

ABSTRACT

American Modernism's Fading Flowers of Friendship

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I examine friendships between major characters in modernist novels written by four American writers: Willa Cather, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, and Ernest Hemingway. My examination will reveal that the friendships they portray largely fail due to a symptom of modernism, namely that people cannot agree upon the purpose of a human being's existence. If the purpose for human life, and therefore the criteria by which to judge whether a human life is lived well, are uncertain, then people cannot selflessly assist one another to live life well; this assistance lies at the heart of my definition of friendship, which I have adopted from Aristotle. The depiction of friendship by these four novelists indicate the immense difficulty of individuals living in the culture of modernism to look past themselves and help those closest to them progress toward a fulfilling, meaningful way of life.

My concern with friendship in modernist novels is cultural and philosophical. I approach the novels as artifacts of the modernist culture in which they were created to see how these writers artistically perceive friendship. This emphasis implies that broad, philosophical trends infiltrated the communities of which these writers were members and affected their

perceptions of friendship, both in their personal lives and in their art; my focus for this project happens to be the latter, rather than the former. I then want to compare the writers' modernist-steeped view to a philosophical notion of friendship that was understood in Western thought for two thousand years but that until recently was almost completely forgotten—Aristotle's conception of friendship and its role in a flourishing, communal life. Through this comparison, I will show that the cultural forces of modernism prompted these authors to create both enfeebled friendships and, on occasion, hopeful ideals of friendship that one might pursue against the alienating forces of modern life. The goal of my study is to reveal that the modernist period is a rich source for understanding the dynamics of and human need for friendship.

American Modernism's Fading Flowers of Friendship

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A Dissertation

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2013

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	viii
Dedication	ix
Chapter	
1. Introduction	1
Pertinent Scholarship.....	3
The Project’s Scope.....	5
The Failed Hope of Art in Modernism	9
The Struggle for American Culture.....	14
The Subsequent Chapters	28
2. Aristotelian Friendship and the Decline of the Virtues.....	37
Aristotelian Friendship	38
Friendship’s Basis	38
Similarities in Nature.....	39
Differences in Nature	43
Virtue Friendship’s Object.....	46
Aristotelian Virtue	51
Immanuel Kant.....	56
Friedrich Nietzsche.....	62
A Return to Virtues.....	70
3. Friendship Fooled in Willa Cather’s “Problem” Novels.....	80
The Futile Search for <i>Telos</i> in <i>One of Ours</i>	84
Failure to Love the Virtues in <i>A Lost Lady</i>	93
Intellectual Avarice in <i>The Professor’s House</i>	103
<i>My Mortal Enemy</i> : A Fractured Fairy Tale	112
<i>Death Comes for the Archbishop</i> : Cather’s Virtue-Friendship.....	119
The Intellectual and Physical Dimensions of Miracles.....	120
The Priests’ Ego-Driven Counterparts.....	124
The Manifestations of Latour’s Purpose.....	128
4. The Personage’s Potential for Authentic Friendship in Fitzgerald’s Early Novels.....	139
<i>This Side of Paradise</i> : The Centrifugal Effect of Personage Friendships	145
Species of Egotist: Personality and Personage.....	149
Thayer Darcy: Amory’s Personage Mentor.....	152
Princeton: The Community of Personality.....	154
The Connages and New York Respectability	157
Spiritually Married and Unmarried Men.....	158
<i>The Beautiful and the Damned</i> : Anthony’s Social Limbo	163

Anthony's Inheritance from His Grandfather	164
Maury: Anthony's Personage Friend	167
Dick: Anthony's Personality Friend	173
<i>The Great Gatsby</i> : The Friend's Unifying Gaze	177
Nick Carraway: Beyond Personage.....	180
Jay Gatsby: Gorgeous Personality	182
The Evolution of Nick and Gatsby's Friendship	183
The Invention of Gatsby: Development of the Façade	188
The Illusoriness of the Buchanans' Society	190
Personality and Personhood	192
5. The Fragility of Narrative: Gertrude Stein's Search for an Audience	199
Identity in Grammatical Terms.....	204
Leo Stein's Rejection of Gertrude Stein's Genius	206
Community in <i>Toklas</i> : Geniuses and Conduits.....	209
Geniuses: Pablo Picasso	210
Conduits: Bernard Fay.....	214
Alice Toklas's Role	217
Post- <i>Autobiography</i> Crisis	223
Stein's Rhetorical Plea in "What is English Literature"	227
First Epoch: Chaucerian	231
Second Epoch: Elizabethan.....	232
Third Epoch: Eighteenth Century.....	233
Fourth Epoch: Nineteenth Century	234
Fifth Epoch: American.....	237
The Lectures' Failure	240
The Attempt to Elude Death in <i>The Geography of America</i>	242
The Turn to the Individual in <i>Everybody's Autobiography</i>	248
6. The Inescapability of Action in Ernest Hemingway	258
Detachment and <i>Afición</i> in <i>The Son Always Rises</i>	262
Jake and the Analogy between <i>Afición</i> and Virtue.....	264
Robert Cohn's Unsuitability for Friendship.....	267
Bill Gorton's Exemplary Detachment	269
The Trip to Burguete.....	271
<i>Afición</i> and <i>Corrida</i> of Erotic Love.....	277
The Danger of Escape in <i>A Farewell to Arms</i>	285
Rinaldi: A Tie of Brotherhood	288
The Priest: Detached Yet Engaged	294
Frederic Henry's Retreat from the World	302
The Necessity of Other-Centeredness in <i>For Whom the Bell Tolls</i>	307
Robert Jordan's Utilitarian Identity.....	308
The Selfishness of Pablo	310
The Republicans' Internal Division.....	316
Living in the Immediate and the Future.....	319
7. Conclusion	329

Works Cited333

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my director, Luke Ferretter, for his tireless help and guidance throughout the dissertation process. Also, I thank the members of my committee: Sarah Ford, DeAnna Toten-Beard, Jay Losey, and Kevin Gardner. Your input has been of extreme value to me. The English Department and Graduate School have been so generous with funding and direction, also, for which I am grateful.

To Amanda, in whom my spirit can rest, to whom I can pour out my soul, to
whose pleasant exchanges, as to soothing songs, I can fly in sorrow
— *Adapted from Aelred of Rievaulx*

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In the following pages, I will examine friendships between major characters in novels written during the years between the two World Wars by four American writers: Willa Cather, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, and Ernest Hemingway. My examination will reveal that the friendships they portray largely fail due to a symptom of modernism, namely that people cannot agree upon the purpose of a human being's existence. Without agreement upon the meaning of human existence—or even if there is such a meaning—neither can there be agreement upon what makes an excellent, that is, a virtuous, human being. If the purpose for human life, and therefore the criteria by which to judge whether a human life is lived well, are uncertain, then people cannot selflessly assist one another to live life well; this assistance lies at the heart of my definition of friendship, which I have adopted from Aristotle. The depiction of friendship by these four novelists indicate the immense difficulty of individuals living in the culture of modernism to look past themselves and help those closest to them progress toward a fulfilling, meaningful way of life.

Friendship is a rather nebulous concept in contemporary culture, the result, I believe, of the gradual draining of significance in the discourse of the virtues that reached a crisis point in the modernist period, which I will discuss in the next chapter. When thinking about friendship, we typically subsume it within another type of relationship that is easier to rationalize, such as the bond

between spouses or siblings, the partnership between coworkers, or the commonalities shared by individuals pursuing the same interest or hobby. I do not mean to say that friendships do not occur between people in the situations mentioned above nor that constitutive elements of those relationships cannot be found in friendship. Indeed, we will see brotherly affection (for example, Tom Outland and Godfrey St. Peter in *The Professor's House*), erotic attraction (Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*), common vocation (Jean Marie Latour and Joseph Vaillant in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*), and mutually shared pastimes (Jake Barnes and Bill Gorton in *The Sun Also Rises*) exemplified in the friendships of the modernists' novels. But, I believe, to understand the significance of friendship and see how it is undermined in the modernist period, we must isolate to the best of our ability the qualities unique to friendship, as opposed to other types of relationship or love.¹ I focus on this distinctive foundation of friendship, partners mutually assisting each other in their pursuit of the good life, and argue that the presence of dynamics found in other relationships—marriage, family, business, leisure—are to some extent incidental, at least when trying to analyze the success or failure of the bond of friendship.

The isolation of friendship's distinct characteristics motivates my choice of Aristotle's discussion of friendship rather than Plato, even though the latter does write on friendship: the convoluted dialogue, *Lysis*, ends in aporia and fails to provide a functional definition of friendship against which to evaluate instances of it. Also, the *Symposium*, which eloquently and touchingly treats of love in its

¹ For an excellent example from the twentieth century of the classification and analysis of different types of love, see C. S. Lewis's *The Four Loves* (1960).

many forms, again conflates friendship with erotic love and thus does not serve to talk about friendship as a singular phenomenon. But besides the greater functionality of Aristotle's treatment of friendship, I choose him rather than Plato because he establishes normativity—what should constitute virtuous behavior—through the observation of people's behavior in the real world, rather than as a transcendent ideal removed from human existence. For the modernists I am examining, who have witnessed their ideals crumble in the horrors of the first World War, I find Aristotle's search for the attainment of the good life through the range of human activity to be more sympathetic to their wounded interaction with the world.

Pertinent Scholarship

In 1986, Ronald A. Sharp complained that “[l]ove, sex, and marriage have been the central subjects of a great variety of serious twentieth-century literature, but with very few exceptions, friendship—which up through the nineteenth century remained a major issue for serious writers and philosophers—seems to have fallen mainly into the hands of pop psychologists and self-help enthusiasts” (4). Two years later, Wayne Booth also bemoaned the neglect friendship had received: “The modern neglect of friendship as a serious subject of inquiry is puzzling. After millennia during which friendship was one of the major philosophical topics, the subject of thousands of books and tens of thousands of essays, it has now so dwindled that our encyclopedias do not even mention it” (170).² Since then, scholars have published a number of studies regarding friendship in British literature, covering relationships of both genders as well as

² In *The Company We Keep* (1988), Booth uses Aristotle's three categories of friendship (which I will discuss in Chapter 2) as the basis for an ethics of reading.

historical periods from the middle ages to the nineteenth century. More relevant for this study, there have been a handful of works that examine the portrayal of friendship in American literature from the colonial period also to the end of the nineteenth century.³ Curiously, the exploration of friendship in literature stops at the twentieth century, the notable exception being Sarah Cole's 2003 study, in which she argues that "friendship took on a heightened and intensified importance [in the early twentieth century], even as its place in personal, social, and narrative desire seemed increasingly tenuous" (2). But her work focuses on British writers: Forster, Conrad, Owen, Sassoon, and Lawrence. Victor Luftig's study,⁴ also of British writers, analyzes the evolution of the term "friendship" as it is used to describe extra-marital, non-familial friendships between men and women from the late Victorian period to after the first World War. But there has been no extensive study performed on friendships in modernist American literature.⁵ This project thus breaks new ground by examining texts previously ignored by scholars of friendship in literature. Similarly, with the exception of Edna Rosenthal's evaluation of Eliot, Stevens, and Woolf using the aesthetic

³ Bronk, *The Brother in Elysium: Ideas of Friendship and Society in the United States* (Elizabeth P, 1980); Cameron, *Sidekicks in American Literature* (Edwin Mellen, 2002); Crain, *American Sympathy: Men, Friendship, and Literature in the New Nation* (Yale UP, 2001); Marchalonis, *Patrons and Protégés: Gender, Friendship, and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Rutgers UP, 1988); Martin, *Hero, Captain, and Stranger: Male Friendship, Social Critique, and Literary Form in the Sea Novels of Herman Melville* (U of North Carolina P, 1986); Nissen, *Manly Love: Romantic Friendship in American Fiction* (U of Chicago P, 2009); Schweitzer, *Perfecting Friendship: Politics and Affiliation in Early American Literature* (U of North Carolina P, 2006). There is also one study of postwar American poetry: Epstein, *Beautiful Enemies: Friendship and Postwar American Poetry* (Oxford, 2006)

⁴ Luftig, *Seeing Together: Friendship Between the Sexes in English Writing, from Mill to Woolf* (Stanford UP, 1993)

⁵ One possible exception would be John P. Anders's *Willa Cather's Sexual Aesthetics and the Male Homosexual Literary Tradition* (U of Nebraska P, 1999), in which he does discuss friendships of her various characters, particularly Fathers Latour and Vaillant in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, but as his title implies, friendship is interpreted using the lens of queer theory, which diverges from my Aristotelian focus.

principles found in the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*,⁶ this project is unique in using Aristotelian philosophy as a lens by which to observe modernist literature.

The Project's Scope

With a topical territory so wide open yet needing to be settled, it would be easy to find myself in Ronald Sharp's situation when he began his book:

"[F]riendship is such a broad subject and it can be approached from so many different directions—each of which has important implications for every other—that the big danger in undertaking this kind of a study is simple paralysis" (8).

Students of the modernist period know that its most important authors are connected in an elaborate web of association, so it would be understandable to proceed with my exploration of modernist friendship by studying the authors' biographical friendships.⁷ Stein, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald certainly considered one another friends at points in their careers; Cather and Fitzgerald exchanged light correspondence regarding *A Lost Lady* and *The Great Gatsby*. And stories from the memoirs of these authors and others have been absorbed into American literary legend, such as Fitzgerald's ride through Manhattan on a taxi-cab roof with Zelda, Stein and Hemingway's conversation in a French auto mechanic's garage about *la generation perdue*, and the empirical reassurance Hemingway gives Fitzgerald about the latter's manhood. Indeed, memoirs about the writers of this period are themselves modernist classics, such as Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*, Fitzgerald's essay collection *The Crack-Up*,

⁶ Rosenthal, *Aristotle and Modernism* (Sussex Academic P, 2008)

⁷ For wonderful visuals of these webs, see Steven Watson's *Strange Bedfellows: The First American Avant-Garde* (Abbeville Press, 1991). He includes a schematic of Gertrude Stein's various relationships (42-43). His work, however, concentrates on the writers at the dawn of the modernist movement, prior to World War I.

Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return*, Sylvia Beach's *Shakespeare & Company*, Claude McKay's *A Long Way from Home*, and Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. But much scholarship has already been invested in tracing the authors' real-life friendships,⁸ so my project will not cover that same territory. Some readers may protest that, by neglecting the authors' real-life friendships, I do not have a clear, complete picture of their perceptions of friendship. After all, these men and women did not portray their fictional friendships according to an abstract ideal isolated from their experiences of interpersonal interaction; scholars, in fact, have been able to discern the friends (or enemies) of the authors who inspired many of the characters I will be analyzing. To understand the relationships between characters of a novel in light of the author's relationships is a worthwhile study, which also has been performed admirably by others,⁹ but I maintain that that approach still does not touch the dimensions that I am interested in exploring.

My concern with friendship in modernist novels is less biographical and psychological and more cultural and philosophical. Drawing inspiration from such works as Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self* (1989) and Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1984), which interpret modern identity and morality respectively

⁸ For example: Bruccoli, *Fitzgerald and Hemingway: A Dangerous Friendship* (Carroll & Graf, 1994); Carpenter, *Geniuses Together* (Houghton Mifflin, 1988); Cohen, *A Chance Meeting: Intertwined Lives of American Writers and Artists, 1854-1967* (Random House, 2004); Larsen, *Stein and Hemingway: The Story of a Turbulent Friendship* (McFarland & Co., 2011); Laskin, *A Common Life: Four Generations of American Literary Friendship and Influence* (Simon & Schuster, 1994); Mellow, *Charmed Circle: Gertrude Stein & Company* (Praeger, 1974). Sarah Cole agrees that the typical approach to friendship in the modernist period "is to focus on biography, on individual friendships or circles of friends; this kind of work often involves celebrated literary figures and relies on personal correspondence" (252).

⁹ For example: Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist* (Princeton UP, 1972); Bridgman, *Gertrude Stein in Pieces* (Oxford UP, 1970); Bruccoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Carroll & Graf, 1991); Donaldson, *By Force of Will: The Life and Art of Ernest Hemingway* (Viking, 1977); Stout, *Willa Cather: The Writer and Her World* (UP of Virginia, 2000); Woodress, *Willa Cather: A Literary Life* (U Nebraska P, 1987).

through a survey of philosophical history, I approach the novels as artifacts of the modernist culture in which they were created to see how artists enmeshed in that culture project friendship into the manifestations of their artistic vision. In other words, I want to examine how these writers artistically perceive friendship. This emphasis thus implies that broad, philosophical trends infiltrated the communities of which these writers were members and affected their perceptions of friendship, both in their personal lives and in their art; my focus for this project happens to be the latter, rather than the former. I then want to compare the writers' modernist-steeped view to a philosophical notion of friendship that was understood in Western thought for two thousand years but that until recently was almost completely forgotten—Aristotle's conception of friendship and its role in a flourishing, communal life.¹⁰ Through this comparison, I will show that the cultural forces of modernism prompted these authors to create both enfeebled friendships and, on occasion, hopeful ideals of friendship that one might pursue against the alienating forces of modern life. As Sarah Cole argues, "[F]riendship can stand either as a bulwark against totalizing features of modern culture or as a sad casualty of those processes..." (14). Although the American writers look at friendship both ways, the friendship-as-bulwark remains largely elusive; when characters do achieve the healthy form of virtue-friendship, it provides a vantage point from which the friends can see their strandedness in the inhospitable surroundings of modernity.

¹⁰ My project is comparable to Stephen Sicari's recent work, *Modernist Humanism and the Men of 1914* (U of South Carolina P, 2011), in which he draws on the writings of early humanists, such as Erasmus, Rabelais, and More, to make the case that Joyce, Lewis, Pound, and Eliot attempt to revive a pre-Enlightenment humanism that relies more on feeling rather than rationality. Sicari's juxtaposition of distant time periods looks very similar to my use of Aristotle.

The goal of my study is to reveal that the modernist period, despite (or rather because of) its conditions of “existential *angst*, narcissism, rootlessness, nihilism, alienation, the breakdown of community, and general estrangement” (Sharp 4), is a rich source for understanding the dynamics of and human need for friendship. Using the most influential philosophical text on friendship as a guide to discuss these novels, and tying them into the larger narrative of morality in Western culture, I lay the groundwork for subsequent scholars to fill in other important gaps, such as the relationship of modernist portrayals of friendship to those of earlier epochs of American literature. Again, my choice to illuminate one dimension of modernist friendship does not negate the need for the illumination of others, but I hope it inspires others to examine those dimensions.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will set the context in which these authors have created their novels. First, I will describe the conflict between art and society central to the concept of modernism, with which all four authors grappled in their careers. Next, I will discuss the dilemma American writers faced in the decade prior to World War I, in which they attempted to bring national identity into harmony with a mandate for innovative, authentic, artistic creativity. Although the idealistic critical discourse engaged in by writers such as Randolph Bourne, H. L. Mencken, and Van Wyck Brooks fizzled with the harsh realities of the war, the questions they raise about the individual and the community provide a framework for understanding the individual’s disenchantment with community and its effects on friendship in the postwar novels examined in this study. Finally, I will outline the subsequent chapters of my study, explaining my selection of authors and their novels.

The Failed Hope of Art in Modernism

In her discussion of the virtues, Iris Murdoch clings to art as humanity's metaphysical salvation: "Art indeed, so far from being a playful diversion of the human race, is the place of its most fundamental insight, and the centre to which the more uncertain steps of metaphysics must constantly return" (73).

Murdoch's view of art as humanity's savior is steeped in the influence of modernism: "The high modernist work gives structure to the world, since the world itself cannot give structure to the work. Art excepted, all structure is frail and temporary, including selfhood. Art succeeds where the world itself fails, even though that victory is also ever-present proof of the tremendous loss: the success of art signals the failure of everything else" (Berman 61). By the 1920s, the world has "failed" in that the many structures that had been used for centuries to organize and understand the world, the universe, and the self had been called into question or completely abandoned within the last half century.

Modernism is a response to profound and traumatic changes, not only to nearly every aspect of life, but also to the very universe, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. These changes included new means of travel—the advent of flight with the Wright Brothers' successful trial at Kitty Hawk in 1906 and the first production of automobiles in 1888, which drastically diminished the time and difficulty of land travel—and new means of communication—the telephone was invented in 1876, the phonograph in 1877, and the first radio transmission was received in 1902. New, alarming ways of viewing the human psyche came with the burgeoning field of psychology. For example, Ernst Mach's research led him to conclude that no real boundaries divide the self from the outside world that the self perceives; rather, "[t]he ego is

not a definite, unalterable, sharply bounded unity” (Mach, quoted in Ryan 12). William James’s solution for ameliorating Mach’s unnerving conclusion was to say that “the self is a convenient, practical label which we attach to our ever-changing sense impressions” (Ryan 14). The Christian understanding of the earth and its creation had been criticized since Darwin published his *Evolution of the Species* in 1859, and the laws of Newtonian physics that had underpinned the Enlightenment universe were supplanted by Einsteinian relativity. The culture of the West in the nineteenth century was characterized by an optimism invested in the constant improvement and eventual, inexorable perfection of the world through the benevolent forces of rational empiricism, liberal democracy, the free market, paternalistic imperialism, and morals derived from Christianity. Out of this optimistic environment were the above-mentioned changes borne, but ironically these discoveries would incite insecurities that would call the Western worldview of progress into question, culminating in the horrors of World War I, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

In the modernist period, art seems to offer a way to overcome the uncertainties of the universe. As Berman writes, “[A]rt is not meant to be a retreat from modern life, but a mastering of it. To know life well enough to transform it into art is to overcome it” (39). Daniel Joseph Singal agrees that modernist art “attempt[s] to restore a sense of order to human experience under the often chaotic conditions of twentieth-century existence...” (8). Jesse Matz goes so far as to call this mastery a type of redemption: “[T]o write modern novels meant to face modernity with a sense that literary form could redeem it—that it could make a supreme difference to the very life of human culture” (10). A work of art can construct a new reality to which a person can connect through

her emotional response, and the artist gives the work a unity internal to itself (Berman 65). As a result, art can be a comfort and encouragement; one can pay attention to a work of art, perhaps following Murdoch's advice, and take in a vision of beautiful form, a refuge from the confusion of the world outside the painting's frame or the novel's cover. But the work of art can also encourage the viewer by suggesting new ways of fashioning one's reality or existence. These new ways come through modernist art's "superintegration," creating a new fusion from the fragments of reality left behind by the scientific and philosophical discoveries that had turned the world upside down (Singal 13). One could imagine taking the pieces of a shattered mirror and configuring them into an intriguing, flashy mosaic: modernist art attempted to do this with reality. We will see Ernest Hemingway propose a similar process of superintegration in *The Sun Also Rises*: when Jake Barnes and Bill Gorton retreat to the austere, pastoral village of Burguete, they detach themselves from the turmoil of their personal lives, regain perspective on their situation, and return to the chaos of the modern world with a greater resistance to its disorienting influence.

But if art in the modernist period creates its own reality because the structures of the world have failed, where does that leave the viewer once she steps away from the painting or puts down the novel? She returns to the limbo of the uncertain universe where she must make a choice between two options. First, she could submit herself to what Jochen Schulte-Sasse refers to as the "delusion-producing monolith" (xxxii), that is, to surrender to the conventions of the bourgeois life ruled by the demands of the market. By choosing this path, the viewer merely becomes a consumer of art, an object of derision to the modernist artist who constantly strives to escape society's commodifying tendencies.

Alternatively, the viewer could construct a new reality of her own, inspired by the tenets of the art she has just viewed. Willa Cather struggles with the impermanence of the artwork's impact and the vulnerability of the individual to market influences, reflected in the shifting values of Sweet Water after Captain Forrester passes away in *A Lost Lady* and the commodification of Tom Outland's memory in *The Professor's House*.

The artwork may inspire the intrepid move to create a new reality, but it cannot really guide it, for the artwork conveys the message of particularity: "What is expressed is not *the* meaning, but my meaning, not human vision (only) but my particular vision (particularly)" (Berman 43). If art were to provide such guidance, then it would produce another false structure by which to organize the world—art would then lose its power, which lies in overcoming the world by rearranging reality in a new way. Therefore, what power art does seem to have in the modernist schema seems narrow and passive. Peter Bürger articulates this passive effect:

Art allows at least an imagined satisfaction of individual needs that are repressed in daily praxis [by the constraints of bourgeois society]. Through the enjoyment of art, the atrophied bourgeois individual can experience the self as personality. But because art is detached from daily life, this experience remains without tangible effect, i.e., it cannot be integrated into that life. The lack of tangible effects is not the same as functionlessness...but characterizes a specific function of art in bourgeois society: the neutralization of critique. This neutralization of impulses to change society is thus closely related to the role art plays in the development of bourgeois subjectivity. (13)

In this passage, Bürger shows the probability that the viewer will choose the first path—having a moment of personal identity through her encounter with art and then returning to her artificially constructed bourgeois existence—and the reason why the viewer would have trouble choosing the second path: art has no

connection with daily life and therefore can do nothing to change it. So either art winds up affirming the “delusion-producing monolith,” or it disconnects itself from reality, rendering itself irrelevant. Gertrude Stein comes to this impasse as she tries to use more conventional writing to draw her audience to her experimental work. Writing self-consciously or to pander to “mammon” or “human nature” results in work that reinforces the monolith and brings the artist’s genius into jeopardy; however, the audience resists conscious writing from the “human mind,” even though it is the pure precipitation of genius.

There is a difference between art’s influence on the *individual* versus society at large. There may be no consensus on what ethical code to follow or even why one should follow an ethical code, but that does not stop an individual from adopting a particular code. Likewise, art may motivate one person here and there to reconfigure their perception of reality, but, because of the constraints art imposes upon itself, it is too isolated to have any wide ranging power to change. The isolation endemic to modernist art is reflected in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s inability to portray the outcomes of his characters that choose to buck social conformity and pursue authentic identity; to avoid falling into conventional morality, he must leave the futures of Amory Blaine, Maury Noble, and Nick Carraway uncertain. The following passage encapsulates well art’s impotence in reshaping society:

The vision of artists will not prevail; instead, it will increasingly become either isolated inside the practice of art or transformed into elements of other industries, like entertainment or fashion. Modernist art forms will decorate all of contemporary life by the midtwentieth century, but the original modernist aspiration for the arts fails. Modernism may even be said to have had the opposite effect of that intended: rather than liberating people from the economy, it helped liberate them only to participate more fully in the economy [this would be the viewer’s Option #1]. The

modernist vision will become increasingly sheltered, either within the haven of a separate art world or as part of a university curriculum, often appealing most to those who are discontent with the triumph of modernity through its technology and its international economics. The modernist protests that the cost of economic prosperity has been the homogenization of humanity. But artists alone are inadequate to counteract all this, not because they lack genius but because they lack an audience of sufficient magnitude and influence. (Berman 25)

Interestingly, a connection arises between the breakdown of ethical discourse, the process of which I address in the next chapter, and the hobbling of artistic power in society; both dilemmas seem to center on the distinction between the individual and the collective, which again and again modernist novelists portray as a conflict. It is thus fitting to investigate how friendship, which the Aristotelian tradition considers to be the relationship that helps the individual morally negotiate the social collective, is depicted in these novels and contributes to this modernist conflict. We will see that friendship generally offers the hope of the individual's meaningful integration into a community but that the circumstances of modern American society hinder that hope from becoming a reality.

The Struggle for American Culture

According to Malcolm Bradbury, "the American arts had from the beginning a special relation to the modern itself" (28). Although he admits later that the modernist movement itself is characterized by its nomadic character, there still exists an affinity between the forward-thinking experimentalism of modernism and the "progressive" spirit of America (30). This affinity exists because modernism "came to" the United States at a time when the country's intelligentsia were bemoaning its lack of a unified, dynamic cultural identity.

The discussion of the social critics who wrestled with this problem in the years leading up to the First World War centers on the question of ethics, art, and their relationship. They agonize over whether new, vibrant literature can revitalize the American “*polis*”¹¹ or if solidifying such a communal identity would bring about a literary renaissance.

Through the second half of the nineteenth century, artistic production was largely dictated by what George Santayana called the “genteel tradition”: as democratic values more fully saturated the national culture, influence shifted from the old gentry class, whose pride of place was secured by family lineage and land ownership, and rested more with individuals who made their success in business and commercial ventures. Without the traditional credentials for veneration, these new, successful individuals exhibited the “good breeding” of their class through “polite manners, gracious though not ostentatious living, and the promotion of the arts” (Alexander 8). Artists in turn, in order to secure their livelihood, created art that bolstered the values of their wealthy patrons. Thus art became a tool for maintaining and encouraging traditional, virtuous living; the values of the community already established, art merely reinforced, rather than redefined them. As Charles C. Alexander writes,

For cultural custodians as well as cultural consumers, ...the arts were both elitist and democratic, both the sacred trust of a dedicated minority and the means of edification that should be available to Everyman. Above all, the arts should teach the eternal verities—not only universally accepted forms of beauty but also universally desirable modes of conduct. Unless art inspired and uplifted, it was not truly worthwhile as art or anything else. (9)

Inspiring and uplifting art was important to the genteel class because they believed it would keep society focused on the glorious future promised by the

¹¹ See Chapter 2 for my explanation of the *polis* to understand why I use the term here.

progressive, optimistic worldview of liberal capitalism and Enlightenment rationalism. If art devoted itself to rampant self-expression, “the animal component in human nature” (Singal 9) would throw the whole project off course. As Singal notes, “[W]hat [they] aspired to was a radical standard of innocence. They were engaged in an attempt to wall themselves off as completely as possible from what they regarded as evil and corruption, and to create on their side of the barrier a brave new world suffused, in Matthew Arnold’s words, with ‘harmonious perfection’” (10). Many modernist authors questioned whether such social harmony was genuine or whether it truly promoted people’s wellbeing; we will see this questioning most obviously in Cather’s and Fitzgerald’s novels.

The conservation of a moral code by the captains of industry after the society that developed the code had faded is analogous to the perpetuation of taboos by Pacific island nations, described by Alasdair MacIntyre: the Polynesians refrained from certain practices, such as men and women eating together, but they could not explain the reason for this, nor could they provide a definition for the word *taboo* (105). MacIntyre concludes, “Deprive the taboo rules of their original context and they at once are apt to appear as a set of arbitrary prohibitions, as indeed they characteristically do appear when the initial context is lost, when those background beliefs in the light of which the taboo rules had originally been understood have not only been abandoned but forgotten” (106). Similarly, at the turn of the twentieth century, a new generation of American artists and critics finds the genteel morality maintained by the *bourgeoisie* to be arbitrary and takes steps to abandon it. Consider Randolph Bourne’s questioning of traditional mores: “The customs...of primitive tribes

seem to practically everybody in a modern Western society outlandish and foolish. What evidence is there that our codes and conformities which perform exactly the same role, and are mostly traditional survivals, are any the less outlandish and irrational?" (172-173).

Critics like Bourne, H. L. Mencken, and Van Wyck Brooks rejected the notion that art should merely promulgate the same tired propriety of the previous generation. They complained that this approach had only yielded a milquetoast derivative of European classical art:

American literature has had the semblance of one vast, all-embracing baccalaureate sermon, addressed to the private virtues of young men. It has been one shining deluge of righteousness, purity, practical mysticism, the conduct of life, and at the end...the highest ambition of Young America is to be—do I exaggerate?—the owner of a shoe factory. (Brooks 117)

Just as the *nouveau riche* adopted genteel behavior to show themselves worthy of respect and influence, so also American art had emulated what seemed to be "proper art," only at the expense of unique American identity and ingenuity. The problem was that the country's culture was not conducive to great artistic production, or so the critics thought. For example, Brooks believed that "[a]rt...grew out of particular social environments—the accumulated customs, traditions, and values of different peoples. Thus by definition, criticism had to be historical and biographical, and must concern itself not only with artists and their work but with the broad context in which they strived to create" (Alexander 36). In other words, community fosters art, or, more precisely, community fosters the individual who produces art (Bourne, qtd. Hegeman 60). Gertrude Stein will subvert this relationship between artist and community by attempting to cultivate an appreciative audience for her experimental work.

But the so-called American community was constricted by two dominant drives, what Brooks identified as the highbrow and the lowbrow: the highbrow supposedly was the product of America's Puritan past, one haunted by religious guilt and sexual prudery; the lowbrow stemmed from the overly utilitarian, materialistic American Pioneer who degenerated into the American Businessman. Neither the high-brow nor low-brow were admirable in Brooks's view; they were extremes that Americans haplessly bounced between: "Between university ethics and business ethics, between American culture and American humor, between Good Government and Tammany, between academic pedantry and pavement slang, there is no community, no genial middle ground" (83). Brooks's assessment sounds strikingly Aristotelian, with extreme vices between which should lie a virtuous mean, but that middle ground, where the American "community" should be located, is seemingly unattainable (*NE* II.6.1107a).

Finding himself hedged in on either side by these mythical monsters of the nation's past, the American artist had no chance to flourish. "[S]ince society and personality seemed to Brooks inextricably linked," Hegeman observes,

the simultaneously desired and impossible resolution to social division was also reflected on the level of the individual. The bifurcation of American society—between "highbrow" and "lowbrow," or between "Puritan" and "Pioneer"—that was both created by and resulted in the crippled and stunted personalities of the individuals who comprised it, seemed complete and irreconcilable. (78)

This impasse sounds like Schulte-Sasse's "delusion-producing monolith"; indeed, Mencken's epithet for the money-grubbing, repressed reading community, the "booboisie," reveals the same middle-class ties that Schulte-Sasse and Bürger believe prevent art from meaningfully speaking into daily existence. Mencken, Bourne, and Brooks spent the 1910s critiquing the American

artistic wasteland, and the latter two attempted to solve the individual-community dilemma: in fact, “[t]hroughout his long critical career Brooks never seemed to make up his mind whether great American artists would be able to transform American society, or whether the transformation of society had to come before there could be great art” (Alexander 37).

An important influence on all three critics is Friedrich Nietzsche, whose works entered the American market in English translation in the 1890s. Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen argues in her recent study that Nietzsche’s philosophy gives voice to the early modernist struggle for authentic American culture: “Nietzsche laid bare a fundamental concern driving modern American thought: namely, the question of the grounds, or foundations, for modern American thought and culture itself” (23). Indeed, Nietzsche becomes an intellectual hero and mentor for these young writers struggling to form their identity and the identity of their culture:

He is described as a prophet and a martyr, and his philosophy was portrayed as an intellectual intoxicant, an emotional elixir, and a spiritual astringent, as well as a romp in the hay. Though the metaphors for Nietzsche and his writings are as diverse and colorful as their authors, a theme runs throughout. They described their experience with Nietzsche in deeply intimate terms; indeed, many of them confessed to feeling as though Nietzsche had developed his philosophy expressly for them. (149-150)

Unsurprisingly then, these critics adopt a Nietzschean persona in their work, emulating his lyrical style, posing as the non-conformist hammering away at dusty, beloved traditions. Yet after clearing away the previous generation’s taboos, Mencken, Brooks, and Bourne seek to reconstitute the community: “They wanted a cultural criticism of the hammer, but also of the divining rod” (189).

One can also discern Nietzsche's influence in the authors I will examine. His teachings echo most loudly in Cather's more odious characters, such as Ivy Peters in *A Lost Lady* and Father Martinez in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, suggesting that she is more critical of his philosophy. As I will point out in my analysis of his novels, Fitzgerald utilizes Nietzsche's thought frequently, probably through H. L. Mencken's influence. In *This Side of Paradise*, this borrowing seems earnest, but in *The Beautiful and Damned*, it seems almost parodic. Gertrude Stein heeds Nietzsche's warning of the loss of existence through conformity, and her insistence that others recognize her genius reflects the exercise of her will for intellectual dominance. Finally, Ernest Hemingway contemplates the threat of nihilism in all three novels I will examine, prevalently in *A Farewell to Arms*.

At this time, the so-called Lost Generation, the writers who would attain critical acclaim in the 1920s, were in the middle of their teenage years, experiencing the same dilemma, only heightened by adolescent alienation.

Malcolm Cowley describes his contemporaries' angst:

We felt that the world was rigorously controlled by scientific laws of which we had no grasp, that our lives were directed by Puritan standards that were not our own, that society in general was terribly secure, unexciting, middle class, a vast reflection of the families from which we came. Society obeyed the impersonal law of progress. Cities expanded relentlessly year by year; fortunes grew larger; more and more automobiles appeared in the streets; people were wiser and better than their ancestors—eventually, by automatic stages, we should reach an intolerable utopia of dull citizens, without crime or suffering or drama. (18-19)

Cowley's assessment of his teenage years harkens back to Nietzsche's disgust for the middle-class German politeness and conformity surrounding him (*Genealogy* I 12). Singal argues, "[M]odern bourgeois existence had become perilously

artificial and 'over-civilized,' and...the degree of self-control that Victorian morality required of each individual was stultifying the personality" (10). Cowley and his peers feared that they would be made into a form of the self-less "objective man" that Nietzsche had warned about (*Beyond* 207).

Singal asserts that the rigid code of Victorian morality was in place to ensure that society would continue its progress toward perfection (9); in other words, the individual must conform in order for the collective to reach its *telos*, end, or purpose. In the meantime, however, does the individual have a *telos* that she strives toward, besides being a dutiful cog in the mechanism of progress? "For entering as we do a society which is all prepared for us, so toughly grounded and immalleable that even if we came equipped with weapons to assail it and make good some individual preference, we could not in our puny strength achieve anything against it" (Bourne 173). What Bourne, Brooks, Cowley, and the writers covered in this study discover is that the purpose of human life is misplaced in the obsession over attaining a perfected society. Advances in transportation and communication result in the individual losing her sense of place; advances in psychology result in the individual losing her sense of a unified self; advances in science result in the individual losing a sense of an overarching, law-abiding universe presided over by an omnipotent, benevolent God. With all security to one's self lost, society's seemingly inexorable march of progress appears as the march of a tyrant, desirous of stamping out the remaining traces of one's identity. Gone is the organic *polis*, a collective of individuals fulfilling one another's needs and pursuing the meaning of life together; instead, the individual is lost in a crowd of strangers in the modern city, "a perversion of some truly civilized state of being" (Donoghue 28).

No wonder we find, again and again in these novels, a focus on the self at the expense of the other. Stein never exorcises the demon of existential loss, but Cather, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway ultimately discover that the turn to self does not adequately protect one from the annihilating forces of social progress; one must turn her attention outward to the wellbeing of an other.

All of the writers mentioned felt this threat of society against the individual. Consider, for example, Randolph Bourne's strikingly tragic description of American parenthood: "You are a helpless victim of your parents' coming together. There is denied you even the satisfaction of knowing they created you, in their own bungling fashion, after some manner of a work of art....And your parents have not only not conceived you as a work of art, but they are wholly incapable after you are born of bringing you up like a work of art" (169). A work of art, the unique product of a deliberate act imbued with some meaning, even if unknown, through its deliberate creation: Bourne's complaint suggests that children were born during this time without a sense of identity or significance, without a *telos*. But it also seems that the parents similarly lacked a purpose for their lives beyond economic success and frivolous pastimes. Such aimless parenting is exemplified in the Wheelers in Cather's *One of Ours*, Beatrice Blaine in *This Side of Paradise*, and Adam Ulysses Patch in *The Beautiful and Damned*. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley agree that neither will ever have to meet the other's parents (154), and Robert Jordan is ashamed of his father, who commits suicide, in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Most tragic is the fear instilled in Gertrude Stein by her parents who inadvertently reveal to her that her existence was contingent upon the death of

an older sibling. Indeed, the characters of modernism are ushered into a hostile world without any guidance as to what their purpose is.

Nor do societal institutions provide any better guidance. Speaking of the Lost Generation's time in college, Cowley describes a course of study meant to erase any distinguishing characteristics among the students, what he called "deracination":

We were not being prepared for citizenship in a town, a state or a nation; we were not being trained for an industry or profession essential to the common life; instead we were being exhorted to enter that international republic of learning whose traditions are those of Athens, Florence, Paris, Berlin and Oxford. The immigrant into that high disembodied realm is supposed to come with empty hands and naked mind, like a recruit into the army. He is clothed and fed by his preceptors, who furnish him only with the best of intellectual supplies. Nothing must enter that world in its raw state; everything must be refined by time and distance, by theory and research, until it loses its own special qualities, its life, and is transformed into the dead material of culture. The ideal university is regarded as having no regional or economic ties. (28-29)

Cowley admits that his professors at Harvard had tried to give him and his fellow students "a key to unlock[ing] the world" (30), but their abstract, academic knowledge was too abstract from the experience that the students brought to school with them and the real world that they would return to after their four years. Instead, the students emerged from college with a "veneer" of culture (33), which covered selves of which they still had no understanding. Fitzgerald addresses this veneer directly in his modernist *Bildungsroman*, *This Side of Paradise*.

The difference between the prewar and post-war modernists lies in how they respond to society's onslaught against individuality. As the discussion so far has suggested, Randolph Bourne and Van Wyck Brooks look for a way to reshape American society from inside; although the Puritan and pioneer drives

have hindered artistic expression, Brooks believes that there must be a “usable past,” something deep within the American psyche, in the nation’s past cultural production (e.g., the New England Transcendentalists), or in a Whitmanesque exaltation of the land that artists could draw upon to create a dynamic, uniquely American art that would awaken the spirit of the nation (Hegeman 70). Brooks’s solution is steeped in Nietzschean individualism: “What, out of all the multifarious achievements and impulses and desires of the American literary mind, ought we to elect to remember? The more personally we answer this question, it seems to me, the more likely we are to get a vital order out of the anarchy of the present” (Brooks 225). Rather than looking at the roots native to the United States, Bourne pins his hopes on the distinctive voices of the many ethnic communities that make the United States a transnational nation; in this vision, American culture becomes a tapestry woven from threads pulled from international spools (Bourne 262). Thus their strategies involve the materials already existent in society or sources from the past; within their solutions to the cultural dilemma is a lingering faith that individual and community benefit each other. They do not look upon notions of a communal identity with complete suspicion, only they know that the Victorian-era notions will no longer suffice. For this reason, Brooks and Bourne occupy an uncomfortable, transitional space between the genteel and the fully modernist, “fated to dwell in a kind of no-man’s land” (Singal 10). The post-war modernists look on their communities with complete alienation; even Cather, who is sometimes categorized as one of these transitional figures, seems doubtful of a reconciliation between community and individual.

Of course, the Great War drastically recontextualizes the dilemma of American cultural identity. Paul Fussell writes that, although all wars are ironic because their consequences are always worse than expected, World War I has been the most ironic war of all: "In the Great War eight million people were destroyed because two persons, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his Consort, had been shot" (7-8). If the moral strictures of Victorianism and Whig optimism were showing wear and tear already, the horrors of life and death in muddy, rat-infested trenches for five years completely demolished them:

[T]he Great War took place in what was, compared with ours, a static world, where the values appeared stable and where the meanings of abstractions seemed permanent and reliable. Everyone knew what Glory was, and what Honor meant. It was not until eleven years after the war that Hemingway could declare in *A Farewell to Arms* that "abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates." (21)

Just as Cowley's Harvard professors could only offer an abstracted wisdom with which to face the soul-crushing machine of bourgeois society, so also virtue, drained of its power in the latter half of the nineteenth century through the discoveries made in the name of society's progress, became a series of abstract, empty platitudes that could give no guidance to a young soldier facing the harrowing details of battle. The "radical standard of innocence" was violently cast aside, along with the optimistic vision of perfected society. But the dissatisfaction of the pre-war writers indicates that the world was not static, that the societal structures in place no longer adequately reflected reality. The war and all its attendant ironies, then, was an apotheosis, the exclamation point at the end of the early modernist critics' cry for change. As Gertrude Stein frequently

mentions in her work, wars merely confirm a social change that has already taken place (e.g., *Everybody's Autobiography* 74).

A number of American writers born in the 1890s, including Ernest Hemingway, went to the war as ambulance drivers or munitions transporters. This participation in the war, Malcolm Cowley underscores, was largely as spectators (38). Whereas the European soldiers had the virtuous platitudes blasted out of their hands, the Americans felt the *nearness* of danger, observing battle from a privileged, cynical position: "The war created in young [American] men a thirst for abstract danger, not suffered for a cause but courted for itself..." (41). But the experience of war also made the alienation of the individual from society complete: "We were fed, lodged, clothed by strangers, commanded by strangers, infected with the poison of irresponsibility—the poison of travel, too, for we had learned that problems could be left behind us merely by moving elsewhere—and the poison of danger, excitement, that made our old life seem intolerable" (46). This rootless condition, which had been cultivated in the American youth, predisposed them to be effectively severed from the American community through participation in the Great War. Yet Hemingway suggests that this detachment will enable his generation to recapture life's true *telos*, unmediated by the meaningless conformity of the modern community.

For this reason, the Lost Generation generally did not stay at home in the United States to reform the culture, as Bourne (who died in the influenza epidemic of 1918) and Brooks had advised in the 1910s; instead, they returned in the 1920s to the Europe with which they had become acquainted during the war. Gertrude Stein was a permanent expatriate, Hemingway and Fitzgerald spent several years in Europe, and Cather made frequent trips there. Alfred Kazin

writes, "Something in American life had gone out with the war, as Bourne and all he represented had gone down in it: a contagious idealism, the dream of a new community in America, all the tokens of that brave and expectant fraternalism which had at one period marked the emergence of the modern spirit in America" (191). The "something" that had gone out did not leave the United States in the same shambles as Europe—quite the opposite: Europe "came out of the war only to enter upon the Fascist agony, where America now emerged completely as a dominant world power" (190). And as Europe reeled into political and economic turmoil, American writers took up the modernist mantle, so that the movement "had become the twentieth-century American style, the language of its progressivism, pluralism, cultural convergence; its commerce, its aesthetic drive, its modernity" (Bradbury 34). Kazin seems to agree with this assessment, describing a "heedlessness, a boisterous pride in [American writers'] liberation from convention" (191).

But perhaps this is too positive a reading of Americans' adoption of modernism in the 1920s; perhaps it was not such a hand-in-glove fit, as Bradbury's and Kazin's observations suggest. As I will show in the subsequent chapters, the tension between individual and community remains unresolved and plays out in the novels between the wars. Now more than ever, following the devastations of World War I, the purpose for human existence is unclear, and without a human *telos* to pursue, the relationship between individual and community cannot be reconciled. Thus the friendships portrayed in these novels become an important locus of this tension: the various ways friendships show weakness act as indices to the weaknesses of the individual-community relationship during the modernist period.

The Subsequent Chapters

Having now established the theoretical and historical contexts for the novels I will be examining, I will now explain how the rest of the project will proceed. I begin Chapter Two by explaining Aristotle's conception of friendship—its basis, nature, and object; these details will serve as criteria for evaluating the friendships portrayed in the novels. After describing Aristotelian friendship, I will expand my focus to show how friendship is the centerpiece to what Aristotle considers to be a purposeful, virtuous life. Aristotle's treatises are a dominant influence in the discussion of moral living up to the Enlightenment, when philosophers begin to question the validity of the virtues and search for a way to rationalize ethical action. The most important voice in this venture is Immanuel Kant's, whose notion of universal moral laws as the product of a free, rational will, prevails as the framework for thinking about ethical behavior, even to the present day. Kant's preeminence in ethical discourse makes him one of the major targets in Friedrich Nietzsche's brutal attack of morals as arbitrary fabrications of society's dominant will. In his work to obliterate absolute moral truths, Nietzsche provides the unstable foundation for modernist moral consciousness. After surveying Kant's and Nietzsche's thought, I will discuss the recent reconsideration of virtue in ethical discourse, posing the problems philosophers now face in a post-Nietzschean world. By articulating these problems in the context of the postmodern revival of virtue, I am actually setting out the moral challenges the modernist novelists faced in their portrayals of friendships.

Chapters Three through Six each focus on one author. It would appear that I chose Fitzgerald, Stein, and Hemingway because they had been friends in

real life, making Cather an odd fourth choice. Actually, the project began with my discovery of single novels in which friendship stood out to me as an important aspect of the story, beginning with the exemplary virtue-friendship between Fathers Latour and Vaillant in Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, followed by the striking intimacy between Jake Barnes and Bill Gorton in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, the gradual revelation of identity that deepens the bond between Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, and finally Stein's use of her lover's friendly gaze to recount her life in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Expanding my reading, I found that each of these works either initiates or acts as the culmination of an exploration of friendship in other novels by the authors. Whereas I firmly believe that friendship is a paramount theme in the four novels mentioned above, I do not think it necessarily as strong in the novels leading up to or proceeding from them; nevertheless, the presence of friendship in all the novels I examine in this study is undeniable, and its presence helps clarify both the larger meaning of the individual work and its relationship to the author's proximate pieces. Most importantly, the theme of friendship, whether strong or weak, in each of these novels reflects the fragmented, disoriented moral psyche that is the product of the modern world and further reinforces the classification of these works as modernist. As I already have indicated in my discussion of the years leading up to World War I, the American modernist period—or at least its birth pains—arguably begins in the 1910s, but I focus my study of modernism on the 1920s and 1930s, the period in which writers struggled to find the meaning to life between the horrors of the great wars.

Chapter Three focuses on Willa Cather's novels from the 1920s, beginning with her Pulitzer Prize-winning treatment of the First World War, *One of Ours*, published in 1922, the year Cather claims the world broke in two (SPOW 812). Her next three novels—*A Lost Lady*, *The Professor's House*, and *My Mortal Enemy*—are referred to by scholars as her “problem novels,” followed by her modernist masterpiece *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. I see these five novels following a trajectory: *One of Ours* poses a scenario, the inability of American society to provide meaning for the lives of its youth. The next three novels struggle with this scenario. In *A Lost Lady*, Cather implies that worthwhile virtues at one point did undergird American society but that now they are misunderstood or are cast aside for the expedient acquisition of pleasure or money. But she comes to the conclusion in *The Professor's House* that clinging to the past causes us to overlook our responsibility to others in the present. That present, she observes in *My Mortal Enemy*, cannot be shaped solely by our selfish wishes and desires; we must turn our attention outward, to transcendent truths, as in religion, and to the wellbeing of others. Finally, Cather tests the efficacy of her discoveries through the virtuous actions constituting the life of a good man, Bishop Latour, who devotes his life to serving others in obedience to his God and in the process perpetuates his identity in the community he has helped shape through his selfless service.

This trajectory of thought plays out in friendships central to each novel. In *One of Ours*, Claude Wheeler searches for a legitimate purpose to his life, emulating first his pragmatic childhood friend Ernest, then his talented, intellectual war buddy David Gerhardt. But all three men lose sight of a worthwhile *telos* because the community that has formed them has not instilled

them with a meaningful notion of living well. The friendships of the problem novels are characterized by selfishness: Niel Herbert and Marian Forrester use their friends to acquire social standing or frivolous pleasure. Tom Outland and Godfrey St. Peter jealously guard the worlds of their intellects, allowing relationships with people who care about them to languish. Myra Henshawe uses her friends to perpetuate her imagined world of riches and romance. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, however, Latour and Vaillant serve their parishioners and encourage each other through the trials of their ministry. They promote each other's wellbeing and hone each other's gifts, having anchored their lives to truths that transcend nation, class, reputation, and prestige. Willa Cather argues that life—and friendship—derives purpose from such sovereign truths, be they religious or artistic.

In Chapter Four, I explain how F. Scott Fitzgerald uses friendship to critique what American society has defined as the object of the pursuit of happiness—financial wealth and social elitism; one must acquire the former to practice the latter. According to Fitzgerald, society requires people in pursuit of happiness to don certain façades to conform with the community's conventions, but true friendship lies in one partner encouraging the other to maintain critical distance from that social conformity. If friends push each other away from the community, as well as its belief in wealth and prestige as the source of happiness, then they can really begin the search for true happiness. In *This Side of Paradise*, Fitzgerald distinguishes between those who invest fully in their social façade (personalities) and those who keep their critical distance from social conformity and therefore their integrity (personages). The novel follows the maturation of Amory Blaine into a personage, primarily with the help of his

mentor Monsignor Thayer Darcy. The end of the story is really Amory's beginning, because he is ready to search for authentic happiness, thanks to his friend's influence. Fitzgerald's next novel, *The Beautiful and Damned*, portrays a much weaker-willed protagonist, Anthony Patch, caught in existential limbo between personality and personage, represented by his two best friends Dick Caramel and Maury Noble respectively. Neither of Anthony's friends can help him achieve balance: Dick's clichéd morality disgusts Anthony, and Maury's concern for his own entertainment only encourages Anthony down a path of dissipation. Through Anthony, Fitzgerald demonstrates that the community's emphasis on wealth only brings the individual alienation and ultimately destruction. In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald portrays a man willing to resort to criminal means to attain the social façade of wealth and prestige because he believes them to be inherently virtuous. When Tom Buchanan, a legitimate member of the social elite, shatters Gatsby's romance with Daisy, who epitomizes for him the American Dream, he is reduced to his humble, undernourished, true identity. Nick, who has witnessed Gatsby's tragic debacle, solves Fitzgerald's dilemma of social conformity through a key act of friendship: Nick affirms both Gatsby's true identity and his desire to be someone great. Fitzgerald ultimately shows us that friendship enables us to pursue happiness without sacrificing our real selves.

My approach to Gertrude Stein's texts in Chapter Five differs significantly from the other chapters. None of the works that I examine is actually a novel: two of them are autobiographies, one is a set of lectures, and one is a philosophical treatise. Despite the generic divergence, I still trace the movements of a character, whose search for a friend spans across the four major works I

address. This character is Gertrude Stein, and the friend she desires is an appreciative reading audience. Stein views friendship as a promotion of the self—a friend for her is one who will affirm who she is by appreciating what she does. Since Stein identifies herself as a genius who writes, then a friend is one who reads her writing and acknowledges her genius. In the 1930s, after twenty years of writing with only a small audience, Stein attempts to draw more readers to her experimental work by publishing a more accessible one: *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. In it, Stein chronicles the past twenty years, emphasizing the people who make up the community that appreciates her; she intends for the audience to emulate the behavior of the friends she writes about in the *Autobiography*. Her plan is thwarted, though, by the audience, who is charmed by her portrayal of the Parisian avant-garde yet only wants more entertaining, easy-to-understand works. Next, she embarks on a lecture tour of the United States, hoping that her physical presence will efface the artificial persona of the *Autobiography* and that, by explaining her literary innovations, the audience will recognize the work of genius and begin reading them. Stein's *Lectures in America* essentially are a biography of her literary career. Once again, however, the audience is taken with Stein the person, not Stein the genius, embodied in her work. Desperate now to preserve her existence, which for her is defined by her genius, Stein attempts to reestablish a barrier between herself and the outside world to protect the integrity of her creative genius from the distortions of communal conformity, which have threatened to blot out her existence through her compromising "audience writing." Hurt by the audience's refusal to affirm her on her own terms, Stein writes *Everybody's Autobiography*, which argues that self-affirmation, the act that originally had defined friendship for her, must be

done by oneself individually. Stein eschews community and denies the possibility for deep, meaningful communication between people. The work ends with a lingering anxiety that her existence is still in danger. My assessment of friendship in Stein's works is the least hopeful of the four, and I think it conveys most poignantly the alienation and untenability of the self-focused individual in the modern world.

When I began my analysis of Ernest Hemingway's novels for Chapter Six, I first thought that remoteness is the defining characteristic of friendship for him, exemplified in *The Sun Also Rises*: the fishing trip to the mountainside village of Burguete occupies the center of the novel and is the setting for honest, intimate fellowship between Jake Barnes and Bill Gorton. But I soon realized that Hemingway's understanding of friendship is more complex: although it is true that Jake and Bill cannot express such open affection in the midst of the modern world—New York or Paris, for example—they retreat to reaffirm for each other what constitutes living life well *in order to* reenter the chaos of the modern world. Jake's time with his friend in Burguete gives him needed distance from the love triangle involving Brett Ashley, Cohn, and Mike; when he joins them in Pamplona, he has the critical distance of an aficionado, which allows him to more accurately observe Brett and test the authenticity of her *afición* by pairing her with Romero, the gifted matador. Hemingway may think that friendship cannot adequately be practiced in the middle of the modern milieu, but he does not believe that one can leave it permanently, which is the lesson of *A Farewell to Arms*. Frederic Henry interacts with his friends in secluded places, usually the bedroom he shares with Rinaldi, one of his best friends. In spite of these moments of seclusion, Frederic wants to retreat even further, ultimately

abandoning the Italian army to live with his lover Catherine in Switzerland. As he retreats, he breaks ties with his friends, denying his commonalities with Rinaldi and refusing to accept the priest's call to servant-love. Frederic thinks that his retreat from the war, and from the real world in general, is for the preservation of his self-interest, but when Catherine and their baby die in childbirth, Frederic finds himself alone in a hostile world, the hostility of which he has contributed to. Hemingway's contemplation of friendship actually culminates with *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, where the retreat for friends has become a last bastion. Robert Jordan and the Spanish *guerrilleros* at first are friends because they find one another useful—the republican band can help Jordan accomplish his mission to blow a strategic bridge, and he can help them relocate from their mountain hideout. But soon they find that their friendship goes deeper than mere usefulness because they share the values of democratic freedom; they all fight in order to make Spain a country where individuals can pursue the good life. In order to accomplish their goal, they must leave the mountain and rejoin the republican army to continue fighting. Hemingway asserts that friends must encourage each other to return to society, to open it to freedom; otherwise, the good life cannot be fully pursued.

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One final note about the title of my project, *American Modernism's Fading Flowers of Friendship*: it comes from Gertrude Stein's piece *Before the Flowers of Friendship Faded Friendship Faded*, a poetic interpretation of her (former) friend Georges Hugnet's poem cycle *Enfances*. She gave the piece its title following the fall-out regarding how the two artists would be credited when the two poems were published. I would argue that, although friendship, as it is conceived by

Aristotle to assist humans in their virtuous pursuit of the good life, has faded in the modernist period, its flowers—specific instances of friendship, such as those portrayed in the following novels—are still visible to us, but they too are fading because the relationship can no longer bring either partner closer to their *telos*. In spite of the vast historical and moral distance between Aristotle and modernist America, I believe he will be a useful commentator on the modernist malaise. Consider Martha Nussbaum’s assessment: “Aristotelian philosophy, then, like (and as a part of) our human nature, exists in a continual oscillation between too much order and disorder, ambition and abandonment, excess and deficiency, the super-human and the merely animal” (262). As Aristotle strives to navigate between these extremes to find a human life of meaning and fulfillment, so too do the modernists.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Aristotelian Friendship and the Decline of the Virtues

Aristotle's description of the nature and needs of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *Eudemian Ethics*, and the *Rhetoric* has been influential over millennia. David Konstan declares, "Aristotle's analysis of friendship in the context of his discussion of *philia* generally...is the most comprehensive and intelligent treatment in all antiquity" (21).<sup>1</sup> Other classical writers following Aristotle also wrote on friendship, emphasizing some aspects of his theory and disputing others—notably the Romans Cicero and Seneca—and Thomas Aquinas synthesized his conception of friendship, along with much of his philosophy, with Christian theology in medieval Scholasticism. One can even detect traces of Aristotle's influence in Immanuel Kant's lecture on friendship. Therefore, in order to get a clear idea of friendship's philosophical underpinnings from the classical period to early modernity, one must understand Aristotle's conception of it. For this reason also, I adopt Aristotle's conception of friendship as the working definition by which I will evaluate the friendships depicted by the American modernists.

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<sup>1</sup> James O. Grunebaum agrees, "Aristotle's conception of the best form of friendship has had more influence on Western ideas about friendship than any other" (9).

## *Aristotelian Friendship*

### *Friendship's Basis*

To clarify this working definition, I turn to James O. Grunebaum's handy method of explaining philosophical theories of friendship that looks at three dimensions: friendship's basis, nature, and object (31). First of all, Grunebaum states, "The bases of friendship relations are the various reasons people have for forming friendships; it is the ground or foundation for friendships" (39).

Aristotle delineates three types of friendship, which will be distinguished here by their respective bases: friendships of utility, pleasure, and virtue. Friendships based on utility arise when two people find that they mutually derive some sort of advantage by wishing each other well, such as two students who are friends because they study more effectively for tests together. Similarly, in friendships of pleasure, two people find it pleasant for themselves to wish each other well, as in two people who spend time together because they find each other funny.

Aristotle concludes, "So we see that when the useful is the basis of affection, men love because of the good they get out of it, and when pleasure is the basis, for the pleasure they get out of it. In other words, the friend is loved not because he is a friend, but because he is useful or pleasant" (*NE* VIII.3.1156a). He deems friendships of utility and pleasure incidental because self-serving, rather than other-centered, motivations underlie both types. As a result, these friendships are unstable, "easily dissolved when the partners do not remain unchanged: the affection ceases as soon as one partner is no longer pleasant or useful to the other" (1156a). There will be a number of utility and pleasure friendships in the texts I will examine in the subsequent chapters.

By contrast, friendships of virtue occur when two people identify good, excellence, or virtue in each other. (These latter terms I will clarify later.) Virtue-friends desire to foster the growth of virtue in each other, and in the process, they benefit themselves through association with virtue. But self-accrued benefit comes as a result of their primary motivation, which is directed toward one's friend:

For these friends wish alike for one another's good because they are good men, and they are good *per se*, <that is, their goodness is something intrinsic, not incidental>. Those who wish for their friends' good for their friends' sake are friends in the truest sense, since their attitude is determined by what their friends are and not by incidental considerations. (1156b).

Virtue friendships thus have greater stability because their basis lies in the character entrenched within each friend, which only grows more pronounced as time passes.

### *Similarities in Nature*

The next dimension of Aristotle's theory to consider is the nature of friendship, "a characterization of the relationship that distinguishes friendship from other relationships between people" (Grunebaum 32). Because Aristotle claims that there are three different types of friendship, we can also consider how the natures of all three types differ from one another, but before we do that, we must address the characteristic that all three types have in common, which is what Grunebaum calls a "reciprocal goodwill" between friends. Aristotle mentions this necessity just prior to his categories of friendships: "We conclude, therefore, that to be friends men must have good will for one another, must each wish for the good of the other on the basis of one of the three motives [about to



be] mentioned, and must each be aware of one another's good will" (*NE* VIII.2.1156).

A number of scholars have wrestled with the seemingly contradictory characteristics of utility- and pleasure-friendships, that they are self-serving and yet sites of reciprocal goodwill for the sake of the friend. Paul Waddell points out that these friendships "would be exploitative if each person aimed solely at his or her own pleasure or advantage, and not at that of the friend; however, if that were the case they would not be friendships at all" (56). He cites Martha C. Nussbaum, who argues that, although the *basis* of the friendship may be self-serving, its ultimate goal will be other-serving: "The *object* of the relation in all cases is the other person; but the person will be conceived of and known in a way bounded by the basis: as someone who is pleasant to be with, as a person well-placed for useful dealings, as a person of good character" (355). In other words, the goodwill extended to the utility- or pleasure-friend will be framed within the benefit received by the self; once the self no longer receives said benefit, active contribution to the friend's goodwill may not continue, and the friendship may come to an end. Goodwill thus is limited in friendships of utility and pleasure, both temporally (the bestowal of goodwill ends with the friendship) and in scope (how one manifests goodwill in these friendships is contingent upon the nature and extent of the friend's usefulness or pleasantness). Goodwill in a friendship of virtue presumably would not be constrained in these ways.

Paul Schollmeier provides a useful way of distinguishing how goodwill is shared in Aristotle's three types of friendships, which touches upon the first difference in nature between utility- and pleasure-friendships on the one hand and virtue-friendships on the other:

[Aristotle] implies that because of these differences in lovable objects, some friends bear good wishes for others altruistically, and some friends bear good wishes for others egoistically. He argues that those whom he calls good friends [friends of virtue] act for the sake of another essentially, advancing the good of another as an end. Those who are useful and pleasant friends act for the sake of another accidentally, advancing the good of another only as a means to some other end of their own. (38)

Nussbaum and Waddell might protest that Schollmeier's qualifications reintroduce the possibility of exploitation by his suggestion that goodwill for the useful and pleasant friends is only a means to an end. Admittedly, he does refer to utility- and pleasure-friends as "means"; perhaps it would be clearer to say that the wishing of goodwill to one's friend for her sake—which is an action that treats the friend properly as an end—becomes the means by which the self acquires some sort of gain—utility or pleasure.

It would seem, then, that all three friendships are the same because the self derives gain from her virtue-friend as well. This seeming conflation of the three types prompts Schollmeier's qualifications of "accidental" and "essential": the goodwill of the utility- or pleasure-friend, although present, is nevertheless accidental, whereas the goodwill of the virtue-friend is essential to the relationship. The key difference lies in the self's motivation: "[F]riends who are essentially friends need not appear to differ in their actions from those who are accidentally friends...But essential friends differ greatly from accidental friends in their intentions" (40). We could extrapolate further that the benefit the self derives from wishing her virtue-friend well is accidental, an unexpected bonus to the relationship that becomes additional proof for Aristotle's claim that friendship is essential for the good life (*NE* VIII.1.1155a).

Schollmeier's bald dichotomies of altruistic versus egoistic and accidental versus essential are helpful in maintaining a needed distance between virtue-friendships and the two inferior types. Some scholars want to award the latter types a nobility that they believe has been overlooked for too long. For example, Grunebaum wants to stick up for them by insisting "that they more closely resemble the ideal friendship by literally fulfilling Aristotle's reciprocal goodwill criterion" (60). But to emphasize the goodwill criterion is to distort Aristotle's ideal, the pursuit of virtue, which subsumes both utility and pleasure: "Now...it is the good man who is pleasant and useful at the same time" (*NE* VIII.6.1158a). The desire to emphasize the more unstable categories of friendship in Aristotle's theory I believe is endemic to our postmodern milieu, in which there is no consensus on how a human life is lived well or even if such a question is worthwhile. This lack of consensus is not unique to the contemporary West, though; Aristotle witnessed the same problem in Athens:

He admitted that many people...make of eudaimonia what they want, commonly defining it according to whatever gives them pleasure, but that is not an argument against his account of eudaimonia as much as it is testimony to their lack of moral development....[T]hey have never understood what happiness and well-being involve. It is not pleasure alone that makes one happy, but taking pleasure in the best possible things. (Waddell 38)

One of the first things Aristotle tackles in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is the confusion over what brings about *eudaimonia*, or a life of flourishing, for a person, and his discussion of friendship seems to be an important coalescing of his examination of the virtues before concluding what does in fact precipitate *eudaimonia*. But this line of thought goes beyond our current inquiry, so I will return to it later.

