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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Gary Simmers entitled "The Concept of the Hero in Selected Adolescent Novels." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Curriculum and Instruction.

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THE CONCEPT OF THE HERO
IN SELECTED ADOLESCENT NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Since the protagonist of the adolescent novel is an adolescent dealing with conflict, the resolution of that conflict can serve a didactic purpose for the adolescent reader. The purpose of this study was to examine the concept of the hero as it emerges in the adolescent novel.

Fifteen novels were selected based on frequency from a survey of specialists in the field of adolescent literature. The method for content analysis, suggested by Kerlinger, consists of theme, character, and the sequence of events confronting the protagonist. To create a framework for analysis, the study was divided into three areas: the quest-hero, the alienated hero--or outsider, and the hero as moralist.

Chapter I was introductory. Chapter II was a survey of criticism which produced two significant findings. First, a majority of critics believe that adolescent literature can produce a positive classroom experience if taught in conjunction with traditional literature. Second, most critics feel that adolescent readers can especially benefit from exposure to the adolescent novel, because it presents heroes who struggle to resolve conflicts in a world which is familiar to the adolescent reader. Chapter III revealed that the fictional adolescent quest is an attempt to achieve self-identity, or an experiential process that facilitates the transition from childhood

to adulthood. Chapter IV revealed that alienation of an adolescent protagonist occurs because the hero fails to achieve a sense of self-identity, or a sense of identity related to family or society. Chapter V revealed that the adolescent hero learns moral responsibility only when there is a recognition of the moral dilemma, a struggle to resolve the conflict, and a positive resolution. However, the adolescent reader can learn from either a positive or negative resolution.

Further study is suggested. There is a need for interactive classroom studies to determine how adolescent readers respond to the resolution achieved by the adolescent hero in selected novels.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Rationale for the Study	1
Definition of the Hero	4
Evolution of the Hero	8
The Hero in the Adolescent Novel	15
Purpose and Design of the Study	18
II. THE WORLD OF ADOLESCENT LITERATURE	22
Historical Perspective of Adolescent Literature .	22
Critical Reception of Adolescent Literature	28
The Adolescent as Reader	36
III. THE HERO AND THE MYTHIC QUEST	43
<u>Deathwatch</u>	54
<u>Z for Zachariah</u>	62
<u>The Last Mission</u>	69
<u>Winning</u>	75
<u>One Fat Summer</u>	85
IV. THE ALIENATED HERO: THE OUTSIDER THEME	97
<u>Home Before Dark</u>	103
<u>Jacob Have I Loved</u>	113
<u>The Outsiders</u>	123
<u>Where the Lilies Bloom</u>	136
<u>The Chocolate War</u>	146
V. THE HERO AS MORALIST	159
<u>A Day No Pigs Would Die</u>	167
<u>The Pigman</u>	177
<u>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</u>	187
<u>Summer of My German Soldier</u>	195
<u>A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich</u>	206
VI. CONCLUSION	215
WORKS CITED	221
APPENDIX	231
VITA	232

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rationale for the Study

Many American teenagers view contemporary American culture as a complex diorama of chaotic proportions. They gaze at a confusing landscape populated by alien and inexplicable characters pursuing nebulous, and to the adolescent's eyes motiveless, activities. They hear, but do not always comprehend, the voices of adults as they offer reasons and rationales for behaviors which conflict with the teenagers' perceptions of their world. The sad truth is that most adults have little knowledge of what it is like to be an adolescent in contemporary America. Patrick Welsh, a high school teacher, offers some illuminating insights into the world of today's teenagers:

. . . In 1960, parents and teachers were the leading influence on thirteen- to nineteen-year-olds. By 1980, teachers had slipped to fourth place, behind peers, parents, and media (television, radio, and records). By then, a seductive, independent youth culture, with its own music, drugs, precocious sexual mores and values, was challenging the traditional values of school and family.

In the 1980s, the cheerleaders take the pill, the band does drugs, and the classroom has become peripheral in the lives of many of our "students." Nearly one out of two of them lives with only one natural parent; for the blacks among them, it's closer to two out of three. Jobs and parties take precedence over education. In my day, the "fast" girl was the one who put her hand on the back of your neck during slow dances. Kids are more precocious now. The "college weekend" is now a high school tradition, too, and I've had bright students apologize

for turning in papers rendered incoherent by months of steady drug and alcohol abuse. (6, 7)

The values adolescents hear expressed by adults, the so called "conventional morality," are merely abstractions, rarely given concrete form, even by their advocates. The teenage subculture, as it exists on the streets and in our schools, is a world unto itself. It has its own codes of behavior, its own system of values, and its own social contract with a consequent method of punishing those who break the rules, usually by ostracism and isolation. But this subculture, for all its autonomy, has managed to create its own anxieties, manifested in the kinds of problems which inevitably arise when children are forced prematurely to make adult decisions.

Adolescents struggle, like adults, to find meaning and purpose in their existence. When the anxiety becomes too much to deal with, they most often turn to each other for advice. Sometimes this natural and predictable peer counseling is effective. Often, however, it is a case of the blind leading the blind," or, more accurately, the inexperienced leading the slightly more inexperienced. The world of today is terribly confusing to young people and, perhaps more than at any other time in history, they need a clearly marked path to follow. The tragedy is that many teenagers either do not have anyone to ask for help or do not know how to ask for the help they need.

Today's adolescents need to be able to answer two simple questions: Who am I? and Where am I going? It is at this juncture that literature may enter to provide answers that are not readily available elsewhere in the teenagers' world. Adolescent literature in particular recreates a reality easily identifiable to the young person and can literally offer a path to walk. Flora Fenimore says that the adolescent novel helps the teenagers develop their self-concepts by dealing "with questions about ultimate meaning-- about the adolescent's life as a thinking and feeling person" (1272). It is the adolescent novel that lets teenagers enter a reality uniquely their own, while engaging in an experience that reflects the wisdom and maturity of an author who has already grown beyond that reality. Through the conflicts and resolutions experienced by the adolescent hero, teenagers can find a way to resolve their own conflicts. The adolescent novel presents at least one possible model for a particular journey that some adolescent reader is likely to make. Thus, vicariously, the adolescent protagonist becomes a mentor for the young adult reader experiencing the novel. Beverly Haley says that "heroes give hope and meaning to our lives," and that "they can save us from the dark shadows that lurk within our selves" ("The Changing Hero," 22). In the emotional darkness that so often characterizes adolescence, the adolescent novel can offer the reader a little light to illuminate a path that is difficult to walk. After

all, "those who need heroes most are teenagers" (Haley, "The Changing Hero," 22).

Several preliminary considerations are important before proceeding with the examination of the hero in the adolescent novel. First, how can one arrive at a definition of the hero? Second, how has the concept of the hero evolved and where it is presently? Finally, what is the adolescent novel, and how can the concept of the hero be applied to it?

Definition of the Hero

Historically, the word "hero" has primarily masculine antecedents and the word "heroine" is the feminine equivalent. For simplicity, and in the interest of avoiding sexist phraseology whenever possible, the word "hero" when used in this study will represent both masculine and feminine characters who are central participants in a work of fiction.

A synthesis of the definitions of hero and heroine from the Oxford English Dictionary will provide a useful starting point for the definition of the adolescent hero. A hero is:

1. A man or woman of superhuman strength, courage, or ability, favored by the gods; a man or woman who functions as an intermediary between the gods and mankind; a demi-god or a demi-goddess.
2. A man or woman distinguished by extraordinary valour or martial achievements, exalted courage, fortitude, or noble achievements.
3. The principal character in a poem, story, or play, on which the interest of the conflict is centered. (1296)

While characteristics of the first two definitions may well emerge in the discussion of the novels, the final definition, that is, the hero as principal character, is most important for the purposes of a paper examining the conflicts experienced by the protagonist in the adolescent novel, and will provide a focal point for most of the discussion.

The superheroes of Homeric legend afford very little help in an effort to understand the concept of the hero in the contemporary adolescent novel. To be sure, the progeny of such heroes still exist and the legacy of the epic hero can be seen in the mythic structures that surround the hero of the modern novel. A simple glance at comic books or Saturday morning cartoons reveals an abundance of colorful characters with super, and supernatural, powers. The creators of some of these characters, such as Marvel's "Spider-man," even add emotional depth and human complexity to make their creations more appealing. But, for the most part, such superheroes, whether presented in literature or on film, are designed as pure escapism for children of all ages.

A prominent hero type in escapist literature is the hero who, though human, is possessed of extraordinary ability. Such heroes emerge in characterizations as diverse as Rambo, Luke Skywalker, Indiana Jones, Tarzan, Matt Bolen, Conan the Barbarian, Doc Savage--man of bronze, the Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew, and even the intellectually superior

Sherlock Holmes. They are often heroic figures who represent that which is noblest or best perfected in each person. But they, like their superhuman counterparts, are designed for escapist entertainment, not for real life role models.

Where then do society's role models originate? Are there or can there be any heroic role models outside the realm of escapist fantasy? In 1949 Joseph Campbell published The Hero with a Thousand Faces, a landmark study of the composite hero, that is, the archetypal hero created from a common mythological heritage, a fusion of myth and natural psychology. But where can heroes be found in an age where science and technology have replaced myth? When the old myths die, what replaces them? Today's newspapers are full of stories of real people who do heroic things--the soldier who displays extraordinary courage in combat, the police who risk their lives daily in the streets, the brave young adult who saves the life of a child. Then, of course, there is the sports hero or the popular entertainment idol--movie star or musician--who is afforded superstardom and the stature of a role model simply because of a special talent. James Parsons actually equates the modern sports hero with the classical Homeric hero who was "known by his exceptional deeds" and "given status by those who would like to be able to compete with such deeds" (189). But all of these heroes are transitory--they are heroes

of the moment. When their deed is forgotten, their talent diminishes, or their popularity fades, they will be of little use to the teenagers who need to know that their lives have heroic potential. These teenagers need models for a life lived heroically, not the flash-in-the-pan flicker of fame that often ends tragically. There must be some way for today's adolescents to see the true qualities hidden beneath the face of the moment. Beverly Haley elaborates on this idea:

Heroes today--when they appear--are short lived rather than enduring, to fit our "throw away" society. Some people today feel cheated of any kind of heroes--in life or in literature. But maybe that's because today's heroes, like those in fairy tales, come in disguise. That disguise (unlike the disguise of fairy tales) must be uncovered by the reader--the writer doesn't do it for them. ("The Changing Hero," 23)

How can the disguise be penetrated? One means is by the contemplation of the face of the hero as it is reflected in literature. Though society may no longer believe in the heroes of its own myths, it is still capable of producing a literature that is heroic, a literature that mirrors humankind's struggles. Contemporary literature, including the contemporary novel for adolescents, is not escapist--it is confrontational. Its substance is conflict and the struggle for resolution, a struggle, it might be added, that doesn't always end in triumph, even in the world of children's fiction. As readers, adolescents can penetrate the disguise only when they see beneath the mask

a true face, a guide to help them find and stay on their own chosen path.

Adolescent heroes in contemporary literature are rarely extraordinary. Instead, they are realistic, three-dimensional creations who struggle with life in all of its permutations. They are people in the process of becoming. For the purposes of this study, a "hero" will be defined as the central character or protagonist of a work of fiction who confronts a conflict and by conscious choice achieves a resolution of that conflict; the resolution may be either positive or negative.

Evolution of the Hero

Today's hero wears a thousand faces, or at least a thousand disguises. The modern age is one of diminishing expectations regarding the moral perfectibility of humankind, and such negation renders it difficult to see that which is heroic in existence. Modern philosophies have created an absurdist universe where nihilism has made a permissive and narcissistic society inevitable. Self-actualization, the realization of the self's highest potential, is too often today misinterpreted as self-acquisition, the accumulation of material wealth. In such a societal atmosphere, there is a confusion of values. How can adolescents determine a system of values when their adult role models, for the most part, don't seem

to be able to find one for themselves? In The Denial of Death, Ernest Becker addresses what he calls "the crisis of modern society":

The crisis of modern society is precisely that the youth no longer feel heroic in the plan for action that their culture has set up. They don't believe it is empirically true to the problems of their lives and times. We are living a crisis of heroism that reaches into every aspect of our social life: the dropouts of university heroism, of business and career heroism, of political action heroism; the rise of anti-heroes, those who would be heroic each in his own way or like Charles Manson with his special "family", those whose tormented heroics lash out at the system that itself has ceased to represent agreed heroism. The great perplexity of our time, the churning of our age, is that the youth have sensed--for better or worse--a great social-historical truth: that just as there are useless self-sacrifices in unjust wars, so too is there an ignoble heroics of whole societies: it can be the viciously destructive heroics of Hitler's Germany or the plain debasing and silly heroics of the acquisition and display of consumer goods, the piling up of money and privileges that now characterizes whole ways of life, capitalist and Soviet. (6-7)

What historical events have led to this tragic collapse of belief in the possibility of the heroic in the modern age? And, more important, what kind of hero is possible for such an age?

In the 19th century, Darwinism gave birth to the concept of "evolutionary man," an accident of nature rather than a product of noble aspiration and divine design. Of what use then were the emblematic heroes of Judeo-Christian tradition or the Homeric superheroes of the Iliad and the Odyssey? Humankind was essentially reduced to a biological

unit engaging in scientific rather than spiritual perfectibility. Friedrich Nietzsche proclaimed that "God is dead!" and the world belonged solely to those who could exercise their "will to power". After the second world war, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus popularized the philosophy of existentialism. Its tenets suggest that in a world where God is dead, or at least an absentee landlord, people are forced to create their own meaning. Since a person owes no remorse to a higher authority, he or she can act in any way that will better the perceived self, insofar as it doesn't interfere with the self-actualization of others. The absurdist philosophy even goes further. If people are not responsible for their own destiny, nor are there any consequences for their actions, then nothing has meaning, and every action we take is simply a grand jest. The Nothingness of existentialism becomes the antithesis of heroic affirmation. Nihilism, with its total absence of meaning, emerges as the dominant philosophy of the modern age.¹

¹ The discussion of existentialism and absurdism is a synthesis from my own studies and does not come from any particular source. However, for further information and study, I refer the reader to Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus; Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, The Genealogy of Morals, and Beyond Good and Evil; Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness and Existentialism and Human Emotions.

When society is threatened by such moral despair, it has little recourse but to retreat into the mythologies which sustain it. Often this withdrawal emerges as a type of cultural ethnocentrism wherein the values of an individual nation can withstand the external forces, whether philosophical, socio-economic, or military, that threaten to undermine its values. As a young country, the United States had a strong chance for survival in such a moral climate. Its value structures were solid, and its people unified. Americans believed in such cliches as "manifest destiny" and "America: the world's peacekeeper." It had survived the chaos of two world wars and, for the most part, avoided the intellectual upheavals of 19th and 20th century European socialism. America even offered sanctuary to those who fled from such socialistic philosophies, especially when they produced a totalitarian system of government. But in the fifties and sixties, America's own mythological structures began to collapse. The self-righteous, moral absolutism which had long been associated with Americanism, a stance of moral superiority, began to show cracks as America weathered its own storms of social upheaval, storms with the gale force of the Civil Rights Movement, the children's crusade against America's involvement in Vietnam, the Feminist Movement, the Gay Rights Movement, and the moral revolution. Free speech and free love went hand-in-hand with civil disobedience as this new

generation of American adolescents sought to find their authentic voice in a brave new world. A new generation of American youth refused to turn blind eyes to cultural reality. Old Glory was replaced by peace signs and closed fists raised in righteous anger by the youthful dissenters who felt traditional values had betrayed them. America's youth became Becker's "dropouts of university heroism, of business and career heroism, of political action heroism." The adolescents of the seventies were looking for new heroes, new values. They became the spark that ignited the flame of rebellion against the materialism of the old America. They took to the streets, rejecting the security of the traditional family along with economic security. They became the new romantics, the back-to-nature children who would build a society based on love and communal nurture. They sought Utopia, but somehow lost the momentum and the energy needed to create their vision.

The wheel came full circle with the next generation of American adolescents. The children of the sixties grew up without a standard bearer, with fluctuating values, with uncertainties about their role in American society. They became a lost generation, populated by aging hippies, stressed-out Vietnam vets, and disillusioned idealists who discovered their dreams of Utopia were as faded as the denim jeans which had become their uniform. These flower

children produced their own offspring. But the adolescents of the sixties apparently made very poor role models for the adolescents of the eighties. ⁿ Many of these free spirits took too long to learn the responsibilities of adulthood. Their legacy has all too often been one of poverty, broken dreams, and broken homes.

The new generation, the adolescents of the eighties, has rebelled against the values of their parents, values that have denied them the stable childhood promised by the myth of the American dream. They have returned to conservatism and founded a new materialism. In place of the idealism of the sixties, they have substituted the narcissism of the eighties. If the values they court are artificial and self-aggrandizing, they at least offer the potential of a stable future. Such is the inheritance of the contemporary American adolescent.

The literature that emerged from this chaotic period characterized the children of the post WWII decades as a lost generation hopelessly adrift in a sea of despair. Such characterizations, as John Gardner comments, leave little room for heroic affirmation:

Our normal view is that if everything isn't terrific, it stinks. Thus American self-doubts about ecology lead instantly to a conviction that life is unendurable, God is horror, and our wives and children all hate us. So in the sixties black humor came in--the Vonnegut shrug--and nihilism, as in William Burroughs, and smart-mouth satire of the kind third-rate novelists are still turning out. ("The Way We Write Now," 2)

Victor Brombert, commenting on the absurdist hero in literature, says that "the antinovels of contemporary literature . . . with their challenge to optimistic humanism and their climate of metaphysical farce, seem to undermine even further the hero concept" (20). There seems to be little doubt that the image of the modern literary hero is in trouble. As early as 1961, Ihab Hassan identified the problem of the modern hero as an "existential crisis":

The fate of the mature hero like that of the adolescent on the verge of initiation, we see, proves that the solitary individual in our epoch is on trial for nothing less than his being. This, and nothing else, defines the sense of existential crisis that the novel in Europe and America now share. What continues to distinguish the American from the European novel is its critical awareness of loss, its ironic cultivation of human vulnerability, and its bitter generosity toward all things quixotic and infrangible. The black stream of violence wells from a turbid and extravagant hope, a radical innocence. The American myth and the American conscience, the dominant and opposing images of man in America, continue to be at odds. The American novel, faced inevitably with the schizoid figure of the hero, seeks in his victimhood for the meaning of reconciliation, the meaning of being. (Heroic Fiction, 60)

Hassan's comparison of the hero to an "adolescent on the verge of initiation" is fortuitous for it offers the necessary bridge to a discussion of the concept of the hero in adolescent literature. There is a kind of radical innocence that characterizes the adolescent's first tentative steps into adulthood. This is not a worldly

innocence, for the adolescent is all too often tragically aware of the harsh realities of the world. The contemporary adolescent's radical innocence is a cynical optimism that projects a bleak future for humankind, but almost always incorporates the possibility of individual self-affirmation. The contemporary adolescent, then, has a hardened shell, but a hopeful heart. The contemporary adolescent protagonists in literature are usually heroes unawares, for they are still trying to discover the authentic self beneath the skin of childhood being painfully ripped away. As role models they exhibit the same doubts and insecurities as their readers.

The Hero in the Adolescent Novel

What is adolescent literature? G. Robert Carlsen answers simply, "that literature which adolescents read" (Books and the Teenage Reader, 1). But Carlsen makes a distinction between the "adolescent novel" and the "novel of adolescence" which is a literary novel, or "literary accident," which was written for an adult audience but later claimed by teenagers. These novels of adolescence include such works as Huckleberry Finn, Call of the Wild, and Little Women. The adolescent novel, according to Carlsen, is a novel written by serious writers for 12- to 18-year-olds, and includes such novels as The Chocolate War, Where the Lilies Bloom, and The Pigman. Carlsen

offers some characteristics of the adolescent, or young adult, novel:

In adolescent novels, writers direct their stories to the 12- to 18-year-olds . . . most young adult novels present a unique, self-contained experience. A more important difference from series books lies in perceptions about teenage life and relationships as found in adolescent novels. They do not use the formulaistic patterns of subliterate: that people are either good or bad, that character is revealed by physical appearance, that teenagers are more perceptive and competent than adults, and so on. They are written by serious writers, who try to evoke the feelings and emotions, the triumphs and failures, the tensions and releases that teens experience. Far from being Sunday-school-paper stories teaching moral truths and exhorting young people to live the moral life, many of the better books do not offer a pat solution to the characters' difficulties. Like good adult literature, the adolescent novel shows the whole spectrum of human life: the good and the bad; people's successes and failures, the indifferent, the vicious, the lost. (Books and the Teenage Reader, 56-57)

This study will be confined to adolescent novels, as characterized by Carlsen. Therefore, the adolescent novel shall be defined as a novel written specifically for an adolescent audience.

Because the adolescent novel most often presents young people as complex human beings in search of answers to difficult questions, the manner in which these young protagonists find these answers can offer a secondary form of experience which can provide either positive or negative insight for the adolescent reader. Cline and McBride define adolescence as a "period of transition"

between childhood and adulthood, a time when "young people's needs are more intensified than at any other time of their lives" (3). Adolescent literature can help address these needs. In an age when so many young people end their lives tragically by suicide, it is important ^athat adolescents have some means to affirm their existence and find some way to choose the right solution to a life crisis. Sheila Schwartz emphasizes the positive effects of literature that realistically reflects the lives of adolescents in her criteria for "good adolescent literature" as writing which:

- . . . meets adequate literary standards;
- . . . helps young people become more in touch with themselves by establishing a common bond with the rest of humanity;
- . . . shows young people that they are not the only ones to suffer their problems;
- . . . makes the world knowable by telling the truth;
- . . . without being didactic, affirms those values that keep people hoping, that give young people the strength to continue to grow;
- . . . helps combat the values and events that result in apathy, disillusionment, and retreat;
- . . . has a humanistic base of respect for human beings;
- . . . deals with eternal problems rather than with the transitory, commercialized manufactured mores of the youth culture;
- . . . and reflects the affirmative, hopeful vision of the twenty-first century embodied in the Humanist Manifesto.

(11-12)

Good adolescent literature affirms that which is positive in the lives of young people and offers them a fixed system of values that reflects the avowed moral standards of society.

James E. Miller, Jr., argues that:

. . . in every work of literature there is a perspective on the world and on life; in this perspective there is implicit or explicit what is called variously a moral dimension, a system of values, a vision of the nature of things, a truth. (29)

It is this moral dimension, this truth, that is essential to the study of the hero in the adolescent novel. If the young adult reader can experience the conflicts of the protagonists in the adolescent novels and glimpse, however briefly, the "truth" represented in the novel, then the journey will have been worth the effort. John Gardner says that true art "asserts an ultimate rightness of things which it does not pretend to understand in the philosopher's way but which it nevertheless can understand and show mankind" (On Moral Fiction, 173). The adolescent novel, at its best, has the potential to show the young reader a vision of "the ultimate rightness of things," or, in a few instances, the ultimate wrongness of things.

Purpose and Design of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to examine the concept of the hero in selected adolescent novels. The chapters will be organized around three traditional approaches to the hero in literature. The first section, "The Hero and the Mythic Quest," will be an examination of the hero's mythic journey and the trial by ordeal which is associated with heroic initiation. The novels selected

for this chapter are Robb White's Deathwatch, Robert C. O'Brien's Z for Zachariah, Harry Mazer's The Last Mission, Robin Brancato's Winning, and Robert Lipsyte's One Fat Summer.

The next section, "The Alienated Hero: The Outsider Theme," is an examination of the hero who is alienated from some element of his society, either by choice or circumstance. The novels for this chapter are Sue Ellen Bridgers' Home Before Dark, Katherine Patterson's Jacob Have I Loved, S. E. Hinton's The Outsiders, Vera and Bill Cleaver's Where the Lilies Bloom, and Robert Cormier's The Chocolate War.

The third analytical section, "The Hero as Moralist," will examine the novels which exhibit a strong moral theme and a didactic purpose. The novels selected for this chapter are Robert Newton Peck's A Day No Pigs Would Die, Paul Zindel's The Pigman, Mildred Taylor's Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, Bette Greene's Summer of My German Soldier, and Alice Childress' A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich.

The selection of novels for this study is based on a questionnaire which was sent to thirty-four professionals in the field of adolescent literature. Fifteen adolescent novels were selected on a frequency basis from the responses given, with the limitation that the study may not include more than one novel from any one particular author (see Appendix).

The survey method of selection creates some limitations for the study. The novels have to be somewhat arbitrarily assigned to the three thematic areas, and, in some cases, they could just as easily be assigned to another category. The approaches are intended only as frameworks for analysis, not as definitive categories. It is the author's belief that these categories are particularly appropriate for this study because they represent recurring heroic patterns in mainstream literature, as well as areas of concern to adolescents in their representation of the quest for self-identity or self-esteem, the dilemma of the outsider, and the search for values.

The second part of the research design consists of a procedure for content analysis suggested by Fred Kerlinger (544-553). The design consists of three sections.

1. The universe of content to be analyzed shall consist of the entire text of each of the adolescent novels selected for the sample.
2. There shall be three units of analysis:
 - (a) theme--which consists of the dominant idea presented in the novel and its relationship to the actions of the hero.
 - (b) character--which consists of the hero-protagonist and other characters which inform the hero's actions.
 - (c) thema--which is "a sequence of events that consists of a situation confronting a person, the response behavior, and the consequences of that behavior as perceived by the person himself."
(Child, Potter, and Levine, "Children's Textbooks and Personality Development," as rept. in Kerlinger)

3. Three thematic orientations will provide a framework for the content analysis:

- (a) The Hero and the Mythic Quest
- (b) The Alienated Hero: The Outsider Theme
- (c) The Hero as Moralist

The entire study consists of six chapters. Chapter I contains an introduction to the subject and presents the rationale for the study. It includes background on the concept of the hero and its relevance to the adolescent novel, definitions, discussion of instrumentation, and an outline for the rest of the paper. Chapter II provides a historical perspective for adolescent literature, a review of the relevant literature, and a framework for the study of the adolescent hero. Chapter III introduces the concept of myth criticism and provides a content analysis of selected novels. Chapter IV introduces the concept of the hero as an outsider and provides a content analysis of selected novels. Chapter V introduces the concepts of moral criticism and provides a content analysis of selected novels. Chapter VI presents a brief summary of conclusions, suggestions for classroom application, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

THE WORLD OF ADOLESCENT LITERATURE

Before beginning a specific examination of the concept of the hero in the adolescent novel, an introduction to the world of adolescent literature as reflected by the literature in the field is necessary. First, the historical perspective of adolescent literature will be examined. Second, the critical reception of adolescent literature will be examined in order to determine the place of adolescent literature in the literary canon. The final section of this chapter will look at the adolescent reader as an active participant in the literary transaction.

Historical Perspective of Adolescent Literature

Adolescent literature, as literature heard by adolescents, is perhaps as old as the record of literature itself. It is not inconceivable that adolescent males, particularly those coming of age, participated in the campfire stories of primitive hunters. Nor is it difficult to imagine Greek teenagers listening to stories from the Iliad or the Odyssey, while their Anglo-Saxon counterparts were entertained with songs of Beowulf. In the 12th century when the romance began to replace the epic, it is probable that young squires were taught the rudiments of virtue and honor by stories of Arthur, Gawain, or Lancelot. By Renaissance times, teenagers may have been exposed

to written works in the form of courtesy books, such as Castiglione's The Courtier (1528) or Sir Thomas Elyot's Book Named the Governour (1531), which were designed as didactic works to teach the proper behavior to Renaissance noblemen.² But it was not until 1476 when William Caxton introduced the printing press to England that books became more readily available to the English-speaking world. Among the hundred works, mostly theological and scholarly, that Caxton printed were Chaucer's Canterbury Tales (1483) and Malory's Morte Darthur (1845), which were among the first publications of literature in the English language. Two other presses existed in England at this time, Oxford (1478) and St. Albans (1479), and contributed to the growth of the written word.

The earliest written works for children in the American colonies were didactic in nature and were designed to help Puritan children resist the temptation to sin. Cline and McBride annotate the title of one such work by Benjamin Keach: War with the Devil or Man's Conflict with the Powers of Darkness, in a Dialogue Discovering the Corruption and Vanity of Youth, the Horrible Nature of Sin, and the Deplorable Condition of Fallen Man (1707) (16). Such blatantly didactic literature persisted in America

²Specific references are from C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1980) 104, 351.

until around 1850. Mary Lystad characterizes the change:

In the earlier period until about 1850 the adolescent was seen as a person with one overriding duty: to cast off evil ways and engage in that religious and social activity which would merit him eternal life. The youth was born not to live but to die in a befitting manner. After 1850 the adolescent was encouraged to expand his horizons and to think not only about life after death but also about life after childhood. Ways of achieving in the world, especially for boys, were highlighted and the adolescent was urged to think seriously about and to plan for adult roles, especially as they related to work. (19, 35)

In the 19th century the historical romances flourished in America. Sir Walter Scott's Ivanhoe was regarded as "fiction for the young adult" (Cline and McBride, 18).

In 1883, Robert Louis Stevenson published Treasure Island, which featured an adolescent protagonist, young Jim Hawkins, who gave battle to wicked pirates. Stevenson said of Treasure Island that it was "a story for boys, no need of psychology and fine writing" (Cline and McBride, 19). If Stevenson can be believed, Treasure Island might very well qualify as the first novel written for adolescents, even though other writers, notably Jules Verne, Mark Twain, and Louisa Mae Alcott, had novels which featured adolescent protagonists.

The late 1800s and the turn of the century ushered in the era of the series novel. Horatio Alger penned Ragged Dick (1867), with its rags-to-riches theme of the homeless shoeshine boy who became a millionaire, and created a whole chapter in American mythology. Edward

Stratemeyer, writing in the 1920s and 1930s, became the most successful series writer for adolescents. Under the pen names Victor Appleton, Franklin W. Dixon, and Carolyn Keene, respectively, he created Tom Swift, the Hardy Boys, and Nancy Drew. The Stratemeyer factory, as this prolific author came to be called, produced well written, formula adventure novels that were successful with the young adult audience. These novels and others which flourished in the 1940s and 1950s in America stressed the traditional social and family values and presented any deviation from these as unacceptable behavior. (Cline and McBride, 19-25)

It was not until the late sixties that the adolescent novel turned away from romanticized teenagers who were little more than clones of their parents. Mainstream literature had already signalled the end of the two-dimensional teenager with works like James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1952), Carson McCullers' The Member of the Wedding (1952), and J. D. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye (1951). Nilsen and Donelson mark the beginning of the "new realism" in the adolescent novel as "1967, when S. E. Hinton's The Outsiders, Ann Head's Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones, and Jean Thompson's House of Tomorrow appeared" (81). Theodore W. Hipple concurs with Nilsen and Donelson, but adds 1968's The Pigman by Paul Zindel as the third member of the triad that was to become the foundation of the realistic movement in the young adult novel:

One of the emerging classics is Paul Zindel's The Pigman, one of the three books of the late 1960s that really turned adolescent literature on its head and changed its presentation of adolescent life from an essentially romantic treatment into a highly realistic one. Prior to such books as The Pigman, S. E. Hinton's The Outsiders, and Ann Head's Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones, most adolescent novels--those novels written for adolescent audiences--were older versions of the primers studied in the early school grades. . . .

