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Comments (Optional):

Sally Rowlett has done a fine, scholarly analysis of the text of Heading West. She has worked hard on the project and produced a creditable piece of work.

An Analysis of Literary Allusions and Their
Significance in Doris Betts's Heading West

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Abstract

Although Doris Betts is not widely known outside academic circles, the complexity of her novel Heading West earns her a place in the literary tradition. Some aspects of the novel have been studied, particularly character analyses of the protagonist Nancy Finch. A thorough evaluation of the allusions within the novel has not been completed to date, even though these allusions link the novel to many of the greatest minds in literature, philosophy, religion, myths, and popular culture. Heading West contains over two-hundred allusions of varying significance, particularly to characterization. These allusions also display the skill and scholarship of Doris Betts.

This thesis explores primarily three types of allusions: allusions to literature, allusions to the Bible and religious, and allusions to fairy tales. These allusions give insight into characterization and can be grouped together to show pervasive themes of the novel. Allusions are a unique and multi-faceted way of expressing the complexities of human existence.

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Introduction

Heading West is a novel of self-definition, a coming of age for Nancy Finch, a thirty-four year old single librarian. An unorthodox kidnapping allows her to come to terms with herself and forces her family to evaluate life without her. Nancy has made several attempts to understand herself better; the novel shows how inadequate each of these attempts has been. Only when she is forcefully relieved of the monotony of every day chores and the dependency of her family does she have the opportunity to evaluate her life and what she wants from life.

This bildungsroman is also an "achievement of maturity" (Scura, "Mid-Career" 173) for North Carolinian Doris Betts. Betts is currently a professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Heading West is her fourth novel and seventh work of fiction. She has published three collections of short stories, including The Beasts of the Southern Wild and Other Stories (1973), and six novels, including her latest novel Souls Raised from the Dead (1994) and a forthcoming novel due in May of 1997, The Sharp Teeth of Love. One of her short stories, "The Ugliest Pilgrim," has been adapted into an Academy Award-winning short film Violet, and a musical of the same name that has recently enjoyed a limited run on Broadway. In addition to these works, Betts has also published numerous scholarly journal articles about other authors and about the writing process itself. Heading West is her masterpiece, rich in detail and

complex in themes. One mark of Betts' supreme craftsmanship is her extensive use of allusion, and this thesis will discuss these allusions and their significance to Heading West.

As of yet, no one has completed a thorough analysis of allusions in Betts's novel. In fact, only two other authors have given reference to the number and importance of allusions in Heading West. Mary Anne Ferguson briefly refers to allusions within the novel saying that the allusions "invite readers of all levels of culture to interpret the characters' experiences and reactions symbolically"(69). Dorothy M. Scura adds that "rather than serving as ornaments for the text, the literary allusions reinforce the themes of the novel, including those having to do with time, mortality, and vision"("Heroine" 143). This thesis will painstakingly excavate the literary allusions in the novel and explore their significance to Heading West, expanding greatly on the few paragraphs written on the subject thus far.

The appendix lists over two-hundred allusions. These allusions vary considerably in subject matter and form. Many are allusions to people; others refer to specific works or lines. Still other allusions focus on themes such as the fairy tale motif or Nancy's search for happiness. Finally, allusions to popular culture abound in references such as song titles, the names of famous people, and magazine titles. Each of the allusions in Heading West has a

distinct purpose and is an integral part in adding another level of meaning to the novel.

Also important to an analysis of allusions is the tone of Heading West. An interview with Betts by William Walsh gives insight into Nancy's tone:

When I'm comic, the reader may smile but he rarely laughs. And I incline to the character who is sarcastic. Women today say what they think. In my generation you didn't say aloud everything you thought, but your thoughts were quite wry. Comedy is healthier than the Victim Routine. It is life-affirming--a response that involves laughing at oneself as well as others. (95)

Nancy's characterization reflects Betts's attitudes about humor and sarcasm; in fact, the reader experiences firsthand Nancy's "wry" thoughts. For example, her kidnapping becomes humorous as she considers that earlier she had prayed for any man to save her, and "This man [Dwight] was God's answer? There were practical jokes John Calvin had never guessed" (29). The allusion made to John Calvin informs the reader early of Nancy's Presbyterianism and her propensity to seek out and endure suffering. The irony of "God's Answer" sets the stage for Nancy's future doubts. Moreover, the statement effectively lightens the severity of Nancy's situation, showing that she is not afraid to laugh at herself. In order to grow, she must not take herself too seriously; rather, she must observe and learn from the world around her. Humor is used to convey this detachment and the irony of situations.

Due to the interwoven texture of the novel, an analysis of literary allusions would not be meaningful without a brief discussion the themes of the novel. One pervasive theme is Nancy's quest for identity; she looks for a greater understanding of herself through many different aspects of her life. One important aspect of her life is religion, particularly Presbyterianism, and she examines her faith and thus herself throughout the novel. Nancy also seeks to understand herself through her sexual experiences. She analyzes what her "tepid love affairs"(19) have taught her and evaluates society's expectations for women and sexuality. Moreover, Nancy's trek from one end of the continent to the other highlights her search for her identity through, first, her native South and then through the Southwest. Nancy sees the South as "cool, rich, green--a color print," and the Southwest becomes "sharp, bright, bare--a photographic negative"(108). This bare negative helps Nancy to sort out her experience and her relationship to nature and region. Nancy also logically looks to her family and what heredity can tell her about herself, discovering that she has been martyring herself just as her mother martyred herself before; in this instance, Nancy is offered a way to change the vicious cycle of martyrdom by taking responsibility for her own happiness. Nancy also looks to biology and psychology to define herself as human being and woman, knowing that part of her identity is connected with her gender. Finally, she follows the

traditional path of self-education and scholarship, believing that meaning and insight can be gained from books. The literary allusions that she makes are evidence of her faith in knowledge and her search for herself within the pages of the books she reads. The depth and number of these allusions demonstrate Betts's skill as a writer and secure the novel's place in literature.

All of these themes are drawn together in a framework that hides complexity of theme beneath simplicity of plot. Nancy Finch is vacationing with her brother-in-law and sister, Eddie and Faye Rayburn, in the Smokey Mountains. Nancy would rather be taking a cruise, but she has been forced to accept this lesser alternative due to her responsibilities to her aging mother and her epileptic brother. Dwight Anderson, a petty criminal "who had not earned his pursuers yet" (21), robs the Rayburns and impulsively decides to kidnap Nancy. Later, fate intervenes to introduce hitchhiker and former judge Harvey Jolley; Nancy invites Jolley to join her and Dwight.

At first, Nancy fears Dwight, but she quickly learns how to manipulate his weaknesses and determines the length and the conditions of the kidnapping. She has many opportunities to escape or to call for help, but each time she calls home she becomes more aware of how she has been falsely led to believe that she must give up her autonomy as an adult to take care of her family. Nancy realizes that the kidnapping is less restrictive than her home life. After

deciding to make the kidnapping her search for happiness, she has a brief encounter with a California pediatrician J. Waldo Foster and his son, Benjy.

Even though Nancy cannot deny the appeal of a life without remorse, she chooses to return to responsible adulthood, and she eventually leaves the Judge behind and seeks help from a woman that she happens to meet at a public pool, Chan Thatcher. Chan leaves Nancy at the Grand Canyon, and Nancy journeys by herself into the canyon. Dwight pursues her, but he is unable to kill her; one false step throws him over the canyon's edge to his death, and, at this moment, Nancy experiences an animalistic pleasure that represents her own fall from innocence. Her knowledge of her own capacity to do evil will haunt her throughout the novel.

Although free from Dwight, Nancy experiences extreme physical, emotional, and spiritual hardships as she attempts to climb out of the canyon. She throws away all forms of her identity on the arduous journey, and even faints before she reaches the rim, but she is rescued. Her sole possession, a business card bearing Chan's name, takes her back to the care of Chan Thatcher for her recuperation. She meets and falls in love with Chan's son, Hunt, who may not be the Prince Charming she once envisioned, but who will allow her to be true to herself.

The novel finally traces her route eastward to make peace with her past. First, Nancy visits Jolley and

discovers that while she has found her identity, Jolley is still lost, now believing himself to be mulatto. Then, Nancy searches for Dwight's identity, finding his twin brother, Edwin Childers, but nothing definitive to explain Dwight's behavior. Finally, Nancy must return to Greenway and make an uneasy peace with her family and her Southern heritage before finalizing her decision to leave the smothering South behind forever.