### *Differences in Nature*

So far, we have covered the bases of Aristotle's three types of friendship and have begun to explain their unique natures. All three types of friendship consist of a reciprocal goodwill between friends, but in utility- and pleasure-friendships, this goodwill is both accidental and egoistic, to use Schollmeier's terms; the goodwill shared in virtue-friendships, however, is essential and altruistic. Also, as I mentioned before, utility- and pleasure-friendships lack stability because they originate from changeable motives. The usefulness of a person hinges upon his friend's fluctuating circumstances, and even if a person retains a pleasant quality, such as his sense of humor, the taste of his friend is subject to caprice. Thus we see that the positive qualities that spark a utility- or pleasure-friendship may be stable, but a person's attraction or need for them is not. Moreover, the two friendship types that Aristotle deems inferior are founded upon a limited set of characteristics, perhaps even a single one, that each friend possesses; they do not take a holistic account of the person's character and therefore have no bearing on whether either friend is virtuous: "To be friends with one another on the basis of pleasure and usefulness is, accordingly, also possible for bad people, just as it is for good men with bad, and for one who is neither good nor bad with any kind of person at all" (*NE* VIII.4.1157a). This moral variability means that friends of utility or pleasure cannot depend upon each other to be trustworthy (1157a).

It is understandable, then, that Aristotle refers to friendships of virtue as "perfect and complete friendship, both in terms of time and in all other respects" (1156b). In terms of time, he expects virtue-friendships to last for the duration of the friends' lives because they are not constrained by either one's circumstantial

needs or whims of taste. In terms of character, he expects total confidence and reliability in virtue-friends' conduct toward each other because they have become friends after having gained a complete picture of each other's dispositions regarding the virtues. Aristotle can thus safely pronounce, "Because they are steadfast in themselves, they are also steadfast toward one another; they neither request nor render any service that is base. On the contrary, one might even say that they prevent base services; for what characterizes good men is that they neither go wrong themselves nor let their friends do so" (8.1159b).

Many commentators have pointed out that Aristotle's description of virtue-friendships as "perfect and complete" does not mean that only people who possess perfect and complete virtue, that is, those who make the morally right decision in every situation they encounter, are eligible for such friendship. In his influential essay on Aristotelian friendship, John M. Cooper considers this issue in detail:

There can be no doubt...that on Aristotle's theory what makes a friendship a virtue-friendship is the binding force within it of *some*—perhaps, for all that, partial and incomplete—excellence of the character, and the perfect friendship of the perfectly virtuous is only an especially significant special case of this. For this reason, it seems preferable to refer to friendship of the central kind...as "friendship of character." (308)

Cooper chooses his terminology to denote the basis of this type of friendship, but he admits that Aristotle usually chooses the phrase "friendship of the good," which reflects the philosopher's "teleological bias" (308). That Cooper wants to avoid this bias again indicates his position in an ethical world that either cannot agree upon a human *telos* or refutes the notion that one exists. In any event, the quality one should emphasize in people engaged in a virtue-friendship is their devotion to virtue, not whether they fulfill the virtuous ideal or if anyone

actually can fulfill that ideal. The significant qualities virtue-friends share are their ability to conceive of a human *telos* and their desire to pursue it: “We are drawn to certain people...because at least intuitively we feel an agreement with them on what we consider important, an agreement on our estimate of the point and purpose of life” (Waddell 58).

Most imperative for virtue-friends, according to Aristotle, is that they live in close proximity to each other: “For nothing characterizes friends as much as living in each other’s company” (*NE* VIII.5.1157b). Because the virtuous life is others-oriented, it makes sense that virtue-friends would spend extensive amounts of time together; likewise, one can understand why time and proximity are not central to self-focused friendships based in utility or pleasure. Pleasure and utility are not all-encompassing goods—constant exposure to something that begins pleasantly gradually becomes boring or tedious, and rarely does one have a perpetual need to be met.<sup>2</sup> Yet the good life, which is defined by virtuous action (a concept I will discuss shortly), encompasses the more restricted goods. Therefore, as I noted earlier, virtue-friends are pleasant and useful to each other, which also is unsurprising if they spend so much time together. On the other hand, pleasure- and utility-friends may have no desire to live near each other or spend very much time together (3.1156a).

Aristotle insists that virtue-friends share life together for two reasons: first, virtue manifests in actions. If two people’s virtues form the basis for their

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<sup>2</sup> One exception would be a person in need of round-the-clock medical care. This person may consider her nurse to be a utility-friend. Even so, it is rare that the same nurse attends a patient twenty-four hours every day, unless the person providing care has a deeper relationship with the patient, such as a spouse or child, in which case the friendship is not defined merely by utility; in that situation, a more profound devotion exists.

friendship, they must be in each other's presence to experience those virtues and to promote them: "Friends thus support our well-being both as co-partners in our agency and as objects of our virtuous actions" (Sherman 92). Virtue friends assist each other in performing virtuous deeds and act as recipients of those deeds. As I shall show later, action is central to Aristotle's ethics, but this focus does not mean that friendship is *only* constituted in action: just as the virtuous character of a person is exhibited in actions, so is the friendly character between two people exhibited in how they relate to each other (*NE* VIII.5.1157b). Nevertheless, virtue cannot lay dormant inside a person—either it atrophies from lack of use or is not actually present. Distance between friends produces the same effect: "[I]f the absence lasts for some time, it apparently also causes the friendship itself to be forgotten. Hence the saying: 'Out of sight, out of mind'" (1157b).

#### *Virtue Friendship's Object*

The second reason why friends must live in close proximity actually brings us to a discussion of virtue-friendship's object, the third dimension of friendship in Grunebaum's analytical apparatus: "The object of friendship is what friends do together as constitutive of their friendship" (32). One might say that the basis of the friendship is actualized in its object. Consider Grunebaum's example: "A friendship might...be based on pleasure and have as its object participation in amateur athletics. Pleasure would be the reason for friends participating together in athletics."<sup>3</sup> Virtue-friendships by nature require that

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<sup>3</sup> As Grunebaum's example indicates, the object of utility- and pleasure-friendships are countless. My explanation of these two friendship types suffices for the moment; further

friends spend large amounts of time with each other so that together they can shape the good life they want to pursue: “And whatever his existence means to each partner individually or whatever is the purpose that makes his life desirable, he wishes to pursue it together with his friends” (*NE IX.12.1172a*). We already understand that a shared sense of life’s purpose attracts virtue-friends to each other. Now, Aristotle makes clear that virtue-friends actively spur each other toward that purpose; they work together to fulfill it. Friendship becomes the context in which *eudaimonia*, the flourishing life, is attained: “The intrinsic worth of friendship...is...[in] providing the very form and mode of life within which an agent can best realize her virtue and achieve happiness” (Sherman 93).

Sharing daily life fosters the virtues in that a person creates “another self” within her friend (*NE IX.4.1166a*). Aristotle’s explanation of this phenomenon in the ninth chapter of the ninth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is extremely hard to follow.<sup>4</sup> It stems from his claim that a person loves her friend the way she loves herself: she is glad to be alive and wants her life to be good, her past and current actions are such that she feels comfortable in solitude with her memories, her desires align with virtuous action, and her emotions respond in the appropriate situations (*IX.4.1166a*). Similarly, she delights that her friend lives, and she desires that her friend’s life be good; she enjoys being in her friend’s presence; she desires the same things as her friend; and her friend’s emotional responses prompt hers. Because her treatment of herself runs parallel to how she treats her

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explanation will arise with the specific examples of these types in the novels. Now, I fully devote my attention to virtue-friendships and their object.

<sup>4</sup> See Sherman (106), Schollmeier (64-69, complete with a chart!), and Cooper (318-319) for interpretations.



friend, her friend becomes a “second self.” Now, Aristotle claims that happiness lies in the uniquely human action of perception, and we are happy to perceive our own existence, which is demonstrated in our act of perception. If perceiving our existence makes us happy, then perceiving the existence of our friends will make us happy because they are our second selves, and, as an added advantage, their existence is more readily perceptible because it is external to us. So, in order for this joyful perceiving to take place, friends must share their lives together (1169b-1170a).

Whether Aristotle’s proof stands up to logical scrutiny is not of paramount importance right now; however, two elements of his argument will become crucial in my analysis of modernist friendships. The first is his notion of multiple selves that are internal *and* external to the person:

Another self thus appears to be an embodiment of happiness in a locally or temporally distinct individual. A self is happiness and virtue embodied in someone who befriends, another self is this same activity and virtue embodied in someone who is befriended. And a self is happiness and virtue embodied in ourself as in a friend, another self is this same activity and virtue embodied in ourself as in someone befriended. (Schollmeier 62)

Essentially, Aristotle claims that a person’s psyche is divided, such that one part can befriend another. In the *Eudemian Ethics*, he makes the same implication when claiming that abstract good and personal good must be in agreement: “For what is worthwhile is what is good in the abstract, but what is worthwhile for you is what is good for you: and these must be brought to coincide....Where these do not coincide, a person is not perfectly good, because *room is left* for incontinence to arise; for incontinence just is discord in the passions between what is good and what is pleasant” (*EE* VII.2.1237a, my italics). The good-in-the-abstract must make friends with the good-for-you; otherwise, internal “discord”

will occur. Unsurprisingly, in the friendship sections of both the *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle discusses concord, or political agreement within the *polis*. Apparently, within a person there may exist “room” where negotiation must take place between desire (what one thinks is good for herself) and virtue (what is actually good). Aristotle argues that the two parties must reach concord, which can only happen if desire finds virtue’s claim appealing. Many of the novels I will examine deal with divided selves and the struggle between the internal and external expressions of the self.

The other important concept is Aristotle’s “activation” of existence: “Now, since a man’s perception that he exists is desirable, his perception of his friend’s existence is desirable, too. But only by living together can the perception of a friend’s existence be activated...” (1171b). Friends affirm each other’s existence through the mutual extension of their selves. Nancy Sherman describes it this way: “[Friendship] extends and redefines the boundaries of the good life in such a way that my happiness or complete good comes to include the happiness of significant others. Happiness or good living is thus ascribable to me, not as an isolated individual, but as a self extended, so to speak, by friends” (94). The virtuous activity that humans are uniquely designed to undertake necessitates that humans undertake that activity *together* in order to achieve a fully flourishing life. Sherman’s description emphasizes the benefit to self in this extension toward one’s friend, but Cooper emphasizes its essential altruistic component: “The motif of the friend as a mirror...implies that [a person’s] self-esteem only gets the support he seeks insofar as he first has precisely the same esteem for the other person and his life, taken by itself, as he will come to have for himself and his own life” (333). Yet the security of one’s own self always

seems to be in question, which makes the extension of self to another person even more challenging because of the vulnerability one must exhibit. Surely this vulnerability is why Aristotle insists that virtue-friendships develop slowly and with testing: “A stable friendship demands trust, and trust comes only with time. A person must be tried and tested, as Theognis says: ‘If you would know the mind of man or woman / First try them as you’d try a pair of oxen’” (*EE* VII.2.1237b).<sup>5</sup> Many of the characters in the novels I will analyze wrestle with internal discord. With such insecurity, can any of them actually extend themselves to activate their perception of another’s existence? I will investigate this important question.

To summarize my working definition of friendship for this project, I will be using Aristotle’s concept of the virtue-friendship, which is based on the friends’ mutual recognition of a desire to pursue a shared vision of the good life through living according to the virtues. Virtue-friendships are characterized by the stability of both partners’ moral dispositions; an essential, altruistic focus on each other’s wellbeing; the need for time and testing in order to develop unshakeable trust between the partners; and the need for partners to share daily life together so that they may affirm each other’s existence and promote and benefit from each other’s virtuous action. Finally, the object of virtue-friendships is *eudaimonia*, a life of flourishing, which is actualized through an active life of virtue. Acting as foils to the virtue-friendship are Aristotle’s two inferior types—utility- and pleasure-friendships, which do not require the presence of virtue in

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<sup>5</sup> Utility- and pleasure-friendships do not require time and testing—they may begin as soon as a need or desire arises that both friends are willing to mutually meet. There need not be proof of either partner’s moral character.

either partner and exhibit an egoistic focus on the self's wellbeing with the other's goodwill as an accidental benefit. Such friendships are unstable based on the fluctuations of usefulness and pleasure and so do not demand any particular duration or living arrangements. Although utility- and pleasure-friendships abound in the novels I will evaluate, like Aristotle, I will take virtue-friendships as my ideal in my analyses.

### *Aristotelian Virtue*

Over the course of my discussion so far, I have used a number of terms without providing extensive definitions for them—*eudaimonia*, *telos*, and, most importantly, *aretē*, or virtue. I have postponed doing so while fleshing out Aristotle's conception of friendship, but they form a significant philosophical-historical context that is important to grasp for my evaluation of modernist works according to Aristotelian standards to have any purpose. I turn now to that context, which will bridge Hellenic philosophy with American modernist literature.

*Aretē*, which scholars also translate as "excellence" or "goodness" in addition to "virtue," first relates to a person's functional goodness in his interaction with other people in society, "since man is by nature a social and political being" (I.1097b). A person's naturally social nature leads Aristotle to claim that the science of politics<sup>6</sup> is devoted to the greatest good of humans. He

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<sup>6</sup> We should not read our contemporary notion of politics onto Aristotle's use of the term, which has more to do with the communal values of the *polis*. The *polis* was an organic unity of people; whereas modern-day Americans view themselves as individuals first, ancient Greeks viewed themselves as members of the *polis* first. So politics has a much wider meaning than simply the study of government, although this was very important in the Greek perspective, since the *polis* was the focus of life.

rejects the idea that *aretē* is humans' greatest good because "a man might possibly possess it while asleep or while being inactive all his life, and while, in addition, undergoing the greatest suffering and misfortune. Nobody would call the life of such a man happy..." (I.1095b-1096a). In other words, possessing human excellence will not necessarily make one's life good. The good life, one in which a person flourishes, aims at happiness, a terminal goal or purpose (*telos*) that requires no supplementary good. Humans attain happiness by performing their proper function (*ergon*) as humans, which "consists in an activity of the soul in conformity with a rational principle or, at least, not without it" (I.1098a). But this rational activity of the soul must be done excellently, so virtue reappears. Virtue is not the ultimate good, but it plays an essential role in helping humans achieve their ultimate good: "Happiness...requires completeness in virtue..." (I.1100a).

Although Aristotle believes that virtues can lie dormant within the person, in order for a person to attain happiness, the virtues must be put into action: "For a characteristic may exist without producing any good result...[but a]n activity, on the other hand, must produce a result: <an active person> will necessarily act and act well" (I.1098b-1099a). More specifically, the human must perform her natural function (the rational activity mentioned above)—this is the action that must take place—and it must be done well; the quality of the action is where virtue comes into play. Such virtuous action must take place continuously, Aristotle demands, and the determination of whether a person's life is happy or not cannot happen until the person's life has ended, in order to prevent inconsistency in the identification of happiness (I.1100a-b). We see, then, that Aristotle's definition of a happy life led in virtuous action is quite rigorous:

The happy man will have the attribute of permanence which we are discussing, and he will remain happy throughout his life. For he will always or to the highest degree both do and contemplate what is in conformity with virtue; he will bear the vicissitudes of fortune most nobly and with perfect decorum under all circumstances, inasmuch as he is truly good and “four-square beyond reproach.” (I.1100b)

The elements that make a life happy and virtuous must be observable; they must be apparent to one who inspects the actions and events of a person’s life. For this reason, external goods must be a factor in the determination of whether a person’s life is happy—a person who has no money or property, who lacks physical attractiveness, or who has experienced considerable loss or grief cannot be considered supremely happy in Aristotle’s estimation (I.1101a). Yet, as the quotation above reveals, a person who suffers misfortune can still act virtuously and therefore will not be considered completely miserable at the end of her life. Consistency of action still retains value, even in light of external loss.

Consistency of virtuous action is important, but Aristotle does not assume that the action will be uniform in all circumstances. This lack of uniformity explains why acting virtuously is difficult; one must use practical wisdom (itself a virtue) to discern how to act most excellently given the details of the situation she is in:

[N]ot everyone can find the middle of a circle, but only a man who has the proper knowledge. Similarly, anyone can get angry—that is easy—or can give away money or spend it; but to do all this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, for the right reason, and in the right way is no longer something easy that anyone can do. It is for this reason that good conduct is rare, praiseworthy, and noble. (II.1109a)

The ability to be virtuous potentially could be available to anyone—anyone who is willing to practice virtue to the point where it becomes a habit. But virtuous

action is difficult, especially to perform it consistently. Thus, a virtuous character is rare and more laudable due to its rarity.

John McDowell observes how difficult this fluid conception of virtue is for post-Enlightenment rationality, which requires a formula for virtuous action: for example, to act courageously, we might suggest, means *never* to retreat in a battle situation or that there is a set of circumstances which must be in place before retreating, including a certain number of enemies one is up against, the duration you are to stay and fight before retreating, etc. Lacking such formulas to define reasonable action, those who ascribe to such rationality experience a kind of vertigo because they fear the unpredictable contingencies of social interaction that can be discerned through “the ‘mere’ sharing of forms of life” (150-1).

Virtuous action requires the interdependence of communal relationships, which are founded on a mutual understanding of excellence rather than on rational formulas mastered in isolation. Aristotle insists that the moral virtues are “formed by habit” (*NE* II.1103a), not by teaching because instruction can never account for the infinite variety of circumstances that one may encounter. The most thorough instructor could not account for every possible situation that her student would run into.

The *polis*, the city-state, should be devoted to promoting the excellent actions; as a result, *eudaimonia* becomes a communal attribute: “The moral life is a function of the polis, for it represents not the individual’s, but the community’s pursuit of the good, the community’s commitment to discover, embody, and sustain the virtues. The goal of the moral life is not just the virtuous person, but the virtuous community” (Waddell 46). Although Aristotle sets the *polis*’s unified commitment to the virtues as his goal, he confesses that *poleis* rarely

pursue, let alone attain, this goal (he grudgingly admits that in Sparta “the lawgiver seems to have paid attention to upbringing and pursuits” *NE* X.9.1180a). If citizens cannot rely upon the *polis* necessarily to foster their virtues, they must turn to one another to cultivate virtuous action in friendship. Nancy Sherman observes that when we choose a friend, “we choose to arrange our lives around a loyalty to another, and around a willingness to choose ends and pursuits within the context of this loyalty” (97). The resulting benefit is that we have a consistent companion on whom we can practice virtue, who will also practice virtue on us. Yet Paul Waddell makes it clear that the mutual practice of virtue between friends is not isolated from the *polis*; rather, the interaction of friends should benefit the *polis* (49-50). After all, friendship is another virtue and therefore contributes to one’s excellence as she functions within her socio-political world.

Although instruction cannot foster the necessary development of the virtues that practicing them can, it does not mean that no instruction of virtues occurs. People observe other people’s virtuous actions and mimic them when they find themselves in similar situations; they also discuss with one another about why one action seems morally correct rather than another, or they debate about which moral action should take precedence should two choices compete. Here we see the central role friendship plays in the development of virtue. One of the best arenas for such conversations is literature. As Iris Murdoch argues, “[T]he most essential and fundamental aspect of culture is the study of literature, since this is an education in how to picture and understand human situations” (34). But we must remember Aristotle’s mandate that virtues emerge through action, not through talk: “Yet most men do not perform such [virtuous] acts, but



by taking refuge in argument they think that they are engaged in philosophy and that they will become good in this way" (1105b). This action, as McDowell affirms, is not guaranteed through a particular formula, which makes virtuous action uncertain and perilous.

*Immanuel Kant*

As I mentioned in the previous section, the peril that John McDowell outlines stems from the individual detached from her relationship to a community; in other words, her identity is no longer defined largely by external relationships with other people with whom she lives but rather by how she perceives herself. Charles Taylor traces the philosophical underpinnings of this movement away from identity as a member of a community to an individualized self in his mammoth work *Sources of the Self* (1989). Alasdair MacIntyre also considers this evolution over history and sums it up as a rejection of the Aristotelian view of man:

[M]oral arguments within the classical, Aristotelian tradition—whether in its Greek or its medieval versions—involve at least one central functional concept, the concept of *man* understood as having an essential nature and an essential purpose or function....It is only when man is thought of as an individual prior to and apart from all roles that "man" ceases to be a functional concept. (56)

To specify exactly when this rejection of the Aristotelian concept of man takes place is, first of all, impossible, since it occurs over a long period of time, and, secondly, not important to my project. Suffice it to say that by the eighteenth century, when Immanuel Kant is formulating his moral theories, the view of humans as *individuals* first and foremost is deeply entrenched. To show how dramatically the notion of the virtues has changed from antiquity to the Enlightenment, I will give a brief sketch of Kant's moral system, which has

profoundly influenced the discussion of philosophical ethics ever since: “[F]or many philosophers after Kant, the subject of ‘morality’ is defined in distinctly Kantian terms. Indeed, *moral* philosophy is, arguably, a footnote to Kant” (Cameron 138).

Whereas Aristotle roots the good life in the interdependence of the *polis*, Immanuel Kant argues that the ultimate good lies in a person’s rational autonomy: “Because we are autonomous, each of us must be allowed a social space within which we may freely determine our own action. This freedom cannot be limited to members of some privileged class. The structure of society must reflect and express the common and equal moral capacity of its members” (Schneewind 310). Certainly, humans’ rational faculty is central to Aristotle’s conception of the good life, but he puts it at the service of reciprocating virtuous actions that bring about a community in concord; a person’s reason helps her observe principles of goodness and calculate how best to apply those principles in given situations. Jennifer K. Uleman argues that Kant’s conception of the good is the use of reason itself: “[B]eyond being preconditions of morality, freedom and rationality and will are all, for Kant, *themselves* good” (16). Perhaps these differences in conception of reason’s role lie in Kant’s claim that the human will, what he believes to be the seat of rationality, occupies the noumenal realm, which it shares with God, rather than the realm of “spatio-temporal” phenomena (11). Admittedly, Aristotle declares that “a life guided by intelligence is divine in comparison with human life” (*NE* X.7.1177b30-35), but again, that life is constrained by the spatio-temporal demands of one’s companions in the *polis*.

By contrast, Kant attempts to move away from the contingencies that arise from the conventions of specific communities with his notion of the Kingdom of Ends,

a systematic union of various rational beings through common laws. Now since laws determine ends in terms of their universal validity, if we abstract from the personal differences of rational beings as well as from all the content of their private ends we shall be able to think of a whole of all ends in systematic connection (a whole both of rational beings as ends in themselves and of the ends of his own that each may set himself)... (Kant 292)

Essentially, Kant constructs a *polis* out of reason. This rational *polis* is not merely imaginary, a thought experiment like Socrates' *kalipolis* in Plato's *Republic*, but it is the product of one person's mind. Because Kant sees moral laws as universal, though, he is able to superimpose an abstract community ruled by the categorical imperative on top of the real, visible world; a person claims membership in this rational community by using her will to give universal maxims (291).

Clarification of Kant's terms here would be useful: "A *maxim* is the subjective principle of volition; the objective principle (i.e., that which would also serve subjectively as the practical principle for all rational beings if reason had complete control over the faculty of desire) is the practical *law*" (306). In other words, a person using her will to act in a particular way is putting forth a maxim; to determine if a maxim is moral or not, one must test it as a universal law, that is, conclude if everybody should act in this particular way if placed in the same situation: "Maxims are subjective practice principles, that is principles of action which inform the action of an agent—a subject—at some time....Maxims are termed 'subjective' to indicate that here we are talking about the role of a principle (a principle-token) in the life and action of some subject at or through some time" (O'Neill 80-81). Kant's categorical imperative is that one must "act

only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law” (Kant 286). Moral action, then, is willing an action that conforms to a universal law, one that it would be reasonable for everyone to follow: “[P]ut intuitively, his view is just that reasoned thought and action should be informed by principles that can be followed by others” (O’Neill 81).

Kant admits that human wills are “under certain subjective limitations and hindrances,” but having a good will, a will that acts out of duty, putting aside all other desires and inclinations in order to align itself with universal laws, is for Kant the highest good (275): “According to Kant, human will authors an ultimate action-guiding principle—a moral law—that tells what matters most and how to act accordingly. It binds itself to this law, experiencing the law’s commands as absolute...” (Uleman 1). The person who acts purely out of reverence (*Achtung*) for the moral law, which has emerged from one’s will, exhibits true goodness because her choice to act out of duty also emerges from her will (Schneewind 326).

As an example, Kant explains the Christian scriptural command to love one’s enemy: “For, love as an inclination cannot be commanded, but beneficence from duty—even though no inclination impels us to it and, indeed, natural and unconquerable aversion opposes it—is *practical* and not *pathological* love, which lies in the will and not in the propensity of feeling, in principles of action and not in melting sympathy; and it alone can be commanded” (276). Kant’s understanding of a Christian’s duty to fulfill the command to love one’s enemy derives strictly from the reasonableness of the universal law, not from one’s personal, spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ, nor in response to the love that

God shows a person, nor even in fulfillment of a covenant relationship (say, something to the effect of “since I’ve committed my life to serving the Lord, then I must love my enemy”). All such things would exemplify “the personal differences of rational beings” or “the content of their private ends” that Kant says one needs to move away from in order to grasp the pure, rational substance of moral law.

Earlier we saw that Aristotle believes that a person’s appetites can be brought into agreement with the virtues, that the calculative quadrant of the soul, in a sense, trains the appetitive quadrant to desire virtuous, rather than vicious, living. For Kant, as the example of loving one’s enemy shows, the desires of the moral agent are not relevant. Aristotle wants to leave no room for discord within the person’s soul; Kant assumes that such discord is inevitable and most likely insurmountable, but this discord indicates that one has obligation to a moral law and justifies the presence of a strong human will. As J. B. Schneewind observes, “Only beings who find morality difficult and who develop persistence in struggling against the temptations can be virtuous” (318). The struggle is the action of the will. Onora O’Neill agrees that Kant “sees virtue not as a matter of bringing out varied desires into harmony by moderating and tempering them, but as the more strenuous demand that where they conflict we subordinate self-love to morality” (95). But this subordination carries ominous implications. First, that wayward desires cannot be brought into alignment with the moral law may imply an invalidity to some aspect of the law. Secondly, it seems that moral obligation demands that one’s identity be divided, if necessary, between one’s interior perception and exterior actions.

Furthermore, how does Kant safeguard other people's integrity as possessors of free, rational wills from a person who misuses her will? The seeming communal quality of his Kingdom of Ends might alleviate this possible problem, but what does Kant mean by "ends"? He explains,

[S]uppose there were something the *existence of which in itself* has an absolute worth, something which as *an end in itself* could be a ground of determinate laws; then in it, and in it alone, would lie the ground of a possible categorical imperative, that is, of a practical law. Now I say that the human being and in general every rational being *exists* as an end in itself, *not merely as a means* to be used by this or that will at its discretion; instead he must in all his actions, whether directed to himself or also to other rational beings, always be regarded *at the same time as an end*. (289)

From his explanation we see that every member of the community is both a subject and a "king" in Kant's kingdom because they both create universal law through the acts of their wills and are constrained by those universal laws in the form of duty. For this reason, the "universality" of the law keeps each lawgiver in check—because a person has to follow her own law, supposedly she will not act corruptly out of her self-interest (291). This system of checks and balances seems to reintroduce a kind of communal interdependence into Kant's conception of moral action, but it actually weakens those communal bonds. Aristotle treats the *polis* as the end because he believes that the good of the *polis* will ultimately be the good for all of its inhabitants. By Kant shifting the emphasis to individual people, he radically changes the vision of community from an organic gathering of people who work together to meet one another's needs to a more abstract, contractual relationship: as long as individuals are mutually restrained by universal laws, then they will function together in community.

Jennifer K. Uleman praises Kant's conception of the free, rational will, supposedly because it "reclaims for humanity many of the awe-inspiring qualities early modern philosophers invested in God: creative power (the ability to bring genuinely new things into being, to initiate change in the world), self-sufficiency (at least with respect to the task of living a morally good life), intimacy with universality and necessity (in understanding and in action)" (19-20). Although she denies that Kant would approve of Friedrich Nietzsche's project of "radical self-invention" (4), the former's formulation of morality opens the door for the latter to explode the discussion of ethics that began with Plato. Once Kant vests the individual will with creating universal moral law, he exposes human purpose and communal interdependence to great danger. He seems to ascribe to traditional virtues—telling the truth, preserving life—but he also optimistically assumes that everyone would see the rational merit in continuing the traditional virtues. If moral law is left up to the individual, however, why *should* he choose to act virtuously, rather than self-interestedly? Immanuel Kant opens the space in which much of modernism's existential angst will take place—the prevailing moral standard that the novels' characters face bears Kantian traits, such as universality and the emphasis on individual will. We will see, however, that the benefits for which Uleman applauds Kant's moral philosophy all have dark consequences as reality diverges from the ideal: destructive power, alienation, and identity-effacing conformity.

*Friedrich Nietzsche*

Whereas Kant's ideal is the good will that acts in accordance with duty, Nietzsche's ideal is the will freed to attain power: "Nietzsche's definition of 'the

supreme will to power' ...has a notable feature: that 'will to power' is presented as the *achievement* of stamping Becoming with the character of Being—not as the *intention* of doing so. In other words, 'will to power' is the securing of power over the world, not a 'striving for power', where the 'striving' and the 'power' are related as cause and effect" (May 13). One can gather from Simon May's explanation that the will-to-power should not be read necessarily as the acquisition of political power; the power one gains "over the world" relates to the individual removing the constraints of the world on one's identity. The will-to-power is for Nietzsche the foundational life force, and already it is apparent that community is not of primary concern. In fact, the unfettered will-to-power will necessarily isolate an individual from society because it enables her to overcome the constraints of the dominating morality, which he believes is designed to keep weaker wills bound in community.

Like Kant, Nietzsche sees morality as a superimposition, but unlike Kant, he does not consider morality to be a transcendental system of laws that can and must be proved rationally: "[I]t is high time to replace the Kantian question, 'How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?' by another question, 'Why is belief in such judgments *necessary*?'—and to comprehend that such judgments must be *believed* to be true, for the sake of the preservation of creatures like ourselves; though they might, of course, be *false* judgments for all that!" (*Beyond* Sect. 11). In other words, Nietzsche does not want to pursue the question of how *the* system of morality works but rather why people insist that such a system exists and governs them (Nehamas 240); the noumenal realm of morals that Kant espouses merely divides the actual world in which people exist and enables them



to falsely rest in “the metaphysical comforts located in the world of ‘Being’, the ‘real’ world” of ideas (Cameron 141).

Kant’s moral system is not the only one that Nietzsche blasts; he in fact considers the judgments of morality since Plato to be false, rejecting the notion “that reason and instinct of themselves tend toward one goal, the good, ‘God’” (*Beyond* 191). Thus, Kant’s effort to discover the natural laws of morality through the use of one’s rational faculties is, according to Nietzsche, an act of folly. Morality is an artificial construct by humans, and since Plato, the procession of philosophers has used rationality either to justify the moral code already in place or to prove that their particular moral prejudices were true to nature. Essentially, morality masks the true nature of things, which is the competition of wills for power; in *The Genealogy of Morals*, he refers to “morality as consequence, as symptom, as mask, as tartufferie, as illness, as misunderstanding; but also morality as cause, as remedy, as stimulant, as restraint, as poison” (*Genealogy* Pref. 6). The former list repudiates the notion of morality as origin, the system of *a priori* truths from which we derive meaning for our lives; the latter list indicts morality as the adulteration of full existence, the drug that distorts humanity’s pursuit of brave, noble living.

His indictment against morality specifically weakens Kant’s Kingdom of Ends in two ways: first, he shows it to be synthetic—not in the Kantian sense<sup>7</sup>—but in the sense that it is not a natural, *a priori* system of laws: “It is *we* alone who have devised cause, sequence, for-each-other, relativity, constraint, number, law,

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<sup>7</sup> Synthetic judgments are “judgments that are known for certain to be true, independently of experience, but not by definition. His examples include the judgment that every event has a cause” (Kaufmann 202).

freedom, motive, and purpose; and when we project and mix this symbol world into things as if it existed 'in itself,' we act once more as we have always acted—*mythologically*" (*Beyond* 21). Secondly, he denies the universal prescriptivity of morals, declaring it "merely another value," not a constitutive characteristic (May 13). As a result, he repudiates the categorical imperative ("'Good' is no longer good when one's neighbor mouths it. And how should there be a 'common good'! The term contradicts itself: whatever can be common always has little value" [43]), the identification of humans as ends in themselves, and the virtues that these conditions were supposed to protect: "There is no other way: the feelings of devotion, self-sacrifice for one's neighbor, the whole morality of self-denial must be questioned mercilessly and taken to court....There is too much charm and sugar in these feelings of 'for others,' 'not for myself,' for us not to need to become doubly suspicious at this point and to ask: 'are these not perhaps—*seductions?*'" (33).

Nietzsche sees himself as a figure at the end of a transitional moment in history, when the crutch of morality is about to be flung away, along with the limiting notions of "good" and "evil." These moralistic notions had produced an anemic Western culture and a population of sickly wills stifled by the conventions of Christianity, which he classifies as a slave morality that was borne out of the *ressentiment* felt by weak-willed humans against those with strong, noble wills (*Genealogy* I 10). Nietzsche sees his historical moment as a turning point ripened by the progress of modernity: capitalism and industrialism had numbed the religious instinct in people (*Beyond* 58), and rational positivism gradually dissolved the "old soul concept" (54). In other words, modernity was

breaking the bonds of community that for centuries had enabled the traditional view of morality and virtue to function unopposed.

Enlightenment rationality, seeking a non-spiritual justification for Christian morality, gradually watered down the meaning of being human:

[T]he diminution of European man constitutes *our* greatest danger, for the sight of him makes us weary.—We can see nothing today that wants to grow greater, we suspect that things will continue to go down, down, to become thinner, more good-natured, more prudent, more comfortable, more mediocre, more indifferent, more Chinese, more Christian—there is no doubt that man is getting “better” all the time. (*Genealogy* I 12)

In this passage, Nietzsche directly challenges the myth of progress central to the project of modernity by equating (European) humanity’s gradual goodness with their gradual blandness. He urges moderns to question whether enlightened, rationalized, universal morality truly makes a better person and, as a result, a better civilization.

This “better” person Nietzsche cannot stand to look at is described in more detail in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Labeled, the “objective man,” the best product of Enlightenment rationality is merely

an instrument, a precious, easily injured and clouded instrument for measuring and, as an arrangement of mirrors, an artistic triumph that deserves care and honor; but he is no goal, no conclusion and sunrise, no complementary man in whom the *rest* of existence is justified, no termination—and still less a beginning, a begetting and first cause, nothing tough, powerful, self-reliant that wants to be master—rather only a delicate, carefully dusted, fine, mobile pot for forms that still has to wait for some content and substance in order to “shape” itself accordingly—for the most part, a man without substance and content, a “selfless” man. Consequently, also nothing for women, *in parenthesi*. (207)

With the “objective man” as the end product of Western civilization under the constraints of a “slave morality,” Nietzsche prophesies the rise of a new kind of man that would step outside of the boundaries imposed by traditional morality

to lead civilization in a new direction under his powerful will. He describes this man as a “new philosopher,” harkening back to Plato’s vision of the philosopher king in terms of a man in possession of the wisdom to lead, though not under the same constraints for the pursuit of the Good, nor with the altruistic motives of benevolently guiding others to moral fulfillment. No, the new philosopher’s duty is strictly to himself (Cameron 142-143).

The character of Nietzsche’s new philosopher will be important in the modernist period, for he becomes a paragon: “[T]he philosopher will betray something of his own ideal when he posits: ‘He shall be greatest who can be loneliest, the most concealed, the most deviant, the human being beyond good and evil, the master of his virtues, he that is overrich in will. Precisely this shall be called *greatness*: being capable of being as manifold as whole, as ample as full’” (VI.212). Although this new philosopher is a paragon in the modernist period, the characters of modernist fiction seem to struggle between the lonely master of his own will who has transcended conventional morality and the selfless, objective man that for Nietzsche represents the previous era. Both types are released into a dizzying world where there is no specific *telos* outside of their own perspectives to pursue. Alexander Nehamas observes,

This is the problem of finding reasons or criteria for establishing one’s identity, one’s values, and the legitimacy of one’s enterprise as valid without appeal to anything that is located outside that identity, those values, or that enterprise. But can anything we do be of any value if all external or objective standards of value—traditional, religious, or rational—have become suspect? (224-225)

Nehamas points out that this problem not only is articulated in modernist art but also lies at the heart of Nietzsche’s project.

If Nietzsche has in fact stormed Kant's Kingdom of Ends and set it ablaze by exposing the artificiality of moral codes, if Nietzsche correctly forecasted the emergence of the modernist character—the isolated, independent creator of her own reality—then is it now pointless to discuss virtues, especially in the context of the period that seemed to eschew the idea completely? The answer to this question depends upon what survives his attack from what previous philosophers have said. For instance, Nietzsche still seems to accept that a “community” still exists, even though he believes humans with strong wills should transcend communal constraints in order to acquire power for self-definition. Simon May notes that, because Nietzsche conceives of the person as a product of only the material world (i.e., not of a transcendent, noumenal realm) and the traits she has inherited from her surrounding culture, then “individual history is, in turn, indissolubly conditioned by its membership in a particular ethical community with a particular history...” (May 20).

Likewise, “morality” still exists, even though it is manufactured by the strongest wills to keep weaker wills in line: “Hence a philosopher should claim the right to include willing as such within the sphere of morals—morals being understood as the doctrine of the relations of supremacy under which the phenomenon of ‘life’ comes to be” (*Beyond* 19). And, although he rejects any notion of normativity (218), Nietzsche admits that the new men, “[w]e Europeans of the day after tomorrow, we first-born of the twentieth century,” do espouse certain “virtues,” antagonistic to conventional morality as they may be (214).<sup>8</sup> Much of the raw materials of moral discussion do survive Nietzsche's attack,

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<sup>8</sup> Cameron includes a list of virtues mentioned by Nietzsche throughout his writings (155-156).

even if he radically transforms them, and therefore it is still reasonable to discuss virtue in light of the modernist period.

Although I have explained how Nietzsche undermines the Enlightenment goal of providing a rationalistic basis for morality epitomized in the work of Kant, I have not discussed how Nietzsche's philosophy compares with Aristotle's treatment of the virtues. As I have already mentioned, Nietzsche repudiates universal moral commands, exemplified in the Categorical Imperative; similarly, he does not believe that all humans share a single *telos*, but Nehamas quickly reminds us that human existence is not purposeless:

"Nietzsche, as we have seen, denies *the* goal, but not goals..." (231); rather, those goals depend upon the unique makeup of the individual: "[C]onstraints of nature, nurture, and decisive life-circumstances constitute a broad personal *telos* that limits us to a certain range of possible values and 'destinies'" (May 18-19).

Thus, what actions a person takes to live well will depend upon who she is and the circumstances she encounters in her life, and therefore the virtues are also defined by the individual person: "For Nietzsche...there is no agent-independent moral status because the nobility of an act is traced exclusively to its agent. In contrast with Aristotle's view that possessing the virtues leads to human greatness, Nietzsche's position is that the 'noble' type *determines* virtue" (Cameron 152).

It might seem, since a person's *telos* and virtues are contingent upon her milieu, that Nietzsche still proffers a communal dimension to a person's actualization through the will-to-power. Indeed, May argues that relationships would be essential for such fulfillment, à la Aristotle (118). But passages I have already cited suggest otherwise, including this final one from *The Genealogy of*

*Morals*, which links altruism with nihilism: “It was precisely here [in “unegoistic” instincts] that I saw the *great* danger to mankind, its sublimest enticement and seduction—but to what? to nothingness?—it was precisely here that I saw the beginning of the end, the dead stop, a retrospective weariness, the will turning *against* life, the tender and sorrowful signs of the ultimate illness...” (Pref. 5).

The other-centeredness that characterizes Aristotelian friendship, which he considers essential to the pursuit of virtue, is rejected by Nietzsche as the pathway to non-existence. We will see in the novels, then, that Nietzsche’s revolt against Kantian morality is both a boon and detriment to the modernist psyche: he provides the space for an individual to separate from socially enforced morality to critically question whether it actually promotes the person’s pursuit of the good life, but he also allows the individual to focus on herself, not only intellectually but appetitively, thereby threatening to dissolve bonds of *philia* that make a community cohesive and that enable people to assist one another in reaching their *teloi*.

#### *A Return to the Virtues*

A number of philosophers following the period of High Modernism have attempted to rehabilitate the concept of virtue as a viable way of discussing ethics. Alasdair MacIntyre posed the challenge in this way: “If a premodern view of morals and politics [i.e., a view based on the virtues] is to be vindicated against modernity, it will be in *something like* Aristotelian terms or not at all” (111). The following survey of the most prominent voices in the renewed study of virtue ethics serves my study of the modernist novels both by revealing what is lacking in twentieth-century discourse about morals from Aristotle’s

conception and by critiquing what Aristotle's conception lacks that modernists (and postmodernists) struggle to provide.

This renewed interest in virtue began with G. E. M. Anscombe's essay from 1958, "Modern Moral Philosophy." She begins her essay by observing that Aristotle handles concepts largely alien to modern discourse on ethics (1), and this profound difference means that "[w]e cannot...look to Aristotle for any elucidation of the modern way of talking about 'moral' goodness, obligation, etc." (2). Her rejection of Aristotle, however, does not mean that she believes modern philosophers have a better grasp of the true ethical issues; indeed, she argues, "all the best-known writers on ethics in modern times, from Butler to Mill, appear to me to have faults as thinkers on the subject which make it impossible to hope for any direct light on it from them." Modern ethics differ from Aristotle because they operate under a paradigm of law: one evaluates a person's virtuous or ethical action based on how well she follows a particular set of laws. Anscombe attributes this law-based approach to the Judeo-Christian influence that has prevailed in Western civilization since late antiquity. Aristotle does not base his conception of ethics on a legal code; in fact, as Martha Nussbaum points out, Aristotle believes that it would be impossible to establish a code that would account for the infinite variations in human interactions that require a nuanced moral response (301 ff.).

Anscombe's inability to reconcile Aristotelian ethics with modern systems, then, is understandable, but it does not explain why modern systems confound her. The reason for this latter dilemma is that these systems still operate under the law paradigm, even though their creators have repudiated the Judeo-Christian worldview that made such an approach to ethics reasonable:



To have a *law* conception of ethics is to hold that what is needed for conformity with the virtues failure in which is the mark of being bad *qua* man (and not merely, say, *qua* craftsman or logician)—that what is needed for *this*, is required by divine law. Naturally it is not possible to have such a conception unless you believe in God as a law-giver; like Jews, Stoics, and Christians. But if such a conception is dominant for many centuries, and then is given up, it is a natural result that the concepts of ‘obligation’, of being bound or required as by a law, should remain though they had lost their root.... (Anscombe 6)

Without belief in a thoroughly good, all-knowing law-giver, it makes no sense to act virtuously in fulfillment of a legal code—whose legal code does one follow, and what makes hers the superior choice? These are the issues Nietzsche brings to light by eschewing all moral codes as manmade fictions. Furthermore, ethical action based on a legal code relies on a person’s interpretation of the law, which may result either in a morally paralyzed agent unable to act based on her rigorous understanding of the moral code or an agent capable of atrocities based on her skillful manipulation of the code and its loopholes. In other words, without a consensus on which code to follow, and without a worthy arbiter of the code, morality based on obligation to a law does not work.

The problem is too large for Anscombe to solve in her essay; rather, she suggests a first step in correcting the faulty trajectory of ethical discourse. She urges her readers to abandon the evaluation of acts using the vague terms “morally right” or “morally wrong” in favor of the vocabulary of virtues, a vocabulary that is simultaneously more precise—because it labels an act with a particular quality—and vaguer—because one’s understanding of a virtue is limited to examples in which that virtue is manifested (16). This shift in vocabulary is why Anscombe cannot attempt to solve the problem of modern ethics’ indecipherability: she is opening a frontier that has not been explored

thoroughly by anyone since the ancient philosophers.<sup>9</sup> Although a reappraisal of virtues may be the future of ethics, she asserts that this reappraisal requires greater knowledge in the field of psychology, a connection that understandably emerges from her “definition” of virtues:

It might remain to look for “norms” in human virtues: just as *man* has so many teeth, which is certainly not the average number of teeth men have, but is the number of teeth for the species, so perhaps the species *man*, regarded not just biologically, but from the point of view of the activity of thought and choice in regard to the various departments of life—powers and faculties and use of things needed—“has” such-and-such virtues: and this “man” with the complete set of virtues is the “norm”, as “man” with, e.g., a complete set of teeth is a norm. (14)

Anscombe’s definition of virtue thus involves some human purpose—virtues enable a person to do what she needs to do. But that definition begs the question, what does a person need to do? As Aristotle would put it, what is a person’s *ergon*, or unique function? Another issue plagues Anscombe’s definition: if the presence of virtues is a human norm, like the presence of thirty-two teeth is a norm, of whose virtues does one take inventory? Which virtuous specimen of humanity will be the paragon for all: Aristotle’s *megalopsyche*? Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*? Jesus Christ? These two problems are related: for every candidate running for the paragon of virtue, there is a variation in the definition of humans’ primary function.

The questions that emerge from Anscombe’s essay, both in her critique of law-based ethics and in her adoption of virtue ethics, are problematic only in terms of a *shared* concept of ethics. An *individual* does not necessarily have to

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<sup>9</sup> Of course, medieval theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas, wrote extensively on the virtues, but their treatment was within the framework of Christianity, a law-based moral code given by a divine Lawmaker.

weigh these questions: she can take or leave any code, cultivate any trait within herself, or admire any paragon based on her own set of criteria. Only when she insists that other individuals adopt her conception does she have to address these questions of *why* a particular code or trait or paragon is worthy. The need to address these questions is not new; Plato and Aristotle had to convince their audiences that their conceptions of the good life were right. Nor is the need to establish some common ground that may not have been there previously; Paul of Tarsus' worldview steeped in Jewish tradition differed considerably from that of the Greeks that he disputed with, which required him to find a place where their perspectives would meet before he could begin to convince them of his message.

What has made the discussion of ethics so tricky in the past century is that many people no longer see the need for a unified, comprehensive system of ethics that is shared. As long as individuals collectively believe that they should not infringe or impinge upon one another, then virtues and ethics only need to suit the individual. Philippa Foot demonstrates this notion in her critique of Richard Hare's philosophy:

[W]hen Hare describes someone who listens to all his adversary has to say and then at the end simply rejects his conclusion, we want to ask "How can he?" Hare clearly supposes that he can, for he says that at this point the objector can only be asked to make up his mind for himself. No one would ever paint such a picture of other kinds of argument—suggesting, for instance, that a man might listen to all that could be said about the shape of the earth, and then ask why he should believe that it was round. We should want, in such a case, to know how he met the case put to him; and it is remarkable that in ethics this question is thought not to be in place. (97)

Foot considers knowledge to be collective, that is, if one person imparts accurate information to another in a clear, understandable way, the second person receives it, internalizes it, and possesses it in the same way that the first person

does. So earth's roundness is observed and agreed upon—not that the earth would not be round if people did not believe it was, but that reasonable people are inclined to unify under a clearly provable truth. Again, this is not to say that ethical matters are always as clear and provable as the earth's roundness. But what shocks Foot is that someone could set out demonstrable reasons for why an ethical matter should be dealt with in a particular way with the same clarity that the roundness of the earth can be shown, and the listener may still opt not to agree with it. In other words, reasonable people do not necessarily unify under *moral* truth the way they do objective, scientific facts, even if the former is reasonably explained. Moral truths, at bottom, become a matter of taste; the individual decides on her own what reasons are suitable for justifying a moral truth.

Charles Taylor addresses this problem as one of frameworks: "This vague term points towards a relatively open disjunction of attitudes. What is common to them all is the sense that no framework is shared by everyone, can be taken for granted as *the* framework tout court, can sink to the phenomenological status of unquestioned fact" (17). Thus the problem Foot identifies in Hare's assessment. One person can provide a clear explanation for the morality or immorality of an act, and another can hear this explanation, understand it, and then reject it. Alasdair MacIntyre agrees with Taylor's view, adding that, without an agreed upon framework, ethical disputes become interminable: "There seems to be no rational way of securing moral agreement in our culture" (6). In Aristotelian terms, our culture lacks the moral unity of his ideal *polis*. MacIntyre traces the incoherence of moral discussion "as mere expressive assertion" (11) in the late twentieth century to the tenets of Emotivism, a philosophy propounded by

English philosophers in the early twentieth century, which members of the English intelligentsia quickly embraced: “Emotivism is the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are *nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character” (11-12). That people would seriously ascribe to Emotivism reflects the distinctly modern crisis that one “can anxiously doubt whether life has meaning, or wonder what its meaning is” (Taylor 16). As mentioned in the previous paragraph, this crisis arises because people cannot agree on why an act is virtuous or not and therefore cannot even agree on if the judgment matters. And finally, one might ask, can these questions be answered without having a clear answer for Aristotle’s main moral question: what is a person’s purpose?

The return to a virtue-based ethical discourse thus brings into sharp relief the central question, the disagreement over which has created the incoherence of ethical debate for over a century. As Anscombe’s definition of virtue suggests, there must be a particular human function or purpose; we could use Aristotle’s term *telos*. MacIntyre’s definition of virtue also points to a human *telos*: “A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to *practices* and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods” (191, my italics). In order to understand his definition of virtue, one must also know his definition of practice, which is

any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human

powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended. (187)

MacIntyre then gives a list of different practices, which include football, chess, architecture, farming, studies of the hard sciences and history, painting, and music. But again, if we were to extend his definition to the act of living life, an act that would fall under his definition of practice, the question of how a human should best live remains, which MacIntyre admits: "I have suggested so far that unless there is a *telos* which transcends the limited goods of practices by constituting the good of a whole human life, the good of a human life conceived as a unity, it will *both* be the case that a certain subversive arbitrariness will invade the moral life *and* that we shall be unable to specify the context of certain virtues adequately" (203).

One more definition of virtue will show the link between moral action and human purpose that virtue seems to demand. Iris Murdoch defines virtue as "good habit and dutiful action" that attempts to view reality undistorted by "selfish consciousness" (91, 93). A neo-Platonist, Murdoch holds out the hope that there is a greater reality, a transcendent Good that can be grasped, but only vaguely, outside of a person's limited, individual perspective: "Good is indefinable...because of the infinite difficulty of the task of apprehending a magnetic but inexhaustible reality....If apprehension of good is apprehension of the individual and the real, then good partakes of the infinite elusive character of reality" (42). Murdoch's may be the most modernistic definition of virtue because she admits of humans' fragmented characters and the inability ever to fully grasp what the Good is: "The self is a divided thing and the whole of it

cannot be redeemed any more than it can be known. And if we look outside the self what we see are scattered intimations of Good" (99).

In addition, Murdoch's conception of virtue is modernistic for its exaltation of art, which she calls "the most educational of all human activities and a place in which the nature of morality can be *seen*" (87-88). Art is so important because it provides an opportunity for steady contemplation of the human condition through a form that shares nature's perfection. As the definition above suggests, a person must pay attention to what goes on outside of herself, to pay attention to other individuals, in order to practice virtue; as "a kind of goodness by proxy," art gives us an opportunity to cultivate our attention (87). This cultivation of attention to something outside of oneself that art enables one to practice sounds similar to the function that friendship is supposed to perform in Aristotle's conception of cultivating the virtues—the friend acts as "another self," a mirror by which one sees her moral strengths and weaknesses (*NE IX.9.1170a*).

Murdoch's definition of virtue fails, though, and its failure comes from her adoption of the modern dilemma, that life is pointless: "The pointlessness of art...is the pointlessness of human life itself, and form in art is properly the simulation of the self-contained aimlessness of the universe" (86). Later she states, "The indefinability of Good is connected with the unsystematic and inexhaustible variety of the world and the pointlessness of virtue" (99).

She does not leave her readers with much to work with: if human life is pointless and the Good is indefinable, what will motivate a person to act virtuously? Why should a human not pursue her own selfish ends? Although Anscombe's and MacIntyre's definitions do not include a description of what the

human *telos* is, they at least leave the opening for one to be inserted. Murdoch gives no such opening. Again, she repudiates the *Angst* described by the existentialists, describing it as “a kind of fright which the conscious will feels when it apprehends the strength and direction of the personality which is not under its immediate control” (38-39). But Murdoch’s conception of virtue and the Good cannot assuage a person’s fears, either. She admits, “Of course one is afraid that the attempt to be good may turn out to be meaningless, or at best something vague and not very important, or turn out to be as Nietzsche described it....That a glance at the scene prompts despair is certainly the case” (72-73). To get around this seemingly unavoidable despair, Murdoch falls back on her notion of paying attention: if a person pays attention with compassion to the human suffering around her, then she will discover that “there is more than this” (73); she quickly qualifies this discovery as “something with...a metaphysical position but not a metaphysical form,” meaning that there is some transcendent truth to be gained—the Good—but not some transcendent being to be known—God. Murdoch, then, asks her readers to take a leap of faith, to pay attention to others in faith that they will find something “more than this.” If life has no purpose, though, a person lacks a necessary motivation to pay attention in the first place: if life has no meaning, why should one risk looking for something more, which itself may be meaningless? Murdoch tries to return virtue to interactions between people, but she is thwarted by operating in modernism’s vacuum of meaning, a location where numerous writers only encounter despair.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Friendship Fooled in Willa Cather's "Problem" Novels

Ann W. Fisher-Wirth considers Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* to be "both a culmination and a reversal of" the three novels immediately preceding it and *My Ántonia* (36). In all of these novels, Fisher-Wirth argues, Cather addresses "concerns with possession and loss, with fall and redemption." Why she chooses to overlook *One of Ours*, which was published in 1922, four years after *My Ántonia*, is not clear. In fact, Merrill Maguire Skaggs calls *One of Ours* a "watershed novel" (10), suggesting that Cather's frequently repeated observation that "[t]he world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts" (*SPOW* 812) reflects a moment of crisis in Cather's life somehow related to the publication of what Cather would later call her favorite novel. Skaggs believes that Cather searches how "to weld her world whole again" through her subsequent novels. Regardless of what caused Cather's anxiety, she clearly wrestles with it in what Bernice Slote refers to as "the three problem or conflict novels of the 1920s—*A Lost Lady*, *The Professor's House*, and *My Mortal Enemy* (that curious triptych)" (110). Both Slote and Skaggs trace a trajectory for Cather's career that stretches beyond the five novels I will examine: Slote believes Cather's writing follows a parabola from her early newspaper writing to her final consideration of her Virginia roots in *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* (109), and Skaggs analyzes how Cather "very slowly works out her own salvation" from 1922 to the end of her career (10). Two conclusions can be drawn that justify my focus on Cather's 1920s novels, however: first, Cather uses her mid-

decade novels as the space in which to struggle with some problem that seems to arise from her writing of *One of Ours*; second, she seems to make some breakthrough in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, “her most comprehensive, complete, happiest novel, containing her most well-rounded and fully adjusted protagonist, Jean Marie Latour” (Murphy 30).

I argue that, through the experiences of Claude Wheeler in *One of Ours*, Cather discovers that American society does not offer its citizens a fulfilling purpose for life. Without a community that can be trusted to guide its members toward a worthwhile *telos*, she determines that individuals must conduct the search, making meaning of their lives on their own. Richard H. Millington observes that Cather practices a “democratization of the figure of the artist” by instilling in them the power to make meaning out of their own lives (60). In her next three novels, then, she tests different ways that her characters can make their lives meaningful—social reputation, pleasure, an idealized past, a romanticized present—but each pursuit results in the character’s disillusionment. A main cause for this failure lies in the character’s appropriating his friend’s self as his own, a practice Stuart Burrows finds throughout Cather’s writing: “[D]iscovering who one is in Cather’s fiction...repeatedly takes place by living *through* someone else or experiencing oneself *as* someone else. The reason for this has to do with Cather’s acute sense of the social isolation and fragmentation of American life” (24).

It would seem that Willa Cather’s characters are practicing one of the central tenets of Aristotelian friendship, treating their friends as other selves, but there is a crucial difference that results in their failure to achieve *eudaimonia*: Cather’s characters claim their friends’ identities or experiences for their own

benefit, to stabilize themselves, thereby making the process essentially egoistic. They do not realize that their selfish reverence of their friends' identities actually distorts the image of their friends; they stake their identities on an *interpretation* of their friends, not their friends' true selves. Cao Jinghua describes this phenomenon with Niel Herbert and Marian Forrester in *A Lost Lady*: "[T]hough he admires Marian's contradictions, [Niel] is unwilling or refuses to accept her as she is and instead selects something stable in her on which to base his faith" (14). Niel turns Marian into an idol for his unstable identity but then harshly condemns her when she fails to live up to his idealized image. Many characters in Cather's problem novels—Niel, Tom Outland, Godfrey St. Peter, Myra Henshawe—never find fulfillment because they want to claim as the meaning of their lives a distortion of what they admire in their friends.

The vicarious living that Burrows describes does not have to end in disaster, though, if we approach it from Aristotle's perspective. In his discussion of friendship, he compares the joy that benefactors derive from promoting their friends' good to that of the craftsman for his work: "[T]he recipient of their benefaction is the work of their own hands, and, accordingly, they [the benefactors] love their handiwork more than it loves its maker" (*NE IX.7.1168a*). Above, I claimed that people who appropriate their friends' identities to stabilize their own actually distort their friends by their personal interpretations; basically, they make their friends in their own image, which is ironic, since they possess fragmented, uncertain identities. Here, Aristotle says that selflessly serving one's friend makes the latter one's handiwork, also implying that one's identity is imprinted on his friend. But notice Aristotle maintains that the benefactor promotes the friend's good, and as we observed in the previous

chapter, friends activate each other's existence (12.1171b). So, rather than further destabilizing one's self and distorting one's friend by egoistically appropriating the latter's identity, Aristotelian virtue-friendship amplifies the identities, the existences, of both people. This selfless, virtuous amplification becomes Cather's breakthrough solution in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* for the problems of her previous novels. While it is hinted at earlier in the actions of other characters—Captain Forrester, Roddy, Nellie—it takes center stage in the friendship between Fathers Latour and Vaillant: they practice such friendship on each other, they demonstrate it to their parishioners, and they leave its mark on the communities they serve.

Two studies that address friendship in Willa Cather's works are important to mention before commencing my analysis. The first is John P. Anders's chapter on "Spiritual Friendship in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*." He points out that friendship pervades the novel, not just between Latour and Vaillant, but also "Eusabio and Latour, Vaillant and Revardy, Lucero and Martínez [a friendship that, I will show, acts as the vicious mirror to Latour and Vaillant's virtuous friendship], Latour and Bernard, Antonio Olivares and Manuel Chavez" (124). Anders also picks up the thread of friendship that runs through Cather's novels of the 1920s: "The search for the ideal friend in *One of Ours* leads to the idealized friendship in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*." But he interprets the priests' friendship as the socially acceptable cover for underlying homoerotic desire, what he considers to be Cather's "thing not named." Although I disagree with his reading of the novel, whether homosexuality is present or not does not affect the evaluation of the *nature* of the friendship and its fulfillment of Aristotle's requirements for virtuous practice.

The second study on Catherian friendship is by Scott Herring, in which he declares that “Cather would go on to make regional male bonds a central—and surprisingly affirmative—facet of her major fictions during the 1920s and 1930s” (67). Herring does not deny that the rise of a gay subculture in the metropolitan areas of the United States—especially Greenwich Village, where Cather lived for years—is an important subtext for modernist literature and Cather’s novels in particular, but he questions whether friendship should be interpreted solely as encoded homoeroticism:

Cather, I believe, provokes us to think about something other than closeted cross-identification, and something more than the literary championing of urban sexual identity. In lieu of either expression or repression, her friendly male-male relations instead challenge readers to imagine spaces that surpass the artifices of a visible subculture (homosexuality) and dominant culture itself (heterosexuality). (69)

Herring proceeds to delineate such a space for the friendship of Tom Outland and Godfrey St. Peter in *The Professor’s House*: “[T]he Professor and his pupil insistently refuse to choose between friendly urban gay subcultures and an increasingly national heterosociability, but not for lack of historical imagination” (74). Herring’s argument interestingly weaves with mine, first of all revealing Cather’s critique of an American society inhospitable to meaningful relationships and secondly reinforcing my observations of St. Peter’s withdrawal from his communal ties, as unsatisfying as they may be.

#### *The Futile Search for Telos in One of Ours*

Cather uses the friendships of Claude Wheeler, the main character of *One of Ours*, to show the dimensions of her foolish protagonist’s psyche. Uncertain of his identity and his purpose in life, Claude befriends two men who are very

different yet possess stable identities. Ernest, his friend who immigrated to Nebraska from Germany, willingly sacrifices intellectual fulfillment for the security of external basics—a farm and a wife. Claude cannot believe that his *telos* should be so limited; he has too much desire and vitality to be content conforming to farm life. David Gerhardt, a man who before the war devoted his life to infusing the world with beauty through masterful violin playing, is the type of person Claude always wanted to be but could never become because of his limitations of temperament and circumstance. But Gerhardt also sacrifices his distinct contribution to the world, believing the war to be the destiny of his generation. Following the lead of his admirable friend, Claude fully invests himself in the vague ideals that underlie the war. Of course, Gerhardt has led his friend unwittingly toward a false *telos*, the war's unconscionable waste of thousands of lives; Claude does not recognize this deception, however, and willingly gives his life to the war's vague cause. Cather's portrait of "one of ours" reveals the questionable *telos* of American life—communities produce young people like Claude who do not have an underlying, permanent, true purpose to which they may anchor their identities, nor can their friends knowingly encourage them toward a meaningful end, being lost themselves. Therefore their existence is wasted, either through intellectual or physical death.<sup>1</sup>

Claude hungers for meaningful companionship, someone whom he can admire, whose example can spur him onward in his search for life's purpose. He has material advantages that should help him in finding such friendship, but

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<sup>1</sup> "When Cather said that she 'cut out all picture making because that boy does not see pictures,' then, she made a profound statement about her character, her book, and her concerns for American consciousness. For *One of Ours* is, as the title indicates, a novel about youth that springs from *American sensibilities*" (Rosowski 97).

these advantages do not help him because he fears incurring the ridicule of his father and brother for being extravagant (*Ours* 11). In addition, Claude fears not only his family's judgment but also "cheap substitutes," "easy compromises," and "being fooled" (30). As Janis Stout observes, however, "Claude is fooled, again and again" (175); the book chronicles the several instances when he is fooled (175-176). His father, a prominent member of the community, may have instilled this fear in him also, with his frequent practical jokes "to harden him" (*Ours* 24).<sup>2</sup> Mr. Wheeler thus instills in his son a proclivity for self-questioning but no self-assurance as to what Claude should become. Lacking self-assurance, then, Claude cannot discern and seize opportunities for personal growth.

Away from the oppressive atmosphere of his family's farm, Claude begins to lose these mental restraints as he makes new friends who expose him to the world's intellectual possibilities. He attends a history class at the state university in which the professor's lectures reveal to him "that the world was full of stimulating things, and that one was fortunate to be alive and to be able to find out about them" (33). He also is invited to the home of one of the university students for dinner one evening. The Erlich home is filled with books, comfort, and conversation, things alien to the Wheeler home. Mrs. Erlich takes Claude under her wing, telling him as he leaves the first evening, "You will come often to see us. We are going to be friends" (37). With the support of these new friends, Claude's future seems promising, until his father calls him back from school to become the manager of the family farm. As he sees the world of

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<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the best example of Mr. Wheeler's humor is when he chops down the cherry tree in response to his wife's request that he pick a bucketful for her. According to Merrill Maguire Skaggs, this incident "records Nat Wheeler's sadistic humor, his profligate waste, his lazy antagonism to the desires of his family, and his malignant effect on Claude's maturation processes, specifically his sexual development" (31-2).

stimulating things closed off to him, Claude's restlessness and mental desperation grows: he feels "as if a trap had been sprung on him" (57). Mr. Wheeler deprives him the company of friends among whom Claude could thrive and find his *telos*, insisting that Claude return to a community from which he constantly feels alienated.

Claude cannot reconcile his inner desires with his life on the farm, unlike his friend Ernest, for whom the good life consists in having stable externals—a farm to work, connection to his family, and a good German wife (45)—so that his mind can be free: "What can happen to you, except in your own mind? If I get through my work, and get an afternoon off to see my friends like this, it's enough for me" (46). Ernest is referred to throughout the novel as a "free-thinker" (e.g., 107), but this moniker is called into question by his willingness to conform to the colorless farm life of the Frankfurt community. Cather refers to his interests in politics, history, and technological innovation as "impersonal preoccupations," suggesting the divorce between his internal and external lives (12). By keeping his interests private and subordinated to his quotidian existence, Ernest actually undermines the potential of community to develop one's personhood by using his interests for the benefit of all.