The time was right for some realism. Zindel, Hinton, and Head provided it and opened the floodgates, so much so that, during the '70s and '80s, virtually any adolescent concern that could be identified--homosexuality, racial prejudice, religious cultism, disintegrating family structures, teenage alcoholism, and on and on--could be found to be the subject of an adolescent novel. . . . (4)

Nilsen and Donelson characterize the novels prior to 1967:

. . . as generally safe, pure, and simplistic, devoid of the reality that young people daily faced--violence, pregnancy, premarital sex, profanity, drinking, smoking, abortion, runaways, alienation, the generation gap, suicide, death, prejudice, poverty, class distinctions, drugs, divorce, and on and on." (451-452)

The new wave of realistic novels actually shook the adolescent market from its complacent, moralizing roots. Catherine Sheldrick Ross calls young adult realism a genre of literature with "adolescent protagonists, narration from the adolescent's point of view, realistic contemporary settings, and subject matter formerly considered taboo" (175). Sheila Egoff describes what she calls the teenage "problem novel":

It was very strongly subject-oriented with the

interest primarily residing in the topic rather than in the telling. The topics--all adult-oriented--sound like chapter titles from a textbook on social pathology: divorce, drugs, disappearing parents, desperation, and death. . . . and towering above all such minor matters, the two superstar problems--sex and alienation. (196)

For further contrast, Dwight L. Burton offers this characterization of the "junior novels" of the late 1950s:

. . . Junior novels were shorter and easier to read than adult novels and were governed by some rather rigid conventions of content and form. The rigorous enforcement of certain taboos, likewise enforced in secondary school literature programs, was a major characteristic. The seamy side of life and the dark side of human nature largely were avoided. Erotic drives, to say nothing of explicit sex or deviant behavior, were ignored; cool kisses were as far as writers would go. Smoking and drinking were seldom alluded to. . . . ("Pap to Protein?", 312)

One of the best characterizations of the adolescent novel as it exists today is offered by Lois Duncan, an adolescent novelist:

. . . These are books about alcoholism, drug use, premarital sex, childbirth, physical handicaps, social and racial problems, divorce, marital illness, and homosexuality. Judy Blume's eleven-year-old menstruates. Richard Peck's seventeen-year-old gets raped. Fran Arrick's fourteen-year-old becomes a prostitute. The doors of life have been thrown wide, and the writer of youth books today has an entire world . . . to draw upon and to utilize. . . . It's exciting, challenging, and more than a little frightening. How much is too much? How far dare we go? Can we really write for young people as though they were adults, or is there some thin dividing line that still separates the two reading levels? (1, 26)

Natalie Babbitt agrees that there is, in fact, a

clearly-defined dividing line between adult novels, with their vision of "gloom," and the sugar-coated children's novels which treated American childhood as "the last repository of the American dream" (179-180). She addresses the need to write better, more authentic novels for children in a 1974 Hornbook article:

. . . We don't have to conjure up some plastic representation of a flowering Eden which must, for the sake of an underrated audience, remain forever serpentless. . . . We can instead give our children great books--we can give them literature if we really want to, if we are willing to sweat a little and get our hands dirty. Just think of it! The great American novel for children. Why not? (185)

Perhaps the field of adolescent literature has not yet produced "the great American novel for children," but if censor's voices are any indication it has certainly begun to sweat a little and get its hands dirty. The decade that has passed since Ms. Babbit's remarks has seen the deflowering of the last repository of the American dream. Contemporary adolescent literature is postlapsarian, but it might well be argued that the fall was a fortunate one. Young adults need to hear an authentic voice and the serpent in the contemporary garden of adolescent literature may well speak with the voice of wisdom.

Critical Reception of Adolescent Literature

The adolescent novel has had a desperate struggle for critical recognition in the American middle- and

secondary-school classrooms. Since the 1950s when adolescent literature began to find its own voice, there has been controversy. The adolescent novel was then and is now often considered unworthy of serious attention. The title of Frank Jennings' 1956 article is indicative of the debate: "Literature for Adolescents--Pap or Protein?" Dwight L. Burton resurrected Jennings' title for his own 1980 retrospective on the subject, marking three decades of controversy. A number of questions persist. Does the adolescent novel have any merit as literature? Does it belong in the classroom? If so, in what capacity? Should it be taught as part of the primary curriculum, or relegated to extra-curricular reading? Should it be used only in developmental classes or in heterogeneous classroom populations? Should adolescent novels be assigned for whole classes or selected students? Should they be an end in themselves or merely a stepping-stone to "good" literature? Finally, should there be a critical standard for evaluating adolescent novels? It is not within the scope of this discussion to answer all of these questions, but rather to offer some critical insight.

In 1977 John Goldthwaite, writing in Harper's, suggested one answer to the controversy surrounding adolescent literature, which was to improve the literary experience of young readers by the "termination of teen-age fiction":

No one has ever satisfactorily explained why there is or ought to be such a thing as teenage fiction at all. In the case of science fiction and fantasy, for example, there is little being written for adults that could not be understood by any literate twelve-year-old. Conversely, some prize winning fantasies for teen-agers have a turgidity of style the worst SF hack would be hard put to achieve. As for all that novelized stuff about alienation, drugs, and pregnancy, the great bulk of it might be more enjoyable presented in comic books. There are any number of very good underground cartoonists on the West Coast who need the money and might be willing to make something halfway real of such material. (qtd. in Nilsen and Donelson, 12)

Even at a national policy level, educators, and those who advise politicians on educational matters, have expressed a rather clear bias against the use of the adolescent novel in the classroom. Holly O'Donnell reports on this bias:

Another concern expressed by some educators is whether or not adolescent novels adequately provide the student with a broader understanding of literature. Ernest L. Boyer in High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America envisions the purpose of literature study as bringing students to the discovery of their common literary heritage and to the power and beauty of the written work. Great literature, according to Boyer, speaks to all people. However, many of the young adult novels marketed today speak only to the adolescent. Both William Bennett and Ronald Goba fear the adolescent novel will restrict the student's experience. In the ASCD Curriculum Update, William J. Bennett notes that the purpose of literary study is "to shape a sensibility, to develop good habits of character, and to lift the imagination beyond the limits of a too narrowly imposed boundary of self-definition." And Ronald Goba, Chair of the Conference on Secondary School English Department Chairs, in his comment on "A Nation at

Risk" warns "Many students have developed a prejudice against Shakespeare because he's difficult. He writes in a vocabulary and a linguistic medium that are outside of the adolescent's range of daily experience. But if we build education around students' limitations, many important authors will remain too difficult. Students will never grow and develop." (85-86)

O'Donnell believes that there is room for both traditional literature and adolescent literature in the classroom.

"Teachers taking a long range view of students' developmental reading patterns," says O'Donnell, "might see adolescent literature as a useful part--but only a part--of what Dwight Burton called the student's 'imaginative entry' into literature" (86).

Many former advocates of the YA novel in the classroom seem to have done an about face. The publication of G. Robert Carlsen's Books and the Teenage Reader in 1967 probably did more to popularize the use of adolescent literature, especially the adolescent novel, in the classroom than any other single publication. Carlsen writes that for adolescents, adolescent literature "becomes a way of seeing themselves and of testing possible solutions to their own problems" (Books and the Teenage Reader, 40). But since his retirement, this noted apologist for adolescent literature has experienced doubts:

. . . Since I retired I have been reading Jane Austen and Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell, and the Brontes and I realize how far short of the mark teenage books tend to be. . . . The things we often talk about as literature in

our evaluating of teenage books fall short of the mark--such things as rounded characters, chronological or inverted plots, setting, or theme do not explain the essence of the books we revere as literature. It has seemed to me lately that the real difference lies in the complexity and subtlety of the plot pattern, in the way the reader's reactions are led in an engrossing pattern that has a satisfying unity. But most important of all is that elusive thing we call style. Part of the style lies in the richness of imagery so that we see, hear, feel, smell, taste what the characters are experiencing. And part of style is that flow of language that raises the work from the transactional or expressive dimension to the poetic. The best that can be said for most teenage books is that they are good journalistic writing. . . . ("Teaching Literature for the Adolescent: A Historical Perspective," 29-30)

Charles A. Bonnici is another educator who changed his opinion of adolescent literature. A former, self-confessed "Zindelist," in 1981 Bonnici declared to readers of the English Journal that his ten-year affair with the adolescent novel was over. He went on to assert that even though these novels helped him learn how to teach literature, he could now teach Ms. Austen or the Brontes. While the adolescent novel might have a place in remedial class, Bonnici suggests, the majority of students should be assigned "good mature writing." After a summer of Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Austen, and Dickens, Mr. Bonnici said, "I could not go back to Paul Zindel and his colleagues with their pat formulas and predictable plots" (37). Instead, he chose to teach such lessons as "the tenacity of evil in our lives (Rebecca), the social matrix of marriage

(Pride and Prejudice), and the psychological conflict of a woman unable to accept society's traditional roles (The Bell Jar)" (38). Bonnici, full of new resolve, proclaimed, "No longer would I belabor the concept of symbol in a collection of glass pigs or a broken madonna when I had at my disposal the sloping "R" of the first Mrs. De Winter or the rancid air of a bell jar" (38).

A response to Bonnici's article appeared in the English Journal in October 1982, almost two full years after the publication of the original piece. John A. Davis responds directly to Bonnici's remarks about good mature writing:

I believe the social matrix of marriage or the tenacity of evil in adult affairs can only be understood by students when they have first clarified and explored their feelings, values, and attitudes on the conventions and behaviors which surround their own lives, not before."
(78)

Davis suggests that the adolescent novel offers students the opportunity for clarification of their own world. But more important are Mr. Davis' insights into the nature of literature as exploration and discovery and the reasons students read:

. . . Are students better served by the exposure to the heights and subtleties of the writer's craft than to a literary piece as an artistic statement of how life feels in the living of it? For the adolescent, I feel the whole impression, rather than a knowledge of the individual parts which contribute to the whole, is more worthwhile at their age. I am afraid Bonnici's students are victims of what

is often an irresistible temptation for us to match students in lockstep to the "delights" of discovering the art of literature, since just such delights drew us to the profession originally, and we must proselytize to justify our continued dedication. But few students in college, and even fewer in high school, can experience this delight. First, they read for escape, later, for an answer to or explication of their personal concerns and still later, probably in their college years, if then, for an answer to or elaboration of social or philosophical concerns. I do not say that Bonnici is wrong in his convictions, only in his belief that they should be prematurely applied to today's adolescents. (78-79)

Mike Angelotti adds his voice to the advocates of young adult literature in the classroom:

. . . There is a place for good YA literature in most literature programs because it has value for most kids and teachers. Almost anything teachable related to reading and responding to most literature can be taught with YAL. Because it is so provocative, it can naturally be integrated with composition. To ignore it, in the end, hurts kids who might have learned to read, write, and think a little better because a literature was there that they could understand. (74)

Angelotti does not suggest that young adult literature replace more traditional texts, but, rather, advocates curricular diversification. For example, Hamlet's existential crisis might capture the imagination of many of the college-bound students in the classroom, but what about the students who are struggling with drug addiction. Wouldn't these students receive far more benefit from a work like Alice Childress' A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich?

Robert Probst, a critic known for his work on the role of the reader in the literary transaction, offers a recent defense of adolescent literature's role in the English curriculum:

Adolescent literature must have a significant place in the curriculum, then, because it deals with the issues students are likely to be confronting, and so it directly and openly invites the sort of encounter we have been alluding to. It touches their lives, addressing issues that matter, raising questions that are likely to interest them. The transactions they may have with it are likely to be significant rather than trivial and superficial. We must not judge the literature solely on criteria of worth that deal only with features of the text. We must instead judge it on the likelihood that the students' transactions with it will be of high quality--that is, committed, interested, reasoned, emotional, personal. ("Adolescent Literature and the English Curriculum," 28)

Probst touches the heart of the matter. Adolescent literature most often speaks to the experiences of the students, while adult literature frequently fails to find a voice. The young adult novel, then, is not just transitional. Sometimes it is the only vehicle of communication for many students. It is rather like the school's hidden curriculum. It offers an education that quite often is a rich protein supplement to the traditional classroom.

Finally, the question remains: Is adolescent fiction pap or protein? Dwight L. Burton's conclusions in his 1980 retrospective offer an appropriate response:

The changes in the junior novel over a generation are great. But is the junior novel better--has it passed from pap to protein? I

think the answer, in general, is yes. The dissolving of most of the taboos of content and rigidities of techniques has given the junior novel a maturity that, in turn, gives it greater potential for a rich experience for the youthful readers who still read it in vast numbers. The junior novel today is much more like the adult novel than it was twenty years ago, but the authentic junior novel, with the particular tempo and attuning of adolescence, is still easily distinguishable (though adults may enjoy reading it) and offers a special experience for the adolescent reader. For that reason, the junior novel today is even more important in its role of transition to mature library experience than it was earlier. ("Pap to Protein? Two Generations of Adolescent Fiction," rpt. in Bator, 318)

The Adolescent as Reader

After an examination of the historical evolution of adolescent literature and the critical reception it received, it now seems appropriate to turn to the other key figure in the reading transaction--the adolescent. Two essential questions must be answered. What are the characteristics of the adolescent reader and what is the adolescent reader's response to literature?

While a discussion of adolescent psychology is not the purpose of this study, a few comments on the nature of the adolescent might provide a valuable context for a discussion of the adolescent as both reader and protagonist of fiction. One early observer of adolescent behavior offers these comments:

Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for their elders and love chatter

in place of exercise. They no longer rise when others enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up their food and tyrannize their teachers. (qtd. in Dacey, 4)

While these remarks may appear to have been written about contemporary teenagers, they were actually penned by no less an authority than Socrates in the 5th century.

G. Stanley Hall, who pioneered the field of adolescent psychology, calls adolescence "the last great wave of human growth, a wave that throws the child up on the shores of manhood or womanhood relatively helpless as from a second birth" (Hall, I, 48).³ Louise J. Kaplan, a contemporary adolescent psychologist, elaborates on adolescence as a crucial transitional period between childhood and adulthood:

. . . Adolescence represents an inner emotional upheaval, a struggle between the eternal human wish to cling to the past and the equally powerful wish to get on with the future. The purpose of adolescence is not to obliterate the past but to immortalize what is valuable and to say farewell to those items of the past that stand in the way of a full realization of adult sexual and moral potentials. Saying farewell entails considerable grief and longing. In that regard the adolescent is like a mourner, but a mourner who at first only dimly realizes what it is she is losing. What the adolescent is losing, and

³ Many of G. Stanley's Hall's ideas on adolescence are psychologically obsolete. Adolescence was a seminal work which attempted to make the study of adolescence a scientific discipline. Hall felt that it was during this time that a child's moral and ethical values were shaped and that the greatest impediment to this development was the child's emerging sex drive.

what is so difficult to relinquish, are the passionate attachments to the parents and to those dialogues that had once been the center of infantile existence. (19)

Judith Viorst also views adolescence as a time of leaving behind the past and learning the values of adulthood. In Necessary Losses, she outlines several stages adolescents undergo in this journey:

There is a course to adolescence which--from puberty to somewhere over eighteen--is loosely marked by the following emphases:

In early adolescence we are preoccupied with puberty's bodily changes.

In middle adolescence we are struggling with who-am-I and looking outside the house for sexual love.

In the late adolescent phase we further mute our conscience's harshness and include--as a vital part of our ego ideal--values and commitments which are connected with our place in the wider world.

And through all these phases we have to work through, to swallow and chew and digest, an array of new and necessary losses, as we separate--really separate--from our parents.

This separation--this loss of the closest attachments of our life--is often frightening and always sad. The gates of Eden are clanging shut for good. And to this add the loss of our self-as-child and the loss of our former familiar body and the loss of our fuzzy innocence as we tune into the tough truths on the evening news. As with every important loss we need to mourn--we need to mourn our childhood's end--before we can be emotionally free to commit to love and to work in the human community. (153)

The turbulent losses of adolescence are mirrored in the adolescent reader's response to literature. Isabelle Jan asserts that, "The reader's interest and involvement in a fictional hero's existence depends on the character's emotional potential--that is to say, his

tribulations" (91). Adolescent readers want conflicts, but they want conflicts that reflect their own struggles in the real world. Further, research suggests that, for the most part, adolescent readers are looking for solutions. In a study of adolescent reading preferences for type of theme, Beyard-Tyler and Sullivan discovered that their test group demonstrated "a strong and consistent preference for themes in which the central problem was resolved successfully over those in which there was no resolution of the problem" (104).

If adolescent literature is a mirror for the adolescent reader's life struggles, it is also one pathway by which the adolescent can seek to create the image reflected in the mirror. Robert Probst examines this aspect of the adolescent reader:

. . . Students read literature to know themselves, and--insofar as they each are a composite of their ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and emotions--to create themselves, for reading will enable them to refine and sharpen their conceptions of the world and the people in it. It is those conceptions that make them who they are. (Adolescent Literature, 5)

Arthur Applebee suggests that adolescents organize the reading experience at the level of Piagetian "formal operations":

. . . Adolescents, too, make use of such classifications of experience, but for them the classification becomes a subset within a larger classification of all that might occur. It is what Piaget has called "formal operations" that makes this expansion possible. In effect,

by observing and organizing the combinations of events around them, adolescents seem to derive rules for combining events which allow them to imagine all of the hypothetically possible combinations of observations, some of which may never occur. These combinations which emerge as possible but which have never been observed become hypotheses for testing. . . .

The characteristic of analysis is that a work is treated in terms of "how it words": its mechanics, the logic of its structure, its images and symbols. Whereas the younger child will order the work into categories based on concrete attributes or characteristics, the adolescent tries to explain the reasons behind those characteristics. The focus shifts to a consideration (implicitly if not explicitly) of how the work might have been structured as well as how it is structured. (108-109)

As an adolescent reader follows the conflicts encountered by the protagonist in a work of fiction, there occurs a process of ordering experience to conform to the type of resolution the reader deems appropriate. If the protagonist chooses a course of action that is outside the realm of experience the reader has predicted, this particular experience with a text has violated the reader's expectations. Therefore, the reader is forced to impose order on the reading experience by restructuring the event, looking at all the possibilities for resolution, and then deciding whether the protagonist's resolution is acceptable. Thus, rather than confirm an a priori position held by the reader, this particular transaction has expanded the reader's universe of possibilities.

In Art As Experience, John Dewey says of this fusion of reader and text that:

The junction of the new and old is not a mere composition of forces, but a re-creation in which the present impulsion gets form and solidity, while the old, the "stored" material is literally revived, given new life and soul through having to meet a new situation. (60)

Wolfgang Iser views this experience as constructive rather than destructive, as "the reader's reception of the text is not based on identifying two different experiences (old versus new), but on the interaction between the two" (132).

The ideal reading transaction should result in a by-product rather than a product if the reader is properly engaged with the text. Louise Rosenblatt suggests that this outcome is obtainable if the reader is engaged in aesthetic, rather than nonaesthetic (or efferent) reading. In nonaesthetic reading, the reader reads for "the information that remains as residue after the reading"; in aesthetic reading, "the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text" (Rosenblatt, 25). If the reader is reading at the aesthetic level, then the restructuring of experience, with its consequent reaffirmation or redefinition of moral stance, should be almost subconscious.

For the reader to be engaged at the aesthetic level of experience, the vehicle involved in the transaction must be authentic. The young adult novel most often offers

the adolescent reader this level of authenticity.

Catherine Sheldrick Ross accounts for the attraction of adolescent literature with a comment about the narrative voice this vehicle uses:

. . . First, the narrators are usually reliable, and their perceptions can be trusted to be what the intended reader would see in the same situation. Second, narrators are presented as characters with whom it is safe to identify. Third, an important part of the narration are those evaluative elements used by the narrator to impress on the reader that the story is worth telling. And, fourth, although narrators tell the story retrospectively so as to be able to evaluate what has happened and comment on its significance, they are still adolescents when they tell the story. There is not the double perspective, common in adult books about growing up, in which the youthful point of view is qualified in the light of subsequent experience of the mature narrator. (182-183)

To engage the adolescent reader, the material must speak to the adolescent within the reader. Sometimes that voice may be authoritative, the voice of the adult writer. But, more often than not, the voice the adolescent reader hears most clearly will be the voice of the narrator who is, like the reader, a young adult.

CHAPTER III

THE HERO AND THE MYTHIC QUEST

Perhaps the most familiar quest-heroes in western culture are the warrior heroes of classical Greek mythology and Anglo-Saxon Arthurian legend. In the Greek myths, the heroes are usually given the task of restoring the social order by going on an object-quest or an obstacle-quest. Jason and the Argonauts must retrieve the golden fleece which will restore order by proving Jason is the rightful ruler of his kingdom. Hercules, the son of the god Jupiter by a mortal woman, incurs the wrath of Juno, the goddess who is Jupiter's wife, and she makes him subject to another god who assigns him the impossible tasks called the "Twelve Labours of Hercules." In the Arthurian legends, the knights are usually tasked with the restoration of order to Arthur's kingdom by either proving their virtue or searching for some magical object which will symbolically purge the calamities which have befallen the kingdom. In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Gawain must prove his honor, and by proxy the honor of all Arthurian knights, by allowing the Green Knight to return the stroke by which Gawain severed his head. In his journey to the Green Knight's realm, Gawain's virtue is severely tested and he falters. Because the young knight is not quite pure, the Green Knight is allowed to nick him with his blade. Perceval, the good and virtuous knight, is the hero of

most of the Grail legends. Only a good and virtuous knight can see the Holy Grail, the chalice used by Christ at The Last Supper, which will restore order and vitality to Arthur's kingdom. In nearly all of the quest-legends, there is some condition of social disorder which can only be ameliorated by the successful completion of the hero's journey.⁴

For the adolescent hero the mythic quest is usually associated with a search for self-knowledge and self-identity. The emphasis is on the adolescent's passage from childhood to adulthood and the youth's integration into the existing social order. Dorothy Norman views the hero's task as one of discovering the "heroic principle":

. . . In order to find the path, follow the path, be the path, it is essential to discover, beyond every ambiguity of polyvalence, what may most clearly illuminate for us the basic inner meaning of the heroic principle in life. (6)

In order to discover the "heroic principle," the adolescent must complete the journey and return with self-knowledge. Nilsen and Donelson say that the hero-journey archetype consists of "the hero who leaves home on a dan-

⁴Campbell offers a brief discussion of the Jason and Hercules myths. A better source for the complete myths is Bulfinch's Mythology: The Age of Fable (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1968). The authoritative source for the Grail myth is Jessie L. Weston's From Ritual to Romance (New York: Doubleday-Anchor, 1957). Malory: Works, Eugene Vinaver, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) is a reliable source for the Arthurian myths.

ger-fraught mission and returns as a stronger and better person" (55).

Adolescence marks the end of childhood. It is a time when children experience new physiological changes and a regeneration as a sexual being with the capacity to reproduce creatures like themselves. Patricia Meyer Spacks calls adolescence "the time of life when the individual has developed full sexual capacity but has not yet assumed a full adult role in society" (7). This emerging sexual tension and the difficulty of integration, that is, the adolescents' assumption of their role in adult society, create most of the anxiety experienced by adolescents. Psychologically, adolescent egocentrism, nurtured by a sense of sameness and continuity in the childhood self, is in the process of being replaced by a growing awareness of the self as it exists, first, in relation to significant others in early adolescence, and, in middle and later adolescence, to the greater society as a whole.

Integration into adult society becomes the primary task of adolescence. The adolescent must endure a rite of passage and, leaving behind childhood nurture, accept fully the responsibilities of adulthood. Erik Erikson offers this assessment of the adolescent task:

. . . The growing and developing youths, faced with the physiological revolution within them, and with tangible adult tasks ahead of them, are now primarily concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared

with what they feel they are, and with the question of how to connect the roles and skills cultivated earlier with the occupational prototypes of the day. . . . (261)

In most cultural systems there is some symbolic recognition of the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. For example, the Jewish bar mitzvah, which still exists in the American Jewish subculture, is a symbolic recognition of a thirteen-year-old Jewish male as an adult, corresponding, more or less, to the onset of puberty. Louise Kaplan says that in some tribal cultures, similar rites of passage celebrated for adolescent girls, usually at the onset of puberty, actually involve physical mutilation of the breasts or vagina" (31). Kaplan states that while boys in such cultures "are initiated into the public sphere . . . the female rites of passage tend to have the effect of binding a girl to a home place which, more often than not, is the home of her childhood" (30-31).

Most of the ceremonies surrounding the rites of passage in primitive cultures involve some awareness of the adolescent's emerging sexuality. Kaplan says that society responds to the adolescent's emerging sexuality in order to impose control on what is viewed as a threat to the social order:

. . . In every period of human history some recognition is accorded to the potential threat to society of this transition period. Both changing child and adult world make an effort to harness an emerging genitality to

the prevailing social norm and to the moral order--whatever that may be. Sexuality and morality always mature in tandem, and everything else grows up around them. (28)

Kaplan stresses that the adolescent's integration into society is accomplished painlessly only when there is a simultaneous initiation into the accepted moral order. Permission to function sexually is granted only with an awareness of the restrictions on the expression of that sexuality:

Regardless of the age assigned for becoming an adult, the overall significance remains the same. An individual is separated from the asexual world of childhood and initiated into adult sexuality and adult moral responsibility. Permission to be a sexually functioning adult is granted under conditions of initiation into the moral order. In all rites of passage, but particularly those associated with puberty, the sexual and moral realms intertwine. (29-30)

Both Kaplan and Joseph Campbell assert that the integration of the adolescent is essential for the completeness of society. Kaplan suggests that the fertility of the individual child, male or female, is symbolic of the fecundity of the entire society, and each adolescent participating in the ritual is, therefore, an embodiment of the gods who bring prosperity to that society:

. . . The changing status of the individual child is appreciated as both a social event and a cosmic one. As the girl is reborn as a fertile and whole woman, the boy as a fertile and whole man, they bring to the social order the gifts of civilization--medicine,

crops, a method for baking corn cakes. But even more, henceforth they are supposed to be embodiments of the divine, of those elemental forces that reach beyond the personal and social to affect the universal. (227)

Campbell says that the integration of the adolescent into society is part of the chain that establishes the place of that society in the larger universe:

Rites of initiation and installation, then, teach the lesson of the essential oneness of the individual and the group; seasonal festivals open a larger horizon. As the individual is an organ of society, so is the tribe or city--so is humanity entire--only a phase of the mighty organism of the cosmos. (384)

Victor Brombert insists that "it would be simplistic to view the hero as essentially 'postmythical'" because the central questions of the hero in the modern age "are those of initiation, rebirth, and innocence" (14). Ernest Becker asserts that no matter what modern disguise society creates for its heroes, there is still a mythic necessity to live life heroically:

It doesn't matter whether the cultural hero-system is frankly magical, religious, and primitive or secular, scientific, and civilized. It is still a mythical hero-system in which people serve in order to earn a feeling of primary value, of cosmic specialness, of ultimate usefulness to creation, of unshakable meaning. They earn this feeling by carving out a place in nature, by building an edifice that reflects human value: a temple, a cathedral, a totem pole, a skyscraper, a family that spans three generations. The hope and belief is that the things that man creates in society are of lasting worth and meaning, that they outlive or outshine death and decay, that man and his products count. . . . (5)

Modern heroes, like their mythic counterparts, seem to have an insatiable desire to establish a sense of self-identity and find their place in the universe. Hazard Adams says that "the fundamental quality of mythical thought . . . is the drive toward identity . . . " (336). Joseph Campbell suggests that modern heroes can only discover their sense of purpose and place if they endure a ritual death and rebirth--death as individuals, and rebirth as knowledge-bringers to society:

. . . the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms. Such a one's visions, ideas, and inspirations come pristine from the primary springs of human life and thought. Here they are eloquent, not of the present, disintegrating society and psyche, but of the unquenched source through which society is reborn. The hero has died as a modern man; but as eternal man--perfected, unspecific, universal man--he has been reborn. His solemn task and deed therefore . . . is to return then to us, transfigured, and teach the lessons he has learned of a life renewed. (19-20)

But Campbell also acknowledges that it is difficult for modern heroes to know how to accomplish their hero-deed. Modern society has discovered a great deal of technical-scientific knowledge, but seems to have lost its sense of unity. The task of the modern hero is to help rebuild that unity:

The problem of mankind today, therefore, is precisely the opposite to that of men in the comparatively stable periods of those great coordinating mythologies which now are known as lies. Then all meaning was in the group, in

the great anonymous forms, none in the self-expressive individual; today no meaning is in the group--none in the world: all is in the individual. But there the meaning is absolutely unconscious. One does not know toward what one moves. One does not know by what one is propelled. The lines of communication between the conscious and the unconscious zones of the human psyche have all been cut, and we have been split in two.

The hero-deed to be wrought is not today what it was in the century of Galileo. Where then there was darkness, now there is light; but also, where light was, there now is darkness. The modern hero-deed must be that of questing to bring to light again the lost Atlantis of the co-ordinated soul. (Campbell, 388)

But society has not totally abandoned its myths--they have simply been modernized. Leonard Lutwack suggests that the modern hero has all the essential elements in common with his literary antecedents:

. . . The hero is the least stable element in the tradition of the epic. What remains intact is honor, or the need the hero feels to stake his interests and his life in a great enterprise with other men. This he freely chooses to do, and so chooses death. What has changed is the extent of the hero's participation in great affairs; the modern hero is no longer cast as an outstanding leader with extraordinary abilities, and if he has innate virtue it is his common heritage as man rather than the sign of exceptional origin. (Heroic Fiction, 17)

Phil Sullivan directly links the adolescent's search for self-identity or self-knowledge with the traditional quest-hero: "The mythic story of the questing hero (male or female) is a metaphor of the inward journey to self-knowledge, that nebulous goal of almost all education" (88). Agee equates the adolescent's initiation experience

with the mythic rite of passage:

I submit that the initiation experience of an adolescent protagonist in literature corresponds in most cases to a paradigm observable in most primitive cultures where the initiation of their youth is a significant cultural and social event. Through initiation the novice in a primitive culture attains the status and prerogatives of an adult, leaving behind him the world of childhood and ignorance and passing into the world of adulthood and knowledge. Essentially through initiation, he establishes his identity and assumes all the responsibilities of adulthood. (1021)

Northrop Frye says that the journey of the hero, the loss and regaining of identity, is basic to all literature:

. . . This story of the loss and regaining of identity is, I think, the framework of all literature. Inside it comes the story of the hero with a thousand faces, as one critic calls him, whose adventures, death, disappearance and marriage or resurrection are the focal points of what later becomes romance and tragedy and satire and comedy in fiction, and the emotional moods that take their place in such forms as the lyric, which normally doesn't tell a story. (The Educated Imagination, 55)

Hugh Agee divides the heroic journey of the adolescent hero into three distinct phases: separation, transition, and incorporation. He says that the separation phase is "a ritual death in the sense that the novice dies in the old life (childhood) only to be reborn later in the incorporation phase into a new life (adulthood)" (1022). Agee says the transition phase involves either "intense instruction" as "preparation for adult life" or "a journey into the unknown" where the adolescent hero endures "tests" which help teach "knowledge of the privileges and

responsibilities of adulthood" (1022). The final phase of the initiation ritual is "the incorporation of the novice into the adult community" (1022).⁵

Nilsen and Donelson call the heroic quest of the adolescent protagonist an "adventure/accomplishment romance," which is characterized by an initiation phase in which the heroes endure a crisis to prove their worth:

It is a distinguishing feature of such romances that the happy ending is achieved only after the hero's worth is proven through a crisis or an ordeal. Usually as part of the ordeal the hero must make a sacrifice, must be wounded, or must leave some part of his or her body, even if it is only sweat or tears. The real loss is that of innocence, but it is usually symbolized by a physical loss . . . (113)

For adolescent readers, the hero in the adolescent novel must become, quite literally, one of them. They see in the protagonist's journey their own painful struggle to cross the divide between childhood and adulthood. Northrop Frye writes of the necessity for identification with the hero in a work of literature:

. . . If superior neither to other men nor to his environment, the hero is one of us: we respond to a sense of his common humanity and demand from the poet the same canons of probability we find in our own experience. (Anatomy of Criticism, 34)

Dwight Burton believes that the adolescent reader's

⁵Hugh Agee's phases are a rephrasing of Campbell's stages--departure, initiation, and return--in The Hero with a Thousand Faces.

experience with imaginative literature can help in the quest for self-knowledge and self-identity. He feels that experiencing literature will help the adolescent recognize the myths and archetypes which form society's common memory:

The literary experience conjures up, in the words of C. G. Jung, the racial memories or emotional memories out of which we recognize the significance of archetypes and myths, those generalizations, latent within us, to which we can relate all the trivia of experience. This fact has given imaginative literature its staying power over the centuries, for we are at once the victims and the beneficiaries of the myths and archetypes of our tradition, and our dreams and aspirations are the products of these myths and archetypes. Each person needs before him a vision of human life, an archetype, that will give meaning and order to experience. It is through the reading of literature that many young people may frame their conceptions of the archetype, a vital part of the search for the "I". (Literature Study in the High Schools, 13)

The novels chosen for analysis in the second part of this chapter each reflect some aspect of the heroic journey theme. Deathwatch and Z for Zachariah are both trial novels in which the heroic protagonists must learn to survive in a world radically altered. The Last Mission is the story of a young warrior whose journey teaches him the true meaning of war and, perhaps, life. Winning is about another kind of warrior, a high school football star, whose journey is one of re-discovering a sense of self-worth and self-identity. Finally, One Fat Summer is about a quest-hero whose elusive Grail is self-respect.