Heading West is a novel of transformation, and Nancy's transformation and experimentation with identity can be seen through her aliases. Symbolically, she assumes different names throughout the novel from the first time she introduces herself as "Nan" to the kidnapper to her trip to the gynecologist under the name "Celeste Victor." Some of the other aliases that Nancy adopts, or is given, are Mrs. Randolph Macon Finch, Ruby Kaye Foster, and Nancy Thatcher. Just as Nancy puts these fictitious personas together to form her personality, she also puts together what she has read to make one solid body of knowledge. Her references to philosophers, theologians, authors, poets, artists, and the Bible form a composite of Nancy's ideology and identity, just as the various personas that she assumes form a composite of her personality.

The allusions that Nancy and other characters make are as varied as the novel itself. Nancy refers to the Partridge Family song "Get Happy" as easily as she refers to Buber's theory of an "I-Thou" relationship between man and

God. Nancy draws upon her experience as a librarian to connect life with the thoughts and works of artists, theologians, philosophers, authors, poets, essayists, adventure writers, myths, legend, Biblical passages, and popular culture. This thesis will explore primarily allusions to literature, myth, legend, and allusions to the Bible and theology.

Fairy Tales

Fairy tales are based on the assumption that every little girl has dreams of being rescued by a handsome and gallant prince and being carried off into the sunset of happiness on a feisty white steed. As girls grow into young women, these fantasies about princes and knights in shining armor turn into a fantasy that romance and marriage can whisk one away from the troubles of life in a similarly gallant manner. Nancy has these unrealistic expectations for romance, specifically marriage, and she appropriately expresses these expectations through allusions to fairy tales and other romantic tales.

In the beginning of the novel--and the kidnapping--Nancy looks to romance as the most viable solution to her problems. Upon meeting Dwight, Nancy realizes "that part of her had been waiting for him ever since she memorized 'The Highwayman,'" (16). This allusion to

Alfred Noyes poem suggests Nancy's highly romanticized view of her situation. Noyes' poem tells of a Highwayman, who is dashing even if he is a criminal, and his love Bess, who ultimately sacrifices herself in an attempt to save the man she loves. Of course, the gallant highwayman cannot simply leave his true love dead, and the British soldiers who were holding Bess hostage brutally murder him. The poem ends sentimentally with the meeting of the Highwayman and Bess as ghosts. Nancy, then, may instinctively know that Dwight is going to change her life; the gory ending of the poem further suggests that she also understands the danger of her situation.

Nancy's romantic dreams become ironic to her as she thinks about Dwight and how he falls short of Prince Charming. Nancy remembers her innocent thoughts of just a few hours before the kidnapping:

On shipboard, Nancy had hoped to meet a man who would give her his full attention, would offer to take her away from all that; she had even prayed in the choirloft for such an encounter and promised no longer to be choosy about the man's habits, or income, or even intelligence. This man was God's answer? There were divine practical jokes that John Calvin had never guessed. (29)

Nancy is beginning to realize not only that Dwight is not her Prince Charming, but also that she should take action rather than passively wait for a happy ending to present itself in the form of an exciting love affair. While Nancy has not been waiting for the perfect man--she "stopped

wishing for Prince Charming or miracles"(19)long ago--she does still believe that marriage is the only legitimate means of escaping her family.

As Nancy realizes that Dwight is not her Prince Charming, she also realizes that she is not the pure and innocent heroine. She looks first to fairy tales, then to literature, to provide justification for her impure thoughts and to escape from her previously uneventful life. At one point, her mind is "cluttered with Robin Hoods"(26) and later she tells Dwight, "It's hard to play Maid Marian with you"(35). The English legend of Robin Hood's kidnapping of virtuous Maid Marian shows that Nancy is already beginning to look for ways to escape her conscience. The English legend of Robin Hood is similar to the tale of Lorna Doone, allowing adventure without a loss of reputation. In Lorna Doone, the title character is kidnapped and raised by outlaws and murderers, yet she manages to remain chaste and pure. Nancy wants to experience life, but she does not yet have the gumption to enjoy those things forbidden to her by society without some form of justification, as shown by the drunken fantasy that she experiences in Bernalillo, one of the campsites where she, Dwight, and the Judge stay. This scene occurs midway in the novel and reveals Nancy's guilt for not being the chaste heroine:

Meanwhile, she decided to indulge in a fantasy about being delivered to strangers who had won her by lottery. Those sexual feelings which canceled out all question of volition usually worked best for her; yes,

she had read the books analyzing that. The nameless stranger had two henchmen, George and Frank. "That's right, George, lift her leg wider. Now get the skirt up, Frank." Neither Mama nor the church elders could hardly blame a helpless wench in some circumstances. (119)

As Cinderella and Snow White are not allowed to indulge in sexual fantasies, Nancy cannot release her sexual tension of her own free will without feelings of guilt; hence, she needs her sexual encounters to be beyond her control so she can remain blameless in the eyes of society, her family, and the church. Nancy comes to look upon her kidnapping as an opportunity to free herself from the shackles of purity--especially from purity of thought. She seeks the excitement and remorselessness of a life of crime, such as the life of the kidnapped yet virtuous maiden. Nancy's kidnapping becomes a socially acceptable means of escaping her responsibilities at home, and life without a conscience becomes attractive to Nancy, a woman who has allowed conscience to tyrannize her life. When Hunt asks Nancy if there were any attributes that Dwight possessed that she admired, she responds she liked nothing about him "except that he had no conscience and I did envy that. Yes, I did, I do--and so do you if you tell the truth" (299). Nancy is attracted, then, to Dwight, not romantically, but because she envies his "remorselessness" and his freedom to live without taking into consideration the lives of others.

Nancy also daydreams about Wuthering Heights, particularly the dark hero, Heathcliff. Interestingly

Hunt senses that Nancy has a secret desire for Heathcliff, and in his letter to Nancy explaining how their romance might not be perfect but that it is honest, he writes as a postscript, "I'll bet your ideal resembled Heathcliff. Sorry"(307). Ironically, works like Wuthering Heights and "The Highwayman" are far from fairy tales. Nancy's acceptance of Hunt, despite the fact that he is no Heathcliff, shows that not only has she given up the gallantry of fairy tales, but she has also given up expectations for unrealistic passion. Wuthering Heights and "The Highwayman" both refer to love affairs so strong that they will meet beyond the grave.

Even though Nancy no longer expects Prince Charming, she does still see marriage as the only socially mandated excuse for leaving her family. Chan Thatcher senses Nancy's initial need for male intervention and refers to Nancy within the paradigm of the fairy tale, saying, "She acts younger than she is. I've always thought that when the Prince kissed Sleeping Beauty, she said, 'Move out of my way,' and took off. Nancy looked like that [when she looked off Mather Point]"(194). Chan understands Nancy more deeply than Nancy understands herself at first. Nancy has always believed that she needed a Prince Charming to "awaken" her true self and true potential. Ironically, Dwight, the antithesis of Prince Charming, instigates Nancy's transformation by forcibly taking her away from the drudgery

of her life at home. Nancy needs no romantic attraction to Dwight to complete the process, rather, she escapes him to complete her self-fulfillment.

Although seemingly unusual that such a well-read woman would have faith in romance and marriage as the best escape route, the alternatives for unmarried women justify Nancy's concern. Other female characters in Heading West show that few alternatives exist for women. First, Nancy desires children, and the only socially acceptable means of having children is within the framework of marriage. The thirty-four year old librarian can hear her biological clock ticking as she thinks wistfully of Oliver Newton and an opportunity lost, ruing the fact that Newton kept living with his family while she "kept on menstruating for nothing"(90). Nancy perceives her duty to have children since "Anything that can make babies is biodegradable. Including me. Without having made a baby or anything else to speak of"(118). An alternative to living without marriage, then is the alternative of not having children and feeling barren and unfulfilled

Second, Heading West clearly shows the few alternatives to romance and marriage for a woman in a small Southern town. In Greenway, there are only two interesting, if less than satisfying, models for unmarried women: Miss. Boykin and Evaline Sample. Nancy indignantly remembers that the county commissioners think of Miss Boykin as "a fixture--

like a lamp whose cord had rooted itself into the floor" (85). Or Nancy could be Evaline Sample

whose small nervous breakdowns had each been shocked back together by small jolts of electrotherapy. Awed tenth grade girls had warned one another that spinsterhood had driven Evaline Sample crazy, that older women needed 'sex juice' to stay normal. (33)

Nancy, of course, takes the opportunity to run "away . . . from turning into the old women [Boykin and Sample] had become" (90). Faced with such limiting alternatives, Nancy is bitter as she thinks about what the future holds for her if her relationship with Hunt does not work. She thinks

If things didn't work out with Hunt, if she stayed here, Nancy could picture herself stripping the library of Arizona travel books. She could pretend to be as virginal as Miss Boykin or Evaline Sample and grow older and purer in Greenway, cultivating her quiet and harmless hobby to the point that when any local club chairman ran out of program topics she could always rely on inviting Miss Nancy Finch to deliver her well-known lecture on the Grand Canyon. (350)

Nancy does envision this unhappy ending for herself, but she ultimately rejects this future in favor of a future with Hunt.

