, who is her first model of a story-teller, the man who empowers her through the stories he tells, and the father-figure who gives her the language to express her frustration, her freedom, and what she really "mean[s]." As Hjartarson notes, Morag's self "exists not as an essence, not as something Morag can find […] but as the stories she tells, stories she composes but which also compose her" (55). Morag's tense celebration of the publication of her first novel emblematically synthesizes determinism and self-making: rather than functioning as limiting burdens, Christie's language and stories liberate Morag to affirm her

[23] Morag's accomplishment is all the greater because Brooke does not believe she is capable of publishing a novel without his input (304). Moreover Morag's symbolic break from Brooke in her use of her own name echoes Hagar Shipley's break from her husband, Bram, in Laurence's first Manawaka novel, *The Stone Angel*. In that novel, Hagar sneaks away from Bram with only a trunk that bears her maiden name, "*Miss H. Currie*" (151).

own freedom not in the denial of the past but in celebration of its persistent presence.

In contrast to Mike, Morag accepts Christie as her father rather than transforming him into the father she has desired. As Hjartarson has shown, Morag realizes her acceptance of Christie as her symbolic father—foreshadowed in her earlier use of his language—when she visits Scotland and decides that she does not need to discover more about the Gunns. When asked why she no longer wishes to visit Sutherland, Morag answers: "I don't know that I can explain. It has to do with Christie. The myths are my reality. Something like that" (*Diviners* 455). Morag explains that not Sutherland but "Christie's real country. Where I was born" is the land of her ancestors: "It's a deep land here [in Scotland] […] But it's not mine, except a long, long way back. I always thought it was the land of my ancestors, but it is not" (456). In claiming Christie's "myths" as her inheritance, Morag chooses a model of inheritance that is not biological or deterministic; hers is a spontaneous and voluntary inheritance that also accepts Christie as a father. Morag finally articulates this choice in a moving scene at Christie's deathbed; after "wonder[ing] if she can discover the words," Morag literally claims Christie as her father: "Christie – I used to fight a lot with you, Christie, but you've been a father to me" (461).[24] Rather than interfering with her identity as a Gunn, Christie, Manawaka's Scavenger, gives Morag a creative and liberating inheritance. Notably, although this inheritance invites Morag to reshape the past continuously, she does so while also allowing Christie his own autonomy. Unlike Mike, who must change his father in order to accept him, Morag accepts Christie's special gift as essential to her own conception of herself.

Morag's and Jules's small material inheritances—the hunting knife Morag receives from Christie and the Currie plaid pin Jules's father, Lazarus, gives him—affirm the model of

[24] Christie's touching response—"Well – I'm blessed"—emphasizes that he, like Morag, chooses his words carefully, because "[a]nother way of indicating surprise would have been to say – *Well, I'm damned*. But that is not the phrase he has chosen. She sees from his eyes that the choice has been intentional" (461; original emphasis).

dynamic inheritance present in the form of the novel and Morag's narrative relation to the past. These objects, misplaced and having fallen out of the linear and familiar trajectory of heirlooms, attest to the spontaneous and ever-changing course of dynamic inheritance. In a way, Morag's and Jules's relationship corrects the course these inherited objects take: Morag and Jules reverse the trade Lazarus made with John Shipley in Laurence's first Manawaka novel, *The Stone Angel*. Morag realizes that her hunting knife should be Jules's because it originally belonged to his father, and Jules trades Morag the pin, which symbolically provides her with the Scottish past she has always wanted, although, notably, this past is one to which, as a Scot who is not a member of the Macdonald clan, she has a broad but not a particular genetic claim. Nonetheless, Morag's claim to the pin suggests that inheritance has a spontaneous, dynamic, and voluntary nature that aligns it with Bergson's description of freedom and duration (*Time* 140-1).

Morag calls the pin her "talisman" (*Diviners* 522), a designation that signals the mysterious connection with the past that it gives her: "It sounds like a voice from the past. Whose voice though? Does it matter? It does not matter" (504). The pin, however, might also be called an heirloom, an object that is handed down from one generation to the next, as, indeed, it had been in the Tonnerre family and will be again when Morag leaves it to her daughter with Jules, Pique. In *On Longing*, Susan Stewart describes the possession of an heirloom as "a statement of membership" (137); Morag clearly senses that the pin is a kind of membership. She finds a full entry for the it—from the Clanranald Macdonalds—in Christie's *The Clans and Tartans of Scotland* and thus adopts that clan as her own: "Clan Gunn, according to this book, as she recalls from years back, did not have a crest or a coat-of-arms. But adoption, as who should know better than Morag, is possible" (504).

Importantly, Laurence does not provide Morag with the direct line of inheritance that

would simply restore the determinist model. Instead, Morag actively chooses this inheritance—voluntarily "adopts" herself into a clan—but she also demonstrates a resemblance to or affinity with the Macdonalds, whose war cry is, as readers of *The Stone Angel* will remember, "*Gainsay Who Dare*" (504; original emphasis). Laurence's emphasis on Morag's natural resemblance to the Macdonalds positions *The Diviners* as a modernist novel in which "affinity rather than lineage" forms the model of inheritance (Hepburn 19). Significantly, however, the correction of the trade and Morag's discovery of a long-desired Scottish ancestry suggest that she is, in fact, an heir to a wider Scottish culture in the New World that sustains a form of lineage. In other words, it appears important to Laurence that the plaid pin returns to a Scottish-Canadian, even if Morag has no direct relation to its clan. Morag's dynamic inheritance once again demonstrates its creative ability to overcome binaries: it reconciles Hepburn's subtle dualism between affinity and lineage and so demonstrates the interrelation of the two terms. Morag's possession of the pin functions much as an object following a linear course of inheritance would—it connects her with a past that remains mysterious to her and affirms her membership in a group with a history—but it also renders that linear course inessential. Much like her narrative inheritances, Morag's material inheritance is a creative and voluntary appropriation of a constantly changing past into a dynamic present.

Morag's adoption of herself into Hagar's Macdonald line is another moment of her narrative self-making. As Stewart argues, the heirloom inspires a narrative of belonging (137). Notably, Morag's narrative contains significant gaps into which she can write herself. Unfamiliar with the marriage between Bram Shipley and Hagar Currie decades earlier, Morag asks, "Where could he have got [the pin] from, John Shipley? We'll never know of course" (504). As she has done before, Morag actively creates her past, this one an ancestral past that is only made her own

through her possession of the pin and her recognition of her resemblance to the ethos expressed in the war cry of the Macdonald clan. Connecting the past and the present in creative and unexpected ways, the pin takes a course from Hagar to Morag that is not determined by the laws or conventions of material inheritance or linear, mechanistic time. Morag's talisman, then, exemplifies a dynamic and voluntary material inheritance.

Grove's, Callaghan's, and Buckler's ideas about inheritance, however, reappear in Laurence's synthesis of them. In particular, the last words of the novel—"Morag returned to the house, to write the remaining private and fictional words, and to set down her title" (525)—link Morag's last novel to property titles, inherited titles, and the possession of a self so important to Grove's protagonists. Morag "set[s] down her title" in the way a pioneer sets down roots when he earns or "proves up" to the title of his land. Indeed, Morag cultivates her roots throughout *The Diviners* in her dynamic and creative relationship to the past. Title also denotes "an individual or family in virtue of rank, function, office, or attainment, or the possession of or association with certain lands" (*OED*). Titles, in particular those inherited titles related to property ownership, are what Canada symbolically promised those who emigrated to it.[25] Moreover, Grove's pioneering patriarchs earn their title, their land ownership, through their cultivation of land, an act, as we have seen, deeply connected to a dream of providing an inheritance for their sons. Morag makes for an unexpected heir to Grove's patriarchs, but in "set[ting] down *her* title," she nonetheless fulfills the pioneer's dream of self-possession.

Despite her unsuspected participation in the legacy of the pioneering patriarchs, Morag

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[25] In her introduction to *Roughing it in the Bush*, Susanna Moodie notes that the younger offspring of "old but impoverished families"—who would not inherit property, wealth, or title—emigrated to Canada "to make for themselves a new name and to find another country, to forget the past and to live in the future, to exult in the prospect of their children being free and the land of their adoption great" (9). Much to Moodie's displeasure, poor emigrants of less noble stock had similar ideas about their potential to make a name for themselves in Canada. As Moodie hears an Irishman proclaim upon his arrival, in Canada, where titles are claimed rather than inherited, "we'll all be jontlemen!" (22).

sees herself as failing the example set for her by women pioneers like Susanna Moodie and especially Moodie's sister Catharine Parr Traill. Traill's work ethic and self-sufficiency antagonize Morag: "Catharine Parr Traill, one could be quite certain, would not have been found of an early morning sitting over a fourth cup of coffee, mulling, approaching the day in gingerly fashion. No. No such sloth for Catharine P.T." (111). Typically, Morag's unique pioneering spirit is connected to Laurence's feminist virtues: "Laurence plays a part in that 'pioneering' effort to find satisfactory patterns by which women may find their 'true individuality.' In creating Morag she creates for herself and others, not an heroic ideal to be strived for, not a role model to be emulated, but rather an identity process" (Buss 164). While part of the importance of *The Diviners* is its development of a female character who struggles and succeeds in a patriarchal society, Morag's creative synthesis of inheritance and self-making participates in a history of narratives of inheritance in modern Canadian novels that struggle (and mostly fail) to synthesize freedom and determinism. Thus, Laurence's dynamic model of inheritance creates an exemplary process of self-making not only for women looking "to find their 'true individuality'" but also for the diverse men and women who have come to call themselves Canadian.

Given the association of title with property, however, we might ask what property Morag claims in "set[ting] down her title." Literally, Morag's title claims the book that is the testament of her dynamic synthesis of inheritance and self-making. Her immaterial inheritance from Christie has been a claim, a title right, in the province of narrative itself. It is only fitting that Morag's title should be both inherited and self-made through the freedom granted in her dynamic relationship with the past. This section began with a Bergsonian resonance; it ends by sounding again the dissonances between inheritance and self-making for the Canadian individualist, which Laurence brings to unlikely but compelling synthesis in her last novel.

Conclusion: Individual Inheritances

These modern novels question the relationship between freedom and determinism as it arises in the novelistic conflict between inheritance and self-making. This conflict also implies a world-view connected, with the help of Bergson, to a way of thinking about time. Grove and Callaghan, especially, reveal the force of older models of inheritance even as they suggest that determinism binds individuals to a kind of self-possession that does not spontaneously arise from some internal source. While they maintain determinist models of inheritance, self-making in Grove's and Callaghan's novels occurs either by projecting inheritance into the future (Grove) or recreating it through a violent transformation of the determining force of the past (Callaghan). Laurence, in contrast, transforms the antagonism itself: Morag's defining moments of self-making occur when she accepts her narrative inheritances. As Morag experiences the present life of the past not as a burden but as the very condition of her self-creation, Laurence opposes an alternative, durational temporality to the predictive assumptions of determinism.

Inheritance is an important philosophical topic for modern novelists, who were writing after the pioneer's narrative of self-making, relying as it did on nineteenth-century ideas about property and time, began to lose its determining force for new generations in the twentieth century. The ambivalence reflected in the treatment of inheritance in these novels further reinforces the individualist interests and philosophical character of the modern novel. As characters struggle for and against their inheritances, they reveal the individualist desires—for freedom, self-making, and self-possession—at the heart of the novels discussed here. In turn, these desires expose both the Lockean and liberal philosophical inheritances that inform the individual and their creative and critical appropriation in the modern Canadian novel. While

Grove, Callaghan, and Buckler demonstrate the tension between determinism and freedom, they also anticipate self-narrative and new experiences of internal time as ways of escaping the seeming bind of patrilineal inheritance, which in its deterministic models displaces self-possession to a future moment or ties it to an event in the past. Both of these directions suggest an individual and a nation unsure of the inheritances they have received from the past and the ones they will create for the future. Laurence's dynamic model of inheritance, however, escapes this bind not by embracing the philosophies of the individual inherited from the Enlightenment tradition, but by appropriating Bergson's philosophy of time into the narrative of the Canadian individual's self-making. As Morag's experience of duration suggests, this philosophical appropriation also repositions the individual in relation to both her inheritances and her self-making. Informed but no longer determined by a past that is "always present," duration and self-reflexive narration free the individual to create spontaneously both herself and her inheritances.

CHAPTER THREE

LIBERAL CRITIQUES:
POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND THE LIBERAL INDIVIDUAL IN GROVE, CALLAGHAN, AND BAIRD

She's just an individual. What's happening to her may be tragic. I don't deny it, although our conception of tragedy may have to change. She's an illustration of a larger issue and you can't stop to worry about her.

Morley Callaghan, *They Shall Inherit the Earth* (131)

So Mike Aikenhead's communist friend, Bill Johnson, dismisses Anna Prychoda's suffering in Morley Callaghan's *They Shall Inherit the Earth*. For Bill, Anna's individual story is meaningful only in abstraction: her tragedy symbolizes the systemic failure of liberal capitalism that Bill's communism promises to correct. Bill's apparently cruel sacrifice of the individual in his ideological interpretation inspires Mike's rejection of communism and illuminates an important political problem in Callaghan's novel and others during the interwar period, a time of polarized and ideological political engagement: can I be an autonomous individual and also part of a political group that has already interpreted me, already conceived who I am? Callaghan's novel, as well as others by Frederick Philip Grove and Irene Baird, questions the dominant political ideologies of the time—namely, liberal democracy, socialism, communism, and fascism—with special attention to the ways in which they transform the individual into an abstract "illustration of a larger issue." Critiquing attitudes like Bill's, these novelists ask how an individual might engage in politics *and* maintain his individuality. To varying degrees these novels suggest that self-reflection and commitment to individually created values are both necessary to any profound political stance and the strategies that buttress the individual in political communities.

Grove's *Fruits of the Earth* (1933) and *The Master of the Mill* (1944), Callaghan's *They Shall Inherit the Earth* (1935), and Baird's *Waste Heritage* (1939) all stage a conflict between

the individual and the political ideologies that diminish his freedom, individuality, and self-possession. In doing so, the novels critique the dominant liberal political institutions, which seem to have abandoned the individual at the centre of liberal philosophy, and test alternative political models that might replace them. Even as Grove, Callaghan, and Baird appraise liberal political ideologies, however, they maintain the value of the primary ethical principle of liberalism: that the individual should be free to develop in his own way. In doing so, they suggest that deep political commitment resists ideological assumptions and relies on the individual's tenacious creation and evaluation of his own political values. Thus, Grove, Callaghan, and Baird espouse liberal values as a means of critiquing both the ideologies that threaten those values and the liberal political systems that fail to live up to them.

Written in the modern realist style Colin Hill has theorized, Grove's, Callaghan's, and Baird's novels also share a number of features that characterize their treatment of politics: a representation of both a desire for collective and political belonging and an individualist critique of the sacrifices implicit in such belonging; a reluctance to develop deep characterizations of political ideologues; and an implied but unsettled interest in the future of the individual and his community. Grove, Callaghan, and Baird demonstrate the way in which political regimes (including, following Nietzsche, democratic ones) diminish the individual's uniqueness and ability to develop his personal potential. Additionally, Callaghan's and Baird's omniscient and apparently objective narrators resist ideological intervention in or comment on the events of their narratives and so underscore the ambivalence that inspires their authors' political investigations.

Each novel offers a different critique of a political system that equalizes and so erases individuality. In *Fruits of the Earth* and *The Master of the Mill* Grove represents individualists who have become authoritarians. In the earlier novel, Grove explicitly criticizes democracy in

Nietzsche's individualist terms, but his novel can only propose an ironic and temporary correction to the problems of democracy through Abe Spalding's benevolent dictatorship. *The Master of the Mill* criticizes both Sam Clark's moderate and inauthentic socialism and his son Edmund's authoritarian conglomeration of modern political ideologies, including communism and fascism. While Grove's novels focus on authoritarian masters, Callaghan's and Baird's address the modern political climate from the perspective of the suffering, exploited individual. *They Shall Inherit the Earth* launches a thorough criticism of the liberal and capitalist values of Mike Aikenhead's father, the collective and disinterested politics of Mike's communist friend, and Mike's own faulty individualist reasoning. *Waste Heritage*, on the other hand, dramatizes Matt Striker's struggle to maintain his individual integrity from within and without a communist organization. Through their representations of alternative political systems to democracy in a capitalist market, the novelists meditate on the political future of the individual during a "fragile" (Mason, "State" 3) historical moment that could only offer impermanent answers.

The political interests of these novels have often gone unarticulated in the criticism. Political readings of modern Canadian novels, few that they are, have focused almost exclusively on novels with explicit communist or socialist projects. Accordingly, critics interested in politics in the modern Canadian novel often scorn works as "middle class," such as Callaghan's *They Shall Inherit the Earth*, that include communist characters but do not present a narrative that can be (superficially or sophisticatedly) interpreted to support a larger leftist ideology. For example, Robin Mathews, following Dorothy Livesay's early review, dismisses Callaghan's novel as one that is "about an unemployed middle-class boy with middle-class values trying to 'find himself'" ("Canada's" 1). It is difficult to imagine Mike's violent transformation of himself and his father presented in Chapter Two as simply an articulation of "middle-class values," but in order to

praise novels with clearer communist objectives, critics of Mathews's generation often made such limited claims. Alternatively, critics have relied on the biography of authors to help identify the political message of their novels. Frederick Philip Grove, who ran (and lost) for the CCF in a provincial election in 1943 (Martens 254), has received favourable attention among leftist critics, especially for *The Master of the Mill*,[1] even as his novels complicate any straightforward socialist reading. These perspectives on politics in the modern Canadian novel endorsed a standard of judgement that values literature primarily for its expression of a pre-conceived political ideology. (Ironically, it is precisely the way the individual is diminished through and made to serve pre-conceived political programs that these novels find problematic.)

Livesay exemplifies this standard of judgement in her forward to "I Was a Young Communist," where she criticizes Baird and Callaghan for their political ambivalence, supported by their impersonal realist aesthetic, and the consequent absence of a firm revolutionary program in their novels. As James Doyle notes in *Progressive Heritage*, "[the] problem with both Baird and Callaghan, Livesay suggested, lay in the very feature that Baird regarded as her strength, the detachment from political commitment" (119). According to Livesay, "[a]lthough dealing with the unemployed […] neither of these writers' work [*sic*] could be called political. They relied on realistic 'slice-of-life' techniques; and though decrying the evils of the social order they offer no solution other than personal salvation" (17). Here Livesay repeats the sentiment of her 1936 review of Callaghan's novel, where she argued that Callaghan's style "steers away from a revolutionary conclusion" (175). Livesay's reading of these novels, however, demonstrates the limited definition of political fiction for those who sincerely subscribe to a particular political ideology. "Political" fiction for such critics polemically offers a revolutionary solution to a

[1] See, for example, Salvatore Proietti's essay, "Frederick Philip Grove's Version of Pastoral Utopianism," and John Z. Ming Chen's "Re-reading Grove: The Influence of Socialist Ideology on the Writer and *The Master of the Mill*."

systemic problem from an ideological point of view.

Approaching politics in the modern Canadian novel from a perspective like Livesay's, however, just does not account for its richly philosophical representation in the novels discussed here. Unlike the ideological characters who populate their novels and the critics who evaluate the way the novels subscribe to or reject explicit political affiliation, Grove, Callaghan, and Baird treat politics as a set of problems rather than a set of assumptions. Broadly, political discussions of Canadian novels have adhered to a simple definition of politics: "the assumptions or principles to or underlying any activity, theory, or attitude, especially when concerned with questions of power and status within society" or "the theory or practice of government or administration" (*OED*). Usually these definitions also imply radical, opposed, or debated positions. Although the absence of a revolutionary solution in Grove's, Callaghan's, and Baird's novels signals the absence of a polemical position, it also signals a desire to debate the political questions of the time from more than one point of view. In fact, Grove, Callaghan, and Baird transform politics from a "theory" or "assumption" to a series of ethical questions that call attention precisely to the way in which political "assumptions" reduce the individual. This approach is supported by the novelists' largely impersonal and detached narrators, who underline problems without interpreting them for their readers. It also suggests that these novelists approach politics from philosophical points of view that posit strategies rather than solutions: they develop self-reflection as a necessary condition of political commitment and they emphasize internal struggle not as a sign of indifference to political struggle, but as part of it.

Such strategies in the modern Canadian novel connect it to the philosophical and political concerns of Anglo-American modernism and its critique of liberalism. In *A Genealogy of Modernism*, Michael Levenson argues that Anglo-American modernism develops egoistic and

authoritarian tendencies in response to the wavering liberalism of the early twentieth century (68).[2] While authoritarianism reduces individual freedom through a strict political system, egoism claims to increase freedom and is thus sometimes aligned with anarchism. Levenson argues that the egoist critique of liberalism was rooted paradoxically in an essentially liberal value—that of the autonomous self. Thus, for a certain kind of liberal skeptic, "liberalism decomposed into egoism. And where liberal ideology had made the individual the basis on which to construct religion, politics, ethics and aesthetics, egoism abjured the constructive impulse and was content to remain where it began: in the sceptical self" (68). The two poles of this reaction to liberalism importantly also define the "changing character of individualism" (74) in the first decades of the twentieth century.

While Levenson's genealogy locates the political impetuses and outcomes of this "changing character of individualism" in the period before World War I, in Canadian literature these changes are most evident in novels of the interwar period. As the novels discussed here demonstrate, the volatile political landscape of the interwar period affected individualism; it challenged the assumptions of democracy and capitalism, and, more broadly, drew attention to the way systems outside the individual structure his freedom. In these novels, egoism and authoritarianism interact as novelists investigate what political system is best for the individual. On one hand, the anarchic spirit of egoism and its Nietzschean emphasis on individual power provided novelists with a means of critiquing the ways in which liberal democracy had ransomed the individual's ability to develop his own power to the easy governance of an anonymous mass. On the other hand, authoritarian characters offered a way to critique the implicit tyranny of that

[2] In Levenson's genealogy, modernists tended toward egoism in the years before the First World War; the more common association of modernism with authority and its political parallels in authoritarianism reflects a shift he perceives to have followed the First World War: "modernism was individualist before it was anti-individualist, anti-traditional before it was traditional, inclined to anarchism before it was inclined to authoritarianism" (79).

anonymous mass, to test political systems that might replace a liberal democracy supported by the free market, and in the case of *The Master of the Mill*, to express anxiety about an authoritarian future. These two forceful political impulses work together in novels by Grove, Callaghan, and Baird to create a relentless political critique.

In *Modernism and Democracy*, Rachel Potter locates the catalyst of skepticism about liberalism in the introduction of mass democracy in Britain in 1918—the same year women were granted the vote in federal elections in Canada—and the political demands of the First World War. As Potter compellingly puts it, "[at] the historical moment when Britain became a genuinely mass democratic state, then, the state's authority over the individual was significantly and permanently extended" (6). In other words, as Nietzsche, who viewed democracy as the political system of a decadent era, would agree, the moment of democracy's apotheosis in the realization of an extended enfranchisement and the victory of the First World War is also the moment in which its values were compromised. Grove suggests a similar disillusionment in *The Master of the Mill*. Captain Stevens, who writes the *History of the Langholm Mill*, critically recalls the hollow interpretation of the war as a fight for democracy and its ideals: "According to the demagogues writing in these papers, the war was to make the world safe for democracy, whatever that might mean; and to usher in an era of peace and universal brotherhood. What those who used such words of wide and undefined meaning meant by them it would be interesting, if difficult, to investigate" (251).[3] According to these recollections of wartime rhetoric, democracy's extension was also its defeat. As Nietzsche anticipated in *Twilight of the Idols* and the novels discussed here critically demonstrate: "Liberal institutions stop being liberal as soon

[3] In his unpublished essay "The Case for Democracy" (1939), Grove echoes this sentiment: "Democracy today is on the defensive throughout the world, even in the so-called democracies. A vast, daring challenge has been thrown down: four great empires have definitely abandoned it; they have abandoned it on the plea that it has failed; that it has itself abandoned the very principles for which it was claimed the last war had been fought; that it has brought to the whole world disasters worse than military defeat has brought in the past" (50).

as they have been attained: after that, nothing damages freedom more terribly or more thoroughly than liberal institutions" (213).

Introducing new political ideologies that might replace liberalism altogether, the revolutionary changes to political regimes in Europe further emphasized the crisis of liberalism. According to Potter, by the 1930s, these changes "suggested that liberal ideals such as the primacy of individual freedom might be redundant in the context of the new totalitarian democracies of post-war politics. This crisis became far more acutely felt in the 1930s, when the totalitarian states of Europe forced politicians and writers to engage with the prospect of the disintegration of basic liberal beliefs altogether" (7). In this moment of extreme political change, egoism and authoritarianism offered vantage points from which one could critique the values and embodiment of liberal democracy in particular and the liberal individual in general.

These changes also engaged Canadian writers, and as Canada's international political presence increased after the First World War, so did writers' criticism of its founding political ideals. While Grove's, Callaghan's, and Baird's novels insistently question the assumptions of the political systems they encounter, each also maintains the importance of John Stuart Mill's "central ethical principle of liberalism – the freedom of the individual to realize his or her capacities" (Macpherson, *Life* 2), which anchors "the democracy that World War I was to make the world safe for" (48). Following the First World War, however, liberal democracy became not a means of supporting individual flourishing but a hegemonic political system that sacrificed individual development to market capitalism, a usual, but inessential, characteristic of liberal

democracy.[4] As they critique liberal political systems for abandoning the liberal individual at their centre, these novelists also defend the individual as "not a consumer […] but an exerter and developer and enjoyer of his capacities" (48). Notably, Nietzsche offers novelists a mode both of defending the individual and of critiquing the political systems (including liberal democracy) that attempt to level him. As H.W. Siemens explains, Nietzsche shares Mill's belief that "freedom attaches to the individual in its particularity, in its difference from a plurality of other[s]" ("Nietzsche" 449).[5] As they respond to and critique the apparent erasure of individual particularity in interwar political ideologies Grove, Callaghan, and Baird variously echo and engage with Nietzsche's criticisms of democracy and socialism. Moreover, Grove and Callaghan also draw on the Nietzschean individual—who, like Mike Aikenhead, attempts to win his individuality through violent acts of power—in order to defend the individualist goods they share with both Nietzsche and Mill.

Attention to how Nietzsche's criticisms of democracy, socialism, and communism anticipate Grove's, Callaghan's, and Baird's representations of those systems reveals the philosophical nature of their novels. For Nietzsche, these political systems remain tyrannical whether the tyranny is that of "the despotic genius" or that "of the people" (Siemens, "Critique" 25). While many of his critics rightfully note that Nietzsche is not a political philosopher, Keith Ansell-Pearson claims that Nietzsche, like the novelists discussed here, is "preoccupied with the fate of politics in the modern world" (*Introduction* 2).[6] Nietzsche believes that "one's primary,

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[4] Macpherson strongly suggests that "a liberal position need not be taken to depend forever on an acceptance of capitalist assumptions, although historically it has been so taken" (2). Chantal Mouffe continues to advocate for the separation of liberal democracy from the free market: "in order to develop fully the potentialities of the liberal ideals of individual freedom and personal autonomy, we need […] to rescue political liberalism from its association with economic liberalism" (7).

[5] See Siemens's essay "Nietzsche *contra* Liberalism on Freedom" and Louise Mabille's *Nietzsche and the Anglo-Saxon Tradition* for detailed analyses of Nietzsche's divergence from Mill.

[6] See Daniel W. Conway's *Nietzsche and the Political*; Keith Ansell-Pearson's *An Introduction to Nietzsche as a Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist*; and H.W. Siemens's "Nietzsche's Critique of Democracy (1870-1886)."

overriding – and perhaps sole – ethical 'obligation' is to attend to the perfection of one's ownmost self," an obligation "typically conveyed via the language of *autonomy and authenticity*" (Conway 54; original emphasis). In developing his individualist ethics, however, Nietzsche also "resuscitates" (Siemens 21) the ethical underpinning of political philosophy. As Daniel Conway points out, the "founding question of politics"—"*What ought humankind to become?*" (3; original emphasis)—drives Nietzsche's political ideas. Nietzsche's answer to this essential question forms the basis of his critique of modern political ideologies and informs his individualist approach to politics. Furthermore, Nietzsche's concern for this question underscores the essentially philosophical approach to politics that Grove, Callaghan, and Baird share with the German philosopher. Investigating what political system could aid the individual's cultivation of his "ownmost self," these novelists engage in a philosophical rather than polemical endeavour.

Nietzsche's critique of democracy is essential to the political investigations of the novels discussed here. According to Nietzsche, democracy values "the people" and in doing so it devalues the individual. In the work of his late period—which includes *On the Genealogy of Morality*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and the "Free Spirit" trilogy—Nietzsche increasingly condemns the transformation of individuals into herd animals by liberal democracy, socialism, and Christian morality. Nietzsche thus privileges the authentic individual, who, like Zarathustra, does not follow the herd; he replaces politics with an ethics that values individuality, difference, and what he calls noble morality.[7] As Nietzsche sarcastically put it in *Daybreak*, "[t]oday it

[7] For Nietzsche, noble morality is essentially an egoist morality, defined and upheld by the individual alone: "The noble type of man feels *himself* to be the determiner of values, he does not need to find approval, in his opinion, 'What harms me is harmful as such', he knows that he himself is the one to first confer honour on a thing, he *creates values*. He honours everything which he knows pertains to himself: a morality like this is self-glorification […] The noble man honours the powerful man in himself" (*Genealogy* 155; original emphasis). In contrast to noble morality, which is "not the morality of 'modern ideas' and [is] therefore difficult to appreciate today" (156), Nietzsche defines slave morality as "essentially a morality of usefulness. Here is the source from which that famous antithesis, 'good' and '*evil*' emerged: – power and danger were projected into evil, a certain dreadfulness, finesse and strength that would not allow contempt to arise" (156; original emphasis).

seems *to do everyone good* when they hear that society is on the way to *adapting* the individual to general requirements, and that *the happiness and at the same time the sacrifice of the individual* lies in feeling himself to be a useful member and instrument of the whole" (82; original emphasis). The tension between individual happiness and sacrifice to the whole resonates with the central conflict of the novels discussed here, most affectively and tragically in Matt Striker's story in Baird's *Waste Heritage*. In a *Nachlass* note of 1880, Nietzsche similarly describes how the sacrifice of the individual to the whole reduces individuals to grains of sand, "all very similar, very small, very round, very accommodating, very boring" and asks, "would this be the last image that humanity could offer?" (qtd. Siemens 25-6). Perhaps the greatest concern Grove, Callaghan, and Baird share with Nietzsche is this worry over humanity's future. Even as these authors offer recognizably Nietzschean critiques of interwar political ideologies, and demonstrate a similarly Nietzschean concern for the individual, their novels do not offer a corrected image of the future that political critics have desired. Instead, as these modern novelists assess the fate of the individual in the interwar period, they also look uneasily toward a future in which individual particularity might be thoroughly erased. *What ought humankind to become* remains an unanswered question as the Depression ends and Canada prepares to enter another world war. Grove, Callaghan, and Baird do suggest, however, what humankind ought not to become: insensitive to the individual's suffering, personal struggle, and political potential. Obliquely, then, these novelists defend the liberal individual and redefine our expectations of "political" novels in Canada.

Grove's Shifting Political Ideals: Autocracy and Democracy

As mentioned above, critics often group Frederick Philip Grove with other writers who

shared socialist ideals and demonstrated some desire for real political power. Larry McDonald notes that Grove "confesses his socialist sympathies" in his letters—"I firmly believe that the root of evil lies in our system of exchange values. La proprieté, c'est le vol"—and in his quasi-autobiographical novel, *A Search for America* (1927)—"I am not an economist, but I can see that real democracy can be arrived at only in one of two ways, by collective ownership or by a limitation of wealth" (qtd. McDonald, "Socialism" 6). McDonald also observes that despite the evidence of Grove's clearly socialist values, "[o]ne must also take into account other, often apparently contradictory, aspects of his ideology: a conservative temperament that was profoundly mistrustful of progress and technology, an often elitist and patronizing dismissal of the general run of humanity, and an ambivalent attitude toward democracy" (6). Indeed, Grove's novels and his unpublished political essays from the 1930s and early 1940s suggest that he was of two minds when it came to the political system that best supports individuality. He openly criticized democracy before the start of the Second World War for promoting conformity and so bringing extraordinary individuals to the level of the mediocre "riff-raff," as he sometimes called undiscerning voters; following the fall of 1939, however, Grove argued that democracy offered the only system through which the individual could claim his liberty. The apparent contradictions in Grove's political theory and its iterations in his novels—especially *Fruits of the Earth* (1933) and *The Master of the Mill* (1944)—may be resolved through attention to the changes he made in his political thinking and, especially, to the political ideals he *did* maintain throughout the Depression and the Second World War, namely a concern for the individual, an emphasis on creative evolution, and a demonstrable commitment to self-reflexive debate.

A series of unpublished essays on democracy and autocracy from between the mid-1930s and the middle of the Second World War reveal Grove's conscious grappling with the political

extremes of his time and his own political beliefs. Grove's socialism is rooted in his essentially liberal emphasis on the individual's right to cultivate his best self, which he clearly expresses in his long essay, "The Case for Democracy: Musings of a Man in the Street" (1939): "the state must see to it that every citizen has the fullest opportunity to develop his powers – physical, mental, emotional – to the highest pitch within his reach" (41).[8] In an earlier essay, "Conformity – A Danger of Democracy,"[9] Grove expresses a similar concern for individual development through his negative image of democratic conformity that inhibits progress at all levels: Grove argues that leaders who are forced "to assume at least the outward appearance of a conformity to the standards of mediocrity" will *become* mediocre (5), and that "conformity stands in the way of all so-called progress, all change, all evolution" (6); "insipid conformity" (7) thus limits what an individual and a nation may become, for "ideals are not evolved by average brains" (6).

As the titles of Grove's essays suggest, the political system that he believed would best foster individual and cultural progress significantly changed between "Conformity – A Danger of Democracy" and "The Case for Democracy." In the earlier essay, Grove controversially argues: "so far, variation has been favoured, has been fostered, not in so-called democracies but in

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[8] The dates of this essay are clearer than others. Grove notes that he is writing during the "fall of 1939" (40) and he wrote to Lorne Pierce about publishing the essay on October 28 and November 11, 1939 (*Letters* 370, 371). The essay was never published, although parts of it were reworked in the published essay "Democracy and Education" (*Letters* 370). "The Case for Democracy" and the other unpublished essays discussed in this chapter can be found in the Grove *fonds* at the University of Manitoba. All can be found in Box 20, marked 1932-1942.

[9] Although this essay is undated, it is likely that Grove wrote it before 1939. It can be found with "The Case for Democracy" in Box 20 at the University of Manitoba, suggesting it was written sometime between 1932-1942. As I discuss below, the themes of the essay also suggest that it may have been composed around the time of the publication of *Fruits of the Earth*. Unlike "The Case for Democracy" (1939) and "Autocracy and Democracy" (1942)—which both contain references to specific events in the Second World War that make their composition dates obvious—"Conformity" concentrates on "America" (by which Grove means both Canada and the United States) and seems oblivious to an international crisis, such as a world war. Given Grove's clear interest in the war, it is unlikely that he would compose an essay about autocracy without some reference to the totalitarian regimes that in other essays he contemplates extensively. Furthermore, "Conformity" explicitly contradicts the argument set forth in "The Case for Democracy," probably because it represents an earlier view that Grove consciously corrected in his political essays during the war. Given that in "Conformity" Grove argues that autocracy actually liberates individuals, it seems highly unlikely that this essay could have been written with the knowledge of the growing maliciousness of totalitarian regimes in the Second World War.

autocracies rather" (6). In contrast, in his later essay he argues that "the autocratically-governed state is of necessity uncreative: it is static. As a matter of principle it abhors creativeness; for creativeness means change" (38), while "[d]emocracy does not advocate conformity; it advocates the most diverse flowering of individuality" (51).[10] Notably, Grove claims that autocracy and democracy are the only options for a political system and that "[all] other forms of government are intermediate between [them]" (7). Moreover, for Grove, the main difference between these forms of government lies in the relationship of each to the individual: "Whereas, in the autocracies or dictatorships, the individual exists primarily for the state, in the democracies the state exists for the individual" (46). As his essays and the seeming contradictions in his novels attest, Grove was attracted to both the authoritarian and egoistic poles Levenson and Potter note, and often brings them together to critique the current political state that his novels represent. In his later thinking, however, autocracy more obviously promotes an authoritarian sacrifice of the individual, while democracy, at least potentially, promotes and protects individuality.

Fruits of the Earth and *The Master of the Mill* reveal the progress of Grove's political thinking as years of depression turned to years of war. In fact, Grove's political ideals become clear only through such comparisons. Grove used both his political essays and his novels to test and experiment with different political systems during a period in which world politics and Grove's personal politics were changing. His novels thus serve a philosophical function: they

[10] Grove's return to the word "conformity" here suggests that he is consciously correcting his earlier view of democracy. In testament to Grove's own thoughtfulness on and inner debate about political systems, however, he presents a balanced view of autocracy even in "The Case for Democracy." While Grove clearly argues there that democracy is the ideal towards which we must continue to strive, he recognizes the appeal of autocracy and some of its theoretically positive characteristics. For example, he claims that "[t]here is something very frank and above-board about autocracy; it undisguisedly acknowledges and accepts the fact that men are born or created unequal. But the only inequality thus acknowledged is one of power ('cratos')" (6-7) and that "[a]utocracy at its best […] is better than democracy at its worst" (30). These suggestions of autocracy's appeal demonstrate Grove's palpable desire to discover the best form of government for the modern world; they also form part of his critique of the current state of democracy and rhetorically persuade his reader to reconsider how to improve democracy so that autocracy might not hold such appeal.

help Grove to express his concerns about and theories of different political systems. *Fruits of the Earth* reveals Grove's apprehension about the regressive nature of democratic conformity in Canada in general and in growing prairie communities in particular. Abe's benevolent dictatorship over Spalding District exhibits many of the positive qualities Grove found in autocracy, and Abe criticizes democracy as Grove does in "Conformity – A Danger of Democracy," likely written around the time of the publication of *Fruits*; however, Grove suggests in both texts that such agrarian dictatorship only works in the small, rural communities that were quickly disappearing after the First World War. *The Master of the Mill*, on the other hand, demonstrates Grove's apprehension about socialism, fascism, and communism; the novel reflects Grove's increasingly international political interests and his renewed commitment to liberal and democratic individualism during the Second World War. More importantly, however, the seeming inconsistencies within Grove's novels and political essays testify to an essential characteristic of his own political commitment: that to engage in politics means to engage in thoughtful debate, experiment, and change. Comparing Grove's political vision in these two novels reveals their author not as an inconsistent socialist, but as a liberal individualist, who applied his deepest criticisms to his own ideals.

As I argued in the previous chapter, the protagonist of *Fruits of the Earth*, Abe Spalding, is a Lockean individual who shares characteristics with the colonizer, the liberal individual, and the Old World aristocrat. As we saw, Abe's visionary projections shape and structure the district that bears his name: "Down to the nature of the wind-breaks, the district bore the imprint of Abe's mind" (Grove, *Fruits* 208). But one of Abe's persistent problems catalyzes in this relationship to the district: despite his incredible influence as one of the original settlers in the district and, more significantly, its primary employer, he remains estranged from the communal

life that it offers. While other settlers regularly meet at Nicoll's Corner to talk and socialize, Abe "was no mixer; *he* followed a lonely path – worst of crimes in western Canada" (209; original emphasis).[11]

As he will in *The Master of the Mill*, in *Fruits of the Earth* Grove imagines different political models that might meet the shifting demands of the modern world against which his protagonists, as a rule, struggle. In this earlier novel, Grove tests the Nietzschean ideal of the aristocratic great man against the modern ideals of the democratic people. Moreover, Grove's thoughtful and often sympathetic portrayal of Spalding District's ironic "king who commands" (209) represents a political conflict essential to a settler culture: while Spalding District needs just such a strong leader to help settle it, because of their democratic values, the settlers come to resent Abe as a dictator, however benevolent. According to Axel Knönagel in *Nietzschean Philosophy in the Works of Frederick Philip Grove*, "[t]he agrarian society that Grove favors throughout his *oeuvre* is so strongly oriented toward individual achievement that communal life appears primarily as an unwanted distraction for the farmer's energies" (166), but "in the western Canada of 1920 everyone is a member of society, whether he wants to be or not" (168). Grove's political question in *Fruits* might thus be phrased as, what political system will settle the prairies? Or, how will the political structure of the prairies be settled?

Just as some of the settlers of Spalding District disdain Abe's ostensibly autocratic power, however, Abe disdains the process and effects of democracy. In the early days of the settlement, Abe's political power is rarely questioned; Nicoll's influential interpretation of

[11] In "Conformity," Grove similarly laments that solitariness is the "worst of crimes in western Canada" and that the desire to be alone results in social ostracism: "In order to incur this sort of ostracism it is not even necessary to do or say the unpopular thing: it is quite sufficient not to do or say what everybody says or does; if you do not play bridge, if you do not attend such theatricals or moving-picture shows as the taste of the generality impels them to call for, yes, if you do not use the slang of the hour, you are at least suspect; and if you do not happen to be economically independent of the community, that community will sooner or later break you unless you bend" (5). The likeness of these comments in phrasing and thought to Grove's description of Abe's predicament in *Fruits* further confirm that "Conformity" was composed in the early 1930s.

democracy—"[d]emocracy means putting the right man in the right place" (Grove, *Fruits* 100)—reconciles democratic values and autocratic rule. As long as the voters elect "the right man" and do not insist on "interfer[ing] with every detail" (100), Abe is free to make decisions according to his own values and vision. For example, Abe "pick[s]" (74) Mr. Blaine to be the schoolteacher despite the popular desire in the district for a female teacher. Abe, secure in his power, "felt he was doing what was best for the district, as time would show. He was content to force his better judgment on them if need be" (76). In fact, Abe's ability to enforce his own position for the good of his community reflects one of the characteristics of a small, municipal government; Grove maintained in "The Case for Democracy" that "the smaller the unit we consider, the less seem the evils of the [democratic] system to predominate" (24). That is, as Abe demonstrates, in small governments, leaders need not pander to a wide community, and so they may make unequivocal, even stubborn, decisions motivated by their individual rule; in small governments, democracy and autocracy not only look similar, they seem (at least initially) compatible.

Importantly, as Abe's initial vision proves to be correct, Mr. Blaine's success confirms Abe not only as the "right man" but the man who is justified in "forc[ing] his better judgment" on his district. As Nicoll claims when he once again defends Abe's power as consistent with the democratic wishes of the district: "Look at the school. It's the best school for many miles around. I'll be the first to oppose Abe when he can't show me that he's right. But to put him down *because* he's right is silly, not democratic" (100; original emphasis). Such conflicts between Abe's "right" vision and his execution of it underline the larger political conflict of the era: Abe's political power and distance from the social life of his community define him as an authoritarian and aristocratic individual. Like Nietzsche's noble individual, Abe "feels *himself* to be the determiner of values, he does not need to find approval" (*Genealogy* 155; original

emphasis); furthermore, although this model of democracy seems "right" in the early days of Spalding District, as the community grows, Abe loses his ability to assert his will over it.

Notably, Abe rejects democracy in explicitly Nietzschean terms. Abe dismisses democracy outright when Nicoll approaches him to run as a trustee on the newly consolidated school board after Wheeldon, a wily neighbour who disapproves of Abe's despotic power, has disenfranchised him to prevent him from voting against consolidation. "Democratic!" Abe exclaims to Nicoll, "I'll tell you what your precious democracy is. A system devised to keep the man who stands out from the common crowd down to the common level" (215). As Siemens explains, Nietzsche has precisely the same problem with democracy: "Democracy represents the *unbelief* in great humans and an elite society: 'everyone is the same as everyone'" (28; original emphasis).[12] Furthermore, Abe's disdain for the "common crowd" and the "common level" not only parallels Nietzsche's contempt for the "*autonomous* herd" of democracy (*Beyond* 90; original emphasis), which for him had become a modern tyrant, it also repeats Nietzsche's description of democratic individuals as "*levelers*" (40; original emphasis).

Abe's Nietzschean criticism of democracy for leveling individual greatness echoes Grove's own criticism of democracy in "Conformity," where he states that "this so-called democracy leads to a cultural levelling-down to the standard of the poor-in-mind" (5). Grove continues his skeptical appraisal of democracy with the claim that "[so] far, democracy means, in a cultural sense, the enforcement of mediocrity" (6). He provocatively argues that this "levelling-down" through the "insipid conformity" (7) of democracy razes the creative potential that Mill had promoted: "It is precisely the man who develops himself, that is, all the potentialities of variation latent in him, to the fullest extent who, in the long-run, will be of greatest value to society. And so long as democracy has left in it […] the slightest trace of mob-rule (and the

[12] Siemens quotes from Nietzsche's notebooks, *Kritische Studienausgabe* (*KSA*); the translation is Siemens's own.

demand for conformity is mob-rule) it can never evolve any but a very crude sort of civilisation" (6-7). Grove thus controversially argues that democracy—the political system commonly thought to develop, promote, and protect the individual's capacity to improve his "potentialities"—actually prevents the liberal individual from existing. Instead of that self-improving, self-reflective individual, for Grove in the mid-1930s, democracy creates a mediocre mass, the democratic "herd" that both Abe and Nietzsche deride. The similarities between Abe's criticisms in *Fruits* and Grove's appraisal in "Conformity" suggest that both belong to the same period of Grove's political thought. Grove's argument in "Conformity" suggests that his apprehensions about democracy in *Fruits* reflect his concern that "American" democracy in particular depends upon a shallow interest in public life that results in unreflective conformity.[13]

Abe Spalding refuses the herd; he stands apart from others in his district because of the size of his farm, his ambition, and his stubborn belief in the moral superiority of his own position. In other words, his egoistic and noble morality, as well as his powerful position as an employer, makes Abe an individualist who is also an authoritarian. The end of the First World War and the resultant boom in the population of young people in the district irrevocably unify Abe's criticisms of democracy and his conservative moral values. The democratic mass begins to desire easy material and sensual satisfaction: "The war had unsettled the men's minds. There was a tremendous new urge towards immediacy of results; there was general dissatisfaction. Irrespective of their economic ability, people craved things which they had never craved before. Democracy was interpreted as the right of everyone to everything that the stimulated inventive power of mankind in the mass could furnish in the way of convenience and luxuries" (Grove,

[13] Grove insists in many of his texts, including "Conformity" and *A Search for America*, that "America" refers not to the United States of America, but to the continent of (North) America. Often Grove uses this "American" correlation to suggest that Canada must fulfill American ideals that have been corrupted in the U.S. (Notably, he makes no reference to Mexico or South American countries in this usage.)

Fruits 288). Here, Grove extends Abe's evaluation of democracy as a system that keeps all individuals to a "common" level. Democracy creates the desires of the modern mass society for "convenience" and "luxuries." Such desire for quick satisfactions—in fact the belief that such satisfactions are democratic rights—starkly opposes Abe's rigid work ethic.

Moreover, Grove's description suggests that democracy is not, primarily, "a form of government or set of institutions" (Siemens 21), as Nietzsche knew in the nineteenth century. Rather, like Nietzsche, Grove presents democracy "as a set of values or ideals […] but also a disposition, attitude, or type that flourishes and dominates under those values" (21). In this final interpretation of democracy in *Fruits of the Earth*, then, it becomes a set of modern values that insists on the luxuries and ease of modern life and so appears irreconcilable with the labour and commitments required for life on the prairie.[14] This interpretation recalls Nietzsche's description of the similar confusion between liberal and democratic political ideals and the conveniences of modern, capitalist culture: "People live for today, people live very fast, – people live very irresponsibly: and this is precisely what people call 'freedom'" (*Twilight* 215). Nietzsche's philosophy functions here, as it does in the other novels discussed in this chapter, as a means of critiquing the culture that a political system produces. Grove's Nietzschean criticism of democracy through Abe's disdain of it thus condemns the capitalist culture of democracy that promotes a shallow conception of freedom, which in turn limits rather than extends the liberal value of individual development that Grove espoused.

Grove's conservative morals—which, as McDonald rightly notes, are often in tension

[14] Abe's disdain here is slightly ironic, because, of course, Abe builds a new house on his property with all of the modern conveniences, including "[l]ight and power" (141). Although Abe saves in order to provide his wife, Ruth, with a comfortable home, he also borrows to fill it with new furniture when it is built (148) and indulges in new farming machinery. Although Abe enjoys his modern conveniences, however, his purchases are the result of years of hard work and solid credit. Rather than profiting from the long-term investment of their labour, the men who return home from the war, on the other hand, expect the immediate satisfaction of their desires.

with his more progressive political characteristics—appear most obviously in his treatment of the young people in Spalding District. Abe's final revelation—that "[t]he district was calling" and that the "gang [of young people] had been running the district because he, Abe, had stood aloof" (Grove, *Fruits* 343)—at first seems to reinstate him as the moral and political leader of Spalding District. Motivated by his daughter's illegitimate pregnancy and his moral disdain for those who disrupt and disrespect the work and integrity of the pioneer, Abe returns to public life, from which he had withdrawn after his disenfranchisement, and takes up his role as an autocratic ruler. Grove's novel ends with Abe "accepting the burden of leadership" (343), vowing to return to political office (345), and using his "compelling power" (346) to break up and indefinitely shut down the schoolhouse dances that fomented the young people's immoral actions.

With such an ending Grove tentatively reconciles Abe's noble morality with his authoritarian claim to absolute power. Abe's renewed dedication to the district is in part inspired by his feeling that it is his possession: "this is *my* district, founded by *me* and bearing *my* name" (344; emphasis added). Although Abe develops as a character—as I discuss in Chapter Two—his political philosophy remains for the most part consistent throughout the novel. If the novel ends with Abe's communal re-commitment, it also ends with what looks like the return to his tradition of benevolent autocratic rule, which, as the last sentence subtly ironizes, comes as a relief to those who desire to be part of Abe's herd: "The news of his action spread through the district that very night; and there were not a few who breathed the traditional sigh of relief" (347).

Nietzsche's philosophy illuminates the bridge between egoism and authoritarianism for characters such as Abe, for their noble egoism bolsters their authoritative rule. According to Knönagel's Nietzschean reading of the novel, "Grove presents a benevolent dictatorship as preferable to any other form of rule" (169) without explaining how it might operate in a

democratic country:

> Grove emphasizes […] the inability of a Nietzschean character to function in a democratic society. At the same time, however, Grove echoes Nietzsche's view of politics by showing the inability of the settlers to govern themselves sensibly. *Fruits of the Earth* presents a benevolent dictatorship as an almost ideal form for an agrarian society, but the novel contains no suggestion how such a system might be brought into place in Canada, a country with a firmly established democratic system. (169-70)

E.A. McCourt also notes Grove's conflicted vision of an ideal political system for the prairie pioneers, especially as they are forced to accommodate the changes of the modern world: "[in] the end [Abe] reasserts a measure of authority over family and community and so gains a victory in which neither he nor the reader can take much pleasure" (63). The democratic reader might struggle with a novel that critiques Canada's political system and seems to promote a benevolent (and notably patriarchal) dictatorship as a political ideal. But Abe's authoritarian victory is also ironic, and his disdain for democracy should not be taken simply to reflect Grove's politics. Abe's rule will be temporary, as Grove implies in his "Author's Note," where he describes the farm that inspired his novel and, specifically, Abe's homestead: "This farm was such as to suggest a race of giants who had founded it; but on inquiry I found that it was held by tenants who tilled a bare ten per cent of its acreage. In a barn built for half a hundred horses they kept a team of two sorry nags; and they inhabited no more than two or three rooms of the outwardly palatial home" (n.p.). A representative of the "race of giants" who settled the prairie, Abe will not maintain his rule over or his legacy in Spalding District; the "traditional" return of order at the end of the novel signals only a temporary correction to the democratic "herd" of modernity.

Fruits of the Earth seems to privilege Abe's autocratic rule over a democratic mass that offends Abe's own individualist accomplishments, that has a shallow sense of freedom, and that encourages conformity. Grove's thorough criticism of democratic culture in *Fruits* echoes his sentiments in "Conformity," where he argues that autocracies rather than democracies foster individual difference (6), and both texts reflect the changes a prairie culture undergoes as its population increases and it transforms into a stable settlement. Grove tests two political systems in this novel that might define the politics and culture of the prairie: Abe exemplifies a Nietzschean noble individual whose timely critique of democracy must eventually fail, while the democratic "herd" exemplifies the risks of democracy in a capitalist economy that must be kept in check by outstanding individuals like Abe. Grove's appraisal of autocracy and democracy on the prairie, however, reveals more problems than it posits solutions. But, even as Grove avoids a utopian solution to the politics of the prairie, in *Fruits of the Earth* he indicates his own political questioning and maintains his liberal emphasis on the individual. That he maintains this emphasis even as he criticizes democracy is a testament to his notable ability to question what seems most hostile to questioning—in this case, the idea that democracy easily and always supports individuality.