Deathwatch

Robb White's Deathwatch is a trial novel in which the heroic protagonist must endure a test of survival. It is also the story of the basic universal conflict--the struggle between good and evil. The hero's task is to survive by using his strength and his knowledge of the desert to defeat an unrelentingly hostile environment and an unforgiving human enemy.

Ben, a young college student serving as a guide to earn money for school, is pitted against Madec, a clever, ruthless, and very wealthy Los Angeles' businessman who wants to kill a bighorn sheep for a trophy. Ben agrees to be Madec's guide because he knows the desert and the mountains that are the range of the bighorn sheep. The conflict in the novel arises when Madec accidentally kills a nameless prospector in the mountains. Though the shooting is an accident, it is caused by Madec's careless, self-centered attitude. Madec feels that he is above the moral concerns of ordinary men and, since the old prospector is a nobody, Madec wants to leave his body and forget about the accident. Ben's basic humanity, his moral and ethical code, will not let him simply abandon the old prospector as if of no worth. Rather than risk a trial which will at the very least inconvenience him and might even convict him of manslaughter, Madec first tries to buy Ben's silence and, when that tactic fails, decides to murder the boy.

Deathwatch is basically a novel of character conflict.

The core of the novel is the struggle between two wills-- each equally strong, one good, the other evil. Nilsen and Donelson comment on the characters of Ben and Madec:

Madec personifies the maddened but crafty villain, able to read Ben's mind and forestall his attempts to get clothes or weapons or water. We are almost certain Ben will win but we wonder, for Madec is a worthy opponent. And at each of Madec's devious turns to stop Ben from escape, we doubt that sanity and the right will win, just as we should in a good adventure novel. Ben changes from a calm and rational young man to a frightened, desperate animal and then to a cold and dangerous person who must think as Madec thinks to win out over the villain. Madec begins with all the power on his side--guns, water, food, and wealth. Given reality, we know that Madec must win, but given our sense of rightness and justice, he cannot be allowed to win. Ben has little interest in right or wrong after the first few pages. His interest is more elemental and believable, simple survival until he can escape. (138-39)

Nilsen and Donelson categorize Deathwatch as a simple adventure story:

Robb White's Deathwatch epitomizes the elements of adventure novels--person versus person, person versus nature, person versus self, conflict, tension, thrills, chills, a hero frustrated at every turn by an inventive, devious, and cruel villain. (139)

But Robb White's novel is more than a simple adventure story. It is an adolescent tragedy, which conforms to the three characteristics of tragedy emphasized by Nilsen and Donelson:

. . . In traditional literary criticism, tragedies have three distinct elements. First, there

is a noble character who, no matter what happens, maintains the qualities that the society considers praiseworthy. Second, there is an inevitable force that works against the character, and, third, there is a struggle and an outcome.
(84)

Deathwatch meets these requirements. Ben is a character who lives by his own code and, though he is tempted away from the precepts of that code within the course of his journey, he returns to the code at the end of the novel. There are two forces at work against the character--man and nature. Finally, there is a struggle between Ben and Madec which is resolved at the end of the story.

Deathwatch also contains another element associated with the classical tragedies. The hero makes a mistake which serves as the catalyst for his difficulties. Aristotle comments on this element of the tragic hero:

. . . Such is the man who on the one hand is not pre-eminent in virtue and justice, and yet on the other hand does not fall to misfortune through vice or depravity, but falls because of some mistake . . . (Aristotle's Poetics, 57)

Ben's mistake is agreeing to guide Madec in his hunt for the bighorn when Ben's own value system does not approve of trophy hunting. Sheila Schwartz says that " . . . symbolically by going ahead and participating in Madec's approach, he becomes as vulnerable as the animals Madec hunts" (162).

Ben's first mistake, the mistake that serves as a catalyst for his ultimate test of survival in the desert

and, ironically, his test of honor among his own people, is in violating his beliefs about hunting and agreeing to become Madec's guide. The reader discovers Ben's views on hunting early in the novel:

"Ben, my young friend, you're not the type of man who can understand big-game hunting," Madec had told him the first night in the desert.

Ben had looked at Madec's face in the fire-light, the skin seeming cold even in that warm, soft glow. "The only hunting I understand is when it's the only way you can get something to eat," Ben had said. "Since we don't need one for camp meat, shooting a bighorn doesn't sound like a big deal to me." (White, Deathwatch, 10-11)

Ben has a chance, before the shooting of the old man, to change his mind about being Madec's guide. He realizes that he has made a mistake, yet because of the money Madec is paying him, Ben ignores his own beliefs:

Madec had irritated Ben from the start, and he was sorry now that he had agreed to come out here with him, although he needed the money Madec was going to pay him; it meant a semester in college, maybe two. (White, Deathwatch, 11)

Ben moves further away from his code after Madec fires the shot that kills the old prospector. Though the novel isn't clear on this point, it is possible that Madec knows already that he has killed an old man instead of a bighorn sheep. He tries to make a deal with Ben in order to get the boy to let him kill a better sheep if the first one doesn't meet his standards for a trophy. Madec offers Ben "double the money and a hundred-dollar

bonus" (White, Deathwatch, 15) and, once again, Ben violates his principles to accept, even though he knows that somebody always gets hurt in Madec's deals. He rationalizes that he can deceive Madec, another mistake:

Ben remembered Madec's stories about the deals he made. Somebody always got cheated and hurt.

But there were mountains where the bighorn never went. Mountains that looked exactly like these. Madec could spend the rest of his life looking for bighorn in these ranges and never find one.

"Okay," Ben said. (White, Deathwatch, 15)

Ben's compromising ends when he discovers that Madec has killed the old prospector. Once again Madec tries to buy him. This time Ben refuses because his code says there is a right and wrong, and Madec is wrong:

"I said, Ben, that I was going to ask you one more time to see this thing my way. If you do, I'll make it so you get all the college you need to get your degree and, after you've got it, I'll see to it that you get a job with the oil company you choose. Now that's a good deal, Ben, so don't turn it down for some petty law."

"I don't want any deals with you," Ben told him. "And I don't care if you're a little inconvenienced because you shot a man. I'm going to the sheriff." (White, Deathwatch, 28-29)

After Madec explains how he has framed him, Ben realizes his mistake in underestimating Madec. But he has waited too long to correct it:

What Ben felt was not exactly fear, or even apprehension. It was more physical; a chill gripping his shoulder blades. He realized now that he had known ever since he'd seen the black wound of the Hornet bullet that this

was going to happen.

It made him feel helpless and stupid, for the time had passed when he should have made decisions, taken action, protected himself. Now it was too late. (White, Deathwatch, 35)

The character of Madec is one that is thoroughly evil. He emerges in Robb White's novel as the total villain. His values do not extend beyond himself and his own interests. When Ben asks him how he can actually kill someone to avoid spending a few months in jail, if that, Madec's answer reveals the kind of mind that could easily plot Ben's destruction:

"You're just a young kid. Twenty-two. I asked about you before I hired you. Nice kid, hard working, wants to be a geologist. No parents. No wife. Lots of girls but no real girl friend. During the last three days out here with you I've found out a lot more about you. You're a nobody, Ben. And you'll never be anything but a nobody. You're a loser, Ben. The world is already too full of men like you."

"There's one too many of you, too," Ben said.

"Some people agree with you," Madec said quietly. "But who am I? I'm president and sole owner of a corporation in California. Not a huge thing like General Motors, but I employ about six hundred people. I'm married, and I've got two wonderful children. Now all of these people, my six hundred employees, my wife, my children, depend on me for the food they eat, for their shelter--for their lives. I'm important to all those people and, in my business, it would be absolutely ruinous for me to be put in jail on any charge at all for any time at all, even a day. You see, I'm looking out not only for myself but for all those other people. I'm balancing them against you, and you lose." (White, Deathwatch, 35)

Most of Deathwatch is concerned with the actual physical details of Ben's survival in the desert. When

Ben begins his trial, he feels confident that he can survive in the land he grew up in. Without the added threat of Madec, perhaps he could survive. But Ben soon learns that Madec will not make a mistake, that he won't let Ben survive. For a moment Ben feels defeated:

Gradually, just sitting there, he began to feel smaller, helpless, a naked child threatened not only by the desert but by a grown man intent on killing him. (White, Deathwatch, 50)

For a while, especially after finding the slingshot to use as a weapon, Ben believes he might get the upper hand, might defeat Madec because, by some miracle, Madec would make a mistake. Once again, he realizes that Madec is too smart to let Ben get the upper hand, that he won't even give Ben a fighting chance, because there is no code, no rules in the game Madec is playing:

Now all his hope for miracles was gone and Ben was left with a strange and chilling thought. He and this man Madec were locked together, chained together in a struggle for life itself --a struggle with no niceties, no rules of behavior, no sportsmanship, no gentlemanly conduct. (White, Deathwatch, 69)

After being shot, after nearly starving and dying of thirst, after losing most of his skin in an impossible climb up a sheer rock face, after the sun burns his skin, Ben does defeat Madec in the desert. Ben refuses to quit. He won't give up because "It was insulting; the thought of being killed here in the desert where he had always lived by this man from the city was insulting and outrageous"

(White, Deathwatch, 125). Ben finally does defeat Madec by joining the very elements which threaten his life; he buries himself in the sand in order to take his enemy by surprise.

But the battle is not over when Ben returns home. Madec, the deceiver, the expert liar, almost convinces Ben's own people that Ben is the guilty one. Nobody believes Ben's story because, as Hondurak says, "Ben, you see, it was just so hard for me to believe that any man could do the things he did to another man" (White, Deathwatch, 220). But Ben does succeed after the doctor confirms his story. His last words are indicative of his code, his simple belief in doing the right thing. When asked if he wants to testify against Madec for attempted murder, Ben responds, "No . . . I came in here to report an accident." This simplistic ending to the novel may leave some readers' sense of justice unsatisfied. But it is in keeping with Ben's code of honor. After having violated his own code by agreeing to guide Madec, Ben reaffirms his own moral purpose by insisting that they report the death of the old prospector because he has value as a human being and because it is the right thing to do.

As a hero, Ben has endured his trial in the desert and survived. He has been reintegrated into his own social order. If he has learned that man has a strong potential for evil, he has also learned that this evil

can be defeated. Ultimately, the rules that operate in the hero's own society have reaffirmed the hero's lesson.

Z for Zachariah

Robert C. O'Brien's Z for Zachariah is a trial novel in which the young heroine must survive in a world devastated by a nuclear holocaust. It is, too, a quest novel, but the events of the novel are preliminary to the hero's beginning the quest at the end of the novel. The majority of the novel takes place in a little green valley that has miraculously been spared from radioactive contamination.

The circumstances of the novel suggest the Eden myth. Ann Burden, the hero, is the Eve who survives in the lush, green paradise. The world outside the valley is a wasteland, too dangerous to explore. Her family left her to explore outside the valley and never returned.

No Eden is complete without an Adam, and the conflict in Z for Zachariah centers around the relationship between Ann Burden and John Loomis, the Adam who enters her world. When Ann sees the figure approaching her valley, she is excited and afraid. She is not the only person left in the world, but she is afraid that the person approaching the valley might be dangerous. She remembers hearing the radio announcer before all went silent reporting on the mean things people were doing to each other:

. . . Suppose a car came over the hill, and I ran out, and whoever was in it got out--suppose

he was crazy? Or suppose it was someone mean, or even cruel, and brutal? A murderer? What could I do? The fact is, the man on the radio toward the end, sounded crazy. He was afraid; there were only a few people left where he was and not much food. He said that men should act with dignity even in the face of death, that no one was better off than any other. He pleaded on the radio, and I knew something terrible was happening there. Once he broke down and cried on the radio. (O'Brien, Z for Zachariah, 12)

Ann decides to remove the signs of her presence from the house and hide in a cave until she determines the intentions of the person approaching. After all, she reasons, "There are worse things than being alone" (O'Brien, Z for Zachariah, 13). With this statement of ironic foreshadowing, the hero's first act of consequence in the novel is a cautious withdrawal against the threat of an unknown intruder in Eden.

John Loomis proves to be the serpent in the garden rather than Adam. His first appearance is deceptive. He appears, a man alone in a "safe suit," which is the only suit in existence that will protect its wearer from radio-activity. Ann describes his appearance in her diary:

. . . I could not really see what he looks like, because he is dressed, entirely covered, in a sort of greenish plastic-looking suit. It even covers his head, and there is a glass mask for his eyes--like the wet suits skin divers wear in cold water, only looser and bulkier. Like skin divers, too, he has an air tank on his back. But I could tell it was a man, even though I could not see his face, by his size and the way he moves. (O'Brien, Z for Zachariah, 21)

The appearance of John Loomis is highly symbolic. First, he appears on the doorstep of Eden as a distorted parody of a human being, something alien and unnatural arriving from the "deadness." His suit is green, normally a color associated with life and fecundity. But Loomis is destined to bring a loss of innocence to Eden. Since his suit is described not only as green but also "plastic-looking," the image is one of artificiality. Loomis, in fact, has the potential to bring life to Eden by mating with Ann Burden. Instead he has been contaminated by his own "deadness" inside, so he brings destruction.

Ann herself has dreamed of a man coming to the valley, so there could be children. She writes of her dream:

For nearly a year I have been here alone. I have hoped and prayed for someone to come, someone to talk to, to work with and plan for the future of the valley. I dreamed that it would be a man, for then, some time in the future--it is a dream, I know--there might be children in the valley. Yet, now that a man has actually come, I realize that my hopes were too simple. All men are different. The man on the radio station, fighting to survive, saw people that were desperate and selfish. This man is a stranger, and bigger and stronger than I am. If he is kind, then I am all right. But if he is not--what then? He can do whatever he likes, and I will be a slave for the rest of my life. That is why I want to find out, at least as well as I can by watching, what he is like. (O'Brien, Z for Zachariah, 34)

Her decision to wait and watch has to be reconsidered when Loomis drinks from the poisoned stream and becomes sick with radiation sickness. Ann is a kind human being and her compassion will not let the sick man suffer and possibly

die. She decides to reveal herself and care for the stranger. It is while she is taking care of Mr. Loomis that she discovers that he killed a man to prevent him from taking the safe suit:

What I had feared was true. There were three holes, spaced about two inches apart, across the middle of the chest. They had been patched --that is, new plastic had been welded over them so that they were airtight--but from the inside you could see that they were bullet holes, round and quite large. If Edward was inside the suit when they were fired, then he had certainly been killed. (O'Brien, Z for Zachariah, 93-94)

Even though Mr. Loomis may have killed a man with, at best, a shadowy justification, Ann's compassion compels her to go to the church and pray for his recovery:

I sat in the front pew, where the light is best, and read the Bible for half an hour, and I prayed just for him to live through the night. Even though he may be a murderer, I do not want him to die. (O'Brien, Z for Zachariah, 95)

Ann uses religion almost ritualistically, and with some degree of uncertainty, in the novel. Even the title of the novel is taken from a lesson learned from The Bible Letter Book: "A is for Adam . . . C is for Christian . . . Z is for Zachariah," and Ann says that "since I knew that Adam was the first man, for a long time I assumed that Zachariah must be the last man" (O'Brien, Z for Zachariah, 61). Religion seems to add continuity to her life and provide her with a sense of hope, something that is certainly necessary in a post-apocalyptic world.

The turning point in Ann's relationship with John Loomis comes when he has recovered sufficiently to begin to get his strength back. He has already been providing instructions to Ann about how to run the farm. Now he begins to take possession of her:

. . . When he was holding my hand, I could tell that he was taking charge, or possession--I do not know how to put it. He was trying to control me, just as he had, in his way, controlled the planting, the use of the gasoline, the tractor, and even my going to church. And, of course, the suit, and, in the end, Edward. (O'Brien, Z for Zachariah, 124)

Their relationship reaches a crisis point when John Loomis attempts to rape Ann. She has until this point only suspected his capacity for evil. Now, for the first time, she realizes her danger:

He crept forward until he was right beside me, just where Faro had been. I felt his hand, groping, touch the edge of the bed. Then, suddenly, both his hands were over me, not roughly, but in a dreadful, possessive way that I had never felt or imagined. His breathing grew faster and louder. He was not going to go away. I could sense that, and I knew what he was planning to do as clearly as if he had told me. One hand brushed my face, and then came down hard on my shoulder to pin me to the bed. At that instant, pretense ended. I whirled to one side, sprang to the floor, and made a dive for the door. In the same second his whole weight landed on the bed where I had just been. (O'Brien, Z for Zachariah, 133-34)

Ann now knows the fate Mr. Loomis has in store for her. He has tied up her dog, Faro, and is training it in order to track her down after her escape to the cave.

She has no doubt about what will happen to her if Mr.

Loomis finds her:

Where was Faro when we talked? There was no sight nor sound of him. He must have had him tied up inside the house. Does he think, then, that I might try to untie him--to steal him? (As Edward stole the suit.) As I remembered that I did, in fact, think of doing that, I had a really sickening thought. I realized that whatever Mr. Loomis was planning, at the end of the plan was a picture, and it was of me, too, tied up like Faro in the house. (O'Brien, Z for Zachariah, 145)

Ann continues to bring Mr. Loomis the necessities he needs and then returns to her hiding place. But Loomis is still determined to catch her since he is not strong enough to track her down yet. He even shoots her in order to cripple her so that he can catch her. He almost succeeds in catching her with the aid of the dog which he had trained to track her. Ann knows that she will have to shoot the dog in order to protect herself. But even for personal survival, she cannot bring herself to kill her old friend:

That was, and is, my nightmare. The worst part of it was that I really did decide to kill Faro. I am glad I could not pull the trigger, but that does not alter the fact. It makes me feel as much a murderer as Mr. Loomis. Now there are two of us in the valley. (O'Brien, Z for Zachariah, 170-71)

The novel ends with Ann Burden stealing Mr. Loomis' safe suit and leaving the valley. In the final confrontation with Mr. Loomis, she forces him to confront the fact that he murdered his friend to keep the safe suit. Loomis

has a chance to shoot her, as he did Edward, but he does not shoot. Instead, as she is leaving the valley, he tells her he saw birds circling in the west. The author's suggestion is that somehow the hero of the novel, Ann Burden, because of her goodness, has redeemed, at least partially, a man who had lost his own humanity. Susan Terris comments on Ann Burden's redemptive quality in her New York Times review:

Except--as she stands just beyond the fringe of the valley wearing the stolen suit and giving Loomis every chance to gun her down--she manages to pierce through his personal deadness just enough to get him to admit he's seen birds circling somewhere to the west. These elusive birds are her only hope that she might find what she modestly seeks--"a trace of green" and a schoolroom full of children to teach. Is Ann too good and too courageous to be believable? Probably. But I want to believe in her just because she is so terribly decent, vulnerable and human. (8)

If Z for Zachariah is flawed, it is most certainly in this exaggerated saintly innocence which O'Brien gives to his protagonist. But the novel's success lies in this fact as well, for the hero's basic goodness allows her to perform the function of world-redeemer. Her dream vision at the end of the novel suggests that it is her task for the future to discover the Grail which will rejuvenate the wasteland:

. . . While I was sleeping the dream came, and in the dream I walked until I found the schoolroom and the children. When I awoke, the sun was high in the sky. A stream was flowing through the brown grass, winding west. The

dream was gone, yet I knew which way to go.
 As I walk, I search the horizon for a trace
 of green. I am hopeful. (O'Brien, Z for
Zachariah, 188)

Ann Burden has completed her trials in the valley.
 As each situation with Mr. Loomis confronts her, she
 learns more about the strengths within herself and more
 about the human potential for self-contamination. Mr.
 Loomis is not a ^{bullshit} bad man; he is a weak man who allows the
 deadness of the outside world to contaminate his heart.
 Even though she has lost some of her innocence about human
 nature, Ann emerges from the valley with her basic humanity
 intact. Now she has become a questing knight, a world-
 redeemer who dons a "safe suit" of armor which has been
 purified by her own virtue. Her quest is for new life,
 "a trace of green," to rejuvenate the wasteland.

The Last Mission

Harry Mazer's The Last Mission is a traditional
 warrior-quest about the young hero's journey into combat,
 his trial by fire, and his return with a knowledge about
 the harsh reality of war. Jack Raab is a fifteen-year-old
 Jewish boy who enlists in the Air Force during World War
 II, using a false birth certificate, in order to "fight
 Hitler."

The strength of Mazer's novel lies in his ability
 to convincingly portray the character's journey from the

innocence of adolescence to the terrible knowledge of adulthood. In a New York Times review, Paxton Davis praises the novel for the details of Air Force training and for the creation of a protagonist with emotional depth:

. . . What gives Mr. Mazer's novel its force, however, lies less with the details of Air Force training and service, though he does them well, than with the emotional substance upon which the experience builds. For Jack Raab is no mere author's pawn. The reader feels his shock and grief at losing his friends, suffers with him the doubts and apprehensions that being a Jewish prisoner inevitably raise, and especially, experiences with him the bewildering mixture of relief and repugnance that comes with returning to civilian life. . . . (41)

Jack Raab's journey is undertaken without his parents' knowing what he is doing or where he is. He feels that he needs to represent his family in the fight against the Nazi's oppression of the Jews. He even has nightmares about the Nazi horrors he reads about:

He had nightmares about the Nazis coming to get his family. He'd hear them in the hall outside their apartment, their black boots striking the floor like the clop of horses' hooves. He'd wake up in a sweat, his heart pounding, feeling as if he were suffocating. He could only stop the terror by imagining that he was ready for them. (Mazer, The Last Mission, 11)

At the beginning of the novel, Jack is a Walter Mitty-like character who has daydreams about being a soldier and fighting the Germans. In his dreams, he becomes a great warrior:

. . . Commander Raab took a slow drag on his cigarette. Raab's band of Jewish volunteers, mere boys, but all with hearts like lions, were deep in Nazi territory. Their mission: Destroy Hitler. (Mazer, The Last Mission, 13)

Even during his training Jack's fantasies continue. They all have the effect of creating an image of the super-warrior:

. . . He was at the controls of his P-51 Mustang barreling and diving and twisting down through the German squadrons, scattering them like sheep . . . he caught an ME 109 in his sight . . . fired . . . and blew it from the sky. . . . (Mazer, The Last Mission, 17)

Jack experiences a number of such Mitty-like fantasies. They are significant because they portray a stylized, Hollywood-glamorous concept of war as objectified and victimless. All too soon, Jack Raab will learn that the reality of war is quite different, and then the fantasies will stop.

The hero as initiate, the young Jack Raab at the beginning of his journey, wants nothing more than to win medals and become a hero. His view of war is one of glory, medals of valor, patriotic songs, and triumph over the enemy:

. . . He was good with the guns. He got a sharpshooter medal and couldn't write home about it. He started letters to his family, but he had to stop himself. It was too dangerous. It was better if they thought he was in California, or Oregon, or Alaska, so far away they wouldn't try to find him. He got a good-conduct ribbon. Nobody to tell. He was so afraid he'd say or do something

wrong that he hardly talked to anyone those first few weeks. But he was glad he was in the Air Corps, glad and proud. They sang as they marched. "Off we go into the wild blue yonder, flying high into the sun. . . ." the Air Force song brought tears to Jack's eyes. He'd dream about coming home a hero, covered with ribbons and decorations. Maybe limping from a wound in his leg, and with a black eye patch over one eye. Everyone would cry when they saw him, his mother, his brother and sister, his cousins and aunts and uncles, even his father would be crying. And Jack would just smile and say, I had to enlist . . . I had to go and fight Hitler. . . . (Mazer, The Last Mission, 25)

Jack will soon learn that the romanticized, limping war hero who returns home after saving the world is a pathetic, absurd figure in the modern world.

Fantasy isn't reality and war isn't medals and patriotic songs. Combat is Jack's true test and he is uncertain about how he will perform:

But going into combat was a bigger divide than the Atlantic Ocean. It was the test. It was what all his training had been about. And though Jack had dreamed over and over about all the great things he'd do in combat, deep down inside himself he didn't know how he'd really act until the time came. (Mazer, The Last Mission, 35)

When the time does come, Jack performs his duty well. His first trial by combat is a bombing mission over Berlin.

Jack experiences only a moment of fear:

The moment they entered the bomb run they were buffeted by prop wash and by flak that hit like gravel being flung against a tin roof. The plane jerked and bolted. This is it, Jack said to himself. This is the worst part. It isn't going to get any worse. His heart was beating frantically. He sank down behind his gun so he

had the full protection of the ship's armor. He couldn't control himself. He was crouched down, bent double, bent over around himself, protecting himself. (Mazer, The Last Mission, 69-70)

Their mission over Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, a bomb run on a munitions factory, proves to be the "last mission" of Mazer's title, and marks the beginning of Jack's greatest ordeal. He loses all his crew, including his best friend, Chuckie. When Jack touches Chuckie to get him to bail out, he confronts death--a personal, close death--for what is really the first time. From his vantage point as a waist-gunner in a B17, Jack has been able to remove himself from the horror of death. But not this time:

"Chuckie, the wing's shot off," Jack said. He couldn't see Chuckie's face. The mask covered it. "Chuckie." Jack pushed him. Chuckie's head flopped forward. Where the back of his head should have been was just a wet red jelly.

Now Jack saw that he was crawling in blood. His hands and knees were covered with blood. Something skidded under his knee. He looked down at a piece of Chuckie's skull with hair and white stuff still sticking to it. (Mazer, The Last Mission, 105-06)

Jack is captured and spends the rest of the war in a POW camp. As the war is ending, his guards take him south to escape the advancing Russian army. This journey proves to be another trial for the young hero, for he must confront for the first time his own role as a creator of suffering:

There were kids everywhere on the road, gangs of kids, boys and girls. Kids on crutches, kids begging, skinny, ragged kids. Once Jack

saw two girls pulling a legless boy in a wooden wagon.

All those bombs they had dropped--he had never thought they would be blowing kids away. He'd always thought they were bombing war factories and seaports. Military targets. Oil dumps, rail terminals. But they'd hit a lot more than that. Along some of the rail lines they passed he saw whole towns that were obliterated. (Mazer, The Last Mission, 141-42)

Soon Jack learns that even the face of the enemy becomes much more like the face in the mirror every morning. Hatred is often just an abstraction that is ameliorated when he comes face-to-face with its own focus. Jack learns this lesson when he sees the body of a Jew-hating soldier gunned down by aircraft fire:

He was lifted onto the truck, his coat thrown over his face. Everyone climbed back on. Jack hung on to the side of the carrier. Space was left around the corpse. Once or twice Jack looked over to where the dead man was lying. There were identical holes worn in the soles of his boots. Jack felt the hatred drain from him. In death the man had stopped being a German, a Jew hater, a Nazi, or anything at all--except a dead man. (Mazer, The Last Mission, 147)

The war is soon over and Jack Raab returns home. When he learns that none of his crew survived, he realizes that all the pride and glory, and patriotic songs, all the talk of the nobility of warfare, "all were beautiful lies about soldiers, and war, and boys in battle" (Mazer, The Last Mission, 160). Jack is discharged and reunited with his family. As one of the youngest veterans, he is

asked to speak at Christopher Columbus, his old high school. Jack intends to tell the kids about the war and about the need to stop Hitler, but something else comes out:

"I don't like war. I thought I'd like it before. But war is stupid. War is one stupid thing after another. I saw my best friend killed. His name was Chuckie O'Brien. My whole crew was killed." Now he was talking, it was coming out, all the things he'd thought about for so long. "A lot of people were killed. Millions of people. Ordinary people. Not only by Hitler. Not only on our side. War isn't like the movies. It's not fun and songs. It's not about heroes. It about awful, sad things, like my friend Chuckie that I'm never going to see again." His voice faltered.

"I hope war never happens again," he said after a moment. "That's all I've got to say." (Mazer, The Last Mission, 188)

The hero has returned home from his journey. He has brought back the knowledge he has learned to his own society. He has learned that war is not about heroes-- it is about death and loss. It is appropriate that Jack's speech is addressed to an adolescent audience. For he was an adolescent himself when he began his journey. And now, even though he is only sixteen, he is an adult. Jack Raab went off to become a hero. He survived his trial and acquitted himself well. In the process he lost his innocence.

Winning

Robin Brancato's Winning is about another kind of warrior, a high school football star, whose journey is

one of rediscovering a sense of self-worth and self-identity after a crippling injury. Seventeen-year-old Gary Madden is the hero, the knight whose armor fails to protect him. But there are really two journeys in Winning. Ann Treer is the English teacher who has recently lost her husband in an automobile accident. Gary Madden functions as her world-redeemer. As she watches Gary's struggles to come to terms with his own tragedy and lives with him his triumphs and failures, she learns how to care again.