Nancy does not make the decision to marry Hunt with a misplaced faith in the perfection of marriage, however. Both her mother and Faye are examples of the 'fairy tale gone awry. Nancy's mother's bad marriage is reflected by her statement that husbands rarely make their wives happy (360). Faye, on the other hand, hysterically laughs at Nancy for saying that she would not have to pretend with Hunt. Faye

responds, "Oh, Nancy, the things I could tell you!"(362) but then never divulges those things that have made her marriage less than ideal. Thus, while Nancy's final decision may seem trite and representative of her previous attempts at "happily ever after,"she is, in fact, still asserting herself without any delusions about what marriage might bring.

The ending of the novel has been often criticized for Nancy's choice. If she stays in Greenway, she must embrace virginal and slightly crazy spinsterhood; if she leaves with Hunt, she runs the risk of invalidating all that she has learned about the groundless idealism of fairy tales. In "Heading West: A Review Essay" Mary Anne Ferguson discusses the novel's unsatisfactory ending:

Betts has created a female hero who is the subject of her own story; but in marrying her off to the son of the female rescuer who is a role model for Nancy, Betts has ended on a weak note. Nancy does go home again. . . . Her decision to marry is an alternative not an escape. . . . [But] Betts's stress on moral and spiritual development denies the social force of traditional roles; she never hints that Nancy may at the end of the book be taking even more of a risk than she had when she was kidnapped. (73)

One seeming weakness of the novel, then, is that although the contrast between real life and Nancy's allusions to fairy tales and other romantic stories show that such an approach to romance is unrealistic, Betts ends the novel in a similar fashion. At first glance, this ending does seem to contradict Nancy's newly won sense of independence, but Betts is really creating a model for an honest, fulfilling

relationship. Betts stated in an interview with William Walsh that "to live fully, which always means to love fully"(95) is the answer to life's search for meaning. Thus, Nancy's decision to marry does not invalidate her search, but rather fulfills her search.

Nancy looks to other fairy tales to put her existence into perspective. As she prepares to leave the restaurant where she and Dwight first eat, she thinks "of dropping her driver's license on the floor, her social security card at the next stop. A trail. Hansel and Gretel"(28-29). Although practical, Nancy's plan shows the naivete of a child daydreaming her way out of a frightening situation.

Nancy even treats her relationship with her grandfather like a fairy tale. The children's story "Heidi" involves a carefree and cheerful girl winning the heart of her gruff but well-meaning grandfather. Nancy struggles with her relationship with her grandfather, particularly with whether or not he loved her or was proud of her. She seeks to romanticize both him and the pastoral area in which he lived, but in the end she refers to the landscape around her grandfather's house as a "hill, only a hill, not the tall Heidi's mountain [she] had once fancied"(351) suggesting that Nancy has reconciled herself to the true self of her grandfather. She no longer wants her grandfather to be a fairy tale hero rather than the man he was.

Nancy does use a few other allusions to fairy tales to express her relationship to characters. Upon finding out about Dwight's twin brother and finding out what she thinks is Dwight's true identity, Nancy thinks to herself, "I know you, Rumplestiltskin" (105). Interestingly, the fairy tale of Rumplestiltskin in which a princess promises her first born to a troll-like creature in return for his ability to spin straw into gold is a lot like Nancy and Dwight's relationship. Nancy takes advantage of her kidnapping to get what she wants, then she is even happy to see Dwight die, never expressing gratitude for the part he played in her awakening. Once Nancy finds her true self, Dwight loses his control over her; thus she earns her freedom without a great sacrifice. Nancy is Chan Thatcher's "Sleeping Beauty," pushing aside her "redeemer" in favor of defining herself.

Myths

The overriding myth that represents Nancy throughout the novel is the myth of Persephone. Persephone, daughter of the goddess Demeter, is kidnapped by the lord of the underworld, Hades. Demeter appeals to Olympus, and Persephone is eventually allowed to return to her mother, but while in the underworld, Persephone eats some pomegranate seeds, and for this reason she has to return to the underworld for one-third of the year. While in the

underworld, Persephone assumes the role of queen and acts as guide. Accounts differ on why Persephone ate the pomegranates; Edith Hamilton says that Hades forced Persephone to eat them while Bolen suggests that Hades gave Persephone the pomegranate seeds and then she lied in saying she had been forced to eat them. Nancy eats her own literal pomegranates--the salted peanuts offered to her by the unknown hiker(218), and she almost pays her life to learn the symbolic knowledge that she, and every other human being, is capable of evil in some capacity: "Remembering Persephone, Nancy understood her sampling the pomegranate" (302).

The Greeks used the myth of Persephone to explain the changing seasons, but the myth has another meaning for Nancy because Nancy's experience as a whole is similar to Persephone's descent into hell. Without warning, Nancy is kidnapped by an outsider who forces her to face mortality and gain maturity. Similarly, Persephone is wrenched from her mother by Hades and thus forced to enter adulthood. Importantly, Nancy's relationship with her mother mirrors that of Demeter and Persephone particularly by those who seek to connect modern day women's behavior with models that myths provide.

In the book Goddesses in Every Woman: A New Psychology of Women, Jean Shinoda Bolen uses Greek mythology as a means to interpret the psychology of women. She says of the Persephone and Demeter relationship, "Persephone and Demeter

represent a common mother-daughter pattern, in which a daughter is too close to a mother to develop an independent sense of herself"(200). Also, the desire to please her mother makes the Persephone daughter want to be a "'good girl' --obedient, compliant, cautious, and often sheltered . . . from experience that carries even the hint of risk." Nancy is like Persephone before she is kidnapped in that she is compliant enough to dedicate her life to pleasing her family, her community, and God. Bolen further comments that "although Persephone's first experience with the underworld was a kidnap victim, she later became Queen of the Underworld. . . . This aspect of the Persephone archetype develops, as in the myth, as a result of experience and growth"(202). Similarly, Nancy's journey to and through the Grand Canyon forces her into responsible adulthood, and she must confront the evil in her nature and in every human being's nature. Like Persephone, Nancy changes from an innocent, compliant girlish figure to a woman who has knowledge of evil and who is ready to take charge of her life.

Nancy's kidnapping as a whole is hell to her, but the Grand Canyon particularly represents a physical hell in her journey. Davenport says,

Her spectacular and dangerous hike into the Grand Canyon becomes a descent into Hades or an origins quest, during which she goes 'down through the record of earth's biography'; and when she emerges, nearly destroyed, she is free of her abductor--and free of her former self.(441)

The Grand Canyon represents hell, both the Biblical hell and the underworld of the Persephone myth. As Nancy journeys through hell, peeling back layer after layer of human history, she also must peel back layer after layer of human progress. Eventually, she is stripped of the accomplishments of the past and left with nothing but her most primal nature:

Nowhere else but in the Grand Canyon can a man in two days--though trained long-distance runners have trotted the whole 20.6 miles in less than four hours--walk steadily down through the record of earth's biography and then climb slowly through it into his own century again. He starts where marine shells and sponges remain in the limestone, passes the Permian dune sands still marked with reptile tracks, sees where the red and gray floodplains settled, then under the Redwall descends into time back through the quartzite, the sandstone, and lower shale. In the Bass limestone he descends among PreCambrian stones where the first traces of plant life have been found. If he could walk to the deepest inner gorge downriver (and its walls are so steep that only boats penetrate there) he could also go down below granite, at last could *lean out from his raft* to place one hand flat on the lowest stage of Brahma and Vishnu schist, azoic, laid down before any life on earth is thought to have existed. Minus one from the first page of Genesis. Cold. (198, emphasis mine)

Imagining a raft below the lowest layer reinforces a reading of the Grand Canyon as Hades. First, the image is that of Charon, ferryman of the River Styx who ferried the dead to the underworld. Second, the reader knows that there is an area of the Grand Canyon that cannot be seen by the naked eye. Hamilton refers to the Iliad in saying that the

underworld "lies. . .beneath the secret places of the earth"(42). Indeed, the Grand Canyon is magnificent and beautiful; only the occurrences in the canyon and the canyon's sweltering heat comprise Nancy's hell. She is stripped of the niceties of convention and the amenities of modern life as she struggles to survive both a psychological transformation and a real threat to her physical condition.