Grove continued to investigate what political system best supported the individual in his penultimate and most political novel, *The Master of the Mill* (1944). This novel demonstrates a significant change in Grove's political thinking: while in *Fruits* he tentatively endorsed Abe's autocratic rule and criticized democratic culture, in *The Master of the Mill*, Grove criticizes socialism and fascism. Primarily through Sam Clark's meditation on his life and the history of his family's mill, *The Master of the Mill* tells the story of a mill in Langholm, at Ontario's border with Manitoba, and the Clark family that owns it. The largest mill in the country, essential to the

bread that will feed the empire, the mill grants its "master" undeniable political and economic power. Sam also meditates on the form of power that each of the mill's masters has embodied: Rudyard, Sam's father, "the autocrat" (56); Edmund, Sam's son, the visionary dictator (228); and Sam, the "socialist" and impotent "dreamer" (38).[15] In Sam and his son Grove creates two of his most memorable characters through two oppositional narrative strategies: his experiments with temporal narration and interiority make Sam the most fully realized, indeed the only quasi-modernist, protagonist in Grove's *oeuvre*. In contrast, Edmund's strong political vision with its fascist resonances is the most assertive in Grove's corpus, but that vision literally and narratively sacrifices Edmund's individuality; Grove denies Edmund interiority and thus limits him to the political position he espouses in his long speeches. In doing so, Grove suggests that rigid political vision limits individuality—even among strong individuals—and novelistic character development. Equally critical of Edmund's despotic rule and Sam's ineffective, moderate socialist dream, *The Master of the Mill* suggests (through Edmund's and Sam's negative examples) that political commitment requires self-reflexive analysis, the kind of self-criticism Grove himself engaged in through his political essays and novels. If Grove's subtle criticisms of Sam's socialism appear at odds with the author's own socialist inclinations it is because Grove's political commitment lies first with self-reflexive debate, which also commits him to questioning imaginatively the potential failures of socialist good intentions.

While *Fruits of the Earth* considers the implications of autocracy and democracy on the Canadian prairie, the political scope of *The Master of the Mill* transcends national borders; in fact, Edmund's vision of a mechanical mill that is the "master" of all humanity and Grove's

[15] Critics often compare Sam to Grove himself. For example, McDonald notes that "[l]ike Grove, [… Sam] is a self-declared socialist" ("Socialism" 6). Proietti offers more detail: "Grove himself is admittedly fascinated by the idea of 'socialism from above' ('Thoughts' 331). Sam Clark […] had been a firm believer in a Canadian actualization of a dream much like Bellamy's: the painless achievement of socialism promoted by Big Business" (364).

vision of his novel as "a great book" about "world conditions" (Grove, *Letters* 486) both highlight the universal scope of the novel. As is the case with many of Grove's novels, it is difficult to determine the exact years of *The Master*'s composition. At the end of the published novel, Grove gives the dates "1930-1944," but in letters he romantically claims that he "pondered it for almost exactly 30 years" (*Over* 453). Attesting to the importance he placed on the novel, Grove also claimed it was "one of the three books for which all else has been preparation" (453). Not surprisingly given the esteem Grove had for it, then, the novel underwent multiple drafts before the final version was published in 1944. Grove's letters reveal that he thought he had finished the novel in the summer of 1939, but it was redrafted in the years that followed. As I will explain below, Grove significantly rewrote Edmund as an unequivocally reckless and negative character, while in at least one earlier draft, he appeared "more human" (Mathews, "F.P." 255) and his vision seemed "ultimately true" (248). Grove's revision of this politically important novel coincides with his revision to his view of democracy in the essays he wrote during the war. These revisions suggest Grove's concern about the state of world politics and his conscious criticism of his own position; although Grove had once been able to sympathize with and even promote autocracy as a means of achieving liberal individualism, the Second World War inspired his reconsideration of just which political system might body forth the best future for humanity, and which the worst.

Critical interpretations of *The Master of the Mill* have taken Sam Clark's socialist dreams as an indication of its political vision. Supported by Grove's political similarities to his protagonist, critics variously argue that the novel "reverts to a romantic anti-capitalism" (Doyle 122), "test[s] and discard[s]" "three utopias" (Proietti 365), and leads "to a single political choice – utopian socialism" (Chen 25). Although these readings differ in the degree to which they assert

a socialist vision of and in the novel, each assumes that it upholds a fundamentally socialist ideal. Against Edmund Clark's uncompromising dictatorship, which will force men out of work and sterilize the poor, Sam's socialist dream, however unrealized, indeed appears a more reasonable approach to the politics of the twentieth century. Grove, however, does not easily replace Edmund's fascistic model with Sam's idealistic and moderate socialism.

Beyond their ideological differences, Sam's and Edmund's approach to the politics of the mill—which, as Edmund knowingly exploits, are also the politics of the country (228)—distinguish the two from one another. While Edmund asserts his own political vision above all others at any and every cost, Sam describes himself as having "always been a pessimist [… in] the sense that I go around things to look at their other side" (312). Because Sam's self-reflectiveness is rather shallow, however, his "pessimism" leads to a moderate position that prevents him from becoming the socialist visionary he had dreamed he would be. Remembering the first introduction of mechanical processes at the mill, Sam reflects that "he had acted and spoken in a manner opposed to all his preconceived principles": "Utopia would come in time, not now. If the men remained poor while the masters grew rich, it seemed a law of nature which he could not change. […] He felt that he was a link in a chain. Do nothing now; or as little as possible; enough to win the good will of the men; more radical changes must come from the generation to follow" (171). Sam lacks the revolutionary impulse to bring his "dream" into actualization in an era that demands radical positions from its revolutionaries. As this quotation underlines, Sam's moderate position, his desire to do "as little as possible," and his perceived impotence to change the fact that "the men remained poor while the masters grew rich," also reveal the superficial character of his "pessimism" and his failure as a socialist to acknowledge

his own participation in the brewing class conflict at the mill.[16] Ultimately, although Sam sympathizes with the workers, his motivations maintain the capitalistic structure of the mill. Sam's pessimism might have encouraged him to reflect on and change the fact that his position only hypocritically recognized the class injustice that made him rich and his workers poor, but this potential strategy for self-reflection produces stagnation rather than positive change. Sam's limited ability to see things from both sides stabilizes him in a static centre.

Sam's failings as a socialist also mark him as a Victorian rather than modern individual. Maud Clark, Edmund's widow and Sam's sympathetic daughter-in-law, reflects on Sam's good intentions at the end of Grove's narrative:

> this late Victorian, as a reformer, had been ineffective; and at the bottom he knew it. […] When he had been explicitly confronted with the alternatives inherent in the situation – the alternatives, which, in Europe, had sharply defined themselves between fascism and communism, he, the son of an autocrat and the father of a benevolent despot, would have chosen communism, not from any clear intellectual conviction, but from the fact that this aesthetically-satisfying creation of the mill as an outward manifestation of the human spirit demanded as close an approach to a social or economic harmony as could be arrived at. […] He had wanted peace; but peace, Maud reflected, was stagnation. (314-15)

Grove construes Sam's desire for "peace" and "social or economic harmony" as the result of his

[16] In fact, Sam's abstract concern for the workers at the mill prevents him from realizing the growing class differences between himself and the workers. While the workers "had looked upon [his father] as a man of their own kind" (111), "Sam was what his father had not been, a gentleman" (127). Sam, however, believes that his good intentions toward the workers should overcome any actual class difference: "Sam was a stranger to these men. With a weird sort of lucidity he saw that they considered him as being of a different class. And were they wrong? Yet he was more sparing of their feelings than his father had been. Never, for instance, had he driven up to the mill in his luxurious landau. When, from Clark House, he had gone to the mill, he had stopped at the office and proceeded afoot" (112). Of course, such concessions for the feelings of the workers solidify, rather than dissolve, the class differences and power dynamic between Sam and his employees, as is made clear when, on their way to the mill, workers on the morning shift must pass guests returning to the Palace Hotel from a party at the Clark mansion.

"late Victorian" values, which are incapable of competing with the ideological oppositions that would draw Europe into another war.[17] Importantly, Maud suggests that in this period of turbulent political conflict extreme and potentially violent change is unavoidable. Thus, Maud's comments imply that Sam's moderate position cannot survive the political crises of modernity, even though Sam survives his son's violent and radical opposition. Furthermore, through Sam, Grove suggests that a shallow ideological ideal limits the self-reflexivity needed for reasoned political engagement during a period of crisis. He thus criticizes Sam's hollow and aesthetic socialism. If ideological ideals push individuals into extreme positions, Sam escapes into extreme social aestheticism that negates positive action. This implicit criticism of Sam and the socialism he represents suggests not an inconsistency in Grove's own political commitments, but a refinement of them: socialists, especially those in powerful positions like Sam's, must avoid his escapism if they are to help bring forth a future of individual, economic well-being.

Edmund also emphasizes his father's Victorian fear of the future as part of the impotence of his moderate position: "It was the Victorian attitude, and it was yours and your generation's, to mistrust the future as you mistrusted me. So they fought the coming of that future with laws and guns; and finally, seeing that they could not shoot holes into a tide, they fought it with concessions to the rabble, designed to retard the coming of the tide" (226). Significantly, Edmund's interpretation reveals his own political theory: while he criticizes his father for fearing the future, Edmund views himself as an agent of the future, a revolutionary who will help bring in the "tide" of ideological change. Like Nietzsche, Edmund clearly unites the question of

[17] This criticism of Sam as "stagnant" further suggests that he does not represent Grove's own model of socialism. In "The Case for Democracy," Grove clearly emphasizes the necessity of evolution in any state: "the chief function of government […] must necessarily be so to arrange matters as to enable the future to be born; or to express the same thing in different words, to pave the way for evolution – and evolution can, politically, be defined as peaceful revolution" (43). To argue that Sam may be uncritically identified with Grove's own political position would mean to ignore this essential difference between the character and his author. While Grove promotes change, even when it might risk a regression, Sam unconsciously desires to maintain the status quo, a characteristic Grove associates in "The Case for Democracy" with the worst kind of politician.

politics with the question of the future of humankind; he not only imagines a future, he seeks to create it.

Edmund's political theory, a conglomeration of modern influences such as Nietzsche, Marx, and Hitler, has been only partially understood in the criticism, which has mostly viewed Edmund as a fascistic capitalist. For example, John Z. Ming Chen interprets Edmund as an exemplar of "late, monopoly capitalism" (31). For Salvatore Proietti, Edmund "is the spokesman for the new financial capitalism, which is no longer limited to the production of material goods" (365). Dismissing the Treaty of Versailles, Edmund claims that "the mill at Langholm would necessarily, in the long run, form the kernel of a political and economic dictatorship" (*Master* 246) and reveals that that dictatorship could use economic means to limit the population of the unemployed. Because Edmund's political power results from his ownership of the mill and monopoly over the industry, his critics have primarily seen him as a cruel and extreme capitalist.

Notably, Edmund also shares characteristics with the worst authoritarians of the twentieth century, despite his claim that he will be "a dictator in the Roman, not the mid-European sense" (287).[18] In particular, Edmund's extreme plans for population control resonate with the inhumane practices of Hitler's totalitarian regime. Edmund claims that he will manage the new, "economic" state with the profits collected from cutting the workers' wages (228): "The unused profits will be applied to the cost of governing the new state within the state which must replace the present anarchy of the world" (312). Furthermore, in a "Nazi-like proposal" (Proietti 365), Edmund imagines controlling population growth, especially among the poor; he might "sterilize those who live on the dole; or make an increase in the dole dependent on their consent to be

[18] Edmund curiously echoes Grove's own admiration for Roman autocracy. In "Democracy and Autocracy," Grove approves of the fact that "democracies, once war has broken out, turn to some form of dictatorship in the old, Roman sense, in order to be able to cope with the quickness of decision gained by a sharply centralised form of government" (5).

sterilized" (Grove, *Master* 228). Edmund's "Nazi-like" plan inhumanely and irrevocably erases the individuality and freedom of the mill workers.

Despite the critical emphasis on Edmund's apparently cruel capitalism, his capitalistic characteristics serve but do not define his political vision. In spite of his monopoly on the mill, its competitors, and the companies that support it, and his desire to transform the state into an economic one ("[it] will then appear that, essentially, the state is an economic organization and always has been so, not a political one" [228]), Edmund's vision for the future eliminates the distinguishing feature of capitalism: namely, profit. During one of his long diatribes he explains that "[of] course, we'll abolish private profit" (311).[19] This oft-forgotten feature of Edmund's utopia negates a straightforward reading of him as a cruel capitalist. Edmund's emphasis on *private* property unexpectedly resonates with his father's communist sympathies; in fact, Edmund commits to more strongly communist ideals than his moderate father had. Edmund's plan to erase private profit eventually further contributes to the erasure of individuality and difference in his political vision: slowly, Edmund intends to create an anonymous humanity which serves an abstract machine.

Edmund's unacknowledged Marxist influences appear again in his explanation that "[e]very system is born with the germs of death in it" (312). Chen singles out this quotation as evidence of Grove's "Hegelian-Marxist discourse": "this citation about 'antithesis' from Grove (Greve) himself confirms his dialectical bent" (37). Chen's focus on Grove's political beliefs, however, causes him to neglect the fact that this subtle reference to Marx—who wrote in his *Communist Manifesto* that "not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to

[19] In a seeming capitalist contradiction to this plan, Edmund earlier claims that economic competition is necessary for life: "Let all men be equal in an economic sense, and one incitement to live is gone. Man wants to be able to worship power; and power, today, means enormous wealth: wealth that gives him all he needs" (226). Edmund's emphasis on "today," however, suggests that this claim is consistent with his plan to "abolish private profit" in the future. While "now" power is only visible among the wealthy, "later" power will belong to the machines.

itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons" (42-43)—is voiced by the character Chen interprets as a *capitalist* ideologue. Edmund's allusion to Marx's dialectic and his plan to "abolish private profit" suggest a Marxist influence on Edmund's character unrecognized in the criticism of the novel. Significantly, these references demonstrate the combination of modern political ideologies that Edmund embodies and that he draws from as he plots the radical future he will bring into being.

Just as Chen offers a convincing if slightly misrepresentative reading of Edmund as a capitalist, so Knönagel persuasively misreads Grove's radical political character as the embodiment of a tyrannical Nietzschean political ideal. "Edmund Clark," Knönagel argues, "emerges as Grove's most Nietzschean protagonist, embodying the Nietzschean fixation on power as well as the belief in a hierarchal social structure defined by the elite" (161). Although Edmund plans to "divide mankind into two classes," "[t]he rulers and the ruled; the masters and the men; those who control the machines and those who benefit from them" (229), Knönagel neglects to consider the conflict between Edmund's leveling authoritarianism and the unique qualities of Nietzsche's sovereign individual. Like Abe and Nietzsche, Edmund opposes democracy because he does not believe the "*autonomous* herd" (Nietzsche, *Beyond* 90) capable of governing itself, but unlike Nietzsche, he does not act as part of a project of self-cultivation. Edmund desires to create a "state based on social and economic realities […] with only one master, one god: the machine" (287).

Edmund fails to embody a Nietzschean political ideal in two important ways. Edmund's despotism, like Marx's communist utopia, promises the end of history, the end of change. Tracy B. Strong points out that Nietzsche (like Grove) praises tyranny only when it fosters change: "If all will is will to power […] then all will is the will to make the world in one's own image

(whatever that image be). The praise that Nietzsche finds for this arrangement derives from the fact that precisely the competition set up by the desire of each to be a tyrant produces a situation where nothing is lasting" (51). Neither Grove nor Edmund imagines a tyrant strong enough to compete with Edmund's political vision for the future. Rather, Edmund imagines a future in which a new hierarchy of machine over man will be permanent. This vision negates difference and change, and so diminishes Edmund's Nietzschean powers. As Strong explains, Nietzsche's "is a philosophy for the 'day after tomorrow' […] it is truthful and does not believe in itself; only thus will it liberate and not tyrannize" (62). Instead of a Nietzschean ideal, Edmund embodies one of Grove's primary criticisms of autocracy in "The Case for Democracy." There, in a Nietzschean spirit, Grove argues that autocracies breed *ressentiment* and "slave" rebellion that "is not creative; it is purely destructive" (37). This denial of creative change defines autocracies for Grove: "the autocratically-governed state is of necessity uncreative: it is static […] it abhors creativeness; for creativeness means change" (38).

Furthermore, and important to Grove's liberal individualism, Edmund's authoritarian enactment of his revolutionary vision eliminates the individual. Although Edmund might be a leader with a noble morality however harsh, his revolution promises to make both "the masters and the men" (229) subordinate to the machine. Like the "demagogues" Captain Stevens refers to in his history, Edmund plans in abstractions; individual values do not exist in his projected future. Significantly, Edmund also diminishes his own individuality; he calls himself a "tool of destiny […] born to wield power" (226), and so renounces his individual will as a determining force in his revolutionary plans. Thus, while Edmund shares with the Nietzschean individual a vital and noble power, because this power works to eliminate individual autonomy and difference it diverges greatly from the Nietzschean ideal.

Edmund's characterization further emphasizes the de-individualization of his political ideal. Unlike his father, whose internal struggle to understand the past structures the novel, Edmund appears as an ideologue or a Bakhtinian "image of [an] idea" (Chen 35). Grove denies Edmund his father's or wife's interiority; when Edmund appears in the book, it is to voice his political vision. Chen notes that "[at] times, [Edmund] even threatens to usurp the role of the narrator/author, and Grove gives up his own interpretative or controlling voice entirely" (35). Only once does Grove subtly humanize Edmund by providing a glimpse of his personal struggle with his ideological "destiny." As Maud returns to Langholm with Edmund at the outbreak of the violent strike that will end with Edmund's death, she notices to her surprise "that Edmund was not unmoved; he kept his eyes rigidly fixed on the towering structure of the snow-white mill straight ahead" (Grove, *Master* 304). Importantly, this brief insight into Edmund's feelings about his "destiny" is communicated not from his point of view, but from his wife's, who reinforces her husband's inflexible political vision through her litotes—"not unmoved"—and her observance of his "rigidly fixed" gaze. While Edmund's conglomeration of political ideologies suggests that he may thoughtfully borrow what is useful to his political vision (and critically reject what is not), Grove significantly leaves Edmund's process of thinking out of his novel. In fact, Grove's denial of Edmund's interiority emphasizes the inhumane character of his politics and limits readers' sympathy for this tyrannical figure. Although Edmund's political intentions are more unique than those of similar characters in Callaghan's and Baird's novels, like them, he appears in the novel as someone whose political goals "rigidly fix" his character. His authoritarian spirit and commitment to his destiny diminish his individuality, just as his own vision of the future levels humanity in its subordination to the machine.

Edmund, not Sam, however, records Grove's political thought over time, for it is through

Edmund that Grove symbolically expels his former commitments and demonstrates his ability to subject them to his own harsh criticism. Significantly, Grove's treatment of and sympathy for Edmund and his revolutionary vision changed between his earlier drafts of the novel, which Grove had believed he had finished in the summer of 1939, and the version that was published in 1944. Among the drafts of *The Master of the Mill*, Mathews has located a suggestive version that he calls the "Edmund version," and which he believes Grove worked on in 1935-36 ("F.P." 243). The changes to this version in the published novel include Grove's experimentation with narration and interiority through Sam's character and, importantly, Grove's almost total rewriting of Edmund's character. The "Edmund version" "contains an additional forty-five pages in a section of its own, called 'INTERLUDE: THE CHILD EDMUND'" and "represents a text in which Edmund's vision of the future is the vision to which Grove gives himself – and the novel" (246), while it characterizes Sam as a weak pessimist (254). Mathews hypothesizes that Grove "turned the final text […] away from the essential optimism of the Edmund version" as a result of the Second World War (257). Grove's later political essays support this hypothesis: the war likely inspired Grove to a more thorough evaluation of his political values than he had undertaken in the past. The most important of the changes Grove made to his political theory, best articulated in "The Case for Democracy," lies in the shift from his promotion of autocracy to his thorough critique of it and his consequent effort to develop a version of democracy that would better serve the individual. Along with these changes to his own political thinking, Grove also changed the representation of the political future in *The Master*, which no longer promotes Edmund's radical dictatorship. Consequently, the published version of the novel demonstrates Grove's reflective self-criticism; in it he abolishes any idealist value he might once have associated with Edmund's position and his own autocratic sympathies.

Tellingly, while Grove offers no sustained characterization of any of the proletariat, a group that both Sam's and Edmund's political visions manipulate, he does suggest that they are capable of revolutionary and individual action. Sam and Edmund have already interpreted the proletariat as an abstract collective in both of their ideologies; thus, the members of that class, in Sam's and Edmund's views, are incapable of *being* individuals, and Grove's treatment appears at first to affirm their judgment. The proletariat in Grove's "socialist" novel is an abstract and ideological mass, a "herd" in which all individuals adhere to a pre-given political position. As Edmund recalls from Marx, however, "[e]very system is born with the germs of its death in it": fittingly, Edmund, who imagined annihilating the individual, is destroyed by one, anonymous individual among the mass of proletarian men. One man shoots and kills the tyrannical master of the mill with "a single shot" (321). Subtly and with little development, then, Grove suggests that an unknown individual may rise against and destroy modern authoritarian power.

Edmund, an abstract conglomeration of political ideals and strategies that defined political ideologies in the first half of the twentieth century, dies before he realizes his vision of what he believes humankind ought to become. As Chen nicely puts it, "Grove's device allows Edmund the fullest voice possible before totally silencing him with death" (35). Edmund's death symbolically—and perhaps, from Grove's position in the 1940s, hopefully—eliminates his answer to the foundational question of politics—a sterilized and unindividuated mass subordinate to an abstract machine master—as a political option and suggests that the answers to the political problems of the time will not be found in the many political ideologies Edmund exploits. Edmund's dictatorship is never realized and the stagnant peace of his father returns after his death. But, as was the case in *Fruits of the Earth*, Grove's restoration of order at the end of *The Master of the Mill* is also unstable. Grove shows Sam's socialist dream to be an outdated

and hypocritical Victorian model of "socialism from above," unequal to the problems of the twentieth century.

The Master of the Mill nevertheless contradicts many of the superficial critical assumptions about Grove's political affiliations. It reveals Grove's sustained critique of ideological positions that deny or attempt (as Edmund's does) to destroy individuality, change, and thoughtful self-analysis—three characteristics Grove consistently values in his political writing. Grove's penultimate novel, a work that he claimed in a letter to Carleton Stanley in July 1939 "contains all my misgivings" (*Over* 541), takes on a variety of seemingly conflicting political positions—Sam's impotent socialism and Edmund's tyrannical assemblage of ideologies—to which Grove was drawn. The novel ends before it posits a position that would overcome Sam's and Edmund's political models but not before Grove has suggested, through the negative examples of the "masters" of the mill, that the reflective individual who is willing both to create and to change his political ideals might hold the greatest political power. That is, Grove suggests that both Sam and Edmund fail to engage in profound self-reflection that would reveal the ways in which their political ideals sacrifice the liberal individual. Notably, through his essays and novels Grove himself becomes the positive example of an individual whose political investments are guided by his deep self-reflection.

Eleven years and a world war separate the publications of *Fruits of the Earth* and *The Master of the Mill*. Attention to Grove's political comments in both novels reveals the changes in his own political ideas and the way he used the novel to experiment with and analyze different political systems and their effects on the individual. While *Fruits of the Earth* contemplates the best political system for a growing prairie culture, *The Master of the Mill* evaluates the political ideologies that might shape the future of the twentieth century. In both novels Grove emphasizes

how political systems define the individuals they represent. The democratic culture of Spalding District encourages a shallow sense of freedom that demands conformity to a group; Sam's capitalist status quo maintains the exploitation of the workers from whose labour he profits; Edmund's conglomeration of multiple political ideologies into a revolutionary dictatorship attempts to erase individual power by subordinating everyone to an inhuman master. Perhaps Grove's greatest and most consistent political statement, however, can be found in his approach to politics and his persistent concern for the fate of the individual. Grove's novels and essays reveal the kind of self-reflection that he suggests is essential to profound political commitment. In "The Case for Democracy" Grove argues that "[it] is the supreme and unique task of all statecraft to organise the state for creativeness" and that "it is the merest truism that only out of disagreement can creative effort arise. Not conformity but diversity is the law of life" (38). The seeming inconsistencies in Grove's political visions reflect the changes in his political ideas over time and, importantly, exemplify his willingness to disagree with himself in order to inspire creative change. Such engagement transcends the limitations of ideological commitments and actively affirms the individual's ability to cultivate his own political capacities.

Egoism and the Revaluation of Liberal Values in *They Shall Inherit the Earth*

Like other novels of the period, Morley Callaghan's *They Shall Inherit the Earth* responds to the dominant political ideologies of the 1930s. In particular, as the epigraph to this chapter articulates, *They Shall Inherit the Earth* exposes the way in which political ideologies transform the individual into a useful abstraction. As discussed in the previous chapter, Mike Aikenhead rejects his father's wealth and effectively transforms Andrew into the father he desires by ruining his reputation and economic standing. In political terms, Mike's rejection and transformation of his father can be read as a denial of the capitalist values that had fueled

Andrew's advertising business and firmly separated him from the "dispossessed" (36) of the Depression. Mike's friend Ross Hillquist similarly rejects his father, Andrew's advertising partner, whose "vigorous individualism and all his ideas and ready catch phrases about human liberty and personal rights" (85) neglect the suffering collective. For Ross's father, far from fortifying the individual, liberal values have become "catch phrases," advertising slogans emptied of their initial significance and used to sell products. Callaghan's novel imagines a Nietzschean response to the empty slogans of liberal individualism as well as those of Christianity and communism. Mike, who does not share Ross's "collective vision" or his father's liberal ideals, systematically rejects all political systems he encounters: he at first embodies the anarchistic egoism that Levenson claims "abjure[s] the constructive impulse and [is] content to remain where it began: in the sceptical self." From this position, Mike develops a Nietzschean individualism that both revalues his father's liberal values and rejects the ideological abstractions that dismiss individuality. Notably, Mike's violent assertion of his own individuality suggests that it is fueled by a Nietzschean understanding of power. Callaghan's Nietzschean appraisals of political ideologies critique the unreflective acceptance of pre-conceived ideas about the individual and his significance in society. Like Grove, Callaghan emphasizes the importance of individually created values for a profound and ultimately hopeful political future.

Callaghan's political meditations are more subtle and interrogative than political readings of Canadian fiction have generally recognized. In fact, *They Shall Inherit the Earth* meditates on a central and implicitly political question, which echoes Nietzsche's in his *Nachlass* note: what if Callaghan's image of a generation who "couldn't know peace or dignity or unity" (*Inherit* 306) were "the last image humanity could offer?" Although Callaghan's Nietzschean critiques of the authoritarianism of communism, which reveal similarities in the way communists and liberal

capitalists treat individuals, clearly do not promote a communist revolution, neither are they easily reconciled with the middle-class values that Mathews and Livesay imagine are the only alternatives to their own political vision. Thus, while Livesay derisively notes that Mike's "conflict is an internal one" ("Review" 175), Callaghan importantly suggests that such conflict has a political relevance. Rather than express Mike's "middle-class values" (Mathews, "Canada's 1), the novel evinces his skeptical egoism, his discomfort with any political system that diminishes his individuality, and, most importantly, the difficulty of his meditations on his and others' injustices.

In fact, Callaghan suggests that, like Mike, other people in his generation desire to "find [themselves]" (Mathews 1); but, in a time of great political and economic vulnerability, others turn to organized collectives, and so temporarily find themselves—if they do at all—in ideological interpretations of their political, economic, or spiritual position and their world. In Mike's view, the people of his generation

> were all like himself, only some of them became Catholics and some became communists, and then it was too bad for Catholicism and too bad for communism, for such people as these in this generation only heaped the chaos of their own souls on whatever they touched. Such people were all like him in this, that they couldn't know peace or dignity or unity with anything till they were single and whole within themselves. (Callaghan, *Inherit* 306)

Communism and Christianity both promise to erase individual suffering and therefore also erase the "chaos" in souls searching for "peace or dignity or unity." By giving people something to believe in and an already interpreted vision of the world, both Christianity and communism relieve the pressure of individual responsibility and self-knowledge on which Mike's egoistic

analysis insists.

Callaghan's seeming concern for the fate of Catholicism and communism in the above passage also suggests that part of the problem with these systems lies in the individuals they attract. The chaotic individuals who look for unity in an external ideology, Mike's meditation implies, mistake its unity for their own. Moreover, Mike suggests that these unsettled individuals may also disrupt the unity of the ideology to which they appeal. In Callaghan's implied view, the internal struggle for personal unity that Livesay derides in Mike is actually a pre-condition to any real participation in the promotion of an alternative political ideology. Mike's skeptical rejection of ideological shortcuts to self-understanding and individual unity emphasizes personal responsibility and promotes critical self-reflection as a method of political critique.[20]

Mike's is an essentially Nietzschean analysis: communism and Christianity (temporarily) distract people from the struggle that is essential not only to their self-knowledge but also to their individual human potential. Like Mike, Nietzsche suggests that sacrificing one's individuality for the sake of the whole is both an escape from an initial ethical problem and an inadequate solution to the pressures of the modern world: "if he flees from himself, hates himself, does harm to himself – he is certainly not a good person. For in this case all he is doing is rescuing himself from himself *in others*… to flee from the ego, and to hate it, and to live in others, for others – that has hitherto, with as much thoughtlessness as self-confidence, been called '*unegoistic' and consequently 'good*'!" (*Daybreak* 207; original emphasis). For Mike, communists and Christians "rescue" themselves from themselves by participating in a set of beliefs that tells them who they are. For the same reasons that Nietzsche believes such "unegoistic" behaviour is "bad" rather

[20] Of course, as I note in the previous chapter, Mike is not always self-perceptive and does not easily recognize his similarity to those he rejects. Nevertheless, Callaghan's balanced treatment of Mike's flaws suggests his potential to advocate difficult self-knowledge rather than ideological escape as a mode of political engagement.

than "good,"[21] Mike believes that such escapes will not, in the end, free the members of his generation from their inner "chaos." Like Nietzsche, Mike egoistically believes that profound ethical and political values are individually created.

Mike's initial reflection on Bill Johnson's communist interpretation of the world and its history, however, signals the appeal of such an ideology to Mike and the members of his generation, who are struggling to understand their place in a volatile modern world. At this moment, Mike desires the abstract escape from himself that Bill's communism seems to offer:

> it seemed to Michael that the history of all men, through the faith of men like William Johnson, was given at last a splendid meaning, that there in their own time such men were directing it toward a goal. Bewildered people like himself, Michael thought, found only silliness and confusion in their lives, yet there was William Johnson proclaiming that a human being could find dignity carrying on the struggle of all the humble people who ever lived on earth. [… Mike] longed to free himself from his distress by losing himself in his friend's disinterested hope for the poor of the world. (Callaghan, *Inherit* 129-30)

As Nietzsche accuses the unegoistic idealist of "rescuing himself in others," so Mike briefly desires to escape his ego—"to free himself from his distress by losing himself"—in Bill's ideology. Such an escape is problematic because, as Mike comes to understand, one cannot escape the "chaos" of one's ego indefinitely. Moreover, communism offers Bill Johnson a "faith" that leaves Mike, who lacks such certainty, "[b]ewildered." Mike's inability to accept

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[21] Although Nietzsche is critical of the antithesis between "good" and "evil," he maintains the distinction between "good" and "bad." Nietzsche explains that the noble individual "conceives of the basic idea 'good' by himself, in advance and spontaneously, and only then creates a notion of 'bad'" (*Genealogy* 22), while in slave morality, evil "is the original, the beginning, the actual *deed*" (22). In other words, in the proclamation of what is "good" noble morality distinguishes that "good" from its opposite, "bad," but slave morality transforms the noble good into an "evil" against which a new good comes into being. Evil belongs to a morality of *ressentiment*, not to a noble morality of individual authority.

Bill's abstract reduction of the individual or his "disinterested hope" confirms that, like Nietzsche, Mike affirms individual interest.

Despite his recognition of communism's appeal, Mike altogether rejects Bill's dogmatism when he witnesses the real way in which Bill's "disinterested" interpretation of Anna turns her from an individual to a useful abstraction. "Interpretation" best describes Bill's ideological response to Anna: "She's *just an individual*. What's happening to her may be tragic. I don't deny it, although our conception of tragedy may have to change. She's an illustration of a larger issue and you can't stop to worry about her" (131; emphasis added). Importantly, Bill's rejection knowingly identifies Anna as an individual whose "tragedy" is only significant as evidence of a systemic problem. Bill's reduction of Anna inspires Mike's rejection of his communism, because it "can't be touched by anything that's happening to a simple human being" (131).[22] Mike's exchange with his communist friend thus affirms his individualist values: although communism offers a tempting "faith" and an "escape" from his ego, ultimately Mike refuses the reduction of the individual to an abstract political symbol such an escape requires. Furthermore, Mike's rejection reveals his skeptical egoism, his inability to trust any political position that is not uniquely his own, and, importantly, his concern for Anna, who becomes his own symbol of renewing innocence.

Notably, Callaghan limits Bill's characterization to the political position he represents. Bill is a former dentist who "had become a Marxian economist" after he married "a rigid-minded girl"; together, the Johnsons "talked about nothing but politics and whenever [Bill] disagreed with [his wife] she threatened to leave him" (128). Bill's characterization cuttingly criticizes

[22] Mike's compassion for Anna diverges from Nietzsche's egoist ideal. Nietzsche believes that compassion also sacrifices individuality, as I discuss in Chapter Five. Still, Mike's belief that an individual life has significance beyond its adherence to an abstract ideological interpretation is in keeping with Nietzsche's individualist values and his critiques of democracy, Christianity, and socialism.

communists: their acceptance of a single ideological interpretation of the world corresponds to their unwillingness to hear other opinions or questions; they reduce everything to questions of economic inequality—Mike even imagines that for Bill, Dave's death "would be simply an economic matter" (130); and they reject all signs of difference and individuality. Although a potential revolutionary, Bill is ultimately a weak character, who, rather than create his political views, adopts them from his emasculating and dogmatic wife. Bill thus serves as a judgment on communist single-mindedness, which, according to Callaghan's representation, abstracts the individual, is incapable of engaged debate, and views anyone who does not universally agree with its position as a "political enemy" (131). Furthermore, Callaghan's critical characterization of Bill deepens the contrast between him and Mike, whose potential political strength occurs through his Nietzschean (and notably masculine) commitment to individually created values.

The general trend of reducing an explicitly political character to his ideological position within the novels discussed here suggests that the modern novel values a protagonist who struggles, who has not already interpreted himself and others according to a political ideology. In other words, the *struggle* of the protagonists in these novels to find not only themselves, but also their place within the world and their own vision of what humankind ought to become, is crucial to the development of the novel. Livesay questions Callaghan's representation of Bill in terms of his struggle: unlike Bill, Livesay claims, "real communists […] believe there will always be struggle, personal struggle, but it will be on a vital, happier basis" (176). Mike's struggle—and also Abe's, Sam's, and, as we shall see, Matt's—however, suggests that while the Canadian modern novel acknowledges the appeal of the dominant political ideologies, it also values the individualist struggle to affirm a set of Nietzschean, egoistic ideals. In doing so, these novels emphasize the importance of liberal individualism and, importantly, develop the modern political

individual as one who, more like Mike than Bill, critically reflects, often imperfectly, upon his political positions.

Mike's reflection on his own individualist values and his struggle to affirm them is most evident during his wolf hunt with Ross and their guide, Jo. The hunt inspires Mike's meditation on the individualism of the wolf, onto which Mike displaces his criticisms of cutthroat capitalism and his own latent fears that he may also be a savage beast of prey. Callaghan's fine, ambiguous treatment of the wolf—which represents both the political savagery of capitalism that Mike rejects *and* Mike's individualist impulses—displays his great ability to invite his reader into his characters' difficult self-reflection through both free indirect discourse and direct dialogue. As Hill has noted, Callaghan's "narrative detachment, objectivity, and impersonality" (202) reveal his characters' thoughts and actions with little interpretation by the narrator. This deceptively plain style reinforces Callaghan's individualist argument: for his reader, as for Mike, no straight line cuts between the vices of one political program and the virtues of another.

As Mike explains to Ross, he views the wolf as "an individualist" (237) that in his thinking soon also represents all the people he blames for his suffering:

> Any enemy of the race you call a wolf because he knows no moral law, and that's why you can't organize society, because it's full of wolves, and they don't know justice, and don't want it. The financial brigands and labor exploiters and the war profiteers and the Wall Street sharks and nearly anybody who tries to put his head up in a world of private profit, what are they? Wolves I tell you. (238)

For Mike, the wolf symbolizes an unjust individualism that only cares about private profit. The wolf is "an enemy of society," because he serves only himself. Here, Mike expresses one of his deep criticisms of his father's liberal capitalism: during a time of widespread economic struggle,

wolves prey on the financially weak; like war profiteers, they gain from those who suffer. The wolf, however, is also an external symbol through which Mike engages in self-reflection. Mike's insistence that the wolf's ability to kill without purpose—"they kill without sense" (238)—strikes an unconscious and uncomfortable chord with his own part in Dave's death and his concerns about justice. Mike thus also sees in the wolf those qualities that he has not fully recognized as his own: that he is "alive and alone" (242) like the solitary beast of prey, that he is an individualist capable of meaningless destruction, and that he does not "know justice."

The wolf, however, does not kill merely from an innate lust for blood, as Mike imagines. When the hunters find a group of slaughtered deer left in the ice, Jo explains that the wolves leave the deer in the ice so they can feed their cubs in the spring. Ever skeptical, Mike distrusts the explanation that makes "this useless slaughter […] full of meaning" (247) and quickly displaces his interest in the wolves onto their victims: "Is it justice for the wolves when the deer are slain? Is it justice for the deer to wait and be slain, and can they cry out and complain, and who would hear that cry and know what it meant?" (247). Through a critical dialogue with himself Mike begins to reflect on the wolf as a symbol for his own struggle to understand his place in a ruthless society and to develop a sense of justice that, unlike Bill's understanding of class conflict, accommodates the individual:

> "But what about justice for each single human being? That must be there too. I stink with pride when I judge my father's life, or Dave Choate's life." And as he walked on, closing his eyes against the biting snow, he became very humble, and he thought, "I know everything will have some meaning if I stop passing judgment on other people, and forget about myself, and let myself look at the world with whatever goodness there is in me." (248)

Mike's meditation on the wolf reveals his bewilderment about his position in the current political and economic system. This meditation exemplifies the skeptical reflection—prohibited in Bill's rigid ideological interpretations—that defines Mike's political judgments and suggests his hope that he will develop a more compassionate sense of justice.

Callaghan's comparison between the wolf and his protagonist further suggests a Nietzschean transformation in Mike's individualist spirit. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche develops three metamorphoses of the spirit that prepare it for the noble morality that creates its own values. Mike's spiritual progress and the significance of the wolf in his meditation on justice reflect these metamorphoses. After the first metamorphosis—the camel that carries "much that is heavy"—"the spirit becomes lion, it wants to hunt down its freedom and be master in its own desert" (16). Like the wolf, the lion is a beast of prey who asserts his freedom and power: the lion "create[s] freedom for itself for new creation" and, importantly, "take[s] the right to new values – that is the most terrible taking for [the camel's] carrying and reverent spirit. Indeed, it is a preying, and the work of a predatory animal" (17).[23] Callaghan's alignment of Mike with the predatory power of the wolf, then, also implies his power to take the freedom required to revalue the hegemonic values of his father's liberalism and to reject the similarly exploitative program of communism. The wolf, like Nietzsche's lion, is an individualist who claims his own power.

Though the lion may be powerful, however, he cannot create his own values, for that is the work of the child: "The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a wheel rolling out of itself, a first movement, a sacred yes-saying […] for the game of creation my brothers a sacred yes-saying is required. The spirit wants *its* will, the one lost to the world now wins *its own* world" (17; original emphasis). Suggestively, Mike discovers that Anna is pregnant with his child when he returns from his hunt. Anna, an idealized feminine figure who also exudes

[23] In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche associates the "blond beast" with noble morality (23-24).

the innocence of a child, is crucial to Mike's final spiritual metamorphosis: as discussed in the previous chapter, Anna encourages him to confess to his father, an act that implies Mike has revalued his father's values by remaking the rich man as an impoverished one. Mike's rejection of the liberal, capitalist values of his father's advertising days affirms, however unconsciously, the violent power of his own individualist will, as well as the childlike humbling that begins when Mike realizes both his similarity to the wolf and the wolf's place within a social pattern. This humbling, however, does not signal a simple acceptance of the political structures that ensure wolves profit while deer are slaughtered. Rather, Mike's individualist power helps him to create a new social image through his reconciliation with his family, one that implies that his own power, like the wolves who kill deer for their pups, is meaningful and just only when it also serves his family. Moreover, this "new beginning"—in which the lost spirit "wins *its own world*"—claims its own revolutionary potential: Callaghan's ending replaces the alienated suffering of Mike's generation as the "last image" of humanity with an image of an individual who has begun to create a new world for his family.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the last image of the reunited family, still "a little shy with each other" (323), remains ambiguous. From a Nietzschean perspective, as this image maintains the distinct lives of each member of the family it suggests an egoistic alternative to the authoritarian impulses Mike observes in communism and Christianity, which in Callaghan's novel diminish individual struggle and individuality. Still, Mike's violent and transforming egoism—his likeness to the individualist wolf—hardly provides a simple image of a redemptive future to Callaghan's communist, Christian, *and* middle-class readers. This image does, however, mark the end of Mike's egoistic skepticism. While Mike begins Callaghan's novel an egoist who renounces all constructive programs and created values, he becomes a reflective egoist who

creates his own values and sense of justice. Callaghan's Nietzschean resonances serve to critique the authoritative values of political programs—such as communism—that deny individual power and to suggest that such power comes not from the denial of all values, but from the creation of new ones, not from the skeptic who says no to everything but from the reflective child who creates his own world by saying yes. Callaghan's final vision of a potential future certainly diverges from Nietzsche's, but the philosopher helps us understand Callaghan's critique of both communism and liberal capitalism. Although at the end of *They Shall Inherit the Earth* no ideological option looks much like what humanity *ought* to become, Mike's refined and reflective egoism at least suggests that the chaotic souls of his generation may not be the last image humanity could offer.

Ego and Authority in *Waste Heritage*

Importantly focused on the representation of a real event—the sit-down strikes of 1938—Irene Baird's *Waste Heritage* (1939) meditates on the tension between individual autonomy and collective, political belonging.[24] The failure of liberal political institutions to address the problems of the interwar period—here, the unemployment that defined the lives of single men in the Depression—provides the political catalyst of *Waste Heritage*. Like Grove and Callaghan, and in the spirit of Nietzsche, Baird criticizes political ideologies that diminish the individual's ability to develop his own potential. Although Baird does not promote a Nietzschean individual to replace the liberal individual, her criticisms parallel Nietzsche's in order to maintain the

[24] The sit-down strikes occurred in Vancouver in May 1938, when twelve-hundred of "a class of unemployed, transient, single men" (Hill, "Introduction" x) occupied the Civic Art Gallery, the Georgia Hotel, and the central Post Office (xi). The strikes continued until June 20, and in the riots that occurred after the police broke up the strike, "thirty-nine people were injured […] and thirty-thousand dollars in damage was done by the men" (xi). Michiel Horn explains that William Lyon Mackenzie King was partly responsible for the unemployment and poverty of the transient men involved in the strike; after winning the 1935 election and with unemployment rates briefly improving, King abolished federal relief camps in 1935 (36). In 1938, British Columbia limited their helpfulness to transient men by "stopping relief to all people who were from outside the province" (36). Matt Striker, a native of Saskatchewan who does not have a home to return to, would have no access to government relief.

philosophically liberal emphasis on individual flourishing as she criticizes the liberal economy and its political institutions for their neglect of single working men. Baird's criticism of liberal politics is clearest in her characterization of Matt, whose individualist desires for self-possession and self-cultivation are moderate but unmet, and whose characteristic violence erupts at the end of the novel to underline the tragedy of men in his position. *Waste Heritage* thus endorses Mill's liberal individualism not through a positive example, but through the tragic ends of individuals, like Matt and his friend Eddy, prohibited from the individual flourishing Mill promoted.

With its ironic suggestions that war would solve the problem of the men's unemployment—"[s]eems like the country's waitin' for Hitler to give you boys a job so you can all be heroes overnight" (6)—and a publishing history coincident with the beginning of the Second World War, *Waste Heritage* also poignantly exposes the instability of any vision of the future during this volatile period.[25] In fact, Baird inscribes the foundational question of politics onto the characterization and fate of her protagonist and his friend Eddy. Baird recasts this question to underline the grave urgency of her own political representation of individuals like Matt; appropriate to her "direct-reportage style" (Hill, "Introduction" xxxv), the question appears in the words of Matt's friend Harry, whose concern for Matt and Eddy also heightens the reader's sympathy for them: "What's goin' to become of them in the end? […] That's what I want someone should tell me" (90). This question suggests Matt is both a unique individual whose friend cares for him and a representative of the strikers, "them," generally. As Herb Wyile has noted, Matt Striker's name positions him as both "an unemployed Everyman" and as an individual who is "all too ready to strike out in a social and political struggle that calls for the

[25] Jody Mason notes that the unfortunate timing of *Waste Heritage*'s publishing in September 1939 meant that it underwent few, but significant, changes to ensure that it met "the Defense of Canada Regulations" (2). Baird's reference to Hitler as a potential employer was one of the sentences changed in the Canadian version of the novel ("State" 2). The American publication kept the sentence.

restraint of the individual in the cause of the collective" (68). The tension between these two suggestions, along with Matt's conflicting desires to be part of and apart from the organization, contribute to Baird's ambiguous representation of interwar politics, which attempts to represent the individual lives affected by the sit-down strike, rather than to enforce an ideological interpretation of it and the individuals who participated in it.

In his introduction to a new edition of *Waste Heritage* that has brought the novel into print for the first time since 1973, Hill laments that the little critical attention Baird's novel has received has usually focused on its political and historical subject (xxiii).[26] Hill's introduction begins a critical conversation about *Waste Heritage*'s aesthetics by placing it within the "modern-realist" tradition of Grove and Callaghan that Hill develops more thoroughly in *Modern Realism in English-Canadian Fiction*. Hill argues that Baird's omniscient narrator both locates the author within the modern-realist movement and complicates ideological readings of her novel: "Unlike narrators in many overtly ideological fictions of the 1930s, Baird's narrator does not usually take sides, and the detached narrative throughout offers a classic example of the direct-reportage style in the modern-realist novel of the period" (xxxv). This style, which attempts to represent events without the narrator's intervention, demonstrates Baird's political ambiguity in her novel and has contributed to its neglect: "[c]uriously, the politics of the novel have caused it to be neglected both by a conservative literary establishment and the political left" (xli). Baird's careful "direct-reportage style," however, heightens the characteristics of the political novel as it has been developed here: the novel's detached and ambiguous style effectively captures the complex political situation facing individuals at the time and further

[26] With the publication of Hill's critical edition of the novel, however, the interest in it has begun to change. In *Writing Unemployment: Worklessness, Mobility, and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Canadian Literatures*, Jody Mason reads the novel through the methodologies of "book- and print-culture studies" (5). Herb Wyile's essay "'Draw a Squirrel Cage': The Politics and Aesthetics of Unemployment in Irene Baird's *Waste Heritage*" attends to the tension between the bourgeois history of the novel and Baird's desire to represent collective action.

suggests a sustained interest in politics as a series of ethical questions, which inspires the reader's own self-reflexive analysis through its refusal to offer simple or ideological interpretations of the strike.

Despite her narrator's ambiguity, however, Baird has earned praise from leftist critics for her representation of communists during the strikes. From his leftist perspective and seemingly insensitive to the ways in which the novel is at times "overtly critical of leftist politics of the 1930s" (Hill xxv), Mathews, for example, celebrates the class-consciousness of Baird's novel and blames "middle-class critics" ("*Waste*" 65) for the novel's neglect:

> *Waste Heritage* […] shows – unequivocally – the wounds caused by capitalist domination, and leaves the message that only a significant change in the social order can provide a change in the position of the people fighting for the simplest kind of social justice (work and wages). The protagonist of the novel confronts the modern conflict between the claims of the individual and the claims of the larger community, but he does so in an embattled milieu. (66)

Glenn Willmott's contrasting insistence on the novel's overarching interest in the individual—"The collective experience is nearly always portrayed as one that threatens [the individual] either spiritually […] or physically" (34)—however, more accurately reflects the conflict between the individual and the collective that Baird investigates. While *Waste Heritage* certainly demonstrates sympathy for the unemployed single men who participated in the sit-down strikes, Baird's political "message" is more similar to the one found in works by Grove and Callaghan than Mathews admits. Baird criticizes all political institutions that diminish individual freedom, and in doing so reveals telling parallels between the communist organization Mathews celebrates and the "capitalist domination" he decries.

Baird's own account of her political intentions further indicates her desire to represent the political positions she witnessed during the strikes with a fair, but generally critical, eye. In "Sidown, Brothers, Sidown,"[27] a retrospective essay published in 1976, Baird responds directly to the communist reading of her novel: "I have never been connected with Communism and I have never thought of myself as a radical if being a radical means wanting to overthrow the system we live in in favour of another political system. I think a reader of the novel will find, however, that I don't praise or condemn some of the most important people in the novel who are obviously connected to radical politics" (82). Baird stresses the "irresistible, urgent, challenging" (82) call to represent the jobless in the modern-realist style that Hill observes: she claims that she "attempt[ed] to portray the situation correctly, to get it right" (83). This desire also contributes to the novel's universal criticism of political positions. In attempting to "portray the situation correctly," Baird also "steers clear of political affiliations" (Hill xxv).

Although Baird, like Callaghan, resists a programmatic answer, she nonetheless encourages her reader to reflect on a political situation, and as Callaghan and Grove both suggest, such reflection is necessary to political commitment and change.[28] By asking "What's goin' to become of them in the end?", Baird also asks "what we will put up with and what we will demand"—questions that Macpherson claims are implied in every political system, because "people's beliefs about a political system are not something outside it, they are *part* of it [… and] determine the limits and possible development of the system" (6; original emphasis). Baird's political message, then, comes not in the form of a revolutionary solution, but in the suggestion

[27] Baird had wanted to give her novel this title, but her publisher dissuaded her (Baird, "Sidown" 83).
[28] Mason notes that Baird in fact did hope her novel "would create political change in Ottawa" (*Writing* 115) and that Carl Eayrs of Macmillan also believed that the novel might have a real effect on the political landscape of the country as it headed to a federal election in 1940. In a letter to his brother, Hugh, Carl wrote: "That novel is dynamite, becauee [sic] it's so powerful and because it portrays conditions so truthfully. A good many people are going to ask, after reading it, why King allows a condition to exist where the unemployed and the youth of the country appear to have no future" (qtd. "State" Mason 1).

that political systems—liberal, communist, or otherwise—must be overcome or reimagined when they diminish the individual's freedom. This message is rooted in the ethical values of liberalism even as it condemns liberal society for producing and abandoning the single men on strike. This distinction between the philosophy of the liberal individual and its embodiment in political systems allows us to draw a finer point on Baird's narrative ambiguity, which defends a philosophical understanding of the liberal individual, if not always a political one.

Baird's novel clearly demonstrates the desire for collective political belonging while also revealing the authoritarian implications of collective action. Matt Striker, who arrives in Aschelon (Vancouver) the morning of the riots following the police break up of the sit-in, desires to join the strike because he "never got nowhere on [his] own" (Baird, *Waste* 21). Matt finds, however, that the police break-up of the strikes has produced a mass of men to which he stands in contrast: while the crowd "seethed loosely and dangerously, hungry for a fixed objective" (13), Matt has a "definite reason" (18) and "a defined objective" (19) when he arrives in town. This contrast points to the fact that Matt has arrived, in one sense, too late; the objective of the movement is not so clearly "defined" after the riots. The contrast also serves to distinguish Matt, an individual with his own objectives, from the anonymous group already "cemented into a whole" (26). These early descriptions introduce the central tension that Baird investigates between an individual and the abstract systems that structure and limit Matt's development.