Claude, however, bristles at this view of life: "[I]f we've only got once to live, it seems like there ought to be something—well, something splendid about life, sometimes" (46). Later, after he has taken over his father's farm, he thinks to himself, "To be assured, at his age, of three meals a day and plenty of sleep, was like being assured of a decent burial. Safety, security; if you followed that reasoning out, then the unborn, those who would never be born, were the safest of all; nothing could happen to them" (86). Ernest's view of externals merely as



means of survival does not suffice to make life worth living. If there are wonderful things in the world to think about, then the outward living of life should reflect that wonder. A life devoted to greater ease without new challenges weighs the soul down and obliterates identity. But Ernest cannot understand why Claude does not fit into the farming life of their little Nebraska town, even though “[h]e’s big and strong, and he’s got an education and all that fine land...” (116). He does not realize that Claude yearns for “something that is his own” (70). Claude does not want only to survive; he wants to flourish. Ernest’s confusion about Claude’s external attributes turns the Aristotelian conception of material fortune upside down: Aristotle believes that one must have such fortune to attain *eudaimonia* (NE I.8.1099a), but in Claude’s case, it seems to hinder his pursuit of happiness. Merrill Maguire Skaggs suggests that his misfortune is existential, not material: “Cather develops the thesis that some are born unlucky, and for them there is nothing to be done. Claude Wheeler is one of those who unluckily was born in the wrong place to the wrong people” (43).<sup>3</sup>

The dissonance between his inner and outward lives puts ever greater strain on Claude, who constantly agonizes over the purpose of his life: “What *was* the matter with him, he asked himself entreatingly” (*Ours* 100). Desperate to adapt to his external circumstances, he decides to pursue Ernest’s conception of the good life by marrying Enid Royce, making the easy compromise he had

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<sup>3</sup> “The novel itself is happy, however, in giving Claude a disruption to his unlucky life that changes his fortune” (Skaggs 43). Of course, his change of fortune brings Claude to his death in war; thus, as Skaggs admits, “[i]t is a deeply ironic treatment of war, and of what sends soldiers willingly to die.”

feared for so long.<sup>4</sup> Enid's sole desire, which she articulates to Claude repeatedly (105, 110, 127), is to become a missionary in China, like her older sister. He ignores this obvious warning sign, instead cultivating a romanticized view of Enid in his mind: "Often he was glad when she went away and left him alone to think about her....When he was with her, he thought how she was to be the one who would put him right with the world and make him fit into the life about him" (122). Enid agrees to marry him out of missionary zeal—her spiritual advisor encourages her to reclaim Claude's soul for the Church (148), but she maintains a frigid distance from Claude, who is convinced by her aloofness that "[i]t's the end of everything for me" (172). Having deluded himself into thinking that the domestic farm life is his dream, Claude took an unwise course of action that could have been the tragic end of the story.

Instead, Enid leaves Claude in order to take care of her ailing missionary sister in China, which coincides with the United States entering the Great War in Europe. The war provides another chance for Claude to solidify his life's purpose. He enlists in the army and is shipped with his fellow infantrymen to France. The passage across the Atlantic Ocean wipes Claude's mental slate clean, as it does for a number of the soldiers (226). Sailing toward Europe, he is able to let go of his past failures, losing them in the fog that surrounds the boat: "This fog...had become a shelter; a tent moving through space, hiding one from all that had been before, giving one a chance to correct one's ideas about life and to plan the future" (246). The fog-shrouded ship becomes the womb that will deliver Claude into his new life as a soldier. Even as he spends busy, sleepless hours

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<sup>4</sup> "Claude is, above all, ignorant of himself. He is unsure and distrustful of his own feelings, the means by which he might convert objects into human experience; as a result, he subjects himself to the materialism he is so desperately attempting to escape" (Rosowski 98).

assisting the doctor in caring for soldiers affected by the ship-wide outbreak of influenza, he gains a new sense of purpose with these new, dangerous, arduous challenges (251). According to Skaggs, Claude “is happy because he has found a community he fits into, an activity he does well, and a purpose he applauds and respects....His death wish is to destroy his old homelife; his desire to live leads him into gunfire” (40).<sup>5</sup>

What *is* the purpose for Claude’s life, specifically? In Nebraska, Claude felt an inner potential, but his external circumstances did not match with his desire; once he arrives in France, Claude lives a life of constant motion and novelty, but the purpose of his life still eludes him, evident in his friendship with Lieutenant David Gerhardt, a concert violinist who abandons art to fight in the war. Gerhardt exhibits self-assurance and a maturity beyond his years, traits that at first threaten Claude, who only has begun to form his new identity: Gerhardt “seemed experienced; a finished product, rather than something on the way” (*Ours* 280). As Claude gets to know the lieutenant, however, he realizes that Gerhardt is the type of friend he has been longing for: “[H]e was always hunting for some one whom he could admire without reservations; some one he could envy, emulate, wish to be. Now he believed that even then he must have had some faint image of a man like Gerhardt in his mind” (332). What he envies in Gerhardt is a talent that can be put to an end that makes life more “splendid”

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<sup>5</sup> But Claude ignores the bad omens surrounding him on the voyage to Europe: “His feeling that ‘they were Fate, they were tomorrow’ is unchanged by the reality that they are caught on a death ship, infected with influenza of a peculiarly bloody, malignant type. And Claude’s sense of purposeful well-being is unaffected when the ocean itself mocks them: the ship sails against ‘a sinister sunset’ under clouds that ‘came up out of the sea,—wild, witchlike shapes that travelled fast and met in the west as if summoned for an evil conclave’. The murmur of nature has become a scream, still speaking truths that Claude cannot understand” (Rosowski 104-5).

(see p. 46). Claude interprets the stability of Gerhardt's character as coming from that clear sense of purpose.

But in order for Gerhardt to make his inner values congruent with his outer reality, he must sacrifice his music. He explains to Claude that he did not seek exemption from the draft because "I didn't feel I was a good enough violinist to admit that I wasn't a man" (329). Gerhardt realizes that the *telos* of his existence can no longer be creating music; like all men his age, his purpose now is to fight: "The war was put up to our generation. I don't know what for; *the sins of our fathers*, probably....I've sometimes wondered whether the young men of our time had to die to bring a new idea into the world...something Olympian" (330-1, my italics). Like Claude's father, who plays malicious practical jokes on his son, the war plays a joke on Claude's entire generation, including Gerhardt, estranging them from their lives' purposes. Gerhardt's only choice is to make the war the horizon of his reality for the present time. Not knowing what his sacrifice will produce and doubting that he will survive, he can only hope that he and his comrades are offering their lives to a good cause.

Gerhardt's abandonment of his vocation is inexplicable to Claude, who has searched his entire life for such purpose. Even after this conversation, Claude experiences a pang of envy for David's artistic skill (338). Whereas Gerhardt's entrance into the war reflects a kind of resignation with only a cautious hope for an ultimate meaning, Claude exuberantly stakes his entire identity on the war, hoping that the war will give him meaning: "Life was so short that it meant nothing at all unless it were continually reinforced by something that endured; unless the shadows of individual existence came and

went against a background that held together" (328).<sup>6</sup> His makeshift resolution, as he moves into his final battle, is that he fights to defend people's ability simply to have ideals (339). Had he survived, Claude would have discovered that he and his friends succumbed again to a "cheap substitute." His mother, who witnesses the "meanness and greed" of humanity after the war, decides it is a mercy that her son was killed because his disillusionment would be too much to bear: "[H]e, who was so afraid of being fooled! He died believing his own country better than it is, and France better than any country can ever be. And those were beautiful beliefs to die with. Perhaps it was as well to see that vision, and then to see no more" (370).<sup>7</sup> During the war, Claude and Gerhardt encourage each other in the virtues they hope their sacrifice is protecting; in the wake of the war, the rejection of those virtues by the community that had produced the young men shows that Claude and Gerhardt had encouraged each other toward the wrong end. Mrs. Wheeler lives with the tragic realization that her son's sacrifice was futile. From her perspective, the reader sees that Claude's *telos* was merely a terminus.

In spite of the stability of their identities, neither Ernest nor Gerhardt offer a satisfactory solution for Claude's unsettled character. The contentment Ernest experiences through his place in the community comes at the expense of intellectual curiosity, a bargain that few men could make without falling into quiet desperation, which we see Claude endure in his marriage to Enid.

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<sup>6</sup> Claude "is capable of intense emotion but incapable of the erasure of personality essential to learn the truth of a thing" (Rosowski 102).

<sup>7</sup> "There can be little doubt that Cather not only was aware of this souring of the public mind [regarding the war] but shared it....In 1922, shortly before the publication of *One of Ours*, she wrote Dorothy Canfield Fisher, 'We knew one world and knew what we felt about it, now we find ourselves in quite another'" (Stout 180).

Gerhardt must relinquish the purpose for his life to take on the purpose the American community has foisted upon his entire generation with the resigned hope that it will be worthwhile. Both of these friends essentially advise Claude to settle for an inferior *telos* and a tepid version of *eudaimonia* because their community can offer them nothing better. Claude attempts to emulate both of his friends, resulting in a futile waste of his life. Friendship thus fails to promote the good, but Cather argues that it is not the fault of these three young men. Claude is “one of ours,” meaning that he is the typical product of the American soil; that he exhibits gullibility in his poor life choices indicates that the soil does not provide the right nutrients for him—or his friends—to thrive.

*Failure to Love the Virtues in A Lost Lady*

In Cather’s next novel, she demonstrates the ineffectiveness of friendship when its partners do not pursue the virtues as goods in themselves. Niel Herbert desires to be recognized as a member of the affluent class of Sweetwater, a railroad town in decline. Toward that end, he befriends Captain Forrester, the man who founded the town, and his vivacious wife Marian. He admires the Captain’s virtues but only to the extent that he believes they reflect the man’s venerable status; similarly, he considers Marian to be a paragon of womanly virtue because her gracious, charming behavior makes the luxurious Forrester lifestyle that much more attractive. Essentially, Niel treats the Forresters as utility-friends whose association enhances Niel’s reputation in town. Niel’s condemnation of Marian when she abandons her virtues reflects neither his grief over the moral decline of the late Captain’s community nor his frustration that his friend has gotten sidetracked from her *telos*; rather, it indicates his panic that

the social standing he has cultivated is now devalued by Marian's impertinent behavior. His view of Marian as a lost lady, then, is an instance of hypocrisy, since both friends treat the virtues as expendable means to inferior ends, be it honor, as in Niel's case, or pleasure, as in Marian's.

Niel, through whose perspective we see the story unfold, has an uncertain position between the distinct socioeconomic classes of Sweet Water (*Lost* 3). The failure of his father's business is a source of insecurity for Niel, who in order to show his worthiness as a member of the town's affluent class, "clung to his maternal uncle, Judge Pomeroy...Captain Forrester's lawyer and a friend of all the great men who visited the Forresters" (15). The judge and his associates accept Niel into their circle of friends because he subscribes to the values of this older generation, but he subscribes to them only because he believes them to brand him as a member of their superior class. He hopes that, being friends with the rich, sophisticated residents of Sweet Water, the other townspeople will assume the Aristotelian principle that "like goes with like" (*NE* VIII.3.1156b) and that Niel also is of the elite class.

It is through his uncle that Niel becomes friends with the Forresters, but he has been drawn to them—at least to Marian—since he was a little boy, when he saw Mrs. Forrester enter church and "recognized her as belonging to a different world from any he had ever known" (*Lost* 22). The aesthetic charms of Captain Forrester's wife become a symbol for Niel of the good life to which he aspires. His intention of becoming friends with the Forresters, then, is not to enhance their pursuit of personal fulfillment, nor is it even for his own moral improvement. By being a friend of the Forresters, Niel vicariously (or parasitically) enjoys the good life he believes they have. They are friends of

utility for him. In addition, Marian Forrester becomes for him, as she does for many men, an ideal of womanhood: “[W]hatever Mrs. Forrester chose to do was ‘lady-like’ because she did it” (5).<sup>8</sup> Niel is not necessarily remiss for considering an action virtuous simply because Marian performs it, if he has found her actions virtuous in the past; Aristotle believes that to determine what action is virtuous, we must observe the behavior of a virtuous person, such as the magnanimous man (see *NE IV*). But his confidence in the virtuousness of Marian’s action lies in her social status, not her history of consistent, virtuous action.

With the ability to define what it means to be a lady, it would seem that Marian Forrester possesses considerable power. Merrill Maguire Skaggs argues that Marian Forrester “functions effectively as a lawless agent in her own right” (50), but what power Marian does have is derived from her husband, whose unshakeable moral character is revered by all: “He was a man who did not vary his formulae or his manners....His clumsy dignity covered a deep nature, and a conscience that had never been juggled with. His repose was like that of a mountain” (*Lost* 26).<sup>9</sup> As Niel gets to know the Forresters better, what he appreciates most about Marian is her devotion to the Captain: “[H]er comprehension of a man like the railroad-builder, her loyalty to him, stamped her more than anything else. That, he felt, was quality; something that could never become worn or shabby; steel of Damascus” (43). Marian’s external charms, the overt signs of prosperity, command Niel’s imagination, leading him to read the virtue of consistency onto Marian, when it appears to be the

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<sup>8</sup> “Niel Herbert can kneel to, or worship, a remote and abstract idea of Marian as traditional lady, or mistakenly honor her less significant façade—missing her face in his obeisance to her form. But he can understand nothing essential about her...” (Skaggs 51).

<sup>9</sup> “Cather wrote in a letter to Zoë Akins that the integral core of the book lay in the character of Captain Forrester” (Peek 163).



constitutive virtue of the Captain's character. This is not naïveté on Niel's part but rather a distortion of reality brought on by his misplaced priorities. Instead of gravitating toward the Captain's virtuous stability, he is drawn to Marian's surface-level beauty. It may in fact be his youth that causes him to be attracted to the superficial signs of prosperity rather than the character building that the Captain's influence could provide.

Because Niel focuses on the externals, he is baffled when he discovers Marian has an affair with the dark, dangerous Frank Ellinger. In sorting out his feelings, Niel admits, "It was not a moral scruple she had outraged, but an aesthetic ideal" (48). His assessment indicates his casual attitude toward the virtues. Niel sees an incongruity between her actions and her supposed virtue, but his view of the affair is comparable to a fashion faux pas, as if Marian had worn a scarf that clashes with the rest of her ensemble. Recall that Marian's actions define what it means to be ladylike, meaning her status as lady—one could say "virtuous woman"—is unimpeachable for Niel, yet her actions do not *look* like Niel expects them to. In order to resolve this conundrum, Niel figures that she must hide or disguise her aesthetic perfection while she fraternizes with Ellinger. She becomes a social chameleon, but this solution brings a new mystery: "What did she do with all her exquisiteness when she was with a man like Ellinger? Where did she put it away?" (56). Niel must stumble through these conjectures in order to retain his idealized vision of Marian and cling to his social standing as her friend—giving her a goddess-like stature, he determines

that she must be perfect aesthetically and morally.<sup>10</sup> Her status as goddess stems from Niel's idolatry of her social class who for him define the good life and goodness itself. He does not stop to consider if Marian's actions will bring her true, personal fulfillment; instead, he is concerned that her friendship will provide him with the status that he believes will give him fulfillment.

Marian Forrester does not possess divine perfection but rather human mutability. Lacking a strong will, Marian leaves herself open to domination by the will of another. Although her beauty and charm are not illusory, they are vulnerable to circumstance. Whoever provides those circumstances may press his personality upon her. Under Captain Forrester's will, for example, she becomes queenly; under Ellinger's will, she becomes callous, epitomized in her post-tryst comment, "Nothing matters" (36). Niel can never succeed in stamping divine virtue upon Marian because he cannot dominate her; his character is as weak as hers. That Ellinger has the chance to lay claim to her reflects the Captain's declining power and influence; at the beginning of the novel we are informed that the Captain suffered a fall that led him to retire to his home in Sweet Water (5), thereby depriving Marian of a social scene in which she can display her grace. Ellinger, a younger socialite from Denver, could provide her with that scene. Here we see that Marian does not believe the virtues to be good in and of themselves; they are a means to maintaining a lifestyle of luxury and frivolity. Once they do not assist her in keeping that lifestyle, she willingly disposes of them.

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<sup>10</sup> "What Niel cannot understand is Marian's exercise of her powers in service of herself and her own life's needs and desires. He hates her willingness to leave his pedestal for her dark forest" (Skaggs 53).

But before Ellinger can replace the Captain as Marian's masculine, moral influence, a greater need presses upon her in the meantime. A savings bank in Denver, of which Captain Forrester is an officer, fails. In order to protect the depositors, who were low wage earners, the Captain sacrifices most of his fortune. When he returns home, he says to Marian, "I've come home a poor man....You'll have this place, unencumbered, and my pension; that will be about all" (49). Financial prosperity is essential for Marian; as Niel observes earlier in the novel, "She would not be herself in straitened circumstances" (45). True, Aristotle believes that external goods are needed to perform virtuous actions (*NE* I.8.1099a-1099b), but Niel is more concerned that, lacking her former affluent state, what once sparkled on Marian would now be shabby.

The Captain's virtues having brought her financial ruin, Marian makes a utility-friend out of Ivy Peters, a young, opportunistic, unscrupulous lawyer. When Niel was younger, Ivy had proclaimed to him and the other boys in town, "I'm just as good as [Mrs. Forrester] is" (9). This declaration of equality does not arise from a laudable democratic principle; rather, it comes from his belief that he can powerfully assert his will on others, just as he perceives the Forresters doing. Ivy's will, however, is limited as long as Captain Forrester maintains his economic and moral influence on the community. Supported by this, Mrs. Forrester can politely but firmly command Ivy to leave her house near the beginning of the novel: "Ivy cursed himself, but he had to go. There was something final about her imperious courtesy..." (13). Once the Captain is physically and financially incapacitated, however, he can assert his influence with Marian because he has what she lacks: money and a strong will. In her self-

centered struggle to maintain her luxurious lifestyle, Marian places herself under the influence of another man who only has his own self-interest at heart.

Considering Ivy to be an invader on the Forrester property, Niel does what he can to protect Marian from Ivy's pestiferous influence while Captain Forrester is still alive. He still thinks in terms of the town's rigid social strata that are fading away as the Captain's life wanes; it does not occur to him Marian is cultivating an association with Ivy in response to Captain Forrester's debility. Niel urges her to let one of the Captain's friends invest her money instead of Ivy, declaring that "rascality isn't the only thing that succeeds in business" (69). Although she does not "admire people who cheat Indians," Marian needs money quickly, and she knows that Ivy's crooked method "succeeds faster than anything else." Marian sees that Ivy can provide a way for her to return to the social scene where she shines (70), but Niel just thinks she is being taken in by a self-proclaimed shyster (57). It seems that he attempts to be the friend who helps her retain the virtues in the midst of adversity, but he actually worries that Marian's interaction with such a loathsome figure will bring social disgrace.

Because of Niel's distorted view of Mrs. Forrester, he cannot foresee the radical change in her behavior that comes when the Captain dies. Indeed, the Captain's friends do not see it coming, either, because they, too, have conflated her external charm with the Captain's internal virtues: without the Captain, though, "she was like a ship without ballast, driven hither and thither by every wind. She was flighty and perverse. She seemed to have lost her faculty of discrimination; her power of easily and graciously keeping everyone in his proper place" (86). The decay they see in her character is evident in the farcical dinner party she throws for Ivy and his cronies, which Niel also attends as a

favor to Marian. She still exhibits her grace and charm, but they are insufficient to rouse lively conversation and cheerful company among the “vulgar” young men she has invited; as a result, she appears tired and wan (90-1). Marian has lost her sparkle, and Niel finds the usefulness of his friend fading.

Niel’s final outrage occurs when he discovers Mrs. Forrester allowing herself to be embraced by Ivy; as Niel storms away from the house, he thinks to himself, “For the last time...for the last time” (96). He considers himself fooled, cheated by his friend, as the following mental tirade indicates:

He had given her a year of his life, and she had thrown it away. He had helped the Captain to die peacefully, *he believed*; and now it was the Captain who seemed the reality. All those years he had thought it was Mrs. Forrester who made that house so different from any other. But ever since the Captain’s death it was a house where old friends, like his uncle, were betrayed and cast off, where common fellows behaved after their kind and knew a common woman when they saw her. (96, my italics)

Niel’s indignation reveals his inadequacy as a friend to Captain Forrester. Notice that he says he gave *her* a year of his life, even though supposedly he was helping the Captain. Helping Mrs. Forrester maintain her aesthetic façade before the town of Sweet Water truly motivates Niel to volunteer his services. Because Marian cannot exercise the social influence she previously had, the other townswomen transgress the propriety previously enforced by the Forresters, storming the house under the pretext of helping the “invalid,” but really taking the opportunity to snoop through the house that had been closed to them for years (77). Niel cannot bear to hear the women gossiping about Mrs. Forrester because it tarnishes his divine idealization of her (78) and weakens his own social status by association. By driving the women out and taking care of the Captain, he can conserve the distinctions of class that are crucial to his identity’s security.

As he sits in the old house, which symbolizes the dominance of the Captain's class and morality, Niel "ha[s] the satisfaction of those who keep faith" (79). Thus, bringing peace to the Captain's final days has little to do with Niel's service.

Nor does Niel demonstrate friendly loyalty to Marian. He refers to her as a common woman. Although the image of Marian in the arms of Ivy Peters does incite revulsion, it should also elicit compassion—without any resources at her disposal, she must allow her aesthetic, sexual power to be wielded by "an ugly fellow...[who] liked being ugly" (10).<sup>11</sup> For Niel, however, the grotesqueness of the image stands in stark contrast to his glorified ideal—he cannot have compassion for Marian because he has never seen her as she really is; his view of her has always been mediated by his interests. As Niel's idol is shattered, Captain Forrester emerges in his mind as "the reality," but even this realization does not bring Niel to an accurate vision of Marian's vulnerability.<sup>12</sup>

With his condemnation of Marian (indeed, he wishes that she would "immolate herself," 95), Niel reveals himself to be as weak-willed and impressionable as she. He allows his perception of the "lost lady," the Forrester home, the town of Sweet Water, and the entire West to be shaped by the

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<sup>11</sup> Skaggs's assessment of Marian's affair with Ivy misses the mark: she admits that "Ivy is detestable from every perspective the novel provides," but she suggests that "Cather forces us, through him, to acknowledge that strong female sexuality cannot be refined to 'proper' boundaries by any class system" (57). Ivy isn't detestable because he is not of Marian's class; he is detestable because his immoral actions are paired with an ugly appearance. To suggest that Marian's affair with him represents female sexual empowerment is to discredit the latter.

<sup>12</sup> "Niel's effort to know the elusive (always already lost) lady becomes a trope for the effort to know anything at all—or at least anything beautiful and charming; in the wasteland world the unbeautiful and uncharming are so obvious as to require no effort. It is precisely this that is the importance of the time setting of the novel: not the postwar but the pre-war world. By moving the shabbiness and uncertainty back into the time before 1914, she questions whether the emptiness and shabbiness were not, in fact, there even before, even in the world for which Niel wishes Marian Forrester would 'immolate' herself" (Stout 193).

imagination of the strongest will near him (58-9). While Captain Forrester is alive, his mountain-like morality frames Niel's perspective, but as Ivy Peters gains more power over the course of the novel, Niel becomes more pessimistic, thereby conceding to Ivy's cruel, opportunistic worldview. Content to observe how men "felt and lived," Niel does not concern himself "about what men...thought" (44). In other words, he likes the lifestyle that Captain Forrester's imagination and power have created, but he does not do the mental exercise to weigh and adopt the values that underlie the Captain's actions. He does not define his own identity but rather wants others to define it for him.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, this weakness ultimately is what he blames Marian for. Niel fails to be a good friend to Marian because he has no grasp of what living well truly consists of and therefore cannot encourage Marian to pursue the virtues. Like Marian, he can only use others to preserve his illusion of the good life.

Captain Forrester is the moral core of the novel because he claims his morality and uses it to the benefit of his community. His friends, such as Judge Pomeroy, likewise share his conception of the virtues. He understands that the innate good of the virtues makes painful sacrifice worthwhile, which he demonstrates when he uses his fortune to pay the railroad workers who invested in his failing bank. The captain sees the virtuous life as inseparable from communal interdependence. Marian and Ivy use the community for their own exploitative ends; friendship for them can only be utilitarian. Unfortunately, for all his eulogizing of the virtues of the passing generation, Niel's outlook is no

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<sup>13</sup> Joseph Urgo's assessment of Niel's dilemma of identity is more sympathetic than my reading but conveys the same dependence Niel has on the Forresters: "Niel is faced with contending interlocutors, subjectivities in competition for influence on his development. When Niel was a child Marian and Daniel [Forrester] were synchronized, the world was whole, and Niel saw the Forrester house as the epitome of style and graciousness. Niel's character, his sense of himself, is completely tied to the unity of Marian and Daniel" (Urgo 80).

better than Marian's and Ivy's. He desires aristocratic respectability, which he finds in the Forresters, and he becomes disillusioned when he witnesses Marian wasting her charms on the boorish working class. What he does not realize is that Captain Forrester's virtues do not come from his financial and social notoriety but from his love of the virtues in and of themselves.

### *Intellectual Avarice in The Professor's House*

As the centerpiece of *The Professor's House*, "Tom Outland's Story" gives interpretive guidance to the two sections of the novel that frame it; this digression in the desert from the claustrophobic life of Godfrey St. Peter is the turquoise set in dull silver of the novel's epigraph (*House* 99). Tom's story offers the moral—perhaps the curse—of St. Peter's story, the clinging to an idealized past to the detriment of engaging in the community of the present. At the heart of "Tom Outland's Story," furthermore, lies a tragic depiction of friendship; the misunderstanding between Tom and his friend Roddy Blake clarifies the self-focus that plagues Professor St. Peter, who befriends Tom when the latter comes to Hamilton to attend college. For this reason, I will begin my analysis with the middle portion of the novel.

Roddy Blake projects a "closed-mouthed and unfriendly" appearance to protect himself, having experienced betrayal from those closest to him: his mother cheated on his father, and his fiancée "double-crossed" him (211). The closest ties of *philia* for Roddy are sources of pain and distrust; he therefore retreats from participation in any community. Determining that Roddy needs "a pal, a straight fellow to give an account to," Tom extends friendship to him, and the two men grow as close as brothers. Tom does not realize, though, that



Roddy's behavior when he first meets him at a poker game—his surliness, drunkenness, and carelessness with money—indicates that Roddy has lost purpose for his life. When the two men become friends, Roddy exerts an extreme selflessness toward Tom, having decided to lovingly protect the latter's future. So, for example, he insists that Tom regularly study Latin because "if I once knew Latin, I wouldn't have to work with my back all my life like a burro" (212). He sees Latin as a step on the road to fulfillment, to *eudaimonia*, for Tom and so encourages his friend to reach his *telos*.

When Tom discovers Cliff City atop Blue Mesa, it becomes the obsession of his life. He even wonders, upon first seeing it, whether he should keep the city a secret (221), but his desire to know its mysteries leads him to share it with Roddy and their cook Henry; he will need their help to excavate the city. Tom assumes that Roddy understands the value he places on the city, but later he admits, "I had never told him just how I felt about those things we'd dug out together, it was the kind of thing one doesn't talk about directly" (245). We never know exactly what Roddy thinks about the cliff city from Tom's report, only that he helps Tom make financial and labor arrangements (223). Tom recounts all they did that year on the mesa using the pronoun *we*, implying that Roddy is equally enraptured with the artifacts they find, but "Roddy often hinted that we would get a substantial reward of some kind. When we broke or lost anything at our work, he used to smile and say: 'Never mind. I guess our Uncle Sam will make that good to us'" (234-5). The Cliff City holds meaning for Roddy only insofar as it holds significance for Tom. Roddy believes that helping Tom excavate the site brings the latter closer to fulfillment as a result of the site furnishing financial resources for Tom to pursue intellectual improvement in

community, not the site being a source of fulfillment in itself. Because Cliff City consumes Tom's imagination, it distorts his perception of Roddy and his priorities. It is strange that the two men could be so close and Tom never articulate his sense of wonder at the cliff dwellings to his friend, yet we have already seen that Roddy makes clear his desire for Tom to rise up in the world. Whereas Roddy seeks the wellbeing of his friend, Tom's love of the city is selfish, a matter he keeps to himself.

Tom's failure to communicate his passion for Cliff City brings about his disillusionment with Roddy, who sells the artifacts they uncovered to a German collector while Tom is in Washington, D.C., trying to drum up interest for the cliff dwellings at the Smithsonian. At first, Tom does not question his friend's character: "I didn't for a minute believe he'd meant to sell me out, but I cursed his stupidity and presumption" (245). But later, after he confronts Roddy about selling the artifacts, Tom declares that he can no longer trust him (249). Tom feels betrayed by his friend, even though Roddy's actions are always in concord with his stated values: he wants Tom to use the money from the artifacts to go to college, which for Roddy represents success in a stable community. In fact, it is Tom who commits treachery by never confiding his reverence for the city and its treasures to Roddy. Hurt once again by a person he loves, Roddy leaves the mesa and disappears.

Tom claims that Roddy's action contradicts the altruistic purpose he has for the artifacts, to preserve them for American posterity: the artifacts "belonged to this country, to the State, and to all the people....You've gone and sold them to a country that's got plenty of relics of its own" (247). But it is the transcendent value that the city's remains hold for him that he covetously protects, a value

over which he seeks intellectual and emotional mastery: “I would bring back with me men [from Washington] who would understand it, who would appreciate it and dig out all its secrets” (236). He pins his hope on the meaning that can be excavated from the city, and so it becomes more important to him than his friendship with Roddy.<sup>14</sup> Even though his friend is lost, Tom admits, “I didn’t worry much about poor Roddy” (254). Cliff City is not a place of sadness for him, the location where he lost a dear companion; rather, it is a place of “happiness unalloyed,” where Tom spends several months in solitude, experiencing a kind of religious exaltation for the place (253), similar, perhaps, to Aristotle’s notion of divine contemplation (*NE* X.7.1177a). He is aware of the injustice he committed against Roddy: “Anyone who requites faith and friendship as I did, will have to pay for it....I’ll be called to account when I least expect it” (*House* 254). It seems to be a price Tom is willing to pay, however, for the solitary joy he experiences on the mesa. His bond to Roddy matters less to him than his membership in the long-gone community of the cliff dwellers, a community that now mainly occupies his mind.

Tom’s imagined community parallels Professor Godfrey St. Peter’s memories of Tom. As a teacher who is energized when he discerns youthful curiosity and powerful desire (113-4), St. Peter finds his friendship with Tom Outland as invigorating as the latter finds life on the mesa. Just as the sun’s radiance fuels Tom’s studies during his months of solitude, so also does Tom fuel St. Peter’s writing on the Spanish conquistadors (256). Like Tom’s repudiation of money for the artifacts, St. Peter cares nothing about the money he receives when

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<sup>14</sup> Matthias Schubnell points out that “Tom is an intellectual nomad” who is constantly in “search for a home he never truly *possessed*” (105, my italics).

he wins the Oxford prize in history for his books (116). The two men share a love for discovery and a love for what they discover; this great sympathy between them leads them to become friends. While Tom and St. Peter share these intellectual virtues, they also share the attendant vice that prompted Tom's betrayal of Roddy: they both jealously grasp to themselves great, transcendent ideas at the expense of connecting to the real, imperfect people of their communities.

This vice underlies St. Peter's struggle in the novel's first and third sections. Two different but related ideas consume the professor's thoughts: the conclusion of his research on the Spanish conquistadors, his life's work, and the "glittering idea" of Tom Outland (164). The financial success that comes with St. Peter's critical, academic acclaim occurs at the same time that Tom Outland's scientific discovery of a new gas yields its own financial windfall as a result of the chemical's practical applications in military machinery.<sup>15</sup> This prosperity comes after Tom is killed in World War I and benefits his former fiancée Rosamund, St. Peter's elder daughter, who is now married to a business-savvy engineer named Louie Marsellus, the man who has been able to market Tom's discovery.

St. Peter understands that Tom's discovery only becomes lucrative due to Marsellus's knowhow and perseverance (181), but he feels threatened by Marsellus's appropriation of Tom's memory for financial gain (124), even though Marsellus's actions seem largely altruistic. Although he never met Tom, Marsellus speaks of him with a familiarity that scandalizes the professor, his

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<sup>15</sup> Outland's invention originally was a "bulkheaded vacuum" (121), but Cather revised it to be an engine (O'Brien 968).

younger daughter Kitty, and her husband Scott McGregor, who had been Tom's friend and classmate (122). Transforming Tom into a commodity leads Scott to feel that he "isn't very real to me any more" (164); Kitty agrees that "now he's all turned out chemicals and dollars and cents..." (177), but she is determined to keep her memory of the original Tom, who "is much nicer than theirs [the Marselluses']." Similarly, St. Peter insists that "my friendship with Outland is the one thing I will not have translated into the vulgar tongue" of money (133). Once it does, St. Peter fears that his mental construction of Tom will suffer decay or distortion, as it has for Scott. In the individual's mind, Tom retains an idealistic quality, purified of his human foibles; Janis Stout observes that the pristine past is a focal point for Cather in her 1920s novels: "[I]n the three 'problem' novels [*A Lost Lady*, *The Professor's House*, and *My Mortal Enemy*] the past is possessed, if at all, only in isolation and is precious only in being possessed, in being a part of the possessor. Intrinsically the past seems to have been no more precious—or, to use Claude's word splendid—than the all too sorry present" (188).

St. Peter wants to remain in that season when "his relation with his work was becoming every day more simple, natural, and happy" (*House* 116); the joyous nature of his work was the fruit of his friendship with Tom, which had been "a kind of second youth" for the professor (255). Thus St. Peter decides to continue working in the old house's attic, the site of these "golden days," in order to preserve his unadulterated memories. The attic represents the professor's mind, and the contents of that incommensurable space are the contents of his memory: his notes and papers representing his scholarly career; the fabrics and forms used by Augusta the seamstress, which represent his wife Lillian and

his daughters; the “long, blue, hazy smear” of Lake Michigan outside the tiny attic window that conjures his childhood memories (114); and the horse blanket that once belonged to Tom, a relic of his friend.<sup>16</sup> The rest of the house is empty and abandoned, just like Tom’s Cliff City: it is a place devoid of community or friendship, where St. Peter can enjoy his ideas by himself. And just as Tom refuses to touch the money Roddy acquired from selling the artifacts, St. Peter stays in his new house, purchased with his prize money, as little as possible. The world he has constructed for himself in his mind from the artifacts of his life appeals to him more than participation in the challenges of the real world.

To relocate his study to the new house would mean that St. Peter must “change his mind” by letting go of the memories he cherishes so much and accepting this new stage of his life, complete with its difficulties: Rosamund flaunting her wealth, inciting bitter jealousy within Kitty; the competition between his sons-in-law; the approaching legal battle between the Marselluses and Dr. Crane, Tom’s mentor in the physics department; his chilly relationship to Lillian; and the fact that Tom is dead.<sup>17</sup> Faced with these ominous challenges, St. Peter wants to hang on to the delight that he once had, but by doing so, he grows “lonely and inhuman,” as Lillian observes (197). Lillian’s comment indicates that he has become an outsider of the community, which for Aristotle meant losing a

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<sup>16</sup> Phyllis Rose writes, in response to Cather’s “*Novel D meubl *,” “The minds of one’s characters can be overfurnished, too, and in detailing the crockery and footstools of their interior life we can lose track of the distinctive forms of their humanity” (116). Cather not only wanted the sections about Professor St. Peter to feel cramped, but she also wanted his mind to appear cramped because it is his mental furniture that eventually alienate him from his family and, indeed, all human community.

<sup>17</sup> “Cather plots a series of unresolved issues...that serves to emphasize the book’s strong projection of tentativeness. This is a pending and pensive sort of novel, rooted in an inability to finish packing and move” (Urgo 15). Matthias Schubnell refers to this “insistence on the immutability of his lifeless environment” as “petrification,” drawing on the theories of Oswald Spengler on the decline of Western civilization (97).

crucial quality of what it means to be human. The professor's increasing inaction results in the atrophy of his virtuous qualities and instead spawns new vices. By remaining in his delightful memories, spurning the reality of the present, St. Peter enters a state of acedia, in which he begins to question his identity: "His career, his wife, his family, were not his life at all, but a chain of events which had happened to him. All these things had nothing to do with the person he was in the beginning" (259). The professor's ruminations alienate him from life itself.

Enter the gas heater, the final item in the Professor's attic study, which represents the despair he feels about his life as he has confined himself within his mind: weighed down by lethargy, St. Peter lies on the couch in the attic, not realizing that the stove's fumes are smothering him. Only when Augusta the seamstress pulls the Professor out of the attic—out of his head—that he comes back to life.<sup>18</sup> Stern and devout, Augusta reintroduces St. Peter, not only to humanity, but to the virtuous interdependence among people in community: "Seasoned and sound and on the solid earth she surely was, and, for all her matter-of-factness and hard-handedness, kind and loyal. He even felt a sense of obligation toward her, instinctive, escaping definition, but real" (270). In seeing Augusta's real virtues, St. Peter feels a responsibility to her, perhaps to be a living receiver of her virtue, which by nature is interpersonal, communal. As Augusta keeps St. Peter company during his recovery, he learns to let go of the delightful memories that had captivated his attention for so long.

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<sup>18</sup> "Augusta's intervention, then, can be seen as a narrative contribution to the professor's reentry to the world: their lives and their work have 'interpenetrated' [like St. Peter's notes and Augusta's dress patterns in the box couch] once again" (Monroe 308).

The resolution of the novel is subdued but ambiguous.<sup>19</sup> St. Peter decides to engage his family with apathy, but at least he is engaging them (270). Cather leaves open the hope that St. Peter can move the old mental furniture out of his attic. When he does so, perhaps he will find space for a new source of delight. What we see with both Tom Outland and Godfrey St. Peter is that the felicities of mind—be they academic studies, scientific discoveries, or artistic creations—are vulnerable to various forms of corruption, but in spite of this, they must not be hidden away, hoarded in the mind of the individual, because these great, glittering ideas also promote communal bonds; friendship is one of their fruits.<sup>20</sup>

I appreciate the hopefulness of William Monroe's summation of the novel's conclusion, which I quote at length:

*The Professor's House* thus contemplates the possibility of a life of affection and productivity, of weightiness, in the midst of conspicuous consumption and ordinary people—certainly an inauspicious and potentially barren cultural context. Perhaps another remarkable mind, another Outland will appear; perhaps not. But we and the professor have learned from Augusta's story no less than from Tom Outland's that a cultural regeneration can occur in a waste land and that while we wait for that rebirth a stoic reserve and the use of stories, a belief in art and in artifacts, may help us to live *in* the world, with its burdening but sustaining, confining but engendering, families and communities. (309)

Tom's cultural regeneration results from his rejection of a devoted friend. Still, he does climb down from the cliff, although he never accepts his friend's generous if ill-advised gesture. Perhaps we can read Louie Marsellus's gestures

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<sup>19</sup> Augusta seems to represent the voice of religion, which "becomes necessary to give life any meaning, yet its comfort is essentially negative, static. But the resolution of this crisis, although in terms of life, is actually as John Randall points out, a stoicism which involves a spiritual suicide" (McLay 24).

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Urgo extends this point to a political issue, arguing the need for the community of the *polis*: "If human identity flows not from shared, verifiable experience but from highly individualized, very personal constructions of authority, even dreams, then common ground on vital issues will be thin indeed. Romanticism is good for the arts but not so good for the construction and maintenance of a traditional polity" (Urgo 31).



as “magnificent” and ill-advised (*House* 202), in that they invade the sacred space of St. Peter’s memories. Augusta’s presence at the end, the woman who frequently sits through vigils with the sick and dying, brings the stern reminder that engagement in the community necessarily requires facing death and loss. St. Peter cannot keep his living memory of Tom pristine without diminishing his continuing life, nor can he feel betrayal for others carrying on with life. Rather than resigning himself from the conflicts of those around him, he should learn from the mistakes of his friend and do what good he can in his real, but flawed, community.

*My Mortal Enemy: A Fractured Fairy Tale*

Oswald Henshawe, the husband of the main character Myra in *My Mortal Enemy*, describes his wife as “a woman of such generous friendships” (*Enemy* 63), at least until the couple loses their fortune and they must give up their luxurious life in New York City for an impoverished existence in a seedy California hotel. Then, “[i]t’s as if she had used up that part of herself.” In Cather’s most concise, intense novel, she portrays a woman of great extremes in personality viewed by the accurate gaze of a younger friend. The reliability of Nellie Birdseye’s impressions distinguishes her from Cather’s other young storytellers Claude Wheeler, Niel Herbert, and Tom Outland, and the bold lines with which Myra Henshawe is drawn sets her apart from the subtler dimensions of Marian Forrester and Godfrey St. Peter, both of whom are placed in very complex social settings. For these reasons, the self-serving motivations of Myra’s friendships are set off in stark relief, and the reader sees the doom of a strong will used only to achieve one’s desires at the expense of others. To use Paul Schollmeier’s

terminology, friendship for Myra Henshawe is not the essential, altruistic, Aristotelian friendship of virtue but egoistic, accidentally benefitting others as it helps Myra to perpetuate her storybook life.

The novel begins with a fractured fairy tale that shatters any idealization of Myra's romantic life.<sup>21</sup> Nellie has grown up hearing her mother and aunt Lydia tell the legend of Myra's elopement to Oswald, against the wishes of her rich, domineering uncle. With the help of her friends, Myra forsakes the comfortable future of her uncle's provision and flees into the night to start her life with Oswald, an ambitious young man with a promising future. Nellie expects a happily-ever-after resolution to this story, but when she asks her aunt how happy the couple has been, Lydia replies, "'Happy? Oh, yes! As happy as most people.' That answer was disheartening; the very point of their story was that they should be much happier than other people" (14). The disappointing ending to the story raises the first red flag for both Nellie and the reader. We expect a story like Lydia's to explain how *eudaimonia* is attained through some virtuous action, but it seems that Myra's willful insistence on marrying Oswald, despite the warnings of her uncle, is not an exemplary course of action, as romantic as the story sounds.<sup>22</sup>

The outcome of the story is not the only thing that deflates Nellie's ideal picture; when she first meets Myra, she admits, "I could not help feeling a little disappointed" (16). Twenty-five years removed from the romantic elopement

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<sup>21</sup> See Chapter 3 of Marilyn Berg Callander, *Willa Cather and the Fairy Tale*, for her tracing of the "Sleeping Beauty" and "Snow White" allusions through *My Mortal Enemy*.

<sup>22</sup> "The Henshawes' story is one we, like Nellie, have heard since we can remember anything at all. The stock situation of young lovers who defy the world is so firmly part of our cultural heritage that it has become synonymous with 'romantic' in the popular use of the term....[T]his account of the Henshawes' story...is a highly sentimental version, told to a young, impressionable girl by Lydia" (Rosowski 146-7).

story, Myra looks less like the enchanted princess and more like an imperious queen: "I could see, at the far end of the parlor, a short, plump woman in a black velvet dress....She stood markedly and pointedly still, with her shoulders back and her head lifted, as if to remind me that it was my business to get to her as quickly as possible and present myself as best I could" (4). Myra's icy sarcasm throws Nellie into mute confusion (5-6), and her laugh, provoked by "[u]ntoward circumstances, accidents, even disasters," is terrifying at times (8-9). Later in the novel, Myra remarks that her head "would have graced one of the wickedest of the Roman emperors" (53). Nellie's first impression of Myra further suggests that the tyrannical pursuit of self-will does not bring about the fulfillment of *eudaimonia*,<sup>23</sup> and when Myra sets about making friends with Nellie (6), the reader can tell that the friendship will be on her terms. Yet, in spite of being intimidated, Nellie wants Myra to like her. Near the end of the novel, Nellie says to Myra, "You know I love you dearly" (73), but her affection for Myra does not blind her to the woman's flaws; in fact, this declaration of love comes after Nellie criticizes Myra for her poor treatment of Oswald. That Nellie can simultaneously love Myra and see her weaknesses shows that Nellie's friendship with Myra is other-centered with the intention of promoting the virtues in the older woman. Furthermore, we discern that Nellie is a reliable reporter of what she observes, as opposed to Niel Herbert or Tom Outland.

Nellie employs that clear-eyed reporting in her observation of the Henshawes in New York, which uncovers Myra's tyrannical egoism manifest in the extravagance of her personality and her desire to make her world reflect the

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<sup>23</sup> Consider Aristotle's discussion of the tyrant in the midst of the section on friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII.10.1160b.

reality that her will desires. Crucial to shaping that world are her friendships of utility and pleasure. For example, she helps the young Scotsman Ewan Gray, who has “a rather spotty past,” court Esther Sinclair, the daughter of one of her society friends (20); Oswald later mentions that “[w]e nearly always have a love affair on hand” (25). Myra’s assistance to Gray seems altruistic and in line with the virtues that Myra supposedly believes in—true love at all costs—but in reality, she helps Gray woo Esther in order to reinforce her own willful act of love and the lifestyle it has produced. Myra cultivates two types of friends: artistic people and “moneyed” people (32)—the former surround her in the beauty that she expected her storybook romance to produce, and the latter ensure Oswald’s business success so that Myra may continue to live in the luxury that her uncle had denied her. She orchestrates her friendships with her strong will because she needs them to perpetuate the lifestyle that her strong will brought her.

This need for control in her friendships is reflected in two juxtaposed scenes. When she visits Anne Aylward, the poet dying of tuberculosis á la John Keats, Myra’s “brilliant and strangely charming” personality dominates the interaction. Her sadness for the impending death of her friend keeps Myra from telling Nellie any more about the woman after they leave her apartment, which shows Nellie “that her chief extravagance was in caring for so many people and in caring for them so much” (35). In Aristotle’s language, extravagance still is a vice because it lacks the moderation characteristic of all virtues. The death of her friend seems to be an outlet for her indecorous display of emotion. Immediately after this, however, Nellie spots an unnamed author at the opera who is a former friend of Myra’s, but this man “could have stood by Oswald in a [perhaps

financial] difficulty—and he didn't. He passed it up. Wasn't there. I've never forgiven him" (36). The investment that Myra puts into her friends is contingent upon her receiving dividends that promote her idealized world of artistic beauty, romance, and wealth.<sup>24</sup>

That world has shattered when Nellie meets the Henshawes again ten years later. The queen from the story's opening now finds herself in exile, her court of friends having either died or dispersed. Now, because Nellie and the Henshawes have experienced "eclipse" (54), they live in the same poorly built hotel; their circumstances put Nellie on equal terms with the Henshawes, which allows her to be a closer friend, entering the confidence of both spouses. She discovers that the extravagance of Myra's New York life has decayed into regret and self-pity:

Oh, if youth but knew!...It's been the ruin of us both. We've destroyed each other. I should have stayed with my uncle. It was money I needed. We've thrown our lives away....We were never really happy. I am a greedy, selfish, worldly woman; I wanted success and a place in the world. Now I'm old and ill and a fright, but among my own kind I'd still have my circle.... (62-3)

Myra lives in torment—she is constantly reminded of her pain and poverty by the incessant banging and chattering of the tenants in the room above hers; the invasion of "their stupid, messy existence" prevents her from retreating into the illusory world over which she reigned (56). All she can see is that the love that her strong will pursued has led her to a miserable end.

Yet Myra's is not a cautionary tale. Myra bases her judgment only on her current circumstances. Though she has a strong will, the meaning of her life is not anchored to anything more stable than her ego. As her health steadily

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<sup>24</sup> Klein writes, "[U]nderneath all her actions there is a sense that the activity itself is insufficient, that it can't secure for her what her nature demands" (xxi).

declines, however, she begins to find stability in religion. She declares, "Religion is different from everything else; *because in religion seeking is finding*" (77, Cather's italics). Cather allows Nellie to interpret Myra's brief statement: "She seemed to say that in other searchings it might be the object of the quest that brought satisfaction, or it might be something incidental that one got on the way; but in religion, desire was fulfillment, it was the seeking itself that rewarded." Religion enables a person to pay attention to an other, be it God, a widow, an orphan, or, in Iris Murdoch's philosophy of the virtues, a work of art. The reader sees this other-centered outlook quietly demonstrated by Nellie and Oswald, who faithfully take care of Myra as her health declines (75). Cather subtly shows the importance of true friendship in the midst of Myra's frantic search for purpose.

Although Cather seriously proposes religion as an avenue by which to find life's purpose, it is not a completely satisfactory solution for Myra, who never succeeds in fully shifting her attention from herself. This failure is evident in her inability to forgive Oswald, whom she has made the scapegoat for her past mistakes. Myra had attained the object of her quest during the prosperous years in New York, but she had to continue investing it with significance by recreating the quest's context: romance, the powerful feelings induced by art, and the financial comfort that allows one to pursue those things. Oswald should be the friend with whom she shares this good fortune, but he seems instead to be one facet of the life she takes credit for creating. Once she and Oswald experience financial ruin, the happiness of her previous life comes into question. She therefore accuses Oswald of distorting the past when he says they had been happy, even though she had been the creator of a grand illusion; Oswald attempts to comfort his wife, to demonstrate a love independent of fortune, but

she cannot accept such a love, since her world is validated by their good fortune. Nellie encourages Myra to rely on Oswald's love, but to do so would require Myra to "forgive him for the harm I did him" (72), that is, to relinquish her power to shape her world and admit she never truly had that power. Nellie urges Myra to take the steps that would bring her peace in her final days, but Myra fears the prospect of abandoning the illusion.

As the queen of her life, Myra has the task of giving her life meaning. To see her life end differently from what she expected, then, she must account for the error, which she identifies as running off with Oswald as an impetuous youth. As the embodiment of the mistake she made in shaping her world, Oswald becomes her enemy. Drawing near religion in her final days, though, Myra discovers that meaning can come from something outside herself. Seeking then becomes finding because the search itself has meaning, whereas before the goal was to manufacture meaning, using such materials as her "beautiful friendships" (84). Myra has fooled herself, living and failing in an illusion. Her outward actions, although they have benefited others, have been for her own benefit, to give significance to her story, so now that she lives in poverty, crippled by pain and alienated from her husband, the good actions of her past life give her no comfort because her pride punishes her. Therefore, she refers to herself when she says one night, "Why must I die like this, alone with my mortal enemy?" (78).<sup>25</sup> Myra's experience demonstrates that egoistic friendship, even if it accidentally produces goodwill for one's friends, ultimately has a deleterious

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<sup>25</sup> Most scholars believe that Oswald is Myra's mortal enemy. According to Ann W. Fisher-Wirth, however, "Myra's mortal enemy seems to be both her husband—who loves her devotedly—and her own desirous spirit and body" (42, my italics).

effect on the person because she is not actually pursuing what will bring her wellbeing.

At the end of the novel, Cather leaves the reader in a difficult tension. She dispels the romantic notion that pursuing one's desire always results in the ending one imagined, rejecting the "common feeling exalted into beauty by imagination, generosity, and the flaming courage of youth" (85). Yet we cannot abandon imagination, generosity, and the flaming courage of youth; to do so would be to reject art. She is arguing, rather, that there must be something above and beyond that can frame those qualities as virtues, something more durable that makes the vulnerability of desire worthwhile to risk. Otherwise, the relationships that are unified by imagination, generosity, and youth may wind up glorifying the ego, emptying one's life of meaning and purpose. In *My Mortal Enemy*, she suggests that religion is that stable enveloping framework because it provides the seeker an other-oriented perspective. She will more fully—and more positively—articulate her point in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

#### Death Comes for the Archbishop: *Cather's Virtue-Friendship*

Near the end of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Archbishop Latour tells his protégé Bernard, "I shall not die of a cold, my son. I shall die of having lived" (*Archbishop* 440). Cather attempts in this narrative to answer the question how one should live knowing one will die,<sup>26</sup> a worthy goal in Aristotle's estimation, since one cannot determine if a life is virtuous until it is complete, that is, until

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<sup>26</sup> Susan Rosowski argues that this is the meaning of *My Mortal Enemy*: "[S]he wrote not so much about how people live as about how they die. She established, in other words, a 'tragic sense of life.'...As John Driscoll died, so shall his niece [Myra], for despite the yearnings of their immortal souls, human beings are doomed to failure by their mortality. Mortality is Fate; the measure of an individual is how he or she meets that inevitable end" (152).



the person has died. Friendship is central to how she answers this question: she uses Latour's lifelong friendship with his fellow missionary Father Vaillant to show that *eudaimonia* is found when one devotes herself to other-oriented, virtuous action, whether it be serving souls in the name of God or being true to the tenets of good art. As friends, Latour and Vaillant help each other in their virtuous action to achieve their *telos*. To demonstrate that the priests' friendship defines Archbishop Latour's life, I will focus on three dimensions of this extremely intricate masterpiece: the priests' discussion of miracles, their battle with the worldly priests Father Martinez and Father Lucero, and Latour's dwelling on the memory of his friend at the book's conclusion.

#### *The Intellectual and Physical Dimensions of Miracles*

It would seem unlikely that two people as vastly different as Jean Marie Latour and Joseph "Blanchet" Vaillant would become friends. These differences emerge from Latour's recollection of their first meeting at seminary in France: Jean Marie comes from "an old family of scholars and professional men," whereas Joseph's father is a baker. Jean Marie is handsome; Joseph possesses a "peculiarly unpromising appearance" (413). Jean Marie is reserved, intellectual, and moody; Joseph is gregarious and interested in everything taking place around him. But Joseph disarms his older classmate in their first conversation, which he initiates; Jean Marie remembers, "There was something about the baker's son that had given their meeting the colour of an adventure; he meant to repeat it. In that first encounter, he chose the lively, ugly boy for his friend. It was instantaneous" (414). In this observation, the reader detects the boys' commonality: their sense of adventure. But more than this intrepid spirit, the

two young men share a *telos* for their lives; they agree on what will produce *eudaimonia*. Because these men agree to put their love of travel and exploration in the service of spreading the Church to the ends of the earth, their numerous differences in temperament and ability sharpen rather than dull each other.

The two men's differences complement rather than clash, evident on Bishop Latour's first day presiding in Santa Fé. At Vaillant's urging, Latour receives an elderly Mexican priest in his study to listen to him tell the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The story of the Virgin Mary leaving an image of her face on the apron of a humble monk sparks a conversation between Latour and Vaillant about the nature of miracles. The conversation highlights the two priests' different yet complementary perspectives: different, in that one emphasizes the intellect while the other emphasizes the physical, and complementary because both see the miraculous prompting its observer to pay attention to the other rather than the self. The priests' discussion about miracles, then, metaphorically explains the key to virtue-friendships and gives the reader an interpretive guide for how to see the success of the men's friendship through the rest of the novel.

Latour's understanding of miracles emphasizes the perception of one's spiritual sense. He tells Vaillant, "The Miracles of the Church seem to me to rest not so much upon faces or voices or healing power coming suddenly near to us from afar off, but upon our perceptions being made finer, so that for a moment our eyes can see and our ears can hear what is there about us always" (306-7). In other words, the physical manifestation of the miracle is not as important to Latour as the ability to intellectually recognize the intervention of the spiritual

realm because both the spiritual and physical realms are simultaneously present all the time. The miracle occurs when one recognizes their concurrence.<sup>27</sup>

By contrast, Vaillant privileges the physical manifestation of miracles, emphasizing the benefits of their tangibility: "Doctrine is well enough for the wise, Jean; but the miracle is something we can hold in our hands and love" (306). A miracle is like the religious medals that Vaillant hands out to his poor parishioners, a physical reminder of God's love and purpose for them. Latour knows that "his dear Joseph must always have the miracle very direct and spectacular, not with Nature, but against it" (293). Because of his sympathy for "the poor converts of a savage country" (306), who may not have the intellectual refinement of his Bishop to be able to recognize the intertwining of the physical and spiritual realms, Vaillant sees the need for an extraordinary physical presence that interrupts the person's normal, everyday routine. As a result, that interruption jolts the person's awareness of the spiritual realm and brings her to a deeper level of faith.

Of course, the two priests' views are the two sides of one coin.<sup>28</sup> If the miracle has no manifestation, then there is nothing for the person to perceive, but the person also needs some modicum of perception in order to identify that manifestation. Furthermore, a miracle has a communal element: it requires a person to look outside herself and to share what she sees with other people.

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<sup>27</sup> Jean-Francois Leroux quotes Nicholas of Cusa: "All our wisest and most divine teachers agree that visible things are truly images of invisible things and that from created things the Creator can be knowably seen as in a mirror and a symbolism" (219).

<sup>28</sup> John J. Murphy points out the similarities between Cather's depiction of Latour and Vaillant and Dante's depiction of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic: "Not only these individual lives but their complimentary qualities and activities parallel Dante's portraits. Francis and Dominic, says Bonaventure, are each a wheel of the great chariot in which the church rides; they are the two champions sent by Christ to teach and give example. 'To extol one or the other,' says Aquinas, 'is to speak of both in that their works led to a single goal' (*Paradiso* II.40-42)" (29).

Although several events in the book could be considered miraculous, one example will show how perception and physical manifestation work together.

Bishop Latour loses his way in the desert on his return to Santa Fé from Durango. Overwhelmed by the “geometrical nightmare” of interminable red conical hills (285), the priest closes his eyes to rest his over-stimulated sense of sight. By shutting down his sense of sight temporarily, the priest enables his spiritual sense to awaken, so that when he opens his eyes again, his attention is drawn to a unique figure that stands out against the unchanging landscape, a “juniper which differed in shape from the others....Living vegetation could not present more faithfully the form of the Cross” (286). He dismounts from his mare and kneels before the tree to pray. As he rides away from the cruciform tree, Latour knows that the desert’s dangers, combined with his depleted provisions, may spell his demise (287), but the exercise of his faithful imagination enables him to “[blot] himself out of his own consciousness and [meditate] upon the anguish of his Lord. The Passion of Jesus became for him the only reality; the need of his own body was but a part of that conception.”

With the ego out of the way, the physical and spiritual senses can work together; this concord contributes to Latour’s rescue from the desert’s perils. He feels “a change in the body of his mare” when she senses water in the distance and carries the priest to the oasis of *Agua Secreta* and the hospitality of its residents: “But for the quivering of the hide on his mare’s neck and shoulders, he might have thought this [oasis was] a vision, a delusion of thirst” (289). The priest’s reaction suggests the delicate balance involved in perception, the discerning of physical phenomena using spiritual sense, which comes from

outside of the ego. Most interestingly, the miracle culminates in an act of friendship, the villagers' care for the lost priest.

The self-focus of the ego can throw off this balance—a person might hold on too tightly to an idea or may only make a judgment from empirical claims. To exaggerate the importance of either component prevents a person from discerning the miraculous. Likewise, if the egos of the two priests directed their discernment, it is likely that their differences would drive them apart. Within their relationship, then, Cather is trying to provide a corrective for the mistakes made by the characters of her previous novels, especially the self-focus of Myra Henshawe. To show the negation of this delicate balance, she presents arch adversaries for Latour and Vaillant—Fathers Martinez and Lucero. Cather places their story exactly in the middle of the narrative, indicating its importance to the narrative's overall theme.<sup>29</sup>

#### *The Priests' Ego-Driven Counterparts*

Fathers Martinez and Lucero claim to be friends with each other, but the predilections of their respective egos incite them to ridicule each other. Notice also that, unlike Latour and Vaillant, these priests do not live together, even though close community is one of the fundamental tenets of Aristotelian virtue-friendship (*NE* VIII.5.1157b). The two renegade priests symbolize the condition of the American community at the time Cather is writing—self-centered, sensual, avaricious, and divorced from an overarching moral framework; they also

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<sup>29</sup> D. H. Stewart comments on the centrality of this episode also, in his comparison of *Archbishop* to Dante's *Divine Comedy* and the Genevieve frescoes of Puvis de Chavannes: "[T]he central 'panel' in *Death Comes* is Part V, the meeting between Fathers Latour and Martinez—centered squarely in the nine-part novel" (584). Also, he notes, "The antagonism between him [Martinez] and Father Latour is both more personal and more dramatic than any other in the novel, and Cather reinforces parallelisms in their relationship in several ways" (590).

embody the flaws of the characters in Cather's previous novels set in the modernist era—Myra Henshawe, Marian Forrester, Tom Outland, and Godfrey St. Peter. Latour's solution for vanquishing the vicious priests appears passive, but it reflects Cather's realization that the dilemmas she had wrestled with in her previous novels are solved, not by directly dealing with the problems of the ego, but by focusing one's attention outward, through the assistance of virtuous friendship, toward a greater purpose, whether it be religion or art.

When Bishop Latour first arrives in Santa Fé, Father Martinez, priest of the church in Taos, "had ridden over from his parish expressly to receive the new Vicar and to drive him away" (295). Latour must ride from Santa Fé to Durango and back, "a journey of full three thousand miles" (289), in order to acquire his documented credentials, and it is on his return from Durango that Latour gets lost in the desert. Father Martinez has considerable influence in the region, which he uses for corrupt ends. He incites battle between the Indians and Mexicans, he extorts land and money, and he debauches girls from villages across the desert. Yet, in spite of his evil and power, Latour does not fear him; in fact, he is confident that "the day of [Martinez's] tyranny was almost over" (295).

Father Martinez's perspective diametrically opposes Bishop Latour's: whereas the latter emphasizes the perception unclouded by ego, the former advocates the ego-driven embrace of the physical, evident in his argument that priests should indulge in concupiscence so that they know what they are forgiving in their parishioners (365-6). Martinez believes that the "indigenous" Mexican branch of the Catholic Church should be dictated by the natural inclinations of the natives, not forced to adopt "European civilization," i.e., Christian orthodoxy. Interestingly, Martinez demonstrates that he is quite

learned, “not only in the Church Fathers, but in the Latin and Spanish classics” in his conversation with Bishop Latour (370). But this intellectual erudition has replaced the foundations of Christian faith, symbolized in the books on his desk that are “piled so high...they almost hid the crucifix hanging behind it” (364). The physical clutter of the books, along with the overall messiness of his hacienda, indicates Martinez’s giving-over to sensuality.

Yet the Mass that the Padre officiates is beautiful. The Bishop is impressed by the devotion of the Taos church and Martinez’s singing: “The man had a beautiful baritone voice, and he drew from some deep well of emotional power. Nothing in the service was slighted, every phrase and gesture had its full value” (368). The disjunction between the beauty of the Mass and the profligacy of the priest might seem baffling at first, until one sees that the ceremony, again, is a *physical* act. Martinez is a sensual man, not a man of spiritual discernment; he can perform the Mass without subscribing to the spiritual truths behind it. By divorcing the beauty of the Mass from its theological truth, Martinez resembles Marian Forrester, whose outward beauty does not reflect an inner devotion to the virtues.

If Antonio José Martinez is Latour’s foil, then Marino Lucero is Vaillant’s. Whereas Vaillant appreciates the physical as a sign pointing the believer to spiritual truth, Lucero grasps the transcendent or abstracted value and egotistically keeps it to himself. Father Lucero, the priest of Arroyo Hondo, is a miser who lives “in the barest poverty” (375) but spends his life hoarding around 20,000 dollars of gold and silver (382). Out of circulation, the value attributed to the precious metal gives the miser no benefit, but he greedily hangs on to it as if it did because it never loses its value in his mind. Lucero explains this principle

in comparing his avarice to Martinez's lust: "[M]y way is better than old José Martinez's. His nose and chin are getting to be close neighbours now, and a petticoat is not much good to him any more. But I can still rise upright at the sight of a dollar" (375). In other words, the physical is subject to change and decay, whereas the abstract idea that Lucero can wring out of a dollar can continue in his mind. Lucero's vice thus resembles the intellectual miserliness of Godfrey St. Peter and Tom Outland.

Two consequences result from Lucero's love of money: first, he has a foolish appearance. His thriftiness amuses his Mexican parishioners, and he wears Padre Martinez's hand-me-down garments, "though they were so much too big for him." Secondly, the old man has no physical security. One night, a thief tries to rob Lucero of his buried treasure, but the priest kills him: "But from the shock of that night Father Lucero never recovered" (376). As Lucero lies on his deathbed, he is haunted by the fear of thieves: "The stillness of the death chamber was suddenly broken when Trinidad Lucero knelt down before the crucifix on the wall to pray. His uncle, though all thought him asleep, began to struggle and cry out, 'A thief! Help, help!'" (382). His attachment to the idea of money distorts his view of the world and severs him from community; not only does he distrust Father Vaillant, who has come to give him last rites, but he distrusts the women of the village who minister to him in his final hours (380).

Some may critique the Bishop's response to these two heretical priests as weak or passive (Peck 228-229)—he at first decides to do nothing, fearing the loss of the devoted parishioners in Taos, then excommunicates the two priests by decree—but his actions reflect his belief that "the day of lawless personal power was almost over, even on the frontier, and this figure [Martinez] was to him



already like something picturesque and impressive, but really impotent, left over from the past" (362). Cather wants to make a symbolic point with the Bishop's course of action: the wayward actions driven by the ego, which do not understand the relationship between physical and spiritual, have no lasting effect. Once the dominant ego dies, its fruit also withers away. Latour bides his time, knowing that the Church will endure, waiting for the moment when he can replace the ego-driven priests with priests possessing discernment. In Latour's strategy to handle the rebellious priests, Cather allegorizes her philosophy about good art: like the bishop, she is confident that the viciousness of bad art cannot survive and that good art will prevail because it conveys timeless truth. In the meantime, Latour and Vaillant turn their attention to the people they are called to serve, thereby affirming that life has an ultimate purpose and bringing themselves personal fulfillment in the process.

#### *The Manifestations of Latour's Purpose*

Cather's faith in the altruism of good art explains why Latour, the man who has a cathedral built, is not driven by ego. This is an important point to establish in the novel, since it focuses in particular on the life and death of the man. Understanding what Latour conceives his purpose to be gives greater significance to his friendship with Vaillant. The reader finds that Latour's identity is stamped upon his actions as Archbishop, not in a way that suggests he is trying to aggrandize himself, but as an indicator that actions he takes in service to others actually increase his existence because he acts in fulfillment of his purpose. This increase of existence is exemplified in his commissioning of the

cathedral, his spread of French culture in the American Southwest, his ministry to the slave woman Sada, and, most importantly, his friendship with Vaillant.