Betts also uses allusions to myths as description. When Nancy is in the woods at a campsite near Bernalillo, she first "willed herself into a geological formation," then she "hugged her knees tightly together and turned into Niobe"(119). Niobe bragged about her many children claiming that she was greater than Leto, mother of Apollo and Artemis, because she had more children, wealth, and a home. This talk, of course, angered Apollo and Artemis who killed all of Niobe's children, and Niobe then turned into a stone that forever wept from grief. Nancy's attempt to be Niobe is ironic, if poetic, as she wills herself into the picture of grief during a moment of self-pity.

Similarly, Nancy quips "A place like the Grand Canyon. . . would give Sisyphus bad dreams"(73). Hamilton describes the fate of Sisyphus after he told Asopus where Zeus had taken Asopus's daughter as "having to try forever to roll a rock uphill which forever rolled back upon him"(440). Sisyphus may also be an allusion to Camus's essay "The Myth of Sisyphus." Camus says,

His scorn of the Gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing. This is the price that must be paid for the passions of the earth.(120)

Camus adds that scorn can overcome any fate. Sisyphus's nightmare suggests that the majesty and overwhelming nature of the Grand Canyon cancels the individual's ability to scorn the gods. In the grand canyon, Sisyphus would not be able to maintain his stoic and scornful demeanor; the Grand Canyon is proof that the gods, and in Nancy's case God, is indeed sovereign.

Another effectively used allusion is Hunt's comment to Nancy, "You said you weren't an Augean stable that had to be emptied, not now, and that's good because I have no place to store all that"(306). Cleaning the Augean Stables in a single day was the fifth labor of Hercules. To describe the massiveness of this labor, Hamilton writes,

Augeas had thousands of cattle and their stalls had not been cleared out for years. Hercules diverted the courses of two rivers and made them flow through the stables in a great flood that washed out the filth in no time at all.(232)

Nancy effectively alludes to the Augean Stables in order to say that her emotional baggage is not as tremendous as it seems. Furthermore, Hunt is convinced that Nancy does not expect him to be a Hercules, forever having to perform superhuman labors to please her.

Another allusion to mythology gives insight into Chan's character. Speaking of how quickly and easily Chan

recovered from the death of her first husband, Betts explains,

. . .the timeless ordinary motions grinding on had all the mystery for Chan that they had held for Helen, forgetting Menelaus on a larger scale. Penelope's behavior, she was certain, had been invented by a male author with greater optimistic ego than powers of observation.(185)

Betts uses Greek mythology to argue effectively the point that married love is not as invincible as perceived. Helen, of course, was kidnapped by Paris, triggering the entire Trojan War; however, her loyalties to her original husband, Menelaus, are called into question after she is returned to him. Telemachus, the son of Odysseus, and Nestor's son visit Menelaus and Helen in the attempt to find news of Odysseus, and nostalgia ensues. Hamilton writes, "They all thought of Troy and what had happened since and wept. . . and Helen--but who could say for whom Helen's tears fell? Was she thinking of Paris as she sat in her husband's splendid hall?"(299). Helen's sadness and suggested psychological infidelity contrasts greatly with the story of Penelope's faithfulness. Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, has to fight off suitors after her husband has been missing for quite some time. She uses her wits to keep herself free by saying that she will marry when she finishes weaving an elaborate shroud for Odysseus's father. Each day she weaves, and each night she picks out the stitches again. She holds the suitors at bay until she is finally reunited with her husband. The contrast between the stories of

Penelope and Helen shows that marriage is not as romantic as the myth of Penelope or the magic of the previously discussed fairy tales suggest. Rather, human beings are, on the whole, easily adaptable. She says of the widowed Chan, "As she had been happy for most of her married life she was, in a while, on the average, happy again"(185).

Biblical and Religious Allusions

In large part, Nancy's journey is a spiritual journey. She leaves her prayers at the beginning of the novel, but by the end she has returned to her old niche in the choirloft with a new perspective on life. One allusion that explains Nancy's spiritual journey particularly well is the allusion that she makes to Saint Augustine as she prepares to make her escape. She thinks fleetingly of his words, "Lord save me! But not yet!"(177). Although Nancy must eventually come to terms with God as well as her past, she must first explore the themes of religion and spirituality. As she explores these themes, she refers to the Bible¹ and to various theologians.

The greatest part of Nancy's spiritual development takes place on her journey through the Grand Canyon and her subsequent delirium. The Grand Canyon resembles hell, the "valley of the shadow of death" of the Twenty-third Psalm and the wilderness in which Jesus was tempted. As Nancy stumbles through the canyon she looks over the ledge:

Through the shimmer she imagined herself jumping, floating down like a thistle, her descent borne up by angels lest she dash her foot against a stone. Both feet are dashed already? Until now she had not once thought of praying for help but--finding that her only petition was to kill the son of a bitch--she gave a kind of inarticulate moan toward Heaven and turned back from the edge to walk on.
(209)

Nancy faces the same temptation that Jesus did. On a literal level, the Grand Canyon is a temptation to commit suicide with its heights tempting Nancy to take a "leap of faith." The above passage is an allusion to Luke 4.9-13²:

And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the son of God, cast thyself down from hence: For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: And in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

On a symbolic level, Nancy has been tempted to live the life of Dwight, a life of remorselessness. She is also literally tempted to commit suicide with the opportunity to jump to her death all around her. Nancy resists both temptations, choosing life on her own terms rather than death or Dwight's life of crime.

Through the motifs of temptation and hell, Dwight assumes the role of Satan. In her phone call to Oliver, her former minister and former love, Nancy attempts to explain her situation in a code that a minister should understand saying, "Like Jesus, I've gone to the wilderness. With the same party"(167) she then adds, "The denizen from Gehenna

instructs against further details!"(168). Jesus' company in the wilderness is, of course, Satan, who is also known as "the denizen from Gehenna." Naturally, Dwight is the person to whom Nancy is referring.

Nancy also makes literary allusions to show that Dwight is a Satanic figure. In a tip of the hat to Flannery O'Connor, Betts puts Dwight in the same category as Hazel Motes, a character in O'Connor's Wise Blood. Nancy asks to make a call saying that Dwight should not care since the call is to Detroit, and Dwight responds that he "doesn't care if it's to Jesus." Nancy indignantly responds,

"Why," she said sharply, "Do you drag in Jesus all the time?" Dwight said he never did that. . . "He opens his mouth and Jesus falls out every time, have you ever heard of anything so ironic? Pass me a muffin. Just like Hazel Motes." She went on talking with corn bread in her mouth. "They're the worst kind, those people with a ghost for a God, a rumor. . . ." (163)

Although Hazel Motes is not Satan himself, Motes is known for many unscrupulous acts and for founding the "Church without God."

Nancy makes another subtle allusion to Dwight as the devil when Dwight asks her the time in order to get her to look at the watch he has stolen for her. Nancy thinks, "There is a moment in every day the devil cannot find" (98). She is making an abstruse allusion to Blake's Milton:

There is a Moment in each day that Satan cannot find
Nor can his Watch Fiends find it, but the Industrious
find
This Moment & it multiply. & when it once is found
It renovates every Moment of the day if rightly placed.

(Plate 35, Lines 42-45)

Not only does Dwight become Satan by asking the time, but Nancy also becomes one of the Industrious as she attempts to "renovate" each day and her entire life. Interestingly, Blake wrote Milton to emphasize Milton's lack of appreciation of the body, of women, and of other themes. Nancy's search for her identity involves an awareness of and appreciation of body and gender.

Another allusion that embodies perfectly Dwight's relation to Satan is Nancy's allusion to Milton's Paradise Lost. In her delirium she recites, "From morn to noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve" (252). Literally, Nancy is referring to Dwight's fall from the cliffs; symbolically, Dwight is Satan falling from grace. The Romantic perception of Milton's Satan as a heroic figure also applies to this interpretation. Both Milton's Satan and Dwight are independent, and battling against forces that do not understand them; neither begins existence as inherently evil. Betts points out that Dwight has no evil basis for what he does; in reality he has no basis at all. When countless therapists asked him "Why?" his response was always "Why not?" (161) Therefore, Dwight is not particularly evil or immoral, rather amoral. Dwight's role as Satan is more closely connected to his role as the tempter. His life without conscience is understandably appealing.

As J. Waldo Foster is attempting to seduce Nancy, he interprets Dwight as "Satan," "all [Nancy has] repressed." Nancy adds that Dwight is her "dark, irrational, selfish side"(156). This interpretation of Dwight as Satan is probably the most accurate even though the faulty logic of J. Waldo Foster creates the idea. Dwight is real, rather than a fantasy or the figment of Nancy's imagination that Foster suggests; however, his role as Satan is large part Nancy's perception of him. He makes none of the allusions that compare him to Satan, rather Nancy interprets him as evil.