Although Baird's sympathetic portrayal of the unemployed men and her fair representation of their communist leader, Hep, strongly criticizes the ruling provincial and federal governments for their insufficient aid to the unemployed strikers, the conflict between Matt and the organization's collective program also pervades the novel. In a moving passage at the beginning of the novel, Matt experiences a kind of self-loss when he joins the organization:

"Since he stepped inside the hall Matt was experiencing an odd feeling of black-out, as though his identity were being sucked away and absorbed by the powerful currents of an organization" (23). Matt must subordinate his individual identity to the goal of the organization in order to benefit from and belong to it. As I will discuss below, Matt's reactions to this self-loss oscillate between his feeling of collective belonging and his desire for self-possession. From the moment he registers, the loss of individual identity implicit in joining the organization "ma[kes] him touchy and defensive; at the same time it [gives] him a sting of excitement" (24).

Baird further distinguishes Matt from the other men in the organization by emphasizing the "blinding flashes of rage" (25) that characterize him as a unique individual and notably arise when he feels his individuality or integrity to be threatened. For example, Matt grows "white with rage" (112) when, as he looks for his friend Eddy who has wandered from the organization head-quarters, a police officer assumes that Matt is in the street because he desires to cause trouble. Matt's anger inspires his reflection that "[a]nything in uniform made him feel that way now. Uniforms were another bit of class oppression the same way that wars were cooked up by a bunch of pot-bellied financiers" (112). Here, Matt's rage also signals both his frustration with the fact that his economic standing makes him vulnerable to the oppression of "uniforms" and "financiers" and his impatience with the way in which the people he encounters diminish his individuality when they assume that because he is unemployed he must deserve either their disdain or their pity. Matt's characteristic rage, then, serves to set him apart from the other men in the organization and to emphasize the indignity of his position, which denies him the freedom to define and cultivate himself. While the connection between Matt's rage and his desire for individual integrity may suggest the free and sometimes violent acts of Nietzsche's noble individual, Baird's characterization of Matt's rage lacks the robustness of Nietzsche's

philosophical definition. Primarily, Baird uses Matt's "fury" (144) to indicate the cost to the individual of his perpetual thwarting, both by liberal political and economic systems and by the ideological organizations that attempt to supplant them.

While Baird does not draw on philosophical sources as explicitly or consistently as Grove or Callaghan, her representation of the strikers' organization notably literalizes Nietzsche's critique of socialism. According to Nietzsche, socialism,[29] "the fanciful younger brother of the almost expired despotism whose heir it wants to be," "outbids all the despotisms of the past inasmuch as it expressly aspires to the annihilation of the individual, who appears to it like an unauthorized luxury of nature destined to be improved into a useful *organ of the community*" (*Human* 173; original emphasis). Ansell-Pearson explains that Nietzsche views the socialist vision of the future as one that "will require a massive extension of social control over the private life of individuals […] socialism must desire the kind of abundance of state power that one would normally associate with the most fearful despotism" (*Introduction* 92).

Waste Heritage similarly exposes that despotic character of socialism. Just as Matt finds solidarity with the mass of men who suffer as he does, he also experiences the limitations such solidarity places upon the individual. The organization requires that each man observe the rules of the movement and will cast out anyone incapable of towing the line. Matt must learn to "snap in" (56)[30] as the organization tracks all of his daily actions and requires him to sign in and out (55). Furthermore, Matt must keep close watch over Eddy, a simple man who has been badly beaten by the police. If Eddy, confused and acting eccentrically, draws attention to himself, he could unintentionally compromise the whole movement: "good, harmless guys like him can

[29] In criticism on Nietzsche's works communism and socialism are treated as synonyms.
[30] Matt must also learn to snap out of the anger that sometimes threatens his incorporation into the organization, as when he raises his hand to strike Hep (166) during a disagreement about the unhygienic accommodations offered to the striking men.

cause plenty trouble in any man's revolution" (Baird, *Waste* 89). Matt rescues Eddy from a police beating at the beginning of the novel, and so feels personally obligated to protect him from the organization, which might commit him to an insane asylum to ensure he does not unintentionally disrupt its goals. Here, Baird, like Callaghan, reveals a similarity between the communists and liberal capitalists. The communists, who cannot compromise their rigid program for political change, would discard Eddy just as the liberal democratic and capitalist system has. Matt's feelings of obligation toward Eddy resemble Mike's feelings of compassion for Anna: neither protagonist is willing to sacrifice the particular individual for the sake of the larger political movement. This representation of the well-intentioned communist organization thus draws out its authoritarian commitments; collective discipline demands that individuals surrender their freedom. Moreover, Matt's vacillating yet persistent annoyance with the strict rules of the organization suggests that his egoist impulses conflict with the authority of the group.

Baird's sympathetic representation of Matt and the organization points both to the hope involved in belonging to a group—much as Mike understands the draw of communism and Christianity—and also to the individuality of the men who make up the collective whole. In the second part of the novel, Matt begins to feel more like he is a part of the whole and that it in fact supports his ego: belonging to the organization "began subtly to affect the ego. It affected it with a new and heady sense of importance. As in war it brought submerged egos to the surface, nourished weak ones, coloured sickly ones, provided them with a chance to grow and expand" (93-4). Matt's appreciation of the organization when it seems to cultivate liberal individualist values suggests that the collective and the individual can be reconciled when the collective supports the growth of the individual specifically in the terms promoted by liberal philosophy.

Although his relation to the group fortifies Matt, especially during rallies when they are

cheered on by the general public, his distance from that public, his "sense of group isolation," also "gave him the feeling that he was only important or necessary insofar as he fulfilled his obligations as a unit to the whole" (94). As Nietzsche suggests, the authoritarian practices and collective, "herd" mentality of socialist politics reduce the uniqueness of the individual. While the organization grants Matt and others a degree of "hope" (73) and dignity that the liberal political status quo has denied them, it also threatens to eliminate their individuality. Matt's feelings suggest that in order to maintain his identity within a group, he must be uniquely necessary to it, which explains why he desires more responsibility within the organization—and why his duties give him "the keen, exquisite pleasure of action and decision that were at last his own" (140). When Matt feels essential to the organization, he does not feel eliminated by it.

Typically, however, hope and dignity belong to the collective, not to the individuals who form it; as Hep advises Matt, in order to feel strengthened through the organization, "[y]ou've got to keep looking at this as a whole, not as a lot of individual units" (153). Thus, when a picket claims, "I forgot who I was a long time ago" (119), Baird maintains a telling ambiguity that subtly signals a powerful correspondence between the effects of capitalism on the poor and the individual sacrifices of collective protest; Baird's sparse description of the picket—"a [nameless] little man in glasses and a squashed-looking hat" (119)—does not clarify what has caused the picket to forget himself. Furthermore, the picket's soft laughter at his observation suggests that he has quietly resigned himself to this self-loss within and outside of the organization.

Baird's brief description of the nameless picket coheres with the general tendency of modern novelists to offer flattened characterizations of those individuals who surrender themselves to a political ideology. Similarly, while Baird offers a deeper characterization of political ideologues than Callaghan or Grove, she also includes a strongly political figure whose

ideologies limit his characterization. Hep, a communist "prince" (56), who keeps the men in the organization focused and disciplined, fully submits to the demands of the collective; unlike Matt, Hep does not appear to struggle to adhere to the party objectives. In fact, Hep, who represents a "vast impersonal force at once magnetic, implacable and pitilessly single eyed," admits to Matt that he refuses the individualist struggle to conform to the collective: "I don't think […] I just go from day to day. No man's safe that lets himself go around thinking, it gets him jittery an' you can't rely on him any more" (134). Hep's description of his strategy clarifies the necessity of an impersonal and undivided approach to collective protest and politics. The individual thinks, worries, gets jittery, and compromises the movement; hope for success lies in actively diminishing individual struggle with the principles of the organization. Thus, like Grove's Edmund and Callaghan's Bill Johnson, Hep is a man with a vision but without the individuality that internal struggle and psychological characterization would develop. This trend in the representation of ideological characters within these novels further reveals the conflict between the authors' investments in the individual and the political ideologies of the time.

Notably, Matt's disillusionment with the organization occurs when it reveals its similarities to its capitalist antagonist. Baird develops these parallels subtly throughout the novel. For example, she positions Hep as a merchant "out to sell him something" and Matt as a "customer" when Hep lectures Matt on the power of collective action (184). In the end, Baird provocatively compares the organization's impotence to help Matt with that of the well-intentioned business owners whom he approaches for a job. When Matt asks Hep for a more permanent job within the organization, Hep repeats what Matt has been told for years: "there's too long a line-up ahead of you" and, significantly, "maybe tomorrow" (266). For Matt, this final reply echoes the all-too-familiar replies of "come around next week" (182) that potential

employers had given, and so it resolutely confirms the organization's failure to help him. Both the communist organization and the capitalist society that it opposes abandon the individual; Matt cannot find a job and so cannot fulfill his liberal desire not "to be anyone's responsibility" but "to be responsible for [himself]" (219).

Baird focalizes the general failure of liberalism to create political processes that nourish the individual's freedom to develop his potential through Matt. In doing so, she sympathetically reveals the tragic fate of an individual who desires but cannot cultivate his self-possession. Matt embodies the polarization that results from this failure: egoistic individualism seems incompatible with authoritarian collectivity. On one hand, Matt parrots Hep's slogans, as Hazel, Matt's love interest, notes when she accuses him of talking "as Hep used to talk" (179). This comparison further suggests that Matt surrenders his individuality when he mimics Hep, because Hazel also notes that Hep "didn't care what happened to Hep just so long as the organization was going ok" (179). On the other hand, Matt's liberal individualist desires—for self-possession, work, and a life with Hazel—appear egoistic against the organization's demand for self-sacrifice, and when Matt attempts to find a job on his own (183), Hep lectures him on the power of collective protest. Neither of these poles, however, offers a satisfying solution for the future: within the organization, Matt's individuality and his ability to "be responsible" for himself are only slightly less diminished than they are outside of it. Baird's novel demonstrates the sacrifice of the individual in authoritarian responses to the failure of liberal politics and the impotence of the isolated individual to overcome his poverty on his own. Thus, while Livesay is right to note that Baird "offer[s] no solution," she is wrong to position that observation as a source of complaint. By maintaining an objective and often ambiguous narrative method, Baird diagnoses the faults the organization shares with liberal capitalism while she also carefully demonstrates

the organization's real appeal and potential benefits for vulnerable individuals like Matt. Moreover, while Baird leaves a systematic political solution unarticulated, her nuanced suggestion that the perseverance of the liberal individual requires a strong change to interwar political ideology nonetheless implies that no political solution that sacrifices the individual will solve the problem of the unemployed and transient men.

Waste Heritage ends with the dissolution of both the egoistic individual and the authoritarian organization. Feeling "disappointment and disillusionment at the high pressure of the past three weeks" (248) after the sit-downers negotiate an inadequate deal with the provincial government,[31] Matt's "hope" and "defined objective" falter. Matt loses his already wavering faith in the organization and begins to feel not the fortification of his ego through the discipline of the movement, as before, but the isolation of an alienated man who does not belong: "God, Matt thought, are all the guys connected with this goin' nuts or is it only me? Hep's right. There's no plot to it and no sense. Just a mess of talk and a bunch of boys sitting around on their tails and not getting any place" (248). Ironically, the authoritarian organization with collective goals dissolves into a group of frustrated individuals, and the objective that had drawn a hopeful Matt to Aschelon is lost as the organization compromises in the deal with the government and the "boys" disperse.[32] Despite her sympathetic and fair representation of the strike and its organizers, Baird ultimately demonstrates the inadequacy of such collective movements to provide lasting solutions for the unemployed men.

Baird, however, also negates the political effectiveness of the egoistic individual in a

[31] Significantly, because Matt is a transient from Saskatchewan, he does not qualify for aid from or work in British Columbia. As he writes to Hazel: "Us freight car cowboys have been offered relief at the rate of three bucks, seven cents per week for a month and free transportation back where we come from, if we skip within that time" (259).
[32] Matt's letter to Harry suggests that response to the deal was mixed: "Some of the boys feel this has been a sell-out at the last and they have been let-down […] Others are saying Gus came to terms because he was scared of a big sympathetic walkout. Another guy was spreading it around that Laban had a swell job offered to him" (259). Baird's focalization of her narrative through Matt and her suggestion that Matt's young friend Charlie will become a criminal at the end of the strike (268), however, imply that she was disappointed with the deal.

liberal economy and political system. Both Matt and Eddy meet violent and tragic ends in the last pages of the novel. Matt's "old rage-blindness" (273), the part of his character that had always defined him as a unique individual and threatened his full integration into the movement, returns as he defends Eddy against a police attack for the last time. Witnessing his friend beat a police officer, which he believes will end in Matt's death (274), Eddy is unable to intervene and, coming under new police threat, dies on the train tracks as he attempts to stop a train and escape the city. Matt, on the other hand, interprets his action as the culmination of his pent-up desires and frustrations; while he beats the police officer "bloody and shapeless," Matt claims, "All my life I've been waitin' for a chance like this!" (274). Because Matt's rage arises in moments when a threat to his individuality provokes his impulse to assert it violently, Baird may also be drawing a loose connection to the freedom and violence of the Nietzschean individuality Mike Aikenhead adopts. As mentioned above, however, Matt's rage lacks the complexity and autonomous power of the Nietzschean's individual's violence. Rather than connect her protagonist to a Nietzschean individualism, then, Baird more effectively suggests that his violence results from his severe powerlessness, that it indicates a loss of individual freedom, rather than its affirmation. This connection between violence and the erasure of individual power is present from the beginning of *Waste Heritage* and culminates in the last scene to emphasize the wasted potential of Matt's life and the tragedy of his impending death—"they'll get him and kill him for this!" (274).

This final, tragic scene thus dramatically communicates the impotent position of the individual in the novel. Matt and Eddy lack agency and autonomy, and the people they encounter fail to see them as unique individuals; even as they leave the organization, people on the street identify them as "crazy" and "jobless staging a big riot" (275). Without the organization, they do not have protection from the ridiculing assumptions of the general public; with it, they do not

have individual freedom. Baird's sympathy for Matt and Eddy—to whom she dedicated her novel—reveals her essentially liberal individualist values: she criticizes the political systems that abandon individuals like them. If our beliefs in a political system are part of that system, as Macpherson claims, Baird's novel represents the limits of liberal capitalism and the communist correction to it; both fail Matt and Eddy. *Waste Heritage* thus also revives the kind of liberal individualism that Mill had advocated in the nineteenth century not by way of a positive image of a revolutionary future, as Livesay desired, but through the tragic deaths of individuals the novel presents as worthy of its readers' sympathy. As Baird's novel unfolds the sad image of "What's goin' to become of them in the end," it does not answer Nietzsche's question of what we should become but reveals what, in the volatile moment of the Depression, individuals could no longer be.

Conclusion: A Liberal Critique

Grove, Callaghan, and Baird advocate for and defend philosophically liberal values. That is, their novels critique political positions that prevent or limit the individual's ability to develop his own capacities and to create his own values. In doing so, they also critique liberal systems, such as democracy and free-market capitalism. The novels discussed here represent the egoist and authoritarian responses to liberalism that Levenson and Potter find essential to the development of Anglo-American modernism and so also participate in the wider modernist skepticism about the fate of liberalism. In contrast to their Anglo-American counterparts, however, Grove, Callaghan, and Baird demonstrate the interrelation between egoism and authoritarianism in their novels. On one hand, the struggle of protagonists to sustain their egoism critiques the authoritarian potential of the dominant political ideologies of the interwar period—

liberalism, socialism, communism, and fascism. On the other hand, as Edmund Clark and Abe Spalding exemplify, powerful egoists may also become authoritarian rulers.

Although these novels analyze and test the potential of dominant political ideologies to address the problems of the modern individual, they do not offer the polemical solutions to them that some of their political critics desired. In fact, Grove's, Callaghan's, and Baird's emphasis on questions over answers suggests that they approached politics philosophically and that they promoted self-reflection and individually created values in themselves and their readers, even when they did not embody those values explicitly in a character. For instance, Grove's revisions to his political position after the start of the Second World War suggest that his novels, while not polemical, were nonetheless vehicles of self-reflection and philosophical experiment. Callaghan and Baird both focalize their narratives through individuals whose internal struggle between submitting to political ideologies and asserting their individual power is emblematic of the wider conflict between authority and individuality in the interwar period. While Callaghan's ending is definitively more hopeful than Baird's, both novelists' use of impersonal and objective narration reflects a notable uncertainty about the political future. Although these novelists deny a pre-conceived answer to the questions their novels ask, that very denial encourages their readers' active self-reflection upon and analysis of the political problems the novels expose. These characteristics reveal the philosophical spirit of Grove's, Callaghan's, and Baird's novels and, importantly, suggest that the political novel in Canada requires redefinition in order to accommodate the political but not explicitly ideological vision they express.

Grove's description of his approach to political change in "The Case for Democracy" illuminates the critical and experimental treatment of politics in these novels. There Grove insists that "[w]e must not forget that the system by means of which we try to body forth a fundamental

principle can be changed; that it can, if need be, even [be] discarded. And such change, such dismissal even, of the system does not inevitably imply the surrender of the underlying principle" (25-26). Grove, Callaghan, and Baird defend "the underlying principle" of liberalism—the free individual—throughout their meditations on the dominant political ideologies of the interwar period. They desire not to discard the principles of liberal individualism, but to separate—as later political theorists such as Macpherson will as well—those principles from the political ideologies that sacrifice or pervert them. In this way, Grove's comments also anticipate the ironic political engagement of the authentic individual after the Second World War, who attempts to redeem the world through both her creative will and her critical destruction of her creations.

CHAPTER FOUR

IRONY AND INDIVIDUALIST POLITICS: AUTHENTIC ANTAGONISTS IN SMART AND COHEN

Authenteo: to have full power over; also, to commit a murder. *Authentes*: not only a master and a doer, but also a perpetrator, a murderer, even a self-murderer, a suicide.
Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (131)

In their best-known literary works Elizabeth Smart and Leonard Cohen return to questions about the individual's political engagements that had preoccupied Grove, Callaghan, and Baird. In contrast to these earlier writers, however, Smart and Cohen, writing during and after the Second World War, embed politics in the personal desires of characters obsessed with their own authenticity; their novels develop an individualist politics that asserts the individual's creative authority to revolutionize and redeem a fallen world through her private life. Smart's *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* (1945) and Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* (1966) dramatize the political potential of the individual who desires to transform a personal vision of the world into a universal and utopian reality. Critical of the possible dangers latent in their characters' idealistic desires, Smart and Cohen, like Grove and Callaghan, emphasize self-reflection as necessary to individual political engagement. In Smart's and Cohen's novels, however, irony both reveals the political implications of individual desire and serves as a mode of critical self-reflection through which characters' political visions are created and destroyed, affirmed and denied. In this way, the novels imagine political commitment following the Second World War as inseparable from an individual's continual becoming.

Notably, Smart, and to a lesser extent Cohen, have reputations as decidedly apolitical or even anti-political writers. Citing a retrospectively distasteful moment from Smart's trip to Germany in 1933, during which she offered a Hitler salute in a pub in Hausberg, Smart's

biographer, Rosemary Sullivan, concludes: "Elizabeth was dismissive of politics. Indeed one can say she was naïve […] She would always insist that the route to understanding even world movements lay not in understanding politics, but human nature" (77).[1] Cohen's most recent biographer is equally confident that his interests lie in a more personal sphere than the political. Sylvie Simmons notes Cohen's "usual disinclination to take political sides" (345), thus maintaining his popular image as a tortured ladies' man who, like Smart, is caught up in personal rather than political struggle.[2] So long as the term "political" remains associated only with overtly polemical writers and those who subscribe to and inscribe their narratives in party ideologies, Smart and Cohen, like the novelists discussed in the previous chapter, will also remain beyond political categorization. Their biographers correctly note the general absence of party affiliation in their work; however, in the novels discussed here, Smart's and Cohen's characters antagonize conventional morality and reveal the political injustices of their social world. This personal, authentic, and antagonistic position-taking generates the political criticism the novels offer and reveals the political characteristics of both writers.

Smart's and Cohen's emphasis on their characters' inner lives and desires also seems to obscure the relationship between those personal desires and the political systems of power and injustice that their characters continuously push against. For example, Smart's unnamed narrator is best known for the "lavishness of [her] feelings" (Smart 43), the transformative poetic power of her great love for her beloved, who also remains unnamed in the text.[3] An exile in love, the narrator is often confronted with derisive questions that assume one cannot be committed to

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[1] For Smart's own recollection of this scene, see her journal entries from the trip in *Necessary Secrets* (163).
[2] Cohen's scholarly critics have been more sensitive to the political nature of even his most personal writing. For example, in her now famous definition of Cohen's novel as postmodern metafiction, Linda Hutcheon calls it "ironic, historical, and political fiction that is also about fiction" (*Canadian* 27). I will return to these readings below.
[3] Although Smart's novel is loosely based on her affair with the poet George Barker, neither he nor Smart is identified in the text.

personal desire and care about political conflicts, such as the Second World War: "You don't have much interest in politics, do you?" (76), an acquaintance asks Smart's narrator. The narrator's affair, her commitment to her own emotion, and her defiance of the social role to which wartime culture expects her to conform lead those who encounter her, including many of Smart's critics, to believe that she indeed does not "have much interest in politics."

Cohen's novel also seems to deflate the gravitas of political conflict by turning it into the product of (often impotent) sexual energy. When Cohen's two male protagonists, "I" and F., attend a separatist rally, for example, Cohen inverts the common distinction between personal desire and political interest: politics becomes an unsatisfying expression of sexual desire. "I"'s involvement in the rally hinges upon the sexual energy of the crowd and the disembodied hand that reaches around him to touch his genitals. The speaker at the rally unites the crowd, dissolving each individual body into one aroused political body: "His voice caressed us, just as my fingers her, just as her fingers me, his voice fell over our desire like a stream over a moaning water wheel, and I knew that all of us, not just the girl and me, all of us were going to come together" (126). In this scene Cohen mocks the irrational fervor of nationalist politics; through "I," who had not been interested in the rally until it provoked him sexually, Cohen reveals the political rally as a form of mutual masturbation that leaves everyone dissatisfied. As in Smart's novel, in Cohen's, personal desire seems at first to usurp the privileged public place of politics.

Yet, collapsing the public realm of politics onto the private expression of desire does not necessarily signal a disinterest in politics; rather, Smart's and Cohen's novels expose the deep connection between political interest and private feeling. In fact, the novels demonstrate the individual's power to challenge and antagonize unjust political systems through her private life. Through their differing appeals to philosophical projects of authenticity, Smart and Cohen both

criticize the ways in which hegemonic political systems diminish the individual—an effect which the novelists in the previous chapter also criticized—and underscore the individual's power of political subversion. In other words, the individual's assertion of her integrity and original creative potential ironically protests the political habits that attempt to level her. Smart and Cohen display the transformative political power and utopian urges of the authentic individual, who through her creative redescription of the world reveals her criticisms of it and proclaims her power in it; as the epigraph to this chapter illuminates, the authentic individual is one who has "full power over" something, and in the case of Smart's and Cohen's characters, this power is over both the individual and the recreated world. Politics thus becomes an individual expression, and individual expressions in turn become political.

Smart's and Cohen's novels declare the potent political force of the individual and suggest the potentially violent means through which she may transform the world. The utopian visions of Smart's and Cohen's characters, the products of their authentic and individualist ethical ideals, also resonate with the authoritarian impulses all too familiar to the mid-century. As the epigraph here clarifies, the roots of authenticity also lie in destructive soil: "*Authentes*: not only a master and a doer, but also a perpetrator, a murderer, even a self-murderer, a suicide." In order to criticize both hegemonic political systems that diminish the individual and the individual's own potential to create violent systems of revolution, Smart and Cohen write their novels in an ironic mode, which scrutinizes both the authentic self and its world. A "self-murderer, a suicide," the authentic self creates and destroys her political vision, and so reveals its utopian potential and its violent edge simultaneously.

Authenticity, a key concept of existential philosophy that "originates in the Romantic period" (Taylor, *Malaise* 25), became a prevailing value in the decades that followed the Second

World War (*Secular* 299). As Jacob Golomb notes in *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus*, "[t]he quest for authenticity becomes especially pronounced in extreme situations. These include not only personal and external crises, but also significant social and historical crises" (3). The prolonged state of crisis in the first decades of the twentieth century, which culminated in the demands of world war and the injustices of the Holocaust, certainly helped to inspire new philosophies of authenticity, and to reinvigorate earlier models from thinkers like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Authenticity is an individualist ethical response to the modern crises that illuminated the failures of widely regarded cultural truths: for Smart and Cohen, these truths include the existence of God, the heroism of social duty, and, for Smart in particular, the defined role of women in a patriarchal culture, especially when that culture is at war. In a world where objective and stable "truth" no longer obviously manifests itself, authenticity values subjective "truthfulness" and personal integrity (Golomb 8).

Simply put, an ethics of authenticity finds value and direction in the individual herself rather than in the already prescribed social world around her. The individual's power over her own life was already implicit in the etymology of authenticity. According to the *OED*, the Greek roots of "authentic" mean "of first-hand authority, original," "original authority," and "one who does a thing himself, a principal, a master, an autocrat."[4] These etymological roots reveal the way authenticity combines creative power—like that of an author—with political power—like that of an autocrat. The authentic individual is her own authority and she claims that authority through her construction of her self as an original project. An individual's "original authority," however, also threatens to spread beyond the self and claim power over others in the world, so the authentic individual might be both the author of her own life and the autocratic ruler of

[4] Notably, the *OED* definition of authenticity does not emphasize the violent side of authenticity as Trilling does in his own etymology.

others'.

The authentic individual locates in herself the direction and integrity she finds missing in the world, and this commitment to her own values generates her potential as an antagonistic political figure. Charles Guignon explains that the ideal of authenticity should "call us back from our ordinary, inauthentic way of being distracted and dispersed in the world. It calls on us to live a more focused and intense life, a way of existing that integrates our feelings, desires, and beliefs into a unified whole" (xxxiv). Golomb also relates the quest for authenticity to the individual's opposition to the perceived inauthenticity of the hegemonic social world:

> The existential writers hope to shatter our dogmatic beliefs and lure us into giving up blindly accepted ethical norms and ideologies. Only when we successfully shed these values that we have been conditioned to uphold by various institutions – our families, schools and universities – will we be able to reach beyond them to the genuine roots of our selves and ultimately attain authenticity. (8)

The ideal of authenticity invites individuals to recognize their freedom to shape their own lives through their commitments and values; it is an ideal of creative living, because the authentic life, which does not take any value as merely given, constantly recreates itself. Although Guignon and Golomb both suggest that authenticity is something that an individual can "ultimately attain," however, Smart and Cohen demonstrate the value of a more Nietzschean conception of authenticity, which, committed to becoming over being, restlessly recreates itself. As Richard Rorty explains with reference to Nietzschean self-creation, "this willing will always be a project

rather than a result, a project which life does not last long enough to complete" (40).[5]

In his influential *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Lionel Trilling usefully contrasts the two terms in his title. While sincerity suggests "the esteem and fair repute that follow upon the correct fulfillment of a public role" (9) and "is used for the self as manifested in the social domain" (Golomb 8), authenticity suggests a subjective and internal rather than social orientation. Trilling explains that authenticity, in contrast to sincerity, refers to "a more strenuous moral experience […] a more exigent conception of the self and of what being true to it consists in, a wider reference to the universe and man's place in it, and a less acceptant and genial view of the social circumstances of life" (11). Sincerity, on the other hand, is similar to what the existentialists called bad faith "insofar as [both demand] that I see myself as having the fixed identity of a thing" (Crowell 217). Authenticity, in contrast, requires a self-reflexive subject, who may reject her social world in order to live as her own authority. This authentic individual views herself not as "a thing," but as a subject engaged in becoming, whose desire to be true to herself requires her to redefine constantly what such truthfulness entails.[6]

Although authenticity is not one of Nietzsche's conceptual terms, its creative and individualist ideals nonetheless resonate in a number of his key philosophical ideas, including his forceful and influential criticisms of conventional morality, the characteristics of his

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[5] This reading of authenticity counters Theodore Adorno's claim that the "jargon of authenticity" works to conserve exploitative social structures: "The stereotypes of the jargon support and reassure subjective movement. They seem to guarantee that one is not doing what in fact he is doing – bleating with the crowd – simply by virtue of his using those stereotypes to guarantee that one has achieved it all himself, as an unmistakably free person" (18). Adorno supposes that those who take up authenticity as a personal ethic believe that they may complete a project that brings them happiness. Philosophers of authenticity, however, usually see authenticity as a persistent negotiation between the authentic and inauthentic, the private and the social, that is never complete.

[6] Sartre and Heidegger, among other philosophers of authenticity, however, recognize that authenticity and inauthenticity are not so clearly distinct. For Sartre, one's life includes both authenticity and inauthenticity. See Chapter Two, "Bad Faith," of *Being and Nothingness*. For Heidegger, on the other hand, "inauthenticity is based on the possibility of authenticity" (*Being* 303).

Übermensch, and most poetically, in his advice to "[b]ecome who you are!" (*Zarathustra* 192).[7] For Golomb, Nietzsche's announcement that "God is dead!" (*Gay* 120) increases the significance of authenticity: "After the 'Death of God' one has to adopt for oneself the God-like role of being the originator of truth and of one's own self" (Golomb 68). Most important to the implied political dimension of authenticity, however, is its opposition to conventional morality: "the concept of authenticity is a protest against the blind, mechanical acceptance of an externally imposed code of values" (11). In a Nietzschean way, then, the authentic individual disdains the common morality that suppresses individual creative power. As Nietzsche warned in *Daybreak*: "the individual is to sacrifice himself – that is the commandment of morality of custom" (9).[8]

Despite its seemingly utopian potential, however, authenticity may indeed inspire a disengaged life, or one that embodies the violence Trilling uncovers in its etymology. Philosophers of authenticity have expressed anxiety about these two divergent and dangerous positions: on one hand, indifferent passivity and political laziness and, on the other, an authoritarian impulse to rule.[9] In fact, these two potentialities map the possible trajectories (and explain some of the critical readings) of *By Grand Central Station* and *Beautiful Losers*. Although the two novels criticize both of these extreme positions, their critics have generally characterized *By Grand Central Station* as verging on political indifference and *Beautiful Losers* as celebrating an authoritarian impulse. While Smart's narrator appears to be decidedly *a*political and apathetic to the cultural crisis of the Second World War, Cohen's protagonists, especially F., threaten to transform all they see into their own (authentic) vision of the world. As I will explain

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[7] See Golomb (68) for the relationship between Nietzsche's term *Wahrhaftigkeit*, Heidegger's *eigentlich*, and the later existentialists' use of "authenticity."

[8] More recent definitions of authenticity echo this challenge to conventional morality: "Authenticity involves originality, it demands a revolt against convention. It is easy to see how standard morality itself can come to be seen as inseparable from stifling convention" (Taylor, *Malaise* 65).

[9] See Adorno's *The Jargon of Authenticity* for a criticism of authenticity and its dangerous sides, especially as they appear in Heidegger.

throughout this chapter, however, these initial images of Smart's narrator and Cohen's protagonists mislead their readers. Smart and Cohen express their anxieties about the culture of authenticity through irony. While the novels communicate the ethical value of authenticity, especially in a world that sacrifices the individual to larger political ends, they also articulate its costs. In the end, both novels leave their readers with an image of missed communion, which suggests not that authenticity is a failed ethic, but that it requires persistent critical reflection.

In *The Malaise of Modernity*, Charles Taylor develops a moderate view of the culture of authenticity in the late twentieth century with the intention of rescuing authenticity from both of these grave extremes.[10] Taylor presents the dangers of authentic individualism, which he calls both "the individualism of self-fulfillment" (14) and, later in *A Secular Age*, "expressive individualism" (299): "This individualism involves a centring on the self and concomitant shutting out, or even unawareness, of the greater issues or concerns that transcend the self, be they religious, political, historical. As a consequence, life is narrowed or flattened" (*Malaise* 14). Taylor suggests the culture of authenticity generates political indifference—"the liberalism of neutrality" (16)—through the kind of relativism that seems, in its equation of all things, to negate significance altogether. In other words, when we develop a self-generated ethics and view of the world and our place in it, we also recognize that each individual has her own values and are thus tempted to claim that all values, because they are individual, are equal. In *The Jargon of Authenticity*, Theodore Adorno similarly criticizes this passive relativism; he argues in 1964 that authenticity "caricatures the equal rights of everything that bears a human face, since it hides from men the unalleviated discriminations of societal power: the difference between hunger and overabundance, between spirit and docile idiocy" (66). Such universal relativism translates into indifference and neutral acceptance that conserves rather than transforms exploitative systems of

[10] Tellingly, *The Malaise of Modernity* was published outside of Canada under the title *The Ethics of Authenticity*.

power.[11]

In contrast to this political indifference, authenticity's alternate risk lies in its authoritarian potential. Authenticity turns authoritarian when the authentic individual's authority over herself translates into a desire for authority over all. Taylor helpfully explains that "[b]ecause the notion of self-determining freedom, pushed to its limit, doesn't recognize any boundaries, anything that I *have* to respect in my exercise of self-determining choice" (*Malaise* 68; original emphasis), it may devolve into a form of authoritarianism. For Taylor, however, such devolution implies an essential misunderstanding of the philosophic project of authenticity. As Alexander Nehamas points out, for example, Nietzsche's authentic individuals "know that their mode of life is their own creation and that it is not the only mode that is necessary or even possible" (70). Despite this philosophical insistence on recognizing the contingent nature of one's authenticity, however, Smart's and Cohen's novels uncover the subtle authoritarian potential implicit in the creative character of authenticity: one might know that her mode of life is not the only one, and still unconsciously commit to a vision of the world that metaphorically positions the authentic individual as an authoritarian prophet. As I explain below, the ironic and persistent creation and destruction of both the authentic individual and her redemptive political projects in these novels curbs this authoritarian potential.

Taylor's wider, recuperative argument for authenticity, however, diverges greatly from Adorno's critical argument against it. On Taylor's view, the dangerous poles of authenticity rest

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[11] Despite Taylor's criticisms of Nietzsche, his image of a neutral and unpolitical populace echoes Nietzsche's critique of liberalism and his image of the last human. Nietzsche begins *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* with "Zarathustra's Prologue," in which Zarathustra repeats the madman's announcement in *The Gay Science* that "*God is dead!*" and begins to "*teach* […] *the overman*" (5; original emphasis). Zarathustra's image of the last human vibrates with the sad indifference of a "flattened," but comfortable, life. Content but disinterested, the last human has lost the mystery and passion of life: "'What is love? What is creation? What is longing? […] – Thus asks the last human being, blinking" (10). Zarathustra's speech recalls Nietzsche's disdain for the sacrifice of individuality for the sake of a general whole and indicts the culture of last humans: "One no longer becomes poor and rich: both are too burdensome. Who wants to rule anymore? Who wants to obey anymore? Both are too burdensome. No shepherd and one herd! Each wants the same, each is the same" (10).

on an impoverished understanding of it as a project that begins and ends in the solitary individual. Taylor argues instead: "Authenticity is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it supposes such demands" (41). Taylor's definition of authenticity as an individualist ethic cultivated and refined in a community helps to illuminate the philosophical and political importance of Smart's and Cohen's critical irony in their novels. Their irony transforms their protagonists' failures into part of the creative becoming necessary to authenticity itself. For, as Taylor argues, "[t]he thing about inwardly derived, personal, original identity is that it doesn't enjoy [its] recognition [by others] a priori. It has to win it through exchange, and it can fail. What has come about with the modern age is not the need for recognition but the conditions in which this can fail. And that is why the need is now *acknowledged* for the first time" (48; original emphasis). Both of the novels discussed in this chapter emphasize this failure of recognition as part of the ironic process of authenticity. Furthermore, this potential to fail characterizes (in part) the relationship between authenticity and political individuality: authentic individuality is political precisely because it must negotiate between individual values and the values of a wider social community. The individual's failure to determine seamlessly the values of a community or to withdraw from that community altogether implicates her in an exchange that, because it focalizes the power relationships within a community, will always be political.

Smart and Cohen develop characters who believe their authenticity will redeem the world from suffering and injustice; this belief generates the political edge of the characters and novels discussed here. Such redemption is made conceivable through a continual process of redescription that Richard Rorty sees as essential to Nietzschean authenticity. The authentic individual liberates herself from the limits of social and political convention by developing "a new language" (Rorty 28) to express herself and her world. Rorty emphasizes Nietzsche's view

of redemption in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, a view that joins the eternal return and *amor fati* in a vision of willed affirmation: "To redeem those who are past and to recreate all 'it was' into 'thus I willed it!' – only that would I call redemption" (*Zarathustra* 110).[12] Through such creative affirmation, Smart's and Cohen's characters attempt to transform a particular ethical engagement into a universal individualism through which the world becomes the expression of a singular individual, a creation of an authentic authority.

For example, Smart's narrator outrageously (and wrongly) believes that her love transforms the world, especially the suffering of Europe, with hope: "There are not too many bereaved or wounded but I can comfort them, and those 5,000,000 who never stop dragging their feet and bundles of babies with bloated bellies across Europe, are not too many or too benighted for me to say, Here's a world of hope" (43). Similarly, a self-described "Dr. Frankenstein," Cohen's F. desires to alleviate the "pain" and "mutilation" he witnesses by both redescribing history and recreating individual human bodies (183). Both Smart and Cohen imagine communities unified through the authentic individual, who promises (but ultimately fails) to redeem it. Smart and Cohen point to the continued potential for authentic revolutionary communities, however, precisely through the absence of those communities in their novels: the deflated images of the individual and her community at the end of each novel—Smart's narrator abandoned in Grand Central Station, Cohen's final, unnamed narrator's last words of confident

[12] Nietzsche develops his idea of the eternal return in his late writings *The Gay Science*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Twilight of the Idols*, and *Ecce Homo*. Beginning in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche theorizes the eternal return as a "thought experiment" (Williams, "Introduction" xvi) through which we defeat *ressentiment* by willing our lives to be eternally the same. It is important to note, however, that Nietzsche imagines this as a terrifying process: "What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again […] every pain and every joy […] in your life must return to you […].' Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon that spoke thus?" (*Gay* 194). *Amor fati* is the way in which the terror of the eternal return, "the heaviest weight" (194), is moderated: it changes the eternal return from the unbearable repetition of history to the affirmation and love of fate. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche calls *amor fati* his "formula for human greatness"; it is "[to] not want anything to be different, not forwards, not backwards, not for all eternity. Not just to tolerate necessity […] but to *love* it" (99).

evasion—heighten the reader's active engagement with the text and with the image of a transformed future it offered and withdrew.

Irony, a characteristic of authentic self-reflection, also communicates the political character of Smart's and Cohen's novels to a community of readers who have reflected critically on the redemptive visions the novels deflate in their endings. Irony offers a mode through which characters may judiciously contemplate themselves in the way the novels discussed in Chapter Three obliquely promoted and, relatedly, it creates a way of being both authentic and political that curbs the dangers of authenticity discussed above. The first kind of irony draws upon the existential tradition of critical self-reflection; the second draws upon the tradition of romantic irony that constantly destroys what it has created. Smart's and Cohen's novels unite these ironies to suggest that authentic political engagement reflects critically on itself, always asking *how* it would redeem both the self and the world, and that such reflection inspires the creative redemption of ongoing redescription. In turn, the product of redescription must also be scrutinized for the ways in which it makes the authentic individual the master of a recreated world, and, when the injustices and abuses of power still present in the redescribed world are revealed, it too must be destroyed. Thus, political engagement occurs through responsible participation in a process of perpetual creation and destruction. This view, which sees the world as contingent and unstable, suggests that political systems that seek an unnatural stability must be continuously challenged and exposed. Ultimately (and ironically in a different sense), this process inspires a hopeful political vision, for both creation and destruction promise new and potentially better worlds to come.

As theorists of irony have habitually noted, its common understanding as "saying one thing and meaning another" (de Man 209) simply cannot accommodate the multivalent

significance of its use: "The 'ironic' meaning is not, then, simply the unsaid meaning, and the unsaid is not always a simple inversion or opposite of the said […] it is always different – *other than* and more than the said" (Hutcheon, *Irony's* 12-13; original emphasis). Linda Hutcheon argues that ironic meaning is not structured by a binary either/or condition, but exists as a "third meaning" that combines both the said and the unsaid: "ironic meaning is *simultaneously* double (or multiple) […] therefore you don't actually have to reject a 'literal' meaning in order to get at what is usually called the 'ironic' or 'real' meaning of the utterance" (60; original emphasis). This understanding of irony is important to Smart's and Cohen's works because they often both affirm and deny the political significance of personal emotions. Rather than restrict the significance of these desires to a simple criticism of personal emotion by means of a traditional understanding of irony, Hutcheon's definition allows them to be both personal *and* political and thus to create a "third meaning" which uncovers their interrelation, the way in which emotion signals both private and political desire.

The "third meaning" of Smart's and Cohen's ironies occurs through their striking combination of existential and romantic irony. Importantly, irony is *the* narrative mode of authenticity, because it "brings out the self-detachment needed to transcend subjectivity, and enables the individual to refocus, as it were, on the emerging authentic self" (Golomb 29). Trilling's description of the "[p]lain speaking" (22) associated with sincerity distinguishes it from the ironic rhetoric of authenticity. Accordingly, the authentic individual perceives the many masks she may wear in her social interactions, although, unlike the sincere individual, she does not identify fully with any singular role. Thus, this irony provides the double view of one's self—as intimate and as distant—through which one may become authentic.

In *English Romantic Irony*, Anne K. Mellor distinguishes romantic irony from

existentialism: "Existentialism and romantic irony share an ontological vision of the universe as chaotic and incomprehensible. But whereas the romantic ironist embraces this becoming as a merrily multiplying life-process, the existentialist sees it as absurd or benignly indifferent, without inherent meaning for man" (183). Mellor draws her definition of romantic irony from Friedrich Schlegel, who saw irony as the "continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts" (qtd. Mellor 12).[13] According to Mellor, romantic irony describes "the artist in a process in which he simultaneously projects his ego or selfhood as a divine creator and also mocks, criticizes, or rejects his created fictions as limited and false" (14). Romantic irony thus expresses the subject's rage for order and the acknowledgement that such order will be unstable in a chaotic world. This dialectic of creation and destruction never reaches a synthesis (11); rather, the artist "deconstructs his own texts in the expectation that such deconstruction is a way of keeping in contact with a greater creative power" (5). Similarly, while Smart and Cohen constantly acknowledge the limits of their own creations, they nonetheless also affirm the redemptive potential of creation itself. For Smart's narrator and for "I" and F., creation provides the means through which one invents an authentic self and a better world. Unlike the romantic ironist, who "embraces change and process for their own sake" (4), however, Smart and Cohen translate this ironic embrace into critical political commitments. Creative energy and individual authenticity combine in a political individual who restlessly attempts to redeem the unjust world.

"The authentic work of art," Trilling claims in *Sincerity and Authenticity*, "instructs us in our inauthenticity and adjures us to overcome it" (100). In this way, Smart's and Cohen's novels instruct their readers in the political potential of both authenticity and irony. The novels invite their readers to participate in their protagonists' projects of authenticity, which are also subject to

[13] Responding to earlier German philosophers like Kant and Fichte, Schlegel and the thinkers involved in *Das Athenaeum* introduced "a new, revolutionary description of an ideal not only of poetry but also of human knowledge and its boundlessness, an ideal that committed them to a certain philosophical method" (Millan-Zaibert 17).

criticism and seem to fail at the moment in which they are passed directly on to the readers. In a statement that picks up on Trilling's sentiment above, Golomb advises that "[to] ready us for authenticity the illusion that we are already authentic must first be 'taken away'" ("Kierkegaard" 68). *By Grand Central Station* and *Beautiful Losers* strip their readers of their illusions of authenticity and, in doing so, initiate them in the radical politics of the authentic individual.

By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept: Love as a Political Emotion

We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song;
and they that wasted us *required of us* mirth, *saying*,
Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion.
How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? (Psalm 137: 2-4)

On the other side of the war that was beginning as Baird's *Waste Heritage* went to print, Elizabeth Smart published *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* (1945). Three events form the backdrop to the composition and publishing history of *By Grand Central Station*: Smart's affair with the married poet George Barker, the birth of three of her beloved children, and the inescapable Second World War.[14] Encouraged by the "claustrophobic subjectivity" (Cook 60) of a woman in love that saturates the book, Smart's critics have primarily taken up the first of these three events in their discussions, leaving the second to her biography and, with the exception of Nancy Wright, ignoring the third almost unequivocally. In her attentive reading of *By Grand Central Station* in "Extreme Faith in the Work of Elizabeth Smart and Luce Irigaray," Heather Walton notes that Smart invites her critics to ignore the presence of world events in her novel: "As the world descends into chaos Smart perversely chooses to expend her creative energies on the emotional and particular, the ahistorical and apolitical. She might thus be accused

[14] Smart began her book before she met Barker (Sullivan 150), finished it in 1941 while she was pregnant with her first of four children with him (179-83), and received the proofs in April 1945, while she was in the hospital recovering from giving birth to their third child (226).

of nurturing an immoral escapism in the face of impending disaster" (40).

A biting irony, however, accompanies Smart's seemingly "perverse" focus on the "emotional and particular," and this irony challenges readings that view her book as either advocating personal emotion as an escape from world events or thoroughly rejecting such escape. In the tradition of romantic irony *By Grand Central Station* both celebrates and criticizes its narrator's utopian desires as part of a political individuality founded on authenticity. The philosophical roots of this politicized individual lie in the discourse of authenticity, which emphasizes the individual as a creative authority; the creative form of that political individuality, however, is romantic irony, which holds conflicting ideas together and actively destroys its own creations. Furthermore, this oscillation between creation and destruction illuminates the character of political individuality in the mid-century, for, as Smart's narrator reveals, personal emotion often uncovers political complacency. Translating Schlegel's theory of romantic irony as the creative form of perpetual becoming into the war-torn twentieth century, Smart's novel suggests that the individual's political potential is found in her dual ability to imagine the world as an expression of her authentic will (and thus to become responsible for it) and to judge that creative expression as flawed, unfinished, and inadequate to redeem the suffering of the world.

Written in richly poetic language and narrated in the first person, *By Grand Central Station* traces the narrator's affair with a married man and her resulting pregnancy during the Second World War. The narrator's passion transforms her relationship with her society; she views the world around her as a mythological reflection of her affair, a habit that has blinded Smart's critics to the potential political value of her narrator's transgressive insistences on the

value of erotic love during war.[15] The narrator and her beloved meet disdain in their encounters: they are arrested and accused of being communists in Arizona, the narrator's parents strongly disapprove of her affair when she returns to Canada, and wartime expectations of women continually inspire the narrator's own disdain for the hypocrisy and sacrifice wartime culture demands. As if to vindicate external criticisms about the narrator's emotional investments, in the end, her beloved returns to his wife while the pregnant narrator waits for him in Grand Central Station, where her early belief that her love might redeem the war-torn world finally seems lost. As I will argue below, however, this deflationary ending is crucial to the ironic model of political individuality Smart's novel offers. This ending questions the narrator's impossible utopian desires, which define the first half of the novel. As the novel meditates on the political implications of authenticity it suggests that these two poles—the hopeful, imagined creation of the world as a product of the individual's personal desire and that creation's critical, ironic annihilation—define political individualism following the outbreak of the Second World War.

Unknown to many readers until its republication in 1966, Smart's book "about love" (Smart, *Necessary* 213) has predominantly invited two different kinds of critical attention—to biography and to genre—both of which downplay its meditation on authentic and political individuality. The biographical approach to the novel concentrates on the seductive story of Smart's affair with Barker, a concentration that easily conceals the text's political edge. Commenting on Smart's relative obscurity, Sullivan notes that "[w]hen Smart is known, it is often in association with a vague romantic legend: as a woman who fell in love with a poet, had four children by him without ever having lived with him, and wrote one of the most passionate accounts of romantic love in modern English literature" (xi). That the "vague romantic legend"

[15] Wright, however, rightly reads the narrator's subversion of her gendered social role as a comment on Canada as a motherland: "she responds to the overfeminization of Canada as a motherland or feminine being by imagining herself as a fertile motherland whose romantic love 'can repopulate all the world'" (3).

associated with *By Grand Central Station* has often eclipsed the text was clear to Smart herself, who claimed in an interview that her readers had "made far too much of the autobiography […] I only took things out of my own life which I felt were relevant" (qtd. McGill 9). Noting that Smart "had been preparing for ten years to write" the book, Alice Van Wart, who edited Smart's journals for publication, adds that this biographical approach does not tell the full story of Smart's remarkable book ("Introduction" 4). Indeed, Smart's achievements in *By Grand Central Station* surpass the relative banalities of a private affair. Not least among these achievements is her engagement with an ethic of authenticity that fortifies the unique individual and ironically imagines a renewed commitment (however flawed) to the social world.[16]

Generic and formal criticism of Smart's book has also remained blind to its meditation on the radical potential and danger of the authentic political individual. As Robert McGill notes, "feminist reviewers of *By Grand Central Station* in the 1970s generally downplayed the book's autobiographical aspects and celebrated it instead from a formalist perspective" (11).[17] Smart's biography, then, defines even the critical attempts to avoid it. Critics have found the "ever-intensifying subjectivity" (Cook 61) at the centre of the book a formal problem. Because it invites superficially biographical readings, they have sought to explain it in purely formal terms. Formal readings offer insightful descriptions of Smart's style, but in attempting to reduce the power and scope of the "I" to the purely formal, they have also contributed to Smart's reputation as an apolitical writer. As this chapter aims to demonstrate, Smart's "I" catalyzes a new, implicitly political, subjectivity, and Smart's ironic treatment of her narrator only further

[16] See Robert McGill and Elizabeth Podnieks for nuanced readings of the relationship between Smart's biography and *By Grand Central Station*.

[17] See Brigid Brophy's introduction to the 1966 reissue of *By Grand Central Station*; Jean Mallinson's "The Figures of Love: Rhetoric in *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*; Dee Horne's "Elizabeth Smart's Novel-Journal"; Méira Cook's *Writing Lovers: Reading Canadian Love Poetry by Women*; Alice Van Wart's "*By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*: The Novel as Poem" and "Elizabeth Smart: A Reconsideration."

illuminates the sophistication of her achievement.

Both the biographical and the formal approach to *By Grand Central Station* ignore or deflate Smart's interest in the Second World War and the implicitly political stance of the individual who concentrates on her personal passion rather than her duty. More recent publications of Smart's poetry, journals, and later work, however, demonstrate her latent but sustained interest in the war and invite a reconsideration of her best-known work's meditation on politics.[18] For example, in a journal entry dated September 23, 1939, Smart wrote an untitled poem about the outbreak of war and the relief with which people greet the conflict. The poem features a man named Bill and a "complacent wife 3000 miles from death," whose use of the familiar language of national duty predetermines their responses to the war (*Necessary* 190). Bill's "imagination shutting like a trap / All true news banned" (190) creates a relation between "imagination" and "true news" that suggests that the ease with which people fall back on wartime clichés to justify violence prevents them from imagining alternative responses to world conflict. The complacent wife, safe from danger herself, offers another hypocritical cliché: "'Honour above life […] / 'I say it now and shall continue to say it till my last breath'" (190). Smart's poem anticipates many of the themes that appear in *By Grand Central Station*: she presents support for the war as both hypocritical and unimaginative, an appeal to prescribed images that distract from authentic engagement. Smart concludes the poem with a final image of "gaunt dreamers in their disturbed garrets" who "[s]eeing really" the bombs in the sky "are relieved their role of prophet is over / And the doom at last begun" (191). These dreamers, who have "[d]isaster-provoking eyes" (190), feel release from their "nerve-straining wait" (191) and welcome the war as justification of their own vision. Smart's poem, however, ironically criticizes

[18] See also, for example, *The Assumption of Rogues and Rascals*, and the poems "What is Art? Said Doubting Tim" (*Meantime* 36), "What Serene Land" (100), "Imminence of War" (*Collected* 31), "Love in Wartime" (34), "Political Poem" (40), and "Birth of a Child in Wartime" (41).

these reactions for their perverse happiness about the war. The general failure of imagination creates the conditions of war, which in turn brings hypocritical relief to those who foresaw it.