Neither Vaillant nor Latour feel completely at ease with the project's implications at first (424). When the narrator first mentions the cathedral—immediately after the section on Martinez and Lucero—it is referred to as “a continuation of himself [Bishop Latour] and his purpose, a physical body full of his aspirations after he had passed from the scene” (383). What, then, is his purpose, and what are his aspirations? We learn his purpose—and Vaillant's—early in the narrative: “The two rode into Santa Fé together, claiming it for the glory of God” (288). Jean Marie is a missionary priest, a man who has submitted his life to God and has committed to spreading the Church to the ends of the earth; this is the purpose he has embraced for his life.<sup>30</sup>

His other aspirations, which he subsumes under the Church's mission, involve weaving the traditions of his French culture in with the traditions of the Mexicans, Indians, and Americans whom he serves. Padre Martinez accuses Latour of trying to supplant “native traditions” with “European civilization” (366), but while Latour censures sinful, heretical behavior, he repeatedly shows tolerance and affection for the unique customs among the Indians and Mexicans that have evolved in their worship, such as “[t]he wooden figures of the saints, found in even the poorest Mexican houses” that he enjoys looking at (292). Furthermore, he respects Indian customs because he understands that they are the product of a profound tradition that he could never fathom as an outsider

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<sup>30</sup> “As in *My Mortal Enemy*, Love goes out the gates and gives the dare to Fate. Here, however, the bid is for sacrifice, celibacy, discipline, redemption; in this moment the priests are born into their missionary endeavor and die to the fallen world. Leaving their homes, they journey to a terrifying landscape....But though their earthly journey seems to be an exile, faith enables them to dwell in the realm of origins” (Fisher-Wirth 44).

(332), and he admires their intimacy with the environment in which they dwell (420). He frequently meditates on his place in his own cultural tradition, such as when he eats Vaillant's onion soup (299) or hears the silver church bell (303). Therefore, as a legacy of his tenure as Bishop, Latour wishes to add to the native traditions of his diocese the traditions that have been handed down to him, such as the planting of gardens: "He urged the new priests to plant fruit trees wherever they went....Wherever there was a French priest, there should be a garden of fruit trees and vegetables and flowers" (438).<sup>31</sup> These aspirations mark a man keenly aware of his membership in the community he serves.

The cathedral is another way that the Bishop extends French tradition into the diocese. He chooses a stone the color of which reminds him of the Palace of the Popes in Avignon, and he decides that it shall be built in "[o]ur own Midi Romanesque" style (423). But the cathedral not only represents the French culture that Latour and Vaillant have brought into the region; it also represents the Bishop himself—*la tour* is French for *tower*—but not a memorial to the man so much as a symbol of his service to the diocese, best exemplified in the Bishop's ministering to the old slave woman Sada. Unable to sleep one cold night because he suffers from a "sense of failure clutching his heart" (405), Latour leaves his house to pray in the sanctuary; he finds Sada at the door. He ushers this woman, who had been denied worship by her masters for nineteen years, up to the altar to pray and adore the Virgin (407): "Never...had it been permitted him to behold such deep experience of the holy joy of religion as on that pale December night"

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<sup>31</sup> According to Jean-Francois Leroux, "The question for Latour...both at the beginning and throughout his apostolic journey, seems to be how to find the proper vantage point from which to reconcile disparate elements—Christian and pagan, East and West, old and new, matter and spirit, mundane and miraculous" (217-8).

(408-9). Threatened by an egoistic fear that his individual life has been pointless, Latour forces his attention outward, at first in prayer, and then toward another person. Latour's identity is not defined individually; it is defined in community by the people who depend upon him, such as Sada, whom he is responsible for guiding toward her *telos*, faithful devotion to God. The Bishop's faith is restored by this encounter, which reaffirms his purpose of leading the people to worship, pointing them to the spiritual reality of the Holy Family.<sup>32</sup> The cathedral, he hopes, will serve a similar purpose: it is a physical presence that will bring people to greater spiritual perception in community—a miracle.

Bishop Latour declares that the cathedral is “for the future” (424), but we learn that as he draws near the end of his life, his mind dwells in the past, particularly on his friend Vaillant (453). The two friends parted company because Vaillant was sent to minister in Colorado. Vaillant takes this separation in stride because he understands that “it was the discipline of his life to break ties; to say farewell and move on into the unknown” (427). Latour, due to “the loneliness of his position” (430), finds his friend's departure quite painful; in fact, it seems to be the greatest struggle of the Bishop's life. If we understand the complementariness that Cather tries to depict with these two characters, however, we can see why the Bishop has so much difficulty with losing his friend.

The Bishop sums it up well in his reasoning for Vaillant to take both the mules, Contento—belonging to Vaillant, who privileges the physical—and Angelica—belonging to the Bishop, who emphasizes spiritual perception: “They

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<sup>32</sup> Guy Reynolds observes the miraculous quality of this incident: “[T]he scene exemplifies Cather's interest in the transcendental insight emerging out of the ordinary moment” (159).

have a great affection for each other; why separate them indefinitely? One could not explain to them. They have worked long together" (431). The physical and spiritual belong together; if you separate them, explanation fails.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Latour needs the balance of his friend's perspective, from which he has benefited his entire career. Consider, for instance, the Bishop's inability to see the providential nature of his summoning Vaillant back from Tucson, just in time to receive news about Colorado. Latour knows that he called Vaillant back because "I felt the need of your companionship" (430), but he does not consider that his friend's physical absence, and the longing that it caused, may have had an attendant spiritual importance, the positioning of Vaillant to receive his new call for the Church.

Alone with his thoughts in retirement, the Bishop recalls a similar incident, in which Joseph lacked the spiritual perception to make a choice: the morning when the two young men left the Puy de Dom to become missionaries. Jean "knew no wavering," but his friend "was suffering more than flesh could bear, ...was actually being torn in two by conflicting desires" (450). As the coach arrived to carry the two seminarians to Paris, Jean pulls his friend out of his physical torment by convincing him to travel to Paris and decide there. Jean uses sound reasoning to lead his friend out of his physical struggle, bringing him to a fresh place to examine his dilemma. (Perhaps in this conversation, Jean also reminds Joseph of his ultimate purpose and his distinctive talents for promoting

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<sup>33</sup> "Bishop Latour and Father Vaillant—the two character-strands which weave in and out throughout the novel in unity and yet in distinction—are also head and heart, thought and feeling, and like Contento and Angelica, while distinguishable, should never be wholly divided" (Wheeler 174).

that purpose.) Joseph believes that Jean's support was instrumental in his becoming a missionary priest.

That the memory of that morning is the last image on the Bishop's mind before he passes away indicates the significance of the event in Latour's life.<sup>34</sup> Although he is sad to lose Vaillant when he travels to Colorado, Latour is not bitter; rather, he realizes the importance of Vaillant's service for the Church. On their last day together, Latour tells his friend, "*Blanchet...you are a better man than I. You have been a great harvester of souls, without pride and without shame...If hereafter we have stars in our crowns, yours will be a constellation*" (435-6). Latour's recognition of his weakness and his friend's virtue does not reflect self-pity but humility; he therefore asks his friend to bless him. We see in these moments that Bishop Latour lives to fulfill his purpose—spreading the Church as a missionary of God—and we see in his final thoughts that his most significant act in that role is to support his friend in his "hour of torment," giving Joseph Vaillant the encouragement necessary so that he can fulfill his purpose.

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Death Comes for the Archbishop is a breakthrough for the problem Willa Cather poses in *One of Ours*. In the latter, she tells the story of Claude Wheeler, a young American man who struggles his entire, brief life searching for the *telos* of his life; only days before he is killed in a battle in the Great War does he hastily determine his role to fight for people to possess some sort of ideal. In the former, Bishop Latour lives a full life devoted to a clear *telos*: sharing the love of God by serving others. At the end of his life, there is plenty of evidence to indicate that

³⁴ John N. Swift describes the psychoanalytic significance of this "initiating scene" in Latour's life (64).

he lived his life well for a worthwhile purpose. Claude's friends cannot help him because they do not know how to promote the virtues he possesses, whereas Latour's companion and co-laborer Vaillant knows him intimately and acts as iron sharpening the Bishop's iron. There is no guarantee that New Mexico will remain a devout land, an uncertainty hinted at by the encroachment of American-style settlements in the midst of the pueblo town in which the priests served (440), yet when Latour dies, there is certainty that he has left an indelible, beneficial mark on the community. Even though Claude dies in the midst of heroic sacrifice, Cather does not leave the reader under his illusion that his death brought about a meaningful change to the world. How does she get to the confident, exultant ending of Bishop Latour's life from Claude's cynical demise? Through the problem novels, Cather discovers two important elements to living life well with meaningful friendships.

The first necessary element is a set of transcendent values. She begins to articulate this in *One of Ours* with Claude's willingness to die for ideals (339), but of course this solution is temporary and unsatisfactory. In *A Lost Lady*, she considers the virtues of the passing captains of industry, but through Niel and Marian, we see that, if those virtues are practiced, it is no longer because of their inherent goodness. Niel pursues them only because he thinks they reflect a respectable social status, and Marian only follows them as long as Captain Forrester can provide her the life of frivolity she desires. In *The Professor's House*, Cather wonders if the past itself can properly anchor a person, but Tom's obsession with the Cliff City ruins his friendship with Roddy, a man who selflessly promoted Tom's wellbeing. Likewise, Professor St. Peter's insistence on dwelling in his memories of his past work with Tom prevents him from

engaging with the people to whom he has ties—his wife, children, and colleagues. Nor does exercising one's will to create a fantastic present work either, as Cather demonstrates in *My Mortal Enemy*. Myra Henshawe devotes her efforts to perpetuating a romantic lifestyle to justify her decision to rebel against her uncle's prohibition to marriage, but once Oswald's financial fortunes change, Myra can no longer maintain the illusion and ends in pathetic despair.

Just as Cather hits upon the importance of ideals at the end of *One of Ours*, so she finds the reliability of religion to anchor one's life at the end of *My Mortal Enemy*. Thinking that her love for Oswald has been her undoing, Myra returns to the religion of her childhood, but as Harry B. Eichorn observes, she is motivated by revenge against Oswald, not seeking real repentance (136). In spite of her character's selfish reasons for turning to religion, Cather does find it to be a worthwhile solution for infusing one's life with meaning; thus her portrayal of the priests in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. It must be understood, however, that Cather does not necessarily argue that the Christian faith is the key to finding purpose in life. Catherine M. McLay points out, "Cather reveals the nature of her other religious quest for value in the twentieth century: a quest not essentially Christian or Catholic but aesthetic and philosophical, for something which will recreate the meaning of life which she felt to have been lost with the sunset of the pioneer" (McLay 33). I would say that it had been lost with the disillusionment of World War I.

In religion and art, Cather finds a set of transcendent values that can stabilize one's life: "In the kingdom of art there is no God, but one God, and his service is so exacting that there are few men born of woman who are strong enough to take the vows" (KA 417). Both art and religion stand or fall based on

their ability to capture truth. Moreover, both art and religion consist of tenets, right practices, or virtues by which the devout must abide. And virtuous action in either realm stand up against the caprices of time. The correlation Cather sees between art and religion leads to Bishop Latour's crowning achievement to be a beautiful cathedral that stands against the desert mountains with operatic drama (*Archbishop* 441)—it is a virtuous accomplishment of both art and religion.

The second element Cather finds necessary for a good life buoyed by virtuous friendship is other-oriented attention. As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Cather's characters constantly seek to appropriate their friends' identities for themselves, to live through or as someone else, but this action does not reveal the character to be concerned about his friend's wellbeing; rather the character's identity is so unstable that he looks to his friend to ground it. We see this most clearly in Claude's emulation of Ernest and Gerhardt and Niel's idolatry and renunciation of Marian. In *The Professor's House*, the dynamics are more complex: St. Peter lives in his memories with Tom, which hinders him from understanding the needs and desires of his living friends and family (Burrows 27); similarly, Tom's obsession with the Cliff City makes him oblivious to what Roddy values. And Myra Henshawe treats her friends as if they were co-actors in a play with her; those who do not follow her script are banished from the theater. As selfish as many of Cather's characters are, though, the reader never feels confident in condemning them because their selfishness arises from their abandoned state: their community has not given them a foundation of values on which to build their identities, so they are not equipped to respond selflessly to their friends.

This groundless existence is not the case for Latour and Vaillant in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. The *telos* for their lives and the framework for their experience are provided by the Church. One could consider again the priests' understanding of miracles, which requires the submission of the ego to the vision of faith. The priests repeatedly demonstrate their outward-oriented consciousness, as in their narrow escape from the murderous Buck Scales or Latour's sensitivity toward Doña Isabella's vanity. Their attention to others allows them to propagate their faith with kindness and consistency and to navigate a community of assorted cultures and values, not unlike the world that Cather finds herself in.

Still, by framing her solution to the lack of a community fostering meaningful values in a story about two priests in the mid-nineteenth century, has Cather not escaped to an idealized past, like Tom Outland or Professor St. Peter? Latour and Vaillant live in the present moment of their real community, which faces real problems; they are not nostalgists. And the authenticity of their lives transcends the particularities of the time and place in which they are situated, a point about good art that Cather underscores. The security the priests find in their faith in God metaphorically represents Cather's "intensifying spiritual longing for a haven, a sanctuary, something to set against what she was coming to see as the tragedy of human experience: the cruelty, anguish, and bleakness of life and love in the world" (Fisher-Worth 37). For Cather, the kingdom of art and the kingdom of heaven are linked. Latour and Vaillant help other people find meaning for their lives; Cather seeks to do likewise through her art. She does not believe the purpose of art to be glorifying the ego; rather it is the spiritual discernment of genius blended with the physical exertion of craft anchored by an

unchanging virtue of truth in order to produce a work that leads those who encounter it to make meaning for their lives. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Cather does not give her readers a clear solution to the problem; rather, she offers an ideal toward which to strive. If these two friends united in a common goal can encourage each other and serve the people around them to make important, beneficial changes to the community they live in, then we can, too. As we make meaning, we must remember to look outside ourselves, both for worthy virtues that transcend the localities of time and place and for ways to promote those virtues in those closest to us.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Personage's Potential for Authentic Friendship in Fitzgerald's Early Novels

In the ninth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle subverts the common understanding of the term "egoist": "Now those who use 'egoist' as a term of opprobrium apply it to people who assign to themselves the larger share of material goods, honors, and bodily pleasures....Those...who try to get more than their share of these things, gratify their appetites, their emotions in general, and the irrational part of their souls" (IX.8.1168b). He observes that people who exhibit self-love in this way do not actually seek what is good for themselves but indulge instead in the gratification of the baser parts of their souls. By doing so, these people do not practice real self-love. However, "[i]f a man were always to devote his attention above all else to acting justly himself, to acting with self-control, or to fulfilling whatever other demands virtue makes upon him, and if, in general, he were always to try to secure for himself what is noble," that man would be the true egoist because he "loves and gratifies the most sovereign element in him." The virtuous man loves himself and demonstrates that love by acting virtuously, that is, by taking other-oriented action that promotes the other's good. Aristotle thus challenges the notion that one's happiness lies in gratifying the appetites of the self and asserts that a person who truly understands what will bring fulfillment for herself will pursue virtuous action.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's critique of the American Dream essentially echoes Aristotle's point. In the 1920s, that dream seems to be the hope of personal fulfillment through materialistic success; Fitzgerald argues that the dream is "a

contradiction to and distortion of reality” (Hearne 190) and that those who chase it seek a false *telos*. Kimberly Hearne claims that the falsity of the American Dream is evident in “the duality inherent in the American dream’s essential character” (189), a duality that apparently has been present since the nation’s founding. Even though Thomas Jefferson changed the third unalienable right in John Locke’s triad of “life, liberty, and property” to the “pursuit of happiness” in the Declaration of Independence, many people assumed that Jefferson merely disguised the pursuit of property in euphemistic language (Callahan 379). Jefferson’s change thus suggests that the acquisition of material goods has always underlay the uniquely American right to seek personal fulfillment in the nation’s collective unconscious.

But John F. Callahan insists that circumventing the citizenry’s avaricious aspirations was not the intention of Jefferson or the other founding fathers. Rather, the fundamental human right to pursue happiness—arguably the seed from which the American Dream grew—relates more to Aristotelian *eudaimonia*, a matter, not just of personal fulfillment, but also communal involvement:

In Jefferson’s time, if not so strongly in Fitzgerald’s or our own, the “pursuit of happiness” also implied individual responsibility for the “spirit of public happiness” that John Adams felt so strongly in the colonies....Jefferson did not include the word *public*, but his phrase implies the individual’s integration of desire with responsibility, self-fulfillment with the work of the world. In short, in this promissory initial American context, the pursuit of happiness was bound up with citizenship, and citizenship with each individual’s responsibility for democracy. (380)

Out of the ambiguity of Jefferson’s phrase and the unspoken words that could modify it (e.g., “property” or “public”), tensions arise in the concept of the American Dream that Fitzgerald and his generation inherit in the 1920s: self-

centered versus other-centered, individual versus community, materialistic versus idealistic, even Van Wyck Brooks's dichotomy of pioneer versus Puritan.¹

Fitzgerald locates the center of these tensions in the individual, specifically the figure he calls the "egotist" (upon whom I will elaborate in my analysis of *This Side of Paradise*). Through his protagonists, he questions what truly brings fulfillment to the person who loves himself and discovers that the people who pursue the American Dream must adapt their lives to fit certain narratives deemed appropriate by the "American community"—the rags-to-riches story, for example: "Fitzgerald recognized...that the pressures in American culture were designed to channel one relentlessly away from one's natural calling and into the pursuit of money and status" (West 50).² Edwin S. Fussell observes that these narratives follow "two predominant patterns, quest and seduction. The quest is the search for romantic wonder, in the terms which contemporary America offers for such a search; the seduction represents capitulation to these terms" (291). I would argue that these two patterns are actually two related movements within the same narrative. When the contours of one's life do not match those of the narratological mold, however, the person must don a socially acceptable façade that disguises the incongruities between the social myth and his personal reality. Fitzgerald shows in his first three novels that those who pursue the American Dream, driven by the hope of personal fulfillment through materialistic success, succumb to a false *telos* because the dream is "perpetually unreal." As a result, the person pursuing the

¹ See Brooks's *The Wine of the Puritans*, pp. 1-60 (Sprague, ed. *Van Wyck Brooks: The Early Years, A Selection of His Works, 1908-1925*. 1993).

² Jennifer Banach sketches out the evolution of the American Dream in American letters, tracing the more economically driven manifestations of it to Horatio Alger's "hundreds of rags-to-riches stories" in the second half of the nineteenth century (21).

wrong end will either discover the error through crisis, or he will persist in an existence that is gradually drained of all meaning.³ Such an outcome cannot be desired by the egotist, if he truly loves himself.

On the other hand, the person who avoids the existential snares of the American Dream faces an outcome potentially as bleak: this person finds himself on the outside of his community, either rejecting its values or holding them at a critical distance.⁴ Fitzgerald does not suggest what the true *telos* for these outsiders might be—they may find themselves wandering permanently in isolation as social failures or eventually sacrificing their critical insight to conform to the communal myth of success. While he may not know what the true end for these American individuals might be, Fitzgerald does hold out hope that there is one, if they can maintain their separation from the social norm: “Fitzgerald affirms his faith repeatedly in an older, simpler America...[He] continues to find fragments of basic human value, social, moral, and religious” (Fussell 292-293). The perseverance required of their stance against the social norm restores the original spirit of the American Dream—the pursuit of an authentic happiness that does not rely on the caprices of fortune. In other words, Fitzgerald believes that a true *telos* can be found by retreating from the community that fosters self-focused gain and personal inauthenticity. This

³ Ronald Berman detects a number of symptoms indicating the loss of meaning for the characters in *The Great Gatsby*. For example, in the novel’s first chapter, Nick, Jordan, Tom, and Daisy engage in a conversation of falsehoods and signifiers emptied of their sacred meaning (*World of Ideas* 27, 43).

⁴ I am using male pronouns here because the focus of my study is the male characters in the novels. Fitzgerald, of course, is known for his portrayal of the modern woman in his writing, and he addresses the American Dream and identity formation from women’s perspectives as well, but the friendships of women, at least in the three novels I deal with, are not very clear.

course of action has its perils, but it is the only choice for the person who seeks his own best interest.

If Fitzgerald favors a more Aristotelian view of egoism and other-centered virtues, which I believe his texts show he does, then friendship will play a central role in his novels. Virtue-friendships are hard to find, however, because society has devoted itself to material prosperity as the source of personal fulfillment. At best, friends spur each other on in the virtues deemed worthy by society, assisting each other toward false *teloi* and thereby nullifying friendship's benefit; at worst, they simply use each other for pleasure or material acquisition. As Kimberly Hearne maintains, the practical functioning of the American Dream is hostile to friendships that promote mutual wellbeing: "No matter what idyllic picture we paint of America and all of its promise, underneath the brightest of hues lies the stark white canvas of truth: No one is truly equal, and regardless of opportunities, someone is always struggling underfoot—inevitably, as one rises another falls" (191).

Fitzgerald shows that, rather than encouraging conformity with the self-centered, materialistic narratives of the American community, true virtue-friends will push each other away from social conformity, outside of the community, but although he believes in the existence of virtues, he cannot identify them with certainty. True friends in the novels are those who can look past the façades imposed by the community and promote the person's identity that lies beneath. At the same time, this overthrowing of the façade destabilizes the tie between the two friends because they have no actual community, virtues, or *telos* with which to ground the relationship. Friendship thus points to the inadequacy of American society to give life meaning and the resultant isolation necessary for

individuals to seek meaning, but because he believes the search to be worthwhile, Fitzgerald implies the possibility of a reconstituted American society. Ultimately, Fitzgerald reaffirms the original intention of the American project of freedom, only the search for *eudaimonia* must begin anew.⁵

This chapter focuses on Fitzgerald's novels published in the 1920s: *This Side of Paradise*, *The Beautiful and Damned*, and *The Great Gatsby*. To link these novels in my discussion of friendship, virtue, and society, I use terminology that Fitzgerald develops in *This Side of Paradise*—the concepts of egotist, persona, and personage—and apply it to the characters in all three novels. Fitzgerald identifies Anthony Patch in *The Beautiful and Damned* and Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby* as personalities; although I do not believe he necessarily labeled them based on the definition he developed in *This Side of Paradise*, I have found that his definition in the first novel aptly elucidates the behavior of the characters in the next two.

Fitzgerald's critique of the American Dream and the formation of identity are both significant topics in the scholarship examining the author's work: "Critics such as Marcus Bewley and Malcolm Cowley, among countless others, have argued that Fitzgerald's work serves as a harsh critique of traditional notions of the American Dream, exposing it as an illusion fueled by some misguided drive born of the 'nervous energy' of a postwar generation struggling to make sense of their lives and the time in which they lived" (Banach 19).

⁵ John F. Callahan's take on the spirit behind the American right to pursue happiness echoes the implied conclusion drawn from Fitzgerald's exploration of the topic: "[N]aming the 'pursuit of happiness' an unalienable right confirmed the newly declared American nation as an experimental, necessarily improvisational society dedicated to the principle that every human personality is sacred and inviolable....[T]he idea and covenant of American citizenship required that all individuals make themselves up in the midst of the emerging new society. And the process of creation would be vernacular, arising from native ground, the weather, landscape, customs, habits, peoples, and values of this new world in the making" (379).

Berman (1997 et al.) anchors Fitzgerald's critique to the philosophy of his day, showing the influence of James, Royce, Santayana, and Lippmann. I extend this discussion of the American Dream by equating it with Aristotelian *eudaimonia*, enabling a new evaluation of the supposed virtues that underpin American society. Sklar (1967) shows how Fitzgerald subverts the virtuous protagonist of the genteel tradition; I demonstrate that he opens the way for a new definition of virtue. Stavola's Eriksonian analysis of Fitzgerald's characters (1979) lays the groundwork for an Aristotelian analysis of the characters, not just as individuals, but also as members of a dysfunctional society. Finally, Bevilacqua's sensitive Bakhtinian reading provides the raw materials for a discussion of virtue-friendship in *The Great Gatsby*: Nick's authoring of Gatsby becomes the Aristotelian activation of existence through the affirmation of virtuous action.

This Side of Paradise: The Centrifugal Effect of Personage Friendships

This Side of Paradise is Fitzgerald's modernist take on a *Bildungsroman*, in which he portrays the development of Amory Blaine, a young egotist. According to Thomas J. Stavola, "Interaction between self and society is at the core of the *bildungsroman* [sic] which has asserted that the hero can achieve a sense of identity only through a number of significant confrontations with the world around him" (Stavola 74). Fitzgerald undermines the traditional form by showing that Amory must develop his identity by pushing himself outside of the world around him. As an egotist, Amory could follow two different trajectories, either becoming a personality or a personage. The former is a terminal condition that lures Amory with the idea that his *telos* lies in fully investing in one image and conforming to society's established values. The latter continues indefinitely

and opens the hope that by mastering many different self-images, Amory can truly begin the search for his *telos*. But the process of becoming a personage has a centrifugal effect, pushing Amory away from the communal center.⁶

Friendships understandably will play a crucial role in Amory's formation—his friends who are personalities will try to draw him into the perils of social conformity; his friends who are personages will push him away. Interestingly, Amory's development reveals the ineffectiveness of friendship in the modernist period: either friends spur each other toward false *teloi*, or because of their unique positions as non-conformists, they cannot maintain their bond for long. In order to understand how friendships propel Amory on his course toward personage, we first must understand the three central terms of the novel: egotist, personality, and personage.

Species of Egotist: Personality and Personage

Although he never explicitly defines the term, Fitzgerald refers to Amory as an egotist through most of the novel. The following description in an episode titled "Code of the Young Egotist" helps to illuminate the term: "He [Amory] had realized that his best interests were bound up with those of a certain variant, changing person whose label, in order that his past might always be identified with him, was Amory Blaine" (*Paradise* 24). There is a fragmentation of psyche between person and what we might call conscious soul, but Fitzgerald is not trying to suggest that Amory experiences a psychotic break through this division of being; rather, he is breaking down into steps the psychic process that produces an egotist. The egotist is one who devotes his conscious attention to promoting

⁶ "The hero of *This Side of Paradise* proceeds, not from self into society, but away from society into his own first form of self-possession" (Sklar 43).

his interests by shaping the events of the external, visible person to which his name—his identity—is affixed.⁷

Pearl James judges this division of psyche to be an indicator of instability: “[I]dentity is performed and relatively unstable. In the novel’s lexicon, this shift appears as a move from ‘character’ to ‘personality.’ Fitzgerald registers this modern way of being in the world as a formal problem: his protagonist, Amory Blaine, can never achieve a coherent character, and, consequently, the novel never reaches a convincing culmination” (3). But Fitzgerald’s way of explaining egotistical formation actually is Aristotelian. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle talks about the self as if it is divided in two—for example, we show love for ourselves by wanting to spend time with ourselves (IX.4.1166a). Dividing the self enables Amory (and Fitzgerald) to get a handle on what are legitimate desires of the individual and what are false social expectations foisted upon him. It is a practice of self-awareness. Also, we must not yet read into Fitzgerald’s explanation the typical connotation of the egotist as driven by selfish desire; Amory as egotist may discover that other-oriented actions promote his interests most effectively.

Instead of “identity” or “name,” Fitzgerald uses the word “label,” which connotes a product or commodity, and places the conscious soul in the role of advertiser, a manufacturer of image. The egotist dwells on what the label (his name) and the product (his past) connote to *himself*. The consumer response (what other people think of him) is important to the extent that it accords with

⁷ It would seem this bifurcation of internal consciousness from external person is necessary “for Amory to overcome his inherited deficiencies by developing his ‘personal character’...who might eventually attain [William] James’s ‘moral perception’ (26), and thus, avoid [Katherine Fullerton] Gerould’s ‘deterministic net’ and allow the hero to discover ‘a philosophy of [his] own’ (Gerould, ‘British Novelists’ 163, 172)” (Ullrich 48).

his own perception. For example, if the egotist wants his “brand” to evoke luxury for himself, he will shape his past and take new actions that he believes promote the luxurious image and will expect that he evokes luxury for other people. By depicting Amory as an egotist, Fitzgerald is not casting moral judgment on his character. Egotism is Amory’s natural state, and Fitzgerald implies that it must be the natural state for people of Amory’s generation: “This selfishness is not only part of me. It is the most living part” (*Paradise* 258). Although we do not want to condemn immediately Fitzgerald’s conception of the egotist, it is hard to see how meaningful friendship will arise from the egotist’s projection of a superficial brand; it seems a person’s friendship with an egotist would be about as deep as a driver’s with a billboard. *How* the egotist employs this external branding makes an important difference, which I will discuss momentarily.

Amory inherits his egotism, as he did “every trait...that made him worthwhile,” from his mother Beatrice (11). Beatrice’s education was devoted to covering her with an elegant veneer without cultivating anything of substance beneath it: “All in all Beatrice O’Hara absorbed...a tutelage measured by the number of things and people one could be contemptuous of and charming about, a culture rich in all arts and traditions, barren of all ideas, in the last of those days when the great gardener clipped the inferior roses to produce one perfect bud” (11-12). Transient beauty, opinions, and cultural externals characterize Beatrice’s education, and she attempts to hand down all of them to Amory by fashioning her “delightful companion” in her own image (12).⁸ But her education, the

⁸ “But beneath this tangled network of externals Beatrice is essentially insecure, mistrustful, and lacks a firm sense of identity. She does not know who she is and, what is more

vener, does not constitute her egotism; it is important to see the distinction, as Amory does as a five-year-old child: “Even at this age he had no illusions about her” (12). He sees the difference between the external person and the internal consciousness, and what influence her education has had on him is rubbed off by the social friction caused by Amory’s sophisticated posing in middle-class Minneapolis and at St. Regis’, his prep school, where “[h]e went all wrong at the start, was generally considered both conceited and arrogant, and universally detested” (33). The young Amory learns that his branding can fail—his feigned cosmopolitanism brings a decisively negative reaction from the “consumers,” with whom he seeks to make friendly connections, but this adverse experience may have been more beneficial than if his classmates had approved of his posturing. It teaches Amory to experiment with other façades. Beatrice instills in Amory the ability to possess and utilize a veneer, but whereas her wielding of the trait brings about instability—her actions are a never-ending cycle of trips, parties, theatrics, and hypochondriacal disorders of body and spirit—Amory seeks to wield it with greater advantage.⁹

The novel, then, traces Amory’s development in the utilization of his egotism—how he wields veneers or markets his brand—which can lead him to becoming a personality or a personage. Amory’s mentor, Monsignor Darcy, explains the two concepts after Amory has fallen from social prominence at

damaging to herself and her son, she takes extreme delight in her constantly shifting emotions and behaviour, in the belief that this posing makes her more attractive to her friends, whom she quickly tires of, or to new acquaintances” (Stavola 77-78).

⁹ Perhaps the better word would be “struggles,” for, as Ullrich comments, “In *Paradise*, Fitzgerald configures the opposing perspectives of free will and determinism in a narrative structure that juxtaposes his belief in the potential for heroic action with various inherited physical and psychological traits that impede Amory Blaine’s quest for autonomy and self-knowledge” (41).

Princeton (101). According to Darcy, personality is an inferior condition. He refers to it as a “physical matter,” that is, merely the external manifestation—the image or the connotation of the “brand.” This external manifestation can be so influential that “it over-rides ‘the next thing’”; it may help one achieve social promotion without an expenditure of effort, but such advantage comes at too high a cost because “it lowers the people it acts on.” The person who adopts a personality loses the flexibility of adjusting the connotation of his name: no matter what a personality does, the associations that people have already made with his name will remain unchanged. As a result, he cannot reinvent himself—he possesses no dynamism or innovation; thus personality can “vanish in a long sickness” or some other personal catastrophe. The egotist who adopts a personality invests all of his conscious effort in projecting one image, thereby relinquishing the critical distance between soul and person he once had. Personality-friendships, then, would be as superficial as we presumed before; they are founded only on façades and succeed based on how well the friends’ veneers allow them to conform to social expectation.

A personage, on the other hand, retains dynamism by keeping the critical distance between the conscious soul and external person, the “cold mentality” that strategizes how to use the glittering costumes hanging on the bar. The personage does not fully invest in one image but rather diversifies: he “gathers” many different images—the “glittering things”—so that his identity stays flexible. Darcy seems to borrow a Nietzschean image here: “[W]e are the first age that has truly studied ‘costumes’—I mean those of moralities, articles of faith, tastes in the arts, and religions—prepared like no previous age for a carnival in the grand style, for the laughter and high spirits of the most spiritual revelry, for

the transcendental heights of the highest nonsense and Aristophanean derision of the world" (*Beyond* 223). In other words, the personage knows how to manipulate the moral discourse of the society he walks through, but he does not treat it with credulity; instead, he maintains a critical distance.

The personage "is never thought of apart from what he's done" (*Paradise* 101); he can constantly adjust the connotation that his brand conjures because he can choose different courses of action. In order to maintain this flexibility, though, the personage must be responsible to "do the next thing," as Darcy admonishes Amory to do. The ability to "gather" an image to hang it on the bar comes from taking the steps to cultivate that image, all the while maintaining distance: the conscious soul selects a costume from the bar of personage in which to clothe the person.¹⁰ Near the end of the novel, Amory reconceptualizes Darcy's dichotomy, evolving it into the distinction between spiritually married and unmarried men. I will address this version later in the discussion; suffice it to say in the meantime that Amory's goal as an egotist is to become a personage while avoiding the temptations of personality.

¹⁰ Before Monsignor Darcy explained the dichotomy of personality and personage to Amory in college, Amory had already conceived of its prototype—the categories of "slicker" and "big man," which parallel personage and personality respectively. Amory considers himself somewhat of a slicker in prep school, and he aspires to complete his identity as one. His description of the slicker fits nicely with Darcy's description of the personage:

The slicker was good-looking or *clean*-looking; he had brains, social brains that is, and he used all means on the broad path of honesty to get ahead, be popular, admired and never in trouble....The slicker seemed distributed through school, always a little wiser and shrewder than his contemporaries, managing some team or other and keeping his cleverness carefully concealed. (39-40)

Both the slicker and the personage are characterized by image and action with underlying intellect, whereas the big man of prep school faces the same doom of personality when graduation rolls around: he "[g]ets to college and has a problematical future. Feels lost without his circle and always says that [prep] school days were happiest after all. Goes back to school and makes speeches about what St. Regis' boys are doing" (40).

Pearl James worries that, in spite of his critical distance, the personage still does not possess a stable, authentic self beneath the glittering costumes: "The notion of the discursive self does away with simple notions of authenticity. This kind of self comes into being through imitation and acquisition rather than through introspection or contemplation. The discursive self, prodded by desire, comes into being in a social world, through relationships, posturing, and exchange" (12-13). Her misgivings are well-founded; in the context of Amory's society, "an authentic and enduring self becomes increasingly untenable." But this is exactly Fitzgerald's critique of Amory's society: the inconsistency between its values and practices mean that one cannot develop an authentic and enduring self. Until society changes, the self-conscious individual must protect his true self from the conforming, falsifying forces of society. As we will see later, maintaining this critical distance will enable the personage to be a potential force of change in society. However, personages have the chance to form deeper friendships than personalities because they understand that their friend's true identity is under the social costumes; instead of forming friendly bonds under the auspices of a virtue-promoting community, they unite in mutual longing for a community that would allow their real selves to emerge.

Thayer Darcy: Amory's Personage Mentor

Each friend that Amory makes falls into one of the two categories. Thayer Darcy is the preeminent personage of the novel and the most important person in the formation of Amory's character. Fitzgerald's depiction of Darcy epitomizes the personage's multifaceted image: "Description fails. One might enumerate his qualities by the dozen for he had all qualities to all people..."

(*Paradise* 30). His choice of religious vocation suggests the personage's disposition toward action and critical distance: "He was intensely ritualistic, startlingly dramatic, loved the idea of God enough to be a celibate, and rather liked his neighbor." Darcy and Amory find an immediate rapport upon their first meeting, and Darcy gives his young protégé the encouragement needed to pursue the course of the personage. The devoted discipleship that Darcy carries on with Amory results from his conviction that he and Amory are identical in temperament and inclination. As he writes in a letter to Amory during the war, "All you need tell me of yourself is that you still are; for the rest I merely search back in a restive memory...and match you with what I was at your age" (149). In the language of Aristotle, Darcy sees Amory as another self (*NE IX.4.1166a*), a reflection of his youthful self, and he thus desires to guide Amory and promote his development as a personage.

Although these two men are dear to each other, Darcy refuses a central tenet of Aristotelian friendship as a rule for "people like us," that is, personages: as Amory prepares to depart after their first visit, Darcy says, "You're not sorry to go, of course. With people like us our home is where we are not....No one person in the world is necessary to you or to me" (*Paradise* 32). Aristotle thinks that home is in proximity to one's friends,¹¹ but Darcy denies the need for physical proximity, arguing that the personage is not at home anywhere. This condition reflects the critical distance of the personage that makes him an outsider to community; as long as there is no community present where the personage can exhibit an authentic image without resorting to his glittering costumes, then personages as friends cannot live together for long—their

¹¹ *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.4.1157b

interests carry them elsewhere. Indeed, Amory does not meet with Thayer Darcy many times, but when he does, he learns crucial things about himself. Even after his death, Monsignor Darcy influences Amory, continuing to shape him into a personage: it is at Darcy's funeral that Amory determines that he wants "to be necessary to people, to be indispensable..." (246). According to Stavola, "This intimate union, firmly based upon the first positive mutual trust and intimacy Amory had ever deeply experienced, endures, even when they are separated, and grows stronger and more influential after Darcy's unfortunate death. Only then does Amory start to realize fully the formative effect that Darcy has had upon his restless, young spirit and often aimless actions" (85-86). Darcy's treatment of Amory as another self prompts the development of the latter's character throughout the novel.

Princeton: The Community of Personality

Amory tells Darcy that he wants to attend Princeton, which in the novel constitutes American society in microcosm.¹² When he arrives there, the sun-soaked lawns and "great dreaming spires" of the campus enthrall Amory, who is soon drawn into the competition and conformity endemic to the community (*Paradise* 47). He determines to become "one of the gods of the class," going out for the campus newspaper, performing in the Triangle Club musical, and getting selected to one of the long-established clubs for upperclassmen. By doing this, Amory may be cultivating his personage by taking care of "the next thing," as Darcy will later advise him to do, or he may be drifting into the trap of

¹² "Princeton, not Amory Blaine, is the center of *This Side of Paradise*....F. Scott Fitzgerald presented the institution as far more than a setting; indeed it became his center of the universe" (Van Arsdale 39).

personality, an insidious danger of the Princeton club system, in which “everyone [is] sewed up in some bag for the rest of his college career” (49).¹³ In the midst of his college successes, it appears that Amory has done the latter: “His ideas were in tune with life as he found it—he wanted no more than to drift and dream and enjoy a dozen newfound friendships through the April afternoons” (74). Fitzgerald’s mention of friendships reflects Amory’s assimilation into the Princeton community; his friends share his drive for campus notoriety and similarly settle into niches in the various clubs. It would seem they achieve the artificial *telos* of the Princeton community—a respectable place.

Amory’s companions on the road trip to Asbury Park exemplify the surrender to personality, particularly Dick Humbird, whom Amory admires because his aristocratic attributes seem natural and inherent; he is for Amory “the eternal example of what the upper class tries to be” (78).¹⁴ But when Amory learns that Dick’s “father was a grocery clerk who made a fortune in Tacoma real estate and came to New York ten years ago,” his heart sinks because he realizes that Dick’s aristocratic demeanor is in fact a manifestation of personality. As the central symbol of Princetonian personality, Dick must be punished in order to keep Amory on the trajectory toward personage—thus the fatal car accident and Amory’s view of Dick’s body: “All that remained of the charm and personality of the Dick Humbird he had known—oh, it was all so horrible and unaristocratic and close to the earth” (86). Amory’s disillusionment with Dick leads to his

¹³ “Almost every significant personal crisis of the college years described in *This Side of Paradise* focuses on a conflict between Amory’s willingness to submit to the allure of the Princeton ideal and what can be construed as a Jamesian pragmatist’s revolt from the constraints of ‘closed systems’” (Gillin 42).

¹⁴ Amory not only deems Humbird an aristocrat for his actions but also for his physiognomy: “Amory associates Dick Humbird’s external, physiognomic markers as signifying his internal character and intelligence, as if these are causatively connected” (Ullrich 50).

apathetic abdication of his influence as an upperclassman. Through the self-destructive act of flunking his math test, Amory thrusts himself out of the center of community life at Princeton. The shattered image of aristocratic idealism throws Amory into uncertainty about his identity, but it also ensures his progress toward personage.

Later, Dick's devilish apparition prevents Amory from falling into the trap of the personality-community. After going to the apartment of a couple of showgirls with Fred Sloane (another personality from the Asbury trip), Amory is chased out of the apartment by a terrifying vision of the devil. As he runs into a darkened alley to escape the sound of footsteps coming at him from all directions, he collapses to the ground and cries out for someone both good and stupid to save him: "[B]efore his eyes a face flashed over the two feet, a face pale and distorted with a sort of infinite evil that twisted it like flame in the wind; *but he knew...that it was the face of Dick Humbird*" (111). The point of this haunting experience is not to tell a moralistic tale¹⁵ but to keep Amory on the road to personage, away from the "little party" with Sloane and the show girls, a situation in which he is apt to lose his critical distance and tie himself to personality.¹⁶

¹⁵ Fitzgerald infuses this episode with moral ambiguity, evident in Amory's confusing the terms "stupid" and "good" and the appearance of Humbird's face. Although his visage is "distorted with a sort of infinite evil" (111), is Humbird the good/stupid person that Amory had invoked a moment before? "Wherever slave morality becomes preponderant, language tends to bring the words 'good' and 'stupid' closer together" (Nietzsche, *Beyond* 260).

¹⁶ "As 'The Romantic Egotist,' Amory has relied on bodily signifiers to assess a person's moral character and relative chance for success. To develop, he must re-evaluate his system of classification and its emphasis on physical beauty as a marker of moral conduct and cultural and economic success" (Ullrich 51). Ullrich argues that the traumatic episode with the showgirls and the vision of a demonic Dick Humbird breaks Amory's correlation between physical features and worldly success. The problem with this assessment is that Humbird does not possess the right physical traits for success at Princeton that Amory has derived by looking through the university's old yearbooks—but Amory does. The text clearly shows that Amory admires

The Connages and New York Respectability

Amory's journey toward personage is threatened whenever he is in a relationship with a woman, a fact that will contribute to his later articulation of the spiritually unmarried man. The most perilous of these relationships is with Rosalind Connage, whose rose-like beauty nearly cons Amory into a life of conventionality: "For the second time in his life Amory had had a complete bouleversement and was hurrying into line with his generation" (174). Amory takes a job at an advertising agency, intending to support Rosalind on his meager salary; meanwhile, Rosalind is wooed by Dawson Ryder: "twenty-six, handsome, wealthy, faithful to his own, a bore perhaps, but steady and sure of success" (170). Rosalind is also an egotist; she understands that Ryder will provide the setting in which her image will shine most brightly, whereas Amory could only provide her "a narrow atmosphere" (182). He does not realize it at first, but to marry Rosalind would also limit Amory's possibilities of becoming a personage. Naturally, once the engagement is broken, Amory stumbles into his boss's office at the advertising agency to tender a drunken resignation, again pushing himself away from social conformity.

Alec, Rosalind's brother and Amory's friend from Princeton, gives Amory the biggest push toward personage when Amory protects him from being arrested for bringing an underage girl across state lines. Amory decides to take the blame for Alec because he realizes "the great *impersonality* of sacrifice" and its separation from "love and hate, reward and punishment" (228, my italics). If Amory sought social approbation, his sacrifice would be an act of personality,

Humbird's physical appearance, though. Perhaps Amory's drive for success in the Princeton community and his regard for Humbird's naturally aristocratic character are not one and the same.

but by divorcing himself from Alec's perception of him, Amory's act can become one of many that contributes to his multifaceted image, the shaping of which he can maintain control of as a personage. He thinks to himself, "Sacrifice by its very nature was arrogant and impersonal; sacrifice should be eternally supercilious" (229). Convinced of its ability to set him above and apart from other people, Amory decides to make the sacrifice, thereby committing a simultaneously heroic and transgressive act: "Amory sacrifices himself for Alec Connage not in a gesture of genteel acceptance, but in disdainful defiance of the genteel code" (Sklar 55).

Amory's confessing to being with the girl at the hotel shows the problem with personality. He seems to help his friend toward his *telos* by protecting Alec's reputation in the conventionally wholesome world of New York society, but Alec's is an artificial end because of the deception that surrounds it. By colluding with Amory in the lie, Alec commits himself to life as a personality, safe in the conformist community, but he can no longer be Amory's friend because the latter's actions hide the truth. Likewise, unless Amory estranges himself from the Connages' social world, he must accept the status of personality, taking on the caddish image projected by the newspaper report of his supposed immoral act. What appears to be an act of friendship is one that actually shows the impossibility of friendship in a community of surface-level values.

Spiritually Married and Unmarried Men

The incident with Alec marks an important break, both with Rosalind and with the conception of society embodied in Princeton. Amory now can embrace

the condition of personage, which he makes his own by developing a new dichotomy between the spiritually married or unmarried man. The spiritually married man commits himself to being “a conservative as far as existing social conditions are concerned,” most likely because he has committed himself to being literally married (*Paradise* 250). In order to provide financially for his wife, the spiritually married man must agree to play by the rules of the game as they are already established; to do so, he dons a role—a personality—with which to navigate his social and financial success. Once he has agreed to society’s rules, he will refuse to change them, for fear of losing his success. Protecting his status is his first priority, even above living virtuously: “He may be unselfish, kind-hearted, even just in his own way, but his first job is to provide and to hold fast.” Thus, according to Amory, social morality is illusory because it is expendable if it impedes one on the road to success. Therefore, virtue-friendships must also be impossible because the community shapes its members to dispense with virtuous action when it is convenient—everybody’s attention is focused strictly on himself and the preservation of his socioeconomic status.

By contrast, the spiritually unmarried man stands outside of society or has lost society’s game; disillusioned and alienated, he “continually seeks for new systems that will control or counteract human nature....It is not life that’s complicated, it’s the struggle to guide and control life. That is his struggle. He is a part of progress...” (251). Whereas the personality must stay committed to the image he projects to society, the personage can change his image and use it to enter and retreat from society as he needs, using his glittering objects as camouflage or disguise. Detached from society, the spiritually unmarried man or personage can look at it critically and determine how to change it, even by

radical overthrow if necessary.¹⁷ The spiritually unmarried men's outsider status hinders the cultivation of friendships because there is no social context in which to bring them together, but this lack of community does not make it impossible. Their meeting and befriending rather is fortuitous and rare, but Aristotle likewise says that virtue-friendships are rare (*NE* VIII.3.1156b).

Amory first utilizes personage in this way in his conversation with the rich man with goggles who gives him a lift on his way back to Princeton¹⁸—he argues in favor of socialism, countering the rich man's conservatism, in order to explore his own thoughts about how the world should work. The reader is not supposed to think that Amory ends the book as a socialist; in fact, he admits, "Until I talked to you I hadn't thought seriously about it. I wasn't sure of half of what I said" (*Paradise* 256). Although he has not resolved to be a socialist, Amory knows that the current system does not work—for him, at least. When he declares, "I'm in love with change and I've killed my conscience," he speaks only in terms of the society and its conventions out of which he has been pushed, the world of Princeton politics, middle-class office conformity, and genteel respectability. But this declaration does not mean that Amory possesses no

¹⁷ In Amory's explanation of the spiritually unmarried man, he makes clear that the latter is devoted to using his outsider status for improving society, changing its values and moving it away from illusion or hypocrisy, by revolution if necessary. Matthew Bruccoli confirms this desire in Amory to serve society: "[D]espite the novel's iconoclastic reputation, [Amory] is committed to moral and social order. Amory is fundamentally conservative. His individualism is not of the Nietzschean *Übermensch* variety. He yearns to lead, but he expects to serve the race by leading. In fulfilling his destiny, he will fulfill his talents. For Amory Blaine failure is a form of death-in-life, a mark of spiritual bankruptcy" (*Grandeur* 145). Amory's conservatism lies in his belief that there are real virtues that fortify a community, but he sees the community around him touting one set of virtues while functioning on a different set of vices.

¹⁸ "'The Big Man with Goggles,' Jesse Ferrenby's father, represents the last, great 'personality' in *Paradise*, arguably the only fully mature and enfranchised adult male in the entire novel..." (Ullrich 58). In other words, Mr. Ferrenby has attained the false *telos*, but the loss of his son in the war should be a clue to the reader that his self-satisfaction is not as stalwart as his conversation with Amory would suggest.

beliefs, evident when he says, "Even if, deep in my heart, I thought we were all blind atoms in a world as limited as a stroke of a pendulum, I and my sort would struggle against tradition; try, at least, to displace old cants with new ones." The "if" implies that Amory does not believe we live in a random, meaningless world, and his desire to replace old cants with new indicates that the world should have some sort of communal organization; what that organization is, though, he has yet to discover.

Thomas J. Stavola believes that, since Amory "still lacks the vision of a reasonably coherent world," there is no hope at the end of the novel (76). But Amory's hunch that the world can have coherence *is* hopeful. Granted, the hope is as vague as the shadowy spirit of Darcy behind the curtains in the Atlantic City hotel room, but it lurks in such statements as the following: "There is no virtue of unselfishness that I cannot use. I can make sacrifices, be charitable, give to a friend, endure for a friend, lay down my life for a friend—all because these things may be the best possible expression of myself; yet I have not one drop of the milk of human kindness" (*Paradise* 258). Here we see the emergence of the Aristotelian egoist, the one who uses his intellect to determine what truly is virtuous because it "gratifies the most sovereign part of himself" (*NE* IX.8.1168b). As a personage, Amory can practice virtue and have friends, but he cannot commit himself to common moral sentiments, which he has discovered to be illusory traps that bring about the catastrophe of realizing "all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken" (*Paradise* 260). Until he can find a good

life that survives disillusionment, he must hold all virtuous actions at a critical distance, using them only as the disguises of the personage.¹⁹

The end of the novel does not find Amory in a state of completion, symbolized in his incomplete journey back to Princeton (back into the community that thrust him out), but this conclusion is not one of despair. Fitzgerald intends for us to see that Amory now can reexamine the world as a personage, able to wield a collection of glittering costumes through the use of his critical distance honed by personal authenticity.²⁰ He has realized, through Darcy, his other self, that his true desire is “to be necessary to people, to be indispensable....Amory felt an immense desire to give people a sense of security” (246). Returning to Princeton, he must figure out how to accomplish this vague purpose without succumbing to the danger of conformity, which still exists for him: “[T]here was ever the pain of memory, the regret for his lost youth—yet the waters of disillusion had left a deposit on his soul, responsibility and a love of life, the faint stirring of old ambitions and unrealized dreams” (260). These motivations continue to compete with “his ideas...in riot,” but he feels determined to struggle for something more. His final declaration, “I know myself...but that is all—” articulates the beginning of a new search for authentic meaning.²¹

¹⁹ “[I]n one way *This Side of Paradise* details an individual’s journey from the false consciousness of mere ‘personality,’ with all its stamps of upbringing and education and class convention, to the genuineness of becoming a ‘personage,’ one who pragmatically acts in the freedom from constraints of established creed, custom, or caste” (Gillin 46).

²⁰ Matthew J. Bruccoli argues that Amory’s “epic quest is unfulfilled and unfinished in the novel. It scarcely begins. *This Side of Paradise* doesn’t end; it just stops” (“Apprentice” 19).

²¹ Amory “has broken, not with society, but with an accommodation to a social perspective which denies his own distinctive human values. He has given up a passive but secure place in the social order for an active and problematic role in creating constructive social change....Now he must make a direct confrontation with the capacity of his will to create values

The Beautiful and Damned: *Anthony's Social Limbo*

Like Amory Blaine, Anthony Patch, the protagonist of *The Beautiful and Damned*, also experiences a divided psyche, but unlike the former, he cannot productively master that division. Characterized by waiting, Anthony is Fitzgerald's portrait of existential drift: according to Thomas J. Stavola, he "longs for...an identity which will heal his divided self" (113), but he never fully invests in his personality or cultivates the multifaceted image of the personage.²² Anthony is caught in a limbo between the poles of personality and personage, embodied in his two closest friends, Dick Caramel and Maury Noble.²³ Dick, the personality, attempts to stave off the inevitable collapse of his friend by urging him to adopt the moral conventions of the community, but because Anthony can see that Dick has settled for a false *telos*, he refuses to heed his friend's exhortations. Maury, the personage, consciously decides to join Anthony in alcoholic dissipation as part of his exploration of sensual experience before directing his efforts to making a fortune. Maury is not only remiss as a friend for not encouraging his friend in pursuit of the virtues—above which he considers himself to be intellectually—but his actions demonstrate that he has no concern for his friend's wellbeing at all. The friendships depicted in Fitzgerald's second

for himself. If he has not yet become a 'personage,' he has at least attained the ground from which he may begin to work" (Sklar 56).

²² "[Anthony] has lived for so long with the assumption that he will one day be rich that he has failed to develop any purpose for himself—other than a vague desire to write" (West 52).

²³ Robert Sklar sums up Anthony's situation nicely: "Caramel is the functioning creator, a writer; Maury, the complete cynic; Anthony, the man pathetically torn between creativity and passive cynicism, ready to slip into the purposeless abyss that lies between them" (96). I must mention one qualification, however: Maury's cynicism is anything but passive—he has mapped a course for his life and assiduously follows it, as I shall explain in this section.

novel are poisonous and once again demonstrate the delusion and destruction that come with an exclusive self-focus.

Anthony's Inheritance from His Grandfather

In order to understand how Anthony is trapped between personality and persona, we must understand how the purpose of his life is derived from his grandfather, the wealthy reformer Adam "Cross" Patch. Anthony Patch has a clear *telos*, the inheritance of his grandfather's money, which requires one action: waiting for the man to die. Until he attains the power and influence that come with Cross Patch's fortune, he believes he can do nothing worthwhile: "[H]e would one day accomplish some quiet subtle thing that the elect would deem worthy and, passing on, would join the dimmer stars in a nebulous, indeterminate heaven..." (*Damned* 3). In the meantime, Anthony formulates a passive, aristocratic façade of opinions and discriminations. Thus, Fitzgerald tells us at the novel's beginning, he is "not a portrait of a man but a distinct and dynamic *personality*, opinionated, contemptuous, functioning from within outward" (my italics). Rather than cultivate the virtues through engagement with his community, Anthony assumes that his eventual inheritance gives him superiority over society and its conventions, a position from which he is entitled to critique them.

But what Anthony does not realize is that, as a personality, he is a product of the society and conventions that he disdains: "Anthony drew as much consciousness of social security from being the grandson of Adam J. Patch as he would have from tracing his line over the sea to the crusaders" (4). Cross Patch, a man who "charged into Wall Street" to make his fortune, has devoted his life

since middle age to becoming a “reformer of reformers,” shaping society to fit his personal moral outlook. The power he has to wield his moral influence comes from his money, his lifeblood. Even though Anthony eagerly awaits that same lifeblood, he refuses to believe the power it has given the old man: Cross Patch’s fortune “appeared, vaguely, [to be] a demand loan made by the world to Adam Patch’s own moral righteousness” (13). Anthony overlooks the fact that his grandfather made his money in the same way as his stockbroker, whom he respects: “by sheer indomitable strengths and tremendous feats of will” on Wall Street. In either case, Anthony lives parasitically on the efforts of other men, while his “*raison d’être*” is a non-action, “the *theoretical* creation of essays on the popes of the Renaissance” (my italics). With this lack of social consciousness, Anthony will not be able to engage in any relationship that actually benefits the friend, or even himself, as we shall see.

Anthony’s (literal) indebtedness to his grandfather’s society is of crucial importance for interpreting his action (or non-action) throughout the novel. After beginning the novel with a brief sketch of the protagonist at the present moment, Fitzgerald then relates Anthony’s family history, which Ronald Berman describes as a story of vital decline:

It is plain enough that Mr. [Cross] Patch has his “energies” but they quickly decline into Comstockery...and to what Fitzgerald describes as a variety of rabid monomania. Life is entropy rather than progress: he marries an “anemic lady of thirty, Alicia Withers” and their son becomes known as the first man in America to roll the lapels of his coat. Not a [William] Jamesian accomplishment. Our Anthony, in the third generation, is often tired and generally horizontal—conditions which in fiction have implications about political and social energies. (“America” 46)

Fitzgerald does not intend the reader to see Cross Patch as the moral center of the novel; rather, Anthony’s grandfather becomes a reformer in order to recast the

world in his own, selfish image, enforcing his will upon society as he did upon Wall Street in his sprier days. Yet his concern for a world that conforms to his tastes does not seem to have resulted in the fostering of the virtues in his decadent son and grandson. Instead, Cross Patch hands down that self-focused orientation through his son to Anthony, who, deprived of the financial influence to refashion society's morality to suit himself, merely rebels against it in his own wasteful leisure. Berman thus determines the novel to be "organized around what might be called the Idea of Regress" (42), a retreat from meaningful, social involvement into selfish indolence.²⁴ Such regression weakens the bonds of friendship and severely limits the benefits the relationship could bring.

Yet because he relies upon his grandfather's money in order to attain the aristocratic life for which he feels he has been born, Anthony also is beholden to the social conventions supported by that money, whether he knows it or not, and his character is judged according to them: "No matter what he says, Anthony has a deeper attachment to his traditional grandfather than to his own well-articulated beliefs in revolt and the meaninglessness of life" (Stavola 116). From this perspective, then, Anthony's refusal to "*do something*," as his grandfather urges (*Damned* 15), is not an indicator of critical distance from or even neutrality regarding social conformity; rather, it is conventional shiftlessness.²⁵ Anthony's

²⁴ James L. W. West III agrees with Berman's observations of inherited indolence, noting that Fitzgerald's experience at Princeton enabled him to observe many cases similar to Anthony's: "They had attended the proper schools, had found mates and married, and had settled back into the protection of family money, waiting for it to descend upon them....In all of those characters, the anticipation of money has produced a curious enervation and an insensitivity to the needs and desires of others. These characters please only themselves, wait for their money, and drift" (53).

²⁵ "For amid the dialectic between romantic present and sentimental past, it is the future—in the form of the fortune he expects when Adam Patch dies—which is the source of Anthony's undoing. Anthony is made incongruously to believe in the reality of his grandfather's future bequest, though his conviction that life is meaningless gives him no faith in any other

entrenchment in the social standards of his grandfather allows Muriel, a vulgar character who throughout the novel is mocked by the other characters and the narrator, to present strikingly sound advice: “[W]hy don’t you go to work, you la-azy!” (406). Muriel tries to convince Anthony and his wife Gloria that their friends have not abandoned them, in spite of their wild behavior, but they refuse to believe it because they do not think they are defined by the same social conventions. Thus, even though Muriel offers friendship, Anthony and Gloria cannot receive it; the two parties have conflicting moral outlooks, in spite of the fact that they are judged by the same sets of virtues and vices.

Maury: Anthony’s Personage Friend

The moral predicament that leads to Anthony and Gloria’s downfall is clarified throughout the novel in his interactions with his two friends, Dick and Maury. Essentially, Anthony considers himself to be a personage, beyond society’s definitions of good and evil, like Maury, but in reality the obligations to conventional society concomitant with his aristocratic aspirations make Anthony a personality, like Dick. As the stories of his two friends develop, the reader sees possible avenues of action that Anthony could take, were he cognizant of his social position: either he could sell out, as Dick does in his writing, or he could fully reject society’s conventional morality, as Maury does. To do the latter, Anthony would have to abandon his claim to his grandfather’s fortune.²⁶

aspect of the future. One can accept this from Anthony Patch, but only at the cost of his reiterated intelligence and sophistication” (Sklar 103).

²⁶ I essentially side with Stavola, who argues, “Throughout *The Beautiful and Damned* Anthony is constantly drawn to communicate with characters like Maury Noble, Dick Caramel, Bloeckman, and especially Gloria because...he discovers in them projections of various self-images he has yet to integrate into one identity” (118).

Unlike Anthony, Dick and Maury still play the game society has set; they do not adopt Anthony's haughty refusal to act. The contrast between Anthony and his two friends emerges in the group's conversation about art in the first chapter. Dick insists, "Art isn't meaningless," a comment that reflects his idealistic temperament (23). Maury responds that art is meaningless in and of itself, but "[i]t isn't in that it tries to make life less so." Maury's comment exhibits both his cynicism and his pragmatism—both art and life are meaningless, but since we are stuck with life, some people try to perpetuate the illusion that it is worthwhile. Granted, Maury's outlook is bleak, but it enables him to function socially. Finally, Anthony answers Maury specifically: "I'd feel that it being a meaningless world, why write? The very attempt to give it purpose is purposeless" (24). With this comment, Anthony betrays both his apathy and his ambivalence; he says "I'd feel," using the subjunctive mood, implying that he cannot completely accept Maury's nihilistic perspective, yet he then posits the ultra-nihilist renunciation of action—writing is purposeless, so why do it? We must remember that Anthony has told his grandfather that he thought he *could* be a writer (again, using the subjunctive), but when he contemplates Dick working on his novel, the act of writing is distasteful to him: "The notion of sitting down and conjuring up, not only words in which to clothe thoughts but thoughts worthy of being clothed—the whole thing was absurdly beyond his desires" (18). Anthony does not actually hold the conviction that it is meaningless to commit thoughts to paper; he simply lacks the desire to do it, awaiting the day when conditions will be right for him to exercise his personality in some grand action.²⁷ Anthony's contribution to the conversation on art reveals

²⁷ In a letter he wrote to Charles Scribner, Fitzgerald describes Anthony as "one of those

his inert position between the polar views of his friends Dick the personality and Maury the personage, and the widely divergent responses among the three of them reveal the dysfunction underlying the friendship, which cannot be founded upon a shared sense of life's purpose—in fact, Maury openly rejects the idea that life has a purpose!

In spite of his certainty of life's purposelessness, Maury does not share Anthony's apathy: "Behind Maury Noble's attractive indolence, his irrelevance and his easy mockery, lay a surprising and relentless maturity of purpose. His intention, as he stated it in college, had been to use three years in travel, three years in utter leisure—and then to become immensely rich as quickly as possible" (43). Although both Maury and Anthony aspire to wealth, the former pursues it, while the latter waits for it. Maury may consider life to be pointless, but he also believes it can be mastered; he therefore approaches life with a game-like strategy. In the middle of his late-night symposium on his education, he describes "a ghastly dissatisfaction at being used in spite of myself for some inscrutable purpose of whose ultimate goal I was unaware—if, indeed, there *was* an ultimate goal." He continues,

It was a difficult choice. The schoolmistress seemed to be saying, "We're going to play football and nothing but football. If you don't want to play football you can't play at all—"

What was I to do—the playtime was so short!...For it seemed to me that there was no ultimate goal for me. (254-255)

Unable to perceive a purpose to life, Maury determines to see the entire world, experience what physical stimuli he can, and then surround himself in utter comfort because the only thing he knows with certainty is "the tremendous

many with the tastes and weaknesses of an artist but with no actual creative inspiration" (quoted in *Grandeur* 169).

importance of myself to me, and the necessity of acknowledging that importance to myself" (257). Because Maury cannot see a *telos* toward which to develop his personhood, beyond the immediate sensual pleasures he can claim, he cannot encourage a friend toward a good purpose, either. He will then play the game to his own ultimate benefit: "He was sorry for no one now—on Monday morning there would be his business, and later there would be a girl of another class whose whole life he was; these were the things nearest his heart" (260). Maury's commitment to work or relationships does not arise from a sense of communal responsibility but exclusively from self interest; the community, personified above as the schoolmistress, has let him down as far as the possibilities of life are concerned, so he will pursue his own course, interacting with others in society only as it satisfies his will.

Maury partakes in many of Anthony's drunken sprees as part of his season of leisure, in which he had "taught himself to drink as he would have taught himself Greek..." (43). When Anthony and Gloria marry, Maury's gift to them is "an elaborate 'drinking set,' which included silver goblets, cocktail shaker, and bottle-openers" (142), paraphernalia essential to their future Bacchanals. It would seem that Maury considers Anthony to share his nihilist perspective on life by abetting Anthony's reckless partying, but in his soliloquy, Maury declares "that Anthony never will attain" the realization that life is pointless (255). Perhaps Maury tries to persuade his friend that his perspective on life's meaninglessness is correct, but such a motivation is not in accord with his philosophy. With no *telos* but his own personal gratification, Maury likely is not concerned with the wellbeing of his friend, whose drunken, frivolous decline

he assists. Maury must deem Anthony a friend of pleasure, someone whose company is conducive to his tenure of hedonism.

Maury therefore can reject his friend when Anthony becomes a liability to his strategy, evident in the argument that estranges them after the war: “One night in June [Anthony] had quarreled violently with Maury over a matter of the utmost triviality....Maury had told him to sober up and Anthony’s feelings had been hurt, so with an attempted gesture of dignity he had risen from the table...leaving Maury with three dinners ordered and tickets for the opera” (388). Certainly Anthony is not an innocent victim in this incident, but Maury’s telling Anthony to sober up reflects the control Maury has had over his merrymaking in the last few years—he has made a study of it—and likewise the carelessness with which his friend has drifted into dissipation. The senselessness of the fight indicates the tenuousness of the bond that had connected the two men previously.

We learn near the end of the novel that Maury had remained faithful to his original plan; Muriel informs Gloria and Anthony that Maury “doesn’t drink any more....He’s making *piles* of money. He’s sort of changed since the war. He’s going to marry a girl in Philadelphia who has millions...” (409). The change that Muriel perceives is simply Maury’s transition to the next phase of his strategy for playing the game of life. Then, when Anthony approaches Maury as the latter is about to get into a taxi in front of the Biltmore, he receives a chilly, impersonal response from his former friend: “As he nodded from the window it seemed to Anthony that his expression had not changed by a shade or a hair” (433). Maury registers no sign of distress for the condition of his haggard, drunken friend, again suggesting that his only concern is his own wellbeing.