In The Limping Hero, Peter Hays says that a modern hero who is crippled offers a statement about the plight of man in the modern world:

. . . Modern use includes that of the crippled figure's representation of man's lot as similarly crippled--incomplete, imperfect and restricting . . . (187)

This statement offers some insight into the theme of Brancato's novel. Gary Madden's worst adversary is himself. Can he learn to live with his tragedy, accept his new self, even with its limitations, and go on to build a good life? This is the central question--the conflict--of the novel, and it is also the meaning of the term "winning." Nilsen and Donelson comment on the value of a work like Winning for the adolescent audience Brancato is addressing:

The value of such fictional treatments as

the ones cited in this section is that they involve the reader in the problem from many different viewpoints. A relationship is shown between physical and emotional problems. For example, one of the strong points of Brancato's book is that it shows the ripple effect of Gary's accident: how it changes his friends, his parents, his girlfriend, and his teacher. In one brief moment their definition of winning is changed forever. In the new situation, surviving--just wanting to survive--means winning, and readers cheer with Gary when he makes it through the depression that causes some of his hospital mates to commit suicide. (103-04)

Gary's journey is one that many adolescents will have to make or watch someone else make. It involves the same stages as coming to terms with death: denial and isolation, anger, depression, and ultimately acceptance, or withdrawal, possibly even suicide.⁶ Louise De Salvo comments on Robin Brancato's novels and their value as adolescent experiences:

The novels of Robin Brancato mark signposts in the stages that children must live through in learning about adversity, and the way-stations they must pass through in coping with hardship. Her novels, and others like them . . . teach young people about their own capacities for coping with problems without relinquishing the joys that come with living. (16)

Gary's first trial is learning how to come to terms with his injuries. Nobody has really told him anything. When all the visitors come to see him in the hospital, at first he is flattered. Then he begins to worry that his

⁶ Elisabeth Kubler-Ross offers a full explanation of the stages of death in On Death and Dying (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1969). She includes a stage called "bargaining" between anger and depression.

injuries may be more serious than he thinks:

Hurry, he thought. Billy, Jason, Treer. Then Diane. He'd had a bunch of visitors in the last week, ever since they'd let people in--the team, teachers, kids he didn't even know. At first it had been an ego trip having so many people come up. But after they'd seen him, some kids didn't know what to say. One group had ignored him, had just joked with one another as if it was a not-very-sad funeral and he was the dead guy. And the coaches were acting a little weird, too. Coach Hammer kept glancing away--so he wouldn't have to look at the tongs, maybe? Buck Lausch was too quiet. Did the coaches know something he didn't know? Fractured vertebrae and trauma to the spinal cord--that's what Dr. Kimball called his problem. Spinal cord not severed. Hope for the best. Kimball wouldn't lie, would he? His parents wouldn't lie. . . . (Brancato, Winning, 4)

For Gary, the denial of the seriousness of his injuries is a means of maintaining hope. He can cope with his situation only if he feels he will get better--all better. He even convinces himself that because he feels twinges in his arm, complete recovery is "only a matter of time":

Good. Things were looking up, actually. . . . He'd thought he felt a new twinge on his lower arm today. Only a matter of time. Meanwhile, relax. A lousy situation to be in, but it could have been worse. He was getting the best care--everybody told him that. Sister Marie was practically living just to take care of his skin. Insurance pretty good, and people contributing toward the medical bills. Rotten deal, but may as well make the best of it. Probably the only time he'd ever be able to take it this easy. No homework. Automatic peeing machine! Fed with a spoon by his mother. Whispered to by Diane, who right this minute was on her way to him. (Brancato, Winning, 9)

Though Gary Madden is clearly the hero of Brancato's

novel, his story cannot be told in isolation. He shares his journey with Ann Treer, the embittered English teacher who is on her own journey back to life. Out of a sense of duty, she goes to visit Gary, who is one of her students. She views his accident as a senseless tragedy just like the accident that claimed Mike, her husband:

She looked around. Morbid atmosphere. Anti-septic reek. Every detail a reminder of last year, of Mike. And just when she had been beginning to get herself together, this accident had happened, which had seemed to touch her personally, even though she knew Gary less well than she knew a lot of her students. Senseless tragedy repeated with a new twist: Gary would live. (Brancato, Winning, 10)

Through helping Gary, Ann will come to terms with her own grief and exorcise the demons that create her own anxiety. Louise De Salvo comments on the relationship between Ann and Gary:

. . . The novel alternates between Gary's increasing awareness of the meaning of his injury, his denial, anger, depression, and near suicide, and Ann's responses to the opening up of the old wound of her husband's death, which Gary's disability represents. Although she agrees reluctantly to tutor him, she begins to need Gary to reteach herself how to feel, to care passionately, and to love again. And he needs her to teach him to face the reality of his disability with courage, to take the hard and the not so easy way out, to face the fact that although he will never walk again, his life is still just beginning. (50)

When Ann Treer reluctantly begins to tutor Gary, she begins to develop a relationship with him. He is no longer just an anonymous student. He is someone who matters, some-

one she can help. It is significant that she chooses Dostoyevsky's Crime and Punishment as the first novel for him to read. When defending the choice of the novel to Gary she says:

. . . "Raskolnikov's all of us in the sense that he feels deprived, as we all do sometimes. He deludes himself into thinking he's special. As a result, he decides it's O.K. for him to commit a crime. But he can't live with it. He's haunted by guilt, as many people are. He . . . She watched Gary's eyes wandering. No wonder. Her voice was boring even her. Should she, after all, force a kid who had barely escaped death, a kid who couldn't move his head or hold a book, a kid who would never walk and didn't know it yet, to finish a 510-page, often-depressing novel about a murderer? . . . (Brancato, Winning, 43)

Ann Treer does make Gary finish the book and meet other challenges as well. Crime and Punishment is important because it addresses the issue of whether or not disasters are caused or fated. Gary pursues this question with his roommate, Tommy, who has had another of many accidents. Tommy insists that everything is just chance:

"And you don't think anybody--I mean, some higher being or something--puts the rock on the road?"

"What're you, kidding me? What do you think, there's a guy with a long white beard spreading rocks around for certain people?"

"You know what I mean," Gary said. "Don't you ever think back to that rock that got you, and wonder how it happened to get there?"

"Hell, no. What would it prove?"

"That there was a cause."

"You're full of shit," Tommy said. "It happened, that's all."

"But why to you, or to me, instead of to somebody else?"

"Buddy, you're gonna mess up your head with all that heavy stuff. Too many books, man! Send the teachers back to school. Put on the TV. . . . (Brancato, Winning, 53-54)

Gary's "Why me? question is typical of people who suffer a tragedy. Gary would almost prefer to believe that something besides chance, some god with a purpose, had taken his young life and twisted it so cruelly.

Ann Treer begins to be trapped by her own feelings for Gary. She has isolated herself from other people for so long that she is hesitant about reaching out. But she feels his suffering and knows that he needs to be told the truth about his injuries:

But did she really need to get herself into this? she thought as she turned onto Wilmont Terrace. She could, after all, just go to the hospital Friday and tell Gary to concentrate on schoolwork. She might be better off altogether sticking strictly to business. Business --ridiculous. Gary wasn't business. There he was on that frame, as alone and frightened as the character in Kafka's The Metamorphosis, who wakes up one morning and finds himself transformed into a giant insect. She'd had a touch of that feeling herself after Mike's death. She hadn't changed, but her position had. Friends, even the most sympathetic and well-intentioned, had put her, as a new widow, in a special category, a kind of untouchable caste, when all she wanted was to be treated like everyone else. (Brancato, Winning, 58)

Ann convinces Gary's parents that he needs to be told that he'll never walk again. For the first time, Ann intensely feels their grief and equates it with her own feelings about losing Mike. They were afraid to tell Gary because, as Ann understands, "It was the parents who hadn't

been ready for the truth" (Brancato, Winning, 63).

When Gary is finally told the truth on "T-Day," he responds with denial:

T-Day. What had he thought about in those first few minutes after Kimball left? Mostly he'd felt a big urge to get going with the work. He'd felt like pulling out the tongs the way he had in his dream, felt like standing up--just to prove Kimball was wrong on the spot. He'd cool it, though. He wasn't dumb enough to expect magic. He'd do it their way, working a little at a time. (Brancato, Winning, 67)

But Gary's denial soon turns to anger when he realizes that he has been told the truth and that no matter how much he wishes for a miracle it isn't likely to happen. Like Raskolnikov, he is only human, not better than anyone else, and tragedy can happen to him.

Gary's anger emerges at his eighteenth-birthday party. Gary loses control and wets himself. His embarrassment turns to anger and self-pity and he takes it out on his girlfriend, Diane. She tells him she loves him, but he refuses to respond to her:

Yeah? Was that all? It'd be so easy to say I love you, too. Why didn't he? What an ass he was! Some eighteen-year-old man. You can tell a man by the look of him, Wally had just said. Well, this was the look of Gary Madden: flat on his back, feet padded, lying under a wet sheet and didn't even know it until somebody told him. Diane wanted to go to college with him next year. Because she loved him? No, because she wanted to play nurse! (Brancato, Winning, 92)

Several events point to Gary Madden's gradual acceptance of his condition. He begins to write, aided by a

modified pen. With Ann Treer's help, he writes his first message to his girlfriend: "I WANT 2 C U" (Brancato, Winning, 105). He even dreams of himself for the first time as a handicapped person: "Now he understood what was different. . . . In his tortoise dream he had been paralyzed" (Brancato, Winning, 117). But the greatest sign of Gary's acceptance of who he is now is when he accepts the nickname "superquad":

"Yeah, well, to tell you the truth, at first I didn't appreciate Superquad too much," he said. "Like in school, most people don't want to stand out. They want to be like everybody else, not super. And then quad. I hated how that sounded at first. To me it sounded like freak. But you get used to it--para, quad--just abbreviations. The staff, when somebody has pretty good abilities for his level and is really working, they say he's a good quad. Superquad's just a joke, but I'd like to be a good quad. I would. No, the nickname doesn't bother me." (Brancato, Winning, 119)

But Gary does not stay at this level of acceptance. Brancato is more realistic than that. She makes Gary Madden's recovery a constant struggle with highs and lows. Gary's self-esteem reaches a new low at his Christmas party. He begins to drink and continues to drink until he is drunk. Ann Treer, becoming more and more sensitive herself, senses the pain and frustration that has brought Gary to this point:

. . . What the matter was, of course, she couldn't tell him. The matter was that she felt, as if it were her own, his pain--his hurt over Billy, his frustration with the Christmas wrappings, his envy of the visitors

who could get up and walk out, as she had just done. She felt his anger at himself, too, for drinking when he shouldn't, and his disappointment that the drinking didn't help. The matter was that she felt all this and couldn't do anything about it, because nobody, however willing, could assume the pain of somebody else. . . . (Brancato, Winning, 143-44)

By the time the new year arrives, Gary's depression has intensified. He feels that he is playing a "pathetic game," that he can never do anything that matters (Brancato, Winning, 147). Gary reaches the crisis point. He has been reading about Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman and he feels that Willy's solution--suicide--is the solution for him:

Suddenly it came clear to him, so clear, out of the cloud inside his head! The best way to pull off his act of love. He'd almost done it before by accident--so easy! Bite the thermometer, really hard. Swallow the jagged particles of glass, the dense little silver ball that would split apart inside him and split again and again until pinheads of silver filled his bloodstream. . . . (Brancato, Winning, 151-52)

The final dialogue between Gary and Ann Treer is a desperate attempt at reaching out by Gary and at letting go by Ann. Ann wants to show Gary that he has worth, that he doesn't have to commit suicide. Gary insists that his suicide will be an act of love like Willy Loman's. Ann tells him he's "not Willy Loman, a wornout man who spent his whole life avoiding the truth" (Brancato, Winning, 160). But Gary doesn't want to be convinced, until, finally, Ann says that she needs him:

Gary cleared his throat. "Listen, Ms. Treer, thanks for trying, but forget it, please. I'm beat. Some people want to lose, remember? You said it once. I'm beat. No endurance. Wish I had it, like in your metaphor--swimming with grace and ease and all that. What's mine? What's my metaphor, Ms. Treer? I never found one. A weight sinking . . . in a bathtub? How's that? A blob of mercury splitting . . . an atom? Get the nurse, Ms. Treer, tell her to bring the thermometer."

"No, I won't." Her voice broke. She bent over him. "Gary, listen, the thermometer won't do what you want it to. And if it could, do you think I'd sit here and let you try it?" She felt her eyes filling up. "I'm not going to let you leave. I'm one of the people who needs you a lot."

He looked at her. "What for?"

"To make me feel." She paused. "For a while I've been afraid I couldn't anymore. You taught me I could." (Brancato, Winning, 160)

Ann's admission frees her, too, and she can finally cry for Gary Madden, and for Ann Treer, and for all the people in the world who suffer pain.

Together, Gary Madden and Ann Treer have taken a journey that gives them both the capacity to feel, to care. Gary's Grail, the knowledge he brings back from his journey is that "winning is the second step--wanting to win is the first!" (Brancato, Winning, 7). Now both Gary and Ann want to win the game called life. They have both completed their journeys and have found themselves.

One Fat Summer

Robert Lipsyte's One Fat Summer is about a quest-hero

who is seeking the elusive Grail of self-acceptance. Fourteen-year-old Bobby Marks carries the curse of his fatness around like the mark of Cain. He dreads the summer when his fat must be revealed:

I always hated summertime. When people take off their clothes. In winter you can hide yourself. Long coats, heavy jackets, thick sweaters. Nobody can tell how fat you really are. But in the summertime they can see your thick legs and your wobbly backside and your big belly and your soft arms. And they laugh. (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 1)

One Fat Summer is not a complex novel with heavy doses of symbolism or irony. It is, rather, a realistic adolescent novel about a young boy's learning experience in the summer of his fourteenth year. Nilsen and Donelson call the novel an "adventure/accomplishment romance":

How this archetypal initiation rite can be translated into a modern, somewhat realistic story for young adults is shown through Robert Lipsyte's One Fat Summer. It is the story of a quest for self-respect. When the protagonist begins it, he is quite unaware of the magnitude of his undertaking. As part of the quest, he is isolated from his family. The suffering that he undergoes is something that no one else can do for him, but it makes the victory that much sweeter. (114-15)

Lipsyte's novel has the essential stages of the quest-hero's journey. First, the hero is removed from the world he knows. Second, the hero undergoes trials which he endures, for the most part, alone in order to test him. Finally, the hero returns to the world in some way changed by the experience.

Bobby Marks leaves his world behind in two ways. First, he enters another world as he becomes the lawn boy on Dr. Kahn's estate. Second, he leaves behind the old world and the old Bobby Marks as he begins to shed his weight. Bobby has to face three trials in the novel. First, he must endure the physical trial of defeating the lawn, of succeeding in a job that seems so difficult. His second trial is learning to deal with Dr. Kahn who loses no opportunity to belittle Bobby and take advantage of him. Kahn is very much like the trickster-figure that occurs in a number of quest-stories. Finally, Bobby must defeat Willie Rumson, the town bully and an adversary who instills fear in Bobby. Each of these trials represent obstacles to be overcome before Bobby Marks can complete his journey and gain self-esteem.

Bobby begins his journey when he takes a summer job as Dr. Kahn's lawn boy. Dr. Kahn shows himself to be a deceiver right away by only paying Bobby seventy-five cents an hour, even though he had advertised the job at one-dollar an hour. As Bobby faces the lawn for the first time, the author's imagery reinforces the journey motif as it suggests a comparison with a sailor beginning his long sea journey:

The first time I ever saw Dr. Kahn's lawn it looked like a velvet sea, a green velvet sea that flowed up from the gray shore of the county road to surround a great white house with white columns. The house looked like a proud clipper

ship riding the crest of the ocean. As I trudged up from the county road I made out the figure of a man standing on the front porch, the captain on the bridge of his ship. (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 13)

Dr. Kahn may not have shanghaied Bobby, but he makes the task confronting the boy sound formidable:

"You'll make this place look beautiful for the weekends. You'll cut the lawn, trim the hedges, rake the gravel, weed the rock garden. You'll wash the car, mop the pool deck, clean the garbage pails. And whatever else needs to be done." (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 14)

Nilsen and Donelson assert that even though "cutting the lawn may not seem like the kind of Herculean task that would qualify for a romantic quest, for Bobby it was such" (115).

On his first day, Bobby thinks he is getting the best of the "old devil lawn" and the hero, for a moment, feels transformed:

Power surged out of my chest and shoulders, through my arms, out my fingers into the green machine. Scraps of grass flew out from under the mower. My nostrils twitched with the beautiful stinging smell of fresh-cut grass. I felt like singing. . . . (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 24-25)

But Bobby's feeling of triumph is short-lived. After little more than half an hour, his body begins to betray him:

. . . My mouth got dry and my nose was filled with fumes from the gasoline engine, and every time I turned to start a new row, pain exploded in my wrists and shot up my arms into my shoulders. My fingers were numb, I'd never be able to pry them off the handlebar grips. My back hurt. My feet were very hot. I was sweating all over, even my knees and elbows were sweating. Each scorching drop of sweat rolled slowly down my chest and back like a scorching drop of acid

burning out a furrow in my skin. . . .

Everything was getting hazy. Trees swayed and there wasn't even a breeze. The lawn began to move. It rippled. Everything was wavy; it was like looking at the world through a fish tank. The lawn began to roll like the ocean. I was getting lawn sick. (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 27)

Bobby finds the strength to finish the job only to be confronted by an irate Dr. Kahn who shows Bobby the mess he has made of the lawn. Bobby's work is a "disgrace." He has chipped the lawnmower blade and all the work has to be done again the next day. Bobby is devastated and defeated: "I turned away so he couldn't see me cry, and I stumbled down to the country road" (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 30).

Willie Rumson is an ex-marine who has become the town bully. He was Dr. Kahn's lawn boy last summer and wants the job again. But Willie was not "reliable" and Dr. Kahn lets Bobby keep the job. This is reason enough for Willie to make Bobby his sworn enemy. As Willie is leaving his unsuccessful interview with Dr. Kahn, he promises to get even with Bobby:

. . . "And you, pig meat, you're making a really bad mistake. You ever see me coming, you better pray. Give you soul to God, fats, 'cause your ass belongs to me." (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 39)

On the second day of his job, Bobby's task seems impossible. He is already exhausted from redoing the previous day's work and the remainder of the lawn seems

immense:

The longer I cut, the bigger the lawn seemed to get. A friend of my father's once showed us his color movies of a mule trip down into the Grand Canyon. He said that the farther down he went, the bigger the canyon seemed to get. From the top, it looked like just a huge hole, but as he descended, the walls of the canyon seemed to flatten back and the hole became another world. It was something like that with the lawn. After a couple of hours, I could see that I had come a long way, but the distance between me and the county road didn't seem to shrink that much. (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 41)

The second day marks another victory for Dr. Kahn. Bobby's work has progressed slowly and Dr. Kahn reduces his wages and Bobby once again is broken and defeated:

"You seem like a decent boy," said Dr. Kahn. "I want to give you every opportunity to prove yourself. But obviously I can't pay you top dollar. I might allow you to keep working, on a strict trial, of course, for fifty cents an hour. Well?"

"Okay."

"Tomorrow. Nine A.M. Sharp."

For the second day in a row, I turned away before he could see me cry. (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 42)

On the third day Bobby Marks scores a victory. He has determined that the lawn is an enemy which has to be defeated, and he succeeds:

Cutting grass isn't boring if you have the right attitude. Now, if you keep looking at your watch, or thinking about all the things you'd rather be doing than pushing a heavy mower back and forth, back and forth, you'll probably go out of your mind. But if you can understand that the grass is your enemy, that every row you cut brings you that much closer to victory, you might still go crazy but the time will pass much faster. One moment a huge lawn will be sneering greenly at you, a moment

later you'll notice that more than half the lawn is a lighter green than it was when you started. You're more than halfway finished. And that last row, the very last time you stagger from one side of the lawn to the other, is like a victory lap after winning a race. It's so sweet you forget that your back is broken, your legs are lead, your arms are dead and your hands are locked forever into curled claws that fit only the handles of a lawn mower.

At exactly 2:17 P.M., HBT, Wednesday, July 9 1952, I beat Dr. Kahn's lawn. I left that chlorophyll monster chopped to size, one and a half inches high. (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 50-51)

But Bobby isn't allowed to savor his success long. At the end of his first full week's work, Dr. Kahn pays him only seven dollars and eighty-seven cents for his whole week's work. Kahn has won another little victory by deducting for the first day's work which had to be redone, the broken lawnmower, and Bobby's lunch breaks (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 60). But it is Friday, TGIF (thank God, it's Friday), and Bobby does have money in his pocket, so he feels pretty good. Then Willie Rumson appears. Bobby does not end his day without a little minor terrorism from Willie, who accuses him of trying to throw a rock through his windshield and threatens to "kick his ribs in" (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 63).

Bobby's next encounter with Willie could have been serious. Willie really wants to lash out at somebody and Bobby seems to be his prime target. However, Willy's cousin and his friends talk him out of hurting Bobby badly. He settles for humiliation instead, and strips Bobby of his

clothes and strands him on an island in the middle of a lake:

When it died away I stood up and took off the blindfold. I was alone on the island in the middle of Rumson Lake. I fell down on my hands and knees and cried, and I didn't feel the rain until the night exploded with thunder and lightning and the wind drove nails of rain into my naked body. (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 81)

Once again Bobby is defeated and reduced to tears.

At the end of his next week's work, Bobby collects his pay from Dr. Kahn. This time he has improved. But Dr. Kahn still manages to cheat Bobby out of a dollar. This time Bobby doesn't cry. Instead he resolves: "Okay this time. But nobody pulls a fast one on Big Bob twice" (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 95).

Bobby's next week is eventful. He discovers quite by accident that he's losing weight and gaining muscle:

187. And getting muscles. And veins. It was happening. I'm going to wake up thin someday.

I took a shower and dried off and examined myself in the mirror. My belly was a lot smaller. My backside didn't wobble so much. My legs looked harder. I flexed my muscles. There was no vein on my left bicep. Not yet. But there was a muscle all right. . . . (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 110)

Bobby also receives a threat from Willie Rumson who still wants him to quit his job. Bobby debates quitting because he is afraid:

I was scared. Broken kneecaps. Maybe a broken head. Find me in that drainage ditch I dug. It was a lousy job anyway, killing myself for fifty cents an hour. Who needs it? . . .

And Rumson really needed the job. Maybe his folks were poor. Maybe he needed something to keep from getting even crazier. . . . (Lipsyte, One Last Summer, 112-113)

Instead of quitting, Bobby asserts himself with Dr. Kahn who tries to shortchange him again. Not only does Bobby get his entire weekly pay, but he also gets the back pay Dr. Kahn owes him. Bobby the mouse is becoming Bobby the man, or at least he is beginning to try.

Bobby spends his days being afraid of Willie Rumson. There has to be a confrontation. It occurs when Willie has been drinking and appears at Marino's Beach, threatening Bobby, his sister, and Pete Marino, his sister's muscle-bound boyfriend:

"I'm gonna shoot the fat boy in the knee. And maybe the guinea, too."
 "They're not worth the slugs, Willie."
 "You gotta take a stand somewhere." That vein started pumping on Willie's forehead.
 "No guts around here. Let 'em walk all over us. You hear they want to change the name of the lake? They stole it and now they want to take the name away, too."
 "That's just talk, Willie." Jim's voice was soft, as if he was talking to a child.
 "But Rumson's voice was getting louder.
 "They'll do it, they'll do it, call it Kike Lake or Wop Lake, maybe Nigger Lake, but I'm gonna stop it, stop it right now, my Pa didn't have the guts and look at your Pa, gonna have to work until he drops dead, too, this used to be our lake, now I can't even get a lousy job cutting some Jew's grass." (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 142-43)

Jim, Willie's cousin, takes the rifle away. But before he can get Willie back to his car, Pete Marino, who has been humiliated by Willie, attacks Willie and takes

him down easily. When Jim breaks up the fight, Willie sees Bobby and charges him. As they are fighting, they roll off the dock into the water. Bobby has the upper hand:

But I had him. I had him good and tight.
Under water. My territory.

I felt a surge of triumph as his struggling grew weaker. You finally messed with me in the wrong place, Willie-boy. I'm the underwater champ. I spent my whole life underwater, hiding out so no one could see me. You should have shot me while you had the chance. (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 145)

But Bobby's triumph over Willie Rumson is nothing more than a Pyrrhic victory. When he sees the pitiful, broken Willy being stroked and comforted by his cousin, just like someone would comfort a helpless child, Bobby realizes that Willy Rumson is sick and pathetic, not someone to be feared:

. . . I thought of Willie on the dock, retching his guts out. I might have drowned him. Because of Pete. Poor Willie, just a crazy mixed-up guy who couldn't do anything right and tried to make himself feel better by deciding all his problems were caused by the only kid around he was sure he could take. And he couldn't even take him. (Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 150)

Bobby has one more hurdle. His final confrontation with Dr. Kahn is another victory. Bobby demands the full dollar-an-hour wage for the rest of the summer's work. He is no longer intimidated by his employer:

He stared at me. Just like he did the very first time, a lifetime ago. But those shotgun eyes didn't scare me anymore.

"You should pay me for this summer," said Dr. Kahn. "I've watched you change from a miserable fat boy into a fairly presentable young man. On my lawn. On my time."

"You didn't do it, Dr. Kahn. I did it."
(Lipsyte, One Fat Summer, 149)

Bobby's realization that he has indeed made himself a better person is the knowledge he gains from his quest.

A reviewer in the English Journal says:

In a refreshing change from the old macho idea of proving yourself only through physical combat, Bobby's real proof of self-worth comes through the perseverance that he develops on a rotten job. (85)

The hero has completed his journey, endured his trials successfully, and is ready for the next challenge.

CHAPTER IV

THE ALIENATED HERO: THE OUTSIDER THEME

Modern heroes have a fundamental need to establish their own identity and find a place in society. For adolescent heroes, this process occurs as they struggle to leave behind their childhood selves and cross the threshold into adulthood. This process of self-identification and social integration is essential for the adolescents to become fully-functioning members of their society.

But what happens to the adolescents who do not complete the journey to self-identity and social integration successfully? The failure of adolescents to find a sense of self-identity or purpose is a common theme in many adolescent novels. Most often, this failure is associated with some form of alienation, either from self, family, or society.

Leigh and Peterson define alienation as "an awareness of the inability to self-regulate one's life as manifested by feelings of meaninglessness, powerlessness, and isolation" (295). Adolescents experiencing meaninglessness lack a sense of time perspective. They cannot project events into the future or see any potential for fulfillment in the future. With powerlessness, adolescents feel that they are controlled by external events and they lose

the ability for self-reinforcement and self-regulation of their environment. Essentially, they feel helpless. Isolation is often the result of such feelings of meaninglessness and powerlessness. The alienated adolescents withdraw from peer groups, either by rejecting the group or by precipitating the group's rejection of them. (Leigh and Peterson, 294-300)

Kenneth Keniston equates alienation with the traditional myth of the hero. He says that the alienated hero often spends time as an outcast, a social exile, until his heroic return home:

Although formal discussions of alienation itself are largely limited to the last 150 years, the theme of alienation--of estrangement, outcastness, and loss--is an archetypal theme in human life and history. Adam and Eve were estranged from God and outcast from Eden; and since then in every tradition known, themes of irrevocable loss of former closeness abound in myth, literature, history, and life. The myth of the hero is typically a tale of the alienation and exile which precede his heroic return to his native home. The history of nations is in part a history of wandering, exile, outcastness, and the search for a homeland. The chronicle of innovation, too, involves the repudiation of established patterns and values in order to create new ones. Revolutionaries from Christ to Castro have been separated from their homes by emigration, exile, and ostracism, and have returned from their alienation in the desert or the mountains only when they could bring new doctrines by persuasion and force. In all religions, indeed, perhaps the central function of religion is to prevent this estrangement of man from God and God from man. The possibility of "alienation" is predicted on the nature of human development, of social organization, of religious thought, and of history. (451)

The alienated modern heroes often experience a crisis of consciousness as they struggle to choose between potentially meaningless action and passivity. Victor Brombert says that there is the potential for a heroic experience founded on the impossibility of being a hero:

Of course, just as there exists a tragic experience founded on the absence of the "re-assuring" order of tragedy, so there is also an heroic experience dependent on the impossibility of being a hero. Edith Kern and Joseph Campbell have dealt with the mythic potential in that "alien presence" called man. But it is Irving Howe who, it seems to me, has stated the problem most sharply . . . "The modern hero discovers that he cannot be a hero. Yet only through his readiness to face the consequences of this discovery can he salvage a portion of the heroic." The result, however, is not sheer passivity. Deprived of his heroic being, the modern "hero," torn between the desire to act and the conviction that action is absurd, intuitively that it is his tragic fate to live up to this dilemma. Action and thought once again clash. But the stress is no longer on the exploit, the deed; it is on the "heroism of consciousness."
(20)

Absurdity is "the quality or condition of existing in a meaningless and irrational universe where there is no order or value in human life, and in which an individual's life has no meaning or purpose" (Webster's II). David Galloway suggests that the meaninglessness of the modern age has given birth to the absurd hero:

. . . The first step in the development of the absurd consists of the individual's shocking recognition of the apparent meaninglessness of the universe. The second step consists in the absurd man's living the now apparent conflict between his intention (his inner voice) and the reality which he will encounter; the third step

consists in his assumption of heroic dimensions through living the conflict and making it his god. (16)

Rene Dubos says that the condition of absurdity is no longer limited to the philosophical or literary avant-garde. Rather, it exists in all areas of human experience:

Many forms of alienation now coexist in our communities. The social and cultural malaise affects not only disenchanted intellectuals, industrial labor, and the poor classes, but also all those who feel depersonalized because circumstances compel them to accept mass standards which give them little chance to affirm their identity. Alienation is generated, furthermore, by the complete failure of even the most affluent societies to achieve harmonious relationships between human life and the total environment. The view that the modern world is absurd is no longer limited to the philosophical or literary avant-garde. It is spreading to all social and economic groups and affects all manifestations of life. (15)

Keniston asserts that many alienated students may be responding to the absurd world view. They may feel like outsiders or outcasts because their personal conflicts sensitize them to the viewpoints expressed by the philosophy of the absurd:

Psychologically, it is not easy to accept the death of God (and of all the structures premised on His existence) without a feeling of deprivation and rage. Most modern accounts of man's existential outcastness--of his "thrownness" into the world, of the inherent absurdity of existence, of the difficulty in communion between men--though they are presented as "factual," also convey a resentment, anger, bitterness, and disillusionment that we have seen in the philosophies of alienated students. Men never feel bitter about "facts" unless the "facts" are felt to be disappointingly different from some unstated alternative. Here the alternative is clear--a

lost world view in which the universe was made for Man by a caring God, truth was objective, and men could communicate by referring to a shared objective reality. Inevitably, then, disappointment and bitterness have accompanied the progressive erosion of faith that God made the universe as the arena for man's salvation. Those who feel most outcast from the cosmos are of course those whose individual lives sensitize them to these themes: their feelings of cosmic outcastness usually parallel more personal themes of alienation. But at the same time, what they experience acutely is a problem that inevitably and increasingly affects modern men. (456)

Leo Buscaglia attributes much of the alienation experienced by adolescents to an ineffective educational process. He feels that most students leave their schools without any sense of self-identity or social identity:

So the individual, now fully grown, leaves our schools confused, lonely, alienated, lost, angry, but with a mind full of isolated, meaningless facts which together are laughingly called an education. He knows neither who he is, where he is or how he got there. He has no concept of where he's going, how to arrive there nor what he'll do when he gets there. He has no idea what he has, what he wants, nor how to develop it. In essence, he's a type of robot--old before his time, living in the past, confused by the present, frightened by the future, much like the teachers who made him. (69)

Adolescent alienation leads the adolescent protagonist further and further away from the possibility of self-identity and social integration. It creates a feeling of otherness, a sense of being an outsider, firmly isolated from the rest of society. Often this condition leads to severe anxiety. If the source of this anxiety is recog-

nized as the self, then the adolescent's hostility is focused inward. If external sources are perceived to be the cause of anxiety, then the adolescent's hostility is directed outward. Erik Erikson believes that this kind of distancing can create in the adolescent "the readiness to isolate and, if necessary, to destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one's own . . ." (264).