In this context of Smart's creative engagement with the war her implicit political critique in *By Grand Central Station* comes into better focus. I do not, however, wish to overstate the case. Smart never developed a sustained meditation on party politics, and she saw them as petty, as she notes in a letter: "(I don't like politics. I think it's as bad to get so emotional about how to run a country as to get hysterical about the housework and hipped on the housemaids' idiosyncrasies)" (qtd. Sullivan 120). Smart maintained this skeptical view of party politics throughout her life. During her interview with Bruce Meyer and Brian O'Riordan in the early 1980s for *In Their Words*, Smart claimed: "I've always thought politics was nonsense. In fact, I've always found all politics extremely boring" (193). Although she may never have called her project "political," Smart insists upon the dignity of individual emotions and imagination even, *especially*, as the war effort was suppressing them. This antagonistic insistence carries political implications, as the police who arrest the narrator and her parents who chastise her also know. The narrator's overtly emotional state illuminates the disconnection between public propriety and personal passion; it reveals the inauthenticity of the roles people play in public; and, most importantly, in the second half of the book, it suggests the disruptive potential of the individual who refuses to conform to her pre-determined social role even when that individual is defeated in the end. The narrator thus casts into relief the suppressive character of political and national duty; as she calls them into question, she reveals their fragility, a revelation that the narrator's final defeat does not undo.

The exceptional demands she places on language, the medium through which Smart's narrator claims her implicitly political individuality, connects the narrator both to Nietzsche's

philosophical project of authenticity and Smart's own project of modernist creation. While in Mexico in 1939,[19] Smart wrote in her journal that she wanted her "book to be about love. But love is so large and formless. (But so full of new worlds)" (*Necessary* 213). Later, she claimed to need a new form to express her vision: "But I need a new form even for a poem. I have used up my ones. Tricks begin to slouch about. Each word must rip virgin ground. No past effort must ease the new birth" (217). Smart's concern with new forms and her desire for precision signal her association with modernism's project to reinvigorate poetic language. In fact, Smart had been attempting to contribute to modernism since the early '30s.[20] She felt the influence of Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf especially and chronicled her struggle to free herself from those influences. In her writing she desired "[to] be [her] own original self – to be the thing that is the strongest urge at [her] depths" (Smart, *Necessary* 43). Smart's formal innovations thus also imply her own quest for authenticity: with *By Grand Central Station* she successfully developed a form and rhetoric of love to express "the strongest urge at [her] depths." As I discuss below, Smart achieves this authenticity through its ironic displacement in a literary text, which transforms her desires for authenticity into a political comment on the wartime sacrifice of individuality.

While *By Grand Central Station* is not Smart's biography, its creative form reveals something about the authenticity of both the narrator and her author. Richard Rorty's explanation of Nietzsche's advice to "become who you are" in terms of the metaphors we use to describe our life further illuminates the German philosopher's essential interest in what later thinkers called authenticity. According to Rorty's reading of Nietzsche, one creates oneself when one finds an

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[19] This trip was made before Smart met Barker and during her relationship with Jean "Yanko" Varda, a Greek artist she met in France in 1938 (Sullivan 107). While in Mexico, Smart had a brief affair with Alice Paalen (138) and worked on a novella, *Dig a Grave and Let Us Bury Our Mother* (131), unpublished until 1984.

[20] See Anne Quéma's essay, "The Passionate and Sublime Modernism of Elizabeth Smart," for an account of Smart's writing "as a practice and a critique of modernism" (298).

original language of self-description: "To fail as a poet – and thus, for Nietzsche, to fail as a human being – is to accept somebody else's description of oneself, to execute a previously prepared program, to write, at most, elegant variations on previously written poems. So the only way to trace home the causes of one's being as one is would be to tell a story about one's causes in a new language" (28). In finding a new language for love and imagining a new way of life that breaks with the "previously prepared program" of a woman during war, Smart engages with an authentic project to become her "own original self." Whether or not the events of the narrative are related to events in Smart's own life, the act of writing and publishing "erotic emotions" during a time of propriety imagines a new self, who has found her individual language. The same may be said of Smart's narrator, who also defies "a previously prepared program" and insists on loving her beloved. Moreover, in the famous fourth part of the novel, which I discuss below, the narrator responds to police questioning with quotations from the *Song of Songs*: "(The king hath brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love.)" (47). These responses not only reveal the hypocrisy of the law—"society very easily views love as a crime, yet at the same time it professes to believe that love is sacrosanct" (Oliver 119-20)—they also juxtapose the erotic biblical verses with the bureaucratic scene of police questioning, thus creating a new language to describe the narrator's unique experiences. This new language responds to the police's desire to define her as a communist adulteress with a subversive and creative act of her individual will.

The latent political significance of Smart's book begins with the allusion in its title. *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* unites the urban scene of New York's Grand Central Station and the Biblical image of exile in Psalm 137. Jean Mallinson discusses the title as an example of zeugma and relates it to metalepsis, which she argues "is central to the book's

meaning […] because it links the text, through the title, with the idea of love in exile and, through the pervasive references to the *Song of Songs*, to a world in which love was all" (110). Mallinson's influential reading has perhaps encouraged later critics to focus too exclusively on *metaphorical* exile. Wright, for example, argues that for the narrator "exile is separation from her beloved, not separation from her home in Ottawa where she endured the reproaches of her family" (8). Wright's reading is correct, if we take the narrator's exile to reflect only her state when, abandoned in New York, she announces the title in the text: "By Grand Central Station I sat down and wept" (103). Mallinson's point, however, is that the tension between "the idea of love in exile" and "a world in which love was all" structures the entirety of Smart's text. As I explain below, however, exile also describes the state of the individual who values love in a world that glorifies pity. The narrator is thus an exile in New York, in Ottawa, in Arizona, in the presence of her beloved, and in his absence. This state of exile characterizes the narrator's antagonistic presence in the novel; she lives outside of her own "country," and her desire to transform the world to fit her own vision of love communicates her desire to recreate that country in the North America of the Second World War.

Readings too focused on the narrator's metaphoric exile, however, forget that she is also literally exiled when she is deported back to Canada after her arrest in Arizona. While her silent protest when she is arrested encourages the officers questioning her to accuse her of being a communist (50), the novel provides no definitive reason for the narrator's exile.[21] The narrator provokes the officer who questions her: "Are you not convinced, inspector? Do you not believe in love?" (50). For the narrator, love is both crime and alibi, and her refusal to offer a defense in

[21] Sullivan details Smart's arrest in 1940, noting that the authorities were concerned that she and Barker were "Communists, spies, [or] Fifth Columnists" (164). Smart was detained longer than Barker, because her passport had not been stamped when she entered the U.S. from Mexico (164). Her father eventually intervened and "telephoned the ambassador in Washington and her papers were forwarded" (165). A sealed file on Smart still exists with the F.B.I. (165).

any language but the one of her own desire has concrete political consequences. The narrator's belief that her love occasions her deportation—"For too much love, only for too much love" (51)—signals the radical connection she draws between her private feelings and their political significance: in her mind, she is being punished for a love that threatens the inauthentic world that has captured her. Smart's ambiguity about the reason for her narrator's deportation invites us to read the narrator's love as a feeling with real political ramifications even as we remain skeptical of her understanding of her arrest and deportation.

Invoking images of exile to describe the narrator's position within her society, Smart also relates the individualizing power of her narrator's love, which in turn makes her an outsider in a world that values conformity. Exile always cuts with a political edge, and when Smart describes the narrator's position as one of exile through allusion to Psalm 137, she invites both a Biblical and political reading of her text. While many of Smart's formal critics have addressed the Biblical allusions in *By Grand Central Station*, they have widely ignored the political character of exile. But to live in exile means not only to be cast from your own land, but also to live elsewhere without the power that belongs to those who are "at home" in the dominant community. Smart transforms her narrator's position of powerlessness into one of power; the narrator refuses to relinquish her exilic position by subscribing to the roles expected of her. Smart thus amplifies the political character of *By Grand Central Station*: not only does she invoke an allusion with obvious political resonances, she also transforms exile into a position from which her narrator may criticize the dominant culture and, through her claim to power outside of that culture, attempt to redeem the world. Smart's narrator serves as a reminder and a promise of "a world in which love was all" by virtue of her very exile from that world.

Commentators on Psalm 137 note "the powerful political dimension this psalm has

always had for singers who are conscious of the wider context of their singing" (Parker 55). Kirsten Tranter further explains the political context of the psalm:

> In Psalm 137, silence or the refusal to sing is a political gesture of resistance by the Israelites against their captors: "for there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion." The Israelites hang up their instruments and refuse to sing the songs their captors "require"; they ask, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" The song they sing *instead* is the text of the Psalm, an invocation to memory and the importance of remembering "the Lord's song" in a place of exile where it cannot be uttered. (199; original emphasis)

Smart's allusion to Psalm 137 in her title, then, suggests a kind of political resistance that transcends the narrator's single cry of abandonment in Grand Central Station. Smart's narrator, like the Israelites, refuses to sing the song her captors "require" of her. Her refusal, however, reverses the strategy of the Israelites in Babylon: rather than falling into silence, Smart's narrator sings "the Lord's song" when she answers the police questions with lines from the *Song of Songs*. Her political gesture occurs through song, and it is with her defiant language that she promises to redeem the world.

Love is a politicized emotion in *By Grand Central Station*. It transgresses the hierarchy of wartime feeling, which denigrates individualist and life-affirming feelings and glorifies those feelings, such as national pride, that reinforce collective and abstract values like duty and honour—"Honour above life," as the complacent wife in Smart's earlier poem promises. This hierarchy of feeling eventually leads to the narrator's abandonment by her beloved, who follows duty and returns to his wife. In the world of Smart's narrative, pity and love are antagonists: "[in]

such a world, love is just another four-letter word […] love is obscene, an affront, an indecency" (Mallinson 117). Pity belongs to the realm of sincerity and duty, of social roles that have been pre-given; as the inspector tells the narrator in Arizona: "I'm only a cog in the machine, I have my duty to do" (50). Love, as Smart inscribes it, in contrast, belongs to the realm of authenticity, of individuality that expresses its own ethic and redescribes the world in its own language. For Walton this antagonism illuminates Smart's implicit political statement in the book, which

> express[es] a faith which has a completely different foundation to the ethical/political/spiritual systems which Smart has struggled against in relation to her understanding of the work of writing and now emerges with in relation to the political crisis of her time. These same systems are the ones which have brought the world to war and the 'pity' (misplaced faith in a disembodied ideal) which they evoke sustains rather than alleviates the violence. (46)

Michael Brian Oliver similarly notes that "[p]ity is the only force that can destroy love. This is the ultimate truth of the book, and it challenges the ideological foundation of our society which has tried desperately, and for a very long time, to equate love with pity" (125).[22] Explicitly in conflict with the communal and sacrificial values of wartime culture, love in *By Grand Central Station* reveals the book's latent political critique. That pity eventually destroys the narrator's naïve hope that her love will transform the world, however, signals Smart's ironic view of her narrator's intentions: while the narrator's love reveals and criticizes the violence and inauthenticity of her social world, Smart remains critical of her extreme belief in her ability to translate her metaphoric vision of a redeemed world into a literal reality.

For the narrator, love is a particular emotion that empowers her to reimagine the world as

[22] Smart is not alone among Canadian modern novelists in her disdain for pity. See the next chapter for a reading of the individualist ideals of compassion, as opposed to pity, in Wilson, Buckler, Watson, and Laurence.

the expression of her redemptive power. As Mallinson notes, love makes everything in the world take on greater significance: "The world […] loses its indifference. […] everything signifies, the lover and her text move through a web of messages which must be deciphered" (117). This deciphering initiates the transformative potential of the narrator's authenticity: for her, love is enough to make the world significant and to persuade her that she has the power to rejuvenate it through her radical redemptive vision: "There is no angle the world can assume which the love in my eye cannot make into a symbol of love" (Smart 39), she confidently claims. The narrator's transgressive love, however, positions her as an enemy outsider to those who deny love and disdain individual originality; she complains of "the world's antagonism: the hatred of the mediocre for all miracles" (Smart 41). The battle the narrator wages against "the mediocre" reflects an anxiety—both Smart's and her narrator's—about the fate of the individual in the social world of the 1940s, in which "[b]utter is up ten cents. The human being is down" (63). It is such a world that the narrator desires to transform through her individual emotion.

Smart's compelling metaphor and simile buttress her narrator's individualist desire to transform the world. These comparisons expose the connection between the narrator's egoist character and the authoritarian who desires to remake the world for herself that anticipates the corrective force of Smart's irony. For example, Smart's image of her narrator as a statistician suggests the calculating nature of her subjective will: "I stand disinterestedly examining the instruments and the pattern of my fate. It is a slow-motion process of the guillotine in action, and I see plainly that no miracle can avert the imminent deaths. I see, measuring the time, regarding equably the appearance, but I am detached as the statistician is when he lists his thousands dead"

(21).[23] The narrator's ethic of love places her desire above everyone else's wellbeing. Although she believes that her love may redeem the world, that redemption will occur by her own will and to her own benefit. She regrets that her love injures her beloved's wife—"Is there no other channel of my deliverance except by her martyrdom?" (31); "she whom I have injured, and whose agony it is my penalty to watch, lies gasping, but still living" (33)—but finds an alibi for that pain in her faith in her love's wider redemptive power. The narrator's patience with cruelty in order to enforce her own vision of the world resonates with two figures who, against the backdrop of the Second World War, invite both caution and criticism: Nietzsche's absolute egoist—"who demands that everything shall take place in accordance with his will and pleasure" (*Daybreak* 153)—and the authoritarian model of authenticity that, as Trilling notes, has its etymology in the Greek *authentes*—"not only a master and a doer, but also a perpetrator, a murderer, even a self-murderer, a suicide" (131).

The narrator's efforts to transform the world reveal that her "ego's desire for appropriation is boundless" (Nietzsche 151). This desire for appropriation has lead Méira Cook to conclude that by the end of the novel the narrator "can only greedily repeat, 'I want the one I want'" (61). Cook's summation of Smart's ending, however, reduces the narrator's desire to her beloved; more accurately, the narrator might have said "I want the world I want," for her beloved may be the beginning of her love, but he is not its end. Rather, the narrator reimagines and so recreates the world as her own expression. In other words, she appropriates the world and its conflicts into a metaphoric expression of her own self: "I have become a part of the earth: I am one of its waves flooding and leaping. I am the same tune now as the trees, hummingbirds, sky, fruits, vegetables in rows. I am all or any of these. I can metamorphose at will" (42). This

[23] In his new work on Smart and "personal modernism," James Gifford argues that images like this one "bring the politics of Smart's novel to the fore […] The industrial modernity of the state and its war machine is set as the opposite of the individual standing for and expressing an organic and anti-authoritarian humanism" (227).

appropriative power reaches its most disturbing climax in the narrator's brazen equation of the suffering of Europe with her own emotional state, when she claims to "hear all smitten Europe wailing from the stream below" (32). The power of metaphor lies in its equation of its vehicle and tenor; unlike simile, which states that "two things […] are like each other," metaphor states that "two things are each other" (Frye, *Educated* 15). When the narrator claims that she is "all or any of these" and that Europe, like her, is "smitten," she also claims that the world and the "5,000,000 who never stop dragging their feet" (43) express her own subjectivity. This metaphoric equation transforms the world into the narrator's image, which in turn positions her as both its god and subjective ruler. Together, the narrator's appropriative egoism and authoritarian tendencies expose the solipsistic danger in her ethic of authenticity. In believing that love makes the world a reflection of herself, she also discloses her incredible belief that she wills the world into being. Moreover, as the ending of the novel will confirm, metaphor unaccompanied by real political action cannot liberate those poor "5,000,000."

The narrator's description of her ability and plan to give birth to a new world further discloses her fantastic political hopes. With the confidence of her life-affirming love she insists:

> With it I can repopulate the world, I can bring forth new worlds in underground shelters while bombs are dropping above; I can do it in lifeboats as the ship goes down; I can do it in prisons without the guard's permission; and O, when I do it quietly in the lobby while the conference is going on, a lot of statesmen will emerge twirling their moustaches, and see the birth-blood, and know that they have been foiled. (65-6)

This passage importantly demonstrates the narrator's association of giving birth to a new world and her protest against those agents of destructive and loveless authority, who must encounter

"birth-blood" rather than the death-blood that their conferences plan and officiate. "Birth-blood" serves as a reminder that the narrator does not envision a new world without some sacrifice; but these sacrifices will help to "repopulate" and reimagine a new world. The narrator's passionate images of the redemption her love will bring dispel readings of her and her narrative as simply apolitical. Significantly she often communicates her individual power through images of, on the one hand, saving those who are suffering in Europe and, on the other hand, punishing those who benefit from or buy into (with whatever good intentions) that suffering.[24]

The narrator thus desires to transform her individual love into a universal good, which will reform the world of pity into the world of love. Although such desire to make her individual will a universal rule resonates with authoritarian implications, it also resounds with a hopeful and revolutionary utopianism. The world in which the narrator is exiled kills for less than love, and so she attempts to redeem it by imagining it as a place in which her love could justify suffering, in which "love [*really*] is as strong as death" (44). Smart develops a Nietzschean model of redemption in *By Grand Central Station*; her narrator desires, like Zarathustra, "[t]o redeem those who are the past and to recreate all 'it was' into 'thus I willed it!' – only that would I call redemption!" (*Zarathustra* 110). Smart's poetic language becomes the tool with which her narrator feels she can redescribe and redeem the world. For example, empowered, the narrator reimagines the beginnings of colonialism in terms of her love: "Take everything I have, or could have, or anything the world could offer, I am still empress of a new-found land, that neither Columbus nor Cortez could have equaled, even in their instigating dream" (43-4). The narrator's love metaphorically redraws the map of the world to reflect "a new-found land" more impressive

[24] Notably, the narrator's desire to punish people like the statesmen who plan war also suggests a loose allusion to Psalm 137, which ends with the promise of revenge on the Babylonians: "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; / happy *shall he be*, that rewardeth thee as thou has served us. / Happy *shall he be*, that taketh and dasheth / thy little ones against the stones." Of course, these lines also resonate in the sad ending of *By Grand Central Station* and suggest there that the narrator has been divinely punished as the whore of Babylon.

than the New World. In this way, the history of the world culminates in the narrator, who, in redefining it, gives birth to a new world. She proudly claims a redemptive power greater than Christ's: "I was raised for this event from more than a three-day burial, and would have built memorials to last longer than 2,000 years" (64).

The narrator's claims of redemptive power further imply her concern for those suffering in the war and her latent politics. Confident in her love, the narrator can claim "[it] is the lavishness of my feelings that feeds even the waifs and the strays" (43). Moreover, she pretends that her new world makes a home for herself and other exiles: "There are not too many bereaved or wounded but I can comfort them, and those 5,000,000 who never stop dragging their feet and bundles of babies with bloated bellies across Europe, are not too many or too benighted for me to say, Here's a world of hope" (43). Here is also the utopian desire at the heart of the narrator's redemption: if she can reimagine the world as the product of her powerful love, she can also imagine the immense hope that would disburden those suffering in Europe from their burden. Contrary to critics of the novel who claim that the war is "important only in relation to the narrator's feelings" (Van Wart, "Novel" 39), the subjective and poetic realm of the narrator's redemption suggests that, though her way of engaging with politics is decidedly subjective, it is no less concerned with the political. Perhaps the most melancholic revelation of Smart's book, however, is that even such "total" (86) feelings cannot universally redeem the world; the solitary individual can do little to change the pitiful world in which she lives.

The narrator's radical project of authenticity focuses the text's criticism of those who, in bad faith, subscribe to their public roles unquestioningly and in doing so perpetuate war. As Steven Crowell explains, for Sartre, bad faith "is the attempt to avoid admitting to oneself the

meaning of one's behavior, even as one is engaged in it" (217).[25] One so identifies with his social and public role that he "lie[s] to [him]self" (Sartre 49) and negates his own freedom to become something other than that role. Sartre famously explains bad faith in *Being and Nothingness* through the example of a waiter who "is playing at *being* a waiter", who "plays with his condition in order to *realize* it" (59; original emphasis). Trilling describes Sartre's waiter as the one "who sees himself not as a human being but as a waiter and finds his fulfillment in acting out his assigned role" (102). In attempting to be a waiter rather than a free subject, the waiter engages in the bad faith that denies his freedom to create an original and authentic self. Those who engage in bad faith do not redescribe the world in their own language; they accept the roles predetermined for them and conservatively work to realize them.

In *By Grand Central Station*, the Arizona police who question the narrator and her Canadian parents exemplify the bad faith against which the narrator defines her project of authenticity. In contrast to the police, the "family men" who "don't go so much for love" (Smart 51), the narrator's defiant language of love affirms her developing authenticity and illuminates its political potential. While the police officers question her in unimpassioned language—"Were you intending to commit fornication in Arizona?" (47)—the narrator remembers lines from the *Song of Songs*—"(He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.)" (47)—that protest their attempt to belittle her belief in her transformative love. This defiance expresses not only the mythical proportions of the narrator's love, but also her method of protesting the social pressure to accept a role as an innocent young woman *or* malevolent adulteress in bad faith. Thus, even as she remains in custody, the narrator expresses her freedom by recalling the language of her desire. The police officers, in contrast, perform their role in bad faith; limited by the language and duties

[25] Sartre notes a paradox in bad faith, however, for one is both conscious and unconscious of one's lies to oneself: "A person can *live* in bad faith, which does not mean that he does not have abrupt awakenings to cynicism or to good faith, but which implies a constant and particular style of life" (50).

associated with their position, they can only view the narrator's expression of an individual ethics—her compelling questions of "what is important in life, what is it for?"—as confirmation of her seductive character: "The thin-lipped man peered round the corner and noted down in his report: She tried to lure our men" (51).

The officers understand the narrator only in terms of the pre-defined role they can ascribe to her. "The police accuse her of being a Communist," Wright notes, "a traitor who subverts laws circumscribing women's sexuality and activities within the family and the household" (5). Significantly, the police can only imagine one way of protesting in America: consistent with their subscribing to their own roles as "family men" and protectors of propriety, the officers believe that a political enemy must subscribe to an illegal, but equally ideological, political role. Smart's narrator defies the bad faith of the officers: although her protests maintain their political edge, they also express her attempt to become authentic, to create her own ethics and language that challenges those who wish to delineate her into a position of bad faith equal to their own. The narrator insists on describing her world in her own language, and so claims not only her right to her love, but also her own linguistic authority.

The narrator's mother also explicitly states the values of propriety that define her sincere enactment of her social role and demean her daughter's attempt to protest it. When the narrator returns to her parents' home in Ottawa after her arrest and subsequent deportation, her mother dismisses love and emphasizes her sincere public values: "It's loyalty and decency and common standards of behaviour that count" (61). These qualities negate the unique expression of individuality, especially when that individuality calls what is "common" and "standard" in a society into question. Furthermore, they reveal the fundamental difference between the narrator's authenticity and her mother's sincerity. While her mother not only upholds social values but also

interprets them as her own private values, the narrator attempts to define her life through her commitment to deeply personal and original values. The mother attempts to meet society's "demand […] that we really are sincere, that we actually are what we want our community to know we are" by "sincerely act[ing] the part of the sincere person" (Trilling 10-11). In contrast, her daughter undergoes "a more strenuous moral experience" and embodies "a less acceptant and genial view of the social circumstances of life" (11). The narrator's mother tries to enforce the public role that would have her daughter act, in bad faith, the part of the proper lady, to borrow Wright's term, and deny her right to create herself and her world as unique reflections of her own authenticity. The narrator's mother and the police in Arizona reveal the narrator's revolutionary ethics and the limits of bad faith; against their inability to imagine any world but the one they have inherited, the narrator posits an ethics of authenticity that reimagines and so privately recreates the world. Such an antagonistic and revolutionary imagining reveals the latent political critique of a figure who resists the "loyalty and decency" of an inauthentic social world.

Furthermore, the narrator's interpellation of the language of conventional morality in her inner monologue ironically reveals her implicit criticism of the way it flattens individuality: "No, there is no defence for love, and tears will only increase the crime. Be reasonable. Be usual. You're a clever girl. You've got brains. Get busy and make something of yourself" (62-3). These imperatives equate being "reasonable" with being "usual," and express the method by which individuals forfeit their originality: by this logic, "mak[ing] something of yourself" means becoming "usual."[26] Despite the forces that attempt to diminish her antagonistic individuality, however, the narrator still claims a godlike position: "I remain, I AM, I shall never cease to be: your memory grows a deathly glaze: you will forget, you will fade out, but I cannot be undone"

[26] This logic perverts the Lockean ideas of possessive individualism discussed in Chapter Two, by which one makes oneself by acquiring and cultivating property. Abe Spalding could hardly have become a model of such individualism if in order to make himself he had to become like those around him.

(80). Here, the narrator abstractly addresses her beloved, an important detail because her strong assertion that although "you will fade out […] I cannot be undone" suggests that her love, perhaps selfishly, asserts her individuality rather than her position in relation to another. In contrast to the internalized command to "be usual," this defiant speech act affirms the narrator as someone whose power both generates and is generated by her individuality.

This affirmative "I AM", however, also seems to implicate the narrator in both of the dangerous sides of individual authenticity: political laziness and authoritarian appropriation. While Smart's juxtaposition of her narrator's individual desires against the judgments of her society reveals how society's insistence on conformity inspires the bad faith that compromises the individual, it also suggests her escape from political problems into an internal drama. Smart's critics have generally focused on this seeming retreat from the political, as Walton does when she claims that Smart "perversely chooses" the emotional over the political (40). Although Walton misses the implicit political antagonism that I have drawn out here, her observation is not unfounded in Smart's text. Indeed, part of the difficulty of *By Grand Central Station* resides in the fact that Smart's readers may sympathize more with the narrator's antagonists than with her. Certainly, the narrator's insistence that "[a]ll our wishes were private, we desired no more scope than ourselves" (51) and her dismissive question "[w]hat are the world's problems and sorrows and horrors?" (42) support Walton's claim and suggest just the kind of political indifference that Taylor and Adorno fear the culture of authenticity at its worst promotes.

As the narrator distinguishes herself from the conventional roles she is expected to fulfill, however, she also defends herself against accusations, like Walton's, that she cares little about political injustices or the war. Importantly, Smart includes external social criticisms in her narrator's inner monologue. In doing so she focuses her narrator's political stance and expresses

her own anxiety that such an authentic individualism may not redeem the suffering world. Anticipating those critics who would accuse her of inner solipsism during a time of international crisis, Smart persistently scrutinizes her protagonist's position. For example, the narrator's mother claims that "it's time here to put on uniforms, not nightgowns" (63), and an unnamed acquaintance asks the narrator: "I am saving my money for the Red Cross. What War-work are you doing, my dear?" (62). Most compelling, however, are the questions the narrator imagines herself asking her beloved: "Do you see me then as the too-successful one, like a colossus whose smug thighs rise obliviously out of sorrow? Or as the detestable all-female, who grabs and devours, invulnerable with greed?" (68). As the narrator imagines the harsh ways in which her beloved might view her she also reveals her self-reflexive conscience and suggests that she herself worries that her position is actually one of greedy indifference. Furthermore, these images suggest the narrator's awareness of the antagonistic position she takes when she claims "love is as strong as death" (44) during a time of imminent and excessive death. They also suggest the ironic self-reflection necessary to projects of authenticity: the narrator does not accept any of her positions unquestioningly. Far from signaling her retreat from political problems, these questions focus the narrator's scrutiny of wartime affect. For her, the hegemony of wartime feeling shallowly concentrates on inauthentic and nationalistic pathos: "Be at hypocrisy's funeral, O my dear country, and pay the usual hypocritical tear. Mine I am saving for quite another event" (64). Unwilling to engage in the hypocritical pathos she witnesses, the narrator commits herself to an authentic emotion that engages the world even as it appears to withdraw from it. This mode of engagement further signals the ironic character of her political position: retreat becomes an expression of commitment rather than indifference.

Most importantly, the narrator's self-questioning anticipates Smart's final irony, which

reveals the narrator's redemptive vision as a private and impotent fantasy. This irony illuminates Smart's skeptical treatment of her narrator's desires throughout the text, but it does not negate her critical representation of bad faith that the narrator's authentic project focalizes. Rather, the text's oscillation between the redemptive potential of authentic individuality and its critical deflation defines both Smart's use of romantic irony and its relevance to her meditation in *By Grand Central Station* on the confluence of individual desire and political power. The political power of the individual paradoxically resides in the oscillation between her redemptive creation and its critical destruction. While the narrator's incredible hope for the world exposes what needs to change in it, Smart's revelation of the narrator's failure returns the reader's attention to the real work of politics. Individual authenticity might inspire a better political world, but that world will be won through the ironic inversions that structure authentic individuality itself. In other words, the real political work of the authentic individual occurs through her persistent negotiation between the image of a utopian future and the political conditions of the present.

In the end, pity wins over love: the narrator's beloved abandons her in Grand Central Station, amidst urban commotion and quotidian labour. Why does this abandonment inspire such despair in the narrator, who claims her "pain was unbearable, but I did not want it to end: it had operatic grandeur" (103)? Why, in other words, does it suggest that the narrator has given up on her powerful vision of love that can transform the world? Not only does her lover choose his wife over her, he chooses pity over love: "it is *her* tears he feels trickling over his breast each night; it is for *her* he feels the concern; and the *pity* after all, not the love, fills all his twenty-four hours" (Smart 85; original emphasis). Furthermore, her beloved's final absence reveals to the narrator the subjective singularity of her vision: with no other to share her redemption, how can she hope to redeem the whole world? The narrator thus becomes an example of failed

recognition—she fails to recognize an other with whom she can share her vision and her beloved fails to recognize her—that Taylor admits catalyzes the value of authenticity in the twentieth century.

Significantly, the absence of the narrator's beloved shifts the images of birth from their metaphorical realm into the literal. While in the previous parts of the book the narrator's claims that she "can repopulate all the world" suggest a mythic hyperbole that does not rely on an actual pregnancy to be true, in the last section she claims, not that she will give birth to a new world, but simply, "I am going to have a child" (104).[27] Increasingly following her deportation the narrator expresses her interest in "facts" that counter her otherwise metaphorical and symbolic interactions with the world and signal that her power may not be "true." The first fact, quoted above, "says, I remain, I AM, I shall never cease to be" (80). This fact, supported but not reliant on her beloved, who "forget[s]" and "fade[s] out" (80), suggests the narrator's realization that the real suffering of the world "invalidates" her individual power to redeem it: "Too many nights have built their explosive facts, and without the one Fact which these facts invalidate, the 5,000,000 refugees, the corpses that died of starvation, the blood and the mangling, have absolutely no dam. 'Only Love can with a great gaze stop'" (85). A second, particular fact intensifies the narrator's doubt and threatens to destroy her power altogether: "O the fact, the unalterable fact: it is she he is with: he is with her: he is not with me because he is sleeping with her" (86). This second fact dissolves the power of metaphor and returns the narrator to a literal world, where pity overcomes love and individuals act in bad faith. It announces and privileges the social world in which subjective "facts" have little value and, to invert the terms Golomb uses to describe existentialism, objective truth trumps subjective truthfulness.

[27] Smart does, however, suggest that the narrator is pregnant earlier in the book: for example, "[t]hat's our child. That's the reward of love. That's why I drink milk and close my ears to the shock of disaster and the rage of gossips and the thunder of war" (97).

Smart's despairing conclusion casts a critical eye on the claims the narrator has made throughout the narrative, an eye that suggests her vision of redemption was an ironic fantasy, possible only in the realm of metaphor. In the end, it seems, the narrator can no longer imagine a transformed world into which hope breathes life and people kill for no less than love. The child who appears on the last pages is not the symbol of a new world, not the green grass of a new country where the narrator's future is planted (93), but "the idiot boy": "He is all the world that is left. He is America, and better than love. He is civilization's heir, O you mob, whose actions brought him into being" (112). Walton calls this boy "the whimpering end of civilization" (46). Conceived by a mob, rather than a pair of individuals, he is the product of a social world that diminishes the individual even in its most intimate moments. This ending, however, returns to political themes even as it suggests that the narrator cannot solve the world's political problems. The boy, America itself, represents the failure of a grand hope for a new world—recall that the narrator had earlier compared herself to Columbus and Cortez discovering the New World. The narrator's despair for her lost love, then, continues to ridicule the conventions of a society that she finds lacking in authenticity, individuality, and love. Although she does not deliver a redeemed world, she continues her implicitly political critique of the world as she finds it to the novel's final line.

The narrator expresses the kind of political critique that can only be stated ironically, for one cannot redeem a world of pity and bad faith in the language that world provides. Smart's narrator attempts to assert her status as an individual and to develop her own authenticity in a way that clearly pits her against those, like her mother, who accept the descriptions of the world they inherit. Only by expressing the failure of a totalizing subjectivity can Smart adequately demonstrate the hostility this world has for individuality in any form. Thus, the conclusion of her

novel engages the reader in a project of authenticity, in the way Golomb and Trilling claim the authentic work of art inflates the reader's participation in the text and awakens her to her own inauthenticity. The conclusion gives us the image we expected: not the transformed and redeemed world, but a woman suffering for love. This ending confirms the poetic and subjective nature of Smart's narrator, while it also provokes a meditative and emotional pause that "lure[s] the reader towards a different life" (Golomb 26). When the inauthentic world appears more real than the authentic one, Smart's novel makes its most compelling claim: in recognizing the world and ourselves as inauthentic, we are charged to develop our own authenticity. This inspiration of authenticity through the image of inauthenticity and the promise that such movement towards authenticity will always include moments in which our best visions of the world are destroyed, finally, reveals Smart's romantic irony and her method of political engagement.

Beautiful Losers: Leonard Cohen's Political Prophets

Like Smart in *By Grand Central Station*, in *Beautiful Losers* Cohen investigates the political implications of authentic individuals who develop totalizing impulses. Cohen develops this totalizing individuality throughout his work of the early- to mid-60s: it begins in Breavman's totalitarian urges in Cohen's first published novel, *The Favourite Game* (1963); takes on the role of guilty confession in Cohen's radical poetry collection, *Flowers for Hitler* (1964); and culminates in *Beautiful Losers* (1966) with "I", the melancholic narcissist, and F., the revolutionary systematizer. Although in his later work Cohen continues to meditate on the transformative potential of the subject, often attempting to purge his poetic persona of its cruel and selfish desires (as in *Death of a Lady's Man* [1978]), in his work of the early- to mid-60s he celebrates the individual's potential to create and speak for a community of initiates. Like Smart,

Cohen suggests that the individual ethic of authenticity ironically aspires to communal and political change, and demonstrates the risks implicit in the authoritative characteristics of authenticity that promise such change. If authenticity "demands that all individuals adopt for themselves the God-like role of being the originator of their own selves" (Golomb 10), Cohen's protagonists take that God-like role literally: they desire Zarathustrian redemption through their affirmation of their own individuality. Cohen, however, only ironically endorses "I"'s and F.'s redemptive visions. Through his merging of the two characters into the figure of the Old Man in the Epilogue, Cohen develops a prophetic individual whose political potential lies in his ability to create a community from which he will be forever exiled. Cohen both creates and destroys the authentic political individual; in doing so, he suggests that while a purely individualist revolution may be impossible, the authentic individual's on-going process of becoming, which constantly affirms and denies his revolutionary intentions, nonetheless resonates with political significance.

As Claire Colebrook notes, irony implies that the speaker can remain in a privileged position outside of his text from which he can disclaim what he has said and avow what he has not said: "irony allows the speaker to remain 'above' what he says, allowing those members of his audience who share his urbanity to perceive the true sense of what is really meant" (20). As I will elucidate below, Cohen's speakers, characters, and even Cohen himself often claim this privileged position, from which they may welcome those who understand their irony and so are initiated into an elite community that remains beyond the literal text.

Cohen's irony in *Beautiful Losers*, however, is best described as romantic, which, rather than simply deny what has been said and affirm what remains unsaid, celebrates the paradox that occurs when two opposing ideas are held together simultaneously. Mellor describes the romantic ironist as an artist who both delights in his chaotic world and attempts to order and contain it:

> The artist who shares this conception of the universe as chaos must find an aesthetic mode that sustains […] this never-ending becoming. […] But even as he denies the absolute validity of his own perceptions and structuring conceptions of the universe, even as he consciously deconstructs his mystifications of the self and the world, he must affirm and celebrate the process of life by creating new images and ideas. Thus the romantic ironist sustains his participation in a creative process that extends beyond the limits of his own mind. (4-5)

Irony thus becomes an even greater tool of self-reflection for the romantic artist and, as we shall see, for Cohen's development of a political individual. It is the mode of creation in a world in which, as Chapter One reveals, metaphysical order does not manifest itself. The romantic ironist constantly underscores the limits of his ability to create and order a world; but his constant skepticism about this ability does not stop him from creation. On the contrary, this paradoxical process of creation and destruction "negates [his] excessive commitment to the fictions of [his] own mind" and "renews [his] direct participation in an always-becoming life" (11). As Cohen demonstrates in *Beautiful Losers*, both the ability to recreate through redescription *and* the ability to dissolve those redescriptions are necessary to the development of a political individuality. Because no one redescription will universally redeem the world, we must commit ourselves to a continual process of political becoming founded on creative engagement. Cohen's irony thus translates the romantic embrace of "change and process for their own sake" (4) into a profound and difficult ethical commitment.

Cohen's ironic figuration of the political individual begins in *Flowers for Hitler*. With this important precursor to *Beautiful Losers* Cohen consciously reinvented his poetic persona in order to antagonize a complicit reading public into the kind of self-reflection necessary both to

projects of authenticity and the worldview of romantic irony. Ira Nadel explains Cohen's confidence in what he called, at various times, "a fairly original study of Authority" (qtd. Nadel 118), a study of "the totalitarian spirit of our century," and potentially "the best study of the authoritarian psychology ever written" (qtd. Nadel 119). Cohen announced his transformation from the poet who wrote the well-received *The Spice-Box of Earth* (1961) to a writer entrenched in evil in a letter to his publisher, Jack McClelland, parts of which were later used on the back jacket of the collection without Cohen's knowledge or permission:

> This book moves me from the world of the golden-boy poet into the dung-pile of the front-line writer. I didn't plan it this way. I loved the tender notices Spice-Box got but they embarrassed me a little. HITLER won't get the same hospitality from the papers. My sounds are too new, therefore people will say: this is derivative, this is slight, his power has failed. Well, I say that there has never been a book like this, prose or poetry, written in Canada. All I ask is that you put it in the hands of my generation and it will be recognized. (qtd. Nadel 119-20)

Here, Cohen presents his first image of the revolutionary and political poet, who will remain unrecognized by the conventionally conservative reading public of "the papers." Importantly, Cohen positions himself as a poet engaged in war and, although he has exiled himself from the audience of "the papers," Cohen claims to be the prophetic voice of a "generation" of cultural exiles. This antagonistic posturing claims Cohen's creative authenticity and the public and political effects of his new sounds.

Cohen's first poem in *Flowers for Hitler*, "What I'm Doing Here," clearly positions him as an antagonistic "front-line writer" waging war on complacency and demanding his readers' active self-reflection, a first step to authenticity. Reminiscent of Charles Baudelaire's "Au

lecteur,"[28] "What I'm Doing Here" demands that the reader recognize, as the speaker does, his participation in evil: "I do not know if the world has lied / I have lied" (13). The poem calls for the individual acknowledgment of guilt, most controversially in the speaker's denial of "the universal alibi" that collectively absolves the individuals of Allied nations of their evils during and after the Second World War:

> Even without the mushroom cloud
> still I would have hated
> Listen
> I would have done the same things
> even if there were no death
> […]
> I refuse the universal alibi (13)

In his confession, the speaker acts as an exemplar, whose acknowledgment of his guilt makes him both one of and distinct from a community of the guilty. The speaker's confession also importantly distinguishes him from "I", who wallows in his suffering without recognizing his own guilt. Furthermore, the speaker calls upon his readers to confess in this way and, as the poem ends and the volume begins, promises to "wait / for each one of you to confess" (13).

The speaker of "What I'm Doing Here" thus claims a powerful and god-like position for himself that illuminates Cohen's ideas about the political individual, whose commitment to individually created values makes him part of and apart from the community he calls into being. Moreover, through the logic of the poem and the implicit claim to the empowered position of confessor, the speaker embodies the "totalitarian spirit" Cohen set out to study. Cohen's collection exhibits "[t]he fascination with violence" that "in the twentieth century has been a love

[28] *Flowers for Hitler*'s title also alludes to Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*, the collection that "Au lecteur" begins.

affair with power" (Taylor, *Malaise* 67). Furthermore, Siemerling points out the individual power of the poet-confessor in "What I'm Doing Here": "[in] the last part, the poetic 'I' casts itself in the image of an obsessive, lurking mirror which lies in wait, but which we ourselves, the addressees, have to consult, only to find ourselves bound in a confessional community that appears unlikely and alien, a 'strange brotherhood'" (29).[29] The persona demands an individualist attention to and responsibility for the events of the world: he recognizes the lies, torture, hate, and death found in the world as part of his own life.

As Cohen elucidates throughout *Flowers for Hitler*,[30] because God no longer exists to absolve the guilty, guilt, even if confessed, cannot be purged. Thus, while Cohen demands an increased refusal of complacency and acknowledgement of participation in (even willing of) evil, he also suggests that there is no escape from it. In demanding confession but refusing absolution, Cohen's speaker increases his individual power, becoming like a god to whom the guilty confess. Cohen's new, politicized persona both accepts an increased responsibility for the evil of the world and positions himself (however guilty) as privileged in his ability to see guilt and, like a priest or the police, to hear confessions of it. Although this poem implies that there is no god to absolve us, it also suggests that Cohen's speaker's self-reflection on his own guilt grants him a superior vantage point from which he can view particular instances of universal guilt.

In a speech delivered to the Jewish Public Library in Montreal in 1964, Cohen indirectly

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[29] Siemerling further argues that in creating an audience of the initiated, the poet-confessor replaces the singular 'I' with a new community: "the ratification of [the speaker's] demand would simultaneously acknowledge the superior and leading function of the 'I' thus based on difference, *and* in a move toward identification and sameness in the new 'brotherhood' make the new convert speak from the same position. At this point, the exceptional role of the speaking 'I' would dissolve in a community based, again, on the first kind of exclusion in a cosmos divided into believers and non-believers by a new communal 'alibi'" (29-30; original emphasis). While Siemerling rightly notes the creation of a new community through individual confession, this community cannot fully dissolve the originating "I," precisely because it is developed through that "I"'s vision. Rather than dissolve the "I" into a larger community, then, Cohen's poem sets up a logic by which a multitude of individuals may dissolve into an appropriative and powerful "I."

[30] See, for example, "Opium and Hitler" (92), "Goebbels Abandons His Novel and Joins the Party" (32), "It Uses Us!" (35), and "On the Death of an Uncharted Planet" (24).

theorizes the model of the political individual found in his work of the mid-60s. Responding to claims that he had become a "traitor" to his Jewish community, Cohen redefines "traitor" as an exiled prophet, a title that illuminates the antagonistic and individualist way in which Cohen imagines one may be political in the mid-twentieth century. At the beginning of his notes for the speech, Cohen writes, "The Human race needs more traitors" (I) before identifying himself as one: "But when he called me traitor he meant that I had joined the other side. If he had read the book he would know there are no sides for me" (I). In this second statement Cohen takes on a position of amorality familiar to readers of *Flowers for Hitler*; the refusal to take sides is at the heart of Cohen's refusal of "the universal alibi" in "What I'm Doing Here."[31] Like the speaker of that poem Cohen states that "[the] only [thing I] think I can do, indeed must do, is make some kind of personal statement" (II), and thereby places himself, like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, in the position of traitor-prophet. For the prophet is a traitor; he is the lonely exile who sees the community for what it is and knows what "deserve[s] to be attacked and destroyed" (g).

Cohen defines the prophet-traitor historically, as a figure who comes into being when his work is separated from that of the priest. For Cohen, "[h]istory is the description of the path of an idea, a description of an idea's journey from generation to generation" (a). In the first moments of the idea, "each of the men who hold it […] is both a prophet and a priest," but as the idea changes through time "no one man can perform both offices," and "the function of the prophet becomes irreconcilable to the function of the priest" (a). Importantly, the difference between the priest and the prophet lies in their relation to both the community and its values, which are inspired, Cohen implies, by the idea itself. While the priest becomes a conservative figure of

[31] For Cohen, taking a side, especially on political issues, ideologically absolves individual guilt. Consider the "alibi" that frees the Allies from responsibility for the death and destruction their own effort caused during the Second World War: because individuals from the Allied nations position themselves against the evils of the Third Reich, they do not contemplate their own participation in the evil of the world. Their alibi permits them to claim that they "were elsewhere," but their innocence rests on their being on the winning side.

authority who defends the community and protects an older conception of the idea, the prophet "continues to serve the idea as it changes form, trying never to mistake the cast off shell with the swiftly changing thing that shed it" (b). The prophet's loyalty to the changing form of the idea exiles him from the community, "a museum of the old form and dedicated to it," and thus "he becomes alone, and by his nature becomes unwelcome to the community" (b). He is one of the "men who must leave that square so as to produce values […] which the square was invented to enclose and protect" (6). Cohen's prophet, then, creates new values; he is a revolutionary individual even as he is cast out of the community he revolutionizes. Cohen occupies this position of individual and transformative responsibility in his politically antagonistic work discussed above. His vision of an individual who through his distinct and total loneliness can bring forth a new community—"A man must be very alone before he can declare: *We* are not alone" (f; emphasis added)—implies that the revolution that would deliver that new community begins with the cultural antagonism of a single individual. Cohen, like Smart, thus suggests that, ironically, political engagement is necessarily grounded in an individualist ethic of authenticity.

Cohen's traitor-prophet engages in lonely reflection that renews the world through its radical redescription. As discussed above, Rorty explains that Nietzschean authenticity "invent[s] a new language" with which to describe one's self and one's world. This description also illuminates the provocative position Cohen and his speaker take in *Flowers for Hitler* and "What I'm Doing Here." Cohen's "new sounds" confront the individual who, after hearing them, can no longer escape into alibis that prevent him from knowing his guilty self. In contrast to the priest, who wishes to enforce the changing idea as something universally unchanging, Cohen's prophet recognizes the contingency of the idea as it changes form. In Rorty's terms, the prophet's responsibility becomes one of redescribing the idea as it changes and thus of radically changing

the values it represents. Rorty also illuminates the conservative nature of Cohen's priest and the protected square in which he rules. The prophet, like Rorty's ironist, intimidates his audience with his creative power; both the prophet and the ironist "threaten one's final vocabulary, and thus one's ability to make sense of oneself in one's own terms… [the ironist] suggests that one's self and one's world are futile, obsolete, *powerless*. Redescription often humiliates" (Rorty 90; original emphasis).[32] Cohen had already sensed the conservative response new language invites: as he claimed in his letter to McClelland, his new sounds may go unrecognized and suppressed by those they explicitly question. Cohen, however, does not share Rorty's fear of humiliating others. Rather, in Cohen's view, if the individual is to enact any political change in the world, he must claim his own creative power even (especially) when it risks humiliating those who represent the values he wishes to change. In Cohen's logic, this willingness to humiliate in order to provoke change justifies, if only partially, the authoritarian impulses in his authentic figures.

Cohen's typology of the prophetic political individual reaches its greatest and most ironic expression in *Beautiful Losers*. The novel both reinforces the individual as a political force and curbs his totalizing impulses through Cohen's romantic irony. Cohen's memorable protagonists, whom Medrie Purdham describes as "ego-extremes" ("Who" 91), represent, in contrasting ways, what Nietzsche called the "ego's desire for appropriation" (*Daybreak* 151). Through these characters Cohen reveals alternate strategies with which the individual attempts to create a new community and a new world. "I," an obsessive and narcissistic historian, imagines redeeming the past by appropriating colonial injustices as his own fetishistic burden. F., a former MP and a revolutionary, redescribes suffering as an expression of embodied joy. "I" and F. tend toward the two dangerous poles of authenticity, and while Cohen represents their redemptive impulses, his

[32] The primary difference between Rorty's liberal ironist and Cohen's redescribing prophet, however, lies in Rorty's insistence that the ironist privatize her project of authenticity. Cohen's prophet, although alone, has an important social role: he announces a radical change in values through his redescription of the idea to which he remains loyal.

romantic irony also exposes the injustice of their methods. As discussed in Chapter One, "I" withdraws into himself, making his chronic constipation a telling symptom of his repressive ego-ideal. F., on the other hand, occupies an explicitly public role; his authoritarian character expresses his authenticity—his personal "system"—and his active will to transform the world and those he encounters in it. The two men exhibit their greatest political potential, however, when they merge into a figure of the Old Man, who assembles a crowd and almost unites a new community in the Epilogue of Cohen's novel. Consequently, the Old Man functions as Cohen's prophet, who, paradoxically, asserts the potential political power of the individual through his dissolution of individuality. Like the speaker of "What I'm Doing Here," the Old Man is both part of and separate from the community and events he catalyzes.

As one might expect of an authentic work of art, *Beautiful Losers* offended the conservative reading public when it was published in 1966. Cohen had promised to scandalize explicitly before, in *Flowers for Hitler.* In fact, his desire to antagonize his reader out of complacency, which defines the political potential of his characters and his books, is one of the most recognizable characteristics of his writing during this period. Patricia Morley claims that "the initial reading of *Beautiful Losers* subjects the average Canadian to cultural shock" (85), and Robert Stacey, commenting on the early reviews of *Beautiful Losers* that called the novel "filth," argues: "*Beautiful Losers*, at least, is taste*less*. It's an assault on the reader's sense of social and literary propriety. It's obscene. It's *offensive* in the truest sense of the word" (222; original emphasis). Siemerling further notes that Cohen "effectively exploited typical horizons of expectation with respect to history, appropriate language, themes, and the whole novel genre, in order to provoke shock" (26). While most of Cohen's critics have associated this desire to shock with Cohen's generic innovations, which led Linda Hutcheon to call the book an early example

of Canadian postmodernism (*Canadian* 26), few have explicitly connected it to the vision of the political individual Cohen was developing in the mid-1960s.

In general, however, Cohen's critics have been more willing than Smart's to take up the political and ethical concerns of his novel. Although the image of Cohen as a ladies' man still eclipses his reputation as a political writer, his best recent critics have made a compelling case for the political and ethical concerns at the "centre" (Ravvin 30) of *Beautiful Losers*. Critics such as Purdham, Norman Ravvin, and Peter Wilkins argue that Cohen's novel comments on the revolutionary climate of Québec in the 1960s, Canada's culture of colonialism, and the totalitarian violence of the twentieth century. Ravvin, for example, argues: "Cohen examines contemporary political complicity, implying that there is a tendency among even the most sensitive, socially aware people to capitulate to or even participate in the worst extremes of political violence" (29). Similarly, emphasizing the egoism of both F. and "I," Purdham notes that the fine line Cohen draws between beauty and terror in F.'s aesthetic and political renewals and "I"'s intended recovery of the Iroquois saint, Catherine Tekakwitha, "shows that both ego-extremes are avenues to the beauty and danger of the 'total' vision" (91). Wilkins reads Cohen's deflationary ending as a call to ethical action that recognizes the essential difference between the subject and the other, a difference that only becomes visible through the loneliness of the prophet figure: "The ending reasserts the fundamental loneliness of the subject, but it is a loneliness that pays heed to the space between oneself and the other, not the self-enclosed universe of egotism" (47). As I explain below, Cohen expresses the political potential of authenticity—of "tracking one's causes home" (Rorty 27)—in the mode of romantic irony; he thus develops a political individual who constantly recreates himself and his world in order to recognize and reform his role in cultural oppression.

If authenticity means, at the very least, being one's own authority and constructing oneself as a unified project, Cohen critically perverts the image of the authentic individual in "I", whose role as historian and author fully negates the other. "I"'s refusal of his friend F.'s public role and his retreat into his basement apartment suggest the kind of desire for authenticity that Taylor claims centres on the self and ignores the "religious, political, historical" issues that transcend that self (*Malaise* 14). Even "I"'s withdrawal into the history of Catherine Tekakwitha and the A----s[33] he is writing demonstrates his self-centred egoism, for he desires not only to chronicle Catherine's life but also to "love [her] in [his] own way" (*Beautiful* 3) and, following F.'s advice, to "fuck" her (36). "I" thus exerts his will and claims his own authority through his transformative appropriation of Catherine's history. Although as he speaks to the dead saint "I" imagines a political end to his totalizing desires—"C.T. I have come to rescue you from the Jesuits" (5)—he is incapable of recognizing the ways in which his "rescue" recapitulates the Jesuits' fetishization of Catherine. Through "I" Cohen thus reveals the *inauthenticity* of an individual whose self-centred desire for wholeness is unaccompanied by the self-reflection of existential irony. Cohen further underlines the ethical failure of this individual, whose unwillingness to "track his causes" to their colonizing home blinds him to his own participation in political injustice. As "I"'s narrative ends, however, Cohen suggests that his protagonist's growing self-reflection may correct his inauthenticity. Furthermore, even as it emphasizes "I"'s failure, Cohen's romantic irony, like Smart's, exposes the political value of both "I"'s criticisms of the Jesuits and his desire to feel Canada's colonial history as integral to his own life.