Although Fitzgerald identifies Anthony from the beginning as a personage, “the very hardness of his scheme of life” suggests that Maury is a personage, able to maintain a critical distance from his circumstances in order to arrange his actions to maximize self-benefit. Unlike Amory Blaine, however, Maury does not conceive of a meaningful connection between himself and the rest of society—he has no similar aspiration to be useful to people or make them feel safe, as Amory does. In terms of friendship, then, Fitzgerald adds complexity to the possibilities of the personage—a personage still could pursue only inferior, self-focused friendships; his awareness of social façades does not necessarily make him mindful of others.

Fitzgerald also seems to leave open the possibility that the self-focused personage may not always keep his critical acumen. Maury’s radical faithfulness to his self-interest may later degenerate into personality, if he develops a moral conviction in order to protect his fortune or worldly success. On the other hand, such assets in the hands of a personage might stir the type of social revolution Amory had predicted in his conversation with the man with goggles. Just as Cross Patch used his money to bully people into adopting his morality, so also could Maury Noble use his financial power to realign society to fit his amoral perspective. But Maury’s certainty in life’s pointlessness makes it doubtful that he would expend the effort toward a society he cares little about. In any event, we see that Maury does not practice true friendship with Anthony, nor is his way of life, the way of a self-centered personage, a viable course for Anthony, who unconsciously relies on the approbation of the community to give his life meaning.

Dick: Anthony's Personality Friend

Contrary to Maury Noble, Dick Caramel subscribes readily to the conventions and values of his social milieu and as a result receives the contempt of his two friends. According to Anthony, "He's inclined to fall for a million silly enthusiasms. If it wasn't that he's absorbed in realism and therefore has to adopt the garments of the cynic he'd be...credulous as a college religious leader. He's an idealist. Oh, yes. He thinks he's not, because he's rejected Christianity....It's true. Natural born fetish-worshipper" (21). It seems inexplicable why Dick is friends with Anthony and Maury—and vice versa. Dick seems to be a source of amusement for the other two, perhaps indicating that Dick is a pleasure-friend for them. Also, as a writer who fancies himself an intellectual, Dick may choose to spend his time with men who enjoy exchanging literary and philosophical critique in order to reinforce his self-perception; thus Anthony and Maury may be pleasure-friends for Dick, too.

As a true personality, Dick hungers for the acceptance and approval of society; as a result, he becomes a writer who seeks to appease the market. Anthony speculates on the precariousness of Dick's artistic integrity: "Dick, of course, can set down any consciously picturesque, character-like character, but could he accurately transcribe his own sister?" (47). In other words, he lives on the "pre-digested food" of the hack writer, who does not practice critical distance from his surrounding society. After Dick's first novel garners popularity and critical approval, he publishes trite stories "in a well-known monthly" of "New York society people" (301), indicating his susceptibility to the surface-level, genteel respectability of New York. Anthony is shocked by Dick's reference to his "reputation," an indication that Dick does not realize that he has sold out.

Near the end of the novel, Dick brags that his publisher touts him as “the Thackeray of America,” not realizing that he has become a literary joke (423). That Anthony would experience dismay over seeing his friend’s talent wasted on hack writing might suggest that he cares for Dick’s personal fulfillment and the improvement of his literary excellence. Anthony does not attempt to help Dick, though; instead, his friend’s loss of reputation fuels his feeling of superiority, again showing the self-centered nature of the friendship.

Dick has sold out to social convention and, like Muriel, reaches out to Anthony and Gloria in their financially strapped, dissipated state: “You know Gloria’s my cousin, and you’re one of my oldest friends, so it’s natural for me to be interested when I hear that you’re going to the dogs...” (419). He simultaneously has compassion for them and a feeling of vengeful satisfaction for experiencing success after incurring their derision for years: “I always thought that you and Maury would write some day, and now he’s grown to be a sort of tight-fisted aristocrat, and you’re—” It appears, then, that Dick’s concern for Anthony and Gloria is not motivated by altruism but rather an egotistical vindication of his self-perceived identity as a productive intellectual. Although Fitzgerald leaves the reader surmising that Dick has committed moral suicide by playing to the popular taste of Menken’s “booboisie,” his final brush strokes on Dick do not completely condemn him. As Anthony leaves Dick’s posh apartment one evening, he admits his envy for his friend’s prosperity: “He knew that he would have changed places with Dick unhesitatingly” (423). Dick’s late-night labor over the typewriter, albeit “with hittings of the wrong keys,” is contrasted with Anthony’s perpetual inaction, “abominably drunk...sprawled across the back seat of a taxi.” Fitzgerald implies with this contrast that action,

even if misguided, is better than inertia, a point with which Aristotle would agree (*NE* II.4.1105b). As I mentioned before, Dick's activity allows the possibility for his literary instincts to be corrected by a well-meaning friend, whereas Anthony's lack of action helps to perpetuate his illusion that he is above conventional morality.

Anthony would willingly trade places with Dick whose personality is fulfilled in action; Dick may be an object of scorn among the literati, but he has the existential and financial security that come with "his life-work" (*Damned* 423)—his life has a *telos*, even if it is a false one. But as with his other characters who are personalities, Fitzgerald intends for us to see the irony of Dick's position: his foolishness lies in his treating a false *telos* as the real thing, believing that he is an intellectual simply because he writes books: "[W]ell, after all, by God, which of us three has taken to the—to the intellectual life? I don't want to sound vainglorious, but—it's me, and I've always believed that moral values existed, and I always will" (420). Dick's illusion of intelligence indicates that he does not have the distance necessary to view society critically. Anthony thus rejects his admonishments because he can see that Dick's view of the world is distorted. Dick's gesture of friendship may be genuine, but it is offered in the context of what Anthony perceives as an artificial construct of the good life. Yet we see Anthony's moral bankruptcy in his envy of what he knows to be a false *telos*.

The apparent irony of Dick's succumbing to a false *telos* foreshadows the culminating irony of Anthony's life, which Fitzgerald builds up throughout the novel. He alerts his readers to the impending irony at the very beginning, declaring that irony, "the Holy Ghost of this later day" has "descended upon"

Anthony (3). At the novel's conclusion, Anthony Patch has attained his fortune, but he has lost his mind. As he sits in a wheelchair, looking out at the ocean on the deck of a ship bound for Italy, his thoughts reveal his insanity: "I showed them....It was a hard fight, but I didn't give up and I came through!" (449). In his mind, he has convinced himself that the course of events were the result of his deliberate action, that his inertia was a demonstration of moral integrity.

Anthony's state of denial produces a horror in the reader analogous to Anthony's shock when Dick does not realize he has become a hack writer. The reader discovers that, like Dick, Anthony has no critical acumen and no consciousness of his relationship to the community around him, evident in the self-congratulation he indulges in on board the ship while the other passengers speak derisively about him and Gloria (448). The Patches are not the gracefully idle aristocrats they had imagined themselves to be; rather, Anthony is an eccentric not unlike his grandfather. Thus Anthony receives both his financial and psychological inheritance.

The inconsistency of the story, for which critics have faulted Fitzgerald,²⁸ is a necessary result of Anthony's untenable moral position, and his *telos* as an insane millionaire clearly articulates its untenability. Anthony cannot successfully balance his criticism of and dependence on conventional society. To do the former, he would have to renounce his grandfather's morality and money and become a personage; to do the latter, he would have to take some action in conformity with his community that would bring his personality into alignment. By doing neither, he implicitly agrees to convention and concedes his vitality

²⁸ For example, Matthew J. Bruccoli: "Because Fitzgerald did not share the Patches' conviction that the only lesson to be learned from life is that there is no lesson to be learned from life, the novel does not maintain a consistent attitude toward its characters" (*Grandeur* 179).

through moral dissolution. Dick and Muriel, his friends who are personalities, attempt to bring him into social harmony by exhorting him with conventional morality, which he eschews. But because he cannot bring himself to fully reject meaning in the world (to do so would cost him his supposedly easy line to a fortune), his friendship with Maury, a personage, only helps him in his self-destruction.²⁹ The outlook is similarly bleak for friendship in *The Beautiful and Damned*: because every character in the novel focuses on himself, no one fixes on a worthwhile purpose external to themselves, nor do they discern a set of virtues by which to productively live. Anthony, Dick, and Maury can unite in their pursuit of pleasure, but they cannot help one another toward meaningful existence. Instead, they must diverge on separate paths of isolation, inauthenticity, and mental disintegration.

The Great Gatsby: *The Friend's Unifying Gaze*

With the friendship of Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby in his masterpiece *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald reconciles the personality's division between his socially acceptable façade, which a person dons in order to achieve an erroneous conception of fulfillment, and his true identity beneath. This reconciliation is accomplished through the other-oriented attention of a friend: by the end of the novel, Nick simultaneously beholds both Jay Gatsby, the rich, romantic man-of-

²⁹ It seems that Maury always derides Dick as a personality, firmly entrenched in social convention, but when one revisits his comments from the perspective offered here, Maury seems to consider Anthony a personality as well. In his late-night symposium, after agreeing with Gloria that life has no meaning, he asserts that "Anthony never will attain" and "Dick will never fully understand" that fact (255). In the conversation about art early in the novel, Maury declares, "I don't complain of conventional morality. I complain rather of the mediocre heretics who seize upon the findings of sophistication and adopt the pose of moral freedom to which they are by no means entitled by their intelligences" (24). Presumably he refers to Dick Caramel, who has rejected Christianity but has not eschewed the existence of moral values, but he could also be including Anthony in his pronouncement, who cannot commit to a rigorous nihilistic view.

the-world, and James Gatz, the young man who dreamt of worldly success through personal improvement. By doing so, Nick can affirm Gatsby's virtuous qualities while renouncing his morally repugnant ones, and through this process, he shapes the character of his friend: according to Robert Sklar, "The greatness of Jay Gatsby...is created in Nick Carraway's vision, out of himself" (175).

Fitzgerald concludes from his depiction of Nick and Gatsby's friendship that the egotist's self-awareness is most effectively actualized by his friend's awareness of his true identity and his desired fulfillment. In other words, self-awareness is insufficient; we need the sympathetic, coherent gaze of the virtue-friend.

Nick Carraway's creative vision of his friend Jay Gatsby yields a complicated opinion of the latter. Nick can declare to Gatsby, "They're a rotten crowd....You're worth the whole damn bunch put together." Then, immediately after, he can say, "I disapproved of him from the beginning to end" (*Gatsby* 162). As he begins the story about his year in New York City, he comments, "When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever....Only Gatsby...was exempt from my reaction—Gatsby who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn" (6). In spite of Nick's hatred for what Gatsby represents, he does not hold his friend morally responsible. Nick holds these conflicted feelings about his friend retrospectively, but he also identifies the time he interacted with Gatsby as "a time of confusion, when I had reached a point of believing everything and nothing about him" (107). Nick may not approve of Gatsby's actions, but he becomes the man's only friend because he knows both who Gatsby is and who he wants to be. Rather than acknowledging one aspect of the Gatsby's identity and ignoring the other, Nick holds both aspects in tension.

Fitzgerald, through Nick's telling of the story, also allows the reader to come to this complex perception of Gatsby so that we, too, desire to promote his virtuous character even with the knowledge of his immoral actions. It is as if Nick responds to Gatsby's posthumous plea "to get somebody for me" by making the readers of his narrative friends who will stand by Gatsby (173).

Nick's act of friendship, providing a complete and complex picture of his friend, comes to fruition only after Gatsby is dead. As with his previous characters who reach the level of personage but whose future actions he does not report, Fitzgerald argues in *The Great Gatsby* that Nick's honest perception of Gatsby is difficult, if not impossible, in their prosperous, urban, façade-driven world and that the future implications for a person who receives the compassionate gaze of his friend are unclear. He places the story's moral in the mouth of Meyer Wolfsheim, the gangster with whom Gatsby worked: "Let us learn to show our friendship for a man when he is alive and not after he is dead..." (180). Interestingly, he advises Nick to do this after bragging of his role in "making" Gatsby according to the image prescribed by their selfish, materialistic community: "I raised him up out of nothing, right out of the gutter. I saw right away he was a fine appearing gentlemanly young man and when he told me he was an Oggsford I knew I could use him good" (179). His contribution to Gatsby's illusion suggests that Wolfsheim has not figured out how to view his friends honestly either, but he understands the potential power friendship carries. Wolfsheim makes the same mistake as Gatsby of falling for a false *telos*, so his "making" of Gatsby results in an artificial creation, as opposed to Nick's authentic gaze.

Nick Carraway: Beyond Personage

Fitzgerald implies that Nick's ability to be a true friend to Gatsby stems from his personage-like characteristics, although he cannot be classified neatly as a personality or personage. One of those characteristics, his outsider status in New York society, does not arise from some centrifugal action on his part that pushes him out and above social convention; in fact, he comes to New York to ingratiate himself into the community because the Midwest "seemed like the ragged edge of the universe" after the war (7). Nick's description of his daily routine sounds like the colorless existence that both Amory and Anthony tried desperately to avoid: "Most of the time I worked....I knew the other clerks and young bond-salesmen by their first names and lunched with them in dark crowded restaurants....I took dinner usually at the Yale Club...and then I went upstairs to the library and studied investments and securities for a conscientious hour" (61). But the clerk's conformist world never completely envelops Nick, evident in his imagination and loneliness when he has finished work for the day: "I liked to walk up Fifth Avenue and pick out romantic women from the crowd and imagine that in a few minutes I was going to enter into their lives....I felt a haunting loneliness sometimes, and felt it in others...young clerks in the dusk, wasting the most poignant moments of night and life" (61-62). In solitude Nick dwells on romance and personal connection, underscoring his isolation from the community and the dissatisfaction it brings him. Of course, as Amory had discussed in terms of the spiritually married man in *This Side of Paradise*, Nick's imagination lingering on romantic flings with New York women could lead to a relationship that would commit him to the confines of personality, but he never lets fantasy become reality. Even the one "short affair" he has he lets "blow

quietly away” because the girl’s brother “began throwing mean looks in [his] direction” (61), suggesting that full entrance into the community is hostilely blocked to Nick, perhaps because he resists complete submission to its expectations.

Nick’s resistance—conscious or not—to conforming to the prosperity-driven, workaday community of New York gives him the distance necessary to take “privileged glimpses into the human heart” (6) by virtue of his commitment, instilled by his father, “to reserve all judgments” about what he observes (5). Other people take Nick’s reticence as acceptance, or at least trustworthiness, and so voluntarily confide in him. Yet he is not a passive, empty vessel; he still retains the personage’s critical judgment: he says, “Conduct may be founded on the hard rock or the wet marshes but after a certain point I don’t care what it’s founded on” (6). Nick desires moral stability, especially after his time in New York, but this is not the outcry of a Midwestern reactionary scandalized by the big city; rather, he yearns for an authenticity he does not see in the people around him: thus, “[r]eserving judgements [*sic*] is a matter of infinite hope” (6). He hopes for a morality that lies beyond the performance of illusory social conventions. His hope for virtues that promote the person’s authenticity, combined with his critical distance from whatever community in which he moves that fails to promote those virtues, puts him in an excellent position to be a friend that accurately affirms whatever is beneficial in a person’s moral makeup. Nick does not seek façade-driven personality-friendships; he wants to connect with the real, but perhaps flawed, person underneath.

Jay Gatsby: Gorgeous Personality

As a person in New York society but not of it, Nick is perfectly positioned to critically observe Jay Gatsby. Early in the novel, he refers to Gatsby as a personality: “If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away” (6). Gatsby is indeed a personality, but this is a difficult pronouncement to make. Everyone gossips about his activities, which would point toward the personage, who is recognized for the things he does, but no one knows for sure who Gatsby is or what he has done. He possesses a mysterious image, and the rumors that surround him attempt to solve the mystery and affix a permanent identity to him, whether it be the cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm (37), a murderer (48), or the owner of a preposterous houseboat that inconspicuously moves along the shore of Long Island (103). The society surrounding Gatsby attempts to absorb him into their conventional categories, but he remains elusive to them, not even drawing attention to himself at his own lavish parties: Nick comments, “As soon as I arrived I made an attempt to find my host but the two or three people of whom I asked his whereabouts stared at me in such an amazed way and denied so vehemently any knowledge of his movements...” (46). Gatsby’s distance from people, even those that populate his house, might reflect another man resistant to surface-level friendships.

Gatsby is able to maintain the elusiveness of his identity—and therefore give the impression of a personage—because he does not intend to join the society that he attracts to his parties, but this does not mean that he has no desire

for social assimilation. Rather, his goal is to find his lost love among the socialites so that he can join her society. Although the world he creates at his parties, the motley, frenzied community that gathers, is not the world of Daisy Buchanan, it is Gatsby's interpretation of her world, based on his fantasies of wealth and greatness from his adolescence, "[a] universe of ineffable gaudiness [that] spun itself out in his brain" as he lay in bed at night (105). Gatsby thus attempts to create in miniature the society from which he desires approval, and he rules his world with the virtues he assumes characterize Daisy's East Egg community, acting with punctilious grace, employing phrases and gestures he has carefully studied in his reading about the upper-class elite. Winifred Farrant Bevilacqua describes the parties and their goal in Bakhtinian terms: "Gatsby carnivalizes reality in his magnificent parties, assumes masks which blur his identity, ardently desires and almost achieves a carnivalistic shift of positions and destiny from lowly farm boy to a prince worthy of marrying 'the king's daughter, the golden girl'" (49). In the carnivalesque atmosphere of Gatsby's parties, he attains the power and position necessary to make him a worthy suitor for Daisy, but just as the carnival does not last forever, so also does Gatsby lose his illustrious status in the light of day and among the legitimate members of the socially elite.

The Evolution of Nick and Gatsby's Friendship

Before he meets his neighbor, rumor and spectacle are all Nick knows about Gatsby: he lives in a reproduction French chateau (*Gatsby* 9), lines his library shelves with untouched books (50), is the possible bearer of a violent past (48), and plays host to numerous eccentric, uninvited party guests (45). As he

stands in the middle of one of Gatsby's raucous soirees, Nick even wonders if the moon was "produced like the supper...out of a caterer's basket" (47). The identity of his neighbor piques Nick's curiosity because he figures that Gatsby must have a purpose behind his mysterious yet ostentatious presence on West Egg: "[Y]oung men didn't...drift coolly out of nowhere and buy a palace on Long Island Sound" (54). In other words, Nick intuitively feels that there must be more to Gatsby behind his extravagant soirees, but he is unwilling to join the lurid investigations and gossip mongering of the other partygoers. He remains a disinterested outsider as usual, allowing information to come to him. Nick's characteristic reticence enables him to befriend Gatsby and eventually learn the secrets behind his impressive façade.

The way Nick and Gatsby first meet also eases them into friendship. Nick, in the company of Jordan Baker, embarks on an expedition through the party and around the enormous house in search of his host because "it was making me uneasy" not to have met him yet (49). Giving up the search, they take seats at a table with Gatsby, unbeknownst to Nick. The two men strike up a conversation about their experiences in the war—they were in the same division (51). The two men begin on equal footing with this opening conversation, as comrades from the army; Gatsby's legendary status does not come into play. Still without formal introductions, the two men arrange to spend time together the next day, flying in Gatsby's hydroplane. One can infer from this first meeting that there is genuine rapport between the two men, regardless of Gatsby's plan for winning Daisy back.

Between their first conversation and their morning plane ride, however, Gatsby learns from Jordan Baker that Nick is Daisy's cousin and a friend of

Tom's, which motivates Gatsby to submit his credentials to Nick for his approval in order to get access to Daisy. It would seem at this point that Gatsby sees a friendship with Nick only as one of utility. Likewise, Nick finds Gatsby's sudden, unsolicited disclosure of his life story "disconcerting" and suspicious (69), and he is annoyed that it precedes the request for a favor: "I was sure the request would be something utterly fantastic and for a moment I was sorry I'd ever set foot upon his overpopulated lawn" (72). His impression of Gatsby, which had not been auspicious to begin with—he was "simply the proprietor of an elaborate roadhouse next door" (69)—continues to sink as Gatsby's life story reminds him of "skimming hastily through a dozen magazines" (71); the details sound not only counterfeit but clichéd. Gatsby's motivation in recounting his supposed past to Nick is to show that he is not "just some nobody"; that is, he wants to demonstrate that he belongs in elite New York society. But his story, rife with "threadbare" phrases from magazine stories, represents his understanding of what has given the elite their status; the truth of their success is a romantic mystery to him (70). Gatsby has fully invested his identity in the personality of the romantic, world-travelling tycoon, but Nick is put off by Gatsby's utterly fabricated exterior.

Yet Gatsby divulges his method for acquiring this personality, his friendship with Meyer Wolfsheim, the man who fixed the 1919 World Series (78). It is strange that he juxtaposes for Nick his storybook past with his underworld business connections; the façade of his personality is marred by the raw materials he used to create it, if he truly desires admission into the social elite. To share both the illusion and the sordid mechanics behind it with Nick also poses a great risk: Nick might urge Daisy to avoid Gatsby because of his criminal

associations.³⁰ If Gatsby only sees Nick as a friend of utility, the means to his end of reclaiming Daisy's love, then he has made a strategic error. Perhaps Gatsby thinks that Nick is also an outsider looking for some entrance into New York's community and therefore will empathize with Gatsby's quest. This possibility would explain why Gatsby offers Nick a chance to "pick up a nice bit of money" by helping in a confidential business venture (87-88)—as a result, Nick would be able to shape his own socially acceptable personality, as Gatsby supposedly has. Regardless, Gatsby's actions negate the question of a mere utility-friendship because he begins to show Nick what lies beneath the glitzy, fictitious façade.

For Nick, who believes that "the most poignant moments of night and life" should be devoted to "gayety and...intimate excitement" (62), Gatsby is "delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor" when Jordan Baker tells Nick of the romance between Gatsby and Daisy that was spoiled by the war (83). Understanding Gatsby's aspirations and seeing that they accord with his own desires for companionship, Nick decides to help Gatsby reunite with Daisy: "Unlike Gatsby and Tom Buchanan I had no girl whose disembodied face floated along the dark cornices and blinding signs..." (85). Because Nick holds romance sacred, what he thought was going to be an act for a friendship of utility—bringing Gatsby into contact with Daisy—becomes an act for a friendship of virtue—he brings Gatsby closer to what gives his life meaning. So Nick assists Gatsby in creating his illusion by orchestrating the lovers' reunion at

³⁰ Indeed, Decker's argument that *The Great Gatsby* falls under the influence of the nativism endemic to the US in the 1920s heightens the danger of Gatsby's disclosure to Nick in his desire to access Daisy: "The conflation of new arrivals and unethical business practices provides obvious motivation for reading *The Great Gatsby* according to the rise of nativism and the fall of the self-made man. Gatsby's association with immigrant crime, particularly in the form of bootlegging, jeopardizes both the purity of his white identity and the ethics of his entrepreneurial uplift" (60). Thus, Gatsby's eventual rejection from the Buchanans' world is not merely on the basis of class; it is also influenced by Tom's racial prejudice.

his humble house, which positions Daisy perfectly to behold the grand house and possessions that are central to Gatsby's prosperous image (84).

But Daisy will not complete Gatsby's life, which Nick realizes when he joins them on the grand tour of Gatsby's house, the world that Gatsby created to revolve around the woman he idolizes. Having supposedly reached the end purpose toward which he had striven, Gatsby now looks at his property with new eyes: "Sometimes...he stared around at his possessions in a dazed way as though in her actual and astounding presence none of it was any longer real" (97). All of his possessions had been means to attain the end, Daisy, and now they have become strange, foreign to him. After Gatsby achieves reunion with Daisy, one would expect his world to be imbued with greater meaning, but the opposite occurs—his world is drained of meaning, most obviously in the designification of the green light on the dock: "Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever....His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one" (98). Nick also seems to lose his significance in Gatsby's eyes: as Daisy and Gatsby sit together, engrossed in each other's presence, "Gatsby didn't know [Nick] now at all" (102). It would seem, then, that Nick has only been a useful friend; indeed, that afternoon "was a halt...in my associations with his affairs. For several weeks I didn't see him or hear his voice on the phone..." (107). But we are not meant to see their friendship merely as one of utility, evident in Nick's intervention in the story, interrupting its chronological unfolding to divulge Gatsby's true background.³¹

³¹ "During his meditations on Gatsby's adolescence, Nick's relationship to his hero deepens into 'sympathetic understanding' which 'is not a mirroring, but a fundamentally and essentially new valuation, a utilization of my own architectonic position in being outside another's inner life. Sympathetic understanding recreates the whole inner person in aesthetically

The Invention of Gatsby: Development of the Façade

Nick informs us of Gatsby's development from the obscure, Midwestern boy named James Gatz earlier in the sequence of events than when he first heard it: "He told me all this very much later, but I've put it down here..." (107). Nick ostensibly makes this digression "with the idea of exploding those first wild rumors about his antecedents," but dispelling rumors does not adequately account for placing Gatsby's biography in this specific place; after all, rumors were all we knew of Gatsby for the first hundred pages of the novel, and it had not hindered Nick's narration. No, the placement of James Gatz's story here is crucial to how we perceive Gatsby.³² If we received Gatsby's true story when Nick receives it, we might agree with Tom Buchanan's judgment that he is "a common swindler who'd have to steal the ring he put on [Daisy's] finger" (140). If we had received it earlier in the novel, we might identify too much with Gatsby and feel too much indignation at the way the Buchanans treat him. Nick's goal as the narrator is to make the reader see Gatsby as he has come to see him. He does not want to portray Gatsby as a villain unmasked, which is Tom's perspective, nor does he want to cast him simply as the romantic hero whose

loving categories for a new existence in a new dimension of the world' (Bakhtin 1990:103)" (Bevilacqua 52). Nick (and therefore Fitzgerald) wants the reader to enter the next phase of the novel with sympathetic understanding of James Gatz, the man who lies beneath the façade of Gatsby.

³² In the first manuscript of the novel he sent to Maxwell Perkins, Fitzgerald had withheld all of Gatsby's background until Nick learns of it in Chapter VIII, but Perkins advises him to give the reader some of the background earlier in the story because "in giving deliberately Gatsby's biography when he gives it to the narrator you do depart from the method of the narrative in some degree..." (quoted in *Grandeur* 248). From Perkins's advice, Fitzgerald restructured the biographical parts of the novel, but the decision of where to place the passage about Dan Cody's yacht was completely his (249). Perhaps the new arrangement resulted from another critique from Perkins, that "Gatsby is somewhat vague" (quoted on 247); as Fitzgerald was at work on the revisions, he wrote to Perkins, "I myself didn't know what Gatsby looked like or was engaged in + you felt it" (quoted on 249). Both Fitzgerald and Perkins were aware that the portrayal (and therefore, I say, reception) of Gatsby needed to be clarified.

valiant attempts to win back his true love are thwarted by an unjust society.

Rather, he wants the reader to hold the image of Gatsby and the aspirations of James Gatz in tension, just as he does. Nick wants to show why his friendship with Gatsby has been worthwhile, in spite of the latter's immoral actions.

As Nick mentions at the beginning of the novel, Gatsby is a personality, and this fact becomes his downfall because James Gatz, the person behind the personality of Gatsby, invests everything into the one glittering image.³³ Gatz believes that if he can achieve the existence he has created in his mind for Gatsby, he will have reached his *telos*. Gatsby is the end, rather than a means to the end, evident in Nick's description: "The truth was that Jay Gatsby, of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself [i.e., James Gatz]....So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen year old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end" (104). The allusion to Plato's realm of forms is ironic: once Gatz begins to shape the image of Gatsby in real life, he creates an inferior copy two removes from the ideal he has imagined; it is two removes because he can never make the image of Gatsby so complete that it obliterates the real person, James Gatz.

Gatsby tries to make a clean break with his past as James Gatz, and he expects Daisy to make a similar break, to expunge her marriage to Tom from her identity: "He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: 'I never loved you.' After she had obliterated three years with that sentence they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken" (116). Gatsby, whose devotion to Daisy has remained steadfast during their separation,

³³ "Jay Gatsby...lost this stance of simultaneous detachment and engagement [a stance that the personage maintains]..., for they could live in the world only with a single, consuming mission" (Callahan 375-76).

considers her marriage to Tom to be the deviation; thus, when Tom confronts him at the Plaza Hotel about having an affair with Daisy, “Gatsby was content” because “[t]hey were out in the open at last” (136). But Daisy cannot make such a declaration—regardless of Tom’s philandering, she knows that her affair with Gatsby is an act of infidelity against a man she did love: she tells Gatsby, “I love you now— isn’t that enough? I can’t help what’s past....I did love [Tom] once— but I loved you too” (139-140). By refusing to renounce her marriage, Daisy begins to unravel Gatsby’s illusion and validates Tom’s accusations that Gatsby acquired his wealth through criminal means and has attempted to steal another man’s wife.

The Illusoriness of the Buchanans’ Society

In the Plaza Hotel confrontation, Fitzgerald intends the reader to see both Tom’s ridiculous hypocrisy and his airtight case against Gatsby. Tom’s own infidelity does not weaken his position; the fact that both Gatsby and Daisy are beholden to the values of his world—money and pedigree—gives Tom the leverage he needs to condemn Gatsby. Although he tries to enter the Buchanans’ world by trespassing, Gatsby still reveres and lives by the virtues that supposedly undergird it, so he must accept Tom’s condemnation.³⁴ Edwin S. Fussell identifies Gatsby as “a sad figure preyed upon by the American leisure class. The unreal values of the world of Tom and Daisy Buchanan are his values too, they are inherent in his dream” (295). Fussell assumes that the values are unreal because the Buchanans do not act in abidance to them, but their employment of, and Gatsby’s reverence for them show that the values are, in

³⁴ “What defeats Gatsby is not his lack of magic power, but his embarrassment before social power” (Sklar 191).

fact, real. The Buchanans keep the discourse of the virtues to protect their world from invaders; Gatsby imagines that the Buchanans' world is a kind of noble aristocracy, the members of which earned their place because of their virtuous behavior. In fact, that Gatsby had a chance to enter their world through criminal acts rather shows the unreality of the community of the socially elite. For Gatsby, his nobility of character is real while his world is counterfeit; for Tom, it is the other way around.

As Nick reports, "'Jay Gatsby' had broken up like glass against Tom's hard malice" (*Gatsby* 155), but this is not exactly true.³⁵ The perpetuation of Jay Gatsby relies on Daisy: "He knew that Daisy was extraordinary but he didn't realize just how extraordinary a 'nice' girl could be. She vanished into her rich house, into her rich, full life, leaving Gatsby—nothing" (156-157). As the apotheosis of his adolescent visions of wealth and extravagance, Daisy becomes the "grail" that Gatsby must follow (156), making him Amory Blaine's spiritually married man; indeed, Gatsby "felt married to her, that was all" (157).³⁶ The fate

³⁵ "Gatsby, whose love is singular and who believes Daisy's love for him is also singular, is dumbfounded by her admission that she loved both Tom and Gatsby.... Yet *his* faith, his 'extraordinary gift for hope,' allows him to hope and believe that Daisy has this same faith, that she was just 'very excited this afternoon' (159). Thus, Gatsby does not renounce his love after this incident, nor is his dream dead as Nick suggests (142). Gatsby is able, like the knight of faith, to look impossibility in the eye even though it may be absurd, even though his love cannot move from ideality to reality, even though he cannot yet 'materialize his ideal' (Bizzell 782)" (Sanders 122).

³⁶ Callahan writes, "The experience of love deeply moves and changes Gatsby, but so pervasive is the culture of material success that his new reverence and tenderness toward her are inseparable from money and possessions..." (381). His assessment suggests that Gatsby's love for Daisy began pure and became corrupt by the encroachment of the materialistic world, but Gatsby's love for the materialistic world began years before he met Daisy, "gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor," who embodied that world for him. Callahan says that Gatsby "seeks to integrate love of a woman with accomplishment in the world," but that integration was complete in his mind when he met her (380). Although Brucoli's interpretation is more ambiguous, it is probably a better estimation: "Jimmy Gatz/Jay Gatsby confuses the values of love with the buying power of money" (258).

of Gatsby the personality lies with Daisy.³⁷ As long as Gatsby thinks he can win Daisy back, he will continue to live by illusion, but his continued devotion ultimately results in his death. He assumes responsibility for the death of Myrtle Wilson, Tom's mistress who is hit by a car driven by Daisy (151). But this lie, a noble act to protect the woman he loves, rather than drawing Daisy to Gatsby, gives her the perfect escape from her dilemma of choosing which man to be with and ensures the return of equilibrium to her world of money and pedigree.³⁸ Furthermore, it seals Gatsby's identity as a personality defined by the Buchanans' social world, a criminal and a "God Damn coward" (149), giving Tom the justification to send George Wilson to Gatsby's house to exact revenge (187).

Personality and Personhood

Gatsby the personality dies when he finally realizes that Daisy will not call for him, leaving the empty, unnourished person, James Gatz, to continue to live in an alien world:

[H]e must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream [i.e., the death of Gatsby, the personality]. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about.... (169)

³⁷ Gatsby is reliant upon Daisy because she completes his identity: "His goal is not true intimacy but the sense of a perfectly satisfying identity since it is a traditional and widely followed American cultural conviction that the possession of a beautiful woman is one of the signs of personal fulfillment" (Stavola 138).

³⁸ Callahan sympathizes with Daisy's status as mere object to both Tom and Gatsby: "For each man, Daisy is a possession; for Buchanan material, for Gatsby ideal. So Daisy, the actual woman, the flawed and vulnerable human personality, flees. Held to no standard of decency or accountability by either man after her hit-and-run killing of Myrtle Wilson, she once again chooses the conventional, worldly protection of Tom Buchanan" (382).

Of course, moments after this reverie, James Gatz the person is killed out of misplaced revenge by George Wilson. The body that Nick and the servants find is Gatz; Jay Gatsby vanished with the hope of Daisy's return. Thus, the only people who attend the funeral know that Gatsby is actually James Gatz: his father, Nick, and the owl-eyed man from the party who is at least aware of Gatsby's illusion if not his true identity (50).³⁹ The people who interacted with the illusion—the partygoers, Daisy, Jordan, Meyer Wolfsheim—are dispelled with it.

Whereas most of the characters in the novel only see Gatsby, Henry Gatz, Gatsby's father, only sees James Gatz, the young man who aspired to improve himself and seek success, but his vision of the man is as illusory as the people who only knew Gatsby. When Mr. Gatz arrives at his son's mansion, he sees the material prosperity as the projection of his son's early, Franklinesque plans for success and fits his son's life into the mold of the American Dream:⁴⁰ "He had a big future before him, you know. He was only a young man but he had a lot of brain power....If he'd of lived he'd of been a great man. A man like James J. Hill. He'd of helped build up the country" (176). But the narrative he has built in his mind becomes problematic when Mr. Gatz realizes that no one is attending his son's funeral: "And as the time passed and the servants came in and stood

³⁹ "As Owl Eyes sees none of the mystery and only the showmanship, Nick can see beyond the fact of mystery to the value it contains—the possibility and the reality of personal self-creation" (Sklar 180).

⁴⁰ "Fitzgerald's mock-representation of young Gatsby's attempt at Franklinesque uplift demonstrates the extent to which, with the consolidation of consumer society in the twentieth century, the cult of 'personality' (based on image-making and competitiveness) eclipses an earlier producer-oriented notion of 'character' (founded on an inner sense of duty and piety)" (Decker 63). This interpretation of Franklin is too simplistic; Franklin was apt to put virtuous behavior at the service of material acquisition by creating a public image that would bring him additional business. Here again, we see the conflict in the American "pursuit of happiness" between virtuous and avaricious interpretations.

waiting in the hall his eyes began to blink anxiously and he spoke of the rain in a worried uncertain way" (182). Everyone who views the person of Gatsby through a single lens—either through the aspirations of James Gatz or the illusion of Jay Gatsby—misunderstands and ultimately abandons him. Thus neither group of people could adequately be his friend because they cannot wish for the wellbeing of the whole person.

Nick is the only one to look with both lenses.⁴¹ The friendship between these two men truly begins the night before Gatsby's death, when Nick learns of the identity Gatsby has hidden behind the façade. He can appreciate Gatsby's desire for greatness as an "incorruptible dream" because that greatness is supported by such virtues as generosity, courage, and sacrifice (162). Gatsby had conducted himself according to these virtues. But Nick is also grieved by how Gatsby's desire was corrupted—motivated by his love for Daisy and her world, Gatsby took shortcuts to attain his great stature. As a result, the façade was never reinforced with substance that could withstand the onslaught of hypocrites like Tom. In spite of his disapproval of Gatsby's actions, Nick can pay him the final compliment that he is "worth the whole damn bunch put together" because the dream and pursuit of greatness are true.⁴²

⁴¹ "Nick and Gatsby have had an extraordinary relationship going far beyond a simple encounter of two selves and reaching the sphere of aesthetic intersubjectivity. Nick has attempted to formulate a sense of Gatsby's inner world while he, as indicated by his understanding smile, has welcomed Nick's gaze, has assumed an unfinalized subject position with regards to his authorial consciousness and has seemingly accepted elements of his artistic completion" (Bevilacqua 54). After hiding behind an illusion for so long, Gatsby at the end finally entrusts his identity to Nick, knowing that the latter can correctly combine both illusion and truth.

⁴² "Although Gatsby may die of 'a love for which there is no worthy object', the grandeur of his vision remains. It manifests itself in the rare quality of his faith in the goodness of creation and in his ultimate, although only partially recognized, refusal to compromise with the 'colossal vitality' of his dream. Gatsby possesses an almost limitless sense of generosity. He yearns to give meaning to the lives of others and invest the world with his qualities of faith and hope in the

Nick says goodbye to Gatsby the next morning to go to work, but intends to stay close to his friend. Unfortunately, that means being the one to take care of him after his death: "I found myself on Gatsby's side, and alone....I was responsible, because no one else was interested—interested, I mean, with that intense personal interest to which everyone has some vague right at the end" (172). Nick senses Gatsby's loneliness in death and searches for someone to come to the house, but he soon finds that Gatsby is outside of all communities, without a tie to another person except Nick: "I began to have a feeling of defiance, of scornful solidarity between Gatsby and me against them all" (173). So Nick also pushes himself out of community in order to support his friend; Nick finds himself alienated in a way similar to Gatsby in his last moments of life.

Nick affirms Gatsby at the end of the latter's life, but he also stays true to Gatsby's full identity by standing by him in death.⁴³ We do not know what Gatsby would have done after getting out of the swimming pool—if he would continue to pursue Daisy or if he would redirect his pursuit of greatness. Nick, however, resolves from the experience to remove himself from the communities that had corrupted his friend's notion of greatness and that had distorted the meaning of living well. Nick returns to the Midwest, not because the communities there have any better perception. Indeed, the final thoughts of the novel seem to diagnose these distortions and corruptions as problems endemic to life in America and leave the reader with a sense of futility. Our efforts to "run

infinite resources of his own imagination" (Stavola 130). If only that imagination had not been so rigidly defined by American materialism!

⁴³ "It becomes Nick's task to redeem Gatsby from the speculation that plagues Gatsby in life and swarms around him in death. This is Nick's 'faithful service' to Gatsby: that a 'great' man will not be forgotten" (Sanders 112).

faster, stretch out our arms farther” apparently prevent us from making progress: we are “borne back ceaselessly into the past” while the “orgastic future...recedes before us” (189). Is the pursuit of greatness (and goodness) merely striving after the wind?

This is not what Fitzgerald is arguing. Notice that he equates the “orgastic future” with the green light that “Gatsby believed in,” that is, the light that represented to him Daisy and her wealthy world, which brought him to destruction. Nick is about to leave that green light and return to his hometown. Fitzgerald seems to say that the green light is the selfish, materialistic interpretation of the American Dream; it is a distraction, a chimerical future that actually pushes us backward and out of meaningful communities that promote the truly good life. Until friends can help each other toward a real future, a true *telos*, they must help each other move out of the communities distracted by all the things that the green light symbolizes—sex, money, prestige, class, illusion.

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Edwin S. Fussell argues that Fitzgerald rehearses the story of the New World in terms of a quest: “The quest is the search for romantic wonder, in the terms which contemporary America offers for such a search [namely financial success and perhaps sexual conquest]....Obversely, the quest is a flight: from reality, from normality, from time, fate, and the conception of *limit*” (291). All of Fitzgerald’s characters embark on the quest to discover ultimate meaning for their lives; he suggests that their success in finding it lies in their ability to utilize the façades foisted upon them by American society. Those who use the masks as prescribed are lured by the modern interpretation of the American Dream—one’s *telos* lies in making as much money as possible to acquire as many goods as

possible (including a beautiful wife). In order to achieve this false end, they must become personalities and conform themselves to the role society has set for them. Even if they do achieve financial success, however, they find the goal to be empty and resign themselves to lives of existential drift.

Fitzgerald rebels against the prevailing interpretation of the American Dream in an unexpected way, by affirming egotism. He understands that the “pursuit of happiness” underpinning the American Dream begins with the unique identity and desires of the individual, as John F. Callahan notes: “[N]aming the ‘pursuit of happiness’ an unalienable right confirmed the newly declared American nation as an experimental, necessarily improvisational society dedicated to the principle that every human personality [interesting word to use] is sacred and inviolable” (Callahan 379). But Fitzgerald uses the self-awareness of his protagonists, not to call into question the hypocritical veneer of virtuous language that covers the wanton acquisition of wealth and power, but the wanton acquisition itself. He distances his characters from the reality delineated by shallow, consumerist, American society so that they can ask what course of action truly would bring them fulfillment. Unlike his Victorian forebears, Fitzgerald refuses to identify where that course of action will lead, which is understandable since he believes the society of which he is a part has failed to promote a meaningful *telos* for its members. Fitzgerald’s goal is to critique the community, to urge for its reconstitution; only then may the purpose for the lives of its members be clear.

In the meantime, the friendships in which people engage indicate the community’s inadequacy. Fitzgerald suggests in his day that a virtue-friend will assist in a person’s release from the confines of communal norms by pushing him

outside of the community. For example, Monsignor Darcy teaches Amory Blaine to cultivate himself as a personage, one who stands critically outside of the community yet understands how to wield social masks in a way that reshapes that community to seek meaningful fulfillment. The toxic friendships of Anthony Patch, Dick Caramel, and Maury Noble reveal that, even while friends should pull each other away from the community's conformist tendencies, they must still have one another's wellbeing at heart. Critical distance is of no benefit if one's attention is exclusively trained on oneself. Finally, Nick Carraway demonstrates the productive potential of learning the true identity that lies beneath the social façade and affirming the virtuous character within. Until members of the American community understand that their best interests lie in promoting the good for the friends that surround them, Fitzgerald argues that the true pursuit of happiness cannot get underway.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Fragility of Narrative: Gertrude Stein's Search for an Audience

My approach to Gertrude Stein's texts differs dramatically from my procedure in the other chapters: I see her major works of the 1930s constituting an extended narrative featuring two characters in a tumultuous relationship: Gertrude Stein and her reading audience. Stein acts not only as the author of these works but also the protagonist. This role comes out most clearly in the two autobiographies; in fact, Stein claims at the beginning of *Everybody's Autobiography* that all modernist writing is autobiographical, including novels (5). I believe that this claim, along with the experimentation in point of view and increased subjectivity that numerous scholars of modernism have observed, justify my study of her unconventional works for my larger project. But the character that one clearly beholds in the autobiographies extends into the works that she does not classify as autobiography, her *Lectures in America* and her philosophical treatise *The Geographical History of America*. In the former, she attempts to diffuse the character's charismatic power in order to draw attention to the genius found in her other works; one could consider the latter to be an extended inner monologue of the character as she tries to reclaim the security of her genius.

At the same time that Stein is both author and protagonist, the reader is drawn into the narrative as a character, becoming the intended receiver of Stein's gestures of friendship. To the extent we are able to accept those gestures, joining the community of people who affirm Gertrude Stein's genius, we activate her



genial identity and enable her to move forward in creative innovation. I will describe these gestures and their intended response in this chapter. However, where we fail to receive Stein as she intends us to, we endanger the stability of her existence, which is defined by her genius. By implicating the reader in the survival or demise of her projected character, Stein almost shatters the barrier between art and life that the modernists constantly run up against. But the one-sidedness of her project, the need for friendship exclusively on her terms without the input of the audience, again shows the failure to breach the barrier and reinforces the unstable, fragmented quality of identity in the modernist period. Stein attempts to manipulate the audience as character, but because the audience is sovereign from the creativity of her genius, she cannot get her readers to conform to the narrative she has tried to set up.

One might think I am interpreting her works based on psychology and biography, undermining my stated goal in the Introduction. Admittedly, one cannot escape Stein's life in an analysis of her texts because of their hyper-subjectivity, but I am not on the lookout for the historical Stein; rather, in this chapter, I will examine the character or persona that Stein projects in her texts, a character she has created, just as Daniel Defoe created Robinson Crusoe (*Toklas* 913). The other, real-life people she depicts in her works—her brother Leo, Pablo Picasso, Bernard Faÿ, etc.—become characters as well because they convey metaphorical significance in the larger narrative involving Stein and her audience. So while she may recount factual events from her life, they are infused with significance by the fictionalized world into which she has projected them. Again, we see the fluidity between art and reality in Stein's works.

Unlike Aristotle's conception of virtue-friendship, in which friends spur one another toward their respective *teloi*, Gertrude Stein believes that friends affirm one another in what they already are. A person's essence makes itself apparent in what the person does: Stein writes, so her friends are those who affirm that she is a genius by appreciating her writing. Barbara Will argues that one cannot divorce Stein's genial identity from the texts created from her genius: "The Steinian text and the notion of 'genius' are thus synonyms, equivalent categories of 'being' constituted by the mutual exchange of two or more voices" ("Genius" 147). I disagree with Will about the mutual exchange. Although she relies upon an audience to read her texts, Stein does not modify the production of her genius based on feedback she receives from them; the only response she wants is acknowledgement of her genius. As a result, her conception of friendship looks more like Aristotle's utility-friendship, the primary motivation of which is self-gain. Stein does extend friendship to her audience, but she expects to receive the benefit of the relationship; for her, friendship is essentially egoistic.<sup>1</sup>

Gertrude Stein needs readers to legitimate her being a genius,<sup>2</sup> but to acquire these readers, she must grapple with the conflict between the creativity of her interior mind and the expectations of the exterior world. G. F. Mitrano characterizes this conflict as a clash of private and public concerns: "Whether we

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it is this understanding of friendship that leads Barbara Will to comment that "of all relationships, friendship was the most fraught for Stein, the dynamic most likely to result in the suppression rather than celebration of difference: the dynamic most drenched in power" ("Ruthless" 647). Her struggle to attain affirmation from others for her internal genius resulted in her having to compromise her external identity.

<sup>2</sup> I take as centrally important Barbara Will's argument that Stein's genius relies upon "open and unrestricted exchange with a general collectivity, an expression that was always in excess of both the bounded 'self' and the undifferentiated Other" ("Genius" 136).

call it a theatre of the self or an open work, [Stein's] page conjures a place where meaning depends on the encounter of a set of private concerns with a set of public ones" (1). Stein discovers that awareness of the audience outside invades the innovation of the genius within. Her genial process of creation cannot take place in pristine isolation, which also means that the constitution of her existence is vulnerable to forces external to herself.<sup>3</sup> Ironically, the thing for which she strives in order to stabilize her existence—audience affirmation—actually destabilizes it by exposing her dependence on something outside of her mind. This realization brings Stein great anxiety: as Richard Bridgman notes, "Wherever testimony is taken in the thirties, evidence is obtained of [Gertrude Stein's] mental suffering" (286). By the late thirties, Gertrude Stein attempts to retreat into her mind, claiming that the individual must affirm her own existence, but she cannot mend the fragmentation of her creative world resulting from her pursuit of an audience.

This pursuit, which characterizes her writing of the 1930s, and the existential conflict it produces center on the use of what Gertrude Stein calls "traditional" narrative. Traditional narrative, according to her, possesses two weaknesses: first, it artificially frames reality in terms of a beginning, middle, and end; secondly, it merely reports what happens, rather than capturing the fundamental nature of the event or the people involved. Both of these weaknesses tie traditional narrative to temporality, changeability, and

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<sup>3</sup>Mitrano sees Stein's experimental acts as an example of a "modernity characterized by a growing awareness of others. This birthed an aesthetic based on the philosophical fall of the unique individual into the anonymity of the average humanity. With the fall of the unique individual, art is liberated into life" (1). One could replace Mitrano's terms "unique individual" and "average humanity" with Stein's terms "human mind" and "human nature" or "immortality" and "mortality." The clash of public and private reveals the vulnerability of the individual's existence.

contingency. Stein's literary mission is to capture essences, which resist the forces just mentioned, so when she writes *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* in the form of a (relatively) traditional narrative, she is making a tremendous compromise, not just of her artistic beliefs. Those beliefs stem from Stein's fear of the contingency of her own existence. By focusing her genius on essences disconnected from the ravages of change and time, Gertrude Stein can consider herself immune to them also, but once she uses her creative powers to make a narrative—a narrative of her life, no less!—she exposes herself to mortality, the epitome of time, change, and contingency. If her compromise yielded the audience she craves, then it would be worth it, but when the audience misunderstands the purpose of the *Autobiography*, Stein finds herself in what she believes to be mortal danger.

Gertrude Stein's highly subjectivist writing provokes critics to link her work to her biography, such as the seminal works by Bridgman (1970) and Dydo (2003). Neither of these works, however, looks at Stein the projected character used to draw an audience; they maintain a dichotomy of Stein the writer and her work, on the one hand, and the audience who responds, on the other. Galow (2011) comes closest to my project, looking at Stein's rhetorical strategies in describing her creative process to an audience but with less emphasis on biography than the other works. My study connects both approaches, showing how Stein rhetorically constructs herself using elements of her biographical past to convey her existential need for an audience. Synthesizing Bridgman and Goebel's (1991) analysis of Stein's fear of death with her need for a communal affirmation of her genius outlined by Will (2000), I provide a new view of Stein as the insecure character that moves through her works.

### *Identity in Grammatical Terms*

Before focusing on how Gertrude Stein tries to befriend her audience in the texts of the 1930s, I must provide some useful background. First, I will explain her conception of existence, which one can draw from her theory about the parts of speech expounded upon in her lecture "Poetry and Grammar." She begins by rejecting nouns: "A noun is a name of anything, why after a thing is named write about it. A name is adequate or it is not. If it is adequate then why go on calling it, if it is not then calling it by its name does no good" (*Lectures* 313). As a writer, Stein disdains nouns because they lock in the identity of a thing. There is no room for change with a noun; either the thing named fulfills what its noun-name says it is, or it fails. Nouns only deal with being, not becoming. Artistically, nouns do not allow the writer much creative freedom, but existentially, these inflexible qualities of the noun are good. Consider, for example, the noun that Gertrude Stein ascribes to herself: *genius*.

During the summer of 1933, writer and occultist William Seabrook comes to visit Stein in Belley. Over dinner one evening, Stein tells him the story of how she discovered she was a genius: "I did tell all about myself, telling about my brother was telling about myself being a genius..." (*Everybody's* 68-69). *Genius* is the noun Stein uses to identify what type of thing she is: "Slowly and in a way it was not astonishing but slowly I was knowing that I was a genius and it was happening and I did not say anything but I was almost ready to begin to say something" (76). Gertrude Stein's condition as genius exists before she begins to know of its existence, evident in her word choice. She avoids any verbs that suggest transition—she uses "knowing" rather than "realizing," "happening" rather than "becoming," and "was...ready to begin" instead of "preparing." The

word she uses to suggest a change or transition is the adverb “slowly,” but even this word describes her act of knowing that she is a genius. Here we detect the stability of Stein’s identity as a genius, which constrains all her future experience: “[I]nstead of deriving from a set of descriptions collected through experience, the abstract whole precedes experience; indeed, the abstract constitutes the formal condition under which all variety of experience becomes possible” (Ashton 314).

According to her theory of nouns, a thing fits either adequately or inadequately to its noun, and the way it shows that it fits is by doing something, by performing an action.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, verbs are “more interesting” than nouns (*Lectures* 314). The importance of verbs lies not so much in how they help the thing performing them match its noun but rather in their indication of what something is; that is, they assist a person to “feel what is inside that thing.” The verb that best indicates that Gertrude Stein is a genius is *writing*. She gives the following statement its own paragraph, “Gradually I was writing” (*Everybody’s* 75), and she elaborates upon it a few paragraphs later: “As I say I was writing and well why not I was writing the way I was writing and it came to be the writing of *The Making of Americans*. I was writing in the way I was writing” (76). The act of writing is what enables Gertrude Stein to know that she is a genius; the verb reveals a deeper knowledge of the thing than the noun permits.

The frozen nature of nouns does not preclude one from gaining deeper knowledge about the thing a noun names, but to do so, one must turn to other types of words: “As I say a noun is a name of a thing, and therefore slowly if you

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<sup>4</sup> According to Barbara Will, *genius* “is...an ascriptive term: a name which designates her unique status within the social order, her identity or ‘type’ – something she indisputably ‘is’” (7). And, according to Wendy Steiner, “An act is a sign, an index of character, and the living of a life is the signifying of an inner essence, the self” (20).

feel what is inside that thing you do not call it by the name by which it is known. Everybody knows that by the way they do when they are in love and a writer should always have that intensity of emotion about whatever is the object about which he writes" (314). To truly capture the essence of something, which should be the goal to which a writer is passionately devoted, one must abandon the deathly placidity of the noun for the more vital types of words: "I say again. Verbs and adverbs and articles and conjunctions and prepositions are lively because they all do something and as long as anything does something it keeps alive" (316). Just as a writer gets to the bottom nature of her subject and makes her work more lively by focusing on actions, so also a friend is one who can discern a person's bottom nature through understanding her actions. To put it in grammatical terms, then, a friend observes a person's verb and as a result affirms her noun.

#### *Leo Stein's Rejection of Gertrude Stein's Genius*

Stein tells Seabrook that the story of her brother is the story of her realizing her genius; more specifically, it is the story of the siblings' estrangement, the end of their friendship. As Gertrude Stein explains in *Everybody's Autobiography*, solitariness characterizes the discovery of her genius; not only has she realized it by herself, but the action that signifies her genius shatters the most important relationship of her life up to that point. At the same time that she figures out that she is a genius, the dynamics of her relationship with her brother Leo are changing because he realizes, or so Gertrude Stein claims, that he is not a genius:

[B]ecause he understood everything and if you understand everything and besides that are leading and besides that do do

what you do there is no reason why it should not be creating, and that is he was that and had always been and I had not been that but I had been it enough to be following, now why should it come to be that it should be something else now just why should it.  
(*Everybody's* 77)

The brother “who led in everything” now finds himself merely “explaining” instead of “creating,” while his sister who “had always been following” was writing (76). In this moment when the existential fortunes of the two siblings cross and diverge, Gertrude Stein’s thirty-year friendship with her brother falls apart: “[T]hat was the beginning of the ending and we always had been together and now we were never at all together. Little by little we never met again” (77). The break occurs because Leo repudiates Gertrude’s defining action and therefore her identity: “He said it was not it it was I. If I was not there to be there with what I did then what I did would not be what it was. In other words if no one knew me actually then the things I did would not be what they were” (76-77). “It” is Gertrude Stein’s writing. According to Leo, the act of writing does not indicate Gertrude Stein’s genius; she must be present to explain what the writing indicates, which renders the action futile. To put it back in grammatical terms, if the thing’s action does not give insight into what the thing is, then the thing does not adequately fit its noun.

Although Gertrude Stein attempts a sanguine response to Leo’s pronouncement, her articulation of its effects sounds like one put under a curse: “He did not say it to me but he said it *so that it would be true for me*. And it did not trouble me and as it did not trouble me I knew it was not true and a little as it did not trouble me he knew it was not true” (77, my italics). She twice repeats that her brother’s condemnation of her writing does not trouble her, as if she must persistently reject it. By denying that there is any truth to what Leo says,



Gertrude Stein implies that he does not understand the manner in which she performs the action that indicates her genius, that she is a genius because she is the first to write the way she does. Naturally this error ruins the friendship, for it shows that Leo lacks “that intensity of emotion” (*Lectures* 314)—that is, he lacks the (correct) love for his sister—necessary for him to see who she really is: “[I]t destroyed him for me and it destroyed me for him” (*Everybody’s* 77).

So Gertrude Stein’s friendship with her brother Leo ends because he does not think she is a genius, but the dissolution of their friendship carries important significance. Her existence has been vulnerable to contingency since she was young, when she overheard a conversation between her parents: “[T]here is no thinking that one was never born until you hear accidentally that there were to be five children and if two little ones had not died there would be no Gertrude Stein, of course not” (*Everybody’s* 115). If her older siblings had not passed away, her parents would not have tried to have Gertrude and Leo.<sup>5</sup> This knowledge made Gertrude and Leo “feel funny” (134), and so they never discussed it. But one can see that such a revelation would bring the two surviving siblings closer together; indeed, they “were always together. We had travelled a great deal together and he was always a very sweet a little older brother...we always had been together, when we were very little children we went many miles on dusty roads in California together, all alone together....It was all as it could have been” (73). Stein repeats the word “together” eight times as she recalls her childhood with Leo. Thus, one can see that the difference of opinion that resulted in their

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Bridgman believes that “[t]he threat of non-existence was her principle fear” (13). Bruce A. Goebel argues that death is one of the most central preoccupations of Stein’s work, which is “persistently ironic, simultaneously striving to create an immortal testament to the human mind that can erase and transcend the flawed, mortal nature of human existence” (237-238).

estrangement is momentous. Her identity rejected by the brother whom she has followed for thirty years, Gertrude Stein finds herself alone in a world where her existence is contingent. To regain the security of her identity, she must prove Leo's pronouncement wrong—only an audience who appreciates her writing, as he failed to do, could counterbalance his critique: “[I]n order to reinforce her self-conception of transcendent genius, she needed an audience’s recognition and confirmation” (Goebel 248).

### *Community in Toklas: Geniuses and Conduits*

Gertrude Stein wrote *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (referred to from now on as *Toklas*) in order to make contact with that audience, but her intention is not to meet them on their own terms; rather, she wants to cultivate a readership that will properly appreciate her more abstract, elusive works by recalling the events of the past twenty-five years involving Stein and the friends who already appreciate her.<sup>6</sup> Although the reader may be impressed by the variety and illustriousness of the people who come to see Stein, she does not want the reader to think of her as a mere shrine at which to stop along one’s Parisian pilgrimage. At first we may be overwhelmed, as Alice Toklas is when she first enters the atelier, the walls of which covered with avant-garde paintings (*Toklas* 668), but then, like Alice, we are drawn into Stein’s circle to observe the “endless variety” of visitors to twenty-seven rue de Fleurus (786). The spectacle of the Saturday-night salon is “like a kaleidoscope slowly turning” (753) with Gertrude Stein stationary amidst the comers and goers, the sun around which

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<sup>6</sup> Bridgman refers to the publication of *Toklas* as Stein’s “emergence as a best-selling author” (199). He attributes three motivations to Stein’s writing it: “heightened fame, a creative slump, and the hope of pleasing Alice” (206).

revolve the satellites with both steady and wobbly orbits. As an image of Gertrude Stein, this description conveys her imperturbable genius that is not lured by the various competing schools of art and writing whose representatives dash into her atelier; as an image told from the perspective of Alice Toklas, who becomes the manager of hearth and home, the scene becomes a picture of domestic and communal stability. She mentions “the friends who sat around the stove and talked” (786). The ones who do not leave are those who are drawn to the warmth of the Stein/Toklas home and the vitality of Stein’s genius. Gertrude Stein wants to show the reader that there are people who know her and her work and love them both.

*Geniuses: Pablo Picasso*

The friends who make up the community surrounding Gertrude Stein fall into two categories: geniuses and conduits. The former class is defined by the Aristotelian principle that like gathers with like, and Stein’s relationships with members of this class approximate most closely Aristotle’s friendship of virtue. Only two people occupy this class—English mathematician Alfred Whitehead and Pablo Picasso—but Picasso’s is the central friendship, both in Stein’s life and in the book. Besides Toklas and Stein, Picasso appears most frequently throughout the narrative. Early on, Alice<sup>7</sup> declares, “I wish I could convey something of the simple affection and confidence with which [Picasso] always pronounced [Gertrude Stein’s] name and with which she always said, Pablo. In all their long friendship with all its sometimes troubled moments and its

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<sup>7</sup> When discussing passages from *Toklas*, I will refer to Alice Toklas, the narrator, rather than Gertrude Stein, the author.

complications this has never changed" (672). Stein regards Picasso with great affection, evident in every reference to him.

Picasso and Stein sympathize with each other in their struggle to bring new clarity to their respective arts. As Stein writes of Picasso in her early portrait of him, "Something had been coming out of him, certainly it had been coming out of him, certainly it was something, certainly it had been coming out of him and it had meaning, a charming meaning, a solid meaning, a struggling meaning, a clear meaning" ("Picasso" 282). Stein recognizes that Picasso's unique vision—and his rendering of it in paint—captures the reality of their present age; Picasso likewise affirms this vision in Stein's writing. Picasso symbolizes *métier*, the fidelity to genius, which grounds Stein's desire for fame. The painter and writer, following their own channels, support each other in the process of discovery. Toklas observes, "How often I have heard Picasso say to her when she has said something about a picture of his and then illustrated by something she was trying to do, *racontez-moi cela*. In other words tell me about it" (*Toklas* 738). They are bound together in genius, even while they are isolated in their respective media.<sup>8</sup> In her 1938 tribute to Picasso, Stein explains that Picasso befriends writers rather than painters because "[h]e needed ideas, anybody does, but not ideas for painting, no, he had to know those who were interested in ideas, but as to knowing how to paint he was born knowing all of that" (*Picasso*

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<sup>8</sup> As solitary geniuses in their respective realms of expertise, they can encourage each other in their work, but their creative endeavors must stay within their own realms, as Gertrude Stein comically explains to Picasso when he decides to give up painting to write poetry: "[W]ell he said getting truculent, you yourself always said I was an extraordinary person well then an extraordinary person can do anything, ah I said catching him by the lapels of his coat and shaking him, you are extraordinary within your limits but your limits are extraordinarily there and I said shaking him hard, you know it..." (*Everybody's* 37). So the writer and the painter can commune in their extraordinariness and even in innovation, what Gertrude Stein refers to as "the composition of [one's] generation" (*Picasso* 504), but they must maintain independence in their specialties.

498). Similarly, Stein could never collaborate with another writer, even though she fancifully suggests such projects to her friends: for example, she and Sherwood Anderson consider “collaborating on a life of [Ulysses S.] Grant. Gertrude Stein still likes to think about this possibility” (*Toklas* 906). Of course, the partnership never takes place, but Stein writes about Grant herself in *Four in America*. The one example of collaboration in her career, her “translation” of Georges Hugnet’s *Enfances*, ends disastrously. Stein’s genius must work alone; otherwise the friendship fades, as the title of her translation indicates.<sup>9</sup>

Toklas’s physical description of Picasso highlights the solitude of genius and the nimbleness of mind and body: “He, small, quick moving but not restless, his eyes having a strange faculty of opening wide and drinking in what he wished to see. He had the isolation and movement of the head of a bull-fighter at the head of their procession” (669). Picasso’s own question to Toklas about his appearance—“Do you think...that I really do look like your president Lincoln” (672)—evokes the American figure’s legendary honesty. Indeed, Toklas mentions Picasso frequently in connection with a frank assessment or piece of wisdom he imparts to Gertrude Stein, such as the following epigram that Stein repeats in a number of works: “[W]hen you make a thing, it is so complicated making it that it is bound to be ugly, but those that do it after you they don’t have to worry about making it and they can make it pretty, and so everybody can like it when the others make it” (681). With this advice Picasso encourages Stein to continue her innovations, despite the dismay with which they are received.

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<sup>9</sup> Bollinger argues that Stein writes *Toklas* in such a way that no one could claim that it was a collaboration, “since the notion of a genius collaborating on a text would be antithetical to the category of genius itself” (243).

The most important image of the text is a product of Picasso's, his portrait of Gertrude Stein.<sup>10</sup> Just as the origins of genius are mysterious, so also is the conception of that portrait: "They can remember the first time that Picasso dined at the rue de Fleurus and they can remember the first time Gertrude Stein posed for her portrait at rue Ravignan but in between there is a blank" (704-705). The process of making the painting included ninety sittings, but then, "[a]ll of a sudden one day Picasso painted out the whole head. I can't see you any longer when I look, he said irritably" (713). Toklas's account of the process subverts the idea of development toward a goal. The numerous sittings become arduous for a painter who does not like to use models (*Picasso* 497), and they end up blurring his naturally existing vision.<sup>11</sup> Picasso leaves the painting incomplete to spend the summer in Spain: "The day he returned from Spain Picasso sat down and out of his head painted the head in without having seen Gertrude Stein again. And when she saw it he and she were content" (717). Picasso returns to his inner vision, which simply exists within him. His previous depiction of her head, the product of the developmental process over the ninety sittings, "neither can remember at all," and in her 1938 tribute, she still declares, "[I]t is the only reproduction of me which is always I, for me" (*Picasso* 502). Notice that as she recounts the story, Toklas uses the word "head," rather than "face," implying the mind within the head. Stein observes, "I was alone at this time in understanding him..." (508); the portrait reveals that the understanding is mutual.

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<sup>10</sup> "Picasso's portrait of Gertrude Stein attests to the intimacy of the two prime innovators. At the same time Gertrude Stein was careful to establish her independence of his influence. Every detail informs the reader that the two work congenially yet separately, advancing along parallel lines" (Bridgman 224-225).