Because of her obsession with Oliver Newton, Nancy has read widely in theology, referring to such theologians as Anselm, Tillich, Niebuhr, Barth, Williams, Buber, and Ferre; however, her kidnapping represents a departure from this scholarly approach to religion and an emphasis on a new heart-felt approach. Nancy begins the kidnapping with prayers to save her from death and then from rape, but she then decides that death is a much worse fate than rape after all. This decision marks the beginning of Nancy's thinking for herself as she realizes that her family and upbringing have convinced her that death is worse than rape, not her own convictions. Before the trio reach Memphis, Nancy realizes, "The end of her own prayers was a sure sign that she was taking charge herself"(68-69).

Nancy's kidnapping is also a spiritual journey, and her journey through the canyon and especially her delirium

afterward highlight this spiritual journey. Nancy must work beyond her bitterness at a church in which, she says,

"you get save only once, at about twelve, just before puberty can cloud the issues, and then you're expected to develop the feelings, not to sustain them. Its like falling in love and then getting married"(102).

In Heading West, Nancy develops these feelings. In the end she is reconciled to her church and finds a comfortable niche there. Her journey through the Grand Canyon brings her closer to God, and her last Biblical allusion shows a new peace with God and herself. Sitting in church, Nancy realizes the contentment of fitting in--of being in harmony:

Indeed she did know and sang the hymn easily and in harmony with the rest. Never had she sung so well nor surveyed the congregation with quite so much unforced affection; they were unchanged, but they were simultaneously new to her. The sermon on Psalm 103 she only dimly apprehended--the subject was Infinite Mercy, she knew that much--but when the middle verses were read in a ringing voice she felt deeply if vaguely moved and wondered if her cycle was coming due again. (364-365)

Church is the only place that has remained unchanged for Nancy since her return. She realizes that perhaps she is seeing all with new eyes. The fact that the church does not change suggests that Nancy has developed--that her problem with religion was hers rather than the fault of the church.

Psalm 103 is a popular psalm of praise, and it is easy to see how some verses attract Nancy's attention. Verses 6 through 18³ read:

The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all

that are oppressed.
 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the
 children of Israel.
 The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and
 plenteous in mercy.
 He will not always chide: neither will he keep *his*
 anger forever.
 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded
 us according to our iniquities.
 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is
 his mercy toward them that fear him.
 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he
 removed our transgressions from us.
 Like a father pitieth *his* children, so the Lord
 pitieth them that fear him.
 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are
 dust.
 As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the
 field, so he flourisheth.
 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the
 place thereof shall know it no more.
 But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to
 everlasting upon them that fear him, and his
 righteousness unto children's children;
 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that
 remember his commandments to do them.

According to the New Interpreter's Bible, Psalm 103 is a
 popular sermon text because the God represented in this Old
 Testament text is more like the "New Testament God" of mercy
 and grace. This passage is particularly appropriate to a
 reconciliation between Nancy and God, after Nancy has
 committed the ultimate Christian faux pas of acting for
 herself without God's guidance. Nancy has the reassurances
 of Psalm 103 that God will forgive her because God does not
 "treat us as our sins deserve." Also, Nancy can be
 comforted by the fact that her transgressions will be
 removed from her "as far as the east is from the west," and
 that she can start anew avoiding doubt and martyrdom.

Nancy's delirium plays a part in her spiritual transformation, serving as a transition between her life before the kidnapping and her life afterwards. Betts describes the delirium associated with heatstroke as "one long hot current of dreaming in which (1) memories, (2) fantasies, and (3) real events float dreaming by" (252). Several allusions suggest that the delirium from which Nancy suffers is the purgatory that she goes through after having been through hell. First, Nancy says that "some of her dreams contained so little verifiable fact that she felt like Samuel, who rose from his dreams and responded to Eli who had not called" (252-53). Nancy is confused about the line between reality and fantasy just as Samuel is confused when he hears a voice but cannot connect the voice with a human. Betts suggests that Nancy is called by God, or healed by God through the delirium.

In her delirium Nancy has a particular dream in which her tongue is burning and she desires relief. She asks both Lazarus--in a parallel to Luke 16.19-31--and then Abraham to bring her water, but both were anxiously awaiting Lazarus' call from the dead⁴. Her tongue of fire inspired them to take pity on her and "*they relented in Purgatory and fed her pleasure in a teaspoon*" (258). Shortly after this statement, Nancy leaves delirium and reenters the world. Her teaspoon of pleasure suggests that Nancy has survived her spiritual journey and will be allowed to continue life and her search

for happiness. In her delirium she has atoned for her sins, and is thus allowed a new beginning.

Nancy's punishment in the purgatory of her delirium is the haunting image of falling. Ferguson, in particular, emphasizes the importance of Nancy's journey through the canyon and her subsequent delirium. She explains,

Nancy's journey is given resonance by allusions to the Bible, to Bunyan, to Darwin, to Freud; its danger is made vivid by Betts's convincing portrayal of Nancy's lifelong fear of falling. Her fall is into original sin--the refusal to affirm life. . . .(71)

Indeed, the literal fall of Dwight is not as important as Nancy's own spectacular "fall" into a world without conscience: Dwight's world.

Nancy also refers to Milton's Paradise Lost. Lewis and Hunt hear Nancy recite, "From morn to noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve," (252). As mentioned before, this allusion helps characterize Dwight, but also this allusion refers to the Fall of man and the discovery of one's potential to do evil to which this novel is so closely grounded. On a literal level, Heading West explores the effects of a small time criminal on a single librarian. On a larger and more symbolic level, this novel also explores a person's relationship to evil and how each person desires on some level life without a conscience. By referring to Milton, Betts achieves the connection of a literal episode to the symbolic whole.

When Lewis, Chan, and Hunt pick Nancy up from the hospital, she is mumbling about falling:

The feverish woman moaned when they slipped her onto the bed and said it was falling, Beck was falling, London Bridge was falling down. . . . Chan said, "You're in my house, Nancy. House. In a house." And the House of Usher was falling down, Nancy said back. (248)

One of Nancy's first delirious delusions about falling is a reference to Edgar Allen Poe's short story "The Fall of the House of Usher." This allusion connects Nancy's fear of falling with the corruption of man, as represented by the Usher family.

While the text does not provide evidence that Nancy has experienced a "lifelong fear of falling" as Ferguson suggests, Nancy's consciousness, in her delirium, selects several memories that pertain to falling. In one memory the death of Nancy's father becomes tied to the unrelated theme of falling because "[Nancy] would not let the memory progress to the moment of standing on the box with Beckham for she did not want to fall; she did not like to think of falling; she hated the sound of the word" (254). Also, Nancy must live with the trauma of seeing her grandfather fall on the fence before he dies from a heart-attack. Suddenly the details of childhood memories that probably had little significance at the time take on greater meaning because Nancy can connect a fall to the death of her father and grandfather and to the depravity of man.

Nancy also remembers being part of a Bible reciting contest; as she is reciting passages of the Bible, she looks out into the congregation and sees that

These rolling sentences in her mouth were, said their faces, as much truth as Nancy was old enough yet to bear. Adam and Eve and the Fall--she did not like that word--and her ready-made sinfulness; what could be worse than these? Something was.(256)

Again, Nancy is gaining new insight into her memories. She has acquired a distaste for the concept of falling after Dwight's death and her own realization that indeed "Something was [worse]" than her sinfulness. Nancy connects all of these ideas of falling and allusions to falling to discover that her self-knowledge of her sinfulness is more horrifying than her sinfulness alone.

Finally, at the end of her delirium, Nancy says, "Adam was pushed" (258). For the most part, Nancy leaves behind the idea of falling, with the exception of a few comments later in the text, and this declaration suggests that Nancy has come to terms with the idea of human nature's sinfulness. Basically, people are not inherently evil. An outside force, in the form of Satan, had to instigate the fall from grace. Nancy, then, must come to terms with the fact that she can perpetrate evil, but she also realizes that she is not completely evil.

She then searches for what turned Dwight to evil, but she never finds a satisfactory explanation because neither Edwin, Dwight's twin brother, nor his Isoline neighbor

appear to be reliable sources. Adam was forced into evil by Satan; Dwight was forced into his path by his brother.