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[33] "I" is "a well-known folklorist, an authority on the A----s" (4), a Mohawk tribe whose "brief history is characterized by incessant defeat" (5). Catherine Tekakwitha, a member of this tribe and "naturallement chrétienne" (54), is a saint in Cohen's text, although the historical Catherine was only canonized in 2012. P. Edouard Lecompte's history of Catherine, *Une vierge iroquoise: Catherine Tekakwitha, le lis des bords de la Mohawk et du St. Laurent (1656-1680)* (1927), was one of the handful of books Cohen had with him while he was writing *Beautiful Losers* in Greece (Nadel 131).

Like the Jesuits who converted Catherine and then interpreted her life, "I" desires to recreate her as a symbol that guarantees his vision of the world. In other words, "I" engages in a project of redescription in his study of Catherine and the A----s that he recognizes as corrupt when the Jesuits undertake it. Redescription, as "I" knows, has colonial implications: "The French gave the Iroquois their name. Naming food is one thing, naming a people is another, not that the people in question seem to care today: I'm far too willing to shoulder the alleged humiliations of harmless peoples, as evidenced by my life work with the A----s" (7). As "I" attempts to escape into the past through the history he writes, Cohen reveals both the colonial implications of that history project and "I"'s narcissistic identification with the suffering other whom he researches. Perversely, "I" sees himself as an "A----" rather than as a colonizer: as Wilkins argues, he "studies them because he wants to make their loss his" (28). In turning Catherine into an object of his own will, "I" signals a desire, much like Smart's narrator's, to recreate the world as an image of himself.

While "I"'s research into Catherine's life certainly relates the political edge of the Jesuits' colonizing spirit, it also negatively reveals "I"'s own political position. However good "I"'s intentions might seem to him, Cohen criticizes "I"'s lack of self-reflection and his related evasion of the responsibility born from his position as an authority on Catherine and her people. A reading of "I" through the lens Cohen gives us in "Loneliness and History" and *Flowers for Hitler* clarifies Cohen's disparaging characterization of his protagonist's inauthenticity. "I"'s identification with Catherine's victimhood serves as an "alibi" for the colonial implications of his own project. Moreover, in contrast to the speaker of "What I'm Doing Here," "I" attempts to use his alibi to free himself from the feelings of guilt that would encourage his self-reflection and political responsibility. Consider the connection Rorty draws between Zarathustra's definition of

redemption and individual authenticity in the context of "I"'s desire for Catherine: if redemption occurs only when the individual looks upon the past and can claim "thus I willed it," that individual must also claim responsibility for the injustices of that past. Cohen's authentic political individual realizes what "I" does not: that if he desires to redeem Catherine, he must first admit that he has willed her suffering and, consequently, that he has participated in the project of colonialism. This is one of the difficult insights Cohen's contemplation of a politicized individuality offers. Moreover, it inspires one of his most antagonistic (if subtle) moves: Cohen reveals "I"'s well-intentioned sympathy for the historical victim as a perverse personal fantasy that avoids the severe ethical demands the truly authentic individual places upon himself.[34] Ironically, however, Cohen's critical representation of "I" nonetheless offers a negative glimpse of the prophetic individual Cohen was developing in the mid-1960s.

Paradoxically, as Wilkins convincingly explains,[35] "I"'s disengagement from the world occurs through his total appropriation of it, which as it attempts to universalize a personal vision reveals the failure of "I"'s desire for authenticity. Wilkins rightly notes:

> the novel shows the *self-indulgent* victim or false martyr, while appearing to be the opposite of the tyrant, is in fact a version of the tyrant. The historian thus represents the Anglophone Canadian role of the tyrannical victim who

[34] Here, a philosophical reading of Cohen's ideas about the political individual contests Rorty's insistence that the ironist keep her projects private. The political implications of "I"'s personal fantasies reveal that without Cohen's call to individual guilt, private projects of authenticity may devolve into an inauthenticity that recapitulates the political injustices of colonialism. While "I"'s history may not colonize the real bodies of its historical subject, it nonetheless reinforces colonial projects made possible by imbalances in cultural power and agency. If we agree with Rorty that metaphors have power, even an imaginary recapitulation of colonialism should be judged and corrected.

[35] Purdham also links "I"'s appropriative nature to his totalizing subjectivity: "I. suffers from the desire to know everything, and from the desire to *be* everything. He constructs a 'total self' by identifying, meaninglessly, with every position on the ideological spectrum" (92; original emphasis). Purdham quotes section ten of "I"'s narrative as exemplary of his meaningless desire to be all things: "I always wanted to be loved by the Communist Party and the Mother Church. I wanted to live in a folk song like Joe Hill. I wanted to weep for the innocent people my bomb would have to maim. I wanted to thank the peasant father who fed us on the run […]" (Cohen 21). "I"'s desire to know and be all things prevents him from recognizing anything outside of his own desperate fantasies, and, crucially, levels all difference. Thus, although "I" "identif[ies], meaninglessly, with every position," he cannot "be other people" (Cohen 15) with Edith, his wife, when she asks him to enjoy *her* sexual fantasy.

> appropriates the position of the minority other to avoid any responsibility either toward the other or for himself: the absolute victim can do no wrong because he does not act but is acted upon. (25-26; original emphasis)

On this reading, "I" imagines his own authenticity by appropriating an historical injustice as a crime against his selfhood. While "I"'s version of authenticity does suggest the integration of his desires and beliefs into a unified vision of himself and the world, Cohen exposes the perverse inauthenticity of projects that are unaccompanied by self-reflection. Indeed, although "I"'s is a meditative nature, he offers little self-reflexive insight into his participation in the injustice he has claimed. For example, as discussed in Chapter One, "I" contemplates the lonely implications of his constipation—"Please make me empty, if I'm empty then I can receive, if I can receive it means it comes from somewhere outside of me, if it comes from outside of me I'm not alone! I cannot bear this loneliness. Above all it is loneliness" (Cohen, *Beautiful* 40)—but he cannot recognize his own part in the loneliness that unsettles him. There is no outside for "I", (in part) because he has egoistically appropriated the whole world, and such an appropriation of the world thoroughly eliminates it: "This is the brutal solitude of constipation, this is the way the world is lost" (42). Importantly, "I"'s concentration on his loneliness as evidence of his victimization negates the creative potential of Cohen's prophet, from whose loneliness a community is born.

In its final expression, however, "I"'s loneliness tentatively parallels the self-reflective ironic mode of authenticity that may correct his appropriative solipsism. As discussed in Chapter One, Cohen signals a shift in "I"'s closed individuality through the prayers that end the first part of *Beautiful Losers* and suggests that "I" has achieved the ecstasy—the standing outside of himself—that F. promises him in his long letter, which forms the second book of Cohen's novel. There, F. links "I"'s ecstasy to both loneliness and the end of "I"'s desperate cries: "Can you

stop talking? Has loneliness led you into ecstasy?" (161). Notably, F. connects the breakthrough in his friend's characteristic solipsism to the loneliness that defines Cohen's prophet in "Loneliness and History," a move that suggests that "I"'s solitude and silence may provide the *via negativa* upon which he ironically becomes the prophetic voice of a community in the figure of the Old Man. As Cohen claimed in "Loneliness and History," "A man must be very alone before he can declare: *We* are not alone." Characteristic of Cohen's romantic irony, however, at the moment he suggests "I"'s developing authenticity, he also transforms his character into the Old Man. In doing so, Cohen suggests that once an individual recognizes his inauthenticity, he must thoroughly abandon it.

"I"'s first-person narrative concludes with his criticism of his vision of himself as an absolute when he turns to God in silent prayer:[36] "O God, O God, I have asked for too much, I have asked for everything! I hear myself asking for everything in every sound I make. I did not know, in my coldest terror, I did not know how much I needed" (148). "I"'s final prayer departs from his usual desperate cry, which Wilkins describes as "a monologue set up as a dialogue, a fact especially relevant to the historian's solitude and solipsism" (34). In this prayer, however, "I" develops a second voice; he "grow[s] silent" even as he "hear[s him]self begin to pray" (148), and so the prayer becomes not another example of "I"'s solipsistic monologue, but evinces his inner dialogue and self-reflection. This doubling through prayer importantly parallels the process of irony, which doubles the words that we speak and, in the romantic mode, paradoxically asserts two opposing ideas at the same time (Mellor 21). Authenticity similarly requires the double knowledge of oneself suggested by "I"'s prayers; "[i]rony brings out the self-

[36] A few pages before "I"'s final humble prayer, he similarly calls out to F, suggesting that his friendship with F. contributes to his epiphanic translation (141). "I"'s friendship with F. attests to the fact that "I" had once been able to welcome another into his life. While F.'s and Edith's deaths leave "I" closed off from the world in the novel's present, Cohen suggests with "I"'s invocation of F. and his prayers that "I" is beginning to open to the world again.

detachment needed to transcend subjectivity, and enables the individual to refocus, as it were, on the emerging authentic self" (Golomb 29).

Cohen's constant threat of annihilating this "emerging authentic self" just as he comes into being, however, signals his romantic and Nietzschean commitment to becoming over being. Even as he suggests "I"'s growing authenticity, for example, Cohen continues to scrutinize its form. As discussed in Chapter One, "I"'s prayer takes the form of an absurd translation as he, using the Greek phrasebook with "execrable" English (58) F. had given him, participates in imaginary conversations with Catherine. Engaging "I" in a "language he has barely mastered" (58), these translations criticize the colonial mastery of "I"'s solipsistic project of historical redescription. In humbling himself before a divine other in a language over which he does not have mastery, "I" is forced to abandon his totalizing project of redescription. The banal Greek phrases and the incongruous scenes of communication with Catherine—at the drug-shop, for example, where "I" asks Catherine "how much does all cost?" (149)—estrange "I" from his language and his self, thus disrupting his egoistic integrity and opening a space through which something outside of him may enter his world. The content of "I"'s prayers and Catherine's replies—"ten shillings. Thanks" (149)—continue to suggest Cohen's thorough criticism of any positive completion of "I"'s project, which Cohen's own romantic irony further negates. In fact, "I"'s ecstasy—his standing outside of himself at the end of his "history"—suggests not a correction or completion, but a new beginning as it catalyzes his crossing over—as the Latin roots of "translation" imply—into the Old Man of the novel's third section.

As it criticizes the inauthenticity of "I"'s historical project, Cohen's romantic irony also exposes its political implications and, through "I"'s negative example, suggests the political potential of individual authenticity. Like Smart's, Cohen's romantic irony does not discard the

political criticisms that "I"'s desire for authenticity reveals. In fact, Cohen's criticism of "I"'s appropriation of Catherine's victimhood underscores the colonial injustices of the Jesuits' conversions and amplifies the suggestion that Canadians can and should feel those injustices as their own. On the other hand, Cohen uncovers "I"'s identification with Catherine as an approach to history that recapitulates the authority of white men over racialized women. By seeing himself as part of Catherine's victimhood, "I" not only perpetuates the image of a victimized other, he uses it as an alibi that evades the difficult fact that his own fantasies repeat a colonial power imbalance that he condemns when he sees it in history. The political potential of the authentic individual lies in the "third meaning" of Cohen's irony, which, as it dismantles colonizing approaches to history nonetheless maintains the ethical value of "I"'s desire to confront the historical injustices of Canada's past as integral to his own identity.

In striking contrast to "I"'s desperate inner life, F. expresses a political and public project of authenticity that, as Purdham and Wilkins have rightly noted, has totalitarian implications. While "I" wallows in his alibi of victimhood, F. uses the "Charles Axis" system to "refashion[…] himself as a master" (Wilkins 37). Moreover, F.'s success in recreating himself leads to his well-intentioned but fascist aspiration to recreate the people he knows in his image. As Purdham argues, in F.'s model of self-creation, the body becomes the aestheticized site of power and "the vehicle for experiments in totality and perfection" (90). For F., the individual body expresses and renews the body politic. Wilkins nicely draws out the wider political implications of F.'s "experiments in totality and perfection": "Nazi Germany is the political application of the Charles 'Axis' system, in which the desire to attain the Aryan ideal results in the brutal eradication of the Jews" (40). F.'s mode of achieving his authenticity positions him as the author not of himself (for he follows Charles Axis's system rather than originating his own),

but of the world he transforms through his desire to perfect it; F.'s is an absolute desire that forcefully resonates with the unjust and destructive power of the Nazis.

F.'s attempt to transform "I" and his botched recreation of "I"'s wife, Edith, demonstrate the fascist valence of his authenticity and his assumption that perfected bodies will renew an imperfect world. As mentioned in Chapter One, F. would like "I" to follow the Charles Axis program, but disparaging F.'s commitment to "becom[ing] a New Man in just fifteen minutes a day," "I" desires "to be the Superman who was never Clark Kent" (122). In contrast to "I," F. creates his own destiny by perfecting his body and those of others. For example, F. transforms a young Edith from "an ugly mess" to a woman with "perfect skin" (140), who becomes "the lovely wife whom ['I'] discovered performing extraordinary manicures in the barber shop of the Mount Royal Hotel" (167). F.'s makeover of Edith and his later vision of himself as "Dr. Frankenstein with a deadline" sewing the world together (183) clarify, however, that F.'s subscription to the Axis model of re-creation culminates in an authoritarian attempt to refashion the world: F.'s model of authenticity positions him as the potential author of a perfected world, but it is one in which only one system—F.'s appropriation of the Charles Axis system—leads to perfection. Cohen, however, also reveals that F.'s creative impulse is necessary for individual political engagement—for without a desire to reimagine the world as something worth celebrating, how does one begin to change it for the better? This creative aspiration for redemption initiates the ironic process of Cohen's model of political individuality.

F. understands his own system as part of a tradition of revolutionary arrangements that have creatively overcome the past through redescription and, in doing so, forever changed the world. "I" relates "F.'s ideas" (57) about revolutionary systems:

> new systems are forced on the world by men who simply cannot bear the pain of

> living with what is. Creators care nothing for their systems except that they be unique. If Hitler had been born in Nazi Germany he wouldn't have been content to enjoy the atmosphere. If an unpublished poet discovers one of his own images in the work of another writer it gives him no comfort, for his allegiance is not to the image or its progress in the public domain, his allegiance is to the notion that he is not bound to the world as given, that he can escape the painful arrangement of things as they are. Jesus probably designed his system so that it would fail in the hands of other men, that is the way with the greatest creators: they guarantee the desperate power of their own originality by projecting their systems into an abrasive future. (56-7)

In "I"'s recollection, F. implies a disturbing equivalence between Hitler, Jesus, and the poet: each believes in his power, as a creator of a system, to transform the world. Through F.'s seemingly neutral invocation of Hitler as an exemplary creator, Cohen provocatively signals in his character the authoritarian potential of authenticity that Taylor notes. Even more provocatively, however, Cohen expresses an anxiety about the utopian potential of creative systematizers: *Hitler's* creative authority appears through F.'s logic as a response to the "painful arrangement" of the world. While F.'s invocation of Hitler suggests the cruelty implicit in his own creative authority, it also importantly amplifies the need for authentic individuals, whose "unique" systems will be the ones to replace Hitler's with something new. Moreover, important to both F.'s project and Cohen's own image of the political individual as a prophet-traitor is F.'s belief that creators project their systems into "an abrasive future." The strength of redescription lies in its power not only to redeem the past by recreating it, but also to transform the future by projecting a new history, a new model of understanding the world, into it. As creators know, one

changes the past when one invents a new future.

Like Hitler, the poet, and Jesus, F. aims to change the world radically by redescribing it in the terms of his own vision. Examples of F.'s redescriptions proliferate in the novel; among them, the Telephone Dance and the Iroquois' red acropolis reveal the erotic and creatively anachronistic character of F.'s project. In the tellingly named System Theatre, while "I" uses the bathroom, F. and Edith discover the Telephone Dance. As F. later recalls while his friend mourns Edith's death, "[we] invented the Telephone Dance. Spontaneously. I don't know who made the first move. Suddenly our index fingers were in each other's ears. We became telephones!" (33). Redescribing eroticism in his relation of the scene to "I", F. proclaims: "[all] parts of the body are erotogenic" (34). The Telephone Dance, then, reveals part of F.'s system of bodily redescription: his dance with Edith recreates eroticism as a communicative and transformative dance, the translation from human to telephone that subverts "genital imperialism" (34) and asserts the erogenous potential of the total body F. has designed. Because F. views the body as the site of political power and renewal, his development of the Telephone Dance also signals his momentary success in creating a new community through the perfected body of Edith (who is an A---- like Catherine) and their united ability to overcome "imperialism" at the level of the body. Like "I", however, F. blindly participates in the colonial project that transformed Catherine into a fetishized exotic object. F.'s description of the Telephone Dance as sounding like "ordinary eternal machinery" (34) reveals his misunderstanding of his own project, for he repeats the words a sexualized Catherine, wrapped in a blanket of thorns, uses to describe her experience to the priests who watch her (215). While F. imagines sexual expression as a mode of claiming an authentic and implicitly political individuality that liberates the past from colonial injustices and announces a new future, he does not acknowledge the power his view claims over the racialized

and sexualized other. Although F. repeats Catherine's words of ecstasy, we must remember that this scene (which F. himself eventually narrates) also includes two Jesuit witnesses who, like "I" and F., take sexual pleasure in feeling like they are part of Catherine's ecstasy (211-15).

Similarly, F. teaches "I" the power of redescription when he anachronistically imagines the Iroquois seeing a red acropolis: "Do you know how to do this? Do you know how to see the akropolis like the Indians who never even had one? Fuck a saint, that's how, find a little saint and fuck her over and over in some pleasant part of heaven […] look at the traffic of happiness and crime, it's burning in crayon like the akropolis rose!" (13). F.'s system of erotic redescription radically reimagines the world to reveal its apocalyptic potential. Like the creators he describes to "I", F. "is not bound to the world as given," and so he can transform history to create a world in which the Iroquois had an acropolis and dead saints can be fucked. F.'s redescriptions, however, are also politicized. Consider his imagined red acropolis: from the perspective of the imperial imagination, the "Indians" might be connected to the "red" acropolis through the colour of their skin.[37] Similarly, when F. advises "I" to "[f]uck a saint," he does not mean any saint, but the first Iroquois saint, Catherine Tekakwitha, and so the apocalyptic act implies further dominance over a colonized, sexualized, and racialized other. By creating an alternate past, F. also creates a new future: the absurd originality of F.'s images claims the world he reimagines as his own. Like other system creators, F.'s commitment is to what is original in his creation, what, in its very originality, affirms the power of his own individuality, but Cohen underscores the colonial implications that link F.'s authenticity project to Hitler's fascism.

Despite the radical violence of his projects, however, F., like Smart's narrator, desires to recreate a world in which he can reduce suffering. Explaining to Edith why he was motivated to

[37] See Linda Hutcheon's early essay, "*Beautiful Losers*: All the Polarities," for a reading of the "white/red imagery […] in the basic conflict of the novel" (44).

transform her and to embrace a system of such dangerous change, F. confesses to feeling the absurd freedom of creation: "Beholding such a spectacle of misery, I was free to try anything […] Confronted with your pus, I could not stop to examine my direction" (183):

> Call me Dr. Frankenstein with a deadline. I seemed to wake up in the middle of a car accident, limbs strewn everywhere, detached voices screaming for comfort, severed fingers pointing homeward […] and all I had in the wrecked world was a needle and thread […] I had an idea of what a man should look like, but it kept changing. I couldn't devote a life-time to discovering the ideal physique. All I heard was pain, all I saw was mutilation. (183)

In this humble moment of confession, F. recognizes the flaws in his desire to take on the world's suffering as his individual project. As "I" already knew, "there is something arrogant and warlike in the notion of a man setting the universe in order" (99). Furthermore, F.'s changing "idea of what a man should look like" suggests that although he attempts to rebuild the integrity of the individual, that wholeness has been forever compromised by the pain of the world.

F.'s transformative powers fail when confronted with the magnitude of the social, political, and historical suffering of the world. This defeat also signals Cohen's criticisms of the totalitarianism implicit in the tellingly named "Axis" model and thus in F. himself. Ravvin's reading of the Holocaust as the "ethical centre" of the novel illuminates Cohen's investigation into the fascist tendencies of F.'s experimental political power and his "suggestion that the outcome of any eroticized interest in victimization and the abuse of power must inevitably bring about total demoralization and spiritual death" (30). For Wilkins, when F. recognizes himself as Frankenstein he also "recognizes that the social body is also wounded in a way that is too complex for any individual to heal by mapping his own vision of wholeness onto it" (42). In

other words, the Axis model fails because it attempts to unify the multiple individuals of a collective body into a singular vision of human perfection. Notably, the Axis model of individual perfection parallels the kind of individual coherence in projects of authenticity. When working on himself, F. can claim his authority and integrity, but, as Wilkins notes, when F. attempts to apply his system to a social and historical group, or to *any* other—as he does in his separatist desires for Québec and his attempts to make over "I" and Edith—such integrity is only possible through the extreme violence that eradicates all difference.

Although F.'s recollection of himself as Frankenstein suggests that he will give up his system when he returns from Argentina (where he and Edith share a bath with Hitler), he continues to preach it after he returns to Montreal. Like "I," F. only fully recognizes his failings when he humbles himself before God and trades his desire "to be a magician" for the ecstatic joy of becoming "magic" itself (172). In other words, F. discovers that the pleasure and perfection he has been preaching are not made possible through the power of the magician, who transforms the world to reflect his own vision, but through magic, the quality of creative potential and divine joy as it moves in the world. F.'s famous prayer, discussed in Chapter One, connects magic to God through chiasmus—"God is alive. Magic is afoot. God is afoot. Magic is alive" (164)—and emphasizes that magic (and through the chiasmic logic of the prayer, also God) cannot be forced to serve an individual program, for "Magic is no instrument. Magic is the end" (165). Prayer thus provides both "I" and F. with a means of self-discovery and inspires them to change. No longer the sole arbiters of linguistic and redemptive power, both F. and "I" shed their authoritative visions of the world in their appeals to a power greater than their own. Notably, however, F. continues his project of redescription through his insistence that the seemingly metaphysical magic of the divine exists in the very physical pleasures of the body, an insistence that both F.'s

and "I"'s meditations on colonization reveal to have a political as well as a religious valence.

For Rorty, as for many of the existentialists, the creative power of redescription and authenticity is an effect of the death of God, the failure of metaphysical claims to absolute Truth, and the resulting contingency of the self and the world:[38] a contingent world with no absolute to guarantee it can be reshaped.[39] Although Cohen imagines the politically creative power of singular individuals, he also persistently reasserts the existence of creative forces outside of the individual, before which he finally views himself, as "I" does when he grows silent enough to hear his voice raised in prayer. Purdham insists that Cohen's critics recognize his own defense of the absolute even as he criticizes the totalitarian tendencies of his characters: "Cohen demonstrates […] that to give up on the total vision for fear of its negative totalitarian valences is also to give up on the sacral notion of a revealed world, a world that is fundamentally conceivable as one creation" (86-87). Cohen achieves this affirmation of "the total vision" even as he criticizes "its negative totalitarian valences" through his romantic irony, which not only hovers between "I"'s rage for a revealed world and F.'s celebration of his god-like creative power, but also creates and destroys the individualistic and totalitarian urges of each character. Furthermore, as he did in his characterization of "I", in his characterization of F., Cohen signals the political potential of the authentic individual through the "third meaning" of his irony. While Cohen reveals the fascist potential of F.'s program of redescription, he also suggests that authentic political engagement requires not "I"'s passive victimhood, but F.'s active attempt to redeem the world, to overcome "the pain of living with what is." In particular, F.'s redescriptions

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[38] Importantly, in the place of God or another divine absolute Rorty and existentialists like Sartre place the Other, before whom one recognizes oneself not only as a subject but as an object as well.

[39] In both *Flowers for Hitler* and *Beautiful Losers* Cohen expresses anxiety about the human ability to reshape the world. Responding in part to the events of the Holocaust and the Second World War in *Flowers for Hitler*, for example, Cohen presents the consequences of God's death: when one feels no external and ultimate constraint on one's actions, when one answers only to a state that promotes violence, "*All things can be done*" ("It Uses Us!," 35; original emphasis).

emphasize the body as both the site of political domination—that is, they demonstrate the ways in which politics are inscribed on and transform the body—*and* the potential source of joy.

The novel's final scene of potential revolution climactically expresses the ironic nature of Cohen's political individual, a prophetic figure who stands outside of both himself and the community he draws together. After humbling themselves before God, F. and "I" merge into an Old Man.[40] This incredible figure fulfills "I"'s sexual quest to "fuck a saint"—he goes down on the Blonde Housewife, a mystical merging of Cohen's female characters into an Isis figure—and later announces the revolution F. had been preparing for when he brings "[a]ll the second chancers" (252) into the street. The Old Man's disruptive appearance on the Main culminates in his transcendent transformation from an individual to the surreal projection of Ray Charles across the Montreal sky. Leading up to the Old Man's final transformation, the people of Montreal anticipate the spirit of change in the air: "Action was suddenly in the streets! They could all sense it as they closed in on the Main: something was happening in Montréal history!" (252). The possibility of revolution brings out the "losers" who hope to become "beautiful": "All the second chancers rushed in, the divorced, the converted, the overeducated, they all rushed in for their second chance, karate masters, adult stamp collectors, Humanists, give us, give us our second chance! It was the Revolution!" (252).

Appropriate to Cohen's romantic irony, the Old Man's presence builds into an exacting absence, again suggesting the impossibility of an individualist revolution. The individual who brings action into the streets is not an individual at all: "His presence was like the shape of an hourglass, strongest where it was smallest. And that point where he was most absent, that's when the gasps started, because the future streams through that point, going both ways" (253). The Old

[40] For an explanation of the similarities between Cohen's male characters, who merge into the figure of the Old Man in the Epilogue, see footnote 46 in Chapter One. For an explanation of the similarities between the female characters, who merge into the Blonde Housewife, see footnote 47 in Chapter One.

Man announces the revolution that will transform history and project a new future in the manner of the original systems that F. described. The Old Man reveals the future, streaming "both ways," that redeems the past as it announces the new future that is to come. This revelation is thus "not a second chance," but "a vision of All Chances At Once!" (253-54). Importantly, however, this image of total potentiality is not the Old Man's final message. In his unbelievable finale, the Old Man transforms once again, this time into an image of Ray Charles projected across the Montreal sky: "Quickly now, as if even he participated in the excitement over the unknown, he greedily reassembled himself into – into a movie of Ray Charles" (254).

As I discussed in Chapter One, Cohen's critics remain divided on how to read this cryptic final image. For most, the projection of the Old Man across the sky marks a moment of ultimate transcendence for both "I" and F., insofar as they are both part of the Old Man. Sylvia Söderlind persuasively reads this scene as the completion of the task outlined in the epigraph of the novel: "Somebody said lift that bale – Ray Charles singing 'Ol' Man River.'"[41] Concentrating instead on the indifferent responses of what had been a potentially revolutionary crowd—"Thank God it's only a movie" (254), says someone in the crowd—Hutcheon claims that the image reveals "a willed evasion of participation in life" (*Canadian* 34). In contrast, Wilkins emphasizes the image's implicit ethical and political message; he argues that the unveiling of victimization in the movie of Ray Charles, a figure associated with slave labour in the epigraph, demonstrates that the "failure to lift the veil on the perfect victim or the absolute master sends us back to our loss so that we might work with it" (45-46).

Implicit in all of these readings, however, is the Old Man's ability to form and withdraw

[41] Söderlind claims that a native Greek speaker might pronounce "[l]ift that bale" as "[l]ift that veil," a move that explicitly links the appearance of Ray Charles with the possibility of revelation. In her discussion of the epigraph of *Beautiful Losers*, Söderlind explains that "[in] [M]odern Greek, the letter B is pronounced V; read 'in Greek' the word 'bale' would be pronounced 'veil'" (96). After his stay on Hydra in the early sixties, during which he attempted to learn Greek, Cohen was likely aware of this pronunciation.

from a community, an ability Cohen associates with his prophet in "Loneliness and History." In his Epilogue, Cohen returns to the image of the political individual as the unrecognized and antagonistic prophet, the lonely traitor who brings together a community in which he will not participate. (Notably, Cohen continues to emphasize the reprehensible character of such traitors when he suggests that the Old Man is a pedophile [244-45]). The Old Man reveals a community that F.'s system has transformed: F.'s ideal individual, the New Jew, witnesses the Old Man transform into a projection of Ray Charles: "Hey! cried the New Jew, laboring on the lever of the broken Strength Test. Hey. Somebody's making it!" (254). Furthermore, the Old Man causes a crowd to form that reveals the community of second-chancers of all varieties. In this way, he creates a community by bringing it together in a meeting place, similar to the town square Cohen describes in "Loneliness and History."

Cohen's romantic irony structures the Old Man's political message. The Old Man, like the prophet, delivers a message that is not understood by those who cling to the old, recognizable values, those who "[t]hank God it's only a movie," when their expected "second chance" does not obviously appear, and so continue their complicit participation in the victimizing regimes Cohen reveals throughout his novel. Here, Cohen's romantic irony is again essential to understanding his mode of individual political engagement: at the moment the Old Man creates a community, he also moves away from it, transforming into something else in order to reveal what is inauthentic in what he has created—even the New Jew seems complicit in the suffering in the Old Man's last appearance. The image of the Old Man thus also underscores the importance of both romantic irony and individual authenticity for Cohen. His final movement away from the community he creates communicates Cohen's emphasis on the individual's continual becoming and on romantic irony as a mode through which the individual may create a

political community and expose its failings.

Although the fact that the Old Man is a conglomeration of individuals—who, as other critics have noted, are not totally distinct from each other even before their merging—and his final dissolution over Montreal's sky suggest a limit to or end of the individual, Cohen grants the last words of his novel to yet another unnamed first-person narrator. This narrator continues Cohen's romantic irony; through this last voice, Cohen recreates the autonomous individual he had destroyed through the figure of the Old Man. Moreover, this narrator's comments seem to reflect on Cohen's book as a whole, a self-reflexive gesture that also describes the on-going process of authentic becoming: "Poor men, poor men, such as we, they've gone and fled. […] We talk of poor men, broken and fled. Alone with my radio I lift up my hands. Welcome to you who read me today. Welcome to you who put my heart down. Welcome to you, darling and friend, who miss me forever in your trip to the end" (255). While Hutcheon connects these final words to Baudelaire's poem, "Au lecteur," she notes that "there is none of [its] hostility […] The writer of postmodern metafiction wants to lure readers into the act of meaning-making, to tantalize us with our own expectations – if only then ironically to thwart them" (*Canadian* 42). For Hutcheon, then, *Beautiful Losers* ends with an appeal to the reader. Cohen's return to the intertextual reference to Baudelaire's poem that he had also used in "What I'm Doing Here," however, also reiterates the prophet figure of "Loneliness and History." A singular voice that sometimes expands into a collective "we," the last narrator of *Beautiful Losers*, like Cohen's prophet, is "[a]lone" and speaks to and for a community that he will never be fully a part of.

This prophetic voice is thus the voice of continual becoming, of the creative energy, typical of romantic irony, that also judges and destroys what it creates. As Hutcheon notes, it calls upon the reader to participate in "meaning-making," which, as Cohen demonstrates

throughout his novel, inspires individuals to engage in projects of authentic redescription and to criticize self-reflexively their own creations. In other words, the last narrator, like Smart's, inspires readers to participate in the political criticisms of the novel, while also emphasizing that neither their participation nor the novel can absolutely or finally overcome the dangers implicit in the authority of redescription. In this way, Cohen's prophetic political individual continuously recedes from the community of spectators and readers he creates and so both defends and attacks the individual as an absolute model of political responsibility and redemption.

Conclusion: The Political Potential of Authenticity and Irony

Smart and Cohen ask, as the novelists in the previous chapter also did, how the individual may celebrate her individuality and also express an interest in the political injustices of her contemporary world. Smart's and Cohen's answer takes on a very different form from those of the novels discussed in the last chapter: through first-person and often stream-of-consciousness narratives, these novelists create individuals who unite personal desire and political critique. The very individuality of Smart's and Cohen's characters becomes their mode of political engagement. This transformation of politics into personal expression also reflects the appeal to projects of authenticity in both *By Grand Central Station* and *Beautiful Losers*: attempting to become the authors of their own lives, these characters also claim redemptive authority over an imperfect political world. Notably, each character imagines the utopian recovery of the world as his or her creation and responsibility through a process that Rorty has called redescription. In doing so, each also reveals the real political potential of the authentic individual.

This political potential may, however, participate in one of the two negative extremes of authenticity: indifference, or shallow acceptance of all opinions, and authoritarian control. As I

have argued here, however, while their characters are not always aware of such risks, Smart and Cohen curb them through their own creative commitment to irony. In fact, if authenticity is the philosophical root of individualist political commitment, irony is its creative form. Irony functions in three important ways in Smart's and Cohen's novels. First, in its most traditional and simple sense, it asserts what seems to be its opposite: personal desire turns out to express political critique and commitment. Second, it triggers self-reflection, most evidently in "I"'s final prayer, where he finds himself doubled and so may reflect on how his desperation has prevented him from opening himself to anything outside of his appropriative understanding of the world. Finally, Smart and Cohen subject the political commitments of their characters' authenticity to the deconstructive energy of romantic irony. Neither Smart nor Cohen imagines their characters' authenticity as a definitive end to their political becoming. Instead, both conclude their novels with failed images of communion: Smart's narrator is abandoned in Grand Central Station, and Cohen lends the last words of his novel to a narrator who claims every ending will be a missed communion. These deflationary endings do not, however, totally negate the political potential of the authentic individual at their centre. Rather, Smart and Cohen combine the creative project of authenticity with the critical form of romantic irony, thus suggesting that individualist politics requires the constant creation and destruction of authentic authority. If the individual is to remain both an individual and a political being, she must both commit herself to the best world she can imagine and perpetually force herself to recognize the failings of her own authenticity in order to start again.

CHAPTER FIVE

COMPASSIONATE ENDS: THE NOVEL INDIVIDUAL AND THE ETHICS OF FEELING

For the individualist, compassion is a risky emotion, for it requires that she find another's feelings and well being as important as her own.[1] Richard Reilly adeptly explains that the "ethics of compassion" poses a challenge to the individual because it is "rooted in a tension between conceiving oneself as a concrete individual with one's 'own' dispositions, desires and goals and as being fundamentally inter-connected with and capable of selfless concern for others" (5). In their best-known novels, Ethel Wilson, Ernest Buckler, Sheila Watson, and Margaret Laurence meditate on precisely this tension as they both represent isolated modern subjects and pursue fellow feeling as an ethical ideal. In doing so, these novelists imagine how compassion might overcome extreme individualism. In *Swamp Angel* (1954), *The Mountain and the Valley* (1952), *The Double Hook* (1959), and Laurence's Manawaka novels, Wilson, Buckler, Watson, and Laurence represent the difficulty of fully realizing a compassionate ideal that would result in a sustained feeling with another in her pain. Buckler captures this difficulty in his description of the competing emotional states of the compassionate and the suffering individual: "there is a sort of selfishness in the one whose hurt is the more immediate, a sort of desperation in the one who cannot share equally the burden of that immediacy" (46). While the individual's impulse to feel with the one who suffers suggests the possibility of her suspension of her ego, the impossibility of feeling the total pain of another reiterates the individual's insuperable individuality. As

[1] I follow Charles Altieri's distinction between affects—"immediate modes of sensual responsiveness to the world characterized by an accompanying imaginative dimension"—and emotions—"affects involving the construction of attitudes that typically establish a particular cause and so situate the agent within a narrative and generate some kind of action or identification" (2). Altieri, like Martha Nussbaum, calls compassion an emotion. Moreover, Altieri's definition of emotion captures the treatment of compassion in the novels discussed here, which meditate on the emotion as a challenge to both narrative closure and individual action and identification.

Buckler suggests and this chapter will demonstrate, compassion thus requires a difficult balance between self and other, freedom and obligation, participation and witnessing.

In the modern Canadian novel, compassion's risks—of losing one's self in feeling for the other, of truly compromising one's goals for the sake of the other, of experiencing another's pain, of beneficence without the promise of reward—are at best equal to, at worst surpass, its humble rewards. The novelists discussed here redefine compassion in individualist terms: they emphasize autonomy and an unsustainable spontaneity of fellow feeling as essential to the emotion. Furthermore, they stress compassion as a process, as an ideal emotional state and ethical position towards which one strives, rather than as a predetermined moral value that one feels obligated to uphold. While an ethics of compassion might balance the needs of the individual and the community (a particular strength of Canadian fiction in the eyes of many of its critics), these novelists suggest that such ideals are rarely permanently or stably met.[2]

In fact, despite its seemingly universal moral appeal, "[c]ompassion is controversial" (Nussbaum, *Upheavals* 354). Not only is the process by which a subject comes to feel another's pain mysterious, but the definition, potential, and value of the emotion are highly debated philosophical topics. Compassion's controversy is best seen in the debate over the emotion between Arthur Schopenhauer, who promoted compassion as the basis of ethical virtue, and his

[2] Sherrill Grace claims that "[t]he Canadian hero embodies a deep loyalty to community, as opposed to the individual self" ("Portrait" 165), and Margaret Atwood also positions the community as the "collective hero" of Canadian fiction (*Survival* 245). Northrop Frye points out that popular fiction of the nineteenth century often adopts a "success-story formula" in which "the success is usually emotional, *i.e.,* the individual fulfills himself within his community" ("Conclusion" 236). Although Frye notes a difference between this "success story" and the fiction of the twentieth century, his formula reappears in the critical consensus about compassion presented below. Moreover, the narrative of individual fulfillment *through* community reappears as an idealized characteristic of Canadian culture in cultural criticism more broadly. Recently, for example, Robert Meynell has argued that Charles Taylor, C.B. Macpherson, and George Grant participate in a legacy of Canadian idealism, which claims that "individual freedom is enhanced, not hindered, by the social order and the demands to make personal sacrifices for the common good" (18). While the novelists discussed here are certainly concerned with the relationship between the individual and the community, they present the difficulty of and challenges to such a successful integration. In doing so, they perpetually insist that the narrative of an individual's ethical life is not one of "success" but of persistent process in which the demands of the community and the desires of the individual are often at odds.

follower, Friedrich Nietzsche, who famously argued that it is a form of weakness. Furthermore, in her significant study of emotions, *Upheavals of Thought*, Martha Nussbaum notes that theorists of compassion are "scattered" and include "novelists as well as political theorists, psychologists as well as philosophers" (Nussbaum 369). Modern Canadian novelists are among compassion's "scattered" theorists. Drawing on Schopenhauer's demanding definition of the emotion, the four authors discussed here variously invoke, reject, and reformulate philosophies of compassion in order to press for a rigorous and embodied theory of the emotion that can answer the needs of both the compassionate individual and the suffering other.

The novels discussed here take up the ambivalence of a compassionate ideal—which calls the individual out of her singularity and into a relation with another only to deny her total identification with that other—as a point of ethical inquiry. Through their representations of the contradictions and difficulties of understanding and enacting an ethics of feeling, these modern novelists make a common philosophical statement about the necessity of autonomy for compassion, a necessity decidedly at odds with Schopenhauer's philosophy of the emotion. In doing so, their novels also complicate the critical tendency to invoke "an ethics of compassion" superficially as evidence of a novelist's creative merit. Compassion, as these novelists reveal, is too controversial, too difficult, and too volatile to be invoked without serious critical attention and definition. These novelists give compassion precisely such serious critical attention, and in doing so reveal their own participation in the philosophical debates about the emotion. Wilson engages with both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche to develop a theory of autonomous compassion through Maggie's quest for her freedom in *Swamp Angel*. Buckler demonstrates the severe demands of Schopenhauer's model of compassion and critiques the potential of subjective idealism and aesthetic compassion in *The Mountain and the Valley*. Watson similarly draws on

both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche to offer a vision of compassion as a debt that justly curbs excessive individualism in *The Double Hook*, and Laurence brings her Manawaka series to its ethical culmination in her development of a model of sufficient, if not comprehensive, compassion in *The Diviners*. This model of compassion notably builds on Wilson's, Buckler's, and Watson's by also challenging Aristotle's belief that the emotion requires a judgment of similarity.

Compassion belongs to a nexus of terms—including sympathy, pity, and empathy—that define a subject's feeling for another. Although often used as synonyms, these terms have their own histories and philosophical connotations.[3] For example, only a little over a century old, the word empathy developed through the translation of the German *Einfühlung*, originally an aesthetic term, into English (Stueber).[4] Translators of the German *Mitleid* (to suffer with) often signal its negative or positive connotations by rendering it in English as, respectively, "pity" or "compassion." Notably, Schopenhauer's translators usually choose "compassion," while

[3] In "Thinking of Me Thinking of You: Sympathy Versus Empathy in the Realist Novel," D. Rae Greiner notes the current conflation of empathy and sympathy and the popular preference for empathy instead of sympathy because it "shed[s] the moralistic overtones" of sympathy (418).

[4] As Karsten Stueber states in his entry on empathy in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "[d]espite its linguistic roots in ancient Greek, the concept of empathy is of recent intellectual heritage." Empathy entered the English language in 1909 when Edward Titchener, a psychologist, used it to translate the German *Einfühlung*, "a term that by the end of the 19th century was in German philosophical circles understood as an important category in philosophical aesthetics" (Stueber). From the 1870s on, thinkers like Robert Vischer and Theodor Lipps had studied the potential connection between *Einfühlung* as a means of "aesthetic appreciation of objects" (Stueber) and, closer to today's usage, as a means of understanding another human. Greiner summarizes that "*Einfühlung*, in Vischer's view, describes the way we project emotion into aesthetic objects so as to animate our relationship with the phenomenal world," and for Lipps "*Einfühlung* collapses the boundary between subject and object" (Greiner 417). For Lipps, however, empathy was also the "primary basis for recognizing each other as minded creatures" (Stueber). Although contemporary usage may forget the aesthetic roots of the term, Lipps's belief that *Einfühlung* describes the process by which we experience the emotions of another resonates in the current definition of empathy in the *OED*: "the power of projecting one's personality into (and so fully comprehending) the object of contemplation." The *OED* might overestimate the capacity of empathy to "fully comprehend" its object, but this definition underscores the essential feature and direction of empathy: feeling moves by way of projection from the subject to the object. The empathetic subject thus experiences a desire to merge with the world, as Wilhelm Worringer describes in *Abstraction and Empathy*: "the precondition for the urge to empathy is a happy pantheistic relationship of confidence between man and the phenomena of the external world" (qtd. Grace, *Regression* 32).

Nietzsche's use "pity" to emphasize the disdain in which he holds the emotion.[5] Furthermore, Nussbaum observes the conflation of sympathy with compassion: "If there is any difference between 'sympathy' and 'compassion' in contemporary usage, it is perhaps that 'compassion' seems more intense and suggests a greater degree of suffering, both on the part of the afflicted person and on the part of the person having the emotion" (302). While each term possesses its own philosophical tradition, its ethical value indicates its most significant point of divergence from the others. Thus, compassion, which in conventional usage "suggests a greater degree of suffering" than sympathy, carries with it the greatest ethical value, while pity, which suggests that the subject who pities feels superior to the sufferer, is less ethically admirable.[6]

The etymologies of compassion, sympathy, and pity indicate their mutual roots in feeling for another. Compassion, my preferred term for the discussion in this chapter, from the Latin *compati* meaning to suffer with, is defined as "sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others" (*OED*). Sympathy, formed by the Greek *sun* (with) and *pathos* (feeling), means both "feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune" and "understanding between people; common feeling" (*OED*). Finally, pity, from the Old French *pitié* (compassion), means "the feeling of sorrow and compassion caused by the sufferings of others" (*OED*). In their standard definitions these terms clearly overlap and support one another; however, compassion best represents the nuanced processes at work in the novels discussed here. As Nussbaum notes, the primary difference between compassion and sympathy in today's usage is the greater

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[5] See David E. Cartwright's "Schopenhauer's Compassion and Nietzsche's Pity" for an analysis of this convention.

[6] Although most theorists of empathy agree that it carries no moral significance, it is often considered part of compassion: "empathy is a mental ability highly relevant to compassion, although it is itself both fallible and morally neutral" (Nussbaum 333). While the ability to imagine the suffering of another is integral to compassion, that ability itself (empathy) does not necessarily take on moral significance because, as Nussbaum and others have emphasized, the knowledge of another's suffering might inspire either benevolence or malevolence: "empathy is simply an imaginative reconstruction of another person's experience, whether that experience is happy or sad, pleasant or painful or neutral, and whether the imaginer thinks the other person's situation good, bad, or indifferent (separate issues, since a malevolent person will think the other's distress good and her happiness bad)" (302).

suggestion of suffering in compassion, a suggestion clear in the etymologies of the words. While sympathy means feeling with feelings that might fall anywhere on a spectrum of pain and happiness, compassion signals solidarity in pain and has for the most part remained free of the connotations of condescension present in pity. The difficulty of suffering with another marks the primary challenge of compassion in the novels discussed here. That is, the challenge is to meet the other in her suffering, not, as one might in sympathetic happiness, from a position of equality, or, as one might in pity, from a position of superiority and disdain.

Philosophies of individualism and the ethics of feeling forcefully intersect in the realist novel of the nineteenth century, the predecessor of the modern novels discussed here. Crucial to the protagonist of the *Bildungsroman* is his autonomy and faith in a progressive development toward knowledge of himself and his world. Philip Weinstein sums up the triad of Enlightenment values present in the realist novel—"[a]utonomy, individuality, freedom" (*Unknowing* 43)—and notes: "tellingly absent from this trio of values is any sense of community" (43). Weinstein argues that the conventional moral investments of the nineteenth-century realist novel address the "need to correct this lopsided figure/ground ratio – the I so large, the other(s) so small" (44).

The morality of the realist novel finds its philosophical roots in Immanuel Kant's own attempt to curb the excesses and violent potential in the individualist project he helped to develop. Kant articulates his categorical imperative, which Schopenhauer later criticized for maintaining too great a loyalty to egoism, in two famous formulations in the *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. First, he advises, "[a]ct only according to the maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (30).[7] Second, he instructs us to: "[a]ct in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another,

[7] Although this imperative sounds Nietzschean in its emphasis on acting as though one were also willing a universal law, Kant's moral philosophy is fundamentally distinct from Nietzsche's because it appeals to a metaphysical rule.

always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means" (36).[8] Kant's categorical imperative forms the philosophical ground upon which the paradoxical moral project of the realist novel balances: "On the one hand, the Enlightenment dedication to subject empowerment in a lawful world underwrites realist plot. On the other hand, the categorical imperative hovers over the plot, rebuking subjective excess" (Weinstein 98).

For Weinstein, if the realist novel enacts a quest for knowledge, the modernist novel throws the knowable world into crisis: modernist narratives "sabotage realism's spatial premise that representational language somehow makes reliable contact with the real world" and "refuse realism's temporal premise that the subject (in the narrative) […] retain[s] continuous identity over time" (45-6). Understandably, modernism's intervention in realist convention also alters the ethical argument of the modernist novel. Rather than seeking a moral relationship with another who contributes to the individual progress of the realist protagonist, the modernist subject confronts both his self and the other as radically unknowable.[9] Weinstein, however, draws upon authors of radical unknowing—Proust, Kafka, Faulkner—whose work decisively breaks with both the formal and philosophical projects of the nineteenth-century realist novel in a way that modern Canadian novels do not.[10] Wilson, Watson, Buckler, and Laurence retain many of the ideals of the realist novel—most explicitly and importantly, the potential for self-knowledge and self-making—but add to them a modernist skepticism that explicitly confronts the difficulty of

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[8] Many critics, including Schopenhauer, have noted the echoes of the Golden Rule in Kant's second formulation. While iterations of the Golden Rule appear in ancient Egypt, Babylon, China, and Greece, Kant's critics have understandably related the practical imperative to the Christian pronouncements, most notably: "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (Luke 10:25-28).

[9] Thus, for Weinstein, Emmanuel Levinas is the most appropriate philosopher in the discussion of modernism's ethical project; according to Weinstein, Levinas's "critique of the Western commitment to *being* (as little more, finally, than a sublime ego-logy) reveals some of the stakes of this collapse" (5; original emphasis).

[10] The persistence of realism in Canadian literary modernism is best documented in Colin Hill's *Modern Realism in English-Canadian Fiction* and Glenn Willmott's *Unreal Country*. Willmott connects the *Bildungsroman* with the modernizing of Canada in the early twentieth century: "The *bildungsroman* is the 'symbolic form' by which a modernizing society, through the conceptual lens of 'youth,' attempts to attach a meaning to its new and bewildering self, to grow into mastery of self-consciousness" (25).

compassion as a means of harnessing individual excess and, especially in Laurence, as a way of adequately responding to an unknowable other.

These novelists demonstrate their modernist skepticism through their engagement with philosophies of both compassion and self-cultivation. They shift the ethical investments of their novels from the Kantian example Weinstein outlines to an active (if subtle) contest between Schopenhauer's model of compassion, which requires the individual's self-sacrifice, and Nietzsche's model of individualism, which posits fellow feeling as a weakness within the individual. Laurence further extends this contest also to include Aristotle's insistence on similarity as the grounds of compassion; however, Laurence suggests that Aristotle's insistence on similarity does not develop an ethics profound enough to meet the challenges of Canada's colonial history. As they represent the stakes of Schopenhauer's ideas of compassion, Wilson, Watson, Buckler, and Laurence also develop Nietzschean investments that replace absolute morality with the ethics of the becoming individual. Attention to this contest between a Schopenhauerian view of compassion as total transcendence and a Nietzschean view of the individual as the ground of ethics illuminates the ethical claims of the modern Canadian novel, which redefines compassion as a spontaneous but unstable state of feeling for another that belongs to the ethical realm of continual becoming rather than the moral realm of being.[11]

Schopenhauer's understanding of the emotion in *The Basis of Morality* forcefully opposes compassion to individualism and illuminates an important philosophical dimension of the clear cost of the emotion in the modern Canadian novel. Schopenhauer identifies three

[11] Following twentieth-century Nietzschean philosophers like Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, I distinguish morality, "which always refers existence to transcendent values," from ethics, "which is to say, a typology of immanent modes of existence" (Deleuze, *Spinoza* 23). Keith Ansell-Pearson further explains: "'morality' refers existence to otherworldly, spiritual, or transcendent values and is the judgment of God or the system of judgment. Thus the transcendent opposition of the values good and evil is replaced by the qualitative difference of the modes of existence that we call good and bad. As Nietzsche points out, to think beyond good and evil does not mean thinking 'beyond good and bad'" ("Beyond" 180).

"fundamental springs of human conduct" that explain the motives of all human action: *egoism*, "which desires the weal of the self, and is limitless"; *malice*, "which desires the woe of others, and my development to the utmost cruelty"; and *compassion*, "which desires the weal of others, and may rise to nobleness and magnanimity" (86). In Schopenhauer's view, while malice is "the incentive for morally reprehensible action" and egoism the incentive for "morally indifferent actions," compassion is the basis of morality because it fully excludes the benefits of the ego from its motive (Cartwright, "Solidarity" 141).

Schopenhauer's demand for a more thorough selflessness than Kant requires motivates his critique of Kant's categorical imperative. Specifically, Schopenhauer disapproves of Kant's idea that an external voice—which Schopenhauer reads as a disguised religious (specifically, Christian) voice—commands an individual into good moral action and claims that such an impetus to morality actually negates it: "A commanding voice, whether it comes from within, or from without, cannot possibly be imagined except as threatening or promising. Consequently obedience to it, which may be wise or foolish according to the circumstances, is yet always actuated by selfishness, and therefore morally worthless" (16).[12] The problem with Kantian and Christian moral ideals for Schopenhauer is that they do not upend the morally indifferent egoism upon which they are founded. Schopenhauer believes that in the Kantian example, the individual acts morally because he both fears metaphysical punishment and anticipates metaphysical reward. Schopenhauer's insistence that compassion is not motivated by reward or punishment and that it is an emotion rather than a duty informs the definitions of compassion modern Canadian novelists develop and contest.

[12] Schopenhauer similarly criticizes Christian morality: "The impossibility of violating the duty of self-love is at once assumed by the first law of Christian Morals: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' According to this, the love which each man cherishes for himself is postulated as the *maximum*, and as the condition of all other love; while the converse, 'Love thyself as thy neighbour' is never added; for every one would feel that the latter does not claim enough" (18).