<sup>11</sup> "Stein makes a point of emphasizing how many times she sat for Picasso, and the implication here is that the accumulated memories of those eighty or ninety sittings interfere with Picasso's immediate perception, bring in identity, and destroy creation" (Merrill 16).

*Conduits: Bernard Faÿ*

As I noted above, the genius class of friends most closely approximates Aristotle's virtue-friendship, but it is important to see that the primary motivation of Picasso and Stein's friendship is not their mutual wellbeing but the furtherance of their artistic innovations. The two friends already know that they are geniuses—there is no personal end toward which to spur each other. Nor is there a particular end that they try to reach in their work; there is only greater innovation. Stein does not depict her friendship with Picasso in *Toklas* intending to shape an audience of geniuses; rather, she uses the friendship to show her genius credentials. Readers of *Toklas* should take the principle of "like goes with like" as a clue that Stein is a genius and her experimental work is the manifestation of genius.

The genius class of friends is quite small, but the second class is a large network. I refer to Gertrude Stein's second class of friends as conduits because they connect her somehow to the larger audience that she craves, which means that they are largely what Aristotle calls friends of utility. People of this group may understand her work very well or hardly at all, but they nevertheless champion her cause in various ways: offering personal encouragement, publishing her pieces, or introducing her to other influential people. The greatest sign of affection from this class of friends, however, is a public endorsement: "There are many writers who write her letters of admiration but even when they are in a position to do so they do not write themselves down in book reviews....[T]here have been some notable exceptions, Sherwood Anderson, Edith Sitwell, Bernard Faÿ and Louis Bromfield" (*Toklas* 903-904). This act serves

not only to widen the friendly community that will appreciate her work but also to confirm her identity as a genius. Based on these characteristics, we can conclude that Stein intends to cultivate a reading audience of conduit-friends, people who will appreciate her work, confirm her identity, and tell others to do likewise. In *Toklas*, the network of friends she depicts includes, among others, Mildred Aldrich, Mabel Dodge, Carl Van Vechten, Edith Sitwell, Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, Kate Buss, Virgil Thomson, Georges Hugnet, and Bernard Faÿ.

Mentioned eight pages before the end of the book, Bernard Faÿ's friendship points toward Gertrude Stein's imminent notoriety. At first, Faÿ is a conduit linking Stein to French readers through his translations of "Melanctha" and *The Making of Americans*. Stein gives the latter translation high praise: "I knew it was a wonderful book in english, but it is even, well, I cannot say almost really more wonderful but just as wonderful in french" (909). Toklas describes overhearing Stein and Faÿ's private conversations, similar to those Stein has with Picasso: "I remember once coming into the room and hearing Bernard Faÿ say that the three people of first rate importance that he had met in his life were Picasso, Gertrude Stein and André Gide and Gertrude Stein inquired quite simply, that is quite right but why include Gide" (905). Later, when Faÿ visits Stein and Toklas at their summer home in Bilignin, Toklas reports that they "talked out in the garden about everything, about life, and America, and themselves and friendship" (907). The allusion to America perhaps foreshadows her lecture tour two years later, for which Stein must rely on Professor Faÿ's contacts in the United States.



Faÿ and Picasso represent two polar extremes that Stein longs for in her career—fame and artistic discovery. Whereas Stein and Picasso inspire one another to new creative heights, Stein and Faÿ use each other to garner greater public recognition.<sup>12</sup> This is not to say, though, that Faÿ is simply a publicity hound. Indeed, he has an illustrious academic career and receives transatlantic acclaim as the preeminent French expert on America, but he uses his knowledge to gain greater public influence, considering each position he takes to be a stepping stone. Stein would understandably value someone with the knowledge to cultivate wide, respectable notoriety.<sup>13</sup> Faÿ thus guides Stein in her quest for the affirmation of a larger audience, the American community. For this reason, along with Picasso's, Toklas claims that Faÿ's is one of Stein's "four permanent friendships" (907).<sup>14</sup>

Gertrude Stein's struggle to reconcile her internal genius with her need for external fame is evident in the references to Bernard Faÿ that Toklas juxtaposes with her discussions of Picasso's portrait. Just before Toklas recalls the story of

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<sup>12</sup> According to Barbara Will, Stein and Faÿ's friendship is "characterized by desire, greed, ambition, egoism, mutual flattery, as well as genuine affection and shared vulnerability" ("Ruthless" 648).

<sup>13</sup> Ulla Dydo contrasts Faÿ's methods with the less discriminating ones of Bradley, the man who secures Harcourt's agreement to publish *Toklas*: "[Stein] respected the quality of [Faÿ's] mind and his academic standing while also looking to students as her most promising audience; on the other hand, she came increasingly to see Bradley as a commercial agent interested in her work only for business and profit" (602). Although Faÿ "wanted to protect her from commercialism," he is keen to bring her "the honors due her in her country" (603); notoriety is still his goal without the taint of money that Bradley's plans carried.

<sup>14</sup> One may be Carl Van Vechten, whom Gertrude Stein eventually appoints as her literary executor. In the *Autobiography*, she writes the one-line paragraph, "Gertrude Stein and he became dear friends" (798). The other may be Juan Gris, about whom she writes parenthetically, "[H]e was after Pablo Picasso Gertrude Stein's dearest friend" (676). Juan Gris dies in 1927, however. Another possibility is Sherwood Anderson: "Gertrude Stein and Sherwood Anderson have always been the best of friends..." (853). See Ray Lewis White (ed.), *Sherwood Anderson/Gertrude Stein: Correspondence and Personal Essays*, 1972. These speculations, of course, assume that Alice Toklas, as Gertrude Stein's partner, does not fall into her category of "friend."

Picasso repainting Gertrude Stein's head, she briefly mentions Bernard Faÿ and his translation of *The Making of Americans* (Toklas 717). Near the end of the book, just before she discusses the cementing of Stein and Faÿ's friendship, she refers to Picasso's portrait again. Toklas had spent the day cutting Gertrude Stein's hair quite short, until "it ma[de] her look like a monk," according to Sherwood Anderson (907). When Picasso sees that she has cut her hair, he "was for a moment angry and said, and my portrait, but very soon added, after all it is all there." The juxtaposition of Bernard Faÿ and the episode with Picasso's portrait reveals the tension between the desire for notoriety and the devotion to genius. Whether Gertrude Stein has short hair or long, Picasso's portrait still depicts her, what we might call her "bottom nature," her genius—"after all it is all there." But by ushering her into the American spotlight, will Bernard Faÿ cause Gertrude Stein to betray her genius? These two friends bring out the fear that lies beneath *Toklas*: the price of Stein's emergence may be her innovation; the cultivation of a wider audience, as with the ninety sittings for Picasso, may result in a loss of true artistic vision.

#### *Alice Toklas's Role*

Picasso is a genius-friend and Faÿ is a conduit-friend, but where does Alice Toklas, the book's narrator, stand in Gertrude Stein's community? Toklas occupies a special place as Stein's lover and the manager of their home. Stein does not classify her as a genius; Toklas is the wife who sits with the wives of geniuses (671): "Wives, by definition, exist only in relation to another person. By contrast, the traditional paradigm for genius is emphatically singular, with geniuses always envisioned as performing their brilliant work in intellectual

isolation" (Bollinger 227).<sup>15</sup> If one had to place her in one of the two categories, based on Stein's perception of her, Toklas would be a conduit. To classify her this way, however, does not minimize her importance to Stein and her career: Gertrude Stein's creativity relies on the stability of her domestic environment, and as she concentrates on literary innovation, she needs others to promote her work. Toklas is essential to Stein's process of invention. As Toklas declares, "I am a pretty good housekeeper and a pretty good gardener and a pretty good needlewoman and a pretty good secretary and a pretty good editor and a pretty good vet for dogs and I have to do them all at once" (910-913).<sup>16</sup> In addition, she wields considerable influence as the first reader of Stein's writing, as Stein's manuscripts show. Nevertheless, a hierarchy does exist in which Gertrude Stein as the genius is superior to Alice Toklas, the wife and copyist.

Toklas fills the vacancy left by Leo because she readily recognizes Gertrude Stein's genius. As she reports in the autobiography, "I may say that only three times in my life have I met a genius and each time a bell within me rang and I was not mistaken, and I may say in each case it was before there was any general recognition of the quality of genius in them" (*Toklas* 660-661).

Ambiguity lies in the phrase "general recognition"; it is unclear if she means that

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<sup>15</sup> Bollinger continues, "Although Stein vigorously and repeatedly includes herself in her list of geniuses, her life never fully conformed to the paradigm. She was always part of a pair..." (227). If Stein's identity is constrained by relationship, then the only way for her to achieve the singularity of genius is to conceive of relationships as hierarchical. Indeed, Bollinger continues, "however silent they may be, [Stein's] theory shows no way for wives to advance to the ranks of geniuses" (230). Stein enforces this hierarchy by humiliation, as Carl Van Vechten recalls: "Gertrude invariably told Alice she could not write. Even a cookbook. When Alice suggested this she ridiculed and tortured her, to such an extent that Alice never even wrote a long letter during Stein's lifetime....On one occasion Alice was so upset and hurt that she did not speak to GS for a couple of days" (Qtd. in Dydo 574-575).

<sup>16</sup> During Stein's exilic period of the 1920s, Toklas's encouragement is essential to Stein continuing her literary explorations (Mitrano 103). Toklas also plays the erotic muse, as Ulla E. Dydo points out in her analysis of Gertrude Stein's notebooks (27-35).

she did not have an opportunity to observe the range of action of the three people before determining they were geniuses or that the world at large had not determined they were geniuses before she met them.<sup>17</sup> The latter interpretation suits Stein's later theory of nouns and verbs and contradicts Leo's criticism that only people who know Stein personally would think her writing was good. Toklas's immediate intuition of genius means that she was able to witness actions by all three people that indicated their status as geniuses without needing to be intimately acquainted. The instantaneity with which Toklas recognizes Stein as a genius also indicates the deep rapport they will have as friends.<sup>18</sup>

But Alice Toklas cannot completely fill Leo's shoes. As the older brother, Leo had been the leader of the friendship; Gertrude was the baby sister who followed:

I was very fond of reading Clarissa Harlowe and I used to quote to him, what Clarissa's uncle wrote to her about her brother, remember he is your brother two years older and a man. My brother was two years older and a man and we were always together....[M]y brother led in everything. He had always been my

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<sup>17</sup> Certainly Alfred Whitehead is well known when Alice Toklas meets him, but Gertrude Stein makes sure to give Whitehead credit for the ideas behind his collaboration with Bertrand Russell, thereby deeming Whitehead the genius of the pair: "[I]t was during these days that Gertrude Stein realised how completely it was Doctor Whitehead and not Russell who had had the ideas for their great book. Doctor Whitehead, the gentlest and most simply generous of human beings never claimed anything for himself and enormously admired anyone who was brilliant, and Russell undoubtedly was brilliant" (*Toklas* 807-808). According to Bollinger, Stein makes this distinction "to establish that a collaborative pair can have but one genius, and that the public can be wrong in its assumptions about which person that was" (244).

<sup>18</sup> As I will show momentarily, I disagree with Barbara Will's conclusion that "[i]f Gertrude is a 'genius,' therefore, then so too is Alice, whose 'genius' is developed or awakened by engagement with Stein's own. To this extent, what appears to be an account of the singularity of Gertrude Stein comes to seem like an affirmation of the dialogic nature of the capacity of 'genius' – as what can conceivably emerge, as Stein would put it, through the process of 'talking and listening.' 'Genius,' here, as in Stein's more obviously experimental texts, is not the capacity of a unique individual but a shared phenomenon" ("*Genius*" 140). I do not believe that Stein is interested in other people identifying themselves as genius; rather, she is concerned that they find the genius in her.

brother two years older and a brother. I had always been following. (*Everybody's* 73, 76)<sup>19</sup>

Once Leo leaves Paris, Gertrude becomes the leader, and Alice follows her. On the one hand, Alice's support provides Stein with crucial encouragement to push forward with her explorations; on the other hand, Stein no longer has the authoritative protection that her brother supplied, nor does she have someone "above" her to affirm her genius and validate her existence. Toklas cannot undo the contingency Stein feels about her existence. Only recognition from a large readership can replace what Stein lost in her brother.

Although she cannot be the authoritative voice that Gertrude Stein lacks, Toklas can help Stein acquire an appreciative audience, demonstrating her usefulness as a conduit-friend. The most obvious example of this assistance is the labor she puts into getting the Plain Editions published, which she describes in the autobiography. Toklas draws on the adventurous spirit of Parisian art dealers, who take more risks in the artists they promote than publishers are willing to do with new writers (*Toklas* 899-900). She states with naïve simplicity, "I now myself began to think about publishing the work of Gertrude Stein....All that I knew about what I would have to do was that I would have to get the book printed and then to get it distributed, that is sold" (900). She then details the grunt work that yielded the modest circulation of the Plain Editions. Interestingly, the account of Toklas's work to get Stein published segues into the story of Stein's deeper acquaintance with Fay, who represents the hope of a

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<sup>19</sup> "It seemed to Gertrude Stein that in childhood everyone looked after her. Being the youngest minimized her familial responsibilities, which gave her a good deal of time to herself (*EA*, 70). It also established in her an imperious indifference to the humdrum details of daily life. The management of practical matters which she initially left to members of her family, later became Alice Toklas's concern" (*Bridgman* 7-8).

wider readership through his French translations and American connections (905).

Toklas not only acts as promoter of Stein's personally published work; she becomes the public face with which Stein first makes contact with a mainstream audience: "As manager of the Plain Edition, Toklas tried to enlist readers for Stein's work, which submission to publishers had not effectually done. Now, however, the *Autobiography*, joining as one the words of Stein and the voice of Toklas, created the key to publication, audience, fame, and money" (Dydo 545). She reveals the plan on the final page of *Toklas*: "About six weeks ago Gertrude Stein said, it does not look to me as if you were ever going to write that autobiography. You know what I am going to do. I am going to write it for you.... And she has and this is it" (913). Stein uses her lover and confidant as a protective disguise that permits her to furtively enter what may be enemy territory, i.e., mainstream America. But the disguise is more complicated than it seems at first: Stein the author creates Toklas the narrator, who in turn observes another character—Stein! The Gertrude Stein whom the reader follows through the pages of *Toklas* is a hologram refracted through a prism of the author's design.<sup>20</sup>

What does the autobiography's deception accomplish? The humorous episode in Perpignan during the Great War illustrates in miniature what she hopes to achieve with the full autobiography. Stein and Toklas drive a truck in the war for the American Fund for French Wounded. In Perpignan, they have to

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<sup>20</sup> "What we discover in the end is that its [the autobiography's] posture of identity, its one-point perspective, is a hoax, an endless reflection. It is as though Gertrude Stein looks in the mirror and, as she does so, Alice Toklas looks over her shoulder. And so in the mirror Stein sees Toklas watching Stein watch Toklas. Or is it Toklas who looks in the mirror, with Stein peeking over her shoulder?" (Merrill 15).

meet with the French commanding officer to acquire gasoline. Toklas observes that Stein “was perfectly ready to drive the car anywhere, to crank the car as often as there was nobody else to do it, to repair the car...she was even resigned to getting up in the morning, but she flatly refused to go inside of any office and interview any official” (833). Stein does the actual job of driving and maintaining the truck. Toklas’s job is to interact with officials as Stein’s “delegate,” communication essential for Stein to do her job as “the driver” (834). Because Stein is the driver, any papers that Toklas presents are in Stein’s name, so when Toklas meets the major in Perpignan, he assumes that she is Stein. At the conclusion of their interview, the major invites Toklas-as-Stein to dine with him and his wife, a gesture of friendship, at which point Toklas must reveal who Stein really is: “[The major] almost jumped out of his chair. What, he shouted, not Mademoiselle Stein.” Once Toklas explains the mix-up, the major desires to “go downstairs and see this Mademoiselle Stein.” Upon meeting, Stein and the major “became friends.”

In the autobiography at large, Stein also uses Toklas as her delegate to charm the reader and introduce him to her circle. The reader sits with Toklas, watching and listening to Stein converse with the many interesting people who come to pay their respects or to receive her advice. Listening to Alice Toklas, the reader gets a sense of the ideal communal setting for the appreciative reception of Stein’s literary discoveries. Finally, when Stein unveils her ruse, the reader is ready to meet the real Mademoiselle Stein, that is, to make contact with her genius by reading her literary discoveries. By doing so, Stein hopes that she and the reader will become friends, meaning that the reader will affirm her genius.

### *Post-Autobiography Crisis*

But the strategy she uses in *Toklas* to gain readers wreaks havoc on her identity, which she recounts in *Everybody's Autobiography*. She had desired the appreciation of a wider audience, so she wrote *Toklas* as a way to simultaneously make contact with such an audience and shape them into a community that could appreciate her work properly.<sup>21</sup> Once she gained acclaim, she could then introduce her more experimental work. But this plan backfired.<sup>22</sup> The character of Gertrude Stein depicted in *Toklas* entertained the audience and distracted them from her larger mission. They interpreted the work as a turning point in her writing, from which point on she would be easily decipherable.<sup>23</sup> When she tried to publish work in her usual style, both the publisher and the audience bristled. She briefly alludes to this public response in *Everybody's Autobiography*, when Harcourt offers her a contract: "I wanted the Four In America printed and he [Bradley, her agent] wanted me to sign a contract for another autobiography" (107). In Stein's mind, Bradley and Harcourt were more concerned about commercial success than circulating her art.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "Just as Stein's 'experimental' work can be seen offering a 'model of genius' to the reader willing to follow Stein along its bewildering paths, so too do Stein's 'popular' autobiographies of the 1930s operate through a recursive model of 'talking and listening' that holds out a complex lure, soliciting the reader's complicity in the performance of textual authority while appearing to ground this authority in a seemingly monolithic notion of authorial 'genius'" (*Genius* 149).

<sup>22</sup> The notion that Stein's original rhetorical plan for *Toklas* fails explains the change in her opinion about the work, which Galow addresses in *Celebrity* (55).

<sup>23</sup> "For instance, Ellery Sedgwick, the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, supported excerpting Stein's book [*Toklas*] in the magazine despite having repeatedly rejected her earlier work. He wrote, 'During our long correspondence, I think you felt my constant hope that the time would come when the real Miss Stein would pierce the smoke-screen with which she had always so mischievously surrounded herself....Hail Gertrude Stein about to arrive'" (*Celebrity* 56; see also *Genius* 138).

<sup>24</sup> Publication is the crucial step to connecting Stein with her audience. Ulla Dydo understands Stein's search "for a major trade publisher to take on all her work and become 'her



As a result of this misunderstanding, Gertrude Stein entered a period of confusion, in which her identity faced peril. She knew that her audience's curiosity about her unorthodox writing drew them to *Toklas*, but she could not understand why their love for her did not extend to her work: "It always did bother me that the American public were more interested in me than in my work. And after all there is no sense in it because if it were not for my work they would not be interested in me so why should they not be more interested in my work than in me" (*Everybody's* 50). Since it did not, she then wondered if any of her work had value:

Before one is successful that is before any one is ready to pay money for anything you do then you are certain that every word you have written is an important word to have written and that any word you have written is as important as any other word and you keep everything you have written with great care. And then it happens sometimes sooner and sometimes later that it has a money value I had mine very much later and it is upsetting because when nothing had any commercial value everything was important and when something began having a commercial value it was upsetting, I imagine this is true of any one. (39)

She must consider how her writing should proceed. Should she continue to forge her way into the frontier of writing, or should she write in the manner that pleases her audience? No longer is the role of audience just to legitimate Stein's genius; now, the audience steps past the boundary of friendship and tries to shape her identity by dictating what and how she should write.

This choice brings about a split in her conception of her writing that had not been there before; she now distinguishes between conscious writing, which is how she had written before, and self-conscious writing, in which the author writes with the audience in mind. She delineates this dichotomy in three

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publisher" as the search for a "guiding mentor," perhaps another replacement for her older brother Leo. The publisher thus stands as the first in the line of her appreciative audience (550).

different works. In the "Henry James" section of *Four in America*, she argues that writers "either write as they write or they write as they are going to write and they may and they may not choose to do what they are going to do" (*Four* 123). In "What Is English Literature," she makes the distinction between serving god and mammon in one's writing: "If he uses these words indirectly he says what he intends to have heard by somebody who is to hear and in so doing inevitably he has to serve mammon....Now serving god for a writer who is writing is writing anything directly, it makes no difference what it is but it must be direct, the relation between the thing done and the doer must be direct" (*Lectures* 203). And finally, in the *Geographical History*, she assigns good writing to the realm of the human mind, as opposed to human nature: "What is the resemblance between human nature and the human mind. The human mind has no resemblances if it had it could not write that is to say write right" (*Geographical* 396). Stein wanted to write as she had written, from the human mind, serving god, and she had expected the audience, as her friend, to encourage her in that mode. But now the presence of an audience made her wonder if she could write any way except self-consciously, for mammon, according to human nature.<sup>25</sup>

As she pondered this dilemma, she did not write, but ceasing the activity that defined who she was brought about an even deeper crisis: was she still a genius if she did not perform the signature action of her genius? "I had always been I because I had words that had to be written inside me and now any word I had inside could be spoken it did not need to be written. I am I because my little

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<sup>25</sup> Kirk Curnutt argues that Stein's dichotomy of inside and outside is a rhetorical move that she consciously does "to authenticate her fame and win credibility for her writing" (293). In his article, he points out that a number of Hollywood celebrities during the 1930s used a similar dichotomy to assure moviegoers that they possessed an off-screen authenticity (296). Although I disagree with Curnutt that Stein's struggle over this dichotomy was simply a publicity stunt, even if it was rhetorical, it was still a reality that she as a writer had to come to terms with.

dog knows me. But was I I when I had no written word inside me. It was very bothersome" (*Everybody's* 64). She soon began to write again, concentrating on these questions of identity, genius, writing, and audience. The first such work was *Four in America*.<sup>26</sup>

The conflict between inside versus outside, conscious writing versus unconscious, introduces an existential crisis for Gertrude Stein. The audience had always been on the outside, and her writing had been the product of the inside—one could say that she exported the inside to the outside. Now, Stein also imports the critical acclaim given to her for *Toklas*, which contaminates the once hermetic writing process. Her creativity is no longer impervious because she must engage in the paradox of consciously choosing to write unconsciously!<sup>27</sup> Her only recourse is to continue trying to cultivate an appreciative audience, one who will understand *Toklas* in relation to the rest of her oeuvre and ultimately choose the earlier work. As a result, *Toklas* will no longer be an anomaly that creates a division in her writing strategies but rather one step in the process of

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<sup>26</sup> "Ulysses S. Grant, Wilbur Wright, Henry James, and George Washington would all, according to Stein's assessment, continue to express the same characteristics regardless of their particular profession. By extension, the reader is led to infer that Stein herself remains essentially the same person regardless of whether she is producing bestsellers or 'successes d'estime' or not writing at all. She can focus on different approaches to writing because the mind that creates ultimately remains inviolable behind the text" (*Celebrity* 64). Stein may have tried to reach this optimistic conclusion, but the anxiety behind her writing after *Four in America* suggests that she could not completely internalize the security of an unchanging genius without an audience to affirm it also.

<sup>27</sup> "On the one hand, Stein fears that internalizing readers' impressions and expectations will inevitably modify her own self-conception, in effect allowing the 'outside' to get 'inside.' Conversely, both her identity and the literary process that seems so central to it are now matters of concern for the general public, and thus are open to 'outside' speculation and definition. Again, Stein's primary anxiety stems from the fact that she is losing control of her 'self' amidst larger systems of public discourse..." ("Contradictions" 117).

exploration. But her readers must bring her identity as genius back into alignment.<sup>28</sup>

*Stein's Rhetorical Plea in "What Is English Literature"*

Inspired by a series of lectures she attended in which Bernard Faÿ spoke of "Franco-American things" (*Lectures* 312), Stein decides to embark on a lecture tour of the United States. If Stein uses Faÿ to represent the acquisition of notoriety with a large audience in *Toklas*, then her admission that her friend's lectures inspired her own tour suggests that she has invested herself in Faÿ's method of publicizing herself. She uses the *Lectures in America* to bridge the gap between Gertrude Stein the character in *Toklas* and, not the in-the-flesh Gertrude Stein lecturing to the audience, but her writing, the manifestation of her genius. *Toklas* had failed to provoke the audience to seek out her more obscure works and appreciate her genius within them; now, she would become the mediator between the audience she desperately wants and the writing that validates that desire. The audience's experience of seeing and hearing the real Gertrude Stein would replace their imaginative conception of her from reading *Toklas*. No longer would they be distracted by interesting stories about avant-garde artists of Paris; now they could focus on the story of Stein's experimentation.<sup>29</sup> After

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<sup>28</sup> "In short, Stein's work of the 1930s is not simply a public declaration of long-held theories or a historical account of her past work, but a deliberate self-historicization that, in part, responds to the market pressures initiated by the widespread success of *The Autobiography [of Alice B. Toklas]*" (*Celebrity* 51).

<sup>29</sup> Gertrude Stein insisted that, because her lectures were difficult, she would only lecture to a maximum of 500 people. In addition, since "everybody knew who [she] was," she did not want someone to introduce her before she began (*EA* 176-177). Kirk Curnutt writes that Stein's audience "must purify themselves of extratextual preconceptions of the author's identity so that they can directly engage the words" (300). Ulla Dydo adds, "As audience, we must abandon memory, abandon what we have learned, abandon as well our expectations of where a lecture

hearing or reading the lectures, Stein expects her audience to turn next to her other works. According to Timothy W. Galow, "Critics have noted that Stein talks very little about *The Autobiography* in her lectures....Instead, she uses her talks and the publicity afforded to her on the trip to promote less popular books, works that might otherwise have been overshadowed by the runaway commercial and critical success of *The Autobiography*" (*Celebrity* 69). The lectures thus are meant to educate the audience about how to perceive genius and then spark their interest to see that genius demonstrated at full power.

The first lecture in the published edition of *Lectures in America* is a narrative in which Gertrude Stein answers the question "What Is English Literature" by tracing the use of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs from Chaucer to Henry James. At its conclusion she declares that her writing exclusively embodies the next stage in literature's evolution, but near the beginning of the lecture, she tells her audience that "[t]here are two ways of thinking about literature as the history of English literature, the literature as it is a history of it and the literature as it is a history of you" (*Lectures* 196). What she means by the latter option is that one who reads avidly develops her own sense of how literature has changed over centuries, but the way she phrases it, "literature as it is a history of you," tempts one to read her treatment of English literary history into the development of her own writing, especially since she considers her writing to be the culmination of literary history.<sup>30</sup> From this reading, one can see Stein making a request of the audience to complete the

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will go next. In a sense, to listen to her, we must become illiterate, unknowing, expectationless" (628).

<sup>30</sup> "As Stein once wrote to Edmund Wilson, 'all literature is to me me, that isn't as bad as it sounds'" (Dydo 7).

evolution into the new mode of literature by reading her work and appreciating it. Gertrude Stein uses this account of literary history to ask for her audience's friendship.<sup>31</sup> Another way of interpreting the phrase "literature as it is a history of you" is to hear Stein putting the responsibility of moving literary history forward in the hands of her audience by getting them to agree with her about the need for the next step in literary innovation and vesting her with their confidence that she is the writer to embark on that exploration. In other words, they will affirm her role as genius. Before discussing this rhetorical plea, I will show the parallels between the historical epochs she delineates and the phases of her writing career that make this way of reading the lecture reasonable.

Gertrude Stein divides English literary history into five epochs, the first four of which she succinctly describes in this way: "One century has words, another century chooses words, another century uses words and then another century using the words no longer has them" (205). England dominates these first four epochs,<sup>32</sup> and the fifth belongs to America: "[T]oward the end of the nineteenth century there was bound to be a change because after all nothing goes on longer than it can....And this is where it connects on with American literature" (217). Based on her trajectory, Gertrude Stein seems unable to reach

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<sup>31</sup> Timothy Galow argues that Gertrude Stein is not trying "to uncover one overarching telos for all of her previous writing, but to describe and rearticulate the various interrelated processes that, in retrospect, can be seen operating in her earlier books" (*Celebrity* 48). As my interpretation of "What Is English Literature" demonstrates, I disagree with his assessment. Stein admits that her lectures are a form of narrative, and this narrative has a rhetorical goal: to form her ideal audience. Although her lecture on English literature is placed first in the published edition of the lectures, the first lecture she actually gave was "Painting" at "the Colony Club, New York" (Mitrano 174). Still, that she determined to put "What Is English Literature" first in the book shows its rhetorical purpose—placing her work in a developmental history of literature.

<sup>32</sup> The first three epochs of English literature can also loosely parallel the three phases of portraiture that Wendy Steiner delineates in the third chapter of *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance*, pp. 64-130. In fact, she asserts "[t]he centrality of the portrait genre within the corpus of Stein's work" (161).

the breakthrough of the American epoch. Stein's being American makes this roadblock to her progress ironic, and that she pleads her case to an American audience shows that she is trying to convince them that she is a member of their community whose rightful role it is to bring them into the literary future, if they will only understand the development of her work and support her future endeavors.

To make the analogy between Stein and the history of English literature work, she must identify herself as the embodiment of all of the writers that she mentions in her lecture. The audience must see that Gertrude Stein possesses the same traits that distinguished English literature for centuries: "The thing that has made the glory of English literature is description simple concentrated description...[of] what exists and so makes the life the island life the daily island life" (197). Gertrude Stein uses this phrase "the daily island life" persistently through the lecture. This phrase can refer to quotidian existence in the British Isles, but it can also refer to Gertrude Stein. She is the living genius with a mind insulated from any other mind who attempts to live in the perpetually recurring present moment and to record its essence. She embodies "the daily island life" that gives literature its glory. Her consciousness as a literary genius subsumes within it the creative instincts of the writers before her, instincts which, according to her, were shaped by their "daily island life." As with her affiliation with Picasso and Whitehead in *Toklas*, Stein here conveys her similarity to the undisputed geniuses of literary history.

*First Epoch: Chaucerian*

In describing her career in the lectures, Gertrude Stein considers *The Making of Americans* to be her first work. In this book, she attempted to record every type of person in existence, and she sought to distinguish them through the repetitions in their speech:

I then began again to think about the bottom nature in people, I began to get enormously interested in hearing how everybody said the same thing over and over again with infinite variations but over and over again until finally if you listened with great intensity you could hear it rise and fall and tell all that that there was inside them, not so much by the actual words they said or the thoughts they had but the movement of their thoughts and words endlessly the same and endlessly different. (272)<sup>33</sup>

This notion that she could strike upon a person's bottom nature by listening to the ever moving stream of their words and thoughts<sup>34</sup> parallels the Chaucerian epoch in literary history, characterized by the instrumental use of words brought to the isle by the Norman conquest (201-202). Just like Gertrude Stein's exercise of simultaneous listening and speaking, which are natural faculties through which the bottom nature of people she encountered rose up before her, so the use of words in the Chaucerian epoch was as natural as birdsong: "It sounds as sounds that is to say as birds as well as words. And that is because the words are there, they are not chosen as words, they are already there. That is the way Chaucer sounds" (207). From the Chaucerian epoch, the audience can infer that Stein's use of language is organic and natural, that it links her deeply, not just to

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<sup>33</sup> "[Stein] believes in the power of writing to shape life in that it can acknowledge a human subject in his or her innermost intimate difference from others....[T]he portrait stands for a form of listening for the interior intimacy of another that is not so much behind language as on its surface. The portrait impacts on us as a moment of knowing rather than representation" (Mitrano 133).

<sup>34</sup> It was Gertrude Stein's mentor at Radcliffe, William James, who coined the term "stream of consciousness."



the people she strives to portray, but also to the people of the community of which she is a part because she can use their language so instrumentally. For Gertrude Stein this period continues into the first phase of portraits, such as “Picasso,” “Orta, Or One Dancing,” and “Flirting At The Bon Marche.”

*Second Epoch: Elizabethan*

In the Chaucerian epoch, the musicality of the words comes naturally, but in the second epoch, the Elizabethan, writers choose words for their musical quality:

They did not care so much about what they said although they knew that what they said meant a great deal but they liked the words, and one word and another word next to the other word was always being chosen. Think well of the English literature of the sixteenth century and see how they chose the words, they chose them with so much choice that everything made the song they chose to sing. It was no longer just a song it was a song of words that were chosen to make a song that would sound like the words they were to sing. (207)

According to Stein, the Elizabethan poets dwell not only on the meaning of the words they put together; they also dwell on the sound. This sonic focus reminds one of what Stein says in her lecture on “Portraits and Repetition” about the *Tender Buttons* phase of her writing: “I found that I created a melody of words that filled me with a melody that gradually made me do portraits easily by feeling the melody of any one. And this then began to bother me because perhaps I was getting drunk with melody...” (308). Stein may criticize her work of this period, but the parallel with the melodious Elizabethan epoch should encourage them to recognize pleasure in reading her pieces—they contain not only psychological acumen but fun as well. She includes in this phase such portraits as “If I Told Him,” “Van Or Twenty Years After,” and “Sitwell, Edith

Sitwell" (307). In spite of her worries of being drunk on melody, Stein does assert that she worked on these portraits "with a great deal of concentration," suggesting that her search for the true essence still underlay her work and that meaning was still present.<sup>35</sup> She wants to discourage her audience from reading these works as mindless strings of words.

### *Third Epoch: Eighteenth Century*

After the Elizabethan epoch, which Gertrude Stein describes as a "long period" (204), there comes the eighteenth-century epoch, "the period that made Swift and Gibbon and Pope and Johnson" (205). In the eighteenth century, she argues, authors do not have to choose their words, as in the Elizabethan period. They simply use the words, but unlike in the Chaucerian period, the words are so well assimilated that they bring not only utility but pleasure: "No one ever enjoyed the use of what they had more than they did. There was no separation anywhere, the completeness was in the use. As one says this one feels that. As I say the pleasure of a literature is having it all inside you. It is the one thing that one can have all inside one" (205; see also 211). I draw a parallel between this epoch and the phase of Gertrude Stein's writing when she concentrates ever more on grammar and composition:

All the looking was there the talking and listening was there but instead of giving what I was realizing at any and every moment of them and of me until I was empty of them I made them contained within the thing I wrote that was them. The thing in itself [that is, the composition] folded itself up inside itself like you might fold a thing up to be another thing which is that thing inside in that thing. (308)

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<sup>35</sup> Steiner argues that the "melodic portraits" missed the mark because the "aesthetic...dominated the representation." Gertrude Stein would correct this error "by substituting 'movement' for melody" (Steiner 121).

The self-containment she strives for in this period is reminiscent of the completeness that the eighteenth-century authors feel between their words and their English existence. Representative work of this period in Gertrude Stein's career includes "Georges Hugnet," "Bernard Faÿ," *Lucy Church Amiably*, and culminates with *Stanzas in Meditation*. And just as the English literature of the eighteenth century requires of its reader a considerable knowledge of the personages and politics in the London of that time, so too have critics pointed out the increased hermeticism of Gertrude Stein's work of this period.<sup>36</sup> But, Stein implicitly argues, just as the obscurity of the historical situation surrounding the Age of Johnson should not stop one from perusing their works and appreciating their importance to the progress of literature, neither should one avoid wrestling with the difficulty of her works. Stein wants her audience to intuit the same confidence and sophistication of the analogous epoch in her works of this phase.

#### *Fourth Epoch: Nineteenth Century*

As I mentioned before, insularity is crucial both to Gertrude Stein's conception of English literature and her own writing: "What was outside was outside and what was inside was inside, and how could there be a question of god and mammon, when what is inside is inside and what is outside is outside there can be no confusing god and mammon" (201). Despite the biblical reference, Stein's distinction between serving god and mammon has no

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<sup>36</sup> According to Steiner, "The portrait format is the only factor holding the subject and the writing together, along with our faith that Stein was not engaged in an elaborate literary joke....The portrait must ultimately become a depiction of the author's thoughts in a manner not available to her audience. And this final isolation seems always to lurk in the background of portrait communication, despite the enormous advances made by Stein in satisfying the ideals of the genre" (129, 130).

connection to religion, “excepting the need to complete that which is trying to fill itself up inside any one” (200). The difference lies in consciousness versus self-consciousness: if one writes to emulate the style or technique of previous writers, or if she writes to garner approval—popular or monetary—then she serves mammon. If one writes as a natural outpouring as one experiences it, then she serves god (223). Writing to serve god brings the writer completeness; writing to serve mammon brings confusion of outside and inside. It must be clarified here that the phases of her writing career do not come about because she imitates the writers of the analogous epoch; what one should gather from the similarities is the natural progression of her literary explorations that follows the same course of literature already venerated by the audience. It is to be expected that a writer devoted to serving god rather than mammon would develop a career along tried and true paths, even while pushing creative limits.

The fourth epoch, the nineteenth century, introduces such confusion because it is characterized by the breaking of the barrier between the inside and the outside caused by England’s “owning everything” outside of the island (209-210). Gertrude Stein explains the phenomenon also in her first *Narration* lecture:

As I said in the nineteenth century as the sun never set upon the English flag and that island owned everything outside they had more and more to tell every minute of every day that they were leading their daily living every moment of every day because otherwise the outside might come to be inside and the inside might come to be outside then their way of telling about the way they lived their daily living every day would have gone away.  
(*Narration* 8)

Explanation motivates writing in the nineteenth century, both to inform those who are possessed by England and to remind English people themselves of what English life is so that it does not disappear. As a result, writing loses its

completeness because it is no longer self-contained—the inside-outside dichotomy has been compromised.<sup>37</sup> Nor is there the natural concord between thought or observation and word: explanation “leads you to that what you think is not what you say but you say what you think and you are thinking about what you think” (*Lectures* 214). When a person explains, her words are not merely the natural utterances of what she thinks but rather are words she selects because she believes them to be the best representation of what she thinks. There is now no direct correlation between thought and word; it is mediated externally to the person. Consciousness transforms into self-consciousness.<sup>38</sup>

*Toklas* marks Gertrude Stein’s entrance into the fourth, explanatory epoch. She describes it at the end of “Portraits and Repetition”:

And so I wrote the Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas and told what happened as it had happened. As I said way back, as now everybody at any moment can know what it is that happens while it happens, what happens is interesting but it is not really exciting....At any rate it is true there is something much more exciting than anything that happens and now and always I am writing the portrait of that. (312)

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<sup>37</sup> “Whether you are explaining owning the outside to yourself, to others inside, or to others outside, the mere fact of there being someone to whom the explanation is directed means, in grammatical terms, that explanatory discourse is indirect. In contrast to ‘stating,’ which does not necessarily imply any indirect object, ‘explanation,’ by Stein’s reasoning, is always mediated by the indirect object to whom or for whom the thing is explained, and it is this mediation that keeps explanation from being whole” (Ashton 291).

<sup>38</sup> Just as the individual psyche, then, is fragmented and incomplete, so also is the grammar that reflects it. Gertrude Stein traces the decline from words told “just like that” (219), which are assembled into sentences, a completed form, to phrases conveying emotional sentiment about the daily island life (216), which are incomplete. Although these phrases are inserted into sentences in the nineteenth century, the sentence is merely an empty placeholder, an inert form: “This brought about something that made neither words exist for themselves, nor sentences, nor choosing, it created the need of paragraphing, and the whole paragraph having been being made the whole paragraph had rising from it off of it its meaning” (218).

Her portraits, which are products of the inside, are more exciting than *Toklas*, which was prompted from the outside.<sup>39</sup> Only a few lines later, Gertrude Stein associates her lectures with the function of *Toklas*: both autobiography and lecture are in the explanatory mode, which relates to narrative, telling what has happened. Also, she reveals the self-conscious relationship between thought and word: “I am trying in these lectures to tell what is by *telling about how it* happened that *I told about what it is*” (my italics). *Lectures in America* essentially is her second autobiography, the focus of which shifts to her process of invention.<sup>40</sup> In her previous writing, Gertrude Stein told “what it is”; now, she is telling about how to tell. Stein intends her analogy with this epoch to divert people’s attention away from *Toklas*, a work that is not an end in and of itself. The audience should not embrace this piece of work where inside and outside are compromised but should rather be drawn to the fully inside work that it points to. If there is a process of assimilation attempted in the British writing of the nineteenth century, so also is there in *Toklas* and the lectures. Both are meant to bring Stein’s reading community in line with her artistic goals.

#### *Fifth Epoch: American*

Does she ever emerge into the American epoch? This last epoch is marked by a disconnection between literature and daily life because, according to

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<sup>39</sup> As opposed to Stein’s criticism of *Toklas* as an inferior work, Wendy Steiner sees the autobiography as the next phase of her experiment in portraiture. *Toklas* “indicated a new concern with character and identity; it not only explored these issues, but by its own public success launched Stein on a course of meditations on identity, genius, knowledge, and perception. It also marks the end of the dominance of the portrait genre, as is apparent in the paucity of portraits written after 1933, and thus it is both understandable and ironic that the centrality of portraiture is explicitly stated in this work, the culmination of, and point of departure from, the old program” (163).

<sup>40</sup> “Self-portraits in a new voice, her talks were a new form of elucidation that grew out of her review of her own work” (Dydo 627).

Gertrude Stein, “[i]n America...[t]hey do not live every day. And as they do not live every day they do not have the daily living and so they do not have this as something that they are telling” (220). That is to say, there is no regularized mode of living characteristic to Americans as there is in England, yet Americans have inherited the language that evolved out of the English’s daily island living, which results in a disconnection: “[T]hey [Americans] tell this story using the exactly same words that were made to tell an entirely different story and the way it is being done the pressure being put upon the same words to make them move in an entirely different way is most exciting, it excites the words it excites us who use them” (*Narration* 7). What this means is that Americans choose words to articulate their own experience that were developed to articulate a different type of experience, and because the words are used in a way they are unaccustomed to, they experience “pressure.” But this pressure makes the words sound fresh and “exciting.” A side effect of the disconnection caused by the uniquely American use of words is a kind of hovering disembodiment. So Henry James, the representative of this epoch and Gertrude Stein’s forerunner, writes paragraphs in the mode of the declining, nineteenth-century British way, but over them “something floated not floated away but just floated, floated up there” (*Lectures* 222). For Stein, this floating disconnectedness will be her sovereignty from the demands of the audience; receiving their confidence in her genius, Gertrude Stein will forge ahead of the audience with her writing into new territories of innovation.

She places herself at the head of this literary procession, taking the paragraph and “do[ing] more with [it] than ever had been done,” and she promotes the disconnection she sees in the American use of the English

language, the processes of which she elaborates upon in the next five lectures. But based on the similarity between how she describes the various phases of her work and how she outlines the history of English literature, she has not quite made it to this final stage. She concludes her discussion by mentioning her work with paragraphs, which hints at the massive specimens found in *The Making of Americans*, which for her marks the beginning of her career. She makes no claim about *Four in America*, her most recent work, being on the cutting edge of the new literary age. Certainly, her desire to offer a brief preview of her subsequent lectures explains why she would allude to *The Making of Americans*, but it does not explain why she would not mention her latest literary discoveries. If one looks at “What Is English Literature” as an allegorical representation of her own career, Gertrude Stein forms a circle in her lecture, returning to the beginning of her career. If one looks at the narratological purpose of the lecture, then it seems she is stuck in the nineteenth-century, explanatory epoch.

She plots her career this way in order to rhetorically ask her audience for help. Identifying *Toklas* as an artistic failure, a work for mammon and not for god, Stein must rally the audience that has given her success to see the innovation of her “god-serving” works. She revisits the dichotomy in the last paragraph of the lecture to show that literature cannot continue its evolution if it stalls in self-conscious, audience-pleasing writing. But neither can she develop it further as the reflection of her daily island life—she has left her personal island, made the conquest of a wider readership, and cannot go back. Now, to traverse the new frontiers of writing that America symbolizes in her literary history, she must have the support of that bigger community. “What Is English Literature” is Stein’s invitation to her audience to truly befriend her by following her process



of creative discovery over the last twenty-eight years, which she will describe in the subsequent lectures.

### *The Lectures' Failure*

Stein devotes these lectures to the various discoveries she has made: the search for bottom nature in *The Making of Americans*, the influence of painting on her portraiture, her attempt to capture the essence of action in her plays, the evolution of her portraits, and the difference between poetry and prose. Each lecture takes the audience a step further in Stein's career. As she admits in "Portraits and Repetition," Stein uses narrative in her lectures, but at the same time she repudiates the beginning-middle-end approach of traditional narrative, a claim she stakes to undermine the success of *Toklas*. At the end of "Poetry and Grammar," the last lecture in the published collection, Stein makes this observation about narrative: "[N]arrative that is not newspaper narrative but real narrative must of necessity be told by any one having come to the realization that the noun must be replaced not by inner balance but by the thing in itself and that will eventually lead to everything" (336). She cites her novel *Lucy Church Amiably* as the piece that comes closest to "real narrative." Although she classifies her lectures as narrative, they are inferior specimens because they merely tell what has happened. Moreover, they still require a mediator—Stein the lecturer—to connect the audience to the thing in itself, the writing. Consequently, the goal of the lectures seems to prove her brother Leo correct: she must be present to explain her work in order for it to be appreciated. But as I argued earlier, Stein does not give the lectures so that people will love *her* specifically; she wants them to love *her work*, which will validate her existence

and thus become love for her. One cannot love Gertrude Stein without loving her work.

But Gertrude Stein's scheme to garner the type of audience appreciation she craves backfires again. According to Kirk Curnutt, "Stein's public visibility during her American tour actually threatened to widen the breach between author and *oeuvre*. The more media attention devoted to her personality, the more her writing became a mere adjunct to it. As she confronted fame during her public appearances, then, she struggled to correct the perception that she was better read about than read" (Curnutt 298). What is more, because she relies on narrative, Stein's attempts to make contact with a wider readership push her out of the continuous present and into narrative temporality.<sup>41</sup> In both *Toklas* and *Lectures in America*, she chronicles the past of her life and work up to the present moment. Understandably, such an activity, along with the contingency of existence she has felt since childhood and the continued frustration that her work is not more widely accepted, would draw her attention to the future and the impending end of her narrative. Indeed, when she returns from her lecture tour, Gertrude Stein composes a long philosophical work that begins with her apprehension of death: *The Geographical History of America*.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Stein abandoned past and future in her writing, concentrating on the "continuous present," through which "she found a comfortable means by which to avoid thoughts of death" (Goebel 241). Goebel continues, "By disrupting narrative progression [beginning, middle, and end] Stein hoped to deny both time and the daily sequential events of human existence" (245).

<sup>42</sup> Richard Bridgman argues that, with the *Geographical History*, "Gertrude Stein was trying to locate the means of an untroubled life. As the storms of sexuality subsided, the fear of death was moving in to replace them" (262).

*The Attempt to Elude Death in The Geographical History of America*

The main purpose of the *Geographical History* is to reestablish the boundary between inside and outside, which Stein labels in this work “human mind” and “human nature” respectively.<sup>43</sup> By erecting this barrier again, Stein essentially retreats from the community she has tried to form in her more audience-appealing works, but she must do so to escape the vulnerability that those narratological works have given her. If she does not reclaim the creative space of her mind from the popular demands of her audience, she will have no refuge in which to hide from the threat of mortality.

The fundamental difference between the human mind and human nature lies in their relationship to death. The human mind can explain why death is necessary: “If nobody had to die how would there be room for any of us who now live to have lived. We never could have been if all the others had not died. There would have been no room” (*Geographical* 367). The human mind sees that there is only so much space, and only so many people can fill that space. This explanation hearkens back to her traumatic childhood revelation that she would not have been born had two of her siblings not died. The knowledge of death incites the human mind to do something that will overcome death; for Stein, this action is writing a masterpiece: “The human mind is the mind that writes what any human mind years after or years before can read, thousand [*sic*] of years or no years it makes no difference” (406-407). Here Stein makes her need for an appreciative audience more complex: the approval of readers for her

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<sup>43</sup> “[I]nsisting that the public identity does not accurately represent the inner ‘I’ is an act of artistic self-possession. It allows artists to proclaim their disinterest in the outer world of fame and to present their motive solely as expressing their intrinsic self” (Curnutt 297). Even if Stein’s establishment of the internal/external dichotomy is merely a rhetorical move, it carries implications for how an artist—or any individual for that matter—relates to others. It affirms that a necessary boundary exists that outside relationships threaten to overwhelm.

experiments disproves her brother Leo's repudiation of her genius, yes, but it also ensures the perpetuation of her existence within the pages of her masterpieces, which are the natural fruit of the genius. If the audience affirms she is a genius, then they affirm her works are masterpieces, and her immortality is secure.

Since the human mind works to overcome death, it bears no relation to temporal matters, which are the purview of human nature.<sup>44</sup> The human mind does not age (372), does not remember or forget (373), and follows no sequence (390).<sup>45</sup> Therefore, according to the human mind, "[T]here is no use in being a little boy if you are going to grow up to be a man" (371). In her articulation of the human mind, Stein thoroughly repudiates teleology—since the human mind never changes, it does not see a purpose to a person beginning life as a child to grow into adulthood. "In essence," Goebel observes, "Stein tried to create both an alternative world and an alternative entity, rather than identity, which would grant her immortality" (245).<sup>46</sup> Such things are matters for human nature, which "is what any human being will do" (*Geographical* 381). When the human mind creates a masterpiece, then, it must avoid all matters of human nature:

There is no doubt that human nature is not interesting although the human mind has always tried to be busy about this thing that

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<sup>44</sup> "One of the central paradoxes of human nature was that while within it there was no awareness of death, its historical nature rooted itself in death" (Goebel 243).

<sup>45</sup> "The author...no longer needs to 'serve God' because God, who has traditionally been characterized as an infallible, atemporal entity working beyond the reaches of human consciousness, has now been incorporated as a process that exists in every human brain" (*Celebrity* 85).

<sup>46</sup> "Only when Stein dispenses with experience itself as the means to knowledge does she arrive at a model of wholes that does not require any relation to the past. That is to say, Stein finally turns from a phenomenological model of wholes to a logical one, where the whole, instead of being attained through the cumulative experience of its parts, exists in an abstract form prior to any experience of its parts" (Ashton 312). Ashton refers here to literary portrayal, but I think her assessment also is applicable to Stein's conception of the human mind.

human nature is interesting and the human mind has made so many efforts always it is doing this thing trying to make it be to itself that human nature is interesting but it is not and so the master-pieces always flatten it out, flatten human nature out so that there is no beginning and middle and ending, because if there is not then there is no doing and if there is no doing then there is no human nature and so to do without human nature which is not interesting is what within the human mind is doing. There is no relation between the human mind and human nature. (457)

For the human mind to overcome mortality, it must create a masterpiece that “has neither identity nor time” (450), meaning a work that contains no traces of human nature at all. Identity is a negative term for Stein; it is the self mediated externally, a condition Stein strives to get away from because of its contingent nature: it is “an awareness of self as mediated by the retrospection of memory or the recognition of others. And because identity is relational—contingent upon time, memory, and others—rather than immediate, Stein claims it interferes with the pure subjectivity needed for artistic creation” (Merrill 11).<sup>47</sup>

Stein’s criteria for a masterpiece illuminates her simultaneous obsession with conveying movement—as in her description of the nuns in *Four Saints in Three Acts*<sup>48</sup>—and inactivity—as in her description of American soldiers in the second lecture on narration.<sup>49</sup> A work devoid of human nature truly would be interesting, yet, of course, such a work is impossible. Even if Stein did compose such a masterpiece, she still would have to rely upon others to read it. A

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<sup>47</sup> See also Bollinger 247.

<sup>48</sup> “I also wanted it to have the movement of nuns very busy and in continuous movement but placid as a landscape has to be because after all the life in a convent is the life of a landscape, it may look excited a landscape does sometimes look excited but its quality is that a landscape if it ever did go away would have to go away to stay” (*Lectures* 269).

<sup>49</sup> “I always remember during the war being so interested in one thing in seeing the American soldiers standing, standing and doing nothing standing for a long time not even talking but just standing and being watched by the whole French population and their feeling the feeling of the whole population that the American soldier standing there and doing nothing impressed them as the American soldier as no soldier could impress by doing anything” (*Narration* 19).

masterpiece may be a masterpiece regardless of popular consent, but what good does it do if no one reads it? Thus, as with genius, the masterpiece still must appeal both to human nature and the human mind. However one defines it, friendship still is requisite for the work of a genius.

As much as Gertrude Stein would like to renounce human nature, she knows that she cannot escape it.<sup>50</sup> She states in the fourth lecture on narration, “It is a well known fact that no human being can really stand not being able to tell some one something, you see an audience not understanding does not make any difference as long as any one can tell any one something” (*Narration* 56). Contact with an audience is necessary, but their understanding is not, as long as they recognize the genius behind the obscurity. According to Barbara Will,

Only the “genius” or “vitally singular” individual can know what she herself means; for others, it is enough to know that the difficult high modernist masterpiece was produced by a “genius.” Laying claim to “genius” thus seems to describe for Stein an achievement of both identity and authority, of a selfhood creating original works of art uncontaminated by the social, by contingency, by an “outside.” (“*Genius*” 8)<sup>51</sup>

Thus, in *Everybody's Autobiography*, the reader learns that Stein and Toklas send her unpublished manuscripts to Carl Van Vechten in New York “for safe keeping” (11) as the political situation in France begins to unravel, and she urges her literary agent to broker a deal to have all of her work published: “[I]t has

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<sup>50</sup> “*Lectures in America, Narration, and Geographical History* claim with avant-garde insistence that the inside must be sheltered from external influences which compromise the sincerity of artistic effort; yet Stein also understands that in a culture which equates visibility with accomplishment, the consequence of ignoring the outside is obscurity. However virulently she maintains the inside/outside distinction, her concern with the ‘confusion’ that occurs when the two come into conflict suggests that the real interest in these writings is not dismissing identity but coping with it” (Curnutt 302). Also, Galow: “Stein has a clear preference between the two poles, but knows that she can never escape entirely into the placid existence of the Human Mind” (“*Contradictions*” 123).

<sup>51</sup> “[Stein] asserts that human beings recognize their isolation and their inability to share experience, but that we cannot live without attempting to overcome that isolation” (Bollinger 248).

always been my hope that some day some one would print everything, it does not bother me so much now, well partly because it does not and partly because if it is not printed some one will discover it later and that will be so much more exciting or they will not and that will be so much more disturbing" (107). The survival of Gertrude Stein's human mind, the seat of her genius, necessitates her work either to be safe for future discovery or in circulation now. If she cannot make friends with an audience now, she must console herself with the hope of an audience in the future, even after the demise of her human nature.

Gertrude Stein uses the *Geographical History* to make her retreat back into her interior mind, away from the contingency and terminality of which the external world reminds her. But as I argued previously, Stein cannot return to the complete mental isolation she enjoyed before publishing *Toklas*; the choice to take her audience into account when she writes will not go away. Stein thus finds herself in the typical modernist dilemma, her psyche fragmented into interior and exterior perceptions. The reader sees by the end of *Everybody's Autobiography* that Stein has chosen to content herself with her celebrity status: "I always do like to be a lion, I like it again and again, and it is a peaceful thing to be one succeeding..." (318). But her account of coming to this shaky truce with popularity is fraught with an anxiety that her paradoxical language is unable to dispel: "Anything scares me, anything scares any one but really after all considering how dangerous everything is nothing is really very frightening" (62).

Death is still the specter that lurks in her meditations (Bridgman 269). Echoing the premise that opens the *Geographical History*, Stein dwells on the overcrowding of the planet in *Everybody's Autobiography* (60, for example). As the population grows, Gertrude Stein moves closer to death. The immortality of the

soul does not offer comfort, for when she was young she “was surprised to know that in the Old Testament there was nothing about a future life or eternity. I read it to see and there was nothing there” (114). Nor can the perpetuation of civilization console her because it can die out, too: “When I was young the most awful moment of my life was when I really realized that the stars are worlds and when I really realized that there were civilizations that had completely disappeared from this earth” (11-12). Stein does not find safety in numbers; community gives her no comfort, evident in her dispute with Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler, the creators of the University of Chicago’s Great Books program. At a dinner party one night, she tells them, “[T]he real ideas are not the relation of human beings as groups but a human being to himself inside him and that is an idea that is more interesting than humanity in groups, after all the minute that there are a lot of them they do not do it for themselves but somebody does it for them...” (206). Her stance reveals the self-reliant stance she now takes, having been rejected by groups—she concludes that people in large groups are not willing to engage the unique work of the genius; they allow others to do their thinking for them.<sup>52</sup> The community no longer offers safety through their approval; rather, she now repudiates community as conformity, the pressure to publish work that is easily accessible. To follow the group and do what everybody else does, she would submit to human nature and therefore death.

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<sup>52</sup> Liesl Olson’s discussion of Gertrude Stein’s time in Chicago indicates contradictions in how Stein presented her work—at one point telling an audience, “[I]f you understand a thing you enjoy it and if you enjoy a thing you understand it” (Quoted on 343), and at another point trying to convince university professors of her work’s genius: “At the University of Chicago Stein confronted men with very strict claims about literary greatness, and her conflict with them reveals that she wanted her works to be read not just for their ‘feeling,’ which would allow personality to govern literary interpretation. She also wanted them to be impersonal, to contain ideas that stood on their own and stood the test of time, but not ideas as defined in academic terms” (Olson 345). These are not so much contradictions as pleas for audience appreciation, wherever she can acquire it.



### *The Turn to the Individual in Everybody's Autobiography*

Instead of appealing to the community, as she sought to do in *Toklas*, Stein turns to the individual in *Everybody's Autobiography*. To do so, she must abandon the approach she used to write *The Making of Americans*, in which she attempts "to write a history of every individual person" by showing how one person relates to another (*Everybody's* 99). Now, "there is really no relation between any one" because "the earth is all covered over with every one." Relationships and community no longer reveal the special distinctions among people; rather, they blur people into one indistinguishable mass. At another point in the autobiography, Stein observes, "As the earth is covered all over with people and they all do the same thing in the same way anybody can and does have a friend" (60). The friendship she describes here is the animalistic conformity of human nature, not the unique dynamism of the human mind. People are not friends with each other because of their specialness; they are friends because everybody is all the same.

Stein is "filled with the fact that there are so many millions always living and each one is his own self inside him" (263). But if community—that is, the external world—will not call out a person's true, distinctive character, how can it be accessed? In her 1946 Transatlantic Interview, she declares that it cannot be accessed: "Nobody can enter into anybody else's mind; so why try? One can only enter into it in a superficial way. You have slight contacts with other people's minds, but you cannot enter into them" (Haas 34). As Wendy Steiner argues, "It is the isolation, the essential isolation, of people that is interesting and not their relations to others. The switch in character conceptions from identity to entity, from type to individual, is an expression of the radical isolation of

people..." (Steiner 193). Steiner makes this comment regarding Stein's interest in the detective story, where the hero is isolated in death, but the principle extends to *Everybody's Autobiography*. Indeed, Steiner later observes that Stein's consideration of detective stories in the *Geographical History* extends "to all forms of writing in which the writer and reader are engaged in immediacy and discovery" (194). The discovery of the autobiography, however, is of the self, isolated and representative in its isolation.<sup>53</sup>

In a conversation with Dashiell Hammett, Stein comments that nineteenth-century women writers could not invent new women characters but rather wrote variations of themselves and that twentieth-century men writers likewise cannot invent new men characters (*Everybody's* 5). Hammett explains that men have lost the confidence they possessed in the nineteenth century and must "make themselves...more beautiful more intriguing more everything and they cannot make any other man because they have to hold on to themselves not having any confidence." In this respect, then, everybody writes autobiographically because they write some variation of themselves, even in

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<sup>53</sup> As Jennifer Ashton points out, "the compositional model for that history [in *The Making of Americans*] is explicitly one of accumulation and accretion" (293). But that method of counting increases Stein's anxiety about death, so she adopts "a model of the whole based on abstraction." *Everybody's Autobiography* attempts to tell about everyone by looking at one person, Gertrude Stein. Her method transforms from accumulation to individuation, similar to her Aunt Fanny's method of counting:

[S]he said the only way that you could save with dignity and then use the money that had accumulated was by counting one one one. You should never say three or even two, you should keep strictly on a basis of one. If you kept counting by ones and had purses in which you kept the separate ones you could always keep everybody well fed and prettily dressed and the furniture renewed whenever the covers grew shabby. (*EA* 153) Aunt Fanny's method of counting prolongs life—it keeps everything in good working order. In addition, by counting in ones, each one has its own container; it is earmarked for a particular purpose. Stein contrasts this counting of renewal with "the Stein counting money," that is, the counting of accumulation that leads to totals and quotas. Shortly after this description, Stein's train of thought returns to existence: "[W]e are on the earth and we have to live on it and there is beyond all there is and there is no extending it because after all there it is and here we are..." (154). If Gertrude Stein can turn counting by ones into a way of living, then she can overcome her fear of death.

novels. Stein thus begins *Everybody's Autobiography* this way: "Alice B. Toklas did hers and now anybody will do theirs. Alice B. Toklas says and if they are all going to do theirs the way she did hers" (3). I read this last sentence as if a comma would go between "to" and "do" so that the last clause is a command: "Do theirs the way she did hers." Stein links her first autobiography to the fictional novel *Robinson Crusoe*, implying that both Toklas and Stein, although they are real people, are nevertheless products of Stein's imagination in the book (*Toklas* 913).<sup>54</sup> Now, instead of using Alice Toklas as a cover, Gertrude Stein will write herself. Only she can know what her bottom nature is; she cannot await recognition and affirmation from a wider community. Therefore, the purpose of *Everybody's Autobiography* is to emphasize the construction of her self-recognition and to demonstrate that everybody must undertake their own.<sup>55</sup> This goal for the autobiography thus makes the audience incidental; Stein takes an exclusively self-focused stance, essentially denying the possibility of meaningful friendship with another person.

She concludes her introduction with two anecdotes about meeting people in New York City that might suggest that friendship still can exist (8). In the first, a man approaches her and explains that he was the first music teacher of the singer who plays Saint Ignatius in the production of *Four Saints in Three Acts*. In

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<sup>54</sup> "That is not to say that every first-person novel is an autobiography, but rather that every autobiography involves the creation of a semi-real character separate from the writer....For if the hero of a novel is a creation if not a projection of its author, then the narrator, Toklas, though existent in her own right and treating the author Stein as a character in her narrative, is also a creation and a projection of Stein" (Steiner 187).

<sup>55</sup> Timothy W. Galow discusses possible interpretations of Stein's ambiguous title *Everybody's Autobiography*: "For instance, 'Everybody's' could be read as a contraction, which would relate it not only to the book's thematic concern with creation, but also to contemporary autobiographical theories that explore the narrative construction of identity. Alternatively, the title could be read as the articulation of a collective identity, presumably available to individuals through an exploration of the 'self.' Such a reading would draw useful connections between this book and some of Stein's other contemporaneous works..." ("Contradictions" 112). My interpretation accommodates both of these interpretations.

the second, she encounters a woman looking at Stein's newly published book in a shop window with a photograph of Stein on the cover: the woman "smiled and slowly pointed...and she smiled and went away." In both anecdotes, a person recognizes Gertrude Stein and extends a kind gesture—the music teacher approaches her because he "wanted to say how do you do," and the woman smiles at her twice. These meetings also link Stein to her work—the libretto and her collection *Portraits and Prayers* that the woman points to. As I have established already, appreciation of her work is a confirmation of Gertrude Stein's identity as a genius and is an act of friendship.

Both the older man and younger woman are black, which symbolizes two things. First, a sympathy underlies both interactions. Racial prejudice marginalizes the man and woman from mainstream American society, just as Stein experiences marginalization for her innovative writing. The kindness expressed by the man and woman conveys solidarity in the experience, either of being misunderstood, or being deemed unworthy of understanding.<sup>56</sup> Secondly, the man and woman represent the condition W. E. B. DuBois describes as "double consciousness," in which an African-American person lives in the tension produced by her self-perception and society's perception of her as Other. This clash of inside versus outside is not only a central problem in Gertrude Stein's writing of the 1930s; it also is the commonality that makes her autobiography representative of everybody's.

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<sup>56</sup> "[M]ost publishers and editors refused her as illiterate or mad—a faker or simply a capricious lady. What little was published left many readers angry. They turned the tables on her, blaming her for writing incomprehensibly rather than themselves for failing to comprehend. They ridiculed her and her work. No one writes her off as a charlatan anymore. But anyone reading Stein must understand what it was like for an artist to live under incessant, condescending assaults upon herself as a writer, a person, and a woman" (Dydo 13).