But the condition of the alienated hero may not be unique to the modern age. Robert Emmet Jones says that the alienated hero is just another guise for the tragic literary heroes who were exiled from their society:

. . . All tragic heroes are exiled morally or spiritually from their contemporaries; one has only to remember the heroes and heroines in our dramatic heritage to be convinced of this. Each hero in tragic literature rejects his society or is rejected by it. This does not mean, however, that he will ignore the rejectors. He acts and either tries to ameliorate the very society which has no place for him or proves that in rejection one can still retain his integral nobility of character. Few tragic heroes disintegrate as a result of their conflicts without others without first having proved that man's possibilities are great, in short that life is worth living. It is these heroes who give meaning to life, heroes from whom we can learn much about human nature. In this respect they transcend their times and become universal, because human nature remains essentially the same throughout the centuries. (5-6)

In the adolescent novel, the heroes are not always incorporated into the existing social structure when they return from their journey of self-discovery. Hugh Agee

says that adolescent heroes often fail to come to terms with the adult world they have discovered. This results in alienation:

The result of initiation in the novel of adolescence is not always the successful incorporation of the protagonist, the end of which is confirmation in the world. At times, particularly in some of the novels of adolescence written since World War II, the result tends toward alienation as the protagonist fails to come to terms with the adult world. And with the present disenchantment among so many of our young people, it is quite possible that this trend will increase in fiction rather than diminish. In the final analysis, the success or failure of initiation depends upon the initiate's ability to distill from his experiences, however severe they may be, an acceptable mode of confronting the realities of adulthood. (1022)

The novels chosen for analysis in the second part of this chapter each reflect some aspect of the outsider theme, that is, the alienated hero, in the adolescent novel. Home Before Dark is about the alienation that comes with rootlessness and a young girl's attempts to find a place she can call home. Jacob Have I Loved is about a young girl who feels shut out of her parent's love and attempts to find a sense of identity and purpose. The Outsiders is the story of a group of boys who can't seem to find a way to become a part of the society that brutally rejects them, and one sensitive young boy in particular who tries to understand why. Where the Lilies Bloom is about a young girl who feels that she must isolate her family from society in order to protect it. Finally, The Chocolate

War is about a young man who places himself at war with his society when he "dares to disturb the universe."

Home Before Dark

Sue Ellen Bridgers' Home Before Dark is about the alienation that comes with rootlessness and a young girl's struggles to find a sense of place. Stella Willis is fourteen-years-old and most of her life has been spent on the road as her migrant worker family moved from one farm to the next. Finally her father returns home and the family moves into a tenant house on her uncle's farm. For the first time, Stella has a place she can call home.

Stella's heroic journey is a quest for a place to belong. She is tired of always being an outsider, uprooted when the crops are picked and moved to another farm. She loves the tenant house on her uncle's farm. But Mae Willis, Stella's mother, doesn't feel settled in the house and this a primary source of conflict for Stella in the first half of the novel. The second source of conflict occurs after Mae Willis' death. Stella's father remarries and Stella can't bear to leave the only home she has ever known and move into her new stepmother's house. Theodore Hipple comments on the conflict between Stella and her mother:

. . . Mae Willis is unable to adjust to a stationary life and making that house a home --the first she has ever known--becomes more

and more Stella's self-appointed responsibility, one she revels in. . . . ("Sue Ellen Bridgers," 38)

The feeling of being an outsider, of not having a place in the world, makes the adolescent hero's passage from childhood to adulthood a more traumatic one. The loss of permanence and stability in the modern age is a common theme in the literature of the last hundred years. Leonard Lutwack says that the condition of "placelessness, the disappearance of familiar places and the proliferation of a more limited set of uniform places," is "a peculiarly modern malaise" (The Role of Place in Literature, 183). In this condition, the importance of the house is great, because a house becomes, symbolically, "a stay against the deterioration of place and civilization" (Lutwack, The Role of Place in Literature, 204).

Her Uncle Newton's house represents a new sense of freedom to Stella. She feels that her mother has always held her back, and the house will give her a chance to finally reach out to the rest of the world from her maternally-imposed isolation:

She can't hold me back anymore, Stella thought, feeling the pressure of Mae's hand on hers. This is the last time she'll tell me to be still or quiet or patient. There won't be any stuffy old car to sit in half the day, while houses go by and I'm wondering what it's like to be living somewhere, anywhere, where I can get to know people who aren't leaving tomorrow. (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 13)

Mae Willis resents Stella's possessiveness of the

house. When Stella talks about ways they can fix the house up, Mae denies their ownership:

"We can't do nothing like that. Newton'll have to get it done if it gets done. It's his house. You remember that, Stella. Everything you can see belongs to your daddy's brother." Looking at the house had taken the life out of her, and she released Stella's hand slowly as if she'd died standing there. (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 14)

To Stella, the house represents permanence, but for her mother the house symbolizes a trap. All her life Mae Willis has avoided commitment to other people and isolated herself from the necessity of commitment by moving from one place to to another. Now the house threatens to defeat her:

"We're going to stay, aren't we, Mama? Can't we stay forever and ever?" Stella begged, knowing the answer but wanting it out in the open, clearly visible, where she could fight it better.

"There ain't no forever," Mae said. "We keep moving 'cause that's what we can do."

"Not me," Stella said, filling the little house with her voice until the dust seemed to stir and the thin windowpanes vibrate. "I'm never leaving."

Mae stood in the middle of the handout house and let loose the tears saved up across Georgia and South Carolina, held back in the stinking, oily heat of the station wagon and in the gardenia-scented, air-conditioned space of Anne Willis' living room. Spilling down her trembling cheeks and chin, they said what she could never have found words to say, for she knew that what was a beginning for her child was a final, desperate failure for herself. (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 15-16)

Mae Willis realizes that she no longer has a choice with Stella. Mae has been hiding all her life, hiding

from other people. But her daughter isn't like Mae;

Stella needs people:

That look of arrogance about Stella frightened Mae. Add the house--this stability James Earl seemed to relish--to Stella's determination, and Mae felt a fear growing in her, like a pain in her joints that could move up her body until it finally stopped her heart.

All her life Mae had wanted to hide, and her migrant existence had meant she could. There were so many people on the road that nobody noticed you. But now Stella wanted to be noticed, and her needing that already made her dangerous to Mae. (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 39-40)

Mae Willis cannot make the commitment it takes to make a home. She doesn't want what her daughter wants, a life that might "require something of her":

. . . But still, with a desperation that clung heavy in her chest, Mae Willis wanted to go. Not back to any place she'd ever been, not back to the field shacks or the one-room apartments in sultry cities that all looked the same, but away from a life that would require something of her, make her somebody if she would only let it. She smothered the soft head of her baby in her arms, wishing she could take the good things life was offering her. And the sleepy baby nestled, searching for milk that wasn't there. (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 42)

This passage is important for its insight into Mae Willis. As a mother, Mae has no milk, no nurture to give. She doesn't know how to reach out and touch another human being, even her own daughter. She doesn't want to have to give something she has never had herself, that is, a sense of place and security and a feeling of trust that life will be okay.

Mae's world is in crisis. She feels that she is los-

ing her family to the temptations their new home has to offer. Her enemy is the house and the land, and the sense of place that the rest of the family feels. Though it isn't clear in the novel, Bridgers strongly suggests that Mae Willis wanted to die because she didn't know what else to do, because she was losing her family and couldn't find a place with them in this new life. Mae Willis wants to die because she has never learned how to live. Just before her death, Mae's thoughts reveal her pain and anger:

"I despise your goddamn tobacco," she wanted to say. "And your house and your wife and your voice that takes my children away because it bribes them, yes, bribes them with clothes and toys and fancy ideas when none of this is really theirs. We don't want what you can give us, Newton Willis." (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 74)

But Mae knows that it isn't really true. James Earl and the children do have wants, and Newton's house and the stability it offers gives them a chance to fulfill them.

Mae is struck by lightning under the tobacco shed. Stella accepts the loss of her mother and grieves for the pain she knows her mother carried inside. She tells her friend Toby that she believes her mother wanted to die:

"I think Mama stood there waiting to get struck down," she said without bitterness. . . . "I think she let it happen because she didn't like it here. And now look at what's happened. She's in this ground forever." Stella spoke carefully as if the words themselves were her enemies . . . (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 88)

Stella's second crisis comes when her father tells her of his plans to marry Maggie Grover and move into her house. Stella loves her father and knows that he needs Maggie. But Stella does not feel that there is any place for her in Maggie's world. The tenant house with its sense of past is her home and Stella never intends to leave:

In his words, Stella envisioned the house, now dull in her memory of one Sunday dinner. It had been dark and cool, with heavy furniture that couldn't be moved and dull rugs that couldn't be shook and goblets of such heavy crystal she could barely lift them.

She looked at her father. He was calm now, like a man coming out of anesthesia who realizes he's still alive and can rest easy. Nothing churned in him as it did in her--no secrets crept deeper into his brain--so Stella couldn't tell him what she knew was true.

She wouldn't leave this little house for Maggie Grover's leaden world. She wouldn't set her feet off this land or desert the blood-stained mattress of a grandmother she'd never known. She wouldn't. The brute force of them all combined couldn't make her go. For she knew, as surely as her mother had known the road was home, that this shotgun frame was where her life was. She wouldn't leave it. (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 122)

James William Johnson says that one characteristic of adolescence is "the willful divorcement of self from surroundings which reflect the adolescent's assertion of his physical independence and his repudiation of emotional dependence on other people" (7). This is what is happening to Stella. She feels that since she finally has a place to call her own, she will claim it and her own self-identi-

ty, even if it means living in her Uncle Newton's house alone. Stella tries to explain her feelings about the house to her Aunt Anne:

Stella was quiet, searching for words that she knew she could never make Anne truly understand. "You don't know what a house means, Anne," she said finally. "When we were on the road, the six of us in that station wagon, with cars whizzing by or at a filling station or sometimes in one of those diners if Daddy had a little money, we were so close together. It was a special feeling because we knew it was us against everybody and everything else. There wasn't a place to go where things belonged to us, where we could keep safe a little bit of ourselves. Everything we had went in the car, and all we had was each other. It was such a special thing, like a flower that's just holding onto its petal, because when the petals are gone, the flower will be gone, too. There was nothing holding us together but ourselves.

"But now I have a house with screens on the windows and doors that lock. Even if the wind blows hard, I can be safe in it; and if there's a fire, I can put it out." She stopped, overcome by what she knew she couldn't say.

"But you can have that at Maggie's," Anne argued. "Surely you see that all together in one place you could be happy."

"I can't depend on that," Stella said coldly. "Do you think I can depend on Daddy? Or on Maggie Grover? I don't even know that woman, and here she is telling me everything she's got is mine. That's exactly what she said, and I guess she means it. But Anne, that little house is all I really have, and I can't give it up. . . ." (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 125-26)

When her father and Maggie are married, Stella stays behind in the little house where she can be safe and have something that belongs to her. But even though she doesn't want to risk losing the home she has, Stella begins to wonder if Maggie's house could ever begin to feel like home:

They were all keeping her as safe as they could, when what they really wanted was to carry her down to Maggie Grover's house and lock her in a pink, wall-papered room that had white furniture and a bedspread with ruffles down the sides. She'd seen that room, so perfect, so empty of anything human, when she was depositing Lissy in a nursery that looked as fine as Jonathan Willis'. She had stood in the doorway of the room, with Maggie behind her, and felt she must grab hold of the door jamb to keep from being pushed in and the door slammed behind her. The windows were too high for escape; the world would be suddenly, irrevocably, too far outside her reach. But Maggie hadn't pushed her, hadn't even sighed the way Anne did when she wanted to deliver a nonverbal message of chagrin. No, Maggie Grover Willis had been silent, as if she alone understood what little result her voice would have.

Then Stella had wanted to step in. She'd wanted to tell Maggie that the room was truly beautiful and that she was grateful, although she couldn't live there. But those words seemed beyond her, like age itself, and so she turned away from the room and hurried out of the house, because suddenly she could imagine it being her home. (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 136)

Stella feels the power of Maggie's room. She is afraid of being trapped, of the door slamming behind her. But she is also afraid that she will like the trap once it is sprung. She feels torn by her sense of safety in the tenant house and her attraction for Maggie's house:

. . . There was an overpowering sense of past in Maggie's house that would awe Toby just as it awed her. Yet the house attracted her, too, sent a spark of longing deep inside to make her stomach quiver uneasily with delight and expectation at the rich food smells, the colored soaps, the soft towel she'd rubbed against Lissy's cheek, the family portraits in the hall. (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 142)

The turning point comes when Stella realizes that it

is not a house that gives a person a sense of security. Security comes from a family that is able to give love and fills the house with this gift:

Stella dropped her coat on a chair and slipped down the hall. She could hear Maggie singing. Her voice warbled slightly, unsure of the melody, like a child learning a new tune, but a haunting quality in the husky sound made Stella pause on the stair and listen intently, her fingers gripping the banister tightly as she strained her ears over the slosh of kitchen water and the humming wind outside. The voice was mournful and struggled on the notes. The words were undistinguishable. Soft s's hung in the air, and rising with them was a sound that caught Stella's ear so purely that she felt tears springing to her eyes; she knew she was hearing the sound of love. Never had she heard it so clearly before, not in textbook poems or in love scenes on flickering movie screens, not even in her daddy's voice when it came to her across the muffled sound of babies breathing in the night. It was music--richly, harmoniously, undeniably true. (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 145-46)

Maggie tells Stella that what the room "needs is somebody living in it . . . this room has always been needing you, Stella" (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 146).

When Stella sees the love that comes from Maggie's home, she is afraid that she may have hurt her by not wanting to live in her house. She tries to explain, once again, her feelings about the little tenant house, this time to Maggie:

"But, you see, at first I saw what belonged to you as yours--just yours--and I couldn't see you sharing it with us. I couldn't trust your giving us things. I didn't think you cared about us that much. Loving never seemed to have anything to do with giving before. Daddy and Mama never had anything to give. None of us

ever owned anything until we came back to Daddy's home and Newton gave us that little house. But, somehow, I felt like it had always been ours. That land out there belonged to us no matter what anyone said. Daddy was born to it, and I was born to Daddy; so the land and the house were mine. They truly belonged to me, and I belonged to them, like I had known the house and land long before and had somehow forgotten about them for a while. (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 147)

Maggie responds to Stella with warmth, understanding, and love:

"I can love you, Stella," Maggie said softly. "And I know about holding on to what belongs to you. That was all I knew until I found your daddy. Then I learned there were better things than being brave and pretending to like a life that's hard and lonely. It's not always easier to love people more than things, but I've learned it's worth the risk." (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 148)

Stella falls asleep in her room at Maggie's house. When she awakes, she realizes that the house is not her enemy. There is no longer any threat in it:

When she awoke an hour later, the room was still rosy, hazy with midafternoon, but it didn't look the same to her. There was no threat in it; no demon to capture her separateness and make her one with Maggie Grover's world if she didn't choose to be. There was still the farm and the woods and the house beyond, and before that afternoon waned into twilight, she went back to it. (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 148-49)

Stella realizes that she can live in Maggie's house without losing her "separateness," her sense of self and where she is going. She has learned that it isn't a house or things that give people a feeling of safety, of being loved, or a sense of place--it is other people. She can

accept this love now without being afraid that it will be taken away. When she enters her new home, the house welcomes her with warmth and seems to say, "We're here" (Bridgers, Home Before Dark, 150). The Willis family is together, the home is complete, and Stella feels, for the first time, a part of something.

Jacob Have I Loved

Katherine Paterson's Jacob Have I Loved is about a young girl who feels shut out of her parents' love because they love her sister more. Louise feels that she bears all the responsibilities in the family while her younger twin sister, Caroline, receives all the blessings. The story is about sibling rivalry, but it is also about Louise's struggle to find a sense of identity and purpose. The title of the novel comes from the biblical story of Jacob and Esau, the children of Issac. When Issac is old and nearly blind, Jacob, the younger son, tricks Issac into believing that he is Esau and steals Esau's birthright and blessing:

And he (Issac) said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.

And he (Esau) said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? (Genesis 27:36-37 KJV)

The actual title of the story comes from Romans 9:13 when God is speaking in reference to Jacob and Esau: As it is

written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated (KJV). Along with the Cain and Able story, the biblical story of Jacob and Esau has become an archetype for sibling rivalry.

Louise Bradshaw feels like she is an outsider in her own family. Her grandmother doesn't like her, her mother and her sister take her for granted, and her father treats her like the son he never had, the son who will grow up and take his place as a Chesapeake waterman on Rass Island.

She feels constantly in the shadow of Caroline, her younger twin by a few minutes. Louise treasures those minutes:

. . . I always treasured the thought of those minutes. They represented the only time in my life when I was the center of everyone's attention. From the moment Caroline was born, she snatched it all for herself. (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 20)

Louise was the "good baby," the one who never gave them a minute's trouble, a fact that she regretted:

. . . But I had never caused my parents "a minute's worry." Didn't they know that worry proves you care? Didn't they realize that I needed their worry to assure myself that I was worth something? (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 34-35)

Louise's strongest relationship in the family is with her father. He loved her, but treated her very differently from the way he treated Caroline. Truitt Bradshaw treated Louise almost like a son who would take his place as an oysterman:

I suppose my father was used to treating

me with a certain roughness, not quite as he would have treated a son, but certainly differently from the way he treated Caroline. My father, like nearly every man on our island, was a waterman. This meant that six days a week, long before dawn he was in his boat. From November to March, he was tonging for oysters, and from late April into the fall, he was crabbing. There are few jobs in this world more physically demanding than the work of those men who choose to follow the water. For one slightly lame man alone on a boat, the work was more than doubled. He needed a son and I would have given anything to be that son, but on Rass in those days, men's work and women's work were sharply divided, and a waterman's boat was not the place for a girl. (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 22-23)

Louise clearly feels that Caroline is the favored one in their family. She is gifted with a beautiful voice, and her parents sacrifice to give Caroline every chance to develop her talent:

Sometime before that, Mr. Rice had persuaded my parents that Caroline should have voice lessons. At first they refused, not because of the time and effort it would take to get Caroline to the mainland every Saturday, but because there was no money. But Mr. Rice was determined. He took Caroline to the college in Salisbury and had her sing for the head of the music department. Not only did the man agree to take Caroline on as a private pupil, he waived the fee. Even then the two round-trip tickets on the ferry plus the taxi fare to Salisbury put an unbelievable strain on the weekly budget, but Caroline is the kind of person other people sacrifice for as a matter of course. (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 25)

Louise is alienated from the world and unable to discover a sense of self or purpose, because she defines the limits of her existence within Caroline's shadow. At thirteen, she blames her unhappiness "on Caroline, or on my

grandmother, on my mother, even on myself" (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 25). After a Christmas recital in which Caroline receives accolades for singing with the voice of an angel, Louise feels a strange emptiness inside: "That night I lay in bed with an emptiness chewing away inside of me. I said my prayers, trying to push it away with ritual . . . " (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 34). But Louise can't make the feeling go away. She feels unloved and ugly, trapped inside shadow by the light emanating from Caroline:

She was so sure, so present, so easy, so light and gold, while I was all gray and shadow. I was not ugly or monstrous. That might have been better. Monsters always command attention, if only for their freakishness. My parents would have wrung their hands and tried to make it up to me, as parents will with a handicapped or especially ugly child. (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 34)

Louise greatest desire in life is that her parents give her the attention she feels she deserves. She wants to know that they love her as much as--maybe even more than --Caroline. And she is human enough to want her sister to be humbled a little:

I longed for the day when they would have to notice me, give me all the attention and concern that was my due. In my wildest daydreams there was a scene taken from the dreams of Joseph. Joseph dreamed that one day all his brothers and his parents as well would bow down to him. I tried to imagine Caroline bowing down to me. At first, of course, she laughingly refused, but then a giant hand descended from the sky and shoved her to her knees. Her face grew dark. "Oh, Wheeze," she began to

apologize. "Call me no longer Wheeze, but Sara Louise," I said grandly, smiling in the darkness, casting off the nickname she had diminished me with since we were two. (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 35)

Caroline has the power to make Louise feel inferior. She does not feel close to her sister. Since she doesn't care about her sister, she wonders why she can make her feel so badly:

It is hard, even now, to describe my relationship to Caroline in those days. We slept in the same room, ate at the same table, sat for nine months out of each year in the same classroom, but none of these had made us close. How could they, when being conceived at the same time in the same womb had done nothing to bind us together? And yet, if we were not close, why did only Caroline have the power, with a single glance, to slice my flesh clear through to the bone?

I would come in from a day of propping for crab, sweating and filthy. Caroline would remark mildly that my fingernails were dirty. How could they be anything else but dirty? But instead of simply acknowledging the fact, I would fly into a wounded rage. How dare she call me dirty? How dare she try to make me feel inferior to her own pure, clear beauty? It wasn't my fingernails she was concerned with, that I was sure of. She was using my fingernails to indict my soul. Wasn't she content to be golden perfection without cutting away at me? Was she to allow me no virtue--no shard of pride or decency? (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 58)

Louise, in fact, worries about her soul when she decides that she "hates" her sister. She even dreams that Caroline is dead:

Hate. That was the forbidden word. I hated my sister. I, who belonged to a religion which taught that simply to be angry with another made one liable to the judgment of God and that to hate was the equivalent of murder.

I often dreamed that Caroline was dead. Sometimes I would get word of her death--the ferry had sunk with her and my mother aboard, or more often the taxi had crashed and her lovely body had been consumed in the flames. Always there were two feelings in the dream--a wild exultation that now I was free of her and . . . terrible guilt. I once dreamed that I had killed her with my own hands. I had taken the heavy oak pole with which I guided my skiff. She had come to the shore, begging for a ride. In reply I had raised the pole and beat, beat, beat. In the dream her mouth made the shape of screaming, but no sound came out. The only sound of the dream was my own laughter. I woke up laughing, a strange shuddering kind of laugh that turned at once into sobs. (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 59)

She is worried that because she can't repent, and mean it--make it last--her soul will be damned. She searches the Scriptures for absolution:

I would search the Scriptures, but not for enlightenment or instruction. I was looking for some tiny shred of evidence that I was not to be eternally damned for hating my sister. Repent and be saved! But as fast as I would repent, resolving never again to hate, some demon would slip into my soul, tug at the corner, and whisper, "See the look on your mother's face as she listens to Caroline practice? Has she ever looked at you that way?" And I would know she hadn't. (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 60)

Louise's pain and anguish are intense. She feels outside her mother's love and her sister's world of joy. Her father prepares her for a role that her society will never let her assume. She feels that every chance she could have had, everything she could have been is denied

her because of Caroline. Her frustration emerges when she confronts Caroline taking the liberty to use a bottle of hand lotion that Louise had carefully hidden away. She screams at her: "Okay," I screamed, "take it! Take it! Take everything I own!" (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 110). In her bitterness and frustration, Louise feels that she has nothing to call her own.

Louise has two friends that she feels are especially hers--Call and Captain Wallace. When she perceives that Caroline is taking over the Captain and Call, Louise gets angry:

Who did she think she was, inviting me to go to see the Captain? As if she owned both him and Call. Call, who had always belonged to me because nobody else besides his mother and grandmother would have him, and the Captain, who finally through all our troubles and misunderstandings had become mine as well. Now, because of one afternoon of giving away a batch of drugged cats, she thought she could snatch them both for herself. I muttered something angry but unintelligible. (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 88)

But Louise's relationship with the Captain is destined to cause her problems. He is kind to her and he has been her friend. But the adolescent changes raging inside her body as she is becoming a woman cause Louise to have sexual feelings for the Captain. Louise thinks that she has gone crazy and doesn't understand how she could have these feelings for a man much older than her father:

Then, suddenly, something happened. I can't explain it. I had not put my arms around another person since I was tiny. It may have

been the unaccustomed closeness, I don't know. I had only meant to comfort him, but as I smelled his sweat and felt the spring of his beard against my cheek, an alarm began to clang inside my body. I went hot all over, and I could hear my heart banging to be let out of my chest. "Let go, stupid," part of me was saying, while another voice I hardly recognized was urging me to hold him tighter. (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 99)

Louise gets over her misplaced sexual feelings for Captain Wallace after his marriage to Trudy Braxton. Now she begins to realize that Call is becoming a man. However, instead of being attracted to Call, she felt them growing further and further apart. Ironically, she says that she had blamed that on Caroline when Call was still a boy, but now that he is becoming a man, she blames it on his immersion "deep into the world of men--a place I could never hope to enter" (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 126). This mistake is ironic, because as Call becomes a man he will be interested in Caroline as a woman. Louise's men are beginning to betray her, and she will be devastated when she realizes it. The Captain is the first to betray her. After Trudy Braxton's death, the Captain offers Caroline a gift--and Louise nothing:

"You know how much I think of you, how indebted both Trudy and I are--were--to all of you. And now--" He could hardly contain himself. He smiled at me. "I have Sara Louise to thank for the idea. You see, Trudy left a little legacy. I didn't know what to do with it, because I swore to myself I would never touch her money. There isn't a great deal, but there is enough for a good boarding school." He was leaning all over. "I've investigated.

There will be enough for Caroline to go to Baltimore and continue her music. Nothing would make Trudy happier than that, I know."

I sat there as stunned as though he had thrown a rock in my face. Caroline! (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 128-29)

Once again, Louise feels betrayed and a blessing is bestowed on the favorite sister. The Captain, too, has chosen Caroline over Louise. She compares the favoritism to Jacob and Esau. She tries to remember who is speaking the words, "Jacob have I loved . . ." When she looks up the passage and realizes it is God speaking, she is devastated. She feels abandoned by everyone, even by God:

I was shaking all over as I closed the book and got back under the covers. There was, then, no use struggling or even trying. It was God himself who hated me. And without cause. "Therefore," verse eighteen had gone on to rub it in, "hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will be hardeneth." God had chosen to hate me. And if my heart was hard, that was his doing as well. (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 131)

The next betrayal comes when Call returns home from the Navy. Louise doesn't know exactly how she feels about Call's return, or what it will mean to her:

Exactly what Call's return would mean to me, I could not say. I had not despised my life of the past two years, but I began to realize that it had been a time of hibernation, for I felt stirrings I had almost forgotten. Perhaps when Call came home--perhaps--well, at the very least when he came I could turn over my tasks to him. My father would be overjoyed to have a man to help him. And I--what was it I wanted? I could leave the island, if I wished . . . If I chose to leave--there was something cold about the idea, but I shook it away. (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 142)

Louise is struggling to discover how she really feels about Call. Does she love him? Want to marry him? She has never thought of Call that way before and, ironically, her friend will, in her eyes, soon betray her when he declares his feelings for her sister. Before she even has a chance to decide whether she wants Call, Caroline takes him away from her. Call tells Louise and the Captain that Caroline has agreed to marry him: "She--she said, 'Yes'." . . . "Let's just say she answered her Call" (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 149).

Louise's bitterness and frustration overwhelm her. Finally, in anger, she confronts her mother about her feelings that Caroline has always been the favorite child:

"Oh, Caroline. Caroline's different. Everything's always been for Caroline. Caroline the delicate, the gifted, the beautiful. Of course, we must all sacrifice our lives to give her greatness to the world!"

Did I see her flinch, ever so slightly? "What do you want us to do for you, Louise?"

"Let me go. Let me leave!"

"Of course you may leave. You never said before you wanted to leave."

And, oh, my blessed, she was right. All my dreams of leaving, but beneath them I was afraid to go. I had clung to them, to Rass, yes, even to my grandmother, afraid that if I loosened my fingers an iota, I would find myself once more cold and clean in a forgotten basket.

"I chose the island," she said. "I chose to leave my own people and build a life for myself somewhere else. I certainly wouldn't deny you the same choice. But," and her eyes held me if her arms did not, "oh, Louise, we will miss you, your father and I."

"I wanted so to believe her. "Will you really?" I asked. "As much as you miss Caroline?"

"More," she said, reaching up and ever so lightly smoothing my hair with her fingertips.

I did not press her to explain. I was too grateful for that one word that allowed me at last to leave the island and begin to build myself as a soul, separate from the long, long shadow of my twin. (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 163-64)

Louise discovers that her parents have never loved her less, only differently. She has been her own worst enemy, not her mother, or grandmother, or Caroline. She has made herself an outsider. When she leaves the island of Rass behind, Louise leaves behind her jealousy of her sister and finds her destiny with the gentle mountain man who, like her father, "when he smiled, looked like the kind of man who would sing to the oysters" (Paterson, Jacob Have I Loved, 170).

The Outsiders

S. E. Hinton's The Outsiders is the story of a group of boys who can't find a niche in society, and one boy in particular who tries to understand why. The Outsiders is told from Ponyboy Curtis' perspective. Ponyboy is a fourteen-year-old "greaser." It is Ponyboy's journey that is the focus of the novel. Ponyboy, through the tragedies that befall him, learns that there is good in the world and that he has a place to belong. But The Outsiders is also about the other kids who feel left out of their families and abandoned by society, the kids who

join a gang to get a sense of purpose and identity--to find a place to belong.

The Outsiders is about two rival street gangs--the Socs (or Socials) and the Greasers. Ponyboy describes the Greasers:

. . . Greasers are almost like hoods: we steal things and drive old souped-up cars and hold up gas stations and have a gang fight once in a while. I don't mean I do things like that. . . . I only mean most greasers do things like that, just like we wear our hair long and dress in blue jeans and T-shirts, or leave our shirttails out and wear leather jackets and tennis shoes or boots. . . . (Hinton, The Outsiders, 6)

The Greasers spend most of their time fighting with the Socs, a gang of West-side rich kids.

Darry and Sodapop, Ponyboy's brothers, Two-Bit Mathews, Dallas Winston--Dally, and Johnny Cade are the Greasers. Darry is twenty-years-old, strong, with cold, determined eyes, and a man "who doesn't understand anything but plain hard fact." Two-Bit Mathews "always has to get his two-bits worth in" and is "famous for shoplifting and his black-handled switchblade." Dally is "tougher than the rest . . . tougher, colder, meaner." Johnny Cade is only sixteen and "the gang's pet, everyone's kid brother." Ponyboy is fourteen, the baby of the group, and the smartest kid in school. (Hinton, The Outsiders, 9-14)

Ponyboy even feels like an outsider at home. His mother and father are dead and Darry raises Ponyboy and Sodapop. Darry had to give up college to take care of his

brothers. Ponyboy is convinced that Darry just doesn't like him:

. . . Me and Darry just didn't dig each other. I never could please him. He would have hollered at me for carrying a blade if I had carried one. If I brought home B's, he wanted A's, and if I got A's he wanted to make sure they stayed A's. If I was playing football, I should be in studying, and if I was reading, I should be out playing football. He never hollered at Sodapop-- not even when Soda dropped out of school or got tickets for speeding. He just hollered at me. (Hinton, The Outsiders, 15)

Soda tries to explain to Ponyboy that Darry cares about him:

. . . "Listen, kiddo, when Darry hollers at you . . . he don't mean nothin'. He's just got more worries than somebody his age ought to. Don't take him serious . . . you dig, Pony? Don't let him bug you. He's really proud of you 'cause you're so brainy. It's just because you're the baby--I mean, he loves you a lot. Savvy?" (Hinton, The Outsiders, 18-19)

Ponyboy pretends not to care, but he is lying, even to himself: "I don't care about Darry. But I was still lying and I knew it. I lie to myself all the time. But I never believe me" (Hinton, The Outsiders, 19).

The Greasers may be outsiders, may be looked down upon by society, but they are not completely lawless. They have "seen too much to be innocent," but they live by their own code (Hinton, The Outsiders, 26). They stick by their own, as Johnny tells some Soc girls he and Ponyboy meet at a drive-in:

"Dally's okay," Johnny said defensively, and I nodded. You take up for your buddies, no matter

what they do. When you're a gang, you stick up for the members. If you don't stick up for them, stick together, make like brothers, it isn't a gang any more. It's a pack. A snarling, distrustful, bickering pack like the Socs in their social clubs or the street gangs in New York or the wolves in the timber. . . . (Hinton, The Outsiders, 26)

Later, when Dally is going to fight a member of another gang of hoods, another aspect of the greaser code emerges. The Greasers have a sense of fairness and a sense of family. Even though Dally is one of their own, they know that he precipitated the fight with Tim Shepherd, and they know that if they need Shepherd's gang tomorrow in a rumble against the Socs, they'll show up:

"A fair fight isn't rough," Two-Bit said. "Blades are rough. So are chains and heaters and pool sticks and rumbles. Skin fighting isn't rough. It blows off steam better than anything. There's nothing wrong with throwing a few punches. Socs are rough. They gang up on one or two, or they rumble each other with their social clubs. Us greasers usually stick together, but when we do fight among ourselves, it's a fair fight between two. And Dally deserves whatever he gets, 'cause slashed tires ain't no joke when you've got to work to pay for them. He got spotted, too, and that was his fault. Our one rule, besides Stick together, is Don't get caught. He might get beat up, he might not. Either way there's not going to be any blood feud between our outfit and Shepherd's. If we needed them tomorrow they'd show. If Tim beats Dally's head in, and then tomorrow asks us for help in a rumble, we'll show. Dally was getting kicks. He got caught. He pays up. No sweat." (Hinton, The Outsiders, 28-29)

Cherry Valance, a Soc girlfriend, describes the difference between the Greasers and the Socs:

. . . "It's not just money. Part of it is,

but not all. You greasers have a different set of values. You're more emotional. We're sophisticated--cool to the point of not feeling anything. Nothing is for real with us. . . .