Most importantly for the theories of compassion Wilson, Buckler, Watson, and Laurence develop, however, Schopenhauer eliminates the expectation of reciprocal feeling from his model of fellow feeling. Schopenhauer's compassion is spontaneous, "mysterious" (103), and a "paradox" (105), but it is not purposefully reciprocal. Schopenhauer's compassion thus requires a difficult ethical position: it insists that one must act spontaneously and outside of one's self; one must not expect reward or reciprocity for one's fellow feeling. In all of its difficulty, Schopenhauer's compassion helps to illuminate the almost impossible position of the modern protagonist who aspires to transcend her alienated self in compassionate feeling for another.[13]

Thus, for Schopenhauer, compassion thoroughly eliminates the difference between individuals; "the *difference* between my self and him, which is the precise *raison d'etre* of my Egoism, must be *removed*, at least to a certain extent" (85; original emphasis). He calls it a "direct participation […] in the sufferings of another" and claims that "[w]hen once compassion is stirred within me, by another's pain, then his weal and woe go straight to my heart" (85).[14] This mysterious identification structures the metaphysics of Schopenhauer's ethics, which he describes "as the sense which identifies the *ego* with the *non-ego*, so that the individual directly recognizes in *another* his own self, his true and very being" (139-40; original emphasis). Here is the ultimate risk of compassion with which the novelists of this chapter (and their characters) grapple: compassion eliminates the individual as a unique being. According to Schopenhauer, the

[13] For Schopenhauer, compassion not only excludes egoism, it dissolves it. Schopenhauer explains the compassionate motive thus: "I directly desire weal, and not woe, for him [the other for whom I feel compassion], just as habitually I do for myself. This, however, necessarily implies that I suffer with him, and feel his woe, exactly as in most cases I feel only mine" (85).

[14] David E. Cartwright argues that it is best to understand Schopenhauer's compassion as an imagined participation in the suffering of another ("Solidarity" 149). Cartwright's reading coheres with Schopenhauer's view that "I feel it [the pain of another] as my own, not indeed *in myself*, but *in him*" (*Basis* 103; original emphasis). Nussbaum also understands compassion as, in part, a kind of imaginative participation in another's pain, but she points out that the imagination may reach limits that stall feeling for another: "All kinds of social barriers – of class, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation – prove recalcitrant to the imagination, and recalcitrance impedes emotion" (317; see also the discussion of Margaret Laurence's novels in this chapter).

compassionate individual "feels […] that his being is commingled, is identical with the being of whatever is alive" (143). Schopenhauer's description of the individual's dissolution in the suffering of another informs the ethical meditations and insights these novelists dramatize**.** For example, while Wilson and Buckler suggest that the individual must be autonomous in order to momentarily transcend herself in fellow feeling, Laurence emphasizes the autonomy of the sufferer, whose pain remains unknowable even to her compassionate witnesses.

Against Schopenhauer's demanding model of compassion, then, the novelists discussed here place an implicitly Nietzschean model of the individual that insists on individual integrity even, especially, at the level of emotion. Nietzsche's fully individualist ethics criticizes Schopenhauer's philosophy of compassion and illuminates the individualist focus of the novels discussed here. While Nietzsche accuses Schopenhauer of maintaining the ego in his definition of compassion—"No one has ever done anything that was solely for the sake of another and not without a personal motive. […] How could the *ego* act without *ego*" (*Human* 71; original emphasis)—his true criticism is not that Schopenhauer fails to give an adequate model of non-egoistic compassion, but that he attempts to remove the ego altogether. Nietzsche, in accepting the ego as integral to morality, denies a higher realm that would dictate moral feeling and action and emphasizes the multiple incentives to moral and immoral action.[15] According to Nietzsche, "there is no absolute morality" (88), no good that the individual does not determine herself.

Furthermore, Nietzsche's view that the "cult of compassion" (Ansell-Pearson 181) levels the individual motivates the urgency of his "ethics of self-cultivation" (180): "There is today perhaps no more firmly credited prejudice than this: that one *knows* what really constitutes the moral. Today it seems *to do everyone good* when they hear that society is on the way to *adapting*

[15] Keith Ansell-Pearson points out that one of Nietzsche's three primary criticisms in *Daybreak* is his "concern that in its cult of the sympathetic affects modern society is in danger of providing the image of a single moral-making morality that amounts to a tyrannical encroachment on the requirements of individual self-cultivation" (185).

the individual to general requirements, and that *the happiness and at the same time the sacrifice of the individual* lies in feeling himself to be a useful member and instrument of the whole" (*Daybreak* 133; original emphasis). Keith Ansell-Pearson explains that for Nietzsche, hegemonic morality "requires that every individual is made to feel, as its primary emotion, a connectedness or bondedness with the whole, with society, in which anything truly individual is regarded as prodigal, costly, inimical, extravagant" (188). Nietzsche's promotion of an individual ethics of self-cultivation illuminates the persistent individualist pull in the novels discussed here—the individual's active desire for her autonomy—even as they hold up feeling with another as an ethical virtue. Furthermore, the novels' ambivalent nature—moving between compassionate and individualistic poles—proves to be Nietzschean in its vacillation. If the realist novel provides a picture of good and evil authenticated by a metaphysical morality (Kant's categorical imperative and the author's own moral vision), the modern novel questions the stakes of such a morality.

The novelists discussed here take up Kant's and Schopenhauer's ideas of compassion in all of their contradictions and difficulty, and in the process they create a picture of Nietzschean ethics that denies an absolute morality to be found in a metaphysical realm, God, or the author herself. While Wilson, Buckler, Watson, and Laurence suggest that Schopenhauer gets something right about the experience of compassion and its ethical virtue—it is mysterious; it requires the individual to transcend herself; it cannot be premised on reward or punishment—they also point to the very *individual* demands that interfere with fellow feeling and require a redefinition of ethics in Nietzschean terms. Controversial and difficult, compassion nonetheless provokes the modern individual set on her own autonomy with an ethical ideal that persistently reveals the emotional limits of her independence.

COMPASSIONATE AUTONOMY IN ETHEL WILSON'S *SWAMP ANGEL*

Ethel Wilson's critics, few as they are, have long discussed *Swamp Angel* as a novel that promotes compassion as a means of reconciling the individual and the community. Despite Wilson's insistence on the difficulty of compassion, however, her critics have been less interested in the philosophical dimension of Wilson's representation of it in her best-known novel. Instead, compassion, in particular its Christian form, has generally been treated as the resolution to Maggie Vardoe's triumphant return to herself as Maggie Lloyd and her balance between this full vision of herself as an individual and her negotiation of the community at Three Loon Lake. In this view, Maggie's compassion merely proves her success at the fishing lodge. Heather Murray's argument that the camp is "a centre where salvation, both joint and individual, is attempted and achieved" and that its "simultaneous isolation and community provide the setting and motivation for Maggie's resolution of the responsibility of the self to others" (244) is representative of the critical consensus on the novel's moral argument.[16]

Wilson's ideas about compassion, however, are more complicated and nuanced than her critics' readings of the emotion as a tidy, moral means of resolution suggest. Taking up the ethical feeling as an object of inquiry rather than as a way of providing closure, Wilson undercuts the resolving potential of compassion throughout the novel. In doing so, she defines compassion as a difficult and paradoxical emotion; for Wilson, compassion's conditions of possibility are the spontaneous, undetermined present and, unexpectedly, the very autonomous individual whom the emotion seems to overthrow. In contrast with the conventional Christian reading of Wilson's compassion, then, *Swamp Angel* denies a vision of absolute morality and instead focuses on the individual as a source of ethical action in the present. In *Swamp Angel*

[16] See also Desmond Pacey's *Ethel Wilson*; Barbara Wild's "Piety, Propriety, and the Shaping of the Writer"; and Donna E. Smyth's "Strong Women in the Web: Women's Work and Community in Ethel Wilson's Fiction" and "Maggie's Lake: The Vision of Female Power in *Swamp Angel*."

Wilson delivers a vision of what may be called autonomous compassion that emphasizes both Schopenhauer's desire to transcend the ego and Nietzsche's insistence on autonomy. Moreover, Wilson's insistence on the present as a moment of spontaneous ethical action stresses compassion as a persistent negotiation between the individual and the community that diffuses the novel's closure.

Wilson's critics' reluctance to explicate the multiple dimensions of compassion in her novel may be due to a parallel reluctance on the part of many of her early critics to approach Wilson as a philosophical novelist. Worst among these critics is Frank Birbalsingh, who reductively described Wilson as a novelist who "takes her strange and haphazard universe for granted, and nowhere reveals the slightest interest in investigating its philosophical foundations. Thus her books do not probe or analyse the action which they describe" (36). In place of philosophical investigation, Birbalsingh notes Wilson's "whimsicality" (36) and "innocence" (35), which, perhaps without Birbalsingh's intention, suggest a decisive split between writing that is whimsical and innocent and writing that is philosophical and, the comparison implies, serious.[17] In contrast to Birbalsingh, Wilson's best recent critic, David Stouck, describes her fiction as "remarkable for a mannered simplicity which hides both artful invention and philosophical complexities" ("Novels" 74). Stouck argues that the tension between individual and community makes up "the philosophical vision of [Wilson's] novels" (87), but he is hesitant to express just how that "philosophical vision" might be characterized.[18] This vision, as of yet undeveloped in criticism on Wilson, suggests a nuanced image of the conditions of possibility of

[17] Wilson's later critics complicate her "innocence" and "whimsy" and so overcome Birbalsingh's reductive tone. See R.D. MacDonald's "Serious Whimsy" and George Woodcock's "Innocence and Solitude: The Fictions of Ethel Wilson."

[18] Wilson herself gives perhaps the greatest testament to the philosophical potential in her novel. Stouck reports, with amusement, that Wilson told her husband and cousin that "although she does not have a university education and cannot drive a car she nonetheless has a right to her philosophical theories" ("Papers" 50).

compassion and the individualist drive that seems to undermine the emotion.

Just one year after *Swamp Angel* was published, Wilson articulated an original theory of compassion in a talk about her view of Joyce Cary's compassionate prose:

> Mr. Cary's God's eye view of his created beings is lighted by an understanding that informs us all. He does not judge, he does not explain, he does not use comparison as an argument, and compassion (which has nothing to do with sentimentality) is the true compassion which does not imply only 'a bending down towards,' but takes its human (and possibly divine) place as 'a bearing with' or at least 'a feeling with' people. ("Joyce" 78)

Notably, Wilson admires Cary for qualities her critics would later find in her own writing—Pacey commends Wilson's ability as a narrator "to arouse our interest in and compassion for the most apparently unsympathetic of characters" (99). Importantly, Wilson complicates her otherwise conventional definition of compassion in the following passage: "And yet compassion is not only a passive element; it is active, and we find it to be so in our lives. Compassion is sometimes highly complicated by our discovery in human relations that there is a choice to be made, not always between right and wrong, but between what appear to us to be two wrongs, because there is no right. Then it is difficult" ("Joyce" 78). This second quotation better highlights Wilson's philosophical view of compassion. While in the first quotation she points to the possible divine nature of compassion, here she is specifically interested in a model of compassion that does not correlate to a divine intention. "Difficult" compassion is the active attempt to feel with another even when such feeling is not known to be right or good. Thus, while Wilson certainly acknowledges the Christian potential in acts of compassion in her talk, she seems more interested in the difficult position in which one is placed when no "absolute

morality"—Christian or Kantian—may be perceived. Wilson thus suggests that the virtue of compassion lies in the compassionate individual's active choice between two potential "wrongs," a suggestion that aligns her with Nussbaum, who frequently emphasizes that we are often forced to make a difficult ethical choice between two competing "goods."

Wilson's critics have commonly understood her compassionate ideal as an attempt to create meaning in a world perceived to be indifferent: "her world is the uncompromising real world and remains throughout a tangled web shaped largely by chance, but it can be modified by […] compassion and love" (Comeau 38). Brent Thompson also claims Wilson leads "us to see in her an intelligent compassion struggling against the ultimate indifference of things" (31). In this critical view, compassion bridges the "nihilism and belief" that Blanche Gelfant argues "struggle for supremacy in Wilson's fiction" (121). These readings however, focus on compassion as a stable and achievable state and downplay the extreme difficulty of feeling for another in a world of "ultimate indifference." For most of Wilson's critics, compassion redeems the "indifferent" world; it binds suffering individuals together and thus imbues the world with some kind of significance, even if that significance is not fully understood. Thompson, for example, acknowledges Wilson's fictional world as one in which God does not proclaim himself clearly and in which, accordingly, "we must employ other human attributes – the intelligent will and compassion – to complete our participation in the 'everlasting web' of creation. The employment of these is based on faith […] faith, if not in an incomprehensible God, then faith that the intelligent will and compassion will be enough" (Thompson 29). Wilson's emphasis on the compassionate individual's active choice further indicates that the individual, in the absence of a transcendent morality that would clearly dictate the difference between right and wrong, is faced with difficult choices that call upon her to fortify her own ethics. It is in her portrayal of this

challenging process of compassion—which is not always successful and is never guaranteed—rather than in the latently Christian reading of compassion as source of redemption that Wilson reveals her most original and philosophically mature ideas about individualism and community.

Even apparently feminist readings of *Swamp Angel* have endorsed Maggie as compassionate exemplar and, in doing so, uncritically suggested that the emotion is an especially feminine virtue. Donna E. Smyth relates compassion in Wilson's novels to the fulfillment of her female protagonists, who cast off their conventional roles of wife and mother, but still desire to nurture people in their community. Notably, Smyth naturalizes compassion as a feminine and Christian virtue even as she recognizes Wilson's desire to represent female protagonists in search of fulfillment outside the domestic sphere: "When these [traditional domestic] roles are thwarted or put aside, Wilson's women do surprising things. […] These powerful women extend the traditional role of nurturing; they give to each other and to the world not at the expense of the self, as in the conventional wife/mother role, but in the fulfillment of the self in the essential Christian mystery" ("Strong" 95). According to Smyth, Wilson's protagonists, such as Maggie, reinterpret their traditional roles and find the ultimate vision of themselves in a Christian ideal that, while it does not insist upon the sacrificial character of traditionally female roles, reasserts traditional female values. As Smyth reinscribes Maggie's virtue in explicitly feminine terms, she also imagines compassion as a redemptive end rather than a difficult and perpetual process.

In imagining compassion as an end, Wilson's critics reduce it, however unintentionally, to a moral value. Yet Wilson's descriptions of compassion as difficult, active, and unsentimental in her talk, "Joyce Cary," suggest a different approach to the emotion in *Swamp Angel*. Compassion is an ideal emotion, but it is not a value. An ideal suggests something to which we work but may never reach. A value, in contrast, describes an end, something we hold, possess,

and protect. Values belong to the realm of morality—of knowing right and wrong—while ideals belong to individual ethics—of becoming. Like the other novels discussed in this chapter, *Swamp Angel* at times suggests a moral reading, but this reading has over-shadowed the other, ethical one, which better reflects Wilson's philosophical vision of compassion.

As Wilson admires Cary for his compassionate style, so her critics have also admired Wilson's detached and omniscient narrative voice for what they hear as its compassionate tone, especially in *Swamp Angel*;[19] however, Wilson's impersonal narrative voice, which can be as contemptuous as it can be compassionate, complicates the compassionate ideal represented in the plots of her novels. Birbalsingh, for example, praises Wilson's "placid detachment which enables the author to portray less praiseworthy aspects of human nature calmly, without a trace of anger or bitterness" (45). But he also complains that this style signals Wilson's lack of philosophical depth: "Hers is a patient attitude of ample compliance which, while it robs her work of intellectual insight and moral intensity, blesses it with a compassionate view of life" (46). This analysis unfortunately misses the very intellectual insights on which Wilson's compassionate ideal rests.

In contrast to Birbalsingh, W.J. Keith calls Wilson "a profoundly committed moral artist" (*Sense* 59) and adeptly notes the philosophical nature of her omniscient narrative style. Keith insists on "the significant relation between Ethel Wilson's artistic techniques and what may be called, inadequately, her 'philosophy of life'" ("Overview" 105). Moreover, Keith identifies "the freedom to expand and generalize" (106) in Wilson's omniscient narration, which supports her philosophical inclinations because it allows her to comment upon a situation from a perspective unavailable to her characters. For example, Wilson gives her most direct description of the nature

[19] Wilson also considers writing as a compassionate act in "Somewhere Near the Truth," in *Ethel Wilson: Stories, Essays, and Letters*, edited by David Stouck (83).

of compassion in simple, general terms unattached to any one character's perspective: "There is a beautiful action. It has an operative grace. It is when one, seeing some uneasy sleeper cold and without a blanket, bends down, and covers the sleeper because the sleeper is a living being and is cold" (114). Keith draws upon passages like this one to argue that Wilson's "is invariably a providential vision, and her authorial intrusions, so culpable to the advocates of modernism, are justified because they reflect and interpret a worldview that presupposes a larger meaning" (113).

Wilson's god's-eye view, however, rarely manifests in the direct way in which it does in the brief quotation cited above. More characteristic of Wilson's style is the elliptical conclusion of this passage, which relates the description of compassion back to Maggie: "Maggie was compassionate and perhaps she would be able to serve Vera Gunnarsen in this way, forgetting that she did so, and expecting neither praise nor thanks… or perhaps she would not" (*Swamp* 115). The narrator's comments here balance Maggie's confidence and remind the reader of the protagonist's potential to fail. Thus, while Keith rightly argues that Wilson's omniscient narration and authorial intrusions allow her to "expand and generalize" in a philosophical manner, the providential character he finds in the narrator is not one of powerful foreknowledge. Rather, Wilson's intrusions serve as reminders of human fallibility—including the narrator's—and deny her reader a sure understanding of what is to come and its significance.

More than they signal a divine coordinate, Wilson's detached narrative voice and modernist use of multiple points of view embody the difficulty of compassion as the author describes it. Her narrative voice thus also calls upon an ethical response on the part of the reader. Picking up on the occasionally cold character of Wilson's tone, Stouck argues that instead of uniting the multiple perspectives in the novel, Wilson's narrative voice indicates a persistent opposition between the independent narrator and the novel's themes of community: what

"involves and disturbs us as we read Ethel Wilson's fiction is a certain *froideur* in the narrative voice, an implied emotional preference for retreat, evasion, and distance, which is always in tension with the author's vision of unity and her theme of human responsibility" ("Novels" 74).

Notably, Gelfant describes the ethical position of Wilson's narrator and of her reader in terms remarkably similar to those Wilson uses to describe "difficult" compassion as a choice between "what appear to us to be two wrongs, because there is no right":

> 'Perhaps' or 'perhaps not,' 'I think,' 'it was impossible to say,' the omniscient narrator says again and again in Wilson's fiction, implying that even the all-knowing story-teller does not know the truth. Sometimes we as readers have a choice, because the narrator, uncertain of the truth, offers two exclusive possibilities, two adjectives or nouns linked together by *and* though they require *or*. ("Hidden" 138; original emphasis)

Unwilling, if not unable, to provide the "right" moral interpretation for her characters and her readers, Wilson's omniscient narrator emphasizes the difficulty of judgment itself. Wilson's is a compassionate narrative voice, but not in the sense some of her early critics thought it. The detached narrator reminds the reader of the difficulty of interpreting and responding to the world. Thus, despite the modernists' criticisms of Wilson's voice that Keith notes, the narrator of *Swamp Angel* embodies the self-reflexivity that the modernists valued. While Wilson represents her characters sympathetically—refusing to make easy or conclusive judgments of them—she also implicitly calls upon her reader to make the difficult compassionate choice between two "wrongs" in the absence of any determined moral "right." In this way, a strongly modernist and Nietzschean ambiguity of values defines Wilson's difficult compassion.

In context, Wilson's description of the sleeper quoted above provides the most detailed

image of an ideal compassionate act in *Swamp Angel*. The narrator describes this act in general terms—as noted, only the last sentence returns to Maggie's conflict with Vera—and thus sets it up as a universal and ideal definition of compassion:

> There is a beautiful action. It has an operative grace. It is when one, seeing some uneasy sleeper cold and without cover, goes away, finds and fetches a blanket, bends down, and covers the sleeper because the sleeper is a living being and cold. He then returns to his work, forgetting that he has performed this small act of compassion. He will receive neither praise nor thanks. It does not matter who the sleeper be. That is a beautiful action which is divine and human in posture and intention and self-forgetfulness. Maggie was compassionate and perhaps she would be able to serve Vera Gunnarsen in this way, forgetting that she did so, and expecting neither praise nor thanks… or perhaps she would not. (114-15)

Wilson's straightforward prose mimics the simplicity of the compassionate act—"[t]here is a beautiful action"—and her short clauses in the third sentence parallel the compassionate individual's small steps. Like Schopenhauer's ideal compassionate act, Wilson's is spontaneous and performed without the fear of punishment or the promise of reward—"[he] will receive neither praise nor thanks." In fact, Wilson indicates that the virtue of compassion is found in the compassionate person's "self-forgetfulness," which, as Schopenhauer believed to be necessary for compassion, transcends the individual.

That moment of self-forgetfulness also implies a particular temporality for compassion: the undivided present. In Wilson's image compassion has no past and no future; it occurs only in a spontaneous present moment. This temporality is philosophically significant: Wilson's compassion does not allow the backwards-looking resentment that Nietzsche fears pity

encourages. Moreover, like Schopenhauer, Wilson does not promote a future-oriented reward. For these reasons, Wilson's ideal compassion does not belong to a pre-determined set of morals; in other words, Maggie cannot plan her compassion. Maggie is described as compassionate, but Wilson's definition of compassion here bars that description from determining how Maggie will act in the future; "perhaps" Maggie will show Vera compassion or "perhaps not."

The narrator similarly suggests Maggie's potential failure of compassion when she describes Maggie swimming only ten pages later. Maggie thinks of swimming as a metaphor for her relationships with other people and her ability to "swim past obstacles (Vera's sometimes an obstacle)" (*Swamp* 125). Like Wilson's suggestion that compassion occurs in a moment of total presence, swimming allows Maggie to forget "past and future" (126). But, as in the passage describing the sleeper, Maggie's confidence in her ability to swim—to lead an independent life untouched by the people she "swim[s] round" (168)—is undercut by the narrator who states, "She could never sink, she thinks (but she could)" (126). Thinking of herself as a swimmer, Maggie imagines that she will lead a solitary life in which she will serve others but will not be burdened by their pain: "Swimming is like living, it is done alone" (125). Maggie fails to realize, however, that rather than confirm her total independence, swimming, much like compassion, enhances the present and thus brings her into closer relation with the people around her. So, while Maggie's potential to sink both signals a moment in which Maggie herself may need the help of another, it also foreshadows Vera's attempted suicide by drowning which pulls Maggie into an active participation in her antagonist's pain.

Wilson also emphasizes the present in her description of the fly-fishermen who visit the lodge at Three Loon Lake. While the men fish, "[t]here is [to them] no past, no future, only the now" (175). The fishermen compellingly symbolize Wilson's ideal community: they are "bound

closely together by a strong desire to be apart" (174). These three related images—of the sleeper, the swimmer, and the fishermen—together form a vision of the qualities and conditions of compassion in *Swamp Angel*. Compassion occurs in a moment of self-forgetting in the undivided present, which allows no room for resentment or reward. Furthermore, compassion, because it occurs spontaneously in a moment of pure presentness, cannot be planned or predetermined. Maggie's potential to sink—to fail in compassion—is the very condition of her difficult feeling for another. Thus, compassion does not overcome *or* resolve the drive toward an individuated self—the total now of the swimmer and the fishermen suggests both isolated independence and communal relationship—but is only possible in the individual's undivided present.

Wilson reinforces her comments on the difficulty of compassion through two, conflicting maxims in *Swamp Angel*. Maggie's and her friend Nell's credo that "it takes God himself to be fair to two different people at once" (121, 201) implies the individual's desire for autonomy, while Nell's loose quotation of Donne—"No Man is an Island, I am involved in Mankinde" (200)—emphasizes the individual's inevitable participation in a community.[20] Wilson often quoted this line from Donne's *Devotions*, especially when she attempted to "rein her heroines back into the human community of responsibility" (Stouck, "Ethel" 53). Nell invokes Donne to warn Maggie that her intentions to isolate and fortify herself at Three Loon Lake will inevitably draw her into a community for which she is responsible: "We are all in it together. 'No Man is an Island, I am involved in Mankinde,' and we have no immunity and we may as well realize it. You won't be immune ever at that lake Maggie" (200). Despite Nell's resignation to universal social obligation, however, she believes that Maggie unduly suffers at Three Loon Lake and advises her not to "spend [her] life drying off fools who get wet on purpose" (198) under the

[20] In "Ethel Wilson's Characters," Paul Comeau also comments upon the competition between these maxims in relation to compassion (35). Comeau's Christian reading, however, does not further the philosophical understanding of Wilson's representation of difficult individual compassion in *Swamp Angel*.

false assumption that she can acquire independence at the lake, but to return to her more obvious communal obligations in Vancouver.

As much as Nell's invocation of Donne seems to promote the individual's resignation to community and suggest Nell's suppression of her own individual interests, it also serves as a warning to Maggie that she will "always carry [the Gunnarsens'] load" (202). Maggie, like Nell, believes that she will inevitably carry the load of others no matter where she finds herself (200), but she believes such an inevitability to be a reason to stay at Three Loon Lake, rather than an excuse to leave. For this reason, Maggie has earned a reputation in Wilson criticism that idealizes her as a protagonist who fully embraces the sentiment in Donne's quotation and as a "secular saint who fulfills herself through giving herself to others" (Smyth, "Maggie's" 162-3).

The reading of Maggie as a "secular saint," however, emphasizes the communal sentiment of Donne's quotation to the point that it eclipses the equally strong desire for autonomy in the novel, signaled by the repetition of "it takes God himself to be fair to two different people at once." This maxim describes the sacrificial nature of compassion from two different perspectives. First, it implies that any attempt to ease the sufferings of one person will be at the expense of another. This perspective further emphasizes Wilson's concern that compassion requires a choice between two seeming wrongs, or even two seeming rights. Reluctant to further the suffering of anyone, Wilson implies, the compassionate person must nevertheless allow one person to suffer in order to help another. Second, the maxim suggests that one sacrifices *oneself* in attempting to be fair to another. In other words, the compassionate person also chooses between being fair to herself and being fair to another. Thus, this maxim implies a certain level of individual self-interest and could easily function as an alibi for selfish individualism: because I am not God and cannot diminish the suffering of another without

sacrificing myself, I will be fair only to myself. While Donne's quotation promotes an individual's identification with the suffering of another—"I am involved in Mankinde"—Wilson's first aphorism risks excusing self-interest as a human inevitability.

Maggie first aligns herself with the stance that "it takes God himself to be fair to two different people at once" (121) in an attempt to free Vera's son, Alan, from his mother's impatience with his childish games. When Vera asks Maggie where Alan is because she wants him to finish his chores, Maggie, knowing that Alan is playing in the woods, pretends she has not seen the boy. Here, Maggie's on-going conflict with Vera and the fact that the choice does not require Maggie to sacrifice herself make her choice to "be fair" to Alan easy.

Maggie's belief in the necessity of choosing between two people, however, resonates in what might be called an example of "selfish compassion" in the novel: Maggie's decision prior to the beginning of the novel to marry Edward Vardoe in "an act of compassion" (11). *Swamp Angel* begins with Maggie choosing herself over her husband as she plans her escape from her unhappy married life in Vancouver. Importantly, Maggie marries Vardoe at the moment of her own ultimate suffering, after the deaths of her father, first husband, and only child: "Maggie Lloyd, with no one to care for, had tried *to save herself by an act of compassion* and fatal stupidity. She had married Edward Vardoe who had a spaniel's eyes" (11; emphasis added). Ultimately selfish motives incite Maggie's compassionate marriage, for it is primarily a response to her own pain. She believes that caring for another will overcome her own suffering. Wilson, however, presents the marriage as an assault on Maggie's autonomy, and implies that the marriage, not formed out of love, demeans Maggie in its demands of her: "in the night, as had soon happened after their marriage, she lay humiliated and angry" (11). This, the novel's first act of seeming compassion, transforms selfish and ruinous compassion into a destructive pity that

radically unsettles any straightforward Christian readings of Maggie as a "compassionate victor" (Pacey 138).

In fact, we must ask those critics who celebrate Maggie's compassion why her compassion for Vardoe is problematic while her eventual compassion for Vera, who resembles Vardoe in her "dog's adoration" for her husband (65), may be seen as proof that "[t]he one completely unambiguous and unfailing quality of Maggie […] is her compassion" (Pacey 139).[21] Maggie's and Nell's belief that "it takes God himself to be fair to two different people at once" illuminates the essential change in Maggie between her relationship with Vardoe and her compassion for Vera. Maggie's relationship with Vardoe requires that she commit to "be[ing] fair" to *either* herself or her husband, and when she chooses Vardoe, she not only suffers, she loses her autonomy in a humiliating marriage to a man who is uninterested in his wife as an individual. At Three Loon Lake, however, Maggie "can be committed to others without suffering reciprocation, and the emotions whose human objects have gone from her can be exorcised without fears such as Vardoe aroused and the sedentary life in Vancouver sustained – both, at the price of annihilation of the self" (Moss 141). Maggie's departure from Vardoe, as Wilson suggests in the images of birds "returning in migration" (*Swamp* 7) at the beginning of the novel, returns her to herself as Maggie Lloyd, and Maggie's independence at Three Loon Lake helps her to feel for Vera, because her compassion for Vera does not risk her entire sense of self. The challenge of compassion for Wilson, then, is not only that compassion requires the difficult overcoming of the desire to put oneself before others, but that it is impossible without autonomy.

Despite the earlier suggestion that Maggie will "perhaps […] not" offer Vera

[21] Unlike other critics, George Woodcock and David Stouck rightly acknowledge the fallibility of Maggie's compassion. Woodcock claims that "[t]here is something uncanny, even slightly repellent about the serenity with which Maggie makes her plans and acts and deals with people. For cruelty is never far from compassion" (187). Stouck notes that Maggie's "acts of compassion […] paradoxically do as much harm as good" (*Ethel* 200).

compassion, Maggie does help her with the "operative grace" of the compassionate in Wilson's description of the cold sleeper. Maggie's ultimate compassion for Vera, whose jealousy and self-pity earn her little sympathy during most of the novel, occurs when in an extreme act of regret and hopelessness Vera attempts to drown herself. Maggie, preparing to leave Three Loon Lake after a definitive conflict with Vera, hears her antagonist come quietly to her door: "Maggie, hearing the drip and drip of water dropping on the wooden floor of the veranda and looking on Vera's ghostly face, knew with horror that Vera had tried to drown herself and had not been able" (190). Although she cannot cure Vera of the jealous "Evil One" that causes her self-pity, Maggie offers her "helpless compassion" (192) in her moment of real suffering. However helpless, compassion inspires Maggie to spontaneous action, as Wilson describes in the sleeper passage: "[Maggie's] spirit was very sore and sad within her, and still angry, and it seemed to her the least important thing that she should speak and make words, and the most important thing that a fire should burn and warm the cabin and then there would be, somehow, a humanity in the room when the fire was burning" (191). Here, as in the sleeper passage, spontaneous action, inspired by the humanity that the sufferer and the compassionate share, defines compassion.

While Maggie does not totally forget herself in feeling for and helping Vera, her impulse to help another trumps her concern for herself and thus suggests some level of self-forgetfulness. Vera's suffering deflates Maggie's past arguments with her; they are "little things […] nothings, really" (191). In this moment of difficult compassion Maggie balances her self-interest—her own anger and sadness—with her feeling for Vera. Maggie's compassion takes on elements of Schopenhauer's compassionate ideal—she will receive no praise from the thankless Vera for her help—but it does not result in the total self-sacrifice of her initial compassion for Vardoe. Wilson thus suggests that the compassionate individual may maintain her autonomy so long as her

compassionate feeling is only momentary. Here is an alternative vision of the necessity of the present moment for compassion: the compassionate present may not overcome the future, for to do so would compromise the compassionate person's individuality and autonomy. Maggie's compassion for Vardoe fails in part because in their marriage vows Maggie promises to sustain her compassion beyond the spontaneous present, a promise that transforms the emotion into an obligation.

Nell's own belief that "it takes God himself to be fair to two different people at once" (201) connects the maxim with her revolver the Swamp Angel, a symbol of "selfhood and power" (Stouck, *Ethel* 199) in the novel. Nell relates her own difficult choice between juggling her revolver in travelling shows with her husband, Philip, and providing her daughter, Hilda, with a stable and traditional home: "with me, it was Philip or Hilda, Philip or Hilda" (201). While Nell's story suggests that her choice was between her husband and her daughter, her love for her revolver and the independence that it grants her also suggest that she had to choose between a life defined by societal expectations and one that allowed her to define her own roles for herself. The gun's power to dissolve conventional pressures is made clear early in the novel when Nell uses it to scare Vardoe into letting Maggie leave him without a fight (32). For most of Wilson's critics, when Maggie throws the gun in the lake at the end of the novel, she fulfills an image of commitment to community that fully curbs the individualism symbolized in the Angel and signals the victory of Donne's communal impulse over the individual. Thompson's argument represents the usual reading of the novel's end: "the relinquishment of the Angel is an admission of the necessity to limit the individual's wielding of power in the human community" (31).

Yet *Swamp Angel* concludes with more of the uncertainty that marks Wilson's prose and undermines Maggie's confidence throughout the novel: "whether or not Maggie will succeed, we

cannot know. The ending of the novel brings no formal closure" (Stouck, *Ethel* 200). The last pages of the novel, which describe Maggie going out onto the lake and dramatically throwing the gun into it as Nell requested, feature numerous questions, as both Maggie and the narrator are unsure of the significance of Nell's request and what the future will bring: "There were certain things that Maggie could not settle. Would a recovered but enfeebled Vera return to the lake and to the poignant sight of that memorable and melancholy shore? And if she did not return, could Haldar so far bend his own strong will to stay with her in town?" (*Swamp* 208-9). Furthermore, as Maggie contemplates the gun and whether or not she will throw it in the lake, Wilson's prose briefly switches to the simple present—"Maggie handles the Swamp Angel and looks at it curiously and thoughtfully" (208)—and thereby emphasizes the necessity of the spontaneous and uncertain present for ethical action, in this case Maggie's fulfillment of her promise to Nell. Wilson's ending describes Maggie, having kept her promise to Nell, seeing the lodge from the lake: "Now she stopped […] to get her direction" (209). Again, although she is resigned to "appl[y] herself to the matters in hand" (209), Maggie seems to know neither what will come to her next nor how she will respond to it. The last sentence of the novel reinforces her commitment to work and to the lodge, the locus of both her autonomy and community: "Maggie turned again, took the oars, and rowed hard, straight in the direction of the lodge" (209). The first Canadian edition did not include this last sentence (Geng 78), in which Maggie finds her direction and forcefully moves toward it.[22] Rather than indicate that Maggie possesses an assurance that the narration of the novel has in fact persistently signaled as fallible and indeterminate, however, the last sentences of the novel describe Maggie committing to an ethical present in the face of the

[22] In "The Rival Editions of Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel*," Li-Ping Geng describes (among other changes) Wilson's addition of the last seemingly conclusive sentence in the novel and of chapters twelve and forty-four for her American publishers. Although McClelland and Stewart has adopted the American edition in recent publications of the novel, Geng convincingly argues that this version "fail[s] to reflect the author's final intentions" (82) (although he also notes that Wilson was happy with the addition of chapter twelve [65]).

unknowable future, which Wilson's definitive "Now" and Maggie's determination to return to the lodge underscore.

Maggie's undetermined future makes her further acts of compassion possible but not certain. But, as Wilson suggests throughout *Swamp Angel*, the unpredictable nature of compassion is its condition of possibility. In fact, the virtue of compassion develops from the individual's spontaneous choice—between two wrongs, or between action and inaction—and so, like Schopenhauer, Wilson suggests that the compassionate person does not perform a duty (either Christian or Kantian), which would not allow for her free choice and potential failure. Moreover, while Wilson presents the individual as transcending her ego in the spontaneous moment of compassionate action, the author also suggests that compassion can only be temporary, for a state in which one perpetually sacrifices oneself results in the disparaging suppression of the individual, clear in the image of an apparently dutiful but dependent housewife that Maggie refuses at the beginning of the novel. Thus, compassionate feeling does not decisively indicate the victory of social obligation over the drive to individual independence, for Wilson demonstrates how autonomy shapes the possibility of ethical compassion. Maggie's compassion is a difficult ideal, momentarily met but never held; this difficulty, however, with its emphasis on choice, autonomy, and continual process, shapes the ethical virtue of the emotion in *Swamp Angel* and in the novels discussed below.

Aesthetic Compassion in Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley*

Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley* shares with Wilson's *Swamp Angel* a

thematic tension between the individual and the community.[23] Like Maggie, David reveals the difficulty of curbing individualism to a vision of a unified community. Unlike Maggie's, however, even David's best intentions seem to fail, and thus Buckler's novel produces a protagonist unfortunately ensnared by his attuned imagination, which heightens his perception of the feelings of others while it also inexorably prohibits him from authentic participation in his community. In David, Buckler reproduces the tensions and contradictions implicit in Schopenhauer's images of both the genius and the compassionate saint. In doing so, Buckler demonstrates the demands of adopting Schopenhauer's subjective idealism as an ethical model—which both anchors the world in the subject's perception of it and insists upon a universal realm beyond particular subjectivity—and asks whether the artist can be a figure of compassion.[24] While Buckler seems to answer in the affirmative—David imagines art as a compassionate redemption in his last moments and Buckler's own novel portrays its characters compassionately—his critique of subjective idealism reveals two important challenges to Schopenhauer's definition of compassion. As Wilson does, Buckler also suggests that without an adequate sense of autonomy, compassion risks the individual's total loss of self. Moreover, Buckler shows how Schopenhauer's demand for this selflessness may actually produce a

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[23] This tension has preoccupied many of Buckler's critics. See Douglas Barbour's "David Canaan: The Failing Heart"; Bruce F. MacDonald's "Word-Shapes, Time and the Theme of Isolation in *The Mountain and the Valley*"; J.A. Wainwright's "Fern Hill Revisited: Isolation and Death in *The Mountain and the Valley*"; Moss's *Patterns of Isolation*; and Margaret Atwood's discussion of *The Mountain and the Valley* in *Survival* (186-7; 190-1). Rather than focus on the irreconcilable individual-community dichotomy that many of these critics develop, I focus on the novel's understanding of compassion, an emotion that strikingly affirms the individual even as it suggests her feeling with another.

[24] Schopenhauer begins *The World as Will and Representation* with the idealist assertion that "[t]he world is my representation" (23), because "it is only in the case of one's own interiority that one has immediate and direct acquaintance with anything" (Came 238). But, as William Desmond explains, "Schopenhauer's modern idealism is joined with a more Platonic idealism, where philosophy 'has to go back to what is first and original.' This 'going back' will bring us to more than subjectivity, back to something like Platonic Ideas, but more importantly to *will as absolutely original*" (136-7; original emphasis). Schopenhauer believes that the subject desires to escape into will-lessness—possible in aesthetic contemplation, compassion, and ascetic negation—that dissolves his very subjectivity: "Schopenhauer finds value in modes of experience that entail the dissolution of one's own individual subjectivity and hence release from suffering" (Came 238).

character whose compassion appears as a moral failing.

In *Ernest Buckler: Rediscovery and Reassessment*, Marta Dvorak anchors Buckler's creative work in his philosophical interests in Platonism, transcendentalism, and subjective idealism. Concentrating on Buckler's Romantic affiliations and his belief that art has a moral significance, Dvorak claims Buckler's is a "Romantic commitment to transmit a vision of ultimate divine truth, to transport the reader to a dimension beyond prosaic reality through revelation of the good" (9-10). Dvorak thus draws out the similarity between Buckler's aesthetic project and Schopenhauer's philosophy: "The fusion of subject and object, the internal and the external, the individual and the universe, the micro and the macro, the many and the One, had already been proclaimed by Schopenhauer in his major work, *The World as Will and Idea*, published in 1818" (72). Dvorak's foregrounding of Buckler's idealist interest in the moral significance of art also points to the relationship between Schopenhauer's arguments about aesthetics and his thoughts on compassion: "Schopenhauer claimed that we can put an end to servitude, to the cycle of desire and suffering, through Art […] as we can through a certain asceticism" (149-50). Although Dvorak does not fully develop this connection in her study, she nonetheless suggests an approach to Buckler's novel that importantly complicates the apparent critical consensus that David, the perceiver of beauty and would-be artist, is a moral failure.

In fact, the affinity between Buckler's novel and Schopenhauer's philosophy also includes the philosopher's ideas about compassion. Thus, I adopt William Desmond's description of Schopenhauer's aesthetic philosophy as one of "aesthetic compassion" (161) in my analysis of David's compassionate and aesthetic aspirations. In extending Dvorak's interpretation of Buckler's affinity with Schopenhauer to his well-known protagonist and also developing the relationship between aesthetics and compassion in Schopenhauer's philosophy, I

reveal Buckler's novel as critical of the ethical demands that subjective idealism places upon the individual artist, even as it aspires to the universal and compassionate aesthetic feeling that Schopenhauer advocated.

For Schopenhauer, the genius-artist gives up his individuality in order to access a universal vision—in Schopenhauer's terms, he transcends the *principium individuationis*—in creating art and further inspires others to suspend their egos in contemplation of his art.[25] Jerrold Levinson summarizes Schopenhauer's view of the artist in terms that also apply to David:

> First, through an excess of intellect beyond what is required for the practical purposes of daily living, the artist is enabled to perceive the Ideas in things more readily, more widely, and more sustainedly than the ordinary man […] Second, the artist has the ability to embody this apprehension of Ideas in an artwork, a perceivable object in which the Idea has been made more vivid, more striking, more easily discerned than it was in nature, and so capable of triggering in the ordinary perceiver the sort of will-less contemplation that the artist had before nature unassisted. (6)[26]

Levinson's description clarifies the distinction between David and the others in Entremont: David's perception, especially during his epiphany in the final pages, is uniquely attuned to the contemplation of Ideas "unassisted." Importantly, because Schopenhauer views willing as a painful striving inspired by a lack, the artist's ability to provoke will-less contemplation, which results in a momentary suspension of suffering, may be seen as part of his unique form of compassion. As Desmond puts it, the artist "is the aesthetic prefigurement of the universal

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[25] For more on how the artist forsakes his individuality, see Jerrold Levinson's *Contemplating Art*; Bernard Reginster's "Knowledge and Selflessness: Schopenhauer and the Paradox of Reflection"; and William Desmond's *Art, Origins, Otherness: Between Philosophy and Art*.

[26] Levinson quotes *The World as Will and Representation* to clarify the artist's gift: "Whereas to the ordinary man his faculty of knowledge is a lamp that lights his path, to the man of genius it is the sun that reveals the world" (6).

sympathy of the saint" (141).

The language of failure, however, overwhelms critical analyses of Buckler's novel and forcibly reminds Buckler's readers of David's inability to produce an aesthetic creation. For example, Margaret Atwood outlines what she views as David's rich potential and total failure to become a redemptive artist. Atwood describes David's intrinsic promise to unify, speak for, and redeem his community as "a sort of Christ": "David has aspirations as a writer, and his name implies he ought to be both the champion and the incarnation of culture, 'David' suggesting the Biblical giant-killer and king, and 'Canaan,' […] arrival in the Promised Land, the place where locale and people belong to one another" (186). David's success as an artist would "'articulate" the community so it could become "visible to itself," but "the champion fails" (186). Atwood takes David's inability to produce a universal vision that would redeem the seemingly disjointed and unexpressed particulars of life in Entremont as an indication that Buckler believes that "[a] great writer, an artist of any kind, is not imaginable in Entremont" (187). Yet, David is not just "an artist of any kind"; he is an artist committed to a subjective idealism that requires him to sacrifice his particular individuality in order to achieve a vision of universal synthesis. Although David's talents set him apart from his community, it is not Entremont so much as his mode of compassionate and aesthetic understanding that guarantees his collapse.[27]

Moreover, as critics emphasize David's failure as an artist as also a moral failure, they negatively affirm the connection between art and morality. Douglas Barbour, for example, blames David's "willful self-love" (75) for his alienation from others. According to Barbour,

[27] Comparing Buckler's novel with Howard O'Hagan's *Tay John*, Glenn Willmott similarly concludes that both "protagonists […] are characterized by a marked, individual difference with respect to their places of origin, which allows them to mediate between a local-traditional and a larger, modern-world space. Contradictorily, both strive to represent a community of others, as their icon or hero, by means of this individuating and compromising difference. Both fail" (*Unreal* 33). Willmott points to the tragic paradox of David's position: his ability with language, which would allow him to speak for others, crucially prohibits his integration in their community.

David "is too selfish to even look to others for their own sakes: he sees everything in relation to his own selfish needs. Even the pain and loss he feels at Effie's death is self-centred" (71). In contrast to Atwood, who believes that Entremont is at least partly to blame for David's failure, Barbour imagines David's failure as self-inflicted and as the seemingly punitive result of his inability or unwillingness to meet, in Kantian terms, the people of Entremont as ends rather than as means to his own artistic desires. David Williams's comments cut most deeply to the potential ethical stakes of David's aesthetic impotence. Williams describes David as an egoistic Romantic artist, "a moral cannibal of a community for which he still pretends to speak" (170), for whom "there can only be the one old story: the whole world exists simply to wear his face" (172)—an odd conclusion to draw of a protagonist who "seem[s] to have no face of his own" (Buckler 123).

This reading of David's moral failure, however, only superficially engages with the idealist connection between aesthetics and morality that Buckler investigates through David's struggle to be both individual and compassionate. While David may be a failure as an artist—he does not produce a work of art that inspires will-less contemplation, or any real art at all—Buckler nonetheless signals David's profound feeling for others throughout his novel. In fact, it is precisely the demand critics like Barbour and Williams make of David—that his selflessness should be total—that Buckler exposes as a requirement that essentially sacrifices the individual. Although David is certainly not a perfectly moral character, the critical preoccupation with his moral failure not only exaggerates his faults, it obscures Buckler's philosophical interest in both the nature of compassion and the obvious difficulty an individual will have in embodying the idealist definition of the emotion.

Buckler suggests that David's Schopenhauerian "aesthetic compassion"—that is, the feeling, in art, of universal synthesis that overcomes individual suffering—develops during his

childhood. On the day that he is to climb the mountain for the first time, his genius's "secret extra senses" (Buckler 28) acutely active, his relationships with Anna, his twin, and Effie, his friend and childhood love, inspire compassionate and imaginative responses to their individual pain. For instance, when David realizes that Anna also wants to climb the mountain with their brother, Chris, and their father but is not allowed to, David's feelings for her grow: "Suddenly, because she couldn't go, because she didn't know she looked as if she were almost crying, David loved her fiercer than he'd ever loved anything before" (26). Feeling both guilt and love at the thought of Anna's exclusion from his trip, David compassionately answers her pain by telling her to "get Grandmother to tell you a brand new story" (26). Here, David's promise importantly implies his belief that storytelling relieves suffering.[28]

Buckler further suggests David's Schopenhauerian model of compassion in his reaction to Effie's father's death. David's trip up the mountain is aborted when the Canaan men hear that two men from Entremont—Effie's and Charlotte's fathers—have died on the mountain, and thus David must return to the valley with the bodies and the mourning men. David's feelings of guilt— "to be without suffering himself, to have his own father so wonderfully safe beside him" (41)—communicate the emotional distance compassion must cover in order to unite suffering and compassionate individuals. As is the case when he finally reaches the top of the mountain in the epilogue, David responds to the pain he imagines on Effie's face—"[he] could think only of [her] face – she loved her father" (41)—which inspires his guilt and his desire to feel the force of her pain with the immediacy with which she feels it. David's reaction underlines the exacting difficulty of Schopenhauerian compassion, which asserts that the compassionate person feels the

[28] Buckler's critics have often pitted Ellen, David's grandmother, "as a storyteller" and David "as a (would-be) novelist" (Ross 59) against one another. Stephen Ross, for example, argues: "Ellen bears the ideological burden of the premodern, characterized chiefly by authentic artisanal production. Conversely, David bears the ideological burden of modernity, characterized by his inability to reconcile the tensions intrinsic to the oxymoron 'exact representation' and his quest for currency in the global marketplace" (59).

pain of the sufferer as "as my own, not indeed *in myself*, but *in him*" (*Basis* 103; original emphasis). Although David's reaction to Effie's father's death suggests that his compassion will not in fact equal her pain, it nonetheless negatively reveals his acceptance of Schopenhauer's definition: David's failure to feel the intensity of Effie's pain inspires his feelings of guilt.

It is this intense desire to feel the totality of another's pain and his failure to do so that paradoxically and habitually inspires David to reaffirm his own exceptional individuality. Failing in his ability to experience Effie's pain, David imagines his way out of suffering altogether: "Suddenly David wasn't with them at all. […] And suddenly, like waking from a muddled dream, he knew exactly what he was going to be. He was going to be the greatest general in the whole world" (41).[29] Notably, Buckler's repetition of "suddenly" here connects David's imaginative retreat from Effie's suffering to his compassion for his sister the same morning when, confronted by her pain, he "[s]uddenly" loved Anna more than ever. The unpredictable nature of David's reactions also connects them to the spontaneity Wilson emphasizes in her definition of compassion and, importantly, underlines both of David's impulses—to fellow feeling and to solipsistic self-assertion—as motivated by emotion rather than duty. Furthermore, as selfish as David's habit of replacing his guilt with a fantasy of his future triumph may be, it also points to the profound demands of compassion; unable to transcend his individuality fully in compassionate feeling, David nonetheless feels the pressure to overcome his individuality in feeling with another. He thus overcompensates for his perceived guilt and saves himself from the pressure of self-sacrifice by rejecting it altogether in his reassertion of himself as the centre of the world.

In ironic contrast to David's individual struggle, Buckler presents a compassionate ideal

[29] In a perverse intensification of this tendency, David later fully takes on the guilt of Effie's death: "[he] martyrs himself to her memory and quickly inoculates himself against any sincere sadness by over-immersing in his guilt and thereby dissolving it" (Purdham, "Hunger" 319).

of solidarity in suffering in the reactions of the people of Entremont to the men's deaths. The deaths on the mountain bring the community in the valley together: "the village seemed to fuse. Women found in other women, just to see them coming up the path to talk over this terrible thing, a glow as of reconciliation. Men who had been bad friends for years sidled next to each other in the groups and took up each other's remarks, warming at the sound of their own voices" (42). Entremont becomes a community of mutual support that (at least momentarily) heals itself through compassion. As the community "fuse[s]" in its pain, David also momentarily unites with Effie in hers: "And they knew then what it was like for two people to cry together. The breeze of sadness blew outward now, not inward. Even children can never cry together equally: there is a sort of selfishness in the one whose hurt is the more immediate, a sort of desperation in the one who cannot share equally the burden of that immediacy. But they were crying together" (46). In what might be David's most successful moment of compassion—notably one that is not mediated by an aesthetic or imaginative impulse—Buckler again emphasizes the difficulty of truly feeling *with* another person. He suggests that "crying together" moves sadness outward so that the burden can be shared. But this process is difficult for both individuals, because, as David suspects when he first hears of the tragedy, the relationship between the sufferer and the compassionate person is always unequal. Yet, in plain language, which recalls Wilson's definition of compassion and suggests its "mysterious" character that Schopenhauer acknowledges (*Basis* 103), Buckler simply describes David and Effie "crying together."

Importantly, David's relationship with Effie is also one of aesthetic understanding, and Effie, unlike the others in Entremont, believes she understands David in the way he understands her. For example, unlike his pity for the members of his family, David's "bond with [Effie] wasn't of pity: he knew she had the thought of her silk dress in the same way" (56). Notably,

Effie feels similarly when she looks at her Christmas tree with David: "She stood looking at it *with* him; as if, if it *shouldn't* be beautiful there would be no hurt in accepting that judgement from him now. As if, if you both knew what beautiful *was*, it wouldn't matter what anything of yours looked like to the other" (70; original emphasis). In this example of his free indirect style Buckler subtly suggests that a mutual understanding of beauty, an aesthetic judgement, inspires and strengthens the bond of compassion between David and Effie. Furthermore, like Schopenhauer, Buckler implies that aesthetic contemplation can free people from their individual differences: David and Effie look at the tree "*with*" one another just as they cried together after Effie's father's death.[30]

Despite his connection to Effie, however, David oscillates between appreciating her because she sees things as he does and exploiting their unique bond for his own ends, and so David's compassion for Effie has its opposite in his sexual expectations of her. David's aesthetic closeness to Effie mixes with his sexual desires that objectify her, tellingly, in sexual dramas that David plans in advance. For example, as an adolescent David imagines "wittily" seducing Effie:

> They'd be walking up the mountain and he'd say, "Are you hot?" She'd say, "Anybody'd be hot today." He'd say "I'm not. I'm frozen stiff." "Dave," she'd say, laughing, "you're foolish." "All right," he'd say (giving her a teasing, devilish, enigmatic smile), "wantta bet?" "What'll I bet?" she'd say. "That new skirt?" he'd say (with another smile). "I guess," she'd say. And then he'd show her where he was frozen. (101)

[30] Potentially, Effie does not fear David's judgement because, according to Kant, beauty is a judgement that is universally true. Thus, if both David and Effie have taste (that is, know what beautiful is), their judgements will be united. For Kant, "We must begin by fully convincing ourselves that in making a judgment of taste (about the beautiful) we require [*ansinnen*] *everyone* to like the object, yet without this liking's being based on a concept (since then it would be the good) […] in a judgment of taste about beauty we always require others to agree" (*Critique* 57). Kant explains how taste can be both subjective and universal in his discussion of the antinomy of taste in the *Critique of Judgment* (209-17).