Although Stein's encounters with the man and woman are meaningful, do they actually constitute friendship? Most of the interactions with other people that she recounts in *Everybody's Autobiography* are just as cursory; the reader does not find analogues to the close confidences with Picasso or the affectionate conversations with Mildred Aldrich that Toklas depicts in the first autobiography. Indeed, Bridgman attributes a lesson to Stein's anecdotes in the introduction about the kindness of "anybody": "'Anybody' has confidence, is unmotivated by ulterior motives, is courteous and loving, recognizes the genuine article, and does not trouble others" (273). But this "anybody" is anonymous and distant—one cannot really call "anybody" a friend in any robust sense. Rather, in keeping with her retreat into the human mind, Stein's goal in the conversations she records is not to make herself known to other people but to know herself better through her interactions with others.<sup>57</sup> Stein understands that no one else can really know her; thus when Bernard Fay asks how she felt about strangers greeting her in New York, she replies breezily, "I of course never imagined that they would all know me and that they would say how do you do any one anywhere but when they did it it was afterwards as it is here in Bilignin, everybody here and in Belley knows me and as I go about any one anywhere

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<sup>57</sup> "Stein suggests that her previous conception of writing as a means of communication with other people is irrelevant in the contemporary era where people are free to travel almost anywhere and communicate with whomever they want. As a result, Stein is less interested in her own relationship to her audience and instead focuses her attention on an abstracted view of human interactions, interactions that constitute one important element of, to use Stein's term, the contemporary 'composition'" (*Celebrity* 50). Again, the ability to create the contemporary composition is a characteristic of genius. Stein writes in her 1938 tribute to Picasso, "The creator in the arts is like all the rest of the people living he is sensitive to the changes in the way of living and his art is inevitably influenced by the way each generation is living, the way each generation is being educated and the way they move about, all this creates the composition of that generation....At present another composition is commencing, each generation has its composition, people do not change from one generation to another generation but the composition that surrounds them changes" (504, 505). Steiner notes, "[T]he artist, who lives in his time and thus helps to 'compose' it, sees the resulting composition, and describes or makes again the composition that he has helped to make in the first place" (168).

says how do you do and America is a little larger of course..." (*Everybody's* 78). Civility replaces her disappointed expectations of intimacy.<sup>58</sup> Stein recalls this conversation with Fay right after the story of how her friendship with Leo ended. She has now resigned herself that no one, neither her closest friend nor the reading public, can know her well enough to affirm her existence. Self-knowledge must be her primary purpose, and she must elude the incorrect judgments her audience makes about her identity until they can grasp what she tries to accomplish in her writing.<sup>59</sup>

Because of this distance that Gertrude Stein puts in between herself and others, her flight above the American landscape is the most important image from *Everybody's Autobiography*: "It was then in a kind of way that I really began to know what the ground looked like. Quarter sections make a picture and going over America like that made any one know why the post-cubist painting was what it was" (191).<sup>60</sup> Physical distance from the earth gives Stein a greater understanding of the future of art, which foreshadows greater disconnection between artist and audience. She also appreciates the isolation of the plane ride: "I know of nothing more pleasing more soothing more beguiling than the slow

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<sup>58</sup> "For Stein, each person is unavoidably trapped within the confines of his or her own consciousness without any ability to escape or truly reach 'the rest,' a term that, in itself, reflects Stein's sense of distance from other human beings" (*Celebrity* 59).

<sup>59</sup> "'Gertrude Stein' becomes nearly impossible to locate throughout *Everybody's Autobiography*. She comes to exist as nothing more than a textual voice reverberating through past events reconstituted in a present moment that always escapes definition and explanation....Ultimately, it is an identity that is fixed in language, but never stable or definable: a linguistic flash of lightning that always exists in the present tense and is never logically bound by any accumulating 'inside.' In this way, Stein is able to dismiss the threat an audience poses to her creative 'inside' because she has not only undermined the processes of unproblematically representing a historical self, but she has also theoretically evacuated—without altogether eliminating—the space where such a self may have existed" ("Contradictions" 122).

<sup>60</sup> Flight also symbolizes America: "In the America of her imagination, Stein lived in a continual present of pure movement" (Goebel 247).

hum of the mounting....They are now beginning to suppress the noise and that is a pity, it will be too bad if they can have conversation, it will be a pity" (190). Air travel is an occasion for solitude, not communion—it perfectly symbolizes Stein's conception of the human mind.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, as she flies in an airplane, Gertrude Stein feels no fear: "[E]verybody knows that somebody has fallen from any cliff and not been killed so anybody can remember that but anybody falling from the air is killed so no one can remember that. Anyway I was not at all afraid" (191-192). There is no memory of mortal danger associated with flight, so the plane offers a respite from human nature. Removed from the constraints of time and the overcrowded earth, the cabin of the plane becomes a cocoon, where inside stays inside and outside stays outside.

Yet even the airplane cannot completely shield Stein from her apprehensions. On the autobiography's last page, she describes "a wide layer of fog" that she sees floating just above the water of the English Channel on her flight back to Paris from London: "[T]he large part near the shore was clear I do not know why but it was frightening..." (318). In her desire to escape death and the annihilation of existence, Stein hides within the human mind and the self-assurance of her genius, obscuring the human nature from which she has distanced herself, refusing to acknowledge the approaching end of her narrative. She sees, however, that the fog of her denial is clearing—the changeless existence of her genius cannot protect her indefinitely from the change from life to death that she must experience. Her inability to reconcile her internal world with the external still destabilizes her identity: "That is a natural thing, perhaps I am not I

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<sup>61</sup> Perhaps it is this experience of disconnection and isolation that also influences her discussion of Henry James's writing, the mysterious hovering presence over his paragraphs (*LA* 222).

even if my little dog knows me....” All that she can do is continue to cling to the continuous present she has constructed for herself through her thirty years of writing: “[B]ut anyway I like what I have and now it is today.”<sup>62</sup>

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Traumatized to learn that her existence had been contingent upon the death of two older siblings, Gertrude Stein grows up looking for a way to legitimize her existence. She finds this legitimacy in genius—her ability to discern the bottom nature of people through her act of simultaneous talking and listening and then writing her discoveries down in a way that captures the essence of that person in the present moment. Her closest friend, her older brother Leo, denies her genius, telling her that only people that knew her would appreciate her writing. Soon after this confrontation, the friendship between brother and sister falls apart. But Stein gathers around her a community of friends—those who are geniuses, such as Picasso, and those who can connect her to the audience that her brother said she would never have. With the encouragement and assistance of her lover Alice Toklas, Stein tries to acquire this audience; her major gesture toward her readers is *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Stein uses her lover’s persona to describe her friends and writing career with the hope that readers would be charmed into reading her other, less accessible works. The plan fails; readers are entertained by Stein’s personality as portrayed in *Toklas*. They are not interested in her experimental works; they want more books like *Toklas*. The popularity Stein experiences from the autobiography throws her into an identity crisis. To correct the misperception

⁶² Stein declares that a genius is characterized by her ability to extend and remain in the present moment, a desire of everyone who lives in the modern age, for whom the passage of time causes anxiety (*EA* 59, 121, 243-244, 281).

readers have of her, and to get them interested in the writing indicative of her genius, she embarks on a lecture tour of America, in which she explains her literary innovations using the narrative form. Using narrative, however, presents Stein with an even deeper dilemma. Because narrative is rooted to a view of time positing that people and events have beginnings, middles, and ends, Stein finds herself vulnerable to the same contingent existence that motivated her to write in the first place. As a defensive act, Stein establishes a dichotomy between the human mind—a timeless realm that experiences no change and perpetuates its existence through masterpieces—and human nature—existence constrained by time, identity, and the habits that characterize all people. She determines that a community of readers will not be able to affirm her genius; she must recognize it and promote it herself. Her view becomes more individualistic as she clings to the production of the human mind, yet she still hopes that readers eventually will appreciate her work because it is the only way she can find to stave off complete annihilation.

Friendship is severely weakened by Gertrude Stein's outlook. People do not have a *telos* to pursue; without any common goals, communities unravel. Only a person's self-perception matters, meaning that friends are, at best, mirrors.⁶³ And if a person's true being is locked away in her mind, how does one achieve an intimate, meaningful connection with her? Gertrude Stein's story reveals the frailty of human beings but also how clearly that frailty stood out in

⁶³ Cynthia Merrill explains *Toklas* in Lacanian terms that show perfectly Stein's struggle for non-contingent existence: "The vision of unity in the mirror, [Lacan] explains, induces the child retroactively to experience her helpless, fragmented and chaotic past by anticipating a desired future. This 'temporal dialectic,' with its dual orientation of past and future, 'projects the formation of the individual into history' (MS, 4). It represents a birth into time" (12). The reflection Stein receives of herself through her brother's judgment leaves her vulnerable to the passing of time and the perception of others. Stein continuously looks for a friend who will see her the way she perceives her ideal self, which is "illusory."

the modernist era.⁶⁴ Her hyper-individualistic solution, however, only leads to greater fragmentation and anxiety.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ For Mitrano, this vulnerability is a kind of limbo, “suspended between the silence of the closed notebooks and the clamor of movements, the mind thinking and worldly success” (8).

⁶⁵ “From an author whose work was unsharable, she became an author who could write only about her own mind or her writing itself. The extension of the artist into the world...was now impossible....Thus, absolute art, the ‘truth,’ was itself a failure since it ignored the fundamental issue to be solved through writing—the need to reconcile lived experience with aesthetic experience, to create and communicate with the immediacy of life itself” (Steiner 204).

CHAPTER SIX

The Inescapability of Action in Ernest Hemingway

Ernest Hemingway's first four novels follow a departure from and return to engagement with the world. In *The Sun Also Rises*, he argues, through his character Jake Barnes, that the false, pointless, sex-obsessed modern world cannot provide deep, meaningful friendships. To find such friendship, Jake must escape from modern, urban life and seek an oasis of peace.¹ But he cannot remain in the oasis; he must return to the tumultuous modern world. Friendship, therefore, must equip him with a detachment from the turmoil; it must affirm his identity in contrast to the meaningless cycle of existence that modernity perpetuates.²

Whereas in *The Sun Also Rises*, escape seems to be a remedy to modern life, Hemingway shows in *A Farewell to Arms* that permanent escape enhances personal turmoil. In this novel, he traces Frederic Henry's gradual seclusion

¹ According to Suzanne del Gizzo, "Primitivism and recreation were connected insofar as they were portrayed as liminal spaces on the fringe of mainstream society that enabled one to objectify the society's values and gain perspective on them" (502). The mountain village of Burguete, primitive and pastoral, serves as the liminal space Jake Barnes needs to gain perspective on his complicated entanglement with Brett Ashley.

² "Within each of his fictional works, Hemingway, one should note, created an enclave, isolated from everyday existence—the marlin waters far from the mainland, a battlefield remote from the everyday world. There, sequestered from the encroachments of science and the chilling scrutiny of the psychoanalyst for ever fixing and formulating human behaviour in a reductive phrase, he was free to erect a new set of standards, a new series of semiotic significations based upon functionalist principles, and then, with sleight of hand, to transfer or extend them to the 'real' world outside the enclave" (Roston 134-135). Roston's theory of enclaves works best in *Sun* but fails in *Arms*. In *Bell*, the major question of the novel is whether the values of the enclave (the band hiding in a mountain cave) can extend out to the real world of a republican Spain.

from what he sees as the futility of existence, epitomized in the First World War.³ Lieutenant Henry eventually deserts the army and creates a romantic, isolated world with his lover Catherine Barkley. The conversations he has with his two friends at the Italian front, the surgeon Rinaldi and the nameless priest, testify to his retreat from rooted community. Although Jake Barnes's friendship with Bill Gorton gives him the perspective he needs to return to his problems in the world, Frederic's friendships fail to do so, in spite of his friends offering him affirmation and membership in the communities of which they are parts. Ultimately, Hemingway shows that permanent escape is impossible—the pain of the world inevitably invades the citadel when Catherine dies after giving birth to their stillborn son. But since Frederic has eschewed friendship and community, there is no way for the narrative of his experience to come to a meaningful close.

In Hemingway's third novel *To Have and Have Not*, his depiction of the modern world has become completely atomized—everybody in the book, whether or not they possess some form of moral compass, seeks his own satisfaction at the expense of others. I have not devoted space in my chapter to this novel because there is no actual friendship present within it; Hemingway has taken the solution of escape to its logical conclusion, arguing that, without the attempt to make community in the midst of the turmoil, the latter only gets worse.

Finally, in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hemingway asserts that people necessarily are interdependent, even as they oppose one another in their

³ "Rather than being a study in war, love or initiation...[the novel] is more properly a study in isolation. Frederic's progression in the novel is from group participation to total isolation" (Reynolds, qtd. in Vernon 201).

definition of the good life.⁴ Robert Jordan, a dynamiter who performs *partizan* work (special operations behind enemy lines) for the Spanish republican military, enlists the help of a band of loyalist guerilla fighters in the mountains to blow a bridge crucial to the republicans' battle strategy. At first, he views these men and women as means to the end he must accomplish—completing the mission for the republic—but as he speaks with them (and falls in love with one of them), he discovers that the end he works toward is for their sake: his blowing the bridge is one step in the process of rescuing their freedom and building a community in which they may live well. As a result, friends of utility now become friends of virtue. Through the novel's many agonizing moral conflicts, Hemingway demonstrates that escape is not the solution, nor is there a morally unimpeachable political remedy to the modern world's fragmentation. Rather, individuals must choose to remain in the struggle of modernity's contradictions and to sacrifice for the good of others—in this way, there might be hope for meaningful friendship in a strong community.⁵

What distinguishes Hemingway from the other authors examined in this study is that the locus of struggle is outside, rather than inside, the individual. Cather, Fitzgerald, and Stein, although they do question how the individual

⁴ According to Marín Ruiz, "The anti-war position adopted by Hemingway is clearly connected to one [of] the main themes in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*: the communion between all existing things. More specifically, the author believes that the war must end because the death of any individual, regardless its ideological orientation, may have a negative effect on each of us" (115). While I agree that "the communion between all existing things" is a central theme, and that Hemingway tries to convey that "the death of any individual...may have a negative effect on each of us," I disagree that we can conclude that Hemingway adopts an unequivocal anti-war position. See Michael K. Solow's article.

⁵ "The novel gives powerful voice to the evil that is war and to the primacy of love..., ideals clashing against the necessity of killing and the need for individual sacrifice to assure collective freedom. Working from the far side of disillusionment..., Hemingway attained a new level of maturity in his art, a greater ability to encompass his new understanding of the human condition" (Solow 112).

relates to her community, fixate upon how the individual projects her identity within that community; all three authors negotiate the balance of inner and outer self-perception. Hemingway also acknowledges that such a balance exists, most evident in Robert Jordan's constant internal battle in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, but his concern lies mainly in whether and in what manner the individual should engage the community. I believe this difference in focus arises from Hemingway's emphasis on the excellent performance of (external) actions, which I will elaborate upon in the section on *The Sun Also Rises*. As a result, Hemingway's novels accommodate the twentieth-century approach to ethics that looks exclusively at external action, as opposed to the internal formation of virtuous character (see Murdoch 7-9). By saying that Hemingway focuses on action, I am not arguing that his characters do not have internal moral structures or that it is pointless to consider them. What I am saying, however, is that the emphasis on external action promotes the view that internal moral structure is profoundly influenced by communal dynamics; in other words, a person cannot form her moral character only in the isolation of self-reflection. Indeed, the moral that seems to underlie all of Hemingway's novels is that "[n]o man is an *Iland*" (*Bell* 2).

The crisis of masculinity discussed in Hemingway studies goes to the heart of my study because a number of critics—Elliott, Blackmore, and Cohen, for example—claim that friendship cloaks homosexual relationships. Their close readings of the interactions between male characters, which zero in on significant moments of friendship, reinforce my point that friendship is an enervated term in modernism. Critics have failed to interpret friendship on its own terms because they do not see its roles in connecting individuals to society. My study

thus re-signifies friendship in these novels. Other critics, such as Josephs, Donaldson, Lindsay, Beversluis, and Soto, focus on the dilemma of moral action. My study is able to draw parallels between Aristotle's action-oriented theory of the virtues and their interpretations of *afición*, *toreo*, and the modernist virtue of authenticity.

Detachment and Afición in The Sun Also Rises

With the two epigraphs of *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway sets up the circumstances of the modern world in which Jake Barnes and his companions find themselves. The first quotation, attributed to Gertrude Stein in conversation, labels everyone who is Jake's age members of a "Lost Generation." In *Everybody's Autobiography*, Stein claims that she heard the phrase from a hotel owner in Belley, who complains that fighting in the Great War arrested young men's growth into full adulthood.⁶ Now, in peacetime, they do not know what to do with themselves—they are lost. Thanks to the war, Hemingway and his characters are detached from a teleological understanding of their lives and experience a certain alienation from the world around them. Without this understanding, Jake and his contemporaries cannot encourage one another toward a clear notion of living well, so friendship is severely weakened.

Hemingway juxtaposes Gertrude Stein's observation with verses from Ecclesiastes, a meditation on the apparent meaninglessness of existence on earth, in which all human pursuits seem to be a "striving after the wind." The passage

⁶ "It was this hotel keeper [Pernollet] who said what it is said I said that the war generation was a lost generation. And he said it this way. He said that every man becomes civilized between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. If he does not go through a civilizing experience at that time in his life he will not be a civilized man. And the men who went to the war at eighteen missed the period of civilizing, and they could never be civilized. They were a lost generation. Naturally if they are at war they do not have the influences of women of parents and of preparation" (*Everybody's* 52).

he selects also refutes any notion of *telos* because it suggests that nature—and its meaninglessness—are cyclical:

One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever...The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he arose...The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits....All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.
(*Sun* 7)

The sun, wind, and waters move continuously on an ever-present earth; against this backdrop proceed human generations, but as one learns in Genesis, the passing of those generations is cyclical, too, “for you are dust and to dust you will return” (Gen. 3:19, ESV). Life, then, has a terminus, but it does not seem to have a purpose.⁷ The Ecclesiastes passage further undermines the purpose of virtue-friendships to spur their partners toward a meaningful *telos*.

Standing on its own, each epigraph offers a bleak prognosis for the characters the reader is about to encounter in the novel, but taken together, they provoke an interesting question: does this lost generation suffer in their inability to fall into the cycle of the generations, or does their detachment benefit them in some way?⁸ Hemingway proposes that, through the detachment from the meaningless cycle his generation experiences, they will be able to recover a

⁷ Allen Josephs reads the endless cycle described in Ecclesiastes positively, as an image of sacred time, to contrast with the profane time alluded to in Gertrude Stein’s comment (99). Taking into account Solomon’s tone throughout the book, I find Josephs’s reading a little too optimistic.

⁸ In Hemingway’s posthumously published memoir *A Moveable Feast*, he writes, “Later when I published my first novel I tried to balance Miss Stein’s quotation from the garage keeper with one from Ecclesiastes” (61-62). So he admits that the two balance each other. Later in the passage, he thinks “that all generations were lost by something and always had been and always would be...” (62). He attributes “egotism and mental laziness” to Stein’s generation; perhaps he believes that, with mental discipline, his generation’s lostness can be put to productive use.

purpose, a *telos*, for their lives.⁹ The subject with which he will test his hypothesis is Jake Barnes, the novel's narrator and protagonist. In his analysis of authenticity in *The Sun Also Rises*, Timo Müller agrees that detachment is a necessary attribute: Jake "preserves a mental distance to the false, bohemian world of the other expatriates, from whose hedonism he is excluded because of his impotence alone" (34). David Tomkins agrees that "Jake's profound social detachment registers among his most salient characteristics" (752). As he navigates the Parisian social scene, Jake maintains expressive restraint in his interaction with his companions, the one exception being his torturous conversations with Brett Ashley. This stoic armor prevents any deep, interpersonal communication and therefore meaningful friendship.

Jake and the Analogy between Afición and Virtue

Jake's distinguishing characteristic is his possession of *afición*, which, the reader learns, "means passion" (*Sun* 136). The word is used in the context of bull-fighting: an aficionado is a person who understands the ritual of the *corrida* and appreciates the artistry of the matador's movements. As a result of this passion, an aficionado can discern the difference between a good matador and a bad one. A matador who possesses *afición* will be a good matador because he understands that his dance with the bull is a flirtation with death. It does not mean, however, that such a matador will always perform well in the arena, as Jake's comment about Montoya, the hotel owner in Pamplona, indicates:

⁹ David Tomkins similarly finds Stein's pronouncement a source of productivity for Hemingway and his contemporaries; he argues that *Sun* focuses on "the theme of empowerment through the experience of loss" (745). The two central images of the novel for Tomkins are Jake's war wound and the statue of Marshal Michel Ney, Napoleon's failed military hero, near the Luxembourg Gardens (746).

“Montoya could forgive anything of a bull-fighter who had *afición*. He could forgive attacks of nerves, panic, bad unexplainable actions, all sorts of lapses. For one who had *afición* he could forgive anything” (137).¹⁰ An *aficionado* receives Montoya’s grace for poor performance because the performance does not negate the matador’s understanding of the ritual’s significance; in fact, the lapses that an *aficionado* might experience would stem from his keen awareness that the *corrida* brings him to the brink of death. *Afición* is comparable to Aristotelian virtue. Aristotle does not mandate that friends be flawless in their execution of virtuous action but that they aspire to greater understanding and implementation of the virtues. So, then, in the world of *The Sun Also Rises*, a good friend will be one who promotes his friend’s *afición*.

Jake derives his philosophy of life from the bull fight. Early in the novel, he tells Robert Cohn, “Nobody ever lives their life all the way up except bull-fighters” (18). Cohn rejects the statement out of hand because he deems the matador’s life “abnormal.” Nevertheless, Jake’s comment reveals that he uses the matador as an index to determine how well one lives his life: “All the characters who make the pilgrimage to the fiesta at Pamplona are measured—morally or spiritually—around the axis of the art of *toreo*...Jake understands better than anyone because only Jake moves freely and knowingly in both the profane world of the Lost Generation and the sacred world of *toreo*” (Josephs 92-93). But since Jake does not fight bulls, and he probably is not advising Cohn to fight them, either, how does he adapt the matador’s living “all the way up” to a way of life outside the arena? The bridge between the two is *afición*: Jake is an

¹⁰ As the “respected ruler of his realm,” Montoya acts as arbiter of *afición*: “His judgment is above human weakness and corruptibility, above mere reason and logic, and once made, it is final” (Müller 32).

aficionado, not just of bull fighting, but of all aspects of life.¹¹ As he tells Brett at the end of the novel, “I like to do a lot of things” (*Sun* 250). To have passion for life is to do a lot of things and to understand their intrinsic significance.¹² Such passion also will characterize a friend for Jake.

Life itself may not necessarily have a specific purpose, but the actions that one undertakes in life have specific ends that are achieved by performing those actions well. For Jake, then, living excellently occurs in learning how to do a number of different things and understanding what is involved in doing those tasks well, such as fishing, swimming, playing tennis, drinking from a wineskin, etc.¹³ People who perform an action excellently draw Jake’s attention and appreciation, even doing something as simple as a practical joke, as when the Basque man mimics the sound of a car horn on the bus to Burguete: “[H]e imitated the sound of a klaxon motor-horn so well and so suddenly that I spilled some of the wine, and everybody laughed....He made the klaxon again a little later, and it fooled me the second time. He was very good at it. The Basques liked it” (109).

¹¹ Michael Soto equates *afición* to the modernist virtue of authenticity (12); he argues, “*The Sun Also Rises* suggests that cultural practices do not depend on what one is—if an American can show *afición*, anyone can—but on what one believes in with passion” (13). See also Müller’s article on authenticity in *Sun*.

¹² Murray Roston’s argument about ritualistic acts is central to my claim about Hemingway and virtuous action: “It would, of course, be absurd to suggest the following proposition: that, in an age when established moral standards and traditional modes of behaviour have been disqualified, when rules no longer seem to operate with any validity, the game of chess or basketball can no longer be played....Hemingway, brilliantly perceiving this distinction, accordingly established within the bullring itself, or within the parallel enclaves within his other novels, a newly devised moral code whereby his heroes are to be judged, a code based, initially at least, on the principle of functional efficiency” (135).

¹³ Donaldson argues that Jake’s devotion to excellent performance extends to money: what distinguishes Jake from his peers is the conscientiousness he exhibits in both work and spending money (“Compensation” 85).

Robert Cohn's Unsuitability for Friendship

Skillful action might form a basis for friendship, but the relationship is constrained by the action performed. In other words, Jake may like spending time with another man, engaging in an activity that they both do well, but outside of that activity, he may detest the man. Such constraints define Jake's friendship with Cohn. He mentions near the beginning of the novel that he is Cohn's "tennis friend" (13). He admits later that Cohn "was nice to watch on the tennis-court, he had a good body, and he kept it in shape" (52). Off the tennis court, though, Jake has little regard for Cohn, which I will elaborate upon shortly, and when Cohn declares that Jake is his best friend, the latter thinks to himself, "God help you" (47). In fact, when Cohn leaves Paris for a couple of weeks, Jake says, "I rather enjoyed not having to play tennis..." (75). So Cohn's proficiency at tennis is not sufficient for Jake to form a meaningful friendship with him. Therefore, if Jake befriends someone for his proficiency in one particular activity, it is likely an instance of pleasure-friendship, rather than virtue-friendship, in Aristotle's terms.

Although Robert Cohn possesses a number of external attributes, he lacks *afición*. His desire to carry out a task is not for the sake of enjoyment in doing the task well but rather to win the approval of others. He is representative of members of the Lost Generation who think that, by conforming with the people around them, they will solidify their identity; in actuality, they only reintegrate into the anonymous, meaningless cycle of the generations described in Ecclesiastes. Jake begins his narrative with a description of Robert Cohn because he typifies the losing struggle of living in the modern world. Jake characterizes him as "a nice boy, a friendly boy, and very shy" (12). But these supposed

virtues actually prevent Cohn from gaining mastery over his life; in his desire to ingratiate himself with the people around him, his personality disappears. Jake observes, "I never heard him make one remark that would, in any way, detach him from other people....If he were in a crowd nothing he said stood out" (52). Cohn has allowed himself to be formed completely by other people, from his "painful self-consciousness" about his Jewish heritage brought on by the anti-Semitism of his Princeton classmates, to his literary aspirations that arise once he begins hanging around "literary people," to his falling in love with any woman who is "nice to him" (12). The one quality that might set Cohn apart, his boxing proficiency, is obscured by his distaste for the sport and his refusal to fight outside the gym because he is "very shy and a thoroughly nice boy" (11). Cohn has no inner passion on which to build his character, and therefore he is tossed around by the whims of his companions.¹⁴ This lack of self-mastery indicates the absence of *afición* and thus repels Jake from deeper friendship with Cohn.

If Cohn is not patterning himself after the people around him, then he is relying on books to define his reality. After Cohn gets his nose broken in the boxing ring, Jake says that he spent his last year of college "read[ing] too much and...wearing spectacles" (11). Jake is convinced that Cohn comes up with his scheme to travel to South America from W. H. Hudson's book *The Purple Land*, which "recounts splendid imaginary amorous adventures of a perfect English

¹⁴ Jeremy Kaye argues that Robert Cohn's Jewishness is central to his drive for conformity: "Boxing allows Cohn a sort of psychical assimilation, a sense that he is no more different than anyone else....Rather than the hyper-visibility attendant on having a non-white racial body, Cohn's rebuilt, muscular body gives him invisibility. As a boxer, Cohn is absorbed into the hegemonic body of 1920s American whiteness. He becomes simply another member of the crowd, unmemorable and invisible....Cohn performs white masculinity so well, in fact, that he exposes its very nature as a construct rather than an essential identity" (51). Cohn's racial identity therefore enables Hemingway to reveal the desire to conform that comes with the meaningless cycle of the generations, enabling him to be the foil to Jake's detachment.

gentleman in an intensely romantic land" (17). As we shall see, Cohn's affair with Brett becomes his splendid, *imaginary*, amorous adventure. Similarly, Jake presumes that Cohn's dissatisfaction with Paris "came out of a book too" (20). For Jake to criticize Cohn's fetishization of books seems unfair, since he is a writer himself, but as his narrative suggests, Jake allows his life to frame his writing, not the other way around, as Cohn does.¹⁵ The former way still enables a person to live according to his *afición*; the latter way results in an artificial existence and prevents a person from pursuing excellence. Cohn does not act with any appreciation for the action's significance; he only acts in a way that he thinks will elicit the approbation of others and therefore acts falsely. Jake has no desire to be friends with Cohn because he sees that the latter is devoid of *afición*.¹⁶

Bill Gorton's Exemplary Detachment

Jake's best friend Bill Gorton does possess *afición*, which Jake vouches for as he talks with Montoya in Pamplona: "'Your friend, is he aficionado, too?' Montoya smiled at Bill....'Yes,' I said. 'He's a real aficionado'" (136). The key indicator that Bill is an aficionado is his detachment. Now, recall that Hemingway's epigraphs seem to imply that the Lost Generation's lostness may give them an advantage over the meaningless cycle of earthly existence. Also, we have seen that assimilation or conformity motivates Cohn's actions, rather

¹⁵ According to Michael Soto, Cohn lacks the authenticity of a good writer because his "ideas are derivative, arrived at secondhand via the washed-up criticism of Mencken or the quixotic travel narratives of Hudson" (Soto 11).

¹⁶ Kaye suggests, alternatively, that Jake and Cohn have a bizarre friendship of utility: because Cohn's sexual organs are intact, Jake "can deny his own castration" when he is in proximity to Cohn "and project that lack onto Cohn's Jewishness" (53). Conversely, "Cohn's efforts to perform heroic masculinity are complicated by his uncertainty about the masculine ideal itself" (55), an ideal that Jake admires in others and longs to fully perform himself. Therefore, "Jake has the phallus without the penis, while Cohn has the penis without the phallus" (56).

than a passion for those actions that belongs outright to him. A correlation seems to exist paradoxically between passion—which brings understanding—and detachment. *Afición* sets a person apart from those without it, but it forms a bond among those who possess it: “[Montoya] always smiled as though bull-fighting were a very special secret between the two of us; a rather shocking but really very deep secret that we knew about. He always smiled as though there were something lewd about the secret to outsiders, but that it was something that we understood. It would not do to expose it to people who would not understand” (136). Bull-fighting aficionados are like a secret society closed to those who do not comprehend the meaning of the ritual or who condemn its violence. Similarly, aficionados of life may partake of the same activities as others, but their understanding of the activity’s significance or its relationship to life at large gives them a certain mental distance from the events taking place and the people involved. They become a community within a community that can base friendship on shared passion rather than communal conformity; they are simultaneously outside and inside community.

A number of details show that Bill has the detachment of an *afición*. First, he does not live in Paris, so he is not part of the social circle described in the first part of the novel, nor is he an actor in the drama surrounding Brett. Secondly, when he does enter the plot of the novel, he does not attempt to get involved with Brett. Thirdly, he travels frequently. He lives in New York, but we know that he goes to Paris, Budapest, Vienna, and Pamplona. His adjective of choice for every location he visits—if all goes well—is “wonderful”; if all does not go well, he provides a succinct report of his experience, as he does for the incident with the Viennese boxer (77). Fourthly, he maintains a consistently humorous

discourse throughout the novel; making light of whatever situation he finds himself in is the most crucial way he maintains detachment. But whereas Mike Campbell's humor grows more vindictive the drunker he becomes, Bill's generally aims to diffuse an unpleasant situation or to put a person at ease, whether he is drunk (which he usually is) or not. For instance, Bill detests Robert Cohn, but he always is the one who pulls him out of the café to avoid Mike Campbell's vitriol (147, 170, 197). Bill probably removes Cohn for the benefit of Mike, whom he does like; Bill even is willing to confront a group of belligerent Englishmen on Mike's behalf: "Nobody ought to have a right to say things about Mike....I wish to hell they didn't have any right" (208).¹⁷ His willingness to defend Mike demonstrates that Bill's detachment does not come at the expense of sacrificing loyalty to his friends. In fact, diffusing a situation is Bill's way of promoting detachment, breaking his friends' involvement in conflicts that pull them into the cycle of futility.

The Trip to Burguete

Bill also exhibits loyalty to Jake on their fishing trip to Burguete, the account of which occupies the middle of the novel and underscores the theme of *afición* for the entire plot. Interestingly, the excursion to Burguete originally had been Cohn's idea. He had written to Jake earlier in the summer "that he wanted to hold me to the fishing-trip in Spain we had talked about last winter" (75). But once he finds out that Brett and Mike are staying in San Sebastian, Cohn chooses to go there, ostensibly to guide them on to Pamplona. Because Cohn and Brett had had a fling a few months before, he believes that they will continue the

¹⁷ But Bill realizes that the Englishmen, who "helped pay Brett and Mike out of Cannes, once" (208), actually hold a legitimate grievance against Mike because he is in debt to them.

affair, which Brett has no intention of doing. Nevertheless, Cohn prioritizes this imaginary romance above a trip with Jake, who he claims is his best friend (47).

As we know already, Jake does not reciprocate Cohn's friendly feelings, nor is he hurt by Cohn's change of plans; however, the fact that Cohn, who is devoid of *afición*, could succeed in having any sort of amorous involvement with Brett makes Jake "blind, unforgivingly jealous of what had happened to him....I certainly did hate him" (105). Jake cannot stand Cohn's smug secretiveness regarding his affair with Brett for two reasons. First, Cohn takes pride in sleeping with Brett, not realizing that she has only used him to satisfy her sexual appetite. Secondly, Jake also loves Brett, but the wound he sustained in the war precludes their ever being together. Cohn's confidential attitude as he talks to Jake and Bill about Brett thus makes him intolerably foolish. He thinks he is winning the approval of his friends by boasting of his participation in a torrid love affair when Jake and Bill know that Brett merely "wanted to get out of town and she can't go anywhere alone" (107). Cohn's blindness to the truth reveals his pitiful lack of detachment and further exemplifies his lack of *afición*: "He was so sure that Brett loved him. He was going to stay, and true love would conquer all" (203). Jake sums up Cohn's reasoning as if he were giving the synopsis of a romantic novel, again alluding to Cohn's use of fiction to frame his view of reality.¹⁸ Cohn's friendship therefore cannot be fully genuine because he insists on living in his own self-focused fantasy.

¹⁸ For Cohn to desire such a romantic climax to his affair with Brett is understandable, since "bourgeois society has traditionally permitted, even encouraged...the union of two autonomous individuals for the purpose of exploring together their possibilities for subjective growth. Romantic love thus permits an overcoming of individual human isolation while at the same time furthering the process of personal development which the removal of medieval restraints made possible..." (Lennox 83). Cohn becomes a scapegoat for Hemingway's point "that for Western civilization in the twentieth century, even love is no longer a successful

Bill understands Jake's frustration with the situation, but he cautions his friend not to get more emotionally entangled: "'Oh, no,' said Bill. 'Don't get sore. Don't get sore at this stage of the trip....And as for this Robert Cohn...he makes me sick, and he can go to hell, and I'm damn glad he's staying here so we won't have him fishing with us'" (107-108). Bill expresses empathy for Jake, but he also determines that the fishing trip to Burguete will restore Jake's detachment from the romantic turmoil. As Jake's friend, Bill focuses his attention on the immediate, controllable excellences of fishing, a viable focus for his *afición*.

Burguete is a one-street town high in the mountains; its remote location gives Jake needed distance from the complications of his life wrought by Brett. The inn where they stay has a monastic quality: in their room "[t]here were two beds, a washstand, a clothes-chest, and a big, framed steel-engraving of Nuestra Señora de Roncesvalles" (115). Indeed, it is as if Bill and Jake are cloistered, for Jake notes that "[w]e were the only people in the inn" (116). The cold, austere environment of the inn contrasts sharply with the crowded Parisian bars and nightclubs and bright, oppressive heat of Pamplona.¹⁹ It is an environment conducive to clear thinking and uncomplicated existence, yet it is not bereft of comfort. An upright piano stands in the corner of the stone-floored dining room, which Bill plays to keep warm (115). They eat good food and drink plenty of wine (116), but whereas in Paris these pleasures serve as the backdrop for

solution to human estrangement." I will discuss the perils of modernist, erotic love later in this section.

¹⁹ According to Timo Müller, the locations Jake visits in Spain are conducive to living authentically, due to their "healthier social and natural environment," as opposed to "bohemian, inauthentic Paris" (31).

romantic drama, in Burguete they become the focal experience.²⁰ Even the experience of being “warm and in bed,” sheltered from the cold wind, becomes a pleasure. The rustic austerity of Burguete becomes the perfect setting for touting the virtue of friendship because it allows meaningful, shared experience to be foregrounded.

The scene of the men’s first morning in Burguete reminds the reader of brothers teasing each other at home. While Jake goes outside to dig for worms and then gathers the equipment in their room for the fishing trip, Bill lazily stays in bed. Throughout the morning the two men banter with each other. Jake enjoys and encourages the ridiculous heights Bill’s humor reaches, but at one point, Bill inadvertently alludes to Jake’s war wound: “‘You don’t work. One group claims women support you. Another group claims you’re impotent.’ ‘No,’ I said. ‘I just had an accident’” (120). Bill stops his raillery because he fears he has hurt Jake’s feelings; to reassure his friend, Jake picks up the banter where Bill left off. In the midst of their jocularly, though, Bill makes sure that Jake knows he cares about him: “And you’re a hell of a good guy” (121). Jake tries to deny it, but Bill reinforces it, saying, “I’m fonder of you than anybody on earth. I couldn’t tell you that in New York. It’d mean I was a faggot.” Jake replies simply with “Old Bill.”

Bill’s affirmation of Jake here is brief but powerful. According to Elliott, “When Bill acknowledges that [Jake], in spite of his wound, was ‘a good writer’ (could still perform as an artist), he is also reassuring Jake that he can still perform as a good friend and ‘proper’ man—fishing, eating, drinking”

²⁰ Donaldson argues that Bill and Jake’s enjoyment of the hotel’s wine and food is the fruit of their conscientious hard work (“Compensation” 87).

("Performance" 75). Both men know the vulnerability they are exposing, thus Bill's distinguishing his compliment from an erotic declaration and embedding it inside an absurd interpretation of American history: "That was what the Civil War was about. Abraham Lincoln was a faggot. He was in love with General Grant. So was Jefferson Davis" (*Sun* 121). But Bill's joking carries the critique that true expressions of affection between men cannot be articulated in the modern world; the culture that centers on New York City has sexualized its understanding of everything, from the Civil War to friendship.²¹ Such closeness between Jake and Bill can only occur in a place like Burguete, disconnected from the complex, sordid relationships of modern life—the affair between Robert Cohn and Brett, for example.

For five days, the two friends fish for trout in the Irati River without word from Cohn, Brett, or Mike (129-130). They focus on the act of fishing itself, even competing to a certain extent over which method—live bait or flies—catch the bigger fish (123, 125). The focus on excellent action that comes with *afición* enables a deeper interpersonal connection; their sharing in the enjoyment of the fishing provides a space of intimacy for (relatively) honest conversation—about

²¹ David Blackmore notes the effect of Freudian psychoanalysis on male relationships: "Freudian discourse about repression and sexual latency threatened to expose forbidden desire on the part of even the most conventional man. This development rendered all forms of intimacy between men suspect, contradicting in part the dominant nineteenth-century model of manhood, with its emphasis on male camaraderie" (53). Blackmore's article is frustrating in that he entertains a close reading of the fishing trip that exposes all possible innuendo and allusion to Jake and Bill being homosexual but then offers a corrective similar to my reading of the trip (63-64). He writes, "Without endorsing its implicit homophobia, I nonetheless want to heed Bill's suggestion that the categories available in 1926 to denominate men's sexual identities—categories we have inherited today—were inadequate" (65). Ultimately, he insists that the men's relationship is sexual, even though he has conceded that it does not *have* to be. Dana Fore also finds Blackmore's conclusion dubious in her analysis, which focuses on Bill's response to Jake as a man with disability: "Like Blackmore, I believe Hemingway recognizes here that traditional concepts of masculinity—and especially *Freudian* concepts of masculinity—are too emotionally restrictive and in need of change. However, because the text links these norms and the same concepts of 'normality' that stigmatize Jake's disability, I question whether the scene finally promotes the re-establishment of 19th century gender boundaries as Blackmore suggests" (82).

Jake's feelings for Brett and about his technical Catholicism (128-129). Jake's laconic responses to Bill's questions do not mean he finds them intrusive; rather, they show an insecurity about the circumstances of his life and a need to hold them at a distance. It is only by holding his uncertainties at arm's length that Jake can keep from succumbing to confusion and potential artificiality and actually live his life. The intimacy the men share at Burguete allows Jake to let down the guard that shields him in Paris and open up more so than he has previously in the novel.

Hemingway adds an interesting detail to the account of the fishing trip by having "an Englishman named Harris" come to the hotel: as Jake reports, "He was very pleasant and went with us twice to the Irati River" (130). The intimacy of Jake and Bill's friendship can expand to encompass another who shares their passion for fishing. On the Americans' last day in Burguete, though, Harris expresses such gratefulness for their company that it is clear the experience has had greater significance for him than merely sharing in a pleasant pastime. As he buys them drinks at a pub, he declares, "I say. You don't know what it's meant to me to have you chaps here....I've not had much fun since the war....Really, Barnes, you can't know. That's all" (134). He also gives both Bill and Jake envelopes of fishing flies that he tied himself, explaining that "if you fished them some time it might remind you of what a good time we had" (135). Harris's amiable presence reveals the possibility of meaningful, intimate friendship; his affection reveals the desperate need for it; and his lack of camaraderie since the war reveals its rarity. The fact that such interaction takes place in a tiny, obscure village, rather than metropolitan Paris, points to the shallow, truly solitary nature of modern urban life. Sara Lennox shows that the

expatriate community of Paris is one unified by “disaffect[ion],” which therefore cannot provide an environment conducive to flourishing: “[T]he members of the lost generation find it necessary to repudiate the society which has produced them, though, like Jake, they feel their isolation and alienation keenly. Jake’s situation thus demonstrates the failure of his society to create and sustain an environment acceptable to that society’s most talented members” (83).

Finally, Jake and Bill must return to Pamplona to meet up with Cohn, Brett, and Mike for the festival, which suggests that moments of friendship and meaningful living are only temporary respites from the drunken confusion and emotional tumult of the modern world. The intimate world of male friendship that Jake and Bill share for nearly a week cannot be a permanent alternative to their complicated lives; it can only refresh them to reenter the struggle. Hemingway thereby reinforces the validity of such escapes without becoming escapist.

Afición and the Corrida of Erotic Love

With the fishing trip in Burguete, Jake experiences physical detachment from the saga of Brett and her lovers; now that he and Bill are returning to Pamplona to meet Cohn, Brett, and Mike and celebrate the festival, he will employ the mental detachment of the aficionado that his time spent with Bill has honed to manipulate the romantic drama surrounding Brett. The men with whom Brett entangles herself romantically—Robert Cohn, Mike Campbell, and Pedro Romero—have similarities to the three matadors who participate in the festival’s *corridas*. Cohn is like Marcial, the matador who employs the “false aesthetics...of the decadent period” that only give the illusion that he is in

danger of being gored by the bull (*Sun* 219); Mike Campbell is like Belmonte, the matador who once was good but, having lost the support of the spectators after coming out of retirement, has grown bitter (218); and Romero, the gifted, young matador whose “bull-fighting gave real emotion, because he kept the absolute purity of line in his movements and always quietly and calmly let the horns pass him close each time” (171), is seduced by Brett the night before the final bull fight. *Afición* both determines the quality of one’s friendship and is of crucial importance for erotic love.

Just as Jake is a spectator of the bull fights, so must he be spectator of the men’s competition for Brett’s favor, due to his war wound. Because he is unable to perform sexually, Jake literally embodies lost generation—he can never beget children.²² Hemingway implies through the novel’s system of metaphors that erotic love is the path by which one can fall into earth’s cycle of meaninglessness; ironically the act that supposedly produces life is portrayed in the novel as a kind of annihilation of existence—the loss of individual identity and the distortion of reality. The man who has sex with a woman engages in the same dance with death as the matador.²³ Pedro Romero tells Jake and Brett, ““The

²² “Hemingway, in placing Jake at the narrative helm of *The Sun Also Rises*, ironically reifies Stein’s highly abstracted assessment of his lost generation by specifically associating loss with a bodily instrument (now no longer materially present) whose function had been, in large part anyway, to (re)produce or, indeed, to generate—or at least to participate in the generation of offspring” (Tomkins 756). Ira Elliott also notes, “Jake has ‘given more’ (31) than his life, for his manhood has been sacrificed, or at [sic] least compromised, and with it the potential for offspring, his link to the future” (“Performance” 72).

²³ Sara Lennox notes that Hemingway’s underlying commentary on erotic or romantic love “is the exploration of a particular historical development rather than an existential statement on the nature of human beings. That deep social crisis of which the First World War was the political expression has produced the emotional impotence of a generation. As Georgette, the prostitute, puts it when Jake rejects her sexual advances because he is ‘sick,’ ‘Everybody’s sick. I’m sick, too’” (84). An acknowledgement of historical wounds leads Donaldson to read Brett more sympathetically: “Brett’s apparent nymphomania can be at least partly excused by the unhappy circumstances of her past life. She has lost one man she loved in the war, and married

bulls are my best friends.’ I translated to Brett. ‘You kill your friends?’ she asked. ‘Always,’ he said in English, and laughed. ‘So they don’t kill me’” (189-190). Although it is tempting to make Romero’s comment about his best friends the lynchpin of my argument about friendship in the novel, a more consistent interpretation results by reading “best friends” as erotic, rather than platonic, friends. Earlier, Jake contemplates his *friendship* with Brett: “Women made such swell friends. Awfully swell. In the first place, you had to be in love with a woman to have a basis of friendship. I had been having Brett for a friend” (152). We know from the fishing trip in Burguete that Jake had been in love with Brett: Bill asks him, “‘Were you ever in love with her?’ ‘Sure.’ ‘For how long?’ ‘Off and on for a hell of a long time.’ ‘Oh, hell!’ Bill said. ‘I’m sorry, fella.’ ‘It’s all right,’ I said. ‘I don’t give a damn any more.’ ‘Really?’ ‘Really. Only I’d a hell of a lot rather not talk about it’” (128). Jake’s reticence indicates that the physical detachment in Burguete from the situation finally may have given him emotional detachment also. But this conflation of friendship and erotic love further emphasizes the centrality of *afición* in both.

Jake’s rumination over his relationship with Brett shows that, like the *corrida*, erotic love turns the concept of friendship upside down. For the matador, friendship is a matter of violent struggle to the death to attain glory for one’s prowess, and every victory in the arena appears to be a victory over death; thus Romero boasts, “I’m never going to die” (189). Likewise, sex gives one the illusion of immortality. Friendship in terms of an illicit sexual relationship becomes the means of selfishly acquiring what one wants. Such self-focused gain

another...who has returned quite mad from serving as a sailor....Like Jake, she still suffers from war wounds. Like him, too, she articulates her awareness of the law of compensation. If she has put chaps through hell, she’s paying for it all now” (“Compensation” 92).

does not come without consequences, however; whether in the arena or in the bedroom,²⁴ the price everyone pays eventually will be some form of death. Thinking about Brett, Jake says to himself, “I had been getting something for nothing. That only delayed the presentation of the bill. The bill always came” (152). The “something” that Jake has been getting from Brett cannot be a sexual relationship; rather, I argue that it is Jake’s hope for a monogamous relationship of mutual devotion, in spite of his inability to consummate the relationship. Yet Brett’s sexual addiction precludes such an option: she and Jake talk about the possibility during a cab ride through Paris, early in the novel, but Jake desolately concludes, “And there’s not a damn thing we could do” (34).

It seems as if the price he pays is Brett’s running back to him at the end of every affair, causing him to relive his frustrated, unconsummated love:

I lay awake thinking and my mind jumping around. Then I couldn’t keep away from it, and I started to think about Brett and all the rest of it went away. I was thinking about Brett and my mind stopped jumping around and started to go in sort of smooth waves. Then all of a sudden I started to cry. Then after a while it was better and I lay in bed and listened to the trams go by and way down the street, and then I went to sleep. (39)

But this misery merely forces Jake into the cycle of meaninglessness. Like Cohn, he puts himself into an imaginary narrative, the tragedy of unrequited love, and he believes he forces Brett to play the same game: “I had not been thinking about her side of it....I thought I had paid for everything. Not like the woman pays and pays and pays” (152). Jake realizes, after regaining the detachment of *afición*,

²⁴ Both the *corrida* and the bedroom are arenas in which manhood is ritualistically performed and evaluated by an audience, even if that audience is the man himself. As Strychacz argues, “Arising out of an audience’s empowering acts of watching, a protagonist’s sense of self rests precariously upon the audience’s decision to validate or reject his ritual gestures toward manhood. Mastery of the arena bestows power on him, failure invites humiliation: in either case the process implies a loss of authority to the audience. Performances of manhood imply a radical lack of self that must be constantly filled and refashioned...” (247). Again, this notion emphasizes the loss of identity possible in erotic love, a form of the dance with death.

that he must retire from the bull fight; the glory of the arena is not his to have, and his relinquishing of that claim must be the price he pays for his erotic friendship.²⁵ To be Brett's true friend, then, Jake needs to promote her *afición*, specifically in her pursuit of erotic love.

Instead of vying for Brett's affection, Jake decides to facilitate Brett's seduction of Pedro Romero because he determines that, of the possible partners for Brett, he would be the optimal one as an aficionado. Thomas Strychacz concludes that "Jake not only fails in this tough male role, he also betrays, before his co-aficionados, his compensatory ability to watch and evaluate other's masculine behavior" (259). Although it is true that Jake sacrifices his credibility as a *bullfighting* aficionado when he brings Brett and Romero together because he thereby risks Romero's excellence as a matador, his perspicuous evaluation of Romero's masculine behavior itself is a demonstration of masculine excellence. In the economy of the romantic *corrida*, excellent action involves engaging in sex without actually succumbing to its threat of identity annihilation. The good matador flirts with danger and death, "holding...his purity of line through the maximum of exposure...dominat[ing] the bull by making him realize he was unattainable..." (*Sun* 172). Indeed, Romero maintains the beauty of his art in the midst of danger: "Romero's bull-fighting gave real emotion, because he kept the absolute purity of line in his movements and always quietly and calmly let the horns pass him close each time" (171). He performs his actions excellently, as

²⁵ Elliott makes a similar claim, although with a negative conclusion: "[J]ust as Jake is a spectator at the bullfight rather than a participant, so, too, he can only look on as other men (Robert Cohn, Mike Campbell, Pedro Romero) compete for the affections of Brett Ashley. The arena where 'real' men compete—whether the bullring or the bedroom—is for Jake a foreclosed area of emotional and psychic involvement" ("Performance" 73). Elliott does not see the relinquishing of the "real" men's arena to be an exercise of what power he possesses.

goods in and of themselves, to excellently attain his end, the killing of the bull, his friend.²⁶

At the same time that he comes so near death, Romero possesses a nature detached from his surroundings. When Jake watches him and Belmonte, the matador who formerly was good, he notices, "Neither [Belmonte] nor Romero seemed to have anything in common with the others. They were all alone" (216). The audience, the adulation that surrounds Romero, does not affect his composure because he does not fight the bulls for their approval; this unconcern for approval also comes out in his conversation with Jake and the bull-fight critic: "[Romero] talked of his work as something altogether apart from himself. There was nothing conceited or braggartly about him" (178). The pleasure Romero expresses at Jake's admiration for his work is not the inflation of ego; rather, it is the gladness of finding someone who shares the same interest. Romero thus impresses Jake in and out of the arena and shows himself to be a worthy partner for Brett.

Jake is duly impressed that Romero exhibits the detachment of the aficionado in his affair with Brett.²⁷ Romero prevents his feelings for her from diminishing his skill in the arena: "Because he did not look up to ask if it pleased he did it all for himself inside, and it strengthened him, and yet he did it for her,

²⁶ One might think of the teaching of Jesus that one shows no greater love than to give one's life for a friend (John 5:13), but we must remember that the bull also tries to kill the matador. The bull's death is not self-sacrificial for the matador's excellence.

²⁷ Müller argues that Romero's successful bullfighting following his first night with Brett "seems to disprove Montoya's notions of purity [in *afición*]. Good bullfighting is a matter of skill and hard work, not of cult and purity" (35). What Müller fails to understand is that Romero's affair with Brett does not necessarily have to diminish his *afición*, but it could certainly pose a threat. Montoya's discussion with Jake about the American ambassador, which I will address shortly, indicates that women, money, and partying can sufficiently distract a matador from his art, undermining what skill and hard work he has invested in it.

too. But he did not do it for her at any loss to himself" (220). Moreover, in the competition for Brett among the men—Robert Cohn, Mike Campbell (her fiancé), and Romero—the latter appears victorious; he leaves Pamplona with Brett, while Cohn leaves the town in tears (199) and Mike drinks himself into a stupor (214). Yet Romero may not have emerged from the affair unscathed: Brett determines that he should not live with anybody—probably for the benefit of his art—and insists that he leave their hotel in Madrid. When Jake hears this story, he suggests, "You were probably damn good for him" (245), but Brett had said the same thing about her fling with Cohn (89). The reader is left to wonder if Romero still retains his *afición* after his encounter with Brett.²⁸ But like Aristotle's virtuous man, if Romero truly is an aficionado, his passion for life and the *corrida* will persist despite changes in fortune (*NE* I.10.1100b).

It would seem that Jake falls back into the same meaningless cycle by going to rescue Brett in Madrid, but his thoughts after wiring her that he was coming perhaps suggest differently: "That was it. Send a girl off with one man. Introduce her to another to go off with him. Now go and bring her back. And sign the wire with love. That was it all right" (*Sun* 243). Jake looks at his actions with detached criticism; he does not hold out any hope that Brett's call for help will kindle a romance for them, which is confirmed when he arrives at the Hotel Montana and learns that she will go back to Mike (247). At lunch, Jake eats and drinks heavily—these activities seem to be a way for him to maintain a detachment in the situation. In fact, when Brett tells him he does not have to get

²⁸ Allen Josephs considers it fortunate that Hemingway changed the name of the matador from Ordóñez, a bullfighter who had "a few brilliant moments of the season of 1925" (97) but then quickly lost his *afición* through dissipation, to Romero, the legendary matador of the nineteenth century who defeated "5,600 bulls in his long and unmarred career" (96). In the character Romero, the reader sees the paragon of virtue in the *torero*, but in his unreported future, the possibility lingers that the character will share Ordóñez's fate.

drunk, he replies, "How do you know?" (250). She assures him, "You'll be all right," as if she knows that his drinking is out of sadness for their failed relationship, but it may actually indicate his lack of concern for her regard or approval. Finally, as they ride through Madrid in a taxi—reminiscent of their conversation in the Paris taxi—Brett attempts to act their usual tragic scene: "Oh, Jake...we could have had such a good time together" (251). Rather than express sadness at what can never be, Jake's response actually shows that he has detached himself from the meaningless cycle of directionless romance:

"Yes....Isn't it pretty to think so?" Jake sees that Brett has no concern for *afición* in her search for erotic love, since she dumped Romero, a true aficionado. Brett herself is locked in a meaningless cycle, and Jake has no intention of continuing it with her. He may not have come to this conclusion, though, had his critical detachment not been restored through Bill's affirmation of his *afición* at Burguete, which enabled him to conduct the experiment of bringing Romero and Brett together.

Jake's final resolution seems to bode well for the positive possibilities of modernist detachment in the Lost Generation, but his use of *afición* in one aspect of life—choosing a lover for Brett—causes him to compromise his *afición* in another—his passion for the bull fights. Jake knows that the matador's involvement with a woman could put his talent in peril. The day before Jake brings Brett and Romero together, Montoya, the hotel owner, consults him about an invitation he received for Romero to see the American ambassador that evening. Montoya tells Jake, "People take a boy like that. They don't know what he's worth....They start this Grand Hotel business, and in one year they're through....There's one American woman down here now that collects bull-

fighters" (176). The next day, after Romero has slept with Brett, Montoya regards Jake coldly (213); a few days before they had been friends, sharing their *afición* for the bull-fights (136). Jake sacrifices his good relationship with Montoya by leading Brett to Romero in the café.

The plot revolving around Brett and her lovers reinforces the point Hemingway makes in the central episode of the novel, the fishing trip to Burguete. The modern world is fragmented and sexualized, and any narrative that attempts to unify its disparate parts results in the loss of identity. True friendship is vulnerable to the claims of erotic love, which seems to drive the endless cycle of conformity. Robert Cohn sacrifices his friendship with Jake in pursuit of Brett; Jake abandons his bond with Montoya as aficionados to unite Brett and Romero. As long as a person prioritizes the approval of others over the significance of an act in and of itself, he cannot be a friend because he has lost the integrity of his identity, which an *afición* for life preserves. But *afición* in one area of life may compete with a similar passion in another area, thereby bringing the bond of aficionados also into danger. In spite of these pitfalls, Hemingway shows in *The Sun Also Rises* that friendship is not impossible; rather, it requires the redirecting of one's attention away from the modernist condition toward inherently meaningful tasks and a detachment from the meaningless cycle of conformist existence.

The Danger of Escape in A Farewell to Arms

A Farewell to Arms chronicles Frederic Henry's abandonment, not just of the Italian army, but of the world at large, which he finds malicious and

meaningless.²⁹ This individualistic journey is marked by two friendships—Rinaldi, Frederic’s roommate at the house where they are stationed, and the unnamed priest who eats with the officers in the mess-hall. Many critics consider Rinaldi and the priest to be opposing sides of Frederic Henry’s psyche—basically his id and superego, respectively—that vie for moral prominence in his mind. I argue, however, that his two friends try to act as facilitators of self-knowledge. As John Beversluis claims, “[S]elf-knowledge cannot be had simply by introspecting. If I am ever to become aware of these aspects of myself, I must take a hard look at my behavior and thereby come to see myself as others see me. My actions provide a far more reliable criterion of who and what I am than the half-truths, rationalizations, and notoriously selective ‘insights’ of introspection” (19). The priest and Rinaldi attempt to convey to Frederic the instability of his identity and show his need for community, whether it be the Church, tradition, family, or nation.³⁰ The plot of the story is driven simultaneously by the gradually bleaker outlook of the war for the Italians against the Austrians and the blossoming romance between Frederic and the nurse Catherine Barkley, but it is punctuated by episodes in which Frederic speaks with one of his two friends. Both friends agree with Frederic that the war is pointless and terrible, but unlike Frederic, they have ties that obligate them to endure the seemingly endless dissolution of their world

²⁹ Thus I concur with John Beversluis that the theme of the novel “is not love as such, but one man’s attempt, in the name of love, to escape from the oppressive world in which he finds himself and discover a more tolerable world” (20).

³⁰ Mandel likewise argues that the novel favors the group over the individual through its undermining of Frederic’s narrative credibility and the constant classification and evaluation of different types of people throughout the novel. She believes that *Arms* “can be read as a conservative and perhaps even fearful cry for the comfort afforded by the group, a postwar longing for structured village life—redefined, of course, but still identifiably a village, a gang, a group, a tribe, a system that works for some or most of those who are in it” (183).

through the war. With each succeeding interaction between Frederic and his friends, the reader sees Frederic drifting farther away from them and the communities that hold them.³¹

As in *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway shows that these friendships, although meaningful, must be experienced in secluded or remote places, away from the action of the modern world, specifically, the war. For example, Frederic Henry seems to regard favorably the house in which he has most of the conversations with Rinaldi and the priest, evident in his choosing to sleep in the room he shared with Rinaldi the night before he and the other officers retreat from Gorizia (*Arms* 191).³² But these friendships fail to connect Frederic to a larger community, either his Italian comrades or the Catholic Church.³³ Again Hemingway shows the possibility, need, and overall impotence of friendship in the modern world.

³¹ "In this novel Hemingway is concerned with the alternative bondage or freedom of the self; false or authentic selves or false or authentic commitments are scrutinized, and the failure to hold a defined line—in love or war—is seen as potentially fatal" (Gajdusek 26).

³² When Lieutenant Henry invites the priest up to his room to talk, he is not seducing the priest, as Ira Elliott suggests ("Crisis" 297); rather, he is bringing the priest into an area where intimate conversations between friends can happen. Like the village of Burguete, Frederic and Rinaldi's bedroom is an oasis, this time from the war and its upending of virtues, the latter being of central concern to the priest.

³³ Sangwan and Dahiya argue that Frederic Henry's life represents the proper, humanist approach to living in the modern world and fighting in the Great War, that he navigates the Scylla of religious dogmatism that the priest embodies and the Charybdis of Rinaldi's cynical worldview (56). Although I agree that Hemingway intends Frederic's two friends to be counterpoints to his own perspective, I emphatically deny that the author offers Frederic as the ideal, moral choice. One could even think of Hemingway's comment to professors at the University of Hawaii that *A Farewell to Arms* is "an immoral book," in contrast to *The Sun Also Rises* (qtd. in "Compensation" 82). I also think that Elliott's claim that "Rinaldi...stands in opposition to the priest as symbolic of the profane side of Frederic's nature" is not complex enough to explain the two men's roles in the novel ("Crisis" 298).

Rinaldi: A Tie of Brotherhood

Rinaldi is Frederic Henry's roommate in the house at which they are bivouacked. His two favorite pastimes are drinking and visiting the brothel, but as Frederic tells the reader, he also "loved being a surgeon" (12). At first it appears that Frederic and Rinaldi are friends of pleasure, rather than of virtue; Rinaldi wants to hear of the sexual escapades Frederic has gone on during his winter furlough, and he eagerly divulges his upcoming date with an English nurse named Catherine Barkley, although when Rinaldi brings Frederic along to help with speaking English, she winds up liking Frederic better (21). Rinaldi takes this rejection in stride and encourages Frederic with his usual banter: "You have that pleasant air of a dog in heat" (27). But a few nights later, before Frederic is supposed to see Catherine, he gets drunk in a competition with the other officers; Rinaldi gives him coffee beans to chew and walks with him to the hospital where Catherine works (40). Here we see an affection between the two men that extends beyond a mere friendship of pleasure. Rinaldi's calling of Frederic "Baby" also shows affection and protectiveness for his friend; of course, the name also implies that Rinaldi has more experience than Frederic, which will arise in their later conversations. Ira Elliott believes that "[w]hat Frederic responds to in Rinaldi is [*sic*]...those traits which more closely resemble female—or, more specifically, maternal—characteristics" ("Crisis" 298). Indeed, one could characterize Rinaldi's actions toward his friend as those of an affectionate caregiver.

Rinaldi's character fleshes out much more when he comes to visit Frederic in the hospital after the latter is hit by a trench mortar shell. Yes, his glib, jocular manner continues, but we see, in addition, other dimensions of his personality,

such as his passion for surgery: “Oh you should see what I did in the removal of three metres of small intestine and better now than ever....Every day I learn to do things smoother and better” (*Arms* 64). Also, we observe his dislike at being called ignorant: “‘You are ignorant. Stupid.’ I saw that word pricked him and kept on. ‘Uninformed. Inexperienced, stupid from inexperience’” (66). In spite of his comical manner, Rinaldi does not want to be mistaken for a fool. Perhaps his pique at Frederic’s insults stems from having his astute observations rebuffed; he just had told Frederic the he would send Catherine to see him: “I will send her. Your lovely cool goddess. English goddess. My God what would a man do with a woman like that except worship her? What else is an Englishwoman good for?” (66). Of course, we discover later that Catherine becomes an idol for Frederic; for example, when he is in Switzerland with her, he declares “I’m no good when you’re not there. I haven’t any life at all any more” (300). More than just a joke, Rinaldi’s referring to Catherine as Frederic’s English goddess is portentous and perhaps a warning to his friend not to be drawn into a romance detached from reality.³⁴

Also, Rinaldi thinks that he and Frederic are alike, an essential quality of friendship for Aristotle, who describes a friend as “another self” (*NE* IX.4.1166a): “‘[R]eally you are just like me underneath.’ ‘No, I’m not.’ ‘Yes, we are’” (*Arms* 66). Frederic denies the similarity between him and Rinaldi, but the reason why

³⁴ Sangwan and Dahiya argue that the humanist is comparable to the religious man in that both have “an object of devotion. It is this devotion to some object or set of values that gives unity to the discordant impulses of the individual within himself and enables him to resist narrow loyalties and group pressures being exerted on him from outside. The object of devotion in the case of a humanist, however, is not rigidly defined for all times nor does it lie outside time even if it is not visible in the present moment” (58). This definition could apply to Frederic Henry but not in the glowing terms that Sangwan and Dahiya use, that Frederic aligns himself “with the best impulses which exist in every human individual” and “embrace[s] all humanity in fellowship” (59). Frederic demonstrates nothing of the kind, before or after he deserts the Italian army.

is not obvious. Both men enjoy drinking a lot, and before he met Catherine, Frederic visited the prostitutes as much as Rinaldi, returning “at night from adventures” (65).³⁵ Rinaldi’s reply to Frederic’s denial hints at why Frederic does not want to identify himself with his friend: “You are really an Italian. All fire and smoke and nothing inside. You only pretend to be American. We are brothers and we love each other.” Rinaldi mentions three things: Frederic is actually Italian, they are brothers, and they love each other. Each of those things is a tie that binds Frederic to a community. If Frederic is Italian, then his service as an ambulance driver must make him a patriot, “dying that Italy may live,” as the major drunkenly declares the night before Frederic is shipped to the hospital in Milan (76). If he and Rinaldi are brothers, then Frederic has a familial duty to Rinaldi, to be his “keeper,” as the Old Testament suggests (Gen. 4:9). And if the two men love each other, then Frederic must serve selflessly, as the priest tells him: “When you love you wish to do things for. You wish to sacrifice for. You wish to serve” (*Arms* 72).

For Frederic to be like Rinaldi links him to the war in a way that he does not want to be; he can no longer be an “amateur participant,” so to speak. To be defined by his external relationships means that he is constrained to fulfill the obligations those external relationships demand, and he must lose whatever identity he has separate from the war. Thus, he becomes “[a]ll fire and smoke and nothing inside” (66). Like the ants on the log consumed by the fire in Frederic’s vision at the end of the novel (328), so would his self be consumed in

³⁵ This is why Rinaldi cannot simply be one extreme worldview that foils Frederic’s. Cohen notes, “In general, when critics have paid any attention to Rinaldi at all, they have tended to interpret his character as merely the personification of a set of values against which Frederic will eventually define himself” (42).

the community he serves. According to Clarence Lindsay, this ambivalence—a simultaneous desire for and repulsion from a stable identity or a link to a community—is a distinctly American trait: “Frederic’s Americanness can be described as a desire for an identity, the taking on or contriving of some sort of defining selfhood, and then the ensuing discomfort, the desire to escape consequences, the feeling of inauthenticity, the feeling that this isn’t where he belongs, it’s not him” (108).