"Rat race is a perfect name for it," she said. "We're always going and going and going, and never asking where. Did you every hear of having more than you wanted? So that you couldn't want anything else and then started looking for something else to want? It seems like we're always searching for something to satisfy us, and never finding it. Maybe if we could lose our cool we could."

That was the truth. Socs were always behind a wall of aloofness, careful not to let their real selves show through. I had seen a social-club rumble once. The Socs even fought coldly and practically and impersonally.

"That's why we're separated," I said. "It's not money, it's feeling--you don't feel anything and we feel too violently." (Hinton, The Outsiders, 35-36)

Both Socs and Greasers have their own form of alienation. The Socs are alienated because they have everything possible materially, but nothing to satisfy them emotionally. They don't know how to feel. The Greasers have nothing in the way of material possessions--just each other--so they have had to learn to feel intensely.

The catalyst for the tragic conclusion of the novel is the sensitive gang member, Johnny Cade. Johnny Cade had been jumped by a gang of Socs and badly beaten and humiliated, and scared half to death. This attack destroyed whatever emotionally stability he had left, after being beaten almost daily by his father at home. After this beating, Johnny, the "most law-abiding" greaser, starts carrying a knife:

. . . And Johnny, who was the most law-abiding of us, now carried in his back pocket a six-inch switchblade. He'd use it, too, if he ever got jumped again. They had scared him that much. He would kill the next person who jumped him. Nobody was ever going to beat him like that again. Not over his dead body . . . (Hinton, The Outsiders, 32-33)

Johnny's fear creates the tragedy in the novel. One night after Darry and Ponyboy have a fight, Ponyboy runs away, and he and Johnny go for a walk in the park to let him cool off. In the park, the two greasers are attacked by a gang of socs, the same gang that once attacked Johnny. They fight and Ponyboy is hurt. He passes out and when he comes around, he sees that Johnny has killed one of the socs:

. . . The next thing I knew I was lying on the pavement beside the fountain, coughing water and gasping. I lay there weakly, breathing in air and spitting out water. The wind blasted through my soaked sweat shirt and dripping hair. My teeth chattered unceasingly and I couldn't stop them. I finally pushed myself up and leaned back against the fountain, the water running down my face. Then I saw Johnny.

He was sitting next to me, one elbow on his knee, and staring straight ahead. He was a strange greenish-white, and his eyes were huger than I'd ever seen them.

"I killed him," he said slowly. "I killed that boy."

Bob, the handsome Soc, was lying there in the moonlight, doubled up and still. A dark pool was growing from him, spreading slowly over the blue-white cement. I looked at Johnny's hand. He was clutching his switchblade, and it was dark to the hilt. My stomach gave a violent jump and my blood turned icy. (Hinton, The Outsiders, 51)

Johnny and Ponyboy are frightened. Johnny panics, even

though he has killed the soc in self-defense: "We gotta get outta here. Get somewhere. Run away. The police'll be here soon. . . . We'll need money. And maybe a gun. And a plan" (Hinton, The Outsiders, 52). The two boys receive help from Dally and run away to hide in an abandoned church. Johnny is filled with remorse about what he has done, and gets angry at Ponyboy for talking about that night as if it were something ordinary:

"Stop it!" Johnny gasped from between clenched teeth. "Shut up about last night! I killed a kid last night. He couldn't of been over seventeen or eighteen, and I killed him. How'd you like to live with that?" He was crying. I held him like Soda had held him the day we found him lying in the lot.

"I didn't mean to," he finally blurted out, "but they were drownin' you, and I was so scared" He was quiet for a minute. "There sure is a lot of blood in people." (Hinton, The Outsiders, 66)

The time Johnny and Ponyboy spend in the church is reminiscent of the time Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer spend hiding out on the island. But the comraderie in The Outsiders is a dark mirror image of the innocent mischief of Finn and Sawyer. Ponyboy and Johnny were in a fight and a human life was taken. One morning Ponyboy wakes in time to see a sunrise. It becomes almost a mystical experience for Ponyboy, and later he will learn how important the experience is:

One morning I woke up earlier than usual. Johnny and I slept huddled together for warmth --Dally had been right when he said it would get cold where we were going. Being careful

not to wake Johnny up, I went to sit on the steps and smoke a cigarette. The dawn was coming then. All the lower valley was covered with mist, and sometimes little pieces of it broke off and floated away in small clouds. The sky was lighter in the east, and the horizon was a thin golden line. The clouds changed from gray to pink, and the mist was touched with gold. There was a silent moment when everything held its breath, and then the sun rose. It was beautiful. (Hinton, The Outsiders, 68-69)

After watching the sunrise, Ponyboy remembers the Robert Frost poem, "Nothing Gold Can Stay," and struggles with the meaning. The poem's associations with the fragility of youth will convey an important message to Ponyboy at the end of the novel.

Johnny decides to turn himself in while he and Ponyboy are in town getting something to eat with Dally. When the boys come back to the church to collect their belongings, they discover that it has become the site of a school picnic. A fire has started in the church, probably as a result of a cigarette carelessly thrown by Johnny or Ponyboy, and several of the children are trapped inside. Johnny and Ponyboy rush inside to save the children. For Johnny Cade, the act has the power to cleanse and purify him; it is an act of atonement for the guilt he feels over killing Bob. The children are saved, but Dally has to rush in to save Johnny who gets hit with a falling beam. Johnny is badly burned as a result of his heroic action. The teachers who brought the children to the churchyard think the boys are "sent straight from heaven . . . or are professional heroes"

(Hinton, The Outsiders, 84).

Ponyboy's return home from the church and his life as a fugitive signals a turning point in his relationship with Darry. For the first time, Ponyboy actually feels the love that his brother has for him and realizes that he no longer has to feel like an outsider in his own home:

I let go of Soda and stood there for a minute. Darry didn't like me . . . he had driven me away that night . . . he had hit me . . . Darry hollered at me all the time . . . he didn't give a hang about me . . . Suddenly I realized, horrified, that Darry was crying. He didn't make a sound, but tears were running down his cheeks. I hadn't seen him cry in years, not even when Mom and Dad had been killed. (I remembered the funeral. I had sobbed in spite of myself; Soda had broken down and bawled like a baby; but Darry had only stood there, his fists in his pockets and that look on his face, the same helpless, pleading look that he was wearing now.)

In that second what Soda and Dally and Two-Bit had been trying to tell me came through. Darry did care about me, maybe as much as he cared about Soda, and because he cared he was trying too hard to make something of me. When he yelled, "Pony, where have you been all this time?" he meant "Pony, you've scared me to death. Please be careful, because I couldn't stand it if anything happened to you." (Hinton, The Outsiders, 87)

Dally is in the hospital, recovering from his injuries. But Johnny's injuries are serious. Even if he lives, he will be crippled:

He was in critical condition. His back had been broken when that piece of timber fell on him. He was in severe shock and suffering from third-degree burns. They were doing everything they could to ease the pain, although since his back was broken he couldn't even feel the burns below his waist. He kept calling for Dallas and Ponyboy. If he lived . . . If? Please, no, I

thought. Please not "if." The blood was draining from my face and Darry put an arm across my shoulder and squeezed hard. . . . Even if he lived he'd be crippled for the rest of his life. "you wanted it straight and you got it straight," the doctor said. "Now go home and get some rest." (Hinton, The Outsiders, 90-91)

The Greasers arrange a rumble with the Socs. They feel that they have a score to settle because of Johnny. Before the fight, Randy Anderson, a Soc and the best friend of the boy Johnny killed, confronts Ponyboy. He tells Ponyboy that he won't be at the fight, that he is tired of fighting. He tells Ponyboy that Bob was "a good guy . . . his best friend . . ." and tries to explain why Bob was the way he was:

"He's dead--his mother has had a nervous breakdown. They spoiled him rotten. I mean, most parents would be proud of a kid like that--good lookin' and smart and everything, but they gave in to him all the time. He kept trying to make someone say 'No' and they never did. They never did. That was what he wanted. For somebody to tell him 'No.'" To have somebody lay down the law, set the limits, give him something solid to stand on. That's what we all want, really. . . . (Hinton, The Outsiders, 102)

Ponyboy learns that even the Socs are "real people," and suffer their own feelings of being outsiders. Bob wanted his parents to show their love by saying "No." He wanted them to set some limits, so he would have something solid to stand on, a place to come home to.

Before the fight, Ponyboy goes to visit Johnny in the hospital again. Johnny tells Ponyboy that he is afraid, that he doesn't want to die, and Ponyboy realizes that the things they have learned in the streets are the wrong

lessons to learn about life:

"You want to know something, Ponyboy? I'm scared stiff. I used to talk about killing myself . . . " He drew a quivering breath. "I don't want to die now. It ain't long enough. Sixteen years ain't long enough. I wouldn't mind so much if there wasn't so much stuff I ain't done yet and so many things I ain't seen. It's not fair. . . .

. . . Sixteen years on the streets and you can learn a lot. But all the wrong things, not the things you want to learn. Sixteen years on the streets and you see a lot. But all the wrong sights, not the sights you want to see. (Hinton, The Outsiders, 107)

The Greasers win their fight with the Socs, and Dally and Ponyboy hurry back to the hospital to tell Johnny. Dally feels closest to Johnny, and he feels responsible for what happened to Johnny, because he should have made Johnny tougher:

"I was crazy, you know that, kid? Crazy for wantin' Johnny to stay outa trouble, for not wantin' him to get hard. If he'd been like me he'd never have been in this mess. If he'd got smart like me he'd never have run into that church. That's what you get for helpin' people. Editorials in the paper and a lot of trouble. . . . You'd better wise up, Pony . . . you get tough like me and you don't get hurt. You look out for yourself and nothin' can touch you . . . " (Hinton, The Outsiders, 128)

The irony is that Dally did go into the burning church, and he did get hurt. He hurts very much because he loves Johnny like a brother, or maybe even like a father loves a son.

When they get to the hospital, they find out that Johnny is dying. Johnny's last words to Ponyboy are: "Stay gold, Ponyboy. Stay gold . . . " Ponyboy will realize

later that Johnny was telling him to keep his youth, his innocence. But it is Dally who reacts most strongly to Johnny's death. Dally has lost, perhaps, the only person he ever loved and he erupts in anger, and lashes out at the only place he can--the world around him. Dally robs a grocery store and waits for a confrontation with the police, facing them with a gun that he never keeps loaded:

We reached the vacant lot just as Dally came in, running as hard as he could, from the opposite direction. The wail of a siren grew louder and then a police car pulled up across the street from the lot. Doors slammed as the policemen leaped out. Dally had reached the circle of light under the street lamp, and skidding to a halt, he turned and jerked a black object from his waistband. I remembered his voice: I been carryin' a heater. It ain't loaded, but it sure does help a bluff. (Hinton, The Outsiders, 133-34)

The police are forced to shoot Dally, and Ponyboy knows that "Dally Winston wanted to be dead and he always got what he wanted" (Hinton, The Outsiders, 134). Dally's emptiness at losing Johnny had no other recourse than to succumb to the impulse for self-destruction. Ponyboy realizes that Dally's way of life had made his fate inevitable: "Dally didn't die a hero. He died violent and young and desperate, just like we all knew he'd die someday" (Hinton, The Outsiders, 134).

Ponyboy has lost two of his friends and he begins to think about his own life. He reads a letter that Johnny has left behind for him. In the letter, Johnny tells Pony-

boy the meaning of the Frost poem, and asks him to tell

Dally that there is still a lot of good in the world:

Ponyboy, I asked the nurse to give you this book so you could finish it. . . . The doctor came in a while ago but I knew anyway. I keep getting tired and tired. Listen, I don't mind dying now. It's worth it. It's worth saving those kids. Their lives are worth more than mine, they have more to live for. Some of their parents came by to thank me and I know it was worth it. Tell Dally it's worth it. I'm just going to miss you guys. I've been thinking about it, and that poem, that guy that wrote it, he meant you're gold when you're a kid, like green. When you're a kid everything's new, dawn. It's just when you get used to everything that it's day. Like the way you dig sunsets, Pony. That's gold. Keep that way, it's a good way to be. I want you to tell Dally to look at one. He'll probably think you're crazy, but ask for me. I don't think he's ever really seen a sunset. And don't be so bugged over being a greaser. You still have a lot of time to make yourself be what you want. There's still lots of good in the world. Tell Dally. I don't think he knows. Your buddy, Johnny. (Hinton, The Outsiders, 154-55)

Ponyboy realizes that Johnny has given him a purpose. It's too late for Dally, but Ponyboy wants to reach out and help other "outsiders," other hard, bitter boys, see that "there is still good in the world," that there is a way back in. Ponyboy wants to tell their side of the story. Sheila Schwartz says that "Johnny and Ponyboy . . . are beaten not because of anything they do, but because they are there" (137). But Ponyboy realizes that they don't have to be there . . . that they don't have to be outsiders, if society will give them a choice. He has found his own way back to Darry, and maybe now he can find himself.

Where the Lilies Bloom

Vera and Bill Cleaver's Where the Lilies Bloom is about a young girl who feels she must hide her family from society to keep it together and protect their way of life. Nilsen and Donelson say that the premise of the novel is a struggle "to stay free of social institutions that seek to 'control' young people's lives" (95). The alienation in the novel comes from the fact that the Luther family are "mountain folks." Their way of life in the Smoky Mountains, their sense of family, their love of and dependence on nature, their simple, yet enduring, values all serve to isolate them from society. They are outsiders because they choose to live differently than most other people in the world.

William Saroyan writes movingly of the "heroic" impulse in Mary Call Luther and her efforts to keep the family together:

Only 14, Mary Call is determined to keep the family together and to make do--that's the thing the girl is after. The appeal of her effort is profound, because this impulse is the heroic impulse of all achievement, adventure, art and the making of character. (34)

Saroyan views Mary Call as a character with a purpose. She leads her family to a realization of the deep kinship between human beings:

. . . Life has purpose and the purpose is good, because in it is intelligence and pride. Having so much responsibility and awareness of the

hazards ahead makes the beautiful little girl seem ugly and mean, especially to the kid brother Romey, who works with her to keep the noses of outsiders away from the Luther story, which is nobody's business but their own. These two will protect the beautiful Devola. And in doing so they will fight and hate one another, only to discover that they have learned new truth and acquired new humor. The whole book is immersed in a sense of the deep kinship between human beings, animals and plants, recognized, accepted and rejected or cherished with humor. (34)

Saroyan's final summation of the novel is "a story of good people, with real natures, living under conditions of hardship, in poverty, in the midst of bereavement, maintaining their independence, wit and dignity . . ." (34).

Where the Lilies Bloom is the story of fourteen-year-old Mary Call Luther and her determination to help her family survive and stay together. She is, as Saroyan says, "heroic." She even has the flaw of pride. But more than anything else, Mary Call is strong and determined. Her mother is dead, her father, Roy Luther, is dying, and her eighteen-year-old sister, Devola, is "cloudy-headed." Mary Call sees it as her duty to take care of Roy Luther, Devola, Romey, Ima Dean, and herself. When she realizes that Roy Luther is dying, she feels afraid for her family's future:

Oh, I feel it, this bottomless stomach of fright when I look at Devola and see her so free and innocent, so womanly in form but with a child's heart and a child's mind. I feel it when I watch Ima Dean and Romey at their make-believe games. So carefree they are with never a thought in their little heads as to how they're going to get decently raised. And when I look at Roy Luther who is coughing his life away. . . .
(Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 14-15)

Roy Luther makes Mary Call promise to let him die quickly and quietly, without calling the doctor, and to bury him on Old Joshua, the mountain, with "a simple homemade burial." In addition, he asks her to make three promises, two of which are rather heavy burdens for a fourteen-year-old:

Number one: I am always to take pride in having the name of Luther and instill this pride in the others, too. Number two: I am to strive with everything in me to keep our family together and not ever take charity from anybody even if our tongues hang out parched down to our knees because charity is seldom of real service to those upon whom it is bestowed and those who receive it are always looked upon with suspicion, every need and want scrutinized. Number three: I am to keep Devola with me always. I am to be good and kind and loving to her and see to it that the others are, too. I am not to let her marry Kiser Pease. If ever it looks to me like this is about to happen then I am to go to town, find the nearest judge, tell him about how Devola is, and get him to stop it. (Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 16)

Mary Call agrees to Roy Luther's wishes, but she feels a little overburdened by them, and a little resentful of him for leaving them his failures:

He's let things beat him, Roy Luther has. The land, Kiser Pease, the poverty. Now he'd old and sick and ready to die and when he does, this is what we'll inherit--his defeat and all that goes with it. (Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 17)

Kiser Pease is a lightweight antagonist for Mary Call in the novel. Though Vera and Bill Cleaver have portrayed him somewhat as a villain, he is only villainous when seen through Mary Call's eyes. More objectively, he is a pretty

decent fellow who just happens to want to marry Mary Call's sister. This would be considered lecherous if Devola really did have the mind of a child, but the end of the novel reveals that such is not the case. The Luthers are tenants on Kiser Pease's land, but there is no indication that he mistreats them or takes advantage of them. When Kiser gets sick with some kind of fever, Mary Call tends him until he recovers, but only after he agrees to sign a paper deeding them their house and the twenty acres of land that they live on:

"It means we're free," I said. "Now we own our own house and our own land. There's twenty acres of it and nobody can even set foot on it unless we want them to. Not even Kiser. We're not farm tenants any more, Romey. Now nobody can tell us what to do. We're free." (Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 34)

Even though her bargaining with a man on his deathbed may seem a little callous, Mary Call has had the strength to do what her father never seemed capable of, that is, to make some effort to give her family a place of their own, and insure that they have a future.

With winter coming on, Mary Call is afraid. Roy Luther is near death, and she doesn't know how she will provide for the family during the harsh months. One night she has a vision of her mother wildcrafting on Old Joshua, and Mary Call knows that she has found the answer:

I know when this happened. It happened during the blackest part of one night when a turbulence of thick mist rose up out of the bowels of Old Joshua and made watery trails across the face

of the moon. My bed suddenly turned cold and I left it and went to the window and looked out and thought I saw something--a figure kneeling in a blur of white haze on the dark grass. I thought it was Devola and called out to her and just when I did it all dissolved and I moved back from the window and stood there for a minute, feeling the rise of a slow excitement. And then I went across the hall to the room where Roy Luther slept and tiptoed in past him to the chest that had been my mother's, and removed the afghan that she had knitted in the last year of her life from its top and opened its lid and dug down and found it--a big, thick volume tht had belonged to Cosby Luther named A Guide to Wildcrafting. (Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 39)

Roy Luther dies quietly in his sleep. Once again, Mary Call is afraid she can't handle the responsibilities of her promises to her father:

I looked at him and I thought. Oh, Lord, You sure made a mistake when You put me together. You didn't give me enough strength to carry out all I'm supposed to do. I can't do this by myself. You can see that. So now I've got to break a promise. (Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 64)

Mary Call has to ask her brother, Romey, to help her take care of Roy Luther. Throughout the rest of the novel, Romey will be her confident, her support, and, at the same time, her biggest critic. As they climb the mountain, Mary Call feels that she is tough enough to handle anything that life pitches her way:

Standing there on the gloomy trailway, waiting for Romey to recover, I wondered how I could be so calm--how I could just stand there in the gray darkness with the cold handle of the wagon in my hand and the cold tree moisture dripping down on me and the dead body of my father there before me and not be afraid of how grisly it all was.

It's because I'm tough, I thought. I'm so

tough that if a bear came out of the side of the mountain over there I could knock him cold without even breathing hard. And that's all and if anybody's got a better idea how I should handle this and all the other things left to me just let them come on and tell me about it but I don't hear anybody saying anything. (Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 72-73)

Mary Call seems to take her strength from her sense of purpose and, like Antaeus, from her sense of rootedness in their home, their land. She compares herself to a tree that has withstood the elements on Old Joshua:

Beyond Romey's slight figure I saw this tree, alone and different from the rest, its branches all streamed back in one direction from the winds that had battered it year on year. It was quiet now because there was no wind but I could imagine what it looked like in a storm, bending and twisting in the gusts and the rain, resisting with all of its grit the forces that would uproot and destroy it. It looked old and tough and the sight of it made me feel old and tough, I felt like the tree and I were related. I couldn't think of anything more to say good about Roy Luther than had already been said so I told Romey this and then together we knelt and said the Lord's Prayer and then, with some clumsiness, we loosened Roy Luther from his bindings and slid him into his grave. He went in neat. (Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 75)

The tree is symbolic for the strength and endurance Mary Call must have to fulfill her father's wishes. She feels "old and tough" because she has to be old and tough to protect her family.

Mary Call does endure. She takes care of her family, puts up with Kiser Pease and, with some degree of cunning, encourages his efforts to court Devola only enough to receive the benefit of the practical gifts he brings for her.

She is also able to conceal Roy Luther's death from Kiser and Mrs. Connell, the storekeeper's wife. But she also receives resentment and complaints from Romey, and, when Romey and Devola spend their time playing, Mary Call feels as if she is spending all her time doing a thankless task:

By myself I gathered richweed pollen that day. Alone on a dry open slope I worked my way through dense weeds higher than my head, gathering the green-yellow flower heads into bunches, bending their stems to the piece of organdy spread out over the dishpan, shaking the flowers to rid them of their precious grains. At one point in this process I was horrified to feel my eyes fill with tears and I cussed, I think. Some life for a girl, I thought. Out here alone on this blasted mountain working myself to a frazzle, for what nobody knows. Lord, I've said it before and I'll say it again: You sure made some mistakes when You made me. Surely to my soul I must have moss growing in my head where my brains should be. Nobody but a poor dement would do what I'm doing, hiding my old dead daddy over there on Old Joshua. Taking me on three snot-nosed kids to raise. If I had the sense of a rabbit or even half that much I'd just take off across that bald over there and go down the other side of it and just keep right on walking and never look back. They'd make out all right without me. Probably even better. The county people'd come and get them. Maybe not Devola but the other two. Kiser'd probably get Devola. (Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 93)

Mary Call continues to struggle with her resolve to do her father's bidding, and her doubts about her capacity to live up to the promises she made. When she is hornet stung and gets sick, the children are afraid that they will lose her. Romey promises to stop complaining and obey her:

. . . "You're not hateful to us, not ever. We're the ones that're hateful to you and we're sorry. We know you're the boss and we know that's the way it's got to be. Tomorrow morning we're going

to be up at five o'clock and go wildcrafting and we're going to work at it all day. You won't have to go with us. We want you to stay here and rest and get well. We'll do all the work. You won't have to even move a muscle. All you got to do is lay here and rest and get well and think of some more orders you want to give us." (Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 98-99)

Romey has effectively acknowledged that Mary Call is the force that holds their family together, and he doesn't want to take a chance on losing her.

Their life of isolation, duplicity, and the hard task of wildcrafting takes its toll on Mary Call's strength . . . and spirit. She knows that her siblings still resent her, even though they help her now and don't complain as much. She feels the burden of her isolation, alienated from the world, and abandoned by God. She knows that they have got to make it on their own, because they are not going to get any help:

Sleepy and ill-humored, shivering with the cold, they would shamle out and set their feet one in front of the other and we would start off down the valley, the wagon in tow, the wheels of it creaking and rattling with every step and turn. I would try to get them to sing or talk, do anything to raise their spirits, but they remained sullenly silent. At that hour they hated me and I hated myself, knowing how I appeared to them--a pinch-faced crone, straggle-haired, bony, ragged, too desperate for anyone with only fourteen years on them but still driven by a desperation that was unholy and ugly. Straggling up the mountain-side through the sodden, gloomy daybreak I would see the beauty of it all around me, free for the looking and the listening. Surely, I would think, the Lord is here. Roy Luther believed that He was and I believe it, too. He is here and watching over everything, helping it. I believe that. But if this is so where is my share of the help,

answer me that. There isn't going to be any help for me, is there? There's just going to be me and this mountain and that other one over there and these three children and whatever good we can make for ourselves. (Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 112-13)

The family faces a crisis when Kiser's sister, Goldie, comes and tells the Luthers that they will have to get off of her land. Kiser does not own the land and the paper he signed is worthless. Mary Call feels beaten. She doesn't know what to do, and she feels that it would be easier to give up:

The notion of all of us living in a hole in the side of a mountain and possibly freezing to death in it when winter settled down to do its worst didn't frighten me. Somehow it seemed a friendly idea, just for all of us to fall gently asleep in a cave some night and not ever wake up again--to be delivered from all the meanness and worry in life, forever safe. (Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 141)

When Romey says that God has forgotten them, Mary Call at first gives in to her brother's pessimism. Then she finds a new source of strength inside herself:

. . . "The Lord has forgotten us. This land is forgotten. We're forgotten. We're forgotten people."

So harsh he said that but not with vigor. He said it like an old decayed man would say it--a truth filled with absolute despair. It was the most desolate, most disheartening thing I had ever heard anyone say and I didn't have any answer for it.

I looked up at my brother and I thought, It's the truth. The Lord has forgotten us. This land is forgotten. We're forgotten people.

I thought about man's hold on life, how painful its struggle, and I tried to think of the reason for people like us Luthers ever having been born. There must be one, I thought. Roy Luther

said there was a reason for everything. And something within me stirred and my spirits lifted and I thought, By the grace of the Lord we're here and what we make of it is our own affair. It's everybody's affair what they make of being here. The Lord hasn't forgotten us. Those are just Romey's words and he is just a child. This land isn't forgotten and neither are we. It just seems like we are out here in all this snow and cold and quiet. (Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 145-46)

Mary Call's pride and her promise to Roy Luther not to ask for help surface when Romey says that they ought to beg Kiser Pease to get them their land somehow. Mary Call says, "We're not going to beg anything from anybody. Charity is one of the worst things there is. It does terrible things to people" (Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 149). Mary Call insists that asking for help is demeaning:

"When you demean somebody you make them smaller than they are. You conquer them and then they have to be humble and toady to you. For this to happen to us--for us to humble ourselves and toady to anybody--is one of the things I promised Roy Luther never to let happen. On my highest word of honor I promised him that and I mean to keep the promise so you can just forget about begging Kiser Pease or anybody else for anything. . . . (Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 149)

Mary Call's trials, and the trials of the entire Luther family are ended in a rather unconvincing twist at the end of the novel. Devola somehow gets her wits back and says that she is going to marry Kiser Pease and he will take care of all of them. Kiser's guardianship and Devola's recovery release Mary Call from the burdens she carries. At first, she struggles, but then gives in and lets Devola comfort

her: "Shhhhhhhh," said Devola. "It's all right. You did the best you could. You did real good. But now you've got us to help you" (Cleaver, Where the Lilies Bloom, 166).

When Mary Call agrees to accept the comfort Devola offers her, she ends her self-imposed isolation. She no longer has to carry her burdens alone.

Where the Lilies Bloom is, as William Saroyan says, a story of people who live under conditions of hardship and maintain their independence. It is a novel about Mary Call Luther, a young girl whose determination to hold her family together alienates her from them. But it is also a novel about a way of life that isolates people from the mainstream of society, even though the exile may be a matter of choice.

The Chocolate War

Robert Cormier's The Chocolate War is a dark novel of alienation. Jerry Renault is a freshman at Trinity High School. He has just lost his mother and he feels out-of-touch with his father's purposeless existence, the way he "sleepwalks" through life. Jerry is selected by The Vigils, a secret society which specializes in humiliating pranks, for an "assignment." He is to refuse to sell chocolates in the annual school fundraiser, a special project of Brother Leon, the sadistic Assistant Headmaster, for a period of ten days. After the ten days are up, Jerry

continues to refuse to sell the chocolates in defiance of The Vigils and Brother Leon. At first his action seems heroic to his classmates, but soon they begin to hate him. Jerry is brutally beaten at the end of the novel, while almost the entire school and Brother Leon watch. An act that begins as a prank ends in tragedy.

Jerry Renault is not by nature an outsider. He wants to fit in. His two greatest desires are to become a member of the football team and to hold a girl's breast in his hand. But Jerry is struggling with several conflicts in his life, which are to become the catalysts for his actions--his mother's death, his father's empty life, and the Vigil assignment. In his description of the novel, David Rees says that Jerry's story is about the "struggle to be a successful outsider":

The Chocolate War, Robert Cormier's first novel for young adults is, on the surface, a political book. It is about power, power structures, corruption--about how absolute power corrupts absolutely. But, more subtly, beneath the surface, it is about compromise and the choice between hunting with the pack or searching for strength as an individual: about the toughness needed in the struggle to be a successful outsider. . . . (156)

Jerry is still trying to deal with his mother's death and his father's empty meaningless life. Jerry first feels anger over his mother's death, and then that meaninglessness that comes with loss, feelings of abandonment, and estrangement:

Jerry's mother had died in the spring. They had been staying up with her nights--his father and some of his uncles and aunts, and Jerry himself--since her return from the hospital. They came and went in shifts that final week, everyone exhausted and mute with sadness. Nothing more could be done for her at the hospital and she was taken home to die. She'd loved her home so much, always had some project underway--wall-papering, painting, refinishing furniture. "Give me twenty workers like her and I'd open a small factory and make a million," his father used to joke. And then she got sick. And died. Watching her ebb away, seeing her beauty diminish, witnessing the awful alteration of her face and body was too much for Jerry to bear and he sometimes fled her bedroom, ashamed of his weakness, avoiding his father. Jerry wished he could be as strong as his father, always in control, masking his sorrow and grief. When his mother finally died, suddenly, at three-thirty in the afternoon, slipping off quietly without a murmur, Jerry was overcome with rage, a fiery anger that found him standing at her coffin in silent fury. He was angry at the way the disease had ravaged her. He was angry at his inability to do anything about saving her. His anger was so deep and sharp in him that it drove out sorrow. He wanted to bellow at the world, cry out against her death, topple buildings, split the earth open, tear down trees. And he did nothing except lie awake in the dark, thinking of her body there in the funeral home, not her anymore, but a thing suddenly, cold and pale. (Cormier, The Chocolate War, 48)

A tragic loss of a parent is a significant source of trauma and alienation in anyone's life, but it is especially difficult for an adolescent. For the adolescent not only has to deal with a sense of loss and grief, but also the feelings of abandonment, and the consequent anger directed toward the parent who has died.

Jerry's feelings of anger are directed outward toward his father. Jerry's response to grief and loss in anger--

his father's response is withdrawal:

. . . His father was a stranger during those terrible days, like a sleepwalker going through the motions, like a puppet being maneuvered by invisible strings. (Cormier, The Chocolate War, 48-49)

But Jerry has trouble accepting that his father might respond differently to the grief, the "emptiness" that Jerry feels after his mother's death. Jerry feels his father's life is meaningless, pathetic. He doesn't want to become "a mirror of his father," so he vows to "do something, be somebody" (Cormier, The Chocolate War, 53). This vow to himself is one of the reasons Jerry decides not to sell the chocolates.