Edwin remembers Dwight's search for identity and tells Nancy how that search was fulfilled:

"He kept asking me if we were identical or not. We had to decide to be identical or not. . . . We had a big fight on Grandma's porch and I pushed him into one of the posts and broke off his tooth. I was almost glad it happened because he seemed to calm down and then I said now everybody could tell which one of us was which." (330)

While Dwight's (Ervin's) fall from the porch did not determine his nature, this fall did determine Dwight's path in life. Breaking his tooth irrevocably separated Dwight from his brother, and from this moment on, Dwight tries to shape his own identity.

Other references to falling are Humpty Dumpty's fall, pride's fall, the apple's fall not far from the tree, and mankind's Fall in Genesis(260). Betts uses allusions to the Bible, to literature, to nursery rhymes, to folk sayings, and to Nancy's memories to express the complex relationship between the fall of man, Dwight's fall, and the "barbaric pleasure with which she had watched him fall"(266).

Other Biblical allusions help explain the other characters. Jolley, as the perpetually born-again "faucet Baptist"(135), often refers to himself in terms of the Bible. During a violent rain storm in which Dwight and Nancy have been making fun of Jolley for his inability to hitchhike and then questioning him about his role in the

automobile accident that killed his wife, Jolley asks, "Am I the Jonah?" (68). This question parallels the story of Jonah in which a rain storm at sea makes everyone wonder who is running away from a displeased God. By casting lots, the crew discovers that Jonah is the culprit (Jonah 1), and they throw him overboard. Jolley could not know that he was not the only Jonah, but all three of the travelers are running away. The judge is running away from his dishonest actions, Nancy is running away from familial obligations, and Dwight is running away from the law.

Later, Jolley says that he relates most closely with Simon Peter, saying, "'The one in the whole New Testament I understand best is Simon Peter,' only to get back temper, righteous rage, the ear of Malchus, and the understandable temptation of a court room judge to usurp the vengeance of God" (79). Jolley is not actually as comparable to Simon Peter, as he would like to believe; rather, Jolley wishes that he had some concrete form of justification for the crimes that he has committed. Like Nancy, Jolley envies Dwight's lack of remorse, wishing for justification since he cannot escape his conscience.

Living Life and the Quest for Happiness

Nancy's kidnapping becomes not only a bid for autonomy but also a quest for happiness. In Cauplin Canyon as she

competes with Benjy for J. Waldo Foster's attention, Nancy realizes that her life of pleasing others is keeping her from pleasing herself, and she boldly declares,

"I only want to be happy. . .What's wrong with that?"
People promised me that. Everybody. I'm going to
write that in *my* declaration of independence, not the
pursuit but the capture of happiness. Heading west to
Nancy's Manifest Destiny"(145)

Nancy refers to government documents and policies that underpin the basic liberties of all American citizens as she expresses her right as an individual to happiness. The Declaration of Independence gives all Americans the right to the "pursuit of happiness," and Nancy's decision to "capture" happiness is her decision to start living life for herself. "Manifest Destiny" is the name for the nineteenth century policy which claimed that America had the right to inherit all land from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Similarly, Nancy is traveling from east to west and making America, and her life, her own.

Aside from references to documents, Nancy also makes several references to tales of adventure and to the memoirs of great adventurers. These allusions to adventure celebrate Nancy's departure from the one-dimensional world of books into the three-dimensional realm of life.

In the Grand Canyon, Nancy assumes the role of the adventurer. Realizing that she must get herself out of the canyon, Nancy starts sorting through trash "since like Crusoe she could use anything. . . "(206). This reference

to adventure does not end with the allusion to Crusoe. Nancy also alludes to adventure writers like John Wesley Powell and Richard Halliburton. As Nancy rests by the water at Phantom Ranch, exhausted and near delirium, she muses, "Probably John Wesley Powell's face looked wild and tired just before he slept here on another August night under, as he wrote, 'a great overspreading tree with willow-shaped leaves'" (216). Upon returning home, Beck presents Nancy with her own copy of Powell's Canyons of the Colorado, a book of memoirs to mirror her own.

In her delirium, Nancy also makes a reference to another adventurer, Richard Halliburton

She had stowed away on the Ipswich before it sailed past Lady Liberty. The captain, who had climbed Fujiyama and the Matterhorn, swum the Hellespont, and hunted Bengal tigers. . . . except for his paunch, was a ringer for Richard Halliburton. (254)

Nancy refers to these adventure writers because she leaves a life of experiencing their second-hand adventures to have adventures of her own. The adventures are part of her "capture of happiness," representing her own newly won freedom to adventure.

Nancy also refers to the Swiss-American anthropologist Adolph Bandelier, and this reference seems to fit in with both the adventure writers and the number of allusions that concern Nancy's own quest for happiness. Bandelier studied pueblos near present-day Bandelier and then wrote a fictionalized account of the Queres entitled The Delight

Makers. This novel and Bandelier are alluded to twice. First, Nancy sees the area in which Bandelier worked on the Pajarito Plateau(122). Later, she picks up the novel to impress Hunt and finds herself actually getting interested in the content. She reads about the Koshare clan who were "required to fast and pray for harvest but primarily to make the rest of the Queres people happy by dancing and merriment"(281). Later Bandelier's book gives insight into what Nancy considers happiness to be. When she and Hunt visit Besh-ba-Gowah, a former pueblo of the Queres, Hunt explains that people were buried on top of each other, new graves on top of old. Nancy thinks to herself that she couldn't see why "they needed a special clan to pursue happiness; they were already calloused against loss"(282). Nancy connects happiness with acceptance of life and death.

Eventually, Nancy's happiness is connected to her acceptance of the death of her grandfather and to the selling of his property. Interestingly, the subdivision that Nancy allows to be built on her grandfather's farm is a placing of the "new graves" over the "old ones." Nancy decides that she is being overly sentimental to keep the farm, and turns it into a subdivision that will build new houses over the old. She and her family form "Blue Bird Incorporated"(363) in order to oversee the subdivision. The Realtor thinks that she has named the property for a population of blue birds, but in reality she names the property after a play by Maeterlink. Maeterlinck's play is

a children's play that centers around a search for happiness; by forming "Blue Bird Incorporated," Nancy is conducting her own search for happiness.

Critique of Modern Relationships

Nancy's quest for happiness is linked to a critique of modern relationships that is expressed with various allusions, particularly those to popular culture. The inadequacy of modern romance is aptly expressed through J. Waldo Foster, who is too self-absorbed to consider the needs of another:

As soon as he said there wasn't much to tell and launched forth, a yawn rose in Nancy's throat. She always hoped to hear some profound malaise of the twentieth century, *within* which, from time to time, the chosen man would add murmurs about her beauty and desirability. The latter: almost Elizabethan. Thomas Mann, beset periodically by high grace notes of passion. Solzhenitsyn touched with the erotic. Not Nelson Algren, Jack Kerouac--the best she usually got.(141)

Solzhenitsyn and Mann were writers deeply concerned with the world and its problems. Algren and Kerouac leave behind the philosophical realm and concentrate on the horror of the actual world. Both Algren and Kerouac are noted for their portrayal of ordinary life and some obscenity. The problem that Nancy faces in romance is that she cannot find a man who focuses on the elevated plane of the philosophical

rather than the plane of dingy reality. Her lovers are obscene rather than philosophical.

Several allusions express the faultiness of modern relationships. J. Waldo Foster refers to several works to "cure" Nancy of her alleged virginity. He refers to Erica Jong, Story of O, and Frank Harris. His inability to see the real threat of Dwight shows that he cannot see a relationship between men and women on equal footing. He creates his own fantasy of Nancy's virginity rather than listening to and understanding her. No allusion better expresses Foster's attitude on relationships than his allusion to Story of O, a pornographic novel in which a woman's discovery of her own sexuality is interpreted as her acceptance of submission to her "lovers" and her subsequent acceptance of their violence toward her. Foster clearly does not have a healthy attitude about relationships because he attempts to alter Nancy's sex life with books just as he attempts to alter Benjy's behavior with drugs.

Eddie and Faye are evidence of a critique of modern relationships because, as Nancy cynically observes, parts of their sex life are more a part of her memories than theirs. Also, Betts points out that "Carefully Eddie trained [Faye]" to perform sex acts that were "an overpayment for his rapid fingers" (35). Eddie also hires a maid so "Faye could stay home in Eddie's bed and succor him" (56). Like Foster, Eddie has a male-centered view of relationships, whereas Hunt and

Nancy attempt to base their relationship on honesty and equality.