Notably, however, David cannot follow his plan to seduce Effie when he feels an aesthetic connection to her: "They always felt an instant closeness when both saw the same likeness of something else in what to others was never more than just the thing it was. David couldn't go back to the 'frozen' business now" (107). But, in treating Effie like a sexual conquest anyway, David demeans the aesthetic understanding between them, making her an object that may be manipulated to prove his own agency rather than approaching her as her own agent. David thus feels shame after each of his sexual encounters with Effie, most notably after her death, which he wrongly believes to have been caused by his insistence that Effie have sex with him while she has a cold. As if punishing David for his misuse of Effie, Buckler allows his protagonist to suffer the guilt of believing that his selfish desires caused his friend's death and thus never reveals her leukemia to David: "David's sense of guilt about Effie's cold and the wet grass was mistaken. The big word the doctor had used, the one Bess couldn't remember, was 'leukemia.' But David never knew that" (152). Buckler's reluctance to pardon David for his part in Effie's suffering underscores his critical distance from and ethical judgement of his protagonist. That is not to say, however, that Buckler flatly characterizes David as a moral failure, as many of his critics have argued. Rather, Buckler's distance from David allows him to explore the complexity of his protagonist's compassion, which is philosophically interesting precisely because it is imperfect. Moreover, David's relationship with Effie captures his fateful movement between complete selflessness in the communion with another and utter selfishness in his forceful pursuit of his individual desires.

Through his self-proclaimed capacity for genius, David attunes himself to the feelings of others in a way that either isolates him from his community or results in his sacrifice of his own individuality when he successfully feels with them. This ability requires a certain level of

empathy, if not always compassion, because for Schopenhauer the genius, "[t]hrough his surplus of contemplative intellect, […] *sees* the will in the form of its *universality*, prior to the subject-object split" (Desmond 141; original emphasis). In other words, the genius, like the saint, can recognize in one person the suffering of all people. While Buckler's free indirect style in the following passage reveals David's understanding of himself as a Schopenhauerian genius, it also ironically opens David's self-aggrandizing claims to criticism.

> Part of his loneliness had always been that he could tell the coin from the replica. Just as part of it now was that even in his isolation he was not islanded from the true spirit of the changing times. It was as if a kind of extra sense kept him parallel with it, without dependence upon participation. He had been born with a condition for universality within him. In whatever place or at whatever time or with whatever person he found himself, his first response was not adaption [*sic*] but recognition. He could be old with the old, or young with the young. (229)

Despite David's confidence in his perception of "the true spirit of the changing times," his "extra sense"—a "condition for universality" that implies a Schopenhauerian model of genius—ironically isolates David from his contemporary world and guarantees his "loneliness." Instead of adapting to "the changing times," David's belief that he alone recognizes the unchanging universal paralyzes him. David's loneliness thus suggests Buckler's criticism of Schopenhauer and of genius as a compassionate ideal, for David's apparent capacity for genius regularly removes him from the life in which he may develop meaningful relationships with other people. Moreover, David's efforts to use his genius to overcome his loneliness inevitably result in a kind of self-sacrifice, because his universal intuitions depend upon his negation of his particular individuality. This threat to David's individual self can be clearly seen in his conversations with

others, when "David's mind deliberately suspend[s] its own nature" (283), as it does when David speaks with his neighbour Steve.

Buckler further reveals the troubling ethical tension between David's desire to be an individual and his claimed gift of selfless universality: his empathetic understanding only makes his moments of self-affirmation cruel to himself and those around him. David's conflict with his father, Joseph, briefly mentioned in Chapter Two, demonstrates his self-sacrificial position and the difficulty he thus has in asserting his autonomy. Joseph, warmed by his work in the fields with David, thinks of his son as the voice that compassionately unites the family: "This is the smart one. I love them all alike, but this is the one I'm proudest of. But he's not ashamed of me. He's not just smart for himself, he's smart for all of us. He's not above us. It doesn't take him away" (156). Buckler's subtle irony proves Joseph wrong when, in the moments that follow, David shows that he can powerfully use his words as a demonstration of his strength over his father, whose "feelings weren't word-shaped, like David's" (156). Joseph's description, however, highlights David's position in the community as one that perpetually calls for him to stay and "be smart" for everyone, which in turn requires that David abandon his individual desires and serve his community, an obligation he feels throughout his life. David's outburst, during which he uses words "against" Joseph (165), is a moment of failed compassion, because David, attempting to express rather than "cripple" (163) his thoughts, speaks for himself only and not in feeling with Joseph.

Crucially, David cannot be compassionate at this moment precisely because in order to be so he would have to become something other than himself. While Joseph sees David as "smart for all of us," David feels he must "cripple every damn thought [he] had, so they wouldn't look at [him] funny" (163). David thus views the necessary self-loss of the compassionate genius as

debilitating rather than liberating. According to Wainwright's exaggeration of the scene, "the essentially solipsistic and destructive nature of David's talents is revealed here as never before. Joseph, for all his limitations, sees into his son's heart of darkness as David does not see into his father's peaceful inner world" (79). While David's heart is hardly that of Kurtz, his "extra sense" does fail in this interaction, perhaps because the obligation to use it only in the service of others has exhausted it. As in his degradation of Effie, David ultimately suffers for his selfish unconcern for others. Following his argument with his father, David attempts to escape to the city where he imagines his individuality and talent will flourish, but his guilt over his outburst and his allegiance to his family prevent him from getting very far. On the bridge after he has decided to return home, David "began to sob. He sobbed because he could neither leave nor stay. He sobbed because he was neither one thing nor the other" (Buckler 171). David's place on the bridge is also a metaphor for his relationship with his community and the crisis of his subjectivity. Pulled between two unsustainable states, David either loses himself completely in his relationships with others or he disastrously affirms his desires without pausing to think of his community.

Buckler's subtle but fundamental criticism of Schopenhauer's idealism is clearest in his epilogue. *The Mountain and the Valley* culminates in David's self-loss—not unlike but more costly than Schopenhauer's idealized "dissolution of […] individual subjectivity" (Came 238)—when he experiences a total and unsustainable epiphany; he dies moments later on the mountain, the symbolic locus of his desire throughout his short life. Buckler's annihilation of his protagonist in the moment of his fulfillment is also the summit of the author's irony and a forcible indication of his critical distance from his unfortunate protagonist's subjective idealism, for at stake in David's complete "translation" in the scene (Buckler 299) is nothing less than his

Schopenhauerian transcendence of the *principium individuationis*, his individualized self in time and space. David's final clarity is enviable, and one after which Dvorak suggests Buckler himself strove (69). But, as the tragic culmination of a life that "brimmed and emptied so soon" (Buckler 275), David's idealism also demands his total self-loss, which Buckler affectively dramatizes through David's death.

The pressure of David's "translation" reiterates the ethical demand that inspires his idealism: "He must *be* a tree and a stone and a shadow and a crystal of snow and a thread of moss and the veining of a leaf. He must be exactly as each of them was, everywhere and in all times; or the guilt, the exquisite parching for the taste of completion, would never be allayed at all" (292; original emphasis). Here Buckler suggests that only David's complete loss of individuality through his idealist apprehension of the universal truth of things can relieve his guilt, which earlier in the novel Buckler relates to David's failures in compassion. This pressure for complete translation forcefully parallels aesthetic compassion, in which "the subject, to the extent that one can still speak of a subject, becomes a clear mirror of the object" (Came 241); in doing so, it further connects David's aesthetic desires to his compassionate feeling.

As David sets out to climb the mountain, his "translation" begins with painful self-consciousness that is followed swiftly by its reversal:

> Even the sensations of his own flesh had become outside. The inside was nothing but one great white naked eye of self-consciousness, with only its own looking to look at. […] And then (in the reverse of what happens when you stare at a pattern of lines until suddenly the pattern moves off the page and cleaves to your retina), as he looked at the frozen landscape it was as if the outline of the frozen landscape *became* his consciousness: that inside and outside were not two things,

> but one – the bare shape of what his eyes saw. (281; original emphasis)

In this second moment, David becomes what he perceives in the way Schopenhauer describes the genius transformed by aesthetic contemplation:

> we *lose* ourselves in this object completely, i.e. we forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist only as pure subject, the clear mirror of the object, so that it is as if the object existed on its own, without anyone to perceive it, and we can no longer separate the intuited from the intuition as the two have become one, and the whole of consciousness is completely filled and engrossed by a single intuitive image […] this is precisely how someone gripped by this intuition is at the same time no longer an individual […] he is the *pure*, will-less, painless, timeless *subject of cognition*. (*World* 201; original emphasis)

While Schopenhauer endorses this will-less state as an escape from pain, Buckler notably emphasizes both the *pain* and the *process* of such an aesthetic transformation. David's first moment of "translation" delivers the opposite of Schopenhauer's will-less ideal; David, transformed into "nothing but one great white naked eye of self-consciousness, with only its own looking to look at," seems entrapped in a moment of relentless and painful willing.

Furthermore, David's first moment of apparent will-lessness—when the landscape "becomes" his consciousness and his mind takes on "a new stillness" (285)—quickly transforms into his heightened awareness of his own individual guilt as he recalls his relationships with the people in the valley below: "It was as if you'd been given eyes for the first time; your first sight was met by the teeming insatiable hunger to be seen, of everything there was. The swarming multitude of the voices it was physically impossible to attend to gave him a sense of exquisite guilt" (291). Here, again, Buckler underscores the severity of Schopenhauer's compassion:

David's compassionate sensitivity attunes him both to the "swarming multitude" to whose pain he must attend and to his individual inadequacy to overcome their suffering.

Thus, as David climbs, his experience of his epiphany is overwhelmingly that of accusation and guilt, as the world demands that David represent its "single core of meaning" (298), and David, overwhelmed by the multitude of objects and voices, cannot. To begin, David is "absolutely alone" (286) in his ascent up the mountain, but soon he imagines that he is joined by the objects in his transformed vision and a multitude of memories of the people of Entremont he has known. David feels "the exquisite parching for the taste of completion" (292) in his inability to capture everything as it was or might have been for all time. In particular, the insistence of the faces David imagines hastens his crisis: "And now the fact of exactly the way that *faces* happened to be – exactly that way because of exactly all the *feelings* behind them – added its cry to the voices of objects about him. It was a more exquisite accusing still" (292-3; original emphasis).[31] David feels he must respond to "exactly how each one was" (293);[32] in doing so, though, he must pass the superficial face and also understand the feelings behind it, a process that requires the comprehensive fellow feeling in Schopenhauer's definition of compassion.

Eventually, David's peaceful "translation" comes, and with it the accusations of the remembered faces subside; David's confidence in his ability to understand and tell the story of his community—"He saw at last how you could *become* the thing you told" (298; original emphasis) and thus the "clear mirror of the object"—frees him from his "exquisite guilt." David

[31] Notably, David's perception animates the inanimate landscape and personifies its accusations by imagining that it has a voice (292). To grant the landscape a voice that requires a response, as David does, also suggests that the human voice evokes an ethical response from the people who hear it. So, while David's personification of the landscape raises his responsibility to its objects, it also emphasizes the ethical relationship between humans.
[32] D.O. Spettigue first noted the way in which Buckler uses phrases like "the way it was" and "how [it] was" to attempt to convey "the most transcendent experience of unity in the fleeting moment" (99).

therefore imagines his own aesthetic compassion in his belief in his ability to "put [his revelation] down and they will see that I know" (298), to express the faces and feelings of his community. In doing so, he transforms his former guilt into a power to absolve and positions himself as an artist in the role of a redemptive creator:

> Even my mother and my father and all the others who are gone will know somehow, somewhere, that I have given an absolving voice to all the hurts they gave themselves or each other – hurts that were caused only by the misreading of what they couldn't express. They will see that anyone who must have loved them so well, to have known them so thoroughly, could never have denied them once, as sometimes they may have thought I did… (300)[33]

Crucially, David's claim here of a compassionate ability to understand the feelings of his people and to "express" what they cannot relies on his sacrifice of himself to "*become* the thing you told." He attempts to be both a Christ-like martyr who sacrifices himself for his people and a God-like creator capable of absolution and redemption. Although these Christian terms are far from Schopenhauer's, they describe the paradox in his (and David's) notion of the artist-genius.

For Schopenhauer, the compassionate person, like the artist, transcends the *principium individuationis*. Christopher Janaway explains that compassion, like aesthetic experience, does "not accept the natural standpoint of individuality as the one from which I must always regard things" (102). In Schopenhauer's view, "the individual's renunciation of his or her individuality […] makes aesthetic value and moral worth possible" (Janaway 102), because the selfless human "who recognizes […] his innermost and true self in all beings, must also regard the endless

[33] While this passage might appear to confirm David's egoism (as Williams has argued [159])—in that he cannot imagine a relationship with the people of Entremont that does not also imagine his superiority to them, here as a godlike creator capable of forgiving them—David's intentions are clearly apologetic. He wants very much to make up for the times that his intelligence made it seem as though he did not have compassion for his family. He also wants to help them, to ease their pain.

suffering of all living things as his own, and take upon himself the pain of the whole world" (Schopenhauer, *World* 405). Similarly, in *The Basis of Morality*, Schopenhauer claims that in compassionate feeling "the difference between myself and him is no longer […] absolute" (85). David's epiphany inspires compassionate feeling that counters the critical assumption that he is merely a moral failure. In fact, David's feeling of synthesis is the very condition of ethics for Schopenhauer. Furthermore, this feeling inspires David to resolve not only to express his compassion through art, but also to demonstrate it when he returns from his climb: "I will ask if she [Ellen] is warm enough"; "I'll go over and help Steve" (299); "I will ask Chris to come live with us" (300). Paradoxically, then, when David is "absolutely alone," the difference between him and the people of Entremont is "no longer […] absolute."

There is, however, a temporal difference between the artist's and the altruist's negation of the will for Schopenhauer. While the compassionate person is only one step from the ascetic's perpetual negation of the will, the artist's escape from the will is only momentary. According to Bernard Reginster, ascetic resignation is "little more than a more permanent form of the condition achieved in aesthetic contemplation" (103).[34] Although David's epiphany seems to grant him a universal vision that might suspend his will, it does not inspire a total ascetic resignation of his desires because "[c]omplete resignation […] requires not only that I renounce pursuing a desire, but also that I become indifferent to whether or not it is satisfied, and this amounts to renouncing the *desire* itself" (105; original emphasis). As Buckler's critics have duly noted, David's selfless peace is only temporary: after imagining the power of his art to absolve, David "slip[s] as usual into the old romantic egoism, dreaming that his 'book won the prize,' just

[34] Thomas Luetkemeier further explains the difference between ascetic and aesthetic temporality: "In the moment of aesthetic contemplation, the subject has turned into the pure subject of knowledge, which is eternal in the sense that it is free of the form of time altogether, just like the Ideas, which are the objects of this form of perception […] Compassionate behaviour, on the other hand, is of 'eternal relevance' because 'the force of sympathy and compassion breaks up the boundaries of individuality, and thus of time'" (129, note 270).

before he feels 'the beating of his heart' and collapses in the snow" (Williams 159). Yet David's "slip" into egoism suggests only that his freedom from his desires is temporary rather than constant. As has consistently been the case, David again oscillates between the total selflessness of the compassionate saint and the necessarily individualist character of his unique subjectivity. Perhaps here lies the catalyst of David's own suffering and the cause of Buckler's critics' misreadings of him as a moral failure: David is a genius, not a saint.

According to Schopenhauer, in moments of genius, the artist is selfless: he stands outside the temporal, spatial, and causal relations that define his individuality. This transcendence, however, is essentially paradoxical, because the artist's very genius also defines his unique subjectivity— "[t]riumphant subjectivity meets its defeat in its very triumph" (Desmond 137). This paradox also describes David's impossible position in relation to the people of Entremont: the very qualities that might allow him to represent his community bar him from participating in it in any authentic or consistent way. David thus appears both selfish and selfless, a demanding romantic egoist in conflict with a boy who "seem[s] to have no face of his own" (Buckler 123).[35] The demand for a sustained, if impermanent, state of selflessness in David's aesthetic project recalls Maggie's belief that "it takes God himself to be fair to two different people at once," but with a twist. Only in the God-like position of the artist—which paradoxically eliminates the difference between individuals— can David imagine himself as being fair to himself and others. Buckler's decision to bring David to his aesthetic and compassionate peak at a moment when he is "absolutely alone" further signals the author's doubt that a moral philosophy premised on the complete negation of the self could truly unite an individual with his community. David's "translation" requires his isolation even as it promises his communion with the world, and with

[35] Medrie Purdham similarly claims that David's "bid for visibility […] produces a 'crisis of the subject' in which the protagonist's desperation to assert himself makes him 'selfish' without ever being self-possessed" (306).

this necessary isolation Buckler ironically criticizes the redeeming potential of David's idealistic desires; David's selflessness becomes permanent when he dies only moments after his hopeful revelation.

Through the demands and desires of David's own idealism, then, Buckler demonstrates both the severe expectations of subjective idealism and its apparent contradiction: if true compassionate feeling means that individuals transcend their subjectivities, the condition of David's realization of compassion negates its necessity altogether. Therefore, it is not so much that David is a "moral failure," but that his rigorous ethical and aesthetic model means that his success can only occur through his subjective dissolution. Furthermore, this model seems to require a choice, as it does for David throughout his life: he can either be a unique individual or transcend his individuality in feeling with another, with Effie, with his father, with the community of Entremont. Thus, while Buckler brings David to his subjective apotheosis through his epiphany, he also reinforces the tension between the individual and total compassion, and demonstrates how subjective idealism, as Nietzsche famously argued, removes the individual from life. Attention to Buckler's philosophical debate with Schopenhauer in *The Mountain and the Valley* thus reveals the way in which the novel negatively participates in a modernist theory of compassion that, as we saw in *Swamp Angel*, works to reconcile an individual's autonomy with his feelings of emotional unity with others.

Sheila Watson's Compassionate Hook

Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* dramatizes a communal rather than personal ethics of compassion. In contrast to the other novels of this chapter, and as Glenn Willmott argues, Watson's avant-garde novel "represents an empathy that transcends the experience of a central

character or subjectivity" (*Unreal* 53). While the multiplicity of narrative perspectives in *The Double Hook* indeed diffuses any isolated and individual understanding of its events, the fragmented narrative structure also underlines the seeming absence of compassion in the community. *The Double Hook* progresses from a community paradoxically defined by isolation, introduced by James Potter murdering his meddling and oppressive mother, to one in which its members may hopefully imagine the compassionate care of one another, suggested by the birth of James's child, discussed in Chapter One. The optimism of this ending, however, depends on forgetting the violence and apathy that lead to it. Thus Watson's novel "highlight[s], on the one hand, the desire to escape the self and know the other and, on the other hand, the impossibility of ever fully realizing this desire" (Goldman, "Ethics" 205). Like the other novelists in this chapter, then, Watson imagines compassion as a difficult ideal. She powerfully underscores this difficulty and its potential to curb radical individualism through two images of compassion: the compassionate promise of James's renewed bond to his community and the more Schopenhauerian vision of aesthetic compassion in the figure of Felix. Both James and Felix only reluctantly accept their compassionate positions, and so Watson reinforces a modernist theory of compassion as a spontaneous but unsustainable state of feeling for another.[36]

Like Buckler, Watson meditates on art's compassionate potential. The discussion of compassion in this chapter thus deepens the ethical investments in Watson's description of her novel in "What I'm Going to Do," discussed at length in Chapter One. Watson's theory of art as a "mediating ritual" resonates negatively with Schopenhauer's vision of aesthetic contemplation as a way of momentarily transcending the pain of living. Watson claimed she was motivated by

[36] While the women of the novel also undergo compassionate development Watson most forcefully portrays compassion and its challenge to individualism through James and Felix. For sustained analyses of Watson's female characters see Chapter One of this dissertation, as well as Angela Bowering's *Figures Cut in Sacred Ground: Illuminati in* The Double Hook and Constance Rooke's "Women of *The Double Hook*."

an interest in "how people are driven, how if they have no art, how if they have no tradition, how if they have no ritual, they are driven in one of two ways, either towards violence or towards insensibility – if they have no mediating rituals which manifest themselves in what I suppose we call art forms" (15).[37] It bears repeating in this context that Schopenhauer believed that the artist helped others develop self-less feeling (Levinson 6). Watson shares Schopenhauer's belief that art inspires people to transcend their individuality and unite in fellow feeling; her own art, however, ironically embodies aesthetic compassion by dramatizing not the unity of aesthetic contemplation but the isolating effects of its absence.

Watson's critics have similarly characterized her view of art as empathetic, if not also compassionate. For example, Constance Rooke argues that "the middle ground is also the realm of art […] But first of all it is *life*, defined most crucially in terms of our response to our co-inhabitants, our need to avoid both destruction [or vindictive rage] and solipsistic denial. Art helps us to do this because it teaches empathy" ("Women" 83). Sherrill Grace also views Watson's project as one of empathy, and although Grace does not make Watson's similarity to Schopenhauer explicit, she does describe Watson's vision of the artist in terms markedly familiar to the reader of the German Idealist: "The artist, like priest or shaman, mediates between the human community and the elemental, spiritual, or possibly cosmic forces impinging on it by expressing, while shaping and transforming, that energy" (*Regression* 193).[38] As artist-mediator, Watson occupies a latently Schopenhauerian and compassionate position for Rooke and Grace. As author of *The Double Hook*, Watson demonstrates the power of art to create a community;

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[37] Like Watson's first novel, *Deep Hollow Creek* (written in the 1930s but not published until 1992), *The Double Hook* was inspired by the author's time as a schoolteacher in Dog Creek, British Columbia in the 1930s. Watson's time there and her feelings of isolation and alienation have been well documented. See, for example, F.T. Flahiff's "Afterword" to the New Canadian Library edition of the novel (119-30).

[38] Grace also suggests Watson's affinity with Schopenhauer in the first chapter of *Regression and Apocalypse,* where she notes Schopenhauer as one of the "philosophical roots" of Expressionism (17), a literary style in which she claims Watson participates.

moreover, she represents this power in Felix's growing aesthetic compassion in her novel. Thus, if there is a "philosophic position underlying the story" of *The Double Hook*, as Margot Northey claims, it is as much Schopenhauer's as it is the Christian theology that Northey favours (55).

The Double Hook begins with a community perversely unified by the forces that both deny compassion and point to the isolated individualism of its people. The first poetic lines of the novel simultaneously suggest a transcendent order to the community "under Coyote's eye" (11) and an overwhelming separation between the houses and the people that inhabit them:

> In the folds of the hills
> under Coyote's eye
> lived
> the old lady, mother of William
> of James and of Greta
>
> lived James and Greta
> lived William and Ara his wife
> lived the Widow Wagner
> the Widow's girl Lenchen
> the Widow's boy
> lived Felix Prosper and Angel
> lived Theophil
> and Kip
> until one morning in July (11)

While Watson's anaphora emphasizes the isolation at the core of the community, the last line

catalyzes the action of the novel and suggests its potentially redemptive plot. The "until" in this last line signals a change that might overcome the isolating character of the lines that precede it; combined with the past participle "lived," however, "until" might also point to the complete destruction of the small community. In fact, the first lines of prose confirm this destructive potential, as Watson begins her novel with James's murder of his mother: "The old lady falling. […] Into the shadow of death. Pushed by James's will. By James's hand. By James's words: This is *my* day. You'll not fish today" (11; emphasis added). With "James's words" included as part of the force that kills his mother, Watson emphasizes the possessive competition between individuals that disrupts compassionate feeling with its violent opposite. James's words imply that *his* day cannot be shared and that, if he wants to have a day at all, he must first eliminate the forces, like Mrs. Potter and Coyote, who might take over that day and possess it for themselves.

In contrast with this first scene, the birth of James's son at the end of the novel appears to unify the community with at least the potential for renewal and forgiveness. Much like Wilson's critics in their reaction to the ending of *Swamp Angel*, Watson's have often read the last part of *The Double Hook* as a vision of James's redemption of the community, and, as Northey strongly puts it, as the "final optimism" (61) of the novel. For example, in his "Introduction to *The Double Hook*," John Grube states that when James returns from town, he "comes offering a tenderness and compassion whose potency can regenerate the world" (82).[39] These readings, however, exaggerate both the solitariness of James's position as the saviour of the community and the extent to which Watson presents him as definitively changed. Rather than provide a

[39] Similarly, D.G. Jones excuses James's violent actions as necessary for his "courage" to usher in a "new order" (45). Incredibly, Jones argues that James's actions unite the community *and* make it more fair: "The only hope that the new order will be more just lies in the promise of greater fulfillment for [James] and the others. […] Despite the violence of [James's] actions, his faith seems justified by the over-all transformation that occurs in the life of the community" (45). Margaret Morriss also argues that James is "the catalytic figure who instigates the pattern of renewal," who "achieves perception in his individual participation in the collective experience" ("Elements" 92).

conclusive vision of communal redemption, Watson's existential meditation delivers an ethically ambiguous text that challenges its readers with the question: can one move from murder to compassion? As Watson's comments in "What I'm Going to Do" suggest, art provides one potential bridge from violence to fellow feeling.

Watson's more recent critics, particularly her feminist critics, have challenged the reading of a "final optimism" or indeed any sense of finality in *The Double Hook*. Rooke, for instance, reminds readers that "this is still the valley of *The Double Hook*, in which the hook of community is opposed by reminders of our solitude" (91). Marlene Goldman also rightly argues, "[in] contrast to critics who concentrate on the formation of the 'civilized' community," that "Watson maintains a double focus on the community and the individuals that it cannot access and accommodate" ("Ethics" 195). Goldman commends the novel's ethical ambiguity, which avoids appropriating the other into a normative moral project: "Rather than try to render the other 'accessible,' Watson chose to remain haunted by the agonistic, intercultural relations in Canada […] In doing so, she left her readers the ethical project of negotiating the legacy of this haunting" (207).[40] While Goldman emphasizes Watson's ethical approach to the representation of First Nations people in *The Double Hook*, her understanding of Watson's project as one of persistent negotiation in which the reader is involved also applies to the broader tension between individualist desire and compassionate feeling that the novel maintains.

As discussed in Chapter One, Mrs. Potter's haunting appearances after her death do unite the community, albeit through conflict. For instance, they cause the people of the isolated community to meet at the Potters' house. Brought together by self-centred complaints over possession—motivated by the antagonistic image of Mrs. Potter, "[so] old, so wicked, fishing the

[40] While it lacks the nuance of Goldman's treatment of Watson's ethical challenge, Donna Palmateer Pennee's "Canadian letters, dead referents: Reconsidering the Critical Construction of *The Double Hook*" also insists that readers remember the marginalized voices that seem sacrificed in redemptive readings of the novel.

fish of others" (*Double* 16)—the group in the Potters' kitchen forms a community antithetically united in debased moral and communal feeling. Similarly, the community's general mode of communication is gossip: "You've been seeing things, Ara, Greta said. Like everyone else round here. You've been looking into other people's affairs. Noticing this. Remarking that. Seeing too much. Hearing too much" (27). Greta's resentful comments to Ara represent the ethos of distrust in the community in the hills. Moreover, Greta points to the oppressive environment in which the people there move: stifled under the watchful eye of others—most powerfully that of Coyote—independence from the community is a strongly desired but impossible ideal.[41]

For the most part, Watson's characters embody one of the two outcomes of life without "mediating rituals" that she outlines in "What I'm Going to Do." While Greta and James represent the extreme of one pole through their violent attempts to vindicate their resentment, Felix and Theophil represent extreme indifference. Theophil and the early Felix, notably the two men to whom Angel attaches herself, appear oblivious to the activities of those around them. Importantly, both violence and insensibility suggest an impoverished form of individualism. The first resentfully pursues the will of the individual and violently asserts its desire and control. The second so far collapses the individual onto itself that it cannot participate in social interactions. Greta and Theophil so fully occupy their positions that even Watson's most optimistic vision of community cannot accommodate them.[42] Greta ultimately turns her violence upon herself, committing suicide in the fire that she sets to burn down her family's home, and thus reveals the

[41] Until, as Chapter One demonstrates, the people of the community recognize an existential definition of freedom, which views the look of the other as the ground of my freedom.

[42] According to Goldman, "the least sympathetic characters in the novel, Greta and Theophil, are the ones who insist on the limits of vision and one's access to the other. Both Theophil and Greta share a distrust of sympathy and the attendant assumption of a cultural continuity between orator and audience, and they draw attention to the limits of this assumption by varying degrees of uncooperativeness" (199-200).

absolute end of her powerful resentment.[43] Conversely, Theophil aligns himself with an equally selfish position that withdraws from any situation that might require reciprocal action. In response to Angel's warning to him that "[a] man can't peg himself in so tight that nothing can creep through the cracks" (*Double* 47), Theophil answers: "I'm best to depend on myself […] If you take money from anyone at any time, it indebts you to the person handing it out" (47). The renewed community present at the novel's end thus tellingly excludes both Greta and Theophil.

Unlike Greta and Theophil, however, James and Felix undergo a change during the course of the novel that at least momentarily opens them to their compassionate potential. Notably, both reluctantly come to compassion only when their ability to assert their individual will is compromised. For James, this change occurs after he has lost his money and is "freed […] from freedom" (106). For Felix, it occurs when he is forced to tend to Lenchen while she is in labour. His response in this moment is surprisingly Schopenhauerian, for to ease Lenchen's pain he does the only thing he knows how to do: he welcomes her child into the world with music. In all the violence and apathy of *The Double Hook*, two acts stand out as contributing to a theory of compassion in the novel: the feigned compassion of the people James meets in town and the unenthusiastic but genuine compassion of Felix during Lenchen's labour.

At the beginning of the novel, James insists on acting upon his will alone. Thus, he makes possessive claims, such as, "[t]his is *my* day" (11; emphasis added). James's movement throughout most of the novel reinforces his determination to possess—and also to control and to manipulate—the actions of others so that they fit his individual desires. For Willmott, Watson's theme of possession includes "possession of material wealth (property), possession of self by self

[43] Goldman and Angela Bowering point out Watson's suggestion of incest in Greta's statement to Ara: "You've got your own house, Ara. You don't have to see lamps in the night and hear feet walking on the stairs and have people coming in on you when they should be in their beds" (32). This suggested incest might explain Greta's resentment as the debilitating effect of a sexual trauma, but even so, Greta's trauma manifests itself as part of her deeply possessive nature: "I want this house to myself" (32).

(propriety), possession of self by another (assimilation or appropriation), and the possibility of exchange between self and others" ("Sheila" 104).[44] While Willmott distinguishes these different kinds of possession, Watson's text often obscurely collapses all objects of possession onto the will of an individual, as when James's possessive will manifests in violence against others. For example, when Kip defies James's power and appears at the Potters' home against James's will, James blinds him (Watson, *Double* 55). Through his pugnacious actions, James (with Greta) represents the violent extreme of a community obsessed with private property, an obsession that the numerous references throughout the text to the fences, gates, and doors that separate people emphasize. Moreover, as Watson investigates the link between self-possession and property that Grove's Lockean patriarchs affirm, she also portrays the violence its extreme form inspires. If the self-possessed individual is the one who is indebted to no one, as Theophil's comments quoted above suggest, Watson demonstrates the ways in which an individual intent on his total self-possession may violently eliminate the sources of his debts. In claiming his self-possession through his murder of his mother, then, James also claims his freedom from his debts and from his obligations to others, most of all Lenchen and Greta.

A closer look at the false compassion offered to James in town and discussed briefly in Chapter One reveals both the logical end of James's extreme individualism and a new aspect of compassion so far unarticulated in this chapter. Contrary to Angel's belief that in town one finds that "there's only more lonely people there than here" (75), James seems to believe that he will find a kind of freedom from his debts in town that is impossible in the hills. James's experience of false compassion in town, however, definitively indebts him to the people whom he has

[44] In "Sheila Watson, Aboriginal Discourse, and Cosmopolitan Modernism," Willmott briefly notes Watson's theme of possession in connection to her interest in the dispossessed aboriginal communities in Canada (104). While Willmott is interested in the way in which Watson's economic language positions her as a post-colonial modernist writer, my interest is in the way such language also suggests moral indebtedness common to philosophies of individualism and morality.

abandoned and affirms Angel's claim that the town only compounds the essentially existential loneliness of "being in one's own skin and flesh" (75). Like Theophil, James at first suggests that economic transfers can override social obligations. Withdrawing all of his money from his bank account when he arrives in town, James claims that his finances represent his worth as a man: "It's curious, he said, how little a man adds up to" (82). Moreover, James brings the relationship between possession and individualist will to its logical end when he tells Pockett that "when a thing's paid for in money, you've got ownership rights on it and can smash it up if you so choose" (83). With this statement, James seeks to explain and justify his violent actions and confirms the possessive intentions that he first articulated when he murdered his mother: possession ("this is *my* day") excuses violence.

Despite James's seeming self-possession, he falls victim to a false act of compassion that robs him of his money and radically redefines his understanding of freedom. Without knowing that James's mother is dead because he murdered her, Traff and his friends maliciously exploit James's mourning. James loses all of his money when Traff and his friends manipulate him with feigned compassion. As James, in his first moment of vulnerability and still haunted by his mother, obscurely confesses his guilt to Lilly, she fakes compassion and with "[her] hands pressed against his chest" (94), she gets close enough to him to steal his newly purchased wallet. While in the isolated community in the hills money serves as a metaphor for moral and social obligations, for the people of the town it functions as a literal exchange: Traff and Lilly do not desire anything from James but the cash he has withdrawn from the bank.

Traff's and Lilly's malicious exploitation of what they perceive as James's loss creates a compelling negative image of the compassionate individual so far discussed in this chapter. The ease with which Traff and Lilly manipulate James emphasizes the vulnerability of the person

who suffers: feigned compassion may provide a simple means of exploiting the suffering of others. Unlike the difficulty of Maggie's and David's spontaneous and "sudden" fellow feeling, Traff's and Lilly's "compassion" is actively *planned* and enthusiastically enacted. Through this exchange, Watson unwittingly explains the spontaneous and even reluctant nature of compassion in the modern novels discussed here: because they prevent the compassionate individual from planning her reward, these characteristics determine compassion's authenticity and ensure that the emotion benefits the person who suffers.

As discussed in Chapter One, Lilly's robbery of James reinserts him in an existential discourse that views freedom as situated rather than absolute. Watson signals this reinsertion through James's new debt: he immediately charges his stabling fees to his account and claims, "[t]here are times when a man spends more than he has and must go on credit" (106). In thoroughly reversing his position on money after he has been robbed, James now accepts his debt to the stable where he kept his horse and aphoristically states that "[u]nless a man defaults […] a debt is a sort of bond" (106). Robbed of his money and resituated in his freedom, James must return to the social bonds on which he had attempted to default when he escaped to town. Watson suggests that the individualist's emphasis on possession transcends material goods and property, and in James she robs the possessive individualist of his dearest possession—the full freedom of ownership that provides James with a justification to "smash up" all that he believes is his—and posits in its place an existential freedom that depends on the other.

While this reading of James's debt argues that his trip to town importantly reinserts him in his community, which he must learn constitutes rather than limits his freedom, it resists the critical view that sees James as a figure of unambiguous redemption. Arnold E. Davidson, for example, argues that James seeks out his manipulation in town as punishment for his treatment

of Lenchen: "The author and character here contrive not just for James's desired victimization but for a victimization that somehow reverses and thereby cancels out his victimization of Lenchen" (39). Here, Davidson implies that James martyrs himself, that he bankrupts himself so that he may pay his moral debts in one fell swoop. Davidson thus suggests that, now a victim, James has already answered for his previous violent and malicious actions before he returns to his community. In seeing James's victimization as a full repayment for and absolution of his guilt, Davidson argues that James's ethical transformation is completed in town. James's renewed existential freedom, however, marks the beginning of his on-going ethical development, which, because it must always negotiate its freedom in relation to another, is never complete.

Watson's economic language, however has an even deeper philosophical root. Using German etymology in his *Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche links guilt and debt: "the main moral concept '*Schuld*' ('guilt') descends from the very material concept '*Schulden*' ('debt')" (39). For Nietzsche, "[t]he debtor […] in order to etch the duty and obligation of repayment into his conscience, pawns something […] that he still 'possesses' and controls, for example, his body or his wife, or his freedom, or his life" (40). Enriching Watson's clear existential investments, then, is her Nietzschean suggestion both that James's later debt is caused by his early guilt, and that he repays this debt by giving up his unchecked freedom. While Nietzsche disdains the morality of guilt, Watson transforms his etymological connection into a metaphor for the individual's ethical position within his community. Rather than absolve James of his guilt, then, this metaphor is a perpetual reminder of the *unethical* actions at the core of James's apparently ethical bond. Furthermore, it suggests that whatever compassion James may develop when he returns to his community will come at the cost of the total individual freedom he had imagined for himself at the beginning of the novel.

Although James's victimization in town does not absolve him, it does reinstate him in an ethical relationship through his debt and suggests that his future freedom will be negotiated through his "bond" to his community. In fact, this bond is the very condition of James's potential compassion, as Watson suggests that his debts prevent him from "owning" anything fully enough to destroy it violently. Through James, then, Watson also curbs the argument, implicit in other novels discussed in this chapter, that self-possession is essential to compassion. As James demonstrates the violent extremes of total self-possession, Watson suggests that compassion within a community requires individuals to see in others an obligation that defines freedom itself. James thus signals the shift in his character when he promise to build a "new house… All on one floor" (115). This image suggests a new equality between the people of the community; more forcefully, however, it reminds the reader that James murdered his mother "at the top of the stairs" (11). Furthermore, while Watson suggests James's potential compassion, she does not demonstrate it. Watson thus maintains an ambiguity about James's ethical growth: while she has set up the conditions by which he may be compassionate, she emphasizes that his ethical individualism is only beginning. Moreover, by suggesting that James *could* resort once more to his violent individualism, Watson also affirms the existential project I outlined in Chapter One.

Although Felix is an individualist of a different kind from James, he at first appears equally incapable of compassion. While James obsesses over what is his to the point that he violently asserts his possession of things no one person could rightfully own, like the day or another person, Felix displays little worry over what James might consider to be his possessions. For example the image of Angel leaving Felix for Theophil, "walk[ing] across the yard like a mink trailing her young" (15) but not followed by Felix, hardly suggests the violent power James might display if his wife were to leave him for another. He is, as Moss describes him, "the

passive complement to James" (128).

William's view of Felix suggests, however, that he nonetheless shares James's desire for total self-possession. William believes Felix's passivity is caused by his self-centred existence and prevents him from helping others: "what help one could get from Felix I don't know, he said, since Felix sits there like the round world all centred in on himself" (113). Furthermore, William criticizes what he believes to be Felix's inert yet selfish character, because, as William points out in his characteristically aphoristic style, no individual is entirely self-sufficient: "He drinks coffee like the rest of us, William said. […] If you think of it, he said, this case of Felix is a standing lesson for someone to think twice. A man who drinks coffee is dependent on something outside of himself. But I myself doubt that he'd be much help to a person in trouble" (114).[45] William's comments highlight two essential characteristics of the intersection between individualism and compassion. First, William criticizes Felix's seeming ability to remain self-sufficient and in doing so also doubts the potential for any individual to be so self-sufficient that he would not be "dependent on something outside himself." Secondly, William's logic implies that any person "dependent on something outside himself" *should* "help […] a person in trouble," because every coffee-drinker knows how it feels to need someone for something.[46] William suggests that compassion is truly a kind of fellow feeling—an imaginative act that

[45] Felix's coffee does link him to his community in an important way. Felix's coffee cup is an image of his epiphany; in it, in a later scene, "[t]he remembrance of event and the slash of rain merged. Time annihilated in the concurrence. The present contracted into the sweet hot cup he fondled. Vast fingers circling it" (29). Watson later connects Felix's cup with the chalice of the Eucharist, thus further emphasizing Felix's latent potential to remember and enact religious "mediating rituals." Angela Bowering describes the mystical and quotidian convergence symbolized in Felix's coffee cup: "Felix's cup of remembrance reemerges […] to bind Angel's body and human passion to the Passion of Christ's sacrifice celebrated and reenacted in the mass. The domestic, the mundane, the sacred and the profane are all bound together here as offering, for blessing" (59).

[46] Greta and James are presumably among "the rest of us" who drink coffee. Watson begins the prose section of her novel with the image of Greta "at the stove. Turning hotcakes. Reaching for the coffee beans. Grinding away James's voice" (11). Here, coffee provides a distraction from what William might believe to be Greta's responsibility to help another in need. As she does with her economic language, Watson oscillates between the suggestion that coffee signals a moral obligation to another, as it does for William, and the suggestion that it signals a further distraction for the individual only concerned with herself, as it seems to for Greta.

relates (even if it does not equate) quotidian and banal needs to the intense suffering of another. Moreover, William's condemnation of Felix, itself hardly a demonstration of the compassion that he accuses Felix of being without, applies to "the rest of us," the other people in the valley, who also "drink coffee" and are thus obligated, in William's view, to help others in need.

While William is right that an individual's dependence on something outside of himself should inspire his compassion for others, he is wrong to assume that Felix would not help someone in pain. In fact, unlike James, Felix, however reluctantly, becomes an unambiguous figure of compassion when James's victims, Kip and Lenchen, gather at his home at the end of the novel. Despite Felix's apparent passive individualism, he closely embodies and practises the mediating rituals—of Christianity and of art—that Watson demonstrates as lacking in this isolated community. In contrast to the ephemeral character and malicious connotations of the gossip that is the standard form of communication in the isolated community, Felix speaks in "half forgotten" "ritual phrases" (41). These phrases, often taken from the Latin liturgy of the Catholic Church, suggest a degraded relationship with a transcendent system that appears insufficient to life in the hills. Felix's fragmented Christian phrases thus emphasize his isolation as well as his potential to serve as a reminder of the rituals that unite individuals. The fact that the phrases effectively alienate Felix further from the others—for example, Felix's repetition of prayers that "the priest taught [Theophil] the same way" (68) only antagonizes Theophil—challenges critics who read Watson as promoting Christian values through James's redemption. Without any evidence of love and compassion, Felix's ritual at first seems empty, degraded, and exhausted within itself.

Unable to express his own pain or his concern for others effectively in language, Felix often escapes worldly pain by playing his fiddle, a habit that positions him as a Schopenhauerian

artist figure. Schopenhauer's philosophy of suffering and aesthetic compassion illuminates Felix's compassionate role in Lenchen's labour and the birth of her son. Ara's definitive statement of the unavoidable suffering of existence—"I never see baby-clothes, she said, that I don't think how a child puts on suffering with them" (105)—carries a particularly Schopenhauerian sentiment (that existence is suffering) that further suggests a Schopenhauerian reading of Felix's role in bringing Lenchen's son into worldly suffering.

Felix's position as an artist during Lenchen's labour reveals his aesthetic compassion, his desire to ease the suffering of others through art, even if he can only do so momentarily. In the climactic moment of Lenchen's labour, Felix comforts her with music, which Schopenhauer saw as the greatest escape from painful willing. This moment of compassion moves Felix outside of himself temporarily, much like David in his epiphany and Maggie in her compassion for Vera:

> His eyelids dropped. His flesh melted. He rose from the bed on soft owl wings.
> And below he saw his old body crouched down like an ox by the manger.
> He reached for his fiddle. (110)

Fiddle in hand and in a metaphysical state, Felix helps to deliver James's baby, a symbol of hope and renewal (note the allusion to Christ's birth in the image of the ox by the manger), into the world with music. This delivery demonstrates a successful moment of subjective idealism, but delivered as it is by a reluctantly compassionate character, Watson also reinforces compassion as a spontaneous and difficult ideal. Felix's aesthetic compassion thus stands in stark contrast to the feigned and manipulative compassion of Traff and Lilly and to James's unrealized compassionate potential. Felix acts despite his nervousness—"I couldn't do anything but play the fiddle, he said" (108)—and transcends his passive individualism to become an active figure of compassion.

Watson's vision of compassion is related to both her latent critique of individualism, brought into focus through James, and her desire to demonstrate the isolation of an existence without the mediating rituals that unite people. Underpinning such rituals one finds the fellow feeling that inspires an individual to transcend his isolation and feel with and for another person, as Felix does in the climactic moment of Lenchen's labour. Compassion in *The Double Hook* is again a difficult emotion, but one that promises to alleviate the alienation of Watson's characters at least momentarily. Deepening her existential ethics, Watson suggests that compassion, in its selfless spontaneity, is born through the existential freedom I developed in Chapter One. Thus, although Felix's compassion renews hope, Watson persistently underscores the individual's potential to fail even in her novel's seemingly optimistic conclusion. Hopeful as it is, Watson's model of compassion, like the others in this chapter, suggests that compassion is an unsustainable emotional state, only one barb on a hook that catches twice, and while Felix overcomes his selfish individualism in a moment of compassion, James's compassionate repayment of his debt remains a promise at the end of the novel. As the last words of the novel emphasize, Coyote has "set" the baby Felix's "feet on the sloping shoulders / of the world" (118), and Watson's novel suggests that individuals, like James and his child, may rise in compassionate feeling or fall into an extreme and violent insistence on self-possession as they negotiate a difficult existential and ethical condition that Watson offers no evidence will change after her plot concludes.

Margaret Laurence's Model of Sufficient Compassion

As in the other novels discussed in this chapter, compassion forms a potential bridge between the individual and her community in Margaret Laurence's Canadian novels. According

to Nora Foster Stovel, Laurence portrays her protagonists "as finding the confidence, through discovering their own identity, to reach out and help others. In fact, Laurence portrays her heroines as developing from solipsism to community" (*Divining* 23-4). The Manawaka series as a whole develops in this way. Laurence moves from Hagar Shipley, the protagonist of *The Stone Angel* and Laurence's least compassionate character, to Morag Gunn, the protagonist of her last novel, *The Diviners*, and an exemplar of what I will call Laurence's model of sufficient compassion. Laurence further develops the theory of compassion that emerges in the novels by Wilson, Buckler, and Watson discussed here. In particular, like Wilson and Buckler, Laurence emphasizes the necessity of autonomy for compassionate feeling; however, Laurence complicates her model of compassion—as well as those already discussed here—by making the suffering other also the racial other of the Tonnerre family, whose painful history she tells obliquely through four of her five Manawaka books. In doing so, Laurence sets for herself the difficult task of imagining a model of compassion that fully acknowledges the suffering of the other without paternalistically appropriating that other as a subject to be feared, pitied, or resented. Laurence thus extends the theory of compassion suggested in the modern Canadian novel by insisting that the autonomy of the sufferer is also essential to the emotion.

More than other parts of the Tonnerre family history, Laurence repeats the story of Piquette Tonnerre's suffering, of her tuberculosis as a child and the fire that killed her and her children. Stacey's response to Piquette's suffering in *The Fire-Dwellers* and Vanessa's in the short story, "The Loons," from *A Bird in the House*, are characterized by their pity, embarrassment, and resentment and so compellingly contrast Morag's compassionate witnessing. Nussbaum explains that for Aristotle, compassion requires that the compassionate individual make a "judgment of similar possibility" (316), which determines she could suffer a fate similar

to that of the sufferer. Stacey, a mother who often imagines her own children's tragic deaths, confirms her worst fears in Piquette's fate; however, Stacey's "judgment of similar possibility" returns her potential compassion to herself so that Piquette's death makes her more thankful for the life that she has. Although Vanessa, on the other hand, feels obligated to feel for Piquette, her distance from Piquette's suffering leaves Vanessa with "no real warmth towards her" ("Loons" 117). Stacey and Vanessa demonstrate the insufficiency of a "judgment of similar possibility" alone as a stimulus for authentic compassion. Through Morag, however, Laurence balances a model of compassion premised on a judgment of similarity with Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy of the other, which insists that the other remains unknowable to its witness. In Morag, Laurence thus delivers Piquette's compassionate witness, someone who humbly faces the reproaches of the suffering other and feels the pain she knows she does not fully understand. In contrast to the insufficient compassion of Stacey and Vanessa, Laurence develops Morag's sufficient compassion, which, formed in conjunction with Morag's autonomy and strengthened by her own painful experiences, allows the Tonnerres to remain other in their pain.

Laurence's critics, like Wilson's, esteem her for her compassion. Kristjana Gunnars introduces *Crossing the River: Essays in Honour of Margaret Laurence*, published shortly after Laurence's death, with the strong claim that "if there is one word that will describe Margaret Laurence, it is this: Compassion" (xvi). Similarly, Constance Rooke notes "Laurence's compassionate imagination" ("Hagar's" 41) and Paul Comeau defines what he calls Laurence's "loser epic" as the product of her "own abiding sympathy for the dispossessed, the social outcast, the marginalized voice" (*Margaret* 143). As they were for Wilson's critics, Laurence's critics' views about compassion in her novels are ubiquitous yet superficial, for few critics have attempted to define the term, which they nonetheless espouse as constitutive of Laurence's

success as a novelist.

As Comeau's description of Laurence's "loser epic" suggests, Laurence's critics commonly relate her compassion to her representations of marginalized people, most obviously the Africans of her early fiction and the women and Métis of her Canadian fiction. Moreover, her critics often conflate the various groups that Laurence writes about, so that her interest in and compassion for one group is taken to define the terms of her engagement with another.[47] At times this conflation lends itself to sexist and colonial suggestion, as it does for Stephanie A. Demetrakopoulos: "Typically feminine, [… Laurence's] response to the children of Africa is always maternal, womanly, and compassionate" (43). Here Demetrakopoulos suggests that Laurence's compassion embodies "[t]ypically feminine" virtues. Laurence's exploration of female autonomy and her representations of marginalized people, however, challenge the ease with which many of her critics have described her works as compassionate. For, as this chapter has already revealed, compassion is rarely a straightforward and realizable ideal.

Laurence's personal essays reveal her subtle critical understanding of the emotion and its relation to individualism and autonomy.[48] In "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio-Political Being," for example, Laurence relates compassion to freedom: "If freedom is, in part, the ability to act out of one's own self-definition, with some confidence and with compassion, uncompelled by fear or by the authority of others, it is also a celebration of life and

[47] In "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?", Laurence also promotes this conflation: "Canadian writers, like African writers, have had to find our own voices and write out of what is truly ours, in the face of an overwhelming cultural imperialism" (17). In the same essay, Laurence argues that "[o]ur situation at the time, like that of all peoples with colonial mentalities, was not unlike that of women in our society" (23).

[48] Laurence cultivated her reputation as a compassionate writer with varying degrees of subtlety in her use of the term. In "Books that Mattered to Me," Laurence indicates her preference for fiction that has "the ability to portray human individuals in all their complexity and ambiguity, in vitally alive terms, compassionately and caringly" (249), but does not offer much of a definition of compassion. Similarly, during her speech upon receiving an honorary doctorate from the University of Manitoba on May 27, 1986, Laurence offered the following advice to the graduates: "Cultivate in your work and your lives the art of patience, come to terms with your inevitable human limitations, while striving to extend the boundaries of your understanding and compassion" (qtd. Swayze 21).

the mystery at life's core" (24-5). Although Laurence's phrasing is vague, she suggests that compassion is related to autonomy, "the ability to act out of one's own self-definition," that it partly constitutes freedom, and that, as Schopenhauer claimed, it is often mysterious. Importantly, Laurence, like the other novelists in this chapter, also implies that, rather than over-ride autonomy, compassion *requires* an autonomous subject. Oblique as her theory of compassion might be, through this essay and her novels, Laurence positions herself as a compassionate thinker, that is, a thinker of compassion.