Robert Cormier says that Trinity High School is "a metaphor for the world" ("Robert Cormier Interview," NYTBR, 36). If this is true, it is a metaphor for a world with a darkness visible. Trinity is no ordinary high school. It is, as Jerry's friend Goober tells him, a place of "evil":

"Look, Jerry. There's something rotten in that school. More than rotten." He groped for the word and found it but didn't want to use it. The word didn't fit the surroundings, the sun and the bright October afternoon. It was a midnight word, a howling wind word.

"The Vigils?" Jerry asked. . . .

"That's part of it," The Goober said. . . .

"Evil," he said. (Cormier, The Chocolate War, 116)

Goober's barely whispered "Evil" is a profound statement of the paradox of the evil that dwells in a supposedly Christian setting. Nilsen and Donelson comment on the

effectiveness of Cormier's setting:

. . . In The Chocolate War the story would not have been nearly so chilling without the religious setting which provided contrast. In some ways the evil in Archie is less hideous than that in Brother Leon, the corrupt teacher who enlists Archie's help in making his unauthorized investment pay off. The brother hides behind his clerical collar and his role of teacher and assistant headmaster, whereas Archie only identifies himself as a nonbeliever in the so-called "Christian ethic." (87)

The Vigils are the secret society run by Archie Costello, The Assigner. Archie is a trickster figure, a magus whose spells are designed to manipulate the other people who inhabit his universe. His task is to create the assignments The Vigils are famous for, and choose the victims. His power is kept in check by a black box, his "nemesis," which contains six marbles--five white and one black. If Archie draws the black marble, he has to complete his own assignment. Archie is a skilled manipulator. Even his lieutenant, Obie, is never sure whether Archie is telling the truth or weaving one of his elaborate webs. Yet, in Obie's description of Archie, there is admiration for Archie's skillful malevolence:

. . . You could see him physically withdraw although he was only a foot or two away from Obie on the bleacher bench. The shouts of the fellows from the football field below echoed feebly in the air. Archie's lower lip dropped. That meant he was concentrating. Thinking. Obie waited in anticipation, hating the thing in him that made him look at Archie in admiration. The way Archie could turn people on. Or off. The way he could dazzle you with his brilliance--those Vigil assignments that had made him practically a legend

at Trinity--and the way he could disgust you with his cruelties, those strange offbeat cruelties of his, that had nothing to do with pain or violence but were somehow ever worse. . . . (Cormier, The Chocolate War, 12-13)

Archie and The Vigils are the key players in the tragedy of Jerry Renault. Nilsen and Donelson comment on the symbolic importance of Cormier's names:

. . . the irony of the whole situation is exemplified in the gang's name the Vigils. He chose the name as a shortened form of vigilante, an accurate description of the way the gang worked. But in response to an interview question about whether or not the name was an ironic reference to vigil lights, the candles placed devotionally before a shrine or image, he agreed that the religious connotation, the image of the boys in the gang standing like vigil lights before Archie, who basked in the glow of their admiration, "was also very much a part of my choice." Another example of Cormier's subtlety is the fact that Archie's name has such meanings as "principal or chief" as in archvillain, "cleverly sly and alert," and "at the extreme, that is, someone or something most fully embodying the qualities of its kind." (87-88)

With six simple words at a Vigil meeting, Archie seals Jerry Renault's fate: "Put him down for the chocolates" (Cormier, The Chocolate War, 16). As Obie is leaving the vigil meeting, he sees the goal posts on the football field, where they had watched Jerry try out for the team. In an ironic foreshadowing of the book's tragic ending, Obie remarks that "the shadows of the goal posts definitely resembled a network of crosses, empty crucifixes" (Cormier, The Chocolate War, 17).

The symbolism of the goal posts notwithstanding, Jerry Renault is no Christ-figure in the novel. He is not a

martyr for any particular cause. At best, he is a paper hero. He chooses his fate almost by accident, and, in the end, he rejects his choice. David Rees comments on Jerry's weakness:

. . . There is much that is not admirable about Jerry Renault. His weakness is an overriding passion to conform to a conventional teenage image of machismo, which is seen mostly in his desire to become an admired member of the football team--looked up to, respected, a boy with a niche in society. He doesn't have any realization that such values are false; that conventional respect from others is no measure of real worth. . . . He is not the stuff of which heroes are made, and his final compromise is not the gesture of despair that some critics have suggested, but entirely characteristic . . . (156-57)

Rees calls Jerry's stand against selling the chocolates "an aberration, quite uncharacteristic of him" (157).

Jerry's choice to continue to refuse the chocolates is an accident, almost unconscious. He had not intended to do so, had in fact looked forward to ending the cruel assignment:

He hadn't planned to do any such thing of course. He'd been happy to have the terrible assignment all over with, the assignment completed and life normal once again. Every morning he dreaded the roll call, the necessity of facing Brother Leon, say No and watching Leon's reaction --how the teacher tried to pass off Jerry's rebellion as if it didn't matter, putting on a pathetic pretense of indifference, but a pretense that was so transparent, so phony. . . . And then there came a time when Jerry was tired of it all, tired of watching the teacher, disgusted with the contest of wills that wasn't really a contest because Jerry had no choice. Cruelty sickened Jerry--and the assignment, he realized after a few day, was cruel, even though Archie Costello had insisted that it was only a stunt that everyone would get

a kick out of later. And so he had finally waited, impatient for the assignment to come to an end, eager for that silent battle between Brother Leon and himself to be over with. He wanted life to be normal again--football, even his homework, without that daily burden weighing him down. He had felt isolated from the other fellows, separated by the secret he was forced to carry. . . .

Then why had he called No this morning? He'd wanted to end the ordeal--and then the terrible No had issued from his mouth. (Cormier, The Chocolate War, 91-92)

Jerry isn't sure why he refuses to sell the chocolates until he opens his locker and sees the damage done by his fellow classmates who have turned against him:

Jerry opened his locker.

The mess was still there. He hadn't torn down the poster or removed the sneakers, letting them remain there as symbols. Symbols of what? He wasn't certain. Looking wistfully at the poster, he pondered the damaged words: Do I dare disturb the universe? . . .

Do I dare disturb the universe?

Yes, I do, I do. I think.

Jerry suddenly understood the poster--the solitary man on the beach standing upright and alone and unafraid, poised at the moment of making himself heard and known in the world, the universe. (Cormier, The Chocolate War, 142-43)

Jerry Renault does "dare to disturb the universe." He wants to do something in life, to announce his presence, not go through life as a sleepwalker.

Brother Leon is the other major player in the tragedy that befalls Jerry Renault. He is the sadistic Assistant Headmaster at Trinity, a man who is thoroughly evil. He precipitates Jerry's fall by giving Archie Costello permission to do anything it takes to end Jerry's influence with his

classmates. Archie Costello describes Brother Leon:

. . . And Leon was a special breed. On the surface, he was one of those pale, ingratiating kind of men who tiptoed through life on small, quick feet. He looked like a henpecked husband, a pushover, a sucker. He was the Assistant Headmaster of the school but actually served as a flunky for the Head. Like an errand boy. But all this was deceptive. In the classroom, Leon was another person altogether. Smirking, sarcastic. His thin, high voice venomous. He could hold your attention like a cobra. Instead of fangs, he used his teacher's pointer, flicking out her, there, everywhere. He watched the class like a hawk, suspicious, searching out cheaters or daydreamers, probing for weaknesses in the students and then exploiting those weaknesses. (Cormier, The Chocolate War, 23-24)

Brother Leon allows Jerry Renault to be beaten nearly to death, in fact, watches the revenge with sadistic pleasure. He betrays his role as administrator, teacher, and responsible adult.

Jerry becomes more and more isolated from his fellow classmates. He feels like an outsider, alienated and invisible:

Suddenly, he was invisible, without body, without structure, a ghost passing transparently through the hours. He'd made the discovery on the bus going to school. Eyes avoiding his. Looking away. Kids giving him wide berth. Ignoring him, as if he wasn't there. And he realized that he really wasn't there, as far as they were concerned. It was as if he were the carrier of a terrible disease and nobody wanted to become contaminated. And so they rendered him invisible, eliminating him from their presence. . . . (Cormier, The Chocolate War, 163)

When Archie tells Jerry that he will have a chance for revenge against Emile Janza, the "animal" who jumped Jerry

and beat him up, Jerry can't refuse, even though he suspects that it is probably one of Archie's tricks. Archie deceives both Jerry and Emile Janza. He rigs the rules of the fight. Instead of a conventional fight, there will be a raffle and the audience will buy punches for a fighter of their choice. The boys in the ring will follow the instructions of the raffle slip; they will have no will of their own. But the fight gets out of hand when a rule is broken, and Janza goes wild, brutalizing Jerry with random punches. Jerry realizes he is lost, after he manages to land a stray punch in defense, and the crowd of his classmates boos:

. . . They were booing. Booing him. Shaking his head, trying to reassemble himself, squinting, he saw Archie in the crowd, a grinning, exultant Archie. A new sickness invaded Jerry, the sickness of knowing what he had become, another animal, another beast, another violent person in a violent world, inflicting damage, not disturbing the universe but damaging it. He had allowed Archie to do this to him.

And that crowd out there he had wanted to impress? To prove himself before? Hell, they wanted him to lose, they wanted him killed, for Christ's sake. (Cormier, The Chocolate War, 183-84)

Jerry slumps to the floor in defeat--finally broken, both physically and emotionally:

. . . Goober watched helplessly as Jerry finally sank to the stage, bloody, opened mouth, sucking for air, eyes unfocused, flesh swollen. His body was poised for a moment like some wounded animal and then he collapsed like a hunk of meat cut loose from a butcher's hook. (Cormier, The Chocolate War, 184)

Jerry begins to recover physically, but his spirit

remains broken and beaten. He realizes that is was a mistake to raise his voice in defiance--to disturb the universe. It would have been better to sell the chocolates:

. . . He had to tell Goober to play ball, to play football, to run, to make the team, to sell the chocolates, to sell whatever they wanted you to sell, to do whatever they wanted you to do. He tried to voice the words but there was something wrong with his mouth, his teeth, his face. But he went ahead anyway, telling Goober what he needed to know. They tell you to do your thing but they don't mean it. They don't want you to do your thing, not unless it happens to be their thing, too. It's a laugh, Goober, a fake. Don't disturb the universe, Goober, no matter what the posters say. (Cormier, The Chocolate War, 187)

Jerry Renault is defeated at the end of the novel. He is not a conventional hero because he has not won over evil. He is more like a tragic hero who, though beaten, discovers some truth in the process. W. Geiger Ellis points out that "evil is not conquered in Cormier's novels . . . his heroes are more tragic . . . their flaw is an unwillingness to 'play by the established rules'" ("Cormier and the Pessimistic View," 52). Anne Scott MacLeod compares Jerry Renault to a defeated "American Adam":

The lone dissent has not only failed, it is repudiated. The American Adam is brought low; Huck Finn turns Jim over to the slave-catchers, Gary Cooper lies in his own blood in the street at high noon--no wonder the reviewers gasped. In one brief, bitter paragraph, Cormier has abandoned an enduring American myth to confront his teenaged readers with life as it more often is--with the dangers of dissent, the ferocity of systems as they protect themselves, the power of the pressure to conform" (76).

Fred Inglis says that Jerry Renault is a modern hero, "en-

tirely a latter-day victim in that his victimization stands for nothing redemptive . . . " (The Promise of Happiness, 277). Finally, Perry Nodelman says that "The Chocolate War reads like countless other unremittingly naturalistic, unremittingly negative novels, designed to please adolescent readers by pretending that the corrupt world they describe is actually the real one. . . ." ("Robert Cormier Does a Number," 101).

Whether he is a "defeated American Adam" or a victim in an adolescent version of a corrupt adult world, Jerry Renault is defeated at the end of The Chocolate War. His tragedy is that the path he chooses--that one brief moment when he dares disturb the universe--isolates him so completely from his society that he is unable to find his way back in, unable to redeem herself. He is punished and left to his own exile.

CHAPTER V

THE HERO AS MORALIST

The central question for an examination of didacticism in the adolescent novel is, Should art be moral, that is, should art instruct? Specifically, should the adolescent novelist present characters which live in a universe with clearly-defined morality, and should these characters exhibit some sort of awareness of this morality?

The history of adolescent literature offers some insights in seeking an answer to the question of appropriateness with regard to didacticism in children's literature. Yeazell and Cole cite the historical perspective as one which clearly favors art as instruction:

The use of children's books for moral education is far from being a current fad. Prior to the mid-19th century almost all educational books had either a religious or moral content and frequently both. The McGuffey reading series contained blatant moral content--almost every story or poem in the series contained specific moral lessons. As one educator comments, "It has always been an assumption of authors, critics, teachers and other adults interested in the development of children that books have the power to shape and influence the attitudes, values, and behavior of children" (Moir, 1977)

Meigs (1969), in fact, explains the necessity of having moral content in high quality children's literature: ". . . the fundamental questions of human life; good and bad, right and wrong; the recognition of true as opposed to ephemeral values. These are questions that are universally important. They are themes found in all great literature. To find them treated in this microscopic way does not lessen their importance; perhaps it even clarifies them and brings them into perspective." (292)

John Gardner says that there is no other purpose for art than instruction. Further, he suggests that an denial of the didactic purpose of art comes from a defective social vision:

Art instructs. Why, one may wonder, would anyone wish to deny a thing so obvious? We can safely assume in advance that a denial so widespread and earnest cannot come from simple meanness or stupidity. It is far more likely to rise out of a general change in our culture and self-awareness, perhaps a defect in our vision. In societies as in individuals, after all, virtues and faults are very often flip sides of the same thing. (On Moral Fiction, 40-41)

David Swanger objects to Gardner's premise that art is didactic:

. . . I thus return to my contention that the persistent difficulty in understanding the relationship between morality and art is rooted in a confusion between perceptual and moral issues. The work of art, if it is any good, always throws down the gauntlet before our accustomed ways of perceiving the world; but it is incapable, if it is art rather than exposition or propaganda, of being or not being moral. (89)

As evidence for his position, Swanger offers five reasons that art should not be considered in terms of morality, immorality, or amorality:

1. In its reinvention of relations, the artwork embodies the principle of ambivalence;
2. The artwork does not possess a single meaning or message, nor does it make a statement;
3. The artwork cannot, therefore, be said to provide moral directives or instruction;
4. The artist cannot, therefore, be said to provide moral directives or instruction in his or her art;
5. For these reasons, works of art should not be judged morally, nor should their makers be

judged morally on the basis of the artwork. (89)

James Steel Smith argues that didacticism is just one possible function of children's literature. The true question of value should consider how well art accomplishes what it is trying to do:

. . . The relativistic conception of value in children's literature . . . is the view that art may do many things--cause laughter (of diverse sorts) and evoke feelings of sorrow, instruct or not instruct, lead to or away from reality, calm or excite, be logical or illogical, be wittily comic or slapstick comic, be poetry or prose, be stark and simple or elaborate and intricate, be largely verbal narrative or heavily dependent on visual telling. None of these things makes a children's book superior or inferior. The question of value enters when we ask how well, in comparison to other books of its kind . . . a particular book does what it is trying to do. Is the fantasy effective fantasy? the realism convincingly real? the beauty movingly beautiful? the grotesque intriguingly grotesque? the nonsense logically nonsensical? . . . (4)

Peter Scharf asserts that literature plays an important role in adolescent development, particularly in the development of the adolescent's moral conscience. Scharf says that there are three distinct types of literature which each have significance for different stages in the adolescent's moral development: (1) the literature of social expectations, (2) the literature of social revolt, and (3) the literature of affirmation:

The literature of social expectations stimulates a sense of moral conventionality by praising "appropriate" social attitudes. Often protagonists will represent heroic values which are reflected and emulated by young readers. Villains are often portrayed as "unfeeling" or

"cruel" in often one-dimensional, somewhat stereotyped ways. Good literature of this type presents a coherent moral universe in which good and evil are polarized and defined. This provides a platform of social conventions upon which the early adolescent can differentiate his group's social ideology from other philosophies. While this type of literature may seem "corny" or "sentimental" to adults, it is a necessary stage toward the learning of more complex personal moral philosophies.

. . . Such works (social revolt) clearly stimulate a process of moral doubt which has roots in both the polarization of the youth and adult cultures and the pluralism of American values. While such doubt is threatening to some adults, it should be seen as a necessary (but not final) step toward attaining truly principled values. Unless the adolescent rejects what is arbitrary in conventional social norms, he cannot seek to move toward values which are truly internal and universal.

. . . In these works of affirmation there is some kind of ultimate human meaning or value. The works move toward some moral, metaphysical, or aesthetic truth which is seen as nonrelativistic and ultimate. They offer that there are some values which are worth affirming, something positive to live for. (20-22)

Often it is the realism of the adolescent novel that provides adolescents with an opportunity for moral growth through the experience of reading. As Catherine Ross suggests, adolescents find it easier to identify with protagonists who are themselves adolescents (182-83). G. Robert Carlsen asserts that the adolescent novel has the potential to mirror the adolescents' own concerns. By late adolescence, the search for personal values is important and adolescent readers are attracted to characters who are involved in this quest:

It is time for adolescents to crystallize

their value systems. This means searching, questioning, probing, even destroying. They have a driving need to find personal direction for their lives, so it comes as no surprise that books about individuals struggling to find values are immensely popular. (Carlsen, Books and the Teenage Reader, 40)

Ann Juhasz comments further on this adolescent quest and its relation to values-formation within society:

While searching through the historical perspective for the core common to all mankind, the adolescent is searching simultaneously for a unique, individual identity. The problem and the puzzle is to find some way to be within this common core, but at the same time to be different and unique--not just a nonentity, submerged and unidentifiable in the group. The historical perspective evolves through time from the interaction of changing individuals in changing societies. And from these interactions come the values of a society which become embedded in the historical perspective. And because of their developmental characteristics, adolescents are influential change agents in this process. (444)

Lawrence Kohlberg believes that "moral education" is necessary for fully realized development. He feels that without some sort of moral base, the youth of the eighties, in particular, will remain insulated and self-absorbed, unaware of the moral concerns of their society:

There is a strong reason for concern in the 1980s about youth's motivation and ability to actively participate in the larger democratic community. The diagnosis given in 1978 by Lasch is that we live in "The Culture of Narcissism," more popularly known as the "Me Generation." Not necessarily unjust or immoral, the youth student and citizen is privatistic or apathetic about the civic community, and about the public good, focusing instead on his or her own concerns and ideals of happiness. . . . (38)

Kohlberg's caution is extremely relevant because the

moral values learned by adolescents are generated from their society. Ann Juhasz offers these remarks on the formation of adolescent value models within the social context:

Adolescent identity, including the value components, emerges in the context of the current social milieu. The social ethos provides the content with which youth interact and against which they react. In addition, aspects of the historical perspective which they encounter are determined by adults in the current social setting. Adolescents, interacting with and reacting to the social milieu, cannot escape the impact of the historical era in which they live. This determines the number of socially meaningful models from which they can select different aspects with which to identify. . . . (444-445)

Once adolescents have begun to form values, they must engage them, that is, they must learn how to use them in their world. Milton Rokeach offers useful operational definitions for value and value system:

A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. A value system is an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance. (5)

If values are to be of use to adolescents, they must serve as touchstones or standards to guide their conduct. Rokeach offers seven ways values can be converted to standards for guiding conduct. He says that values:

1. lead us to take particular positions on social issues;
2. predispose us to favor one particular political or religious ideology over another;
3. guide presentations of the self to others;

4. help us to evaluate and judge, to heap praise and fix blame on ourselves and others;

5. are central to the study of comparison processes; we employ them as standards to ascertain whether we are as moral and as competent as others;

6. are, moreover, standards employed to persuade and influence others, to tell us which beliefs, attitudes, values, and actions of others are worth challenging, protesting, and arguing about, or worth trying to influence or to change;

7. are standards that tell us how to rationalize in the psychoanalytic sense, beliefs, attitudes, and actions that would otherwise be personally and socially unacceptable so that we will end up with personal feelings of morality and competence, both indispensable ingredients for the maintenance and enhancement of self-esteem.
(13)

James Rest asserts that moral behavior is an act, a process, that can be learned. He lists four components for the production of a moral behavior:

1. To interpret the situation in terms of how one's actions affect the welfare of others.

2. To formulate what a moral course of action would be; to identify the moral ideal in a specific situation.

3. To select among competing value outcomes of ideals, the one to act upon; deciding whether or not to try to fulfill one's moral ideal.

4. To execute and implement what one intends to do.

(13)

Both Rokeach and Rest illustrate the importance of valuation to the process of choosing a moral behavior. The adolescent protagonists must be able to evaluate the consequences of their actions, and effect an outcome. Essentially, they must confront a moral problem, struggle with it, and arrive at the course of action, based on their life experiences, that best resolves the problem, in a manner

which produces a moral outcome. There needs to be a definite resolution, either positively or negatively, in order for the young adult reader to identify the proper course of action that was taken by the protagonist, or that should have been taken by the protagonist. The hero does not have to make the moral choice, but the reader must be able to recognize that the hero fails to do so.

In order for adolescent novels to teach their readers moral behavior, they must have clearly-defined characteristics. Audrey Edwards offers six criteria:

1. the presence of a genuine moral dilemma,
2. familiarity of the moral problem,
3. appropriate level of the dilemma,
4. for stories, appropriate level of development of the characters,
5. a match between moral level and literary level,
6. high literary quality. (47)

Edwards asserts that the adolescent novel which most closely meets these criteria will most effectively communicate its moral premise to an adolescent reader.

Moral heroes do not necessarily accept the existing morality they experience in their respective environments. Once they have completed their own process of moving from childhood to adulthood, adolescent heroes may re-examine the existing morality. Louise Kaplan says that quite often the adolescent hero will feel the need to restructure, rather than reaffirm, the existing social order:

. . . In modern societies the drama does not end with everything returning to the beginning.

We can no longer expect that young people will undergo their personal ordeals and then return to us with an unqualified acceptance of things as they are. When things are rotten in Denmark, the young will be quick to sniff out the decay and corruption. Modern youth resist the idea that they, or the social order, are hopelessly determined by the past. They counter our conservative, reductionist tendencies with their inspirations--exploration, innovation, aspiration. In finding out who they are and who they are not, adolescents mobilize the energies of the archaic past and use them to extend the cultural dimensions of the future. (341)

Art can be didactic only if it stimulates in the reader an awareness of the proper moral order. Gardner asserts that moral art elevates the reader and offers support for the reader's own struggle:

I have said that wherever possible moral art holds up models of decent behavior; for example, characters in fiction, drama, and film whose basic goodness and struggle against confusion, error, and evil--in themselves and in others--give firm intellectual and emotional support to our own struggle. . . . (On Moral Fiction, 106)

Allen Wheelis says that there are two criteria for morality. A moralist must have insight; and a moralist must act:

Morality includes insight and action--insight into the nature and likely consequences of behavior in order to recognize good and evil, and action to secure the good and diminish evil. With either alone morality does not exist, for neither alone entails responsibility. A disembodied spirit unable in any way whatever to exert influence, though it might know good and evil, would not be a moral agent. (27-28)

The novels selected for analysis in the second part of this chapter illustrate some aspect of literature's

didactic function and the hero as moralist. A Day No Pigs Would Die is about a young shaker boy's passage into adulthood on a Vermont farm, and the inculcation of his father's simple moral values. The Pigman is the story of two young adolescents whose thoughtless actions destroy the life of another human being, and their failure to come to terms with the moral implications of their actions. Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry is about the violent moral lessons a young girl is forced to learn because she is black and growing up in the South. Summer of My German Soldier is the story of a young Jewish girl's confrontation with humankind's capacity for inhumanity and immorality during World War II, and the emergence of her own moral spirit. Finally, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich is a moral lesson about the tragic consequences of drug abuse and social indifference.

A Day No Pigs Would Die

Robert Newton Peck's A Day No Pigs Would Die is a "fictionalized autobiography." It is the story of thirteen-year-old Rob Peck's passage into adulthood on a Vermont farm, and the simple moral values he learns from his Shaker father, Haven Peck.

M. Kip Hartvigsen and Christen Brog Hartvigsen commend A Day No Pigs Would Die as a classic, deserving of praise:

. . . For a number of reasons, the novel deserves its acclaim and popularity: the sincere, evocative reminiscences; the Twain-like humor arising from a twelve-year-old narrator's naivete; the complex characterizations; the gritty depiction of farm life; the stripped-down, yet rich style. These achievements, which establish Peck as a gifted storyteller, combine with a theme of substance--a boy's carefully guided passage into manhood and his acceptance of adult responsibility. (41)

Sheila Schwartz says the novel is about a father and son, and the lessons the father passes on to his son, one of which is that "love and cooperation are essential for survival of the family" (167). Schwartz concurs with the Hartvigsens that Haven Peck helps his son cross the difficult threshold between childhood and adulthood:

. . . Haven Peck, the father, is stern and severe, forced to be that way by pride and poverty, but he is a good and honorable man . . . he is a good parent, for he helps his son come of age, to become autonomous, to be able eventually to live a constructive and productive life. . . . (167)

Nilsen and Donelson call Haven Peck a "quiet hero" . . . "poor in money, but rich in spirit" (221). He is exactly the kind of hero that is needed in a life filled with the violence of necessity.

At the center of Robert Peck's novel is a message about learning, that is, learning about the important things in life, such as responsibility, nature, necessity, and family. Even the little town near the Peck farm is called "Learning."

The novel opens with Rob Peck, twelve-years-old at the beginning of the novel, helping a neighbor's cow give birth and pulling a goiter from her neck. Rob's arm is badly mauled by the frightened animal. Even at this early point in the story, the reader encounters a boy who is responsible enough to take it upon himself to help a neighbor in an effort that is both unpleasant and dangerous. The Hartvigsens view the opening of the novel as significant because it begins a cycle of birth and death:

. . . With birth at the center of the first chapter, Peck's novel is underway. At novel's end, the story will complete the cycle begun here, passing from this incident of birth to death, and from death to rebirth. In the interim, Rob's critical thirteenth year is one of learning, and his teacher is his father. (41)

Rob's father is proud of him for what he did for Mr. Tanner's cow, but he also wants his son to know that he disapproves of his leaving school early. He makes the boy a whistle for a gift, saying, "a boy with a whistle as fine as this won't have no earthy reason to skip school" (Peck, A Day No Pigs Would Die, 19). The emphasis on education is one of Haven Peck's lessons to his son. Haven Peck feels that he could have had more out of life if he had been educated. Two scenes in the novel illustrate this point. The first incident occurs when Haven and Rob are discussing politics and Rob discovers that his father is not allowed to vote:

"No, I'm not a Republican. And I'm not no

Democrat. I'm not nothing."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm not allowed to vote."

"Me either. You have to be twenty-one to vote. I'm only twelve."

"Reckon I'm soon looking at sixty."

"Then why can't you vote? Is it because you're a Shaker?"

"No. It's account of I can't read or write. When a man cannot do those things, people think his head is weak. Even when he's proved his back is strong."

"Who decides?"

"Men who look at me and do not take me for what I be. Men who only see me make my mark, my X, when I can't sign my name. They can't see how I true a beam to build our barn, or see that the rows of corn in my field are straight as fences. They just see me walk the street in Learning in clothes made me by my own woman. They do not care that my coat is sturdy and keeps me warm. They'll not care that I owe no debt, and that I am beholding to no man."

(Peck, A Day No Pigs Would Die, 37-38)

The second incident occurs after Haven Peck's death at the end of the novel. As Rob is sorting through his father's things, he finds a scrap of paper that illustrates how important education was to the simple Shaker man:

Under the tools, I saw an old cigar box that was gray with dust. Inside was a wore-down pencil stub and a scrap of old paper. Unfolding the paper, I saw where Papa had been trying to write his name. One of the "Haven Pecks" was near to perfect, and he almost had the hang of it. The paper was dry and brown, as if he had practiced for a long time. Carefully folding the paper back into just the way he had folded it, I rested it in its box and closed the lid. (Peck, A Day No Pigs Would Die, 134)

Haven Peck also believes strongly in the simple Shaker way of life, the farmer's way of life. Haven Peck tells his son that they are "plain people . . . who tend the land,"

and that is enough to make them rich:

. . . I take what I am. We are Plain People, your mother and aunt, and your sisters, you and me. We live by the Book of Shaker. We are not worldly people, and we suffer the less for not paining with worldly wants and wishes. I am not heart-sick, because I am rich and they are poor."

"We're not rich, Papa. We're . . ."

"Yes we are, boy. We have one another to fend to, and this land to tend. And one day we'll own it outright. We have Solomon here to wind up a capstan and help us haul our burdens. And look here, he's almost done pulling that cratch where we want it pulled to. We have Daisy's hot milk. We got rain to wash up with, to get the grime off us. We can look at sundown and see it all, so that it wets the eye and hastens the heart. We hear all the music that's in the wind, so much music that it itches my foot to start tapping. Just like a fiddle."

"Maybe so, Papa. But it seems to me what we have most is dirt and work."

"True enough. But it be our dirt, Rob. This land will be all ours, in just a few more year. As to the work, what matters is that we have the back to do it. . . ." (Peck, A Day No Pigs Would Die, 38-39)

Even Ben Tanner, the Peck's neighbor, a "foot-washing Baptist," believes strongly in the agrarian way of life. When Rob says that "he can be more than a farmer some day," Ben is shocked:

"More than a farmer?!" Ben Tanner looked a bit red. "What better can a man be? There's no higher calling than animal husbandry, and making things live and grow. We farmers are stewards. Our lot is to tend all of God's good living things, and I say there's nothing finer." (Peck, A Day No Pigs Would Die, 122)

But learning in A Day No Pigs Would Die is not limited to lessons learned by children. Adults can learn too--even Haven Peck. There is a scene in the novel where Haven and

Rob are helping a neighbor "weasel a dog." Both Rob and his father learn that this is a cruel way to treat an animal. When the dog is put in a barrel with the weasel, she manages to learn how to kill the weasel, but the lesson has a tragic price:

. . . The weasel was dead. Torn apart into small pieces of fur, bones, and bloody meat. There was blood all over the inside of that barrel, from top to bottom. The dog was alive, but not much more. One of her ears was about tore off and she was wet with blood. She just danced her little feet, splattering the pool of blood in the bottom of the barrel. And making that sound in her throat that almost begged someone to end her misery. (Peck, A Day No Pigs Would Die, 103-04)

Both man and boy learn a lesson from the weaseling. There are some things that are simply worse than losing a little bit of property, in this case a few chickens possibly. They respond to the dog's plight with the only kind of merciful act they can perform. Rob speaks first:

"Kill her," I said.

"What?" said Ira, his hand bleeding into the cuff of his shirt.

"She's dying," I said. "And if you got any mercy at all in you, Ira Long, you'll do her in. Right now. She killed the weasel. Isn't that what you wanted to have her do, with all its sport? She's crazy with hurt. And if you don't kill her, I will."

"Mind your tongue, boy. You're talking to your elders," said Ira.

"The boy's right," Papa said. "I'll get a gun."

Until Papa come back with the rifle, little Hussy just lay on the ground and whimpered. Papa put a bullet in her, and her whole body jerked to a quivering stillness. Nobody said a word. The three of us just stood there, looking down into the dust at what once was a friendly little pet.

"I swear," Papa said. "I swear by the Book of Shaker and all that's holy, I will never again weasel a dog. Even if I lose every chicken I own. (Peck, A Day No Pigs Would Die, 104)

Rob's most important lessons are those he learns about assuming the role of an adult in his world. At thirteen, Rob must learn to be a man. With winter coming on, Rob tells his father he needs a new coat, a "store coat":

"I think I may need a new winter coat."