Another biting commentary on the failure of modern relationships is that people read *True Startling Detective* and "nowhere in America [is] there a bellboy or waitress or gas attendant who could distinguish abduction from marriage or cared to try"(78). In several instances, people cannot tell that Nancy is a kidnap victim, thinking instead that she is Dwight's wife. When she frantically asks a waitress for help, the waitress points to the restroom(30). When she asks for a separate room at the hotel in Texarkana, the bell hop is reading *True Detective* without seeing the crime at hand(78). The insensitivity of people toward Nancy's situation reflects modern culture's addiction to the melodrama of television and cheap, sensationalist magazines. Just as Nancy's addiction to literature had prevented her from having real relationships; the addiction of the public at large to sensationalism prevents the possibility of fulfilling relationships.

In the end, Nancy and Hunt provide the best alternative to the fairy tales that people read and the sordidness that represents their daily lives. Nancy and Hunt have a basis for honesty that is missing in the relationships of many others. Finding an answer for the problem of modern relationships is important to Nancy because her search for happiness involves Betts's ideal that "to live fully . . . always means to love fully"(Walsh 95).

Foster also offers a critique of the modern child-parent relationship, for he represents the new and not-so-lovable America of weekend Dads; in this case, the weekend dad is a pediatrician who cannot raise his own child. An example of the modern parent's inability to rear children is the portrayal of Foster's son Benjy. This parent Nancy confronts in Cauplin Canyon is a parent who labels bad behavior as "hyperactivity" and then attempts to treat the problem with Ritalin rather than old-fashioned attention and discipline. Benjy's rambunctious behavior is annoying, but Nancy suspects that his behavior has little to do with hyperactivity and everything to do with Benjy's simply being an ignored and undisciplined child. Betts uses the inappropriate T-shirts Benjy wears to illustrate his bad behavior, Foster's inability to parent, and society's problems in general. First, Benjy wears a T-shirt with "a giant beer bottle and a popular starlet languishing inside, naked except for well-located foam"(128). Later Benjy wears a T-shirt that declares "REAGAN SUCKS"(134). Both designs are obscene, and while the second T-shirt criticizes, the critique is not eloquent or well-thought out. Parenting, romance, even modern culture have all lapsed into the profane.

Other literary allusions

In an interview with William Walsh, Betts explains that even Nancy's name is an allusion. She says, "The name Nancy came from Nancy Drew--somebody who goes to solve the mystery"(99). Nancy Finch's connection with teenage sleuth Nancy Drew highlights the former's search for the solution to the mystery of happiness.

Many literary allusions give insight into character. Nancy is compared to another spunky heroine, Jo March. When Nancy and Dwight enter a restaurant after their first night as kidnapper and captive, Nancy starts taking charge. She orders her own breakfast, speaking for herself despite Dwight's warning. Dwight reminds her that she is the captive, but "something in his face told her that this was the right move, this show of spunk. Jo March, not Beth or Meg or Amy,"(26). By comparing herself to tomboyish and unladylike Jo, Nancy immediately shows that she is strong and independent; the allusion also serves to show what Dwight admires about her.

Hunt's perception of Nancy upon first meeting her, suggests a model of southern ladyhood that Nancy clearly rebels against. Hunt comments, "It's clear why the south lost. . .All those women they left behind--so delicate, so much like Aunt Pitty Pat"(270). Hunt's description of Nancy is inaccurate as shown by her conduct throughout the novel. Even though this allusion to Gone With the Wind does not give insight into Nancy's character, the allusion does show

Hunt's perception that a southern woman should be like the perpetually frantic and the especially prone to fainting Pitty-Pat. Hunt may forget the heroine of Gone With the Wind, but the reader can see that Nancy more closely resembles Scarlett O'Hara. Nancy is strong, independent, and in the course of the novel begins to act to secure her own happiness--these are the qualities of Scarlett rather than her simpering Aunt.

Conclusion

In the end, the meaning of Heading West can be found in the beginning. Betts's epigraphs give insight into her intentions for the novel. Perhaps Wordsworth's poem "Stepping Westward" provided inspiration:

*"What, you are stepping westward?"--"Yea"
 --'Twould be a wildish destiny
 If we, who thus together roam
 In a strange land, and far from home,
 Were in this place the guests of chance:
 Yet who would stop, or fear to advance,
 Though home or shelter he had none,
 with such a sky to lead him on?*

The poem describes the trio perfectly. For Nancy, Dwight, and Jolley encounter a "wildish destiny" in traveling so "far from home." Chance dictates the entire journey from the moment Dwight decides to take Nancy along with him until he takes his own westerly mis-step over a canyon ledge.

Also, the words of William James speak to the reader about the philosophy of the novel.

I am willing to think that the prodigal son attitude, open to us as it is in many vicissitudes, is not the right and final attitude towards the whole of life. I am willing that there should be real losses and real losers, and no preservation of all that is. I can believe in the ideal as an ultimate not as an origin, and as an extract not the whole. When the cup is poured off, the dregs are left behind forever, but the possibility of what is poured off is sweet enough to accept.

Betts designed Heading West to be more than a feel-good coming of age story. Each character suffers "real losses" and at some point in each of their lives has been a "real loser." Nancy has lost her youth to the cause of caring for her mother and brother, but the novel is a progression away from her self-inflicted martyrdom and to her self-realization. Youth and her past are "the dregs [that] are left behind forever," but her future life with Hunt is the poured-off portion that "is sweet enough to accept." Heading West is about change, but this change is not limited to changes for the better only. In this novel, there are "real losses" for every genuine gain.

The ideal of loss is supported by Betts's introduction to Southern Women Writers: The New Generation. This introduction discusses, in part, the trend of some writers to present female coming of age stories as trivial. Betts explains,

Specific books by women are said to rely on sensibility over plot, or to smother both in the narcissism of yet one more female's pilgrimage to self-identity. . . . By reflecting accurately the daily restrictions of their actual lives, women write novels and poems that

are insufficiently outwardly directed or socially conscious, and they conclude their stories with such tiny private victories of self-esteem for their heroines that plots diminish to trivial pursuits.(6)

Heading West is Betts's answer to these Lilliputian novels as much as her criticism is. Nancy does gain self-esteem, but her victory is not small. Rather, she regains her life and the right to adventure while in the spectacular setting of the Grand Canyon. Her pursuit of happiness is far from trivial because she clearly faces the threat of rape or death. Her story is not the typical female story because it is gritty and real; moreover, her journey to self-realization has a happy, but not sappy, ending in contrast with the "tiny, private victories" that Betts discusses.

The allusions that Nancy and others make help the novel transcend the narrow scope of other female coming of age stories. Literature is, after all, universal because literature explores the ultimate truths of human experience as expressed through fictional lives. The connection that Nancy makes between her life and the literature she reads makes her almost as human as the reader of Heading West who is engaging in the same activity of connecting life to literature. In Heading West, Betts has created a timeless masterpiece of self-discovery; for each new reader must also confront the meaning of life, the human being's capacity for evil, and the search for happiness.

¹ This thesis will use the King James Bible for all allusions, for Betts says that what she absorbed from the King James Bible was,

"the conviction that the Image of God was actually linguistic, that what we called 'soul' could only be made manifest in language seen, said, heard, read, riddled and rhymed, parsed, even scribbled by children, on notebooks, in lemon juice, without any tangible loss of magic. Words were the power inside us. Words also had the power to materialize a hand out of thin air to write the future: *Mene mene Tekel Upharsin*. Words could pull cripples to their feet." ("The Fingerprint of Style" 10)

Since the King James version holds so much power for Betts, this translation is important to the allusions made.

² The temptation of Jesus is also found in Matthew 4.1-11 and Mark 1.12-13; however, in all cases in which a passage is referred to in more than one gospel, the Book of Luke will be used because Betts cites Luke as having particular significance to her and her "tribe," the Associate Reformed Presbyterians. ("The Fingerprint of Style" 19)

³ Nancy refers to the "middle verses" (364). These particular verses were chosen because the New Interpreter's Bible divided Psalm 103 into three parts verses 1-5, 6-18, and 19-22. Since this book is used by ministers, quite likely these verses would be the ones that Nancy heard.

⁴ This part of the delirium combines two unrelated stories: the story of Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha and the parable in Luke about Lazarus, the beggar. The story of Lazarus's being raised from the dead can be found in John 11.1-44.

Appendix

The following list contains literary allusions found within Heading West. This list attempts to be, but does not claim to be, exhaustive. Any apparent inconsistencies can be explained by the format of these pages. Literary allusions appear as they are found in the text on the left; any additions or clarifications are presented after the dash on the right.