The Tonnerre family, whose story Laurence was compelled to retell throughout her Manawaka series, however, seems to have challenged her representation of compassion in her novels. In an interview, Laurence admitted that she felt "quite haunted" (Fabre 201) by the Tonnerres until she had written *The Diviners*, which offers the fullest articulation of their family history, as well as the promise of its future in Pique, Morag's daughter with Jules Tonnerre. Laurence explains, "I never really knew any family exactly like that, but I apparently was not satisfied until I wrote a more complete story about it in *The Diviners*" (Fabre 201).[49] Laurence's claim that she wrote "a *more* complete story" in *The Diviners* subtly contrasts the critical view that she brings the Tonnerre story to its "rich fulfillment" (Swayze 15) in her last novel.[50] Instead, Laurence suggests that even as she explains many of the situations that she leaves fragmented in her other novels, the Tonnerre story remains incomplete, beyond the scope of her

[49] Although Laurence claims that the Tonnerres appear in each of her Canadian novels, she does not mention them in *A Jest of God*. While Laurence claims she did not know a family like the Tonnerres, Lyall Powers suggests that Pate Chaboyer, a Métis man with whom Laurence had contact as a young girl, influenced her portrait of the Tonnerres (18). Additionally, in her essay on "The Loons," Laurence describes a Métis girl much like Piquette who often visited the Laurence family home: "I got to know a young Métis girl who was several years younger than I. The Matron of the Neepawa Hospital was a close friend of our family, and the Métis child was in her care because the girl had tuberculosis of the bone in one leg. When the girl was well enough to walk (first with a cast, then with an awkward leg brace), she used to visit our house often" (805).

[50] Most of Laurence's critics also remark on the closure *The Diviners* offers Laurence's Manawaka books: "readers of *The Diviners* have recognized it as a fitting conclusion to the Manawaka Saga. It gathers up and presents the whole saga […] it recalls families and individual characters from Manawaka novels that preceded it" (Powers 387).

otherwise comprehensive saga in some way. As if the rest of the Tonnerres' story were not hers to tell, Laurence's suggestion of its incompletion parallels Morag's imperfect understanding of the Tonnerres' suffering and also points to their family's legacy and the promise of its future in Pique. Moreover, Laurence's haunting suggests her compulsion to tell the Tonnerre story on ethical and compassionate grounds, not unlike the process that Justin D. Edwards describes in *Gothic Canada: Reading the Spectre of a National Literature*: "to be haunted is to be called upon, for the phantom presence returns to collect an unpaid debt" (xxix).[51]

In *A Native Heritage: Images of the Indian in English-Canadian Literature*, Leslie Monkman adeptly draws out the relationship between Laurence's protagonists' "search for a new sense of personal identity" and the Tonnerre family, which "becomes the focus of suffering and death, acceptance and endurance that are integrally related to the experience of each of Laurence's heroines" (57). Laurence's protagonists' responses to the Tonnerres, particularly to Piquette, reveal their compassionate potential and measure their own search for autonomy and self-acceptance. While most of Laurence's books end with only a glance toward the future independence and self-affirmation of their protagonists, *The Diviners* begins there and traces Morag's development through a narrative that "flow[s] both ways" (*Diviners* 3), thus weaving Morag's present with her past. This narrative form portrays the on-going process by which Morag continues to win her autonomy and compassion in the present through her understanding of her past. According to Barbara Hehner, this narrative form represents the way in which Morag "is constantly reworking her past, even embellishing the events, in order to link her past life to

[51] In *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, Lauren Berlant also describes the emotion as a haunted witnessing: "compassion measures one's value […] in terms of the demonstrated capacity not to turn one's head away but to embrace a sense of obligation to remember what one has seen and, in response to that haunting, to become involved in a story of rescue" (7). Foregoing Berlant's paternalistic language of rescue—her interests lie primarily in governmental and judicial policies of compassion—this quotation nicely describes Laurence's sufficient compassion, which insists that the subject does not turn away from or forget the suffering she has witnessed, but is compelled to remember and continue to face it.

her present life in a meaningful way" (48). Morag's memories, significantly written in the present tense, then, continuously call upon her to recognize her own struggle for autonomy and to recommit herself to the compassionate witnessing of the pain of others in her present.

Stacey's and Vanessa's embarrassed reactions to the suffering of the Tonnerres tellingly contrast Morag's eventual sufficient compassion in *The Diviners*' narrative of the present. Specifically, their insufficient compassion implicitly criticizes a theory of compassion founded solely on the Aristotelian model of similarity and highlights two obstacles that Morag must overcome in her compassionate development. First, Stacey's inability to feel real compassion for Piquette and her sister, Val, despite the similarity of their suffering to her own fears, suggests that a "judgment of similar possibility" also allows the potentially compassionate subject to become distracted by her own potential pain and thus become incapable of feeling for another. Secondly, Vanessa's responses to Piquette exemplify the social limits—such as "class, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation" (Nussbaum 317)—that might both arrest a "judgment of similar possibility" and also disrupt the process by which Schopenhauer believes the compassionate person "*identifie*[*s*]" with the sufferer (*Basis*, 85; original emphasis). As Laurence indicates through Vanessa's reactions to Piquette and Val, compassion can quickly become a superficial feeling of obligation or narcissistic reflection inspired by embarrassed impotence rather than an authentic emotion of fellow feeling.[52] From this perspective, potentially compassionate feeling manifests in feelings of resentment and shame. Stacey's and Vanessa's

[52] Vanessa's failure to imagine Piquette as someone who shares a set of similarities with her is clear in Laurence's description of her essentially racist assumptions about Piquette: "Piquette began to interest me […] My acquaintance with Indians was not extensive. I did not remember ever having seen a real Indian, and my new awareness that Piquette sprang from the people of Big Bear and Poundmaker, of Tecumseh, of the Iroquois who had eaten Father Brebeauf's heart – all this gave her an instant attraction in my eyes. […] It seemed to me that Piquette must be in some way a daughter of the forest, a kind of junior prophetess of the wilds, who might impart to me, if I took the right approach, some of the secrets which she undoubtedly knew" (112). Vanessa imagines Piquette as a stereotype, an exotic "prophetess" whose "Indian" intuition will reveal the secrets of nature, rather than as a girl to whom Vanessa could relate. Although the more mature Vanessa narrating her memory suggests that the reasons for her interest in Piquette were "bizarre," she still insists on Piquette's intuitive relation to nature, as I discuss below.

insufficient compassion thus sharply focuses the difficulty of compassion and so also emphasizes the strength of Morag's eventual sufficient compassion.

Stacey's compassionate potential transforms into feelings of guilty embarrassment that diffuse fellow feeling during her encounter with Val, from whom she learns of the shocking circumstances of Piquette's death. Val, herself a portrait of affliction—Val's "upfrizzed hair, "thick crust of make-up," and "once-high breasts that are dugs now" (*Fire* 239) suggest a life of substance abuse and prostitution—confirms Stacey's terrible fears of her own children's tragic deaths in the story of Piquette's: "Happened in the winter. [...] We had one of them big old wood stoves. Place caught fire. She never got out. The kids neither" (241). Stacey feelingly connects her own anxieties to Piquette's tragedy: "Piquette and her kids and the snow and fire. Ian and Duncan in a burning house" (241). Compounded by the vulnerability she feels about Piquette's death, Stacey's empathetic identification with Piquette suggests that she has made a "judgment of similar possibility" and incites her potential for compassion. Furthermore, Stacey's embarrassment in Val's presence and Val's power over her—"Even her presence is a reproach to me, for all I've got now and have been given and still manage to bitch on and on about it. And a reproach for the sins of my fathers [...] how could the damage ever be undone or forgiven?" (241)—extend Stacey's feelings of obligation to Val, but also inspire her desire to escape Val's uncomfortable company quickly. Stacey sees Val as a "known and total stranger" (244), a description that expresses the difficult position that Laurence and her white protagonists occupy in relation to the Tonnerre family, whom they regard as both familiar and mysterious.

Stacey's acknowledgment of her part in "the town's invisible stabbing" (240) of the Tonnerres and her recognition of her worst fears come true in the story of Piquette's death incite her *desire* to be compassionate rather than her authentic compassion. Stacey's insufficient

compassion nevertheless points to the obstacles that Morag must overcome in order to embody a model of *sufficient* compassion. Stacey's polite but superficial response to Val, too reflective of her own anxieties and too obviously an attempt to hide her discomfort in Val's presence, hinders any authentic exhibition of feeling with Val in her pain. Stacey's insufficient compassion thus manifests in gestures that Val recognizes as insincere: the cup of coffee Stacey wishes she did not have to share with Val (241), for example. Monkman claims that in Val's presence, "Stacey finds a painful measure of her own alienation and suffering" ("Tonnerre" 147) and further points to the narcissistic character of Stacey's potential compassion: her encounter with Val humbles Stacey's perception of her own suffering by revealing "a horror that [Stacey] knows only in the worlds of television and fantasy" (147). Both shocked and selfishly relieved, Stacey retreats narcissistically from the Tonnerres' suffering, freshly concerned for her own family's welfare.

Vanessa's interactions with Piquette in "The Loons" similarly emphasize Piquette's suffering as a mystery to the doctor's daughter and thus further critique the Aristotelian model of compassion. Although Piquette deserves compassion—she suffers from tuberculosis and lives in poverty—she chiefly embarrasses Vanessa, who cannot understand or fully face her pain. Piquette's suffering defines her in Vanessa's eyes: "sickness was almost the only thing I knew about her [...] Otherwise she existed for me only as a vaguely embarrassing presence, with her hoarse voice and clumsy limping walk and her grimy cotton dresses that were miles too long" ("Loons" 109). Furthermore, just as Val's presence is "reproachful" to Stacey, Piquette remains "both a reproach and a mystery" (115) to Vanessa during the summer she stays with the MacLeods. During her uncomfortable encounter with Piquette as a teenager, Vanessa still cannot muster compassion for Piquette, although she begins to see that Piquette deserves it: "I was ashamed, ashamed of my own timidity, the frightened tendency to look the other way. Yet I felt

no real warmth towards her – I only felt that I ought to […] At this moment, meeting her again, I had to admit that she repelled and embarrassed me, and I could not help despising the self-pity in her voice" (117). Here, like Schopenhauer, Laurence emphasizes the inadequacy of obligation as stimulus for compassion: although Vanessa knows that she *should* have compassion for Piquette, she "felt no real warmth towards her." Compassion reveals its difficulty once again: because it is not only an ethical virtue, but also an emotion, obligation alone is inadequate to inspire fellow feeling. Notably, Vanessa's "frightened tendency to look the other way" resonates in Morag's initial rejection of the suffering of others as a means of defending herself from feeling their pain.

Vanessa's attempt to understand Piquette's suffering by imagining her as a disappearing loon at the end of "The Loons" further emphasizes the importance of recognizing the autonomy of the sufferer for Morag's model of sufficient compassion. Notably, Vanessa's mother tells her daughter of Piquette's death in a way almost identical to the way in which Val narrates the death to Stacey; Laurence changes only the tone and diction of the passage to reflect the class difference between Piquette's sister and Vanessa's mother, the doctor's wife:

> One Saturday night last winter, during the coldest weather, Piquette was alone in the shack with the children. The Tonnerres made home brew all the time, so I've heard, and Lazarus said later she'd been drinking most of the day when he and the boys went out that evening. They had an old woodstove there – you know the kind, with exposed pipes. The shack caught fire. Piquette didn't get out, and neither did the children. (118-9)

Undoubtedly shocked by Piquette's death, "Vanessa allows it a silence that indicates her knowledge of her own limitations" (Ware 77): "I did not say anything. As so often with Piquette, there did not seem to be anything to say" ("Loons" 119).

"The Loons" ends, however, with Vanessa's symbolic understanding of Piquette as like the loons at Diamond Lake, whose "long-drawn call, half-mocking and half plaintive" (119), has disappeared. Like Stacey, who turns Piquette's death into a reminder of the ease of her own life, Vanessa cannot allow Piquette autonomy in her suffering. Instead, in an attempt to understand Piquette's tragic life, Vanessa transforms her into a loon and so effectively, if unintentionally, robs her of her agency and individuality. Vanessa's final word on Piquette recalls her juvenile assumption that, because she was an "Indian" "or as near as made no difference," Piquette had an inherent understanding of nature and "might impart to [Vanessa] […] some of the secrets which she undoubtedly knew" (112). Although Laurence clearly satirizes this sentiment in the first half of "The Loons," the last sentences of the story do not uphold Laurence's earlier irony. Laurence's insistence on the autonomy of the sufferer in *The Diviners* suggests that there she wished to correct Vanessa's final reductive understanding of Piquette's life and death.[53]

Although Stacey's and Vanessa's responses to the Tonnerres' suffering suggest that both women recognize the other's pain as distinct from their own, they are hardly ideal answers to the reproach of the suffering other. Stacey's and Vanessa's embarrassment both signals and foments their impotence in helping either Val or Piquette, and their participation, however passively, in Manawaka's culture of judgment and exclusion based on race and class, which has rejected

[53] Vanessa's metaphoric equation of Piquette with the loons has caused some controversy among Laurence's critics. In "Race and Conflict in Garner's 'One-Two-Three Little Indians' and Laurence's 'The Loons,'" Tracy Ware argues that Laurence's loon metaphor participates, however unintentionally, in an implicitly racist habit of equating the Métis with death and disappearance. In response to Ware, Stovel has attempted to redeem Laurence in "Reading Beyond Race in Margaret Laurence's 'The Loons' from *A Bird in the House*." There, Stovel argues that Laurence "clearly satirizes" Vanessa's understanding of Piquette (216). While Laurence does satirize young Vanessa's racist expectations of Piquette early in the short story, the last paragraph of the story, narrated by a more mature Vanessa, resonates with the closure of a final insight into Piquette's suffering: "I remember how Piquette had scorned to come along, when my father and I sat there and listened to the lake birds. It seemed to me now that in some unconscious and totally unrecognized way, Piquette might have been the only one, after all, who had heard the crying of the loons" (120). Of course, Laurence refers to Vanessa's new understanding of Piquette's suffering in these last two sentences, but the over-determined and racial implications of Laurence's chosen metaphor—used in the last sentences without the irony that is clear in early passages—still require comment and analysis like that of Ware's. See also Herbert Zirker's "Metaphoric Mapping in Margaret Laurence's Narrative."

"*those Tonnerres*" as "half-breeds" (*Fire* 240; original emphasis). Morag's task will be to learn how to accept her impotence in relation to those who suffer without turning away from their suffering altogether. Furthermore, through her protagonists' responses to the Tonnerres, Laurence reveals the deficiencies in theories of compassion that take similarity between the sufferer and the compassionate as well as the perception of duty as the primary stimuli for fellow feeling. Without its coupling with an acknowledgment of the other as one whom "we recognize [...] as resembling us, but exterior to us" (Levinas 75), Laurence suggests, compassion cannot overcome racial or class boundaries. In her last novel Laurence thus redefines compassion as an emotion that demands autonomy not only for the compassionate, but also for the sufferer. In this way, she offers a vision of solidarity in suffering that paradoxically widens the scope of our "judgment of similar possibility" by allowing the other to remain individual in her pain.

Laurence's repetition of Piquette's story suggests that she was unsatisfied with her prior narrations of it until she could give Piquette a compassionate witness who would respond to her suffering without embarrassment. Morag is Piquette's compassionate witness, but, importantly, Laurence avoids condescension in her representation of Morag's relationship with the Tonnerre family. The Tonnerres remain mysterious to Morag, but they also belong to the same class as her adopted family, the Logans, and so more easily fall within the scope of Morag's Aristotelian "judgment of similar possibility" than they did for either Stacey or Vanessa. In fact, Morag's development of a compassionate autonomy hinges on her no longer resenting those who suffer because she fears she will become like them and reinforces Laurence's belief in the relationship between freedom and compassion. Morag, the most autonomous of Laurence's protagonists, also exhibits the greatest fellow feeling with the Tonnerres, particularly Piquette's brother, Jules. Significantly, then, *The Diviners* does not only revisit sub-plots from Laurence's other

Manawaka books; it also brings their ethical themes to mature manifestation in Morag's model of sufficient compassion. This model is best termed sufficient rather than complete because in it Laurence, on behalf of her protagonists, resists the claim to the thorough knowledge that a total experience of compassion, such as the one idealized by Schopenhauer, implies.

Morag's physical proximity to the Tonnerres as she grows up in Manawaka suggests that their life is more obviously a "similar possibility" for Morag than it is for either Stacey or Vanessa. The Logans' house, "*halfway up the hill*" and with a yard like "*a junk heap*" (*Diviners* 32; original emphasis), betrays the Logans' position in Manawaka. Unlike Stacey and Vanessa, who live "*on top of the hill on the streets shaded by sturdy maples, elms, Lombardy poplars*" (32; original emphasis), Morag grows up on Hill Street—which leads from the town "*down into the valley*" (31; original emphasis), where the Tonnerres live in their complex of shacks—physically and symbolically closer to Piquette and her family. Morag's proximity to the Tonnerres, as well as to Eva Winkler, Morag's abused neighbour, brings her into close contact with the suffering of others early in her life and also eliminates some of the social barriers—most notably, those of class—that Nussbaum argues can stand in the way of a "judgment of similar possibility."

Morag's very proximity to the suffering of others as a young woman without her own autonomy, however, actually obstructs her compassionate feeling, and so Laurence again reveals the limits of a "judgment of similarity" as the chief requirement for compassion. Although Morag's circumstances make her similar to those she sees suffering as a young girl and as she grows older, Morag struggles to embrace rather than reject those suffering around her. Like Stacey, who sees her own potential suffering confirmed in Piquette's death, and Nietzsche, who sees compassion as an infection of weakness, Morag is threatened by the pain of others. For

example, although Morag defends Eva from those who would tease her (70), she secretly rejects and even fears Eva's pain precisely because it is too close.

Morag's rejection of the suffering she witnesses also contributes to her rejection of the Logans, and by extension, their class, which, as discussed in Chapter Two she views as her burden rather than her birthright. Morag's quest to distinguish herself from the Logans and the expectations of the people of Manawaka is an individualist's pursuit that requires her Nietzschean denial of the suffering of others so that she may fortify her own personal strength; as a young woman, Morag imagines her autonomy as compromised by rather than integral to her feeling for others. Morag thus attempts to be a woman of her own making, freed from the adopted family that she both loves for their kindness to her and rejects for their poverty: "She loves Prin [Logan], but can no longer bear to be seen with her in public" (125). In her pursuit to better herself, Morag takes a job at Simlow's Ladies' Wear, which allows her to improve her appearance and so become more similar to girls like Stacey: "Morag is dressed nicely. Nobody could deny it. She spends on clothes everything she earns Saturdays working at Simlow's Ladies' Wear" (125).[54]

In contrast to Morag, Eva remains a visual testament to her own misfortune and a reminder of what Morag wishes to avoid becoming: "Eva's dresses are still the same old cotton things like potato sacks. Eva hasn't smartened up any. She is no longer in Morag's grade at school. […] Morag is ashamed to be so glad that they are in different schools" (131). More telling than Eva's appearance, however, is Morag's reaction to it: "Eva seems like she is beaten

[54] The upstanding women of Manawaka, however, fail to treat Morag any differently, despite all of her self-improvement: "When church is over, and they're all filing out, chattering, the Camerons and MacLeods and Duncans and Cateses and McVities and Halperns and them, no one will say *Good Morning* to Morag and Prin. Not on your life" (126). When Mrs. Cameron does speak to Morag, it is not with the equality that she desires, but as a reminder that Morag has had to improve herself: "I think you've done really quite well," Mrs. Cameron says to Morag, "since you started working here. You've smartened yourself up a whole lot" (134).

by life already. Morag is not – repeat *not* – going to be beaten by life. But cannot bear to look at Eva very often" (131; original emphasis). Although Morag's reaction is not compassionate, her rejection of Eva reveals an impetus of fellow feeling. Morag suggests that if she were to "look at Eva very often," she would risk her own ability not "to be beaten by life," that Eva's pain would infect her as well. At this early stage of her maturation and self-definition, Morag mistakenly believes that her autonomy depends on her utter denunciation of her history, of her home with the Logans, and of her perception of another's misfortune and pain.

Morag at first adopts a surprisingly Nietzschean view of suffering that sees compassion as an infection of weakness that the autonomous individual must avoid. As she later recalls, "Morag gags inwardly at the weak, against whom she has few defences. But she resents and fears them" (204). Here, Laurence displays her deep understanding of compassion. Morag's reaction to the weak resonates with Nietzsche's disdain for them and Nussbaum's reminder that for Aristotle, the emotion is "closely linked to fear" (316),[55] because in imagining that one might suffer as another does, the compassionate subject could easily begin to fear, as Morag does, the possibility of that suffering. For this reason, Morag initially rejects her feelings for the weak, who threaten her with the possibility that she might lose her strength as they have lost theirs. Later, as she grows close to Ella Gerson and her family in Winnipeg, Morag fears instead that her insistent strength prohibits her compassion: "It is not only Mrs. Gerson's ability to reach out her arms and hold people, both literally and figuratively. It is also her strength. Morag doesn't know yet if she herself has the former ability. If she doesn't, it will go badly for her" (*Diviners* 215). Although Morag strongly pursues and maintains her own autonomy, Laurence suggests that compassion must balance such strength. As she does in "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?",

[55] For Aristotle, "One makes sense of the suffering [of another] by recognizing that one might oneself encounter such a reversal; one estimates its meaning in part by thinking what it would mean to encounter that oneself; and one sees oneself […] as one to whom such things might in fact happen" (Nussbaum 316).

Laurence implies in *The Diviners* that the ability to be compassionate forms part of an individual's freedom. Set on pursuing her independence, Morag must mature into a compassionate subject as well.

While Morag rejects Eva and the Logans, her sexual if not conventionally romantic relationship with Jules develops, perhaps because Jules's defiance and strength parallel Morag's. According to Lyall Powers, Morag and Jules "are mavericks (one male, one female); they suffer similarly from the prejudice and insensitivity of Manawaka; they are aliens" (385). Yet, Morag's and Jules's similarity is not merely their mutual suffering—Morag clearly still rejects suffering as the defining state of existence when her friendship with Jules begins—but their determination to free themselves of "the prejudice and insensitivity of Manawaka."[56]

Morag's relationship with Jules definitively shapes her compassion, for it demands that she care, especially when she does not understand his pain. For example, in an intimate request as teenagers Jules asks her to call him Jules, his real name, rather than Skinner, his name around town: "As though now it were necessary to do this. By right. Does she understand what he means? Is this what he means? What is he really thinking, in there? But you have to take it on faith, she now sees. You can't ever be sure" (*Diviners* 160). Looking back, the mature Morag now recognizes the essential distance between individuals. The younger Morag's use of Jules's real name signals her growing ability to see past the stereotypes of the judgmental social world to the individual who stands before her. To Morag, Jules is not simply one of "*those Tonnerres*" (*Fire* 240), not a "halfbreed" (*Diviners* 76), not even merely Skinner Tonnerre, but Jules, whose ancestors fought with Riel. Moreover, Morag's efforts to pronounce Jules's French name—"You

[56] Monkman argues that Jules's determination distinguishes him from his sisters, who are, significantly, marginalized not only by their class and race, but also by their gender (149). That is not to say, however, that Jules's suffering ends when he leaves Manawaka. As a singer-songwriter, for example, he often performs for white audiences who disrespect and ridicule him.

say it kind of funny. *Jewels*" (161) and later "You still say *Jewels*" (309)—symbolize the character of her eventual compassion: Morag continues to call Jules by his real name, even though her pronunciation is imperfect. Similarly, she will later offer her sufficient compassion to Jules in the full knowledge that both her understanding and her support are imperfect.

Still, it is the horrific scene of Piquette's death, which Morag witnesses first hand, that forces Morag to recognize momentarily, even if she cannot yet fully accept, that her attempts to reject the pain of others cannot immunize her from the suffering in the world. Overcome by what she witnesses in the valley—"She can see only smokened metal and burnt wood, but there is something else in there as well" (184)—Morag's strength wavers when she returns to the Banner office: "Without warning, taking herself by surprise, she puts her head down on the desk and cries in a way she does not remember ever having done before, as though pain were the only condition of human life" (186). Even in her commitment to strength and denial of the weak, Morag cannot ignore Piquette's extreme tragedy. Caught in a moment of impotent compassion, of feeling with the suffering of Piquette and also of her editor Lachlan, whose son, Morag simultaneously remembers, had died at Dieppe, Morag makes a Schopenhauerian observation of the inherent suffering of existence. Furthermore, although Morag believes she cries in a way she has not cried before, her reaction recalls her response to witnessing, as a child, Eva's father beat her brother, Vern. Then, thankful for Christie, who "would never beat her," but also disappointed that he could not stop Eva's father, "Morag cries" (52). Laurence's simple narration of Morag's reactions—which recalls Wilson's plain narration of Maggie's "helpless compassion" and Buckler's description of David and Effie simply "crying together"—parallels the impotence that Morag feels when faced with the pain of another; she can only cry. Morag's habitual attempt to refuse this impotence by rejecting the weak reveals compassion's challenge to the individual set

on her autonomy: Morag, who desires her autonomy more than anything, cannot, at first, accept the pain of others, because it both demonstrates what her life might have been and brings the limit of her power to act in a world of her own making explicitly to the surface.

Despite Morag's important realization on the day of Piquette's death, she further attempts to escape the suffering she has witnessed in Manawaka, first by moving to Winnipeg to go to university, where she meets the Gersons, and then by marrying her professor, Brooke Skelton, and moving to Toronto. As discussed in Chapter Two, with Brooke's encouragement, Morag suppresses her past. Although she remembers, especially, the suffering that she has witnessed—"Vernon Winkler, as a small boy, being beaten by Gus. Eva crying in the dancehall, and the night that followed, and Christie taking the small unformed corpse […] and giving it burial. The valley, the snow and fire"—she vows that in her life with Brooke, "Manawaka and that – it's over. It doesn't exist" (230). Morag thus forcefully attempts to deny her realization about the inherent suffering of existence that followed her witnessing of Piquette's death by imagining a life with Brooke that will be unburdened by the suffering of others. Morag's marriage, however, only further suppresses her autonomy, as Brooke patronizingly denies Morag not only her past, but also her self-definition in the present and the future.[57]

Morag's break from Brooke significantly coincides with two other moments in her process of autonomy and compassion: her first novel is published—with Morag Gunn rather than Morag Skelton as its author—and Jules returns to Morag's life. Through her unequal relationship with Brooke, Morag learns that her autonomy depends upon her acceptance rather than her rejection of her past and importantly requires her (emotional) return to her "experience in

[57] As Laurence's critics have duly noted, Brooke treats Morag like a child—"Have you been a good girl?" he repeatedly asks her (286)—and thus attempts to deny her the agency and autonomy that she sought when she left Manawaka. See my discussion of Morag's marriage in Chapter Two, as well as Stovel's *Divining Margaret Laurence* and Neil ten Kortenaar's "The Trick of Divining a Postcolonial Canadian Identity: Margaret Laurence Between Race and Nation."

Manawaka." In this return, Morag also comes to accept rather than deny her feelings of compassion for those she had viewed as weak. Laurence thus clearly connects Morag's autonomy and her witnessing of suffering: Morag explicitly suppresses her memories of Vern, Eva, and Piquette at the beginning of her relationship with Brooke and significantly returns to her memory of Piquette on the night that she leaves Brooke for the company of Jules. Morag's symbolic return to her past is thus also an acceptance of the pain that, contrary to Brooke's reductive assumptions about her, "[s]he knows in more than theory" (230), for it constitutes her own selfhood. Notably, this return also implies that Morag recognizes her similarity to the people she has seen suffering, even though she has, at this point, lifted herself out of their social class.

As if she were aware of the integral relationship between her autonomy and her compassion, after leaving Brooke, Morag agrees to tell Jules about his sister's death. Although Morag does not want to describe what she saw to Jules, "she knows she will have to" (320), because Jules deserves to know. In this scene of Morag's new freedom, the two outcasts from Manawaka are simultaneously drawn together and pulled apart, as Morag recognizes Jules as "in some kind of pain which cannot be touched by her" (321). Although Morag is not threatened by or resentful of the members of the Tonnerre family, she also avoids appropriating them through a paternalistic or colonial compassionate ideal. Morag's relationship to and feeling for the Tonnerres is not a "knowledge," which Levinas warns against: "because through knowledge, whether one wants it or not, the object is absorbed by the subject and duality disappears. It will not be an ecstasis, because in ecstasis the subject is absorbed in the object and recovers itself in its unity. All these relationships result in the disappearance of the other" (41). In a Levinasian way, then, Laurence insists in this emotionally climactic scene upon the autonomy of both the

compassionate individual and the sufferer whom she witnesses.[58] Morag allows Jules his own pain by accepting it as beyond her power to either reverse or subdue. Morag thus begins to know compassion not as an infection by the weak, but as an emotion of the strong.

Thus, Morag bears Jules's scorn—his explosion: "By Jesus, I hate you" after she cruelly but honestly admits that the air on the day of the fire smelled "like roast meat" (322)—without the kind of shame or embarrassment Stacey and Vanessa feel in their interactions with Val and Piquette. Despite Jules's scorn and her own knowledge that her compassion for him does not equal his pain, Morag nonetheless supports Jules in the limited way that she can: "They hold to one another again, and make love or whatever it is, throughout the deep and terrifying night" (322). Newly independent, Morag begins to demonstrate her sufficient compassion as she stays with Jules in his pain, which she witnesses but cannot fully know and is impotent to diminish.

Like Laurence's definition of faith, her model of sufficient compassion might be described as "not only a *holding on* but also a *reaching out*" ("Statement" 60; original emphasis) through which Morag feels for those who suffer without the fear of losing her autonomy, and also without absorbing the suffering other in a pitiful relationship that denies the sufferer her own autonomy. Morag's last encounter with Jules, dying himself, exemplifies her compassionate maturity. While "Morag realized he was dwelling within the kind of physical pain which she had never experienced and could not imagine" (*Diviners* 517), she also reaches out to hold Jules in the strong but compassionate way that she witnessed as a young woman in Mrs. Gerson and feared she would not be able to embody herself: "Then Jules turned to her and put his arms around her, and she put her arms around him. The brief sound in the darkness was the sound of a man crying the knowledge of his death" (518). Morag again offers Jules her compassion even as

[58] Jules's "Piquette's Song," which repeats "My sister's eyes / Fire and snow - / What they'd be saying / You couldn't know" (*Diviners* 535), further suggests this Levinisian unknowable other.

she recognizes that she cannot fully understand his pain. Moreover, through Morag, Laurence's model of compassion reaches well beyond a mere "judgment of similar possibility" as her model of individual autonomy similarly reaches beyond a Nietzschean denial of weakness. Morag arrives at a model of sufficient compassion that strengthens rather than compromises the autonomy of both the compassionate subject and the sufferer. More like the Tonnerres than Stacey and Vanessa, Morag nonetheless grows into a compassionate subjectivity that combines a "judgment of similar possibility" with the integrity of autonomy in both the sufferer and her compassionate witness.

In the present narrative of the novel Morag's compassionate strength continues to be challenged by her daughter with Jules, and Piquette's namesake, Pique. In fact, the dual temporal structure of Laurence's final novel suggests that Morag's recollection of her own emotional maturation has also been a response to the present challenge she faces as a mother to Pique, whose absence in the first pages of the novel inspires Morag's reflections and blocks her writing. Pique's challenge to Morag—to recognize her daughter's autonomy and to allow her to live and also to suffer independently—sends Morag back to the story of her own maturation. Thus, if Morag's narrative of the past focuses on her development of autonomy and sufficient compassion, her narrative of the present emphasizes her struggle to turn that compassion toward Pique and so let her leave in order to find her own way, even if that way contains pain that Morag will be unable to mediate for her daughter. Morag explicitly recognizes this challenge mid-way through the novel when she critically questions her own impulse to interpret Pique without regard to her daughter's independence: "*Am I only interpreting her through my own experience? Maybe she doesn't feel that at all*" (278; original emphasis). Here Laurence further emphasizes the emotional autonomy of the other, which demands that, in sufficient compassion,

my feelings for another are inspired by her experience, not my own. While Morag's return to the past in which she won both her autonomy and her compassion through emotional struggle emphasizes the on-going and always difficult process of compassionate feeling, it also renews and reinforces her sufficient compassion so that she can offer it to Pique.

Importantly, Morag's eventual support of Pique's quest for autonomy—which she desires to win through her return to Galloping Mountain to learn more about her past and live with the surviving members of the Tonnerre family—grants Piquette, through her namesake, the agency that she lacked in Laurence's narrations of her short life.[59] Morag's sufficient compassion for her daughter, her decision to "[l]et her go" despite her worries that Pique was "taking on more than she could cope with" and "might be making an error of judgment in going at all" (510), demonstrates Morag's commitment to a model of feeling for others that does not diminish their autonomy. That Laurence's last novel ends with Morag's compassion aimed at her daughter, who functions as both a correction of the past and as a "figure of hope, a gauge for the future" (Powers 399), powerfully underlines Morag's model of sufficient compassion as the epitome of Laurence's compassionate legacy.

The relationship between Laurence's white, Presbyterian protagonists and the Métis Tonnerre family makes the difficulty of compassion explicit, for the Tonnerres' suffering inspires embarrassment, shame, fear, even pity, but rarely a strong sense of fellow feeling and solidarity from Laurence's mostly well-to-do protagonists. In her representations of Piquette's death in *The Fire-Dwellers* and "The Loons," Laurence demonstrates the inadequacy of an

[59] Piquette's lack of agency and autonomy motivate Janice Acoose's criticism of Laurence's depiction of her: "Throughout ["The Loons"], Piquette is constructed in accord with stereotypes and she lacks qualities vital to an autonomous individual. Indeed, throughout the narrative, Vanessa describes Piquette as a hopeless victim" (81). Laurence's return to Piquette's tragic life and death in *The Diviners* and her decision to name Morag's and Jules's daughter Piquette, however, suggest that Laurence was also dissatisfied with the image of Piquette as a "hopeless victim." Laurence's redefinition of compassion in *The Diviners* and her insistence on a new legacy for Piquette Tonnerre in her niece, Pique, emphasize compassion and autonomy over hopeless victimization.

Aristotelian "judgment of similar possibility" or a Kantian appeal to duty as definitive inspirations for compassion: Vanessa and Stacey are embarrassed by the suffering that they themselves do not know. Laurence, however, builds upon Vanessa's and Stacey's responses of un-knowing, and subtly corrects them in the figure of Morag, who at last offers the Tonnerres sincere compassion. More like the Tonnerres than either Stacey or Vanessa, Morag, however, must first overcome her fear of the weak and develop her own autonomy before she can reach out to Jules in his coming to terms with Piquette's fate and his own death. Morag's is still a difficult compassion—developed over time and with constant struggle—but in her ability to bear the suffering she does not truly know, Morag becomes a figure of sufficient compassion. This sufficient compassion, which refutes Nietzsche as it makes feeling for the weak a virtue of the strong, importantly allows for the autonomy of both the sufferer and the compassionate individual. In this final model of compassion, then, Laurence, like the other novelists here, emphasizes autonomy, an essentially individualist value, as necessary for the essential communal virtue of feeling with another.

Conclusion: Novels of Compassion

Compassion is, as Martha Nussbaum claims, "controversial," and Ethel Wilson, Ernest Buckler, Sheila Watson, and Margaret Laurence participate in its controversy in important ways. For them, compassion's controversy is born in part out of its seeming incompatible relation to individualism, for compassion demands that the individual feels *with* another and thus also curtails her own individual flourishing for the sake of the well-being of that other. The novels discussed here take up this essential paradox of compassion and critique the tradition of philosophies of compassion as they work to set out their own ethical ideals. In all of these

novels, compassion forms more than a superficial moral value; it is a difficult ethical ideal with which the subject is in persistent negotiation. The four novelists considered here further engage with compassion's controversy: they demonstrate the difficulty of the emotion even as they continue to hold it up as an ideal bridge between individual and community. Furthermore, they focus on compassion as a process, as a desirable but unsustainable ethical state to which one works, rather than a predetermined moral value that one is obligated to uphold at all costs—as Laurence's descriptions of Stacey and Vanessa clarify, such commitments to moral obligation rarely result in a genuine feeling of solidarity with the suffering other. Most controversially, these novelists redefine compassion as an emotion that requires autonomous individuals; they thus redefine it as an essentially individualist ethical ideal. In doing so, they are unwilling to compromise either the individual or the community in their philosophies of compassion. Notably, these are not primarily novels of suffering—their stories are not those of the people in pain—but novels of compassion, of the individuals who struggle to witness, bear, and, when possible, subdue the pain of others.

Schopenhauer's philosophy of compassion demonstrates the cost of total participation in the suffering of another. While at times the novelists discussed here align their compassionate ideals with Schopenhauer's—for example, Buckler and Watson both draw upon Schopenhauer's aesthetic compassion as one way of potentially feeling for someone who suffers—they also critique Schopenhauerian compassion as unsustainable and incompatible with the autonomy of the individual, which they deem necessary for fellow feeling. In their critiques of Schopenhauerian compassion, however, these novelists do not simply adopt a Nietzschean disdain of pity; instead they attempt to merge a Nietzschean ethics of the individual with a more Schopenhauerian compassionate ideal. The result is a theory of compassion that fully confronts

the difficulty of the emotion. This confrontation deflates the critical tendency—especially in Wilson's, Watson's, and Laurence's commentators, whose (somewhat sexist) desire to see these women novelists as compassionate at times deflects serious engagement with their work—to read compassion as a means of providing closure to the ethical challenges of their novels. The invocation of an author's compassionate prose has become somewhat of a critical platitude, one that devalues the complex theory of compassion that these four novelists develop. Seemingly unaware of compassion's controversy, many Canadian critics unjustly and inadequately call upon the emotion to overcome, rather than complicate, a novel's ethical difficulty. In fact, the novels discussed here resist such conclusions and, rather than present compassion as an end, insist that the ethics of feeling requires an individual who is perpetually engaged in new beginnings.

Conclusion

The Interrogative Mode of the Modern Canadian Novel

Canadian modern novelists from Frederick Philip Grove to Ethel Wilson and Margaret Laurence investigated both the legacy and the fate of individualism in their novels. Provoked by a profound ambivalence over the definitions of the individual and individualism they had inherited from the philosophical and literary traditions of the Enlightenment and the nineteenth century, modern novelists in Canada sought to refine their understanding of individualist goods in and through their novels. In fact, for all of the novelists discussed here, the initiatory feeling of ambivalence over individualism did not lead to a static or indifferent state of equivocation, but inspired dynamic and difficult representations of the modern individual that also strive to capture the challenges she faces in the twentieth century. Furthermore, the novelists' investigation of the terms and sources of their ambivalence also led them to reflect on foundational and long-standing themes in philosophy, such as the nature of the individual, the definition and experience of freedom, the nature of time, the structure of a good society, and the feeling of compassionate union with others. Precisely the challenges of modernity, however, made these classic philosophical themes appear new to novelists as diverse as Irene Baird and Leonard Cohen, Morley Callaghan and Sheila Watson. Moreover, as writers witnessed the spiritual crises inspired by the death of God, the mass unemployment and political unrest of the interwar years, and the devastation of two world wars, these questions seemed not only new but in urgent need of careful reflection and judgement. In diverse ways, then, modern novelists in Canada gave shape to and investigated their initial worry about individualism through their fiction and, in doing so, united their philosophical reflections with modernist innovations to the novel.

Philosophy in the modern Canadian novel thus begins with the unsettled and unsettling ambivalence over the individual and individualism. For Plato, such a sense of ambivalence signals the fruitful beginning of philosophy itself. As Socrates discusses the education of philosophers with Glaucon in the *Republic*, he explains that philosophy starts when something "summon[s] thought" by "strik[ing] the relevant sense at the same time as [its] opposite" (197). For Socrates, only what he calls "summoners," those ideas that inspire an initial feeling of ambivalence, "awaken understanding" (197). As Socrates continues to test Glaucon's own understanding by asking him about "the one," he elaborates on this essential and vexing feeling:

> If the one is adequately seen itself by itself or is so perceived by any of the other senses, then […] it wouldn't draw the soul towards being. But if something opposite to it is always seen at the same time, so that nothing is apparently any more than the opposite of one, then something would be needed to judge the matter. The soul would then be puzzled, would look for an answer, would stir up its understanding, and would ask what the one itself is. (197)

Both individualism and the individual are such "summoners" for Canadian modern novelists, because, as Charles Taylor noted with such clarity, individualism is both "the finest achievement of modern civilization" and its "first source of worry" (*Malaise* 2). As diverse modern novelists reflected on these summoners, then, they were motivated by their keen perception of both individualism's successes and its failures in the twentieth century. Like Plato's philosophers, however, the initial ambivalence of modern novelists "stir[s] up" their desire for a greater understanding, a clearer definition of the idea that "summons" them, and, perhaps most importantly, a more nuanced answer to their ambivalence itself. Originating in this desire for an understanding of the multivalent character of individualism, then, the modern Canadian novel

engages in an essentially philosophical pursuit.

Philosophy comes *into* the modern Canadian novel through this stirring uncertainty. Although modern novelists often engaged with individual philosophers—such as Locke and Mill—as they investigated the liberal tradition of individualism and imagined its future, the novels discussed here are philosophical first because they begin with unsettled questions about the definition and potential of the modern individual. These questions led novelists to engage with the philosophical tradition both directly and indirectly. To differing degrees, novelists variously allude openly to a particular philosopher, engage in a prolonged debate with a philosopher, or tacitly enter a dialogue with a philosophical interlocutor. Frederick Philip Grove, Ernest Buckler, Leonard Cohen, Sheila Watson, Elizabeth Smart, and Morley Callaghan all allude directly to one or more philosophers in their novels, as Callaghan alludes to Nietzsche during Mike's meditation on the individualism of the wolf. More than others, Buckler, Cohen, Watson, and Smart transform their allusions into the defining philosophical focus of their novels. Buckler's characterization of David and his representation of David's final epiphany, for instance, rest heavily on his protagonist's idealist desires and Buckler's critical interrogation of Schopenhauer's aesthetic and moral philosophy. While their novels are no less philosophical, Margaret Laurence, Ethel Wilson, and especially Irene Baird, on the other hand, indirectly incorporate their philosophical interlocutors into their novels. Although Baird suggests that Matt Striker desires to be a liberal individual in the manner Mill imagined, and while Baird's criticisms of interwar political ideologies resonate with Nietzsche's thorough criticisms of both socialism and liberalism, *Waste Heritage* does not include quotations from or clear allusions to either philosopher. Moreover, although their contemplation of individualism often led modern novelists to particular philosophers, such direct engagement or influence alone does not define

the "philosophical" character or critical interests of the modern novel. Rather, the modern Canadian novel becomes philosophical when its novelist's initial ambivalence about an idea inspires her to investigate and represent the complexity of that idea through fiction.

For modern novelists, however, the Socratic and always philosophical question "what is it?" cannot be answered through knowledge of the realm of "being" and Plato's stable forms. Smart, Buckler, Wilson, and the other novelists discussed here, all suggest, through a variety of narrative forms and structures, that to know what the individual is, what individualism is, and what goods they might still inspire is to know what these ideas are *like* when they are put in action in the realm of flux and change that Plato called "becoming." For example, in *Fruits of the Earth*, Grove's investigation of the Lockean pioneer occurs through the way Abe's possessive individualism conflicts with the growing democratic spirit of the settled prairie. Similarly, Grove's reflections on time and self-making include moments in which Abe's experience of duration breaks into Grove's typically third-person and objective narration to suggest a more subjective and psychological experience of time than the calculating nature of Abe's possessive individualism usually allows. By emphasizing the ways in which diverse philosophies of the individual and individualism conflict with one another, modern novelists were also able to address the challenges that promised to change both the individual and individualism in the modern world. Thus, in the modern Canadian novel, the Socratic questions of "what is the individual?" and "what is individualism?" are answered by also asking related questions that preoccupied thinkers and writers in the early twentieth century, namely: "how does the individual respond to her existential freedom?"; "do inheritances determine individuals?"; "what kind of individual is best for the future?"; "can the individual redeem the war-torn world?"; and "how can the individual feel for another and remain a distinct self?".

The modern Canadian novel fruitfully experiments with and debates these unresolved philosophical questions in a distinctly literary way. In fact, the formal innovations of modernist fiction helped modern novelists in Canada to address the philosophical problems that engaged them and, in particular, to represent the complex ways in which the values of liberal individualism are variously debated, endorsed, and transformed in the twentieth century. In this way, the development of modernist literary forms in the modern Canadian novel and its reflection on the philosophical questions of modernity were one. Canadian modern novelists found in modernist formal innovation ways of representing and exploring the multivalent and conflicting characteristics of the initial ambivalence that had "summoned" them to their philosophical reflections. Thus, they developed what may usefully be called an "interrogative mode" of probing both the individual and her challenging interactions with her familial, political, and social communities. The interrogative mode incorporates the multiple points of view valued in modernist fiction to represent conflicting perspectives on a philosophical question. Their various practices of this modernist form allowed the novelists discussed here not only to represent the complexity of the problem they were investigating—as, for instance, Watson does when she places "violence" and "insensibility" beside one another in her reflection on individual life after the death of God—or an active philosophical debate—as Callaghan debates self-making and determinism in *They Shall Inherit the Earth*—but also, to varying degrees, to answer their philosophical questions with a subtlety that their initial ambivalence did not seem to allow.

Perhaps the clarifying power of the interrogative mode is most evident in the meditations on politics in Grove's, Callaghan's, and Baird's interwar novels, which, recognizing a crisis in liberalism, attempt to defend the liberal individual even as they reveal and criticize liberal political systems. Thus, Grove's reminder to his readers in "The Case for Democracy"—"[w]e

must not forget that the system by means of which we try to body forth a fundamental principle can be changed […] and such change, such dismissal even, does not inevitably imply the surrender of the underlying principle" (25-26)—effectively captures the clarifying work of the interrogative mode, which, as it develops a deeper understanding of a philosophical question or problem, also inspires answers that are not apparent from an initial, ambivalent perspective. In this case, Grove, Callaghan, and Baird work to separate the liberal individual from the political systems that had failed him. Indeed, in the context of Grove's, Callaghan's, and Baird's criticisms of interwar political ideology, their interrogative mode also distinguishes a philosophical approach to political questions, which interrogates the terms and possibilities of politics itself, from an ideological one, which promotes a set of rigid ideas about revolutionary change.

While all of the novels discussed here develop this interrogative mode by incorporating multiple perspectives into their fiction, they do so through various narrative forms and to differing degrees of intensity. Grove's third-person narrator in *Fruits of the Earth* often subtly treats his protagonist with an irony that suggests Grove's own ambivalence about the fate of individuals like Abe in the twentieth century. In *The Master of the Mill*, Grove experiments more vigorously with modernist form, and his psychological portrait of Sam Clark both ironically criticizes Sam for the ways in which he fails to develop a critical, self-reflective individualism and emphasizes the dangerous rigidity of Edmund's revolutionary plan, which aims to eliminate the individual altogether. In contrast to Grove, Callaghan and Baird embrace modernist impersonality in their philosophical meditations, and their third-person, objective narrators often retain a defining ambiguity in their representations of an individual's relationship to his own narratives of inheritance (Callaghan) and to his feelings of political belonging (Callaghan and

Baird). Callaghan, in particular, builds his fictional world almost entirely through his characters' perspectives on it. Baird's and Callaghan's narrative ambiguity emphasizes the complex conflict between the liberal individual, who desires to cultivate his own interests in his own way, and the social challenges that threaten his autonomy and integrity in the twentieth century. Moreover, it accentuates the persistent questioning the modern Canadian novel both embodies and inspires: while Baird and Callaghan suggest refinements of their initial ambivalence through their novels, their narrative ambiguity resists offering definitive answers to the questions driving their novels.

Wilson, Buckler, and Laurence incorporate multiple and conflicting perspectives on individualism into their novels in still other ways. Wilson, for example, develops an apparently omniscient narrator, who, although she often describes ideas with the confidence and tone of a philosopher, does not have full knowledge of her characters or their actions. In this way, Wilson's narrator offers a unique rather than a unifying perspective on the action of the novel. Moreover, Wilson's detached narrator and modernist use of multiple points of view importantly embody Wilson's own theory of difficult compassion. Buckler develops a similar narrative strategy in his *Bildungsroman*; focalized through David, Buckler's third person narrative uses free indirect discourse both to represent David's psychological development and to ironize his idealist aspirations. Like Wilson, then, Buckler incorporates multiple perspectives into his novel in part by distinguishing his narrator from his protagonist in subtle but telling ways. Buckler thus thoroughly investigates a philosophical idea—in this case, he questions Schopenhauer's aesthetic and moral philosophy—by demonstrating its great appeal to the individual and the discreet ways in which it may exhaust individuality itself. In *The Diviners*, Laurence develops still another narrative form: heightening the free indirect discourse of her precursors, *The Diviners* oscillates between Morag's narrative of the present, told in the third person and in the past tense, and her

narrative of the past, told in third person and in the present tense. This form emphasizes the way in which the multiple perspectives on a philosophical problem continue to contribute to Morag's understanding of it and of herself. For instance, Morag's present compassion for her daughter, Pique, develops out of her understanding of both her compassion and her autonomous strength in the past. Moreover, Laurence's narrative form produces a meditation on time itself and forcefully suggests, as Bergson argued, that an individual's freedom exists through her experience of duration, of the present life of the past.

While Smart, Watson, and Cohen all engage in more obvious formal experiments than the novelists mentioned above, their formal innovations nonetheless also constitute the interrogative mode of their fiction. Written in the first person, Smart's *By Grand Central Station* uses romantic and existential irony to develop the self-reflexivity that modernists valued. Smart's self-reflexive irony thus represents both the political potential of her narrator's deeply personal emotions and criticizes their real ability to redeem the war-torn world. While Cohen develops a romantic irony similar to Smart's, *Beautiful Losers* also presents the conflicting personal philosophies of its two primary male protagonists. Furthermore, Cohen adopts diverse narrative forms to interrogate the models of individualism available to "I" and F.: "I"'s often stream of consciousness, first-person narrative; F.'s letter to "I"; the third-person perspective of the epilogue; and Cohen's incorporation of historical accounts of Catherine Tekakwitha's life, advertisements, and quotations of and allusions to influential philosophers all provide ways of probing the history of the liberal individual and the new, radical forms of individuality that Cohen suggests might replace it. The abstract form of Watson's *The Double Hook* adopts modernist fragmentation to offer multiple perspectives on both the fate of the individual and the possibility of compassionate communities after God's death. In fact, Watson's own comments on

the novel in "What I'm Going to Do" do not articulate the fullness of her meditation in *The Double Hook*, which includes Christian, Nietzschean, existential, and feminist perspectives on the defining philosophical questions of the early twentieth century.

Although all of these novelists adopt modernist narrative forms to differing degrees, they are united in the way in which they use these modernist forms to pose and repose their questions about what kind of individualism will endure in the twentieth century. Moreover, the inclusion of multiple and often conflicting perspectives on individualism in the modern Canadian novel also suggests that novelists believed that to understand an idea deeply meant also to know the ways in which it failed. Even as novelists defended particular models of individualism—as Cohen celebrates the joyful potential of F.'s emphatic individualism—they also continued to scrutinize individualism as a "source of worry" that might have dangerous consequences in the modern world—as Cohen does when he demonstrates F.'s fascistic potential. Thus, as novelists represented and worked through their initial ambivalence in their fiction, they also pointed more precisely to what individualist characteristics deserved to be criticized and even destroyed in the twentieth century. Watson's response to Nietzsche in *The Double Hook* is another clear example of this important aspect of the interrogative mode. As Watson finds that the absolute freedom born of God's death produces James's destructive violence, she suggests that the modern individual must instead adopt an existential perspective that sees freedom as always and essentially situated. The interrogative mode of the novels discussed here is thus a fundamentally critical form of expression, which, inspired by an initial ambivalence, comes to a deeper understanding of a philosophical idea by reflecting on and representing both its redeeming and its destructive characteristics.

The modern Canadian novel's philosophical representation of the individual and

individualism critiques Enlightenment and nineteenth-century philosophies of individualism while also articulating the individualist goods—such as autonomy, freedom, and self-cultivation—that endure in the twentieth century. Moreover, the interrogative mode of the modern Canadian novel demonstrates how inherited ideas may be transformed and renewed in novels that unite philosophical questioning and modernist forms of representation. Indeed, as modern Canadian novelists interrogated the philosophical tradition that produced possessive and liberal individualisms, they also examined new models of individualism announced in the philosophy of Nietzsche, Bergson, Sartre, and Beauvoir, and transformed the liberal individual into a figure of becoming "worthy" of modernity. That is, the Canadian modern novel does not reveal a static or singular image of the individual—not the individual's Platonic form—but a figure who, seemingly by definition, is constantly changing as she attempts to reconcile the demands of her contemporary world with her experiences of her individuality as something that sets her apart from (and often in conflict with) that world. Notably, however, this renewed figure and the individualist goods she endorses are revealed through careful philosophical reflection that begins in ambivalence. That is, it is precisely because individualism is first a provoking "source of worry" for the novelists discussed here that its representation can finally also be seen, to borrow Taylor's words once again, as a "fine achievement" in the modern Canadian novel.

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