"Better speak to your mother to start stitching."

"I want a store coat. I need one."

"So do I. But one thing to learn, Rob, is this. Need is a weak word. Has nothing to do with what people get. Ain't what you need that matters. It's what you do. And your mother'll do you a coat." (Peck, A Day No Pigs Would Die, 113)

Rob has to become a man sooner than he thinks. His father tells the boy that he is dying. Rob can't wait for "someday" to be a man--he has to be a man now:

"It can't be someday, Rob. It's got to be now. This winter. Your sisters are gone, all four are wedded and bedded. Your two brothers are dead. Born dead and grounded in our orchard. So it's got to be you, Rob."

Why are you saying this, Papa?"

"Because, son. Because this is my last winter. I got an affection, I know I do."

. . . "It's got to be you, Rob. Your mother and Carrie can't do it alone. Come spring, you aren't the boy of the place. You're the man. A man of thirteen. But no less a man. And whatever has to be done on this land, it's got to be did by you, Rob. Because there'll be nobody else, boy. Just you." (Peck, A Day No Pigs Would Die, 114, 115)

Rob's most difficult trial comes when he has to kill his pet pig, Pinky. He was given Pinky as a reward for

saving Mr. Tanner's cow, and the pig won a blue ribbon for "best-behaved pig." But Pinky is barren, and a pig eats too much to keep as a pet on a poor working farm. Haven Peck knows that he has to kill the pig. But Rob has trouble helping his father:

"Papa," I said, "I don't think I can."

"That ain't the issue, Rob. We have to."

Standing up, I moved away from Pinky as Papa went to her head. She just stood there in the fresh snow, looking at my feet. I saw Papa get a grip on the crowbar, and raise it high over his head. It was then that I closed my eyes, and my mouth opened like I wanted to scream for her. I waited. I waited to hear the noise that I finally heard.

It was a strong crushing noise that you only hear when an iron stunner bashes in a pig's skull. I hated Papa that moment. I hated him for killing her, and hated him for every pig he ever killed in his lifetime . . . for hundreds and hundreds of butchered hogs. (Peck, A Day No Pigs Would Die, 127)

But Rob's "hatred" can't last against the true force of the love he has inside for his father. When he cries out, "Oh, Papa. My heart's broke," his father responds: "So is mine . . . but I'm thankful you're a man. . . . That's what being a man is all about, boy. It's just doing what's got to be done" (Peck, A Day No Pigs Would Die, 129). When the big man's rough, blood-covered hands try to wipe away his son's tears, Rob realizes how much his father loves him, and how much he really loves his father:

. . . It was the hand that butchered Pinky. He did it. Because he had to. Hated to and had to. And he knew that he'd never have to say to me that he was sorry. His hand against my face, trying to wipe away my tears, said it all. His cruel pig-

sticking fist with its thick fingers so lightly on my cheek.

I couldn't help it. I took his hand to my mouth and held it against my lips and kissed it. Pig blood and all. I kissed his hand again and again, with all its stink and fatty slime of dead pork. So he'd understand that I'd forgive him even if he killed me.

I was still holding his hand as he straightened up tall against the gray winter sky. He looked down at me and then he looked away. With his free arm he raked the sleeve of his work shirt across his eyes. It was the first time I ever seen him do it.

The only time. (Peck, A Day No Pigs Would Die, 129-30)

This particular scene in the novel has become controversial. In an article entitled, "The Cult of Kill in Adolescent Fiction," Jean Kelty condemns the novel for what she perceives as unnecessary violence in the depiction of male initiation:

. . . The pattern is familiar: The boy becomes a man the day he helps his father kill Pinky, the boy's pet pig, because she is barren. As the boy kisses his father's bloody hands, his father tells him: "That's what being a man is all about, boy. It's just doing what's got to be done." From the opening of the book . . . to its conclusion, the book is filled with a cute folksy humor which makes wry asides at the pitiful picture of a young pig being bred for the first time and the reader is expected to see "humor" in the boy helping a calf to be born . . . We presume the reader is also supposed to be amused (the characters are) at the weaseling of the dog, until the weasel is dead and the poor dog so brutally injured that it is necessary to shoot him. All the time the men enjoy the activity with the delight of a bear-baiting contest. One wonders what blindness prompted the New York Times to observe that this is a "superbly rich and moving novel about boyhood, becoming a man, and love. . . .," and what further insensitivity prompts teachers to recommend this book to their students as a lesson in growing up. (58)

The Hartvigsens argue that Kelty's criticism is a misinterpretation of Peck's novel:

. . . To dismiss the novel because of its violence, however, is to interpret the novel's scope too narrowly and to misread the characters' reactions to violence. Violence in A Day No Pigs Would Die is not for its own sake; it is never gratuitous. On the contrary, the novel's climax is infused with meaning and emotion, not the least bit hackneyed or sentimental. Peck carefully prepares his readers for this scene, making it a dramatic representation of all that is not fair about life, those hateful parts of experience that cannot be altered but must be faced. (44)

Rob Peck's education is, of necessity, completed when his father dies. Rob has learned from his father how to be a man--how to do what has to be done. When his mother says that she couldn't have done everything without him, he responds, "Yes, you could, Mama. When you're the only one to do something, it always gets done" (Peck, A Day No Pigs Would Die, 133). Mr. Tanner's words to Rob at the end of the novel reveal Rob's assimilation of Haven Peck's persona:

"Rob," said Ben Tanner, as everyone took leave, "if Bess or me can lend a hand or help in any way, just ask."

"Thank you, Ben," I said. "You're a goodly neighbor."

"The way you said that," Ben said, "you sort of sounded like your father."

"I aim to, Ben."

(Peck, A Day No Pigs Would Die, 137)

Rob's final moments with his father are quiet and gentle. The very simplicity of Rob's last words to his father reveals the value of his father's instruction, and

the willingness of the boy, now become a man, to learn from his teacher:

I don't know why I walked out toward the orchard. All the work there was done. But I guess I had to give a goodnight to Papa, and be alone with him. The bugs were out, and their singing was all around me. Almost like a choir. I got to the fresh grave, all neatly mounded and pounded. Somewhere down under all that Vermont clay was my father, Haven Peck. Buried deep in the land he sweated so hard on and longed to own so much. And now it owned him.

"Goodnight, Papa," I said. "We had thirteen good years."

(Peck, A Day No Pigs Would Die, 138-39)

The Pigman

Paul Zindel's The Pigman is the story of two adolescents whose thoughtless actions cause the death of another human being, and their subsequent failure to come to terms with their moral responsibility for the events. As a result of a practical joke--a phony telephone solicitation--John Conlan and Lorraine Jensen meet Angelo Pignati, a lonely, grieving widower whose memories of his wife are centered on the pig collection he and his wife collected together as a hobby. John and Lorraine befriend him. His only other friend, his best friend, is Bobo, a baboon at the zoo where they visit. When Mr. Pignati is hospitalized for a mild heart attack, John and Lorraine have a party at his house. One of their friends destroys the pig collection. Mr. Pignati's spirit is broken, but he forgives John and Lorraine. On a visit to the zoo, they discover that Bobo has died.

This final grief proves too much for the old man who has lost so much and he collapses outside Bobo's cage from a heart attack that proves fatal this time.

The Pigman is more than a novel about two adolescents who misbehave. It is almost a moral fable with John and Lorraine learning--or perhaps only being offered the opportunity to learn--about moral responsibility. It is arguably an inverted lesson for the reader. Even if John and Lorraine are uncertain of their own moral culpability in the death of Mr. Pignati, the reader will be left with little doubt of their guilt.

Not all critics agree that The Pigman is a morality tale. Yeazell and Cole outline four criteria for a moral novel: (1) a moral dilemma is required, (2) there must be identified alternatives to an action, (3) moral reasoning must be demonstrated, and (4) there must be a moral decision. Further, they assert that The Pigman does not meet these criteria. (Yeazell and Cole, 294-97).

According to Yeazell and Cole, "no recognition of a moral dilemma by the protagonists occurs. While John and Lorraine show remorse when Mr. Pignati dies, they have not recognized the moral dimensions of their behavior" (294). The critics also believe that the novel contains no identified alternatives for the action of the protagonists:

. . . At almost any time in their various escapades, John and Lorraine could have selected alternative ways of behaving. They could have

chosen to be genuinely altruistic toward Mr. Pignati and thus filled an urgent need in his life. Instead, the novel presents us with two selfish teenagers who fail to understand ways of behaving other than to exploit or to rebel. At no point do they wrestle with conflicting alternatives. (295)

Finally, Yeazell and Cole do not feel that Lorraine and John exhibit moral reasoning:

The characters in The Pigman do not consider or understand the consequences of their actions. They become involved with a lonely old man, skip school to spend time with him, and ultimately contribute to his death. (296)

Whether or not John and Lorraine feel responsible for the death of Mr. Pignati is certainly arguable. Early in the novel, in his narrative voice, John says that Mr. Pignati would have died anyway, and suggests that it was mostly Lorraine's fault because she picked his name out of the phone book:

Now Lorraine can blame all the other things on me, but she was the one who picked out the Pigman's phone number. If you asked me, I think he would have died anyway. Maybe we speeded things up a little, but you really can't say we murdered him.

Not murdered him. (Zindel, The Pigman, 25)

When Lorraine and John become Mr. Pignati's friends, they both become morally responsible for his actions. They know that he is grieving over his wife's death; they know that he treasures the pig collection; and they know how desperately lonely he is. They take advantage of Mr. Pignati: they use his home; they eat his food; they use his credit card; and, finally, they abuse his trust when they

allow other people to destroy his house.

Hayley and Donelson suggest that Mr. Pignati becomes a "substitute parent," and that John and Lorraine "become the children he has never known" ("Pigs and Hamburgers, Cadavers and Gamma Rays: Paul Zindel's Adolescents," 943). James Henke disagrees. He thinks that the parent-child roles are reversed in the novel, that is, that John and Lorraine the parents to Mr. Pignati's child. At one point in the novel, Lorraine says of the Pigman: "The longer he knew us, the more of a kid he became. It was cute in a way" (Zindel, The Pigman, 108). Henke believes that this reversal creates the tragedy in the novel:

But it is not really cute; it is tragic. Mr. Pignati's regression indirectly costs him his life. While he is in the hospital, John and Lorraine take over his house and, sans sex, act out the role of man and wife. They masquerade in adult clothes, enjoy a candlelight dinner, and even throw a cocktail party. The fantasy is shattered, however; for at the party John gets drunk, the guests become unruly, and Mr. Pignati's cherished collection of pig figurines is smashed--just as Mr. Pignati returns home unexpectedly from the hospital. (135)

Theodore Hipple believes that the story of The Pigman is a "tragic one" . . . that leaves its protagonists "to wonder to what degree, if any, they had played a part" in the tragedy of Mr. Pignati ("Paul Zindel," 406). Loretta Clarke agrees that The Pigman is a tragedy. She compares the novel to a tragic epic:

The two young authors call their writing a "memorial epic," in the opening oath, "The truth

and nothing but the truth, until this memorial epic is finished, So Help Us God!" the scant invocation perhaps attests to the epic intention. The story opens in media res and it isn't until chapter four that we meet Mr. Pignati, the Pigman. Because Zindel puts the term epic into the mouths of the adolescents, it cannot be taken as a serious literary attempt. It may be more hyperbolic than actual; although the quality of tragedy attendant upon an epic is present, it does not dominate. This story fits Aristotle's first of four kinds of tragedy: "The Complex, depending entirely on Reversal of the Situation and Recognition." Within the story, the Pigman, Lorraine, and John experience grief as a result of their experience of childhood carefreeness; and recognition comes to Pignati in awareness that his relationship with the young people was unstable and impermanent and that he is totally alone when Bobo is dead. It comes to Lorraine and John in Mr. Pignati's death when John writes, "There was no one else to blame anymore." (1165)

Just before the party that results in the terrible destruction of Mr. Pignati's pigs, Lorraine has a prophetic nightmare vision. With his dream imagery, Zindel seems to be offering a bit of foreshadowing about the tragic death of Mr. Pignati. Lorraine dreams of a coffin with all Mr. Pignati's pigs arranged on the lid:

Once I had a nightmare about that room. I was walking down a long hall and saw the curtains on a doorway at the end. Even though I was dreaming, I knew exactly where I was, and I felt an icy chill run through me. I wanted to run away, but something was pushing me toward the curtains, and I started to scream for John.

"Help me . . . help me . . . please."

I couldn't stop my legs from moving closer and closer--as if large hands were fastened to them.

The room was very dark though I could make out the shapes of pigs all around me. But instead of being on a table the pigs were arranged on a long black container, and as I started to realize what it was the fingers propelling my legs tightened and moved me closer. I felt the same horrible

force taking control of my arms, and I couldn't stop my hands from moving down to the lid of the box. When I touched it my hands went cold, and I knew I was about to open a coffin. I started to cry and plead and call to God to stop me as the lid began to rise.

That was when I woke up screaming. Right there and then I should have known the dream was an omen of death. (Zindel, The Pigman, 126)

Lorraine's nightmare is significant. The pigs are symbolic of Mr. Pignati's life with his wife, a time when he was productive and really alive. The fact that they are on the coffin lid also suggests that they are symbols for the nails that seal his coffin, that is, Mr. Pignati's memories and longing for the past.

After the party at the Pigman's house, Lorraine feels remorse over what has happened. She wants to tell Mr. Pignati that she and John were just playing. Then she realizes how deadly their game has been, and compares it, indirectly, to a game of cat and mouse:

I felt tears rolling down my cheeks onto the pillow as I remembered the condition of Mr. Pignati's house. Would he think we had forsaken him and deliberately ripped his wife's clothes --viciously broken the pigs? I wanted to phone and say, Mr. Pignati, we didn't mean things to work out like that. We were just playing.

Playing.

Play.

I couldn't get the work out of my mind. I remembered a cat playing with a rubber ball somewhere . . .

The cat attacked the ball as if it were a living thing. I remember thinking it was practicing for when it might have to kill to survive. Play was something natural, I remember thinking--something which Nature wanted us to do to prepare us for later life. (Zindel, The Pigman, 145)

The ambiguity of Zindel's writing here seems intentional. Lorraine is an adolescent caught between childhood and adulthood. She can display enough moral reasoning to realize that she and John had been playing a deadly game with Mr. Pignati, a game that effectively destroyed his past with his wife. This is her adult voice. But, like the cat's practice with the ball, the game Lorraine and John were playing with Mr. Pignati is a game for survival. In this case, the enemy is the adult world; Mr. Pignati, who is senile and childlike, is just practice.

Mr. Pignati's death occurs at the zoo after he finds out that Bobo is dead. Lorraine says that Mr. Pignati's death cry is like that of "a puppy that has been stepped on by mistake":

As I started moving away and heading for the door John went to Mr. Pignati and just took his arm lightly, trying to turn him away from the empty cage. I saw the Pigman open his mouth, and then his hands started to shake. He went to grab hold of the railing, but let out a tiny cry almost like a puppy that had been stepped on by mistake. I can still remember the sound of it, and sometimes I wake from a nightmare with it in my ears. It was like a high-pitched scream, but it came from deep inside of him, and before John or I knew what had happened, the Pigman dropped to the floor. It seemed as if the monkeys knew something had happened because they started making noise and pulling against the bars. I thought they were going to tear them out of the frames, and I wanted to put my hands to my ears to shut out the jungle that had surrounded us. Mr. Pignati was dead. (Zindel, The Pigman, 152)

Mr. Pignati's cry of angst is a poignant response to the

fate of being stepped on by mistake in the human jungle.

John expresses his grief over Mr. Pignati as they wait for the ambulance at the zoo. But he doesn't feel remorse for their part in Mr. Pignati's death, only sorrow for the plight of the elderly. In fact, John implies rather clearly that Angelo Pignati was better off for having known John and Lorraine:

But I did care. She thinks she knows everything that goes on inside me, and she doesn't know a thing. What did she want from me--to tell the truth all the time? To run around saying it did matter to me that I live in a world where you can grow old and be alone and have to get down on your hands and knees and beg for friends? A place where people just sort of forget about you because you get a little old and your mind's a bit senile or silly? Did she think that didn't bother me underneath? That I didn't know if we hadn't come along the Pigman would've just live like a vegetable until he died alone in that dump of a house? (Zindel, The Pigman, 154)

After Mr. Pignati's death, Lorraine screams at John, "We murdered him" (157). John believes that Mr. Pignati was responsible himself because he "trespassed" in the past:

. . . I wanted to yell at her, tell her he had no business fooling around with kids. I wanted to tell her he had no right going backward. When you grow up, you're not supposed to go back. Trespassing--that's what he had done. (Zindel, The Pigman, 158)

But John acknowledges in the last scene of the novel that he and Lorraine were guilty of trespassing as well:

We had trespassed too--been where we didn't belong, and we were being punished for it. Mr. Pignati had paid with his life. But when he died

something in us had died as well. (Zindel, The Pigman, 159)

The ambiguity of the novel's last scene has created some critical discord. David Rees says that the guilt is shared by Mr. Pignati and the children:

. . . Effective, too, is the emphasis laid by the author on the fact that it is a combination of their own selfishness and Mr. Pignati's that leads to the old man's death--not some vague malevolent adult world outside that is responsible, which is the point made in some of the other books. Mr. Pignati's premature senility and the dangerously unstable state of his mind are quite unrecognized by the children and provide the necessary recipe for disaster; one watches the collision of these two utterly different lifestyles--the Pigman's and the children's--knowing all along that, whatever the pleasures each may give to the other, tragedy is bound to be the outcome, because none of the protagonists can ever see beyond what is happening at the present moment. . . . (31)

But Haley and Donelson view the last scene as redemptive, and reflective of John's beginning acceptance of his moral responsibility:

. . . But the cycle does not stop with the death of the Pigman, for out of evil and the loss of John and Lorraine's innocence comes self-awareness and a promise of something good, a comment on "matters of consequence" and the question, why are we so cruel to each other? . . . If John had evaded any sense of responsibility for his actions earlier in the book, he begins now to accept responsibility for his actions. ("Pigs and Hamburgers, Cadavers and Gamma Rays: Paul Zindel's Adolescents," 942)

John never really says that he feels a moral responsibility for Mr. Pignati's death. Throughout the novel, John has been plagued by dreams of his own death. After Mr.

Pignati's death, John says that life is nothing more than one makes of it. This seems to be a suggestion that each person bears the responsibility for his or her own life. The final lines of the novel suggest that most of the time we are all foolish animals:

There was no one else to blame anymore. No Bores or Old Ladies or Nortons, or Assassins waiting at the bridge. And there was no place to hide--no place across any river for a boatman to take us.

Our life would be what we made of it--nothing more, nothing less.

Baboons.

Baboons.

They build their own cages, we could almost hear the Pigman whisper, as he took his children with him. (Zindel, The Pigman, 159)

Humans are the animals who build their own cages. The Pigman's whisper "takes his children with him" because they have lost their innocence. Lorraine, because she has the most developed moral conscience, has accepted the fact that she bears some responsibility for another person's death. John fights against accepting this burden. He says that people are responsible for their own fates. But John, too, has lost part of his childhood--his innocence about death. He cannot escape the realization that his own fate is to grow old, perhaps, like Mr. Pignati, to end up alone, to die alone. Before his own death, Mr. Pignati built his own cage too. He realized that trying to reach back into the past was a mistake. Each person is given only one life--there is no second chance to try again.

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

Mildred Taylor's Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry is about the violent moral lessons a young girl is forced to learn because she is black and growing up in the South. David Rees calls it "a really good novel about racial prejudice" (108). The protagonist and narrator of the novel is Cassie Logan, who, with her brothers, is growing up in rural Mississippi.

Taylor doesn't waste any time getting to the theme of the novel. As the Logan children are walking to school in the first few pages of the novel, a friend, T. J. Avery, tells them about a "burning":

Finally T. J. said, "Okay. See, them Berry's burnin' wasn't no accident. Some white men took a match to 'em."

"Y'you mean just lit 'em up like a piece of wood?" stammered Christopher-John, his eyes growing big with disbelief.

"But why?" asked Stacey.

T. J. shrugged. "Don't know why. Jus' know they done it, that's all."

(Taylor, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, 6)

The discrimination experienced in the educational system is painfully illustrated in the school book scene. The children are receiving "new books." Little Man, with his "penchant for cleanliness," complains that his book is dirty. When he realizes that his book is a discard, clearly stamped in the front with its eleven-year history of use in white schools, Little Man refuses to take the book. His sister, Cassie, becomes his ally when she realizes what the

problem really is, and they both get punished:

Holding the book up to her, I said, "See, Miz Crocker, see what it says. They give us these ole books when they didn't want 'em no more."

She regarded me impatiently, but did not look at the book. "Now how could he know what it says? He can't read."

"Yes'm, he can. He been reading since he was four. He can't read all them big word, but he can read them columns. See what's in the last row. Please look, Miz Crocker."

This time Miss Crocker did look, but her face did not change. Then, holding up her head, she gazed unblinkingly down at me.

"S-see what they called us," I said, afraid she had not seen.

"That's what you are," she said coldly. "Now go sit down."

I shook my head, realizing now that Miss Crocker did not even know what I was talking about. She had looked at the page and understood nothing.

(Taylor, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, 18-19)

Cassie and Little Man are punished. Cassie objects to the word nigra because it is so often used to denigrate blacks.

Even though their mother, Mary Logan, also a teacher in their school, agrees with their punishment because they disobeyed their teacher, she supports the principle of her children's rebellion. Much to the surprise of the other teacher, Mary Logan stages a little rebellion of her own. She decides to cover the offensive page in the texts, all of them:

. . . She had trimmed the paper to the size of the books and was now dipping a gray-looking glue from the brown bottle onto the inside cover of one of the books. Then she took the paper and placed it over the glue.

"Mary Logan, do you know what you're doing? This book belongs to the county. If somebody

from the superintendent's office ever comes down here and sees that book, you'll be in real trouble."

Mama laughed and picked up the other book. "In the first place no one cares enough to come down here, and in the second place if anyone should come, maybe he could see all the things we need--current books for all of our subjects, not just somebody's old throwaways, desks, paper, blackboards, erasers, maps, chalk . . . " Her voice trailed off as she glued the second book.

"Biting the hand that feeds you. That's what you're doing, Mary Logan, biting the hand that feeds you."

Again Mama laughed. "If that's the case, Daisy, I don't think I need that little bit of food." . . .

"Well, I just think you're spoiling those children, Mary. They've got to learn how things are sometime."

"Maybe so," said Mama, "but that doesn't mean they have to accept them . . . and maybe we don't either."

(Taylor, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, 21-22)

The black community in the novel lives in fear of the night riders, a group of white men who terrorize blacks. After Stacey succeeds in sabotaging the white children's school bus because the driver had run the black children off the road into a rain-filled gully, the night riders make an appearance at Cassie Logan's house. Even though Mr. Morrison, a friend of their father's who stays with them while their father is away working, is there to protect them, the children are terrified. This time the night riders get back into their cars and leave. But the memory of their caravan rolling down their road will haunt Cassie Logan for the rest of her life:

Once inside the house, I leaned against the latch while waves of sick terror swept over me.

Realizing that I must get into bed before Mama or Big Ma came from the other room, I pulled off my muddy clothes, turning them inside out to wipe the mud from my body, and put on my night clothes. Then I climbed into the softness of the bed. I lay very still for a while, not allowing myself to think. But soon, against my will, the vision of ghostly headlights soaked into my mind and an uncontrollable trembling racked my body. And it remained until dawn, when I fell into a restless sleep. (Taylor, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, 50-51)

The Wallaces own the only mercantile store that will sell to the blacks. They represent the stereotype of the southern bigot. They manipulate the blacks and encourage the black teenagers to dance, and smoke, and drink in the back of their store. Mary Logan takes the children to see an example of the Wallaces' handiwork to teach them a lesson about the kind of folks the Wallaces are. The Wallaces were responsible for the burning of Mr. Berry and his two nephews, one of whom died:

A still form lay there staring at us with glittering eyes. The face had no nose, and the head no hair; the skin was scarred, burned, and the lips were wizened black, like charcoal. As the wheezing sound echoed from the opening that was a mouth, Mama said, "Say good morning to Mrs. Berry's husband, children."

. . . "The Wallaces did that, children. They poured kerosene over Mr. Berry and his nephews and lit them afire. One of the nephews died, the other one is just like Mr. Berry." She allowed this information to penetrate the silence, then went on. "Everyone knows they did it, and the Wallaces even laugh about it, but nothing was ever done. They're bad people, the Wallaces. That's why I don't want you to ever go to their store again--for any reason. You understand?" (Taylor, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, 74)

Cassie learns about racial prejudice on a more direct, personal level one day when she goes into town with Big Ma. The first incident occurs at Barnett's store when the storekeeper keeps Cassie waiting, while he waits on all the white customers as they come in:

"Uh . . . 'scuse me, Mr. Barnett," I said as politely as I could, waiting for a moment for him to look up from his wrapping. "I think you forgot, but you was waiting on us 'fore you was waiting on this girl here, and we been waiting a good while now for you to get back."

The girl gazed at me strangely, but Mr. Barnett did not look up. I assumed that he had not heard me. I was near the end of the counter so I merely went to the other side of it and tugged on his shirt sleeve to get his attention.

He recoiled as if I had struck him.

"Y-you was helping us," I said, backing to the front of the counter again.

"Well, you just get your little black self back over there and wait some more," he said in a low, tight voice.

I was hot. I had been as nice as I could be to him and here he was talking like this. "We been waiting on you for near an hour," I hissed, "while you 'round here waiting on everybody else. And it ain't fair. You got no right--"

"Whose little nigger is this!" bellowed Mr. Barnett.

Everyone in the store turned and stared at me. "I ain't nobody's little nigger!" I screamed, angry and humiliated. "And you ought not be waiting on everybody 'fore you wait on us."

(Taylor, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, 83-84)

The second incident occurs after Cassie leaves the store and walks down the sidewalk. She bumps into Lillian Jean Simms, a white girl, and the girl orders Cassie to get off the sidewalk and down in the road. The scene becomes ugly when Lillian Jean's father shoves Cassie into the road:

"She done something to me just standing in

front of me." With that, she reached for my arm and attempted to push me off the sidewalk. I braced myself and swept my arm backward, out of Lillian Jean's reach. But something caught it from behind, painfully twisting it, and shoved me off the sidewalk into the road. I landed bottom first on the ground.

Mr. Simms glared down at me. "When my gal Lillian Jean says for you to get yo'self off the sidewalk, you get, you hear?"

(Taylor, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, 86)

Realizing that there could be serious trouble, Cassie's grandmother orders her to apologize, humiliating her even further:

Big Ma looked at me again, her voice cracking as she spoke. "Go on, child . . . apologize."

"But, Big Ma--"

Her voice hardened. "Do like I say."

I swallowed hard.

"Go on!"

"I'm sorry," I mumbled.

"I'm sorry, Miz Lillian Jean," demanded Mr. Simms.

"Big Ma!" I balked.

"Say it, child."

A painful tear slid down my cheek and my lips trembled. "I'm sorry . . . M-Miz . . . Lillian Jean."

When the words had been spoken, I turned and fled crying into the back of the wagon. No day in all my life had ever been as cruel as this one.

(Taylor, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, 87)

Cassie's mother tries to explain to her why her grandmother did what she felt she had to do. She finally tells Cassie that the Simms think they are better than Cassie because they are white. When Cassie responds, "Ah, shoot! White ain't nothin'!", her mother disagrees:

. . . "It is something, Cassie. White is something just like black is something. Everybody born on this earth is something and nobody, no

matter what color, is better than anybody else."

"Then how come Mr. Simms don't know that?"

"Because he's one of those people who has to believe that white people are better than black people to make himself feel big." . . .

(Taylor, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, 95-96)

Finally, Mary Logan tells Cassie that what she makes of her life is her choice:

"Baby, we have no choice of what color we're born or who our parents are or whether we're rich or poor. What we do have is some choice over what we make of our lives once we're here." Mama cupped my face in her hands. "And I pray to God you'll make the best of yours." She hugged me warmly then and motioned me under the covers. (Taylor, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, 97)

The Logans aren't popular when they lead a boycott against the Wallaces' store. Mary Logan loses her job when it is discovered that she has been teaching the kids wrong things and destroying school books. It is Stacey Logan's best friend, T. J., that causes Mary to lose her job by talking out of turn about her while he is hanging around the Wallaces' store. He is mad at Mary Logan for giving him a bad grade. The kids confront T. J. and Stacey and T. J. fight, ending their friendship:

T. J., for the first time comprehending that we were no longer his friends, stopped. Then, standing alone in the middle of the road, he screamed after us, "Who needs y'all anyway? I been tired of y'all always hangin' 'round for a long while now, but I been too nice to tell ya . . . I should've known better. What I look like, having a bunch of little kids 'round all the time and me here fourteen, near grown. . . ."

We walked on, not stopping.

"Got me better friends than y'all! They give

me things and treat me like I'm a man and . . .
and they white too. . . ."

(Taylor, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, 147)

There is a tragic irony in T. J. 's remarks, for he is far more alone than he realizes. Soon his white friends betray him, leaving him to take the blame alone for a robbery the three of them commit. The Wallaces come after T. J. with a group of vigilantes. They are ready to hang him before the law can arrive and interfere. But Cassie's father sets the cotton stand on fire, creating a distraction that lasts long enough for the law to arrive and take T. J. to jail.

In a New York Times review of the novel, Jean Fritz says that Mildred Taylor's work presents a terrifying truth:

Mildred Taylor's truth is on a more terrifying level. People against people. White people, the hunters; black, the hunted. The Logans are particularly vulnerable, for they go against the grain of their society by owning land, and they can hang on to it only if all goes well. One false move by a black person and, as the Logans know, the night riders come. . . . (62)

One might well ask, then, how a black child is expected to survive in a white world. Perhaps the answer lies in the parable of the tree that David Logan, Cassie's father, relates to his daughter:

. . . "You see that fig tree over yonder, Cassie? them other trees all around . . . that oak and walnut, they're a lot bigger and they take up more room and give so much shade they almost overshadow that little ole fig. But that fig tree's got roots that run deep, and it belongs in that

yard as much as that oak and walnut. It keeps on blooming, bearing good fruit year after year, knowing all the time it'll never get as big as them other trees. Just keeps on growing and doing what it gotta do. It don't give up. It give up, it'll die. There's a lesson to be learned from that little tree, Cassie girl, 'cause we're like it. We keep doing what we gotta, and we don't give up. We can't." (Taylor, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, 156)

Summer of My German Soldier

Bette Greene's Summer of My German Soldier is a story about a young Jewish girl's confrontation with humankind's capacity for inhumanity and immorality during World War II, and the painful genesis of her own moral spirit. Patty Bergen is a young Jewish girl growing up in Jenkinsville, Arkansas. She is lonely and feels left out of her parents' lives, and is overshadowed by her little sister, Sharon. Patty is in many ways a classic outsider. She doesn't fit into her parents' world. Her mother either ignores her, or criticizes her. Her father beats her unmercifully with very little provocation. Her only friend is Ruth, their black maid. But Patty Bergen is not just an adolescent who feels alienated from her world and unloved. She is a symbol of humanity's potential to be better than it is. Patty's love for Anton Reiker awakens in her an awareness that there is the possibility for goodness in an evil world. The backdrop of Hitler's persecution of the Jews is important, for it gives us the contrast between what is perhaps

the greatest evil perpetuated against a people and the potential for moral goodness on an individual level.

Summer of My German Soldier is a finely drawn moral novel.

It's parallel moral contrasts are presented sharply and distinctly: Hitler