Authors and Their Works

Nancy Finch(throughout)--Carolyn Keene the Nancy Drew series
 Wordsworth "Stepping Westward"(Epigraph)
 "The Highwayman"(16)--Alfred Noyes
 Jo March, not Beth or Meg or Amy(26)--Louisa Alcott Little Women
 Shelley(28)
Lorna Doone(36)--R.D. Blackmore
Wuthering Heights(36)--Emily Bronte
 Tolstoy(76)
 Flannery O'Connor(85)
 C.S. Lewis(85)
 G.K. Chesterton(85)
 Graham Greene(85)
 W.H. Auden(85)
 Robert Penn Warren on Original Sin(85)
 John Updike(85)
 Browning's poised chimney sweeps(86)
 Walker Percy(90)
 Saul Bellow(90)
 Pope(91)--Alexander Pope
 Shakespeare(91)
 Because of the rider the battle was lost, and all for the want of a horseshoe nail(94)--comic re-working of phrase from Franklin Poor Richard's Almanac
 There is a moment in every day the Devil cannot find(98)--paraphrase of Plate 35, Line 42 in Blake Milton
 "Thanatopsis"(109)--William Cullen Bryant
The Delight Makers(122)--Adolph Bandelier
 Quixote(137)--Cervantes Don Quixote
 Thomas Mann(141)
 Solzhenitsyn(141)
 Nelson Algren(141)

Jack Kerouac(141)
 Thoreau(162)
 Hazel Motes(163)--Flannery O'Connor Wise Blood
 Gulliver-sized(164)--Jonathan Swift Gulliver's Travels
 not Lilliputians but Houynhnms(164)--Jonathan Swift
Gulliver's Travels
 Iris Murdoch(168)
 William Golding(168)
 Alisande from Connecticut Yankee(180)--Mark Twain
Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court
 Carl Sandburg "There goes God with an army of banners"(191)
 Colin Fletcher(196)
 John Wesly Powell(199)
 Sandburg(199)
Paradise Lost(199)
 Graham Greene(202)
 Crusoe(206)--William Defoe Robinson Crusoe
 "a great overspreading tree with willow shaped leaves"(216)-
 -John Wesley Powell Canyons of the Colorado
 a corona like Ophelia's(227)--William Shakespeare Hamlet
 And the House of Usher was falling down--Edgar Allen Poe
 "The Fall of the House of Usher"
 "From morn to noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve"--John
 Milton Paradise Lost
 Richard Halliburton(254)
 Alice went down the rabbithole(256)--Lewis Carroll Alice in
Wonderland
 Moby Dick was cool and white(257)--Herman Melville Moby Dick
 "They are so placid and self-contained"(262)--Walt Whitman
 Milton(262)
 Barbara Tuchman(262)
Prelude(264)--Wordsworth
 "Those thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears"(269)--
 William Wordsworth Ode: Intimations of Immortality
 Aunt Pitty-Pat(270)--Margaret Mitchell Gone With the Wind
 Bandelier's novel. . . The Delight Makers(281)
 John Bunyan(290)--Pilgrim's Progress
 Zane Grey (292)
 Heathcliff (307)--Emily Bronte Wuthering Heights
 Mauriac(344)
Canyons of the Colorado by J.W. Powell(349)
 Montaigne(350)
 Rousseau(350)
 Charles Lamb(351)
 Mary Lamb(351)
 Coleridge(351)
 Maeterlinck (363)

Biblical/Religious

John Calvin(throughout)
 John Wesley(throughout)
 Victor Frankl(33)
 Jonah(68)--Jonah 1-2
 Matthew 20.14/Proverbs 3.13(75)
 sparing of Isaac(76)--Genesis 22
 Simon Peter/the ear of Malchus(79)--John 18.10
 Anselm(83)
 Tillich(85)
 Niebuhr(85)
 Karl Barth(85)
 Charles Williams(90)
 Esau(99)--Beckham's cat; Jacob's brother
 Balaam's ass(100)--Numbers22-24
 "Have Thine Own Way"(101)--hymn
 Martin Buber(115)
 Nels Ferre(115)
 denizen from Gehenna(168)--Matthew 5.22
 'Whither thou Goest, I will go'(169)--Ruth 1.16-17
 "Lamp Unto My Feet"(172)--hymn
 John 3.16(174)
 St. Augustine"Lord, Save me! But not yet!"(177)
 Jesus(182)
 "You Gotta Walk that Lonesome Valley"(197)--hymn
 [temptations of Jesus](209) Mark 1.12-13; Matt 4.1-11; Luke
 4.1-13
 Twenty-third Psalm(212)
 Daniel and the Lions(216)--Daniel 6
 petrified orchard(216)--Garden of Eden
 Psalm 121(226)
 Lazarus(228)--John 11.1-44
She might be inside the whale?(271)--Jonah 1-2
 Samuel/Eli(253)--1 Samuel 3.1-21
 Noah(253)
even the shadow of death was hot(257)--Psalm 23
 Lazarus/Abraham[in parable of the rich man](258)--Luke
 16.19-31
 Lazarus(258)--John 11.1-44
 beside the still waters(258)--Psalm 23
 streets of Gomorrah(258) Genesis 18.16-33; Genesis 19.1-29
 Adam was pushed (258)--Genesis 3
 the tree of Genesis(260)
 Luther(280)
 Psalm 137(280)
 Babylonian Captivity(280)
 Methuselah(284)
 the Pope(309)
 Simon Peter(311)

hidden himself in the Rock of Ages(315)--hymn "Rock of Ages"
 Jezebel(328)
 Apprehensive as Jephthah(335)--Judges 11.30-40
 Brunner(344)
 Boethius(344)
 Duns Scotus(344)
De Citate Dei(344)--Saint Augustine
The Varieties of Religious Experience(361)--William James
 Psalm 103(364)
 "Gloria Patria"(365)--hymn

Myth/Legend/Fairy Tale

Prince Charming(19)
 Robin Hood(26)
 Hansel and Gretel(28-29)
 Maid Marian(35)
 Persephone(53)
 Sisyphus(73)
 Rumpelstiltskin(105)
 the drama of the Pied Piper(117-18)
 Niobe(119)
 Mother Goose(180)
 Helen(185)--Helen of Troy
 Menelaus(185)
 Penelope(185)
 Sleeping Beauty(194)
 red shoes(216)--The Wizard of Oz
 "When you take a bird out of the bush into your hand. .
 ." (238)--A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
 London Bridge(248)
 Mother Goose(252)
 Peter Rabbit(253)
Nutcracker Suite(253)
 [Blackfoot legend of whether people should live forever or
 die](254-5)
 [Navajo story of hole in the universe](255)
 Nestor's robe(257)
 Humpty-Dumpty's great fall(260)
 pride's [fall](260)
 the apple not falling far from the tree(260)
 The better to eat you with, my dear(261)--Little Red
 Ridinghood
 Augean Stable(306)
 Better one bluebird of happiness in the hand than two in the
 bush(346)
 Heidi's mountain(351)
 Little Miss Orphan Annie(363)

Philosophers

William James Pragmatism(Epigraph)
 Kafka-esque(28)--Franz Kafka
 Anselm(83)
 Kant(83)
 Simone Weil(90)
 Gabriel Marcel(90)
 Aurelius(129)
 Marx(182)
 Kierkagaard(184)
 Marcus Aurelius(230)
 Martin Heidegger(280)
 Mrs. Thomas Hobbes(307)--Thomas Hobbes

Art and History

Rockefeller(14)
 Lincoln(21)
 against the gray oak as Joan must have stood(41)--Joan of
 Arc
Collected Masterworks(88)--Heironymus Bosch
 Morris Graves/Little Known Bird of the Inner Eye(88)
 Winslow Homer(132)
 Declaration of Independence(145)
 Manifest Destiny(145)
 Popocatepetl(253)
 Ipswich(254)--ship of Halliburton
 Lady Liberty(254)--the Statue of Liberty
 Toynbee(262)
 Howard Mumford Jones(262)
 Roberta E. Lee(298)--Robert E. Lee

Anthropology/Psychology/Science

Rorschach(9)
 Mesmer(33)
 Freud(33)
 Jung(33)
 Kinsey(46)
 Darwin(118)
The Myth of Mental Illness, Szasz(130)
 Mendel(182)
 Lombroso(182)
 Pavlov(183)
 La Reina de la Noche(187)
 Alvarez(227)
 Pierre Curie(253)

Jukes and Kallikaks(289)
Borgia(328)

Popular Culture

Dr. Zhivago(10)--film
National Geographic(33)
Startling True Detective(78)
Jennifer Jones(132)
She(139)
The Joy of Sex(141)--Alex Comfort
Erica Jong(156)
Story of O(156)
Frank Harris(156)
Time(323)
Reader's Digest(232)
The New Yorker(323)
Patty Hearst(336)
Startling Crime Magazine(338)
Bing Crosby
"Would You Like to Swing on a Star. . ."(365)--song
"Get Happy(368)--song

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