After Lieutenant Henry returns to Gorizia from the American hospital in Milan, he sees Rinaldi one more time. The reunion takes place in their old bedroom; when Rinaldi comes in, he looks tired (*Arms* 171) and “a little thinner” (166), and he believes he has contracted syphilis (175). While his vices have deteriorated his health, he has improved at his vocation.³⁶ When he examines the results of Frederic’s knee surgery, the latter notices Rinaldi’s “fine surgeon’s hands” (166-167), and Rinaldi tells him, “All summer and all fall I’ve operated. I work all the time. I do everybody’s work. All the hard ones they leave to me. By God, baby, I am becoming a lovely surgeon” (167). But later, he confesses, “I am only happy when I am working” (170). We see that, even though Rinaldi has not been sent to the front, he is exposed to its horrors through his operating on “the hard ones.” In fact, the major informs Frederic that Rinaldi “has had a summer and fall of it” (165). Rinaldi frequently mentions how bad the war is. When he works, Rinaldi feels that his life has a purpose; when he does not work,

³⁶ Yet, as Miriam B. Mandel points out, his self-proclaimed improvement does not necessarily make him a good doctor, and his reference to drinking the alcohol that causes his surgeon’s hand to shake threatens his credibility: “Critics have consistently read Rinaldi as a good doctor....In fact, instead of validating Rinaldi’s medical expertise, the novel strongly suggests that Rinaldi’s medical judgments are incorrect” (180). By questioning Rinaldi’s excellence as a doctor, the reader must also question Frederic Henry’s judgment, since we receive our picture of Rinaldi through his memory (181). Of course, this fits in with my interpretation of Frederic as simultaneously self-focused and self-unaware.

he is left to meditate on the destruction of his country, and probably his life, by the war.

Yet Frederic does not believe in Rinaldi's depression about the war: without irony, he tells his friend, "I can see you've been having a fine time" (167). Whether Frederic's distance from the war in the hospital hinders his recognition of Rinaldi's decline, or he attempts to distract Rinaldi from his troubles, Frederic engages in denial with his friend. Rinaldi will not completely play along, however—he sees the distance between him and his friend, the result of Frederic's relationship with Catherine.³⁷ He observes, "You act like a married man" (167), while he broods over his contracting syphilis from the brothel. He finds humor in Frederic's surface-level remorse for having slept with prostitutes: "Look, baby, this is your old tooth-brushing glass. I kept it all the time to remind me of you...trying to brush away the Villa Rossa from your teeth in the morning, swearing and eating aspirin and cursing harlots. Every time I see that glass I think of you trying to clean your conscience with a toothbrush" (168). But then he discovers that Frederic's relationship with Catherine is not another night adventure—it is a "sacred subject" (169).

Rinaldi realizes that Frederic is in a state of denial stemming from his "marriage" to Catherine; he envies Frederic for being in such a state because Rinaldi's reason will not allow him to enter it. Married couples do not want to be friends with Rinaldi because he is "the snake of reason" (170). Perhaps this

³⁷ Cohen writes, "Once Frederic stops seeing Catherine as a sexual object and makes her instead into his literal 'partner,' Rinaldi's...hatred for Catherine becomes manifest. In other words, while Fetterley suggests that Rinaldi despises Catherine for being 'a complication' in the simpler world of friendships between men (Fetterley 61), I would contend that this complication disrupts relations between men that are hardly so simple" (48). Perhaps, as Cohen suggests, Rinaldi possesses sexual desire for Frederic, but the complexity of the men's relationship could also be deep kinship, such as a familial bond.

allusion means that, like the serpent from the Genesis account, Rinaldi seduces the wives; I argue that he plays the snake by robbing the married couple of their illusions, that husband and wife can be a world unto themselves, as Frederic tries to do after leaving the army. Because he cares about Frederic, though, Rinaldi does not want to disillusion him: "I love you, baby....You puncture me when I become a great Italian thinker. But I know many things I can't say. I know more than you." By allowing Frederic to keep his denial of the world's reality, Rinaldi believes he is enabling his friend to "have a better time."³⁸ Rinaldi retains reality for himself, caught in the futile cycle of alcohol and women, with brief respites in his purposeful work as a surgeon. This echoes Hemingway's formulation of *afición* from *The Sun Also Rises*—Rinaldi finds significance in performing operations well.

It is doubtful that Rinaldi serves his friend well in letting him keep his illusions, especially when the reader sees how completely Frederic's world is devastated by Catherine's death. But Hemingway's goal does not seem to be portraying the most choiceworthy course of action in response to modernity's meaninglessness; rather, he takes one possible path and follows it to its logical, tragic conclusions. Nor does he necessarily commend Rinaldi's response to life, but Rinaldi does display a bizarre nobility in the honesty with which he sums up his life: "Already I am only happy when I am working....I only like two other things; one is bad for my work and the other is over in half an hour or fifteen minutes. Sometimes less....We never get anything. We are born with all we have and we never learn" (170-171). If there is a slim chance that Rinaldi has not

³⁸ When Frederic is not near Catherine, he frequently permits himself to fantasize about being with her. According to Gajdusek, "[F]or Frederic at this time imaginative fulfillment is superior to actual experience" (26).

given himself over to despair, he may be in a better position to discover a purpose to his life than his friend Lieutenant Henry.

The Priest: Detached Yet Engaged

In addition to Rinaldi, Lieutenant Henry is friends with the priest who eats with the officers in their mess-hall. Never given a name in the narrative, the priest is quiet and gentle; at first, it seems that Frederic attributes these qualities to the priest's youth and inexperience: "The priest was young and blushed easily..." (7).³⁹ He is the target of the officers' blasphemy and ribaldry every night, yet he receives it patiently—although he denies their accusations and innuendos, he does not get angry, nor does he chastise the men. The priest is with the officers, yet he is set apart from them, evident in his behavior as well as in his uniform: he "wore a uniform like the rest of us but with a cross in dark red velvet above the left breast pocket of his gray tunic." His devotion to God and the Church separate him from the rest of the uniformed officers who repudiate God and engage in vice. Yet in spite of this detachment that comes from a different view of life and its purpose, the priest does not shelter himself from the reality of the world. His willingness to expose himself to the officers' heckling reflects his willingness to be friends with the officers, to promote a meaningful *telos* for their lives, if they choose to listen to him.

The priest seems to feel a connection with Frederic, even though the latter also drinks too much, tells dirty jokes, and frequents the brothel. Like the priest, Frederic is distinctive from the other officers as a foreigner. Ira Elliott points out further similarities between Frederic and the priest in the intermediary roles they

³⁹ These characteristics lead Elliott to classify the priest "as a kindly younger brother to Frederic" ("Crisis" 293).

play in the war: "An ambulance driver...stands in the same relation to the soldiers as the priest does to Frederic. The ambulance driver delivers wounded bodies to the surgeon as the priest delivers souls to God, for each is an intermediary for those (the surgeon, God) who have the power to heal, the power to restore the body or soul to health" ("Crisis" 294). The priest observes Frederic's outsider status and interprets his welcoming the priest's conversation as a sign that Frederic is searching for a purpose for his life. The priest seeks friendship with Frederic in order to turn him away from the sinful, self-destructive actions of the other officers.

But the other officers also seek Frederic's friendship; they poke fun at the priest for Frederic's amusement, to try to assimilate him into their group with their humor. Frederic notes that "[t]he captain spoke pidgin Italian for my doubtful benefit, in order that I might understand perfectly [his jabs at the priest], that nothing should be lost" (*Arms* 7). While the officers urge Frederic to use his winter leave to visit Palermo, Capri, or Naples, places where he could find "[b]eautiful young girls," the priest tells him, "I would like you to see Abruzzi and visit my family at Capracotta" (8). The officers ridicule this suggestion: "He doesn't want to see peasants. Let him go to centres of culture and civilization." Frederic is the location of a philosophical battle between the priest and the Italian officers, both sides wanting to secure the American as their friend and to promote their conception of the virtues and purpose of life within him.

With the battle for Frederic's friendship and his implicit approval of one set of virtues, Hemingway makes the same dichotomy as in *The Sun Also Rises* between the small, cold village and the warm, metropolitan center of

modernism. Civilization is equated with sex; the remote peasant community is equated with a skillful activity—hunting. The priest says, “There is good hunting. You would like the people and though it is cold it is clear and dry. You could stay with my family. My father is a famous hunter” (9). The priest takes pride in his home and family; he invites Frederic into community, rather than the rootless, modern existence he will find in the Italian cities. The priest’s homeland is characterized by the inhabitants’ cognizance of a social structure—hierarchical, yes, but also a structure that enables mutual recognition and acknowledgement. The priest believes that if Frederic were to visit his hometown, he would discover that his friend’s life has meaning and purpose. Perhaps if Frederic had gone to visit the priest’s family, he would have found stability for his identity that the war cannot provide: “Hemingway intricately lets us know how utterly a self depends upon gestures or acts of acknowledgement of the ‘other.’ The self exists on one side, and it must come into awareness of, acknowledgement of, what exists on the other side—not to capitulate to it, but to experientially know it, that ‘it’ may be respected—that both may be integrally respectable” (Gajdusek 28, 29).

Indeed, we learn in the next chapter that Frederic goes to one city after another: “I went everywhere. Milan, Florence, Rome, Naples, Villa San Giovanni, Messina, Taormina” (*Arms* 11).⁴⁰ As Frederic explains “winefully” to the priest why he did not go to the Abruzzi, he describes a winter of alienation, confusion, and inconsistency dominated by the night: “I tried to tell about the night and the difference between the night and the day and how the night was better unless the day was very clean and cold and I could not tell it; as I cannot

⁴⁰ According to Beversluis, Frederic’s choice to take the tour of Italian civilization indicates “that he is a man acutely aware of, but almost wholly indifferent to, his emotional and spiritual alienation from the world at large” (19).

tell it now" (13). Of course, clean and cold sounds like the days in the Abruzzi, and Frederic claims he wanted to go to the priest's home country but "could not understand why I had not gone." Lieutenant Henry shows his propensity to drift into the meaningless existence of modernism, along with the other officers, which suggests a weakness of will or an identity that lacks integrity.⁴¹ Whatever causes the propensity, it is the gulf that separates Frederic from the priest and hinders the priest's ability to spur him toward virtue: "[W]e were still friends, with many tastes alike, but with the difference between us. He [the priest] had always known what I did not know and what, when I learned it, I was always able to forget" (14). The knowledge that the priest possesses is how to stay rooted in the midst of the war's moral confusion—he understands the importance of community, tradition, and excellent action, and he tries to impart that importance onto his friend. Unlike Jake Barnes, the priest finds their significance, not in an intrinsic value, but in the value given to them by his God.

Several days after their conversation about the Abruzzi, Lieutenant Henry is in the field hospital after having his knee blown by a trench mortar shell (59). The priest comes to visit him in the hospital. Earlier in the book, it is implied that the two men are around the same age, but the priest seems to be more like a boy—he blushes and has the supposed naïveté of his vocation. Now that he comes to visit Frederic in the hospital, Frederic feels like a child tucked in for the night: "It made me feel very young to have the dark come after the dusk and then remain. It was like being put to bed after early supper" (68). By contrast,

⁴¹ Gajdusek again comments, "It is right that [Frederic] should note upon his return from leave that 'it did not matter whether I was there or not,' for in a cyclical world where differences are negated, individuality is lost, there are only replaceable because nonintegral parts" (30). His description of Frederic on his furlough sounds strikingly like Robert Cohn in *Sun*, who desires to be invisible in his conformity, and the meaningless cycle of generations that Hemingway invokes from the Ecclesiastes passage.

the priest is “small, brown-faced, and embarrassed,” and Frederic repeatedly observes his tiredness: “He seemed very tired and I was not used to seeing him tired” (69). The priest now appears to be the older of the friends, suggesting that the naïveté lies with Frederic.

The evils of the war weigh more heavily on the priest, which ages him but also gives him more maturity than Frederic. The priest tells Frederic that he hates the war; when Frederic says that he does not enjoy it, either, the priest responds, “You do not mind it. You do not see it. You must forgive me. I know you are wounded....Still even wounded you do not see it. I can tell. I do not see it myself but I feel it a little” (70). The priest’s response sounds harsh but is fitting, considering that Frederic uses the word “enjoy,” implying the war is a form of pastime. The priest attempts to show Frederic how the latter’s view of the war is limited by his own interests. Frederic’s comment also suggests that his friends in the war, the priest and Rinaldi, are friends of pleasure, the ones who partake in this unpleasant pastime with him. The priest’s exhortation indicates that he wants to be Frederic’s virtue-friend.

The greater compassion the priest exhibits comes from his rootedness in community; he feels kinship with the soldiers fighting: “‘I know them because I am like they are,’ he said.” The priest understands the sacrifice the soldiers make because he is familiar with their normal, peacetime existence. But Frederic disputes the priest’s claim of closeness, emphasizing the way the priest is different, and therefore disconnected, from the men. Perhaps the disconnection would excuse the priest—and Frederic himself—from the war’s moral

obligations.⁴² As a foreigner, Frederic Henry lacks the compassion that the priest believes would come with seeing his compatriots fight; he is “nearer the officers than...the men,” not because he desires to make war, but because he is more removed from the losses of combat. Frederic is more spectator than participant, in the priest’s estimation. But the priest also sees that the cost of combat is not merely physical—the loss of limb or life—but also spiritual, thus the happiness that crosses his face when Frederic mentions returning to the Abruzzi: “[I]n my country it is understood that a man may love God. It is not a dirty joke” (71). The priest, who has grown up in a community that has taught him that life does have a purpose, fears the spiritual well-being of the soldiers, who he knows have not learned that life possesses a *telos*, because the war will only confirm to them life’s meaninglessness. The priest insists that he is closer to the fighting men than Frederic is because he wishes his friendship with the latter were based on a shared understanding about life’s purpose—a virtue-friendship—instead of a feeling of separateness that for Frederic lowers the stakes of the war and enables him to overlook the existential implications for his fellow-soldiers.

Frederic does not see the true evil of the war due to his foreign separateness and his ignorance of life’s purpose, but the priest still hopes that he will learn: “‘When you love you wish to do things for. You wish to sacrifice for. You wish to serve.’ ‘I don’t love.’ ‘You will. I know you will. Then you will be happy’” (72). The priest hopes to push Frederic toward the *telos* that he perceives

⁴² Elliott observes, “[N]either the priest nor Frederic wish to be identified with other men; they desire to stand alone, singular and detached, a stable and subjective self not affiliated with others and so not bound by the laws of others” (“Crisis” 299). This assessment is not exactly true. The priest is bound by laws—those of God and not men. He stands apart from the other men to show that he follows a different code than they do, yet that code tells him that he must engage with these men by serving them. Frederic (outwardly) feels no such obligation and thus tries to escape engagement.

through faith, but just as Frederic was unable to adequately describe his experience of night during his winter furlough ("I cannot tell it now. But if you have had it you know," p. 13), neither can the priest convey what he means by happiness: "You cannot know about it unless you have it" (72). Here again, we see the gulf between the two men, yet there is a desire within both of them to bridge that gulf in friendship. The priest practices virtue-friendship in his struggle to get Frederic to understand the happiness of servant love; Frederic, however, wants to see the priest return to the world where the meaning of life is clear, again assuming that the two men share an alienation from what is happening around them: "I liked him very much and I hoped he would get back to the Abruzzi some time" (73). What Frederic does not realize, though, is that, even in the midst of the war, the priest is in that meaningful world.⁴³

The two men meet one more time, after Frederic Henry returns to Gorizia following his recovery in the Milanese hospital. He observes that the priest is "surer of himself now than when I had gone away" (177-178). Frederic's attention, meanwhile, has been devoted to Catherine Barkley. Even before his escaping assassination by jumping into the river and deserting the army, Frederic inwardly has withdrawn his allegiance from the Italian army because he has invested the meaning of his life fully in Catherine. As he tells her later, "My life used to be full of everything....Now if you aren't with me I haven't a thing in the world" (257). He has begun his retreat already when he speaks to the priest this last time, evident in his resolute demeanor when talking about Italy's defeat: "'Something may happen,' I said. 'But it will happen only to us. If they felt the

⁴³ And Frederic does everything he can not to be tied down by such a world. As Lindsay observes, "Frederic always is dissatisfied with what he chooses to be, never comfortable for long with a newly acquired identity" (107).

way we do, it would be all right. But they have beaten us. They feel another way'" (179). Witnessing the growing gentleness of his countrymen, by contrast, the priest hopes that a collective act of mercy will take place on both sides and that the fighting will cease; he finds Frederic's talk discouraging, which he mentions twice. The priest's hope for peace is a hope for "[s]omething more" (179), that both sides will see the futility of the war, but Frederic's realism actually comes from his understanding of the delusion behind the war: it does not seem pointless to the side that wins (178). He suggests that defeat "may be better" because with defeat may come the realization that the whole thing is pointless. Whereas the priest desires everybody's betterment through peace, a realization of what truly is important, Frederic merely desires the war to end so that people can break off again in search of their own self-interests. The priest's attempts to reach out to Frederic as a virtue friend have failed because the latter has drifted deeper into his own selfish desires.

Although the two friends agree over the war's meaninglessness, they disagree over whether there is any ultimate meaning: the priest's hope for mercy indicates his faith in a larger meaning that can put everything into context, while Frederic's advocacy of cutting one's losses indicates that the war should be abandoned so that every individual can find meaning for himself, which he already has begun to do in his relationship with Catherine.⁴⁴ The gulf has

⁴⁴ But, as a few scholars notice, Frederic may not find his romance with Catherine an adequate alternative; the idyllic escape to Switzerland may actually be stifling to Frederic, just as the war was. For instance, Lindsay argues that Frederic's attention distracted from his relationship with Catherine, exemplified in his staying awake after she has gone to sleep and his meditation on whiskey, may "at first seem Frederic's way of keeping a kind of balance, keeping his awareness of the outside world intact so as to preserve the feeling of security and isolation of their retreat from that world. But toward the end, it's obvious that these things have become, ironically, a retreat from his retreat, an escape from his growing discomfort with the obligations and consequences of his romantic love" (110).

opened too wide at this point—Frederic has determined to build his world around the love of his life, and he figures the priest has done the same. Each man's world is closed off to the other, and Frederic gradually closes himself to everything else in the remainder of the novel: the priest asks him, ““What do you believe in?’ ‘In sleep,’ I said” (179).

Frederic Henry's Retreat from the World

Whereas both the priest and Rinaldi frequently are depicted as tired—indicating a weariness from engaging with the world—Frederic is often falling asleep or “deadly sleepy” (180), symbolizing his withdrawal from the world. Frederic's focus differs dramatically from his friends', which weakens the bonds. Indeed, Frederic will close his eyes to the world at war, disconnect himself from the friends who have cared about him, and live with Catherine in Switzerland, in their own private dream.⁴⁵ When they arrive safely in Switzerland, Frederic says, “I'm afraid I'll wake up and it won't be true” (284). His final disconnection with the war, which occurs when he escapes being shot by the patrol allowing the retreating soldiers to enter Italian-held territory, comes with an image of drift: he jumps into the Tagliamento River and follows its current (226-227). Similarly, Lieutenant Henry allows himself to drift away from the reality of the world and the obligations that have tied him to it, particularly his friends who have cared about him. This interpretation is not to say that Frederic should have shown his solidarity with the Italian army by allowing himself to be shot; his escape was

⁴⁵ William Adair discusses the entire novel as a cycle between nightmares and erotic dreams. The scene in which Frederic and Catherine row across the lake to Switzerland does mark the division between the nightmare of Frederic's desertion and the next erotic dream of the couple's romantic existence in Montreux, but Adair does not point this scene out as Frederic's (attempted) transition into complete denial, as I argue (44).

certainly necessary.⁴⁶ But his decision to rejoin Catherine rather than figure out a way to rejoin his comrades indicates his allegiance to the world he is building with his lover. Because he sees the arbitrariness of the war and therefore the purposelessness of reality, which is defined by the war, he feels no need to actively promote the wellbeing of his friends still fighting in the attainment of a particular end.

Frederic rationalizes his abandoning the army by comparing it to employment: "If they shot floorwalkers after a fire in the department store because they spoke with an accent they had always had, then certainly the floorwalkers would not be expected to return when the store opened again for business. They might seek other employment; if there was any other employment and the police did not get them" (232). Frederic sees his obligation as contractual, rather than relational; his ties to the people he knows in the army are severed with the breach of contract: "I was not against them. I was through. I wished them all the luck." This attitude indicates that Frederic may have seen Rinaldi and the priest as friends of utility or pleasure that merely provided some benefit to him when he was on the front. Now that his contract is broken, he need not concern himself with their wellbeing.

Yet somewhere in his mind, Frederic realizes that he has drifted into a land of denial, evident in his references to the war in the remainder of the novel. For instance, on the train to Stresa, Frederic decides, "I was going to forget the war. I had made a separate peace. I felt damned lonely..." (243). His loneliness

⁴⁶ Beversluis points out that Frederic "acts solely for the sake of his own survival" (20); his escape down the Tagliamento is not a step in a plan he has conceived. Rather, it provides for him the opportunity to realign his allegiances, to "enlist," as Lindsay describes it, with Catherine instead of the Italian army (107).

comes from his sudden cutting of ties with people he cares about—Rinaldi, the priest, the major. In the bar at Stresa, he has “the feeling of a boy who thinks of what is happening at a certain hour at the schoolhouse from which he has played truant” (245). Frederic cannot dismiss his commitment to the war as a breach of contract; he feels that he is missing out on something that he is supposed to be part of because he has become part of his fellow soldiers’ community.⁴⁷ Later, when he and Catherine are settled in Switzerland, the distant war makes a strange juxtaposition with his peaceful, banal life: “I sat back in the corner with a heavy mug of dark beer...and ate the pretzels...and read about disaster” (292). The distant war and Frederic’s uneasiness about his disconnection from it help form the ominous foreshadowing of his impending tragedy. The comfort that he had desired—for himself and the priest—cannot effectually shield him from the reality of the war and his obligation to the friends he has lived with.

In spite of his efforts to build his own peaceful world with the woman he loves, Frederic cannot escape the pain and loss of the real world. Frederic may have separated himself from the suffering of his friends in the Italian army with a national border and wishes of luck, but he cannot shield himself from the loss of the person he has idolized, the person he predicted would ruin him (305). After Catherine dies in the maternity ward of the Swiss hospital, Frederic attempts to preserve what is left of their world in the hospital room where she lies by throwing the nurses out: “But after I had got them out and shut the door and turned off the light it wasn’t any good. It was like saying good-bye to a statue” (332). The goddess whom he worshipped becomes a mute idol, and with the world he built around Catherine destroyed, Frederic Henry’s story simply

⁴⁷ This interpretation concurs with Beversluis (21).

stops—no ending, no resolution: “After a while I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain.” Diane Price Herndl interprets the abrupt ending of the novel as Frederic’s surrender to the forces of the world that are out to steal, kill, and destroy, the forces that push individuals closer to annihilation, such as the world leaders who brought so many young men to their deaths in the Great War: “[T]he novel...ends with Frederic’s surrender of narration, which is itself a kind of death....In stopping narrating, then, Frederic Henry ceases to claim immunity, ceases to try to keep safe. He not only stops feeling, but stops fighting against the ‘them’ that would rule his life” (49-50). But Frederic has already demonstrated his implicit affiliation with these meaningless forces when he cut short the narrative of his friendships by abandoning his companions to serve in the war without him. Catherine’s death robbed his life of a clear meaning, but he robbed his friendships of their meaning already.

Whereas Jake Barnes views life as an exciting dance with death, Lieutenant Frederic Henry views it as a desperate but futile attempt to escape annihilation, a self-centered approach that focuses on personal survival.⁴⁸ Near the end of the novel, Frederic develops an analogy to life based on his memory of watching a burning log covered with ants:

Once in camp I put a log on top of the fire and it was full of ants. As it commenced to burn, the ants swarmed out and went first toward the centre where the fire was; then turned back and ran toward the end. When there were enough on the end they fell off into the fire. Some got out, their bodies burnt and flattened, and

⁴⁸ Scott Donaldson refuses to buy into Frederic Henry’s fatalistic view of the world that, he believes, excuses him from any moral culpability: “Throughout the book Frederic paints himself as a man more sinned against than sinning, as a passive victim of circumstances. Yet the portrait is not, finally, to the life....Like the wily fox in the woods, he pretends to an innocence he does not possess; the comparison itself constitutes a *caveat* against accepting as gospel Frederic Henry’s presentation of himself” (“Passivity” 111, 112). I must agree with Donaldson that Frederic’s depressing outlook is more a consequence of his selfish, individualistic actions.

went off not knowing where they were going. But most of them went toward the fire and then back toward the end and swarmed on the cool end and finally fell off into the fire. I remember thinking at the time that it was the end of the world and a splendid chance to be a messiah and lift the log off the fire and throw it out where the ants could get off onto the ground. But I did not do anything but throw a tin cup of water on the log, so that I would have the cup empty to put whiskey in before I added water to it. I think the cup of water on the burning log only steamed the ants. (*Arms* 328)

The log is the world that the conflagration of war gradually is consuming, but the war only exposes the truth that everyone moves inexorably toward death; it is the only certain end for humanity: “Stay around and they would kill you” (327). Those who escape the fire still are crippled in some way by it and are doomed to end their days lost and wounded. Even if the war’s flame is extinguished, people will still lie vulnerable to its scalding aftermath. Finally, Frederic believes, if there is someone present to redeem this world, he is more concerned about his own interests.⁴⁹

This metaphor for life comes to Frederic just after he learns that his son was stillborn and shortly before Catherine, the love of his life, dies from the complications of the birth.⁵⁰ The pessimistic image is inspired by the breakdown of what communal ties Frederic had left—those of erotic love and (loosely)

⁴⁹ Herndl suggests that Frederic’s bleak outlook may stem from the narrow definition of male identity that Western culture foisted upon the men fighting in World War I: “Such sentiments are perhaps typical of a postwar modernist disillusionment, an alienation focused on the pointlessness of life and manifested later in existentialism. It would be possible, though, to read these sentiments as figuring the condition of World War I masculinity, focused as it was on a particularly passive form of warfare. Convinced by patriotic fervor to embrace military service as a path to masculine feats of heroism, most soldiers discovered that the war meant waiting in a trench to be shelled” (42).

⁵⁰ “[T]he novel ends with the infant strangled in the womb, the birth of death, a cruel parodic image of Henry’s deepest desire for ultimate security, an identity without consequence. The world, the ‘them’ or ‘they’ which both Catherine and Frederic had continued to insist they had safely excluded, intrudes in the form of biology, Catherine’s narrow hips and the baby himself. The baby is a trope for time’s inexorability, a trope standing for consequences of identity expressed in time, consequences that Frederic has either felt safely excluded from or uncomfortable with when he sees them” (Lindsay 109).

family. Certainly, Frederic Henry is not alone in contemplating the inevitability of death; even people who believe in the immortality of the soul must come to terms with the end of one's earthly life. But the agonizing futility of that earthly life arises from Frederic's decision to withdraw from the world around him and form his own reality with Catherine. Frederic had already loosened himself from the bonds of community when he deserted his friendships on the front; his selfish actions before his time with Catherine in Switzerland set the stage for his nihilistic, violent notion of human life. Thus, after he must face the loss of his companion in that imaginary, romantic world and their child, he conceives of a redeemer formed in his own image—callous, disinterested, and self-absorbed. The god of his burning world has left him to suffer, just as Frederic has abandoned the priest and Rinaldi to an uncertain fate alone. Hemingway depicts Frederic Henry as both a product of, and contributor to, the selfish, cruel environment of the modern world.

The Necessity of Other-Centeredness in For Whom the Bell Tolls

For Whom the Bell Tolls begins by putting forth a rather simple plot that emphasizes the usefulness of the characters involved, but soon one sees that, as the characters interact, friendships of utility will tangle with friendships of virtue. This entanglement occurs because the goal that the characters use one another to accomplish—exploding a bridge that will enable the Spanish republicans to wrest the region of Segovia from the hands of the fascists—also has a virtuous purpose—bringing the republic closer to victory in the Spanish Civil War, which will restore liberty to all (surviving) Spanish people. The plot,

then, becomes complex as the dilemma of viewing people both as means and ends emerges.

Robert Jordan's Utilitarian Identity

Robert Jordan, the main character, must blow up a bridge at a strategic moment to prevent reinforcements from coming to the fascists once the republicans begin the attack at Segovia. General Golz informs him, "I must know that bridge is gone. Not before, so it can be repaired if the attack is postponed. No. It must go when the attack starts and I must know it is gone" (*Bell* 8). This assignment demands that Jordan perform his task well, and according to the general, he has a reputation as an excellent dynamiter: "They tell me you blow bridges very well. Very scientific" (10).⁵¹ To complete his mission, Jordan must recruit the help of guerilla fighters hiding on the mountain near the bridge; the man who helps him gather this assistance, Anselmo, also has a good reputation: "He is a very reliable man, they say. You will see. He has people in the mountains" (8). Thus the plot of the novel begins with a clear, simple goal—bomb the bridge to ensure that the republicans have a chance at victory—and it requires the people who pursue the goal to act excellently.⁵²

Anselmo will be an excellent utility-friend because of his reliability.

⁵¹ Yet Alex Vernon protests that, as a dynamiter, Jordan does not have a very heroic job and therefore perhaps undermines Hemingway's heroic ideal: "Such a warrior is a far cry from the Spanish bullfighter whose art, grace, and courage Hemingway so greatly admired. Yet bullfighting too has its necessary ugliness. Does Hemingway paint his portrait of Pilar's first lover, the self-destructive bullfighter Finito, to compare or contrast the bullfighter's art with Robert Jordan's? Or is it the two men's passion for agency and self-actualization that ultimately matters?" (210). I argue the latter in this paragraph.

⁵² "[I]t is interesting to observe...how Hemingway focuses more on a particular event—the destruction of a bridge—than on general issues concerning the war—often political and military matters. This circumstance reveals the greater attention the novelist paid to anonymous stories to the detriment of those alluding to the ideological side of the conflict. Unlike other

The excellence we know Jordan possesses pertains to his utility for the republican army: he is a skilled dynamiter. In carrying out his mission well, Jordan experiences the fulfillment of purpose, which becomes evident later in the pleasure he derives from drawing up plans for bombing the bridge: "He sketched quickly and happily; glad at last to have the problem under his hand; glad at last actually to be engaged upon it" (40). Through his further, informal conversation with General Golz, we learn that Jordan's focus rests exclusively on his work; when Golz asks him about romantic relationships, Jordan replies, "No, there is no time for girls" (10). The reader's first impression of him, then, is that his character is defined by the useful role he plays in the army. One also assumes that his interaction with people will be framed by his mission; that is, if he makes friends, they will be friends of utility, people who can help him.⁵³ Indeed, Jordan follows a simple rule in his interaction with people during his mission: "You had to trust the people you worked with completely or not at all, and you had to make decisions about the trusting" (6-7). The decision to trust or not is not difficult if he observes his collaborators closely, which he does with Anselmo: "This Anselmo had been a good guide and he could travel wonderfully in the mountains....Robert Jordan trusted the man...so far, in everything except judgment. He had not yet had an opportunity to test his

books dealing with the Spanish War, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a work where the title role is not played by political theories, but by people who fought for them..." (Marín Ruiz 112).

⁵³ Rod Romesburg argues that General Golz promotes and represents the view of humans as means rather than ends: "In the mythology of Golz's society, humans are merely instruments, allowing no compassion. They serve only to do their duty, with connotations not of laws and orders, but of commands from a higher authority, which must be obeyed....For Golz, no man is an island only in reference to the actions which must be performed, not in any sense of the interconnections existing between people. Jordan accepts this ideology, and it reinforces not only the distance between himself and all of humanity, but between the human race and nature. In order to do the job he feels he must do, he must ignore any calls of bonding between himself and the world around him, human and natural" (142-143).

judgment, and, anyway, the judgment was his own responsibility" (7). Jordan needs to evaluate a person only to the extent that he can use him, which typifies the instrumental nature of a friendship of utility, a relationship in which the friend is a means to some other end. Notice also that virtues, specifically in this case trustworthiness, are not essential to the relationship; Jordan simply needs to be aware of their presence or absence and act accordingly. This latter detail will be important when he meets Pablo, the leader of the *guerrilleros*.

The Selfishness of Pablo

When he meets Pablo, Jordan's first instinct is not to trust him; externally he speaks friendly to the man, but "inside himself he was not smiling at all" (12). Jordan takes Pablo's sullen attitude as a warning sign: "That's the sadness they get before they quit or before they betray. That is the sadness that comes before the sell-out" (15). He soon learns that Pablo no longer wants to endanger himself for the survival of the republic: "I am tired of being hunted....To me, now, the most important is that we be not disturbed here....To me, now, my duty is to those who are with me and to myself" (18, 19). Pablo's declaration sets off Anselmo, who accuses the leader of acting solely out of self interest: "Thyself now since a long time....Until thou hadst horses thou wert with us. Now thou art another capitalist more" (19). Anselmo's accusation that Pablo thinks only of himself points to the limitations of utility-friends. The war in general and the mission in particular are always in jeopardy if the people involved cannot be trusted to serve others besides themselves. Robert Jordan's simple rule of trusting the people he works with thus comes into question.

Jordan's interactions with the vigilantes cannot be defined strictly according to utility because the one task he wants assistance with is one step in the much larger act of the war, which carries great significance for all the participants in the smaller act. For the *guerrilleros* to be useful to Jordan in blowing up the bridge, they must be in accord with him about the necessary outcome of the war—to drive out the fascists and preserve the liberty of the republic. As Augustín, one of the vigilantes, tells Pilar, Pablo's wife, "Two things we must do. We must leave here and we must win. The bridges are necessary if we are to win" (105). Blowing the bridge has a meaning external to the act itself: it brings the republicans one step closer to winning the war and therefore brings them one step closer to freedom. The cave in which the *guerrilleros* hide is a refuge only if they remember that they must leave it to engage with the world and promote their countrymen's freedom; if they forget this goal, then the cave is a den of solitary self-interest, which we see it has become for Pablo.

Pablo does not agree with Jordan regarding the necessary outcome of the war, not that he has defected to the fascists' side, but he has lost hope in the republicans' victory. He does not want the fascists to win, but he thinks it is inevitable: "*They* are very strong....You do not realize how strong they are. I see them always stronger, always better armed. Always with more material. Here am I with horses like these. And what can I look forward to? To be hunted and to die. Nothing more" (18). As with Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*, self-focus begets futility and despair. Because he despairs over the probable outcome of the war, Pablo chooses to focus on his own survival. Robert Jordan's mission, therefore, seems pointless and detrimental. Pablo later tells Pilar, "I am for the good and the safety of all," to which she replies, "There is no such thing as

safety. There are so many seeking safety here now that they make a great danger. In seeking safety now you lose all" (59). As this dialogue demonstrates, Pablo's self-interested cause is just as pointless and detrimental to the republicans as their mission is to him.

Thus the two *teloi*—survival at any cost and freedom at any cost—are at odds with each other, and since Pablo does not share Jordan's *telos*, he cannot be trusted: "No, [Jordan] said to himself, don't fool yourself. You do not know how [Pablo] was before; but you do know that he is going bad fast and without hiding it. When he starts to hide it he will have made a decision....The first friendly thing he does, he will have made a decision" (20). Robert Jordan's assessment of people carries the assumption that they possess a particular disposition, what Gertrude Stein calls a "bottom nature." He sees that self-preservation underlies Pablo's actions. Therefore, Jordan must follow Pablo's behavior carefully. Friendliness indicates a shared goal, so if Pablo begins to act friendly, it is because he believes his goal—the failure of the bridge, the retention of his mountain hideaway—is coming to fruition, not that he has adopted Jordan's. Pablo views the matter as a competition of wills, and he can afford to be friendly only when he finds the selfish interests of his will have the possibility to triumph.

Robert Jordan's prediction proves correct: once Pablo hears Anselmo's report of the fascists receiving reinforcements and sees Jordan write to the general urging him to abort the attack, he decides to steal the detonation materials for the dynamite, but he suddenly speaks encouragingly to Jordan: "I have admired thy judgment much today, *Inglés*....I think thou hast much *picardia*. That thou art smarter than I am. I have confidence in thee" (358). But because Jordan is formulating his report to the general, he does not realize that Pablo is

wheedling him. Pablo's comment about his intelligence should tip off the reader to his craftiness; Agustín warns Pilar earlier, "Pablo I *know* is smart....He wants things as they are for his own weakness. He wants to stay in the eddy of his own weakness. But the river is rising. Forced to change, he will be smart in the change. *Es muy vivo*" (104, 105). Of course, that Jordan's apprehensions about Pablo's behavior—and therefore also his bottom nature—prove true prompts the reader to wonder whether Pablo's glorious actions of the past were truly for the republic or for his own gain. Pablo does return to help with bombing the bridge, bringing five men from rival bands to help with the mission, but when the bridge is blown, Pablo shoots the additional men (490). Pablo's actions thus bring ambiguity to Pilar's admiring words when Pablo returns after having stolen the detonator: "I suppose if a man has something once, always something of it remains" (423). In Pablo's case, however, that something may be selfishness. As I mentioned before, though, virtue is not necessary for a person to be Robert Jordan's friend of utility; he still receives assistance from Pablo even though he finds him odious, especially after he learns that Pablo killed the men who helped them:

Robert Jordan was thinking, keep your mouth shut. It is none of your business now. They have done all that you could expect and more. This is an inter-tribal matter. Don't make moral judgments. What do you expect from a murderer? You're working with a murderer. Keep your mouth shut. You knew enough about him before. This is nothing new. But you dirty bastard, he thought. You dirty, rotten bastard. (490)

Treating Pablo as a utility-friend to accomplish his mission brings about consequences that Robert Jordan finds unconscionable. Pablo's behavior throughout the novel only underscores the need for virtue and utility to be linked for the good purpose of the war to remain clear. Pablo's utility in

completing the mission despite his lack of virtues represents Hemingway's ambivalence regarding the morality of the war and the motives of the people on both sides.

Robert Jordan's friendship with the other *guerrilleros* blends virtue and utility, but the mix of the two types complicate his interaction with them: "So now he was compelled to use these people whom he liked as you should use troops toward whom you have no feeling at all if you were to be successful" (177).⁵⁴ The people for whom Robert Jordan wants to promote the good, i.e., with whom he wants to be friends of virtue, must also be the instruments he uses to promote the good for them and for the rest of the republic: "Though still beholden to his sense of duty, Jordan loses the sense that he and those around him are instruments" (Romesburg 145).⁵⁵ But by using his friends in this way, he puts them in harm's way, essentially diminishing the good for them; Jordan must wrestle with this dilemma: "In all the work that they, the *partizans* did, they brought added danger and bad luck to the people that sheltered them and worked with them. For what? So that, eventually, there should be no more danger and so that the country should be a good place to live in. That was true

⁵⁴ "Besides the blowup of the bridge, the American volunteer has another aspiration: reaching a state of absolute communion with everything around him. Achieving this aim involves, in the case of Jordan, the integration with the Spanish people and their customs. The interaction of the American volunteer with the local culture—represented by Pablo's band—is one of the narrative lines on which Hemingway projects his view of Spain to a larger extent. Despite being deeply acquainted with our country, Jordan cannot get rid of the customs and values from his homeland. As a result, his incorporation to Pablo's band means the clash between two cultures..." (Marín Ruiz 111). Marín Ruiz's statement that Robert Jordan wants "absolute communion with everything" is obviously false in its wide, indiscriminant scope; however, his observation that Jordan wants to be integrated with the Spanish people is reasonable. Jordan becomes part of this small community, and the "clash between two cultures" is not so much American versus Spanish but rather Jordan's mission as *partizan* and his developing camaraderie with Pablo's band.

⁵⁵ Romesburg asserts that Maria is responsible for integrating Jordan into the community of *guerrilleros*, of promoting a friendship between him and the band that goes beyond utility: "Maria serves Robert Jordan and brings him to a reconnection with the people and the land he loves."

no matter how trite it sounded" (178). The good that Jordan diminishes by using his friends to complete his mission, their temporary safety, is subordinate to the greater good that he wants to bestow upon them, their permanent safety and freedom.

The use of his friends should not be a source of moral angst for him, however, for as Pilar asks of Joaquín, the guard of El Sordo's hideout, "For what are we born if not to aid one another?" (151). The *guerrilleros* consider it the demonstration of their excellence to help Jordan for the benefit of the republic. For example, while standing in the cold, staking out the guard house at the end of the bridge, Anselmo thinks to himself, "[O]ne thing I have that no man nor any God can take from me and that is that I have worked well for the Republic. I have worked hard for the good that we will all share later. I have worked my best from the first of the movement and I have done nothing that I am ashamed of" (216). Anselmo defines his identity by his usefulness to the republic, by the excellence with which he performs actions that he hopes will foster the good of the republic; this means that Anselmo also defines himself by his relationship to others, the role he plays in a community that strives toward a good they all will share. Thus, when Anselmo dies while helping Jordan blow up the bridge, he "dies being involved in mankind" (Cheney 185).⁵⁶ When Jordan praises Anselmo for being steadfast in his post, despite the cold and darkness, the old man "did not feel lonely"; rather, he feels "happy now and...very pleased" (Bell 219). Jordan's affirmation strengthens Anselmo's purpose to serve the Republic and actualizes the fulfillment that his virtuous action produced.

⁵⁶ Patrick Cheney claims that Hemingway measures the morality of each character in the novel by "a yardstick" of Christlike self-sacrifice, epitomized in Robert Jordan (182).

The Republicans' Internal Division

Even though this latter interpretation conveys a stable identity and a coherent purpose consonant with consistent action, most of the republicans experience a certain amount of division within themselves, specifically regarding the killing of their neighbors and countrymen for the preservation of the republic. For example, we learn that “whenever [Anselmo] was alone for long...this problem of the killing returned to him” (215).⁵⁷ He believes the killing to be “necessary,” but he also knows that “the doing of it is very bad for a man.” He repeatedly thinks of some act of national penance that the republic can undergo after the war; that it must be nationwide indicates Anselmo’s inability to reconcile the *telos* of the republic with the means of attaining it—a community of free citizens built on the spilled blood of citizens like them. Robert Jordan acts as a virtue-friend to Anselmo by helping him mentally process the simultaneous vice and virtue of fighting for the republic, and he willingly bears the burden of the men Anselmo must shoot during the carrying out of the mission (43-48).

Pilar experiences a similar disgust while she witnesses Pablo and the people of his hometown shoot the civil guard and massacre the members of the fascist party. Although she feels “weak in the stomach when I looked at the guards dead” (113), she considers it a necessary evil and was relieved that “there was no cruelty, only the depriving of life” (130). As drunkenness and murderous frenzy comes upon the townspeople, she “felt a feeling of shame and distaste” and “wished that I might disassociate myself altogether from the lines” of

⁵⁷ “Of all the men in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, [Anselmo] expresses the only real compassion for the victims of his actions....His compassion is important enough for Hemingway to have the narrator state directly, ‘Anselmo was a very good man [...],’ as if to ensure we will not miss this point....Anselmo brings a healing order into the chaotic world of the war and forces Robert Jordan to connect with the people around him” (Romesburg 146).

peasants waiting to beat the fascist party members, who themselves were residents of the town. Anselmo's fear that the killing would brutalize the republicans seems to come true in Pilar's story: "[T]he people of this town are as kind as they can be cruel and they have a natural sense of justice and a desire to do that which is right. But cruelty had entered into the lines and also drunkenness" (127). Gradually, the ritualistic method of killing the fascist townspeople, which Pablo had arranged to signify the purging of the town (118), deteriorates into a free-for-all, exacerbated by anarchists (132). The vices of the people, let loose by the act of killing, cause the community to degenerate into a mob that shouts, "Long live me and long live anarchy" (134), a clear sign that the villagers no longer promote their communal pursuit of the virtues. Pilar's story, as well as the inner thoughts of the *guerrilleros* and Jordan, indicate that only a thin line divides the virtues of the republic from the vices of a self-centered individualism that actually dissolves personhood as the community dissolves into a faceless mob.

It seems that maintaining a divided conscience ensures that the various characters in the novel do not drift into the cruelty exemplified in Pilar's story. As we have seen repeatedly throughout the novels examined in this study, a division exists between the characters' outward actions, which in this case always serve as means toward a republican victory, and their inward consciousness, which is marked by a profound ambivalence that the actions they take are in fact bringing them to the virtuous end they desire. Unsurprisingly, this division and ambivalence is most obvious in Robert Jordan, to whose

thoughts the reader is constantly privy.⁵⁸ These thoughts, however, do not come in the form of an inner monologue but rather an inner dialogue—two voices constantly debate or advise each other in Jordan’s mind to such an extent that at one point he says to himself, “Quit thinking like a schizophrenic” (426).⁵⁹

Erik Nakjavani discusses how Robert Jordan’s knowledge, his central characteristic as an “intellectual hero,” empowers him to fight for the republican cause in Spain, but his description of intellectual critique, I feel, better serves to show how Jordan approaches his mission with necessary moral ambivalence:

This ‘unhappy conscience’ has its origin in the distinct ability of the intellectual to put himself and his world in question. In short, the academic becomes an intellectual at the moment when he questions his relationship to his own knowledge and the nature of that knowledge. *Thus the world of the intellectual is a world of radical critical discourse in which no dimension or component of any relationship escapes close scrutiny.* (135, my italics).

This description perfectly encapsulates the novel-wide agonizing of Robert Jordan over every aspect of his involvement in the war and, specifically, the mission to blow the bridge. Nearly every passage of the novel recording Jordan’s thoughts is characterized by these competing voices (e.g., *Bell* 48, 179, 185, 328, 465, 502, etc.). They exemplify Aristotle’s claim that a person must be friends with himself because he loves his own existence. Jordan talks to himself

⁵⁸ Alex Vernon complains, “For all the times the book tells us about Kashkin’s shaky nerves, and for all the times Jordan evaluates Kashkin’s state of mind, we witness Jordan’s own worries, anxieties, and diffidence, and we hear him worry about worrying, from nearly the first page of the novel to the last. One can only imagine how much longer the book would be had Hemingway used his more usual first-person narration rather than the novel’s third-person sometimes omniscient point-of-view” (213). Yet Jordan’s deliberating remains exclusively interior, and he exhibits a calm, confident demeanor, prompting the *guerrilleros* to refer to him as “cold headed.”

⁵⁹ According to Solow, “The long narrative continually provokes dissonances: Jordan’s internal monologues are dizzyingly rife with points and counterpoints; the ‘right’ side is responsible for the most horrific atrocity; Fascist soldiers are humanized while some among the Loyalists [the republicans] are betrayers.” Such dissonances are symptomatic of war, which “lies in contradiction itself” (104).

as a friend who urges himself to cling to the virtues, even as it involves confronting his actions that do not measure up to moral excellence: “You believe in Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. You believe in Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. Don’t ever kid yourself with too much dialectics” (328). For Jordan, the primary virtues are those that undergird democratic freedom. The voices help him sort out what he does merely to follow the orders of his communist commanders and what he does out of his desire to protect the inalienable rights of the Spanish people, whom he loves (178-179).

In addition, the voices protect him from the brutalization that Anselmo worries about, even as he cold-headedly kills people: “I believe in the people and their rights to govern themselves as they wish. But you mustn’t believe in killing, he told himself. You must do it as a necessity but you must not believe in it. If you believe in it the whole thing is wrong. But how many do you suppose you have killed?” (327). As this last question indicates, the dialogue about killing must be continuous for Robert Jordan, as it is for Anselmo, in order for the act not to become an end in itself. He must continually wrestle with his conscience about taking life so that he does not become accustomed to it: “You have no right to shut your eyes to any of it nor any right to forget any of it nor to soften it nor to change it” (328). The divided, conflicted voices in Robert Jordan’s head thus parallel the simultaneous view of people as means and ends—he must kill people in the effort to retain the value of life for people.

Living in the Immediate and the Future

Besides the dichotomies that Jordan must straddle mentioned above—friendships of utility and virtue, Marxism and liberal democracy, destruction and

protection of life—he must live in a temporal paradox. His actions in the present are invested in a particular future outcome, i.e., the Spanish republic’s victory: “You see that we are working for one thing. To win the war. Unless we win, all other things are futile” (315). Yet he must live as if there is no future: “[A]ll the life you have or ever will have is today, tonight, tomorrow, today, tonight, tomorrow, over and over again (I hope), he thought and so you had better take what time there is and be very thankful for it. If the bridge goes bad. It does not look too good just now” (181). Jordan labors toward a *telos* that he most likely will never enjoy, so in his mind, he must funnel his expectations of a long life into the two remaining days he is certain that he has.

The limitations on Jordan’s life by time arise most poignantly in his love affair with Maria. As I mentioned earlier, Jordan had eschewed love as part of his life because it distracted him from his work as a republican dynamiter. Now he meets the love of his life while “co-ordinating two chicken-crut guerilla bands to help you blow a bridge under impossible conditions, to abort a counter-offensive that will probably already be started” (183). In the middle of an assignment that is crucial for the achievement of the Spanish republic’s *telos*, Jordan finds the woman with whom he wants to live in the peace and freedom that that end is supposed to produce, but because he is unlikely to live in that liberty, he must sacrifice all the elements of a long-lived commitment—children, home, domesticity: “Not a lifetime, not to live together, not to have what people were always supposed to have, not at all....So if you love this girl as much as you say you do, you had better love her very hard and make up in intensity what the

relation will lack in duration and in continuity" (184).⁶⁰ Intensity becomes a virtue to replace those that would blossom if his relationship with Maria lasted longer than two days.⁶¹

Jordan thus lives in an uncomfortable position, acting for the republic's future but not for his own; his existence is stuck in the present without the benefit of being shaped by the future: "There is nothing else than now. There is neither yesterday, certainly, nor is there any tomorrow. How old must you be before you know that? There is only now, and if now is only two days, then two days is your life and everything in it will be in proportion. This is how you live a life in two days....A good life is not measured by any biblical span" (185). Jordan asks himself how long it will take for him to learn that *now* is the only reality, but his actions do not reflect such a reality—neither his work for the Spanish republic nor his love of Maria: "In dying for Spain, he dies for Maria; in dying for Maria, he dies for Spain. He sends her, and with her Spain's future in the form of her nubile and presumably fertile body, off to survive, staying behind to tie up the

⁶⁰ Alex Vernon cynically highlights the bourgeois character of Jordan's fantasies for a life with Maria, which contrast with his revolutionary participation in the war: "The struggle between his military objective, of which Maria can play no part, and his marriage fantasy indicates a struggle between his loyalty to the progressive Republic and to his own comforting American, capitalist, conservative identity. His death conveniently spares him any more maddening turns; it relieves him of having to choose" (183-184). Vernon generally does not read Jordan sympathetically in his analyses, considering the protagonist to be another, less consistent incarnation of Frederic Henry. I find this an unfair evaluation of Jordan, however. His marriage fantasy is entwined with his military objectives because he sees the war as the deliverance of the Spanish people from fascist oppression into democratic freedom. Jordan's supposed "inconsistency" shows that he sees the complexities of the situation much more than Henry does.

⁶¹ Romesburg critiques this distortion of virtue by shaping it to the available span of time for Jordan: "A whole life is lived in four days, the length of the mission, and then left behind. Again, the disconnection absolves responsibility, which leads to domination" (143). Romesburg attributes this distortion to Golz's way of thinking framed by patriarchal dominance. As I will mention shortly, Jordan cannot constrict his life to the remaining moments with Maria; he cannot resist thinking about the future with her, even though he knows it is mere fantasy.

enemy and give her and the others more time to escape" (Vernon 196).⁶² On their last night together, he cannot refrain from fantasizing about living in Madrid with her, even though he knows that such dreams are futile (*Bell* 370).

The person who influences him to think of a futureless present is Pilar: "She is a damned sight more civilized than you are and she knows what time is all about. Yes, he said to himself, I think we can admit that she has certain notions about the value of time" (184). Pilar's focus on the present stems from her keen awareness of death—she reads of Jordan's impending death in his palm (37), and she can smell the presence of death on others (271). Because she knows the inescapability of death, she encourages Jordan to embrace what life he can by embracing Maria; here she acts as a friend of virtue by urging Jordan to cling to what good is available in the final days before the bridge. Yet her devotion to the republic shows that she too lives in the uncomfortable limbo between present and future. I would argue that the future she looks toward, that of the republic, is provisional, that the victory of the republic will enable people to live only in the present. This view of life framed by death, then, gives her encouraging words to Jordan before the band embarks on their mission a new twist: "Thou art very worried, for good cause. But all will be well, *Inglés*. It is for this that we are born" (419). It is not fighting valiantly that she believes all are born for; it is death.⁶³ Her way of promoting Jordan's *telos*, then, is to encourage her friend that he will die excellently, fighting for the republic.

⁶² These two pursuits, many scholars point out, converge. For example, Cheney explains that "[t]he band carries the burden of Maria because she is, as an innocent victim of the tyranny of fascism, a symbol of all they fight for" (185).

⁶³ "According to the American novelist, people in Spain assume death as universal fate. However, this does not involve a resigned acceptance of death, especially in those cases where the mode of dying is not honorable; in other words, Spaniards desire to die well" (Marín Ruiz

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In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hemingway offers a *telos* for the life of a person—to use one’s gifts sacrificially for the promotion of freedom for humanity at large.⁶⁴ Robert Jordan says to himself at the end of the novel, “You can do nothing for yourself but perhaps you can do something for another....I hate to leave [the world] very much and I hope I have done some good in it. I have tried to with what talent I had” (502). This others-centered *telos* provides opportunity for virtue-friendships to flourish, which we see happen in the novel. At first, the presence of a *telos* seems to contradict Hemingway’s assessment of life in *The Sun Also Rises*; part of the operating thesis of that novel is that the cycle of generations is meaningless. Now he suggests that that cycle is vulnerable and must be preserved. But we must remember that the cycle alluded to in his 1926 work is perpetuated by a false, conformist view of the world that causes a person to lose his identity. The threat the republicans fight against in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is the annihilation of *afición*, a love for life and the worthwhile actions that constitute it. Hemingway argues in *The Sun Also Rises* that friends must encourage each other to detach from the false outlook of the meaningless cycle to find a true purpose for their lives. Indeed, Jordan and the band of republican *guerrilleros* he collaborates with embody such detachment, hiding out in the mountains in territory conquered by the fascists. The retreat that Jake Barnes and Bill Gorton take to the mountain village of Burguete transforms in this novel

113). With this observation, we can see death brought into Hemingway’s veneration for excellently performed actions; both life and death can be defined by one’s skillful action.

⁶⁴ Patrick Cheney believes that Hemingway offers his readers a revision of Christian faith as “a new ‘religion of man,’” in which “man must create his own salvation—do the forgiving [as Anselmo thinks about with the national penance], do the loving, even do the sacrificial dying” (188).

into a literal retreat—the mountain pass to La Granja serves as refuge for the comrades and their hope for a life of liberty. And like Jake and Bill, the *guerrilleros* know the importance of leaving the refuge to go back into the world. To truly serve one another and facilitate a life of freedom and purpose, they must reenter the danger of the war, just as Jake and Bill must return to the complications of their modern, cosmopolitan lives.

Hemingway's 1940 novel actually provides more of a corrective for *A Farewell to Arms* by repudiating Frederic Henry's self-interested withdrawal from the world in order to build his own reality around his love for Catherine.⁶⁵ Whereas Frederic abandons friends in the middle of what seems to be a hopeless, pointless struggle, Robert Jordan forms deep friendships in an even more perilous situation. Some of Robert Jordan's language as he thinks about the Spanish Civil War might remind the reader of Frederic's impersonal equation of humanity with ants on a burning log: "[T]here is not you, and there are no people that things must not happen to. Neither you nor this old man [Anselmo] is anything. You are instruments to do your duty" (48). Yet Jordan must reject this utilitarian view of people framed by his military mission because he realizes that his friends' usefulness lies in their agreement with him about what makes life worth living. Jordan may intend his work to protect a world in which a person could pursue a self-focused existence, like Frederic Henry's: "[A]ll people should be left alone and you should interfere with no one" (178). But the difference between Frederic and Jordan lies in the latter's favorable feeling about

⁶⁵ Michael K. Solow agrees that "the idea of individual sacrifice in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a radical departure from Hemingway's earlier thought," even from 1935, just before the Spanish Civil War began (104, 105). Solow traces Hemingway's movement from a radically isolationist stance, to a radically pro-republican stance, and finally to an insightful, compassionate stance that takes into account the weaknesses of both sides while still strenuously renouncing fascism. It is from this latter position that he wrote *Bell*.

the world: "The world is a fine place and worth the fighting for and I hate very much to leave it" (502). This conception of the world, made by a man lying in the woods with a broken femur waiting to be shot, is strikingly different from the burning log analogy. Granted, the Spanish Civil War was fought for a noble but futile end, whereas the so-called Great War was an exercise in futility from start to finish. Yet the disposition of each man influences how he looks at the particular war in which he fights. No matter what war he is in, Frederic Henry's goal arguably will be to separate himself from any sense of community.

There is an insistent theme throughout *For Whom the Bell Tolls* of the communal interdependence of human beings that begins with Hemingway's epigraph from John Donne: "No man is an *Iland*" (2).⁶⁶ Robert Jordan has the character that enables the reader to connect with that theme as he connects with the people who help him accomplish his goal. As *The Sun Also Rises* urges readers to find significance in the actions of one's life, knowing that one inevitably faces death, so also does *For Whom the Bell Tolls* encourage the strength of community against the individualistic force of death. Even as Robert Jordan awaits his death alone, he forces himself to keep his mind on his companions who have gone ahead: "Think about them O.K. tonight. Think about them travelling, all night. Think about them hiding up tomorrow. Think about them. God damn it, think about them" (506). We see in both novels, then, that other-centered friendships, based upon a mutual agreement of what is good to pursue in life, enable one to relate well with death, even if such relationships cannot

⁶⁶ The theme of collectivity bears out also in the novel's narratological strategy: unlike the first-person narration of *Sun* and *Arms*, the story in *Bell* jumps from character to character, creating a "collective voice" (Solow 112). By contrast, Alex Vernon argues that "[t]he many shifts in point of view disrupt the idea of a single, Republican sympathizing worldview and underscore contests of perspective that do not depend on narrative shifts" (153).

protect one from death. This right relation with death occurs because virtue-friends help each other to perceive the goodness of life properly. Maria, Pilar, and Anselmo help Robert Jordan in this way.

Hemingway still emphasizes the excellent performance of tasks in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, but instead of their simply having intrinsic value in being completed well, he now suggests that they can have a larger, external purpose, again to serve others. For example, Jordan's motivation for thinking about the *guerrilleros* escaping is to prevent him from passing out due to the pain of his broken leg; this act of maintaining consciousness, if done excellently, will enable his friends to gain a greater distance on the fascist officers that chase them. As Jordan reminds himself, "*And if you wait and hold them up even a little while or just get the officer that may make all the difference. One thing well done can make—*" (506, Hemingway's italics). Similarly, throughout the novel, his thoughts about the bridge center on its success affecting the progress of the war: "[T]here is a bridge and that bridge can be the point on which the future of the human race can turn. As it can turn on everything that happens in this war" (48). Again, on the morning that he blows up the bridge, he thinks to himself, "Today is only one day in all the days that will ever be. But what will happen in all the other days that ever come can depend on what you do today" (465). The bridge, the war, and every action a person takes have significance on the people who will live after those actions take place, and the people who most clearly demonstrate this fact are our friends whom we serve. The generations may cycle endlessly, but the people of the current generation can make an impact on how the people of

the next experience the cycle of earthly life if the generations organically develop out of other-minded friendships.⁶⁷

It must be conceded, however, that the *telos* Hemingway discovers for his characters in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is intermediate. Robert Jordan's generation has the purpose of protecting freedom, but if they are successful, what will be the purpose of the next generation that lives in that freedom? The fulfillment of Robert Jordan's *telos* merely provides the space for future Jake Barneses and Frederic Henrys to stumble their way through the world, searching for meaning. The insecurity of Jordan's existential role emerges in the open-ended conclusion of the novel. Jordan watches as Pilar, Pablo, Maria, Agustín, and Rafael ride away, supposedly to freedom, a freedom he has given to them by standing in the gap and sacrificing his life to the fascist troop that is pursuing the *guerrilleros*. We do not know if Pablo leads the others to the republic, where they can continue to play their part in the battle for freedom, or if he leads them to another secluded place where he can selfishly prolong his survival. Jordan's sacrifice may not be efficacious because the people for whom he has sacrificed may not be pursuing a life defined by virtue. The novel's ambiguous ending reflects the vulnerability of the virtues in freedom. Freedom is not *the* good but only *a* good. Nor can freedom be the end that one pursues; at best, it is only a

⁶⁷ Solow discusses the pointlessness attendant to the novel's plot—the reader knows from the beginning that the Republic loses. He argues that the mission recounted in *Bell* serves as a clarion call to Americans to engage in the fight against the ever expanding threat of fascism, specifically the German Nazis: "Robert Jordan is an American, willing to sacrifice his life for Spanish freedom. Despite Hemingway's earlier isolationist certainty, this time he has made his protagonist a fellow countryman and an interventionist, signaling to his audience that there are larger struggles beyond the borders for which honorable people are willing to fight and die. Throughout the novel, Jordan delivers his anti-fascist creed repeatedly in thoughts and dialogue, as when he tells Maria how his fellow Americans can be made to understand the struggle, 'We can educate the people so that they will fear fascism and recognize it as it appears and combat it' (*FWTBT* 208)" (117).

beginning to the pursuit. Nevertheless, Hemingway suggests that the only way to find the right end to pursue is to consider how to help our friends in their own pursuit.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

C. S. Lewis declares that “Eros will have naked bodies; Friendship naked personalities” (71). This epigrammatic comment reflects the value of studying friendship in modernist literature. At a time when authors strove to convey the necessarily individualistic, subjectivist view of the world that we all supposedly possess, separated from any certain, all-encompassing, explanatory narrative about life, the universe, and everything, they still provided, perhaps inadvertently, a way for readers to observe their characters’ psyches from without, through how those characters interact with their friends. Furthermore, if Aristotle’s belief in the centrality of friendship to a flourishing life in community is valid, then our observations of characters’ friendships can give us insight into how the community, and the good life it is supposed to foster, are endangered by the modern world.

I believe that the four authors examined in this study still retain a hope that community can promote a worthwhile *telos* for its members, the pursuit of which would bring them *eudaimonia* and that friends could encourage one another in that pursuit. Willa Cather sees the solution in individuals striking upon a worthy set of transcendent values, such as those that underpin art or religion, and joining with friends to live them out. F. Scott Fitzgerald suggests that a reconstitution of the community will take place when good friends draw each other away from conforming to false *teloi* and affirm their authentic identities and virtuous desires. Ernest Hemingway builds upon Fitzgerald’s

strategy of retreat by insisting that friends, energized by mutual affirmation through meaningful action, return to their dysfunctional communities and reshape them according to their *afición*, their passion for life. Even Gertrude Stein, whose work ends in existential anxiety and cynicism about the good of community, still has a vision for community, in which its members affirm and encourage innovative genius, what she considers to be the ultimate virtue. Whether the friendships they portray in their respective works succeed or fail, they all point to a longing for community that nourishes the good life of its members.

Such nourishment must go to the individual person, who has been starved by identity-erasing forces of modernization—for example, mass marketing, bureaucratic government, or the impersonal maneuvers of a widening, increasingly complicated universe. Because the individual feels her identity to be threatened by civilization's hostile environment, her focus gradually turns inward in order to protect herself. Thus, as we have seen in the works of all four authors, the biggest hindrance to friendship in the modernist milieu is egoism, the self focused on the self. Turning one's attention outside one's self to an other appears too risky; however, most of the characters in these novels do not realize that having an other-oriented focus would simultaneously amplify their existence as they amplify their friends'. Selflessness actually counteracts the anonymity of modern life and increases selfhood. Some of the characters we have examined learn this lesson: Jean Marie Latour and Joseph Vaillant, Nick Carraway and James Gatz, Jake Barnes and Bill Gorton, Robert Jordan and Anselmo.

With the exception of the priests in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, none of the characters find a reliable set of virtues that would enable them to flourish. Fitzgerald reinforces the pursuit of happiness, but he does not clarify *how* to pursue it; in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hemingway expresses the need for people to have freedom to live well, but freedom seems to be only a precondition, not a virtue in itself. Some readers might interpret the lack of clearly articulated virtues as a sign that these authors do not believe in the virtues, but my argument has shown that, rather than eschewing *all* virtues, they are recommending the search for which virtues are worthwhile to practice. I believe that our authors have revealed that, like freedom, selflessness—demonstrated in friendship—is a precondition to reconstituting the community with authentic virtues. The discovery and development of virtue occurs when people share what is meaningful to them in friendship. Consider Lewis’s speculation:

We can imagine that among those early hunters and warriors single individuals—one in a century? one in a thousand years?—saw what others did not; saw that the deer was beautiful as well as edible, that hunting was fun as well as necessary, dreamed that his gods might be not only powerful but holy. But as long as each of these percipient persons dies without finding a kindred soul, nothing (I suspect) will come of it; art or sport or spiritual religion will not be born. It is when two such persons discover one another, when, whether with immense difficulties and semi-articulate fumbings or with what would seem to us amazing and elliptical speed, they share their vision—it is then that Friendship is born. And instantly they stand together in an immense solitude. (65)

Lewis goes on to say that the solitude of friends is not unbreechable; friends welcome others in their circle who share their valuations. We could therefore imagine the organic growth of new community from the sharing of virtues between friends, which vindicates Aristotle’s placing remarkable importance on

friendship for the proper functioning of the *polis*; it seems that friendship is community in embryonic form.

If the flowers of friendship are fading, it is because the soil of the modern community has been exhausted; the supposed virtues that enrich it no longer yield a healthy crop. People must renew the search for the virtues, but it must be accomplished in other-oriented, goodwill-promoting friendships. Our modernist authors cannot extol the joys of friendship as authors of earlier times did; rather, they must begin with semi-articulate fumbblings, the rare and poignant friendships that have taken root in a different soil. Isolated from the modern wasteland, these friendships reveal the authors' hope that community can be reborn, that *eudaimonia* can be recovered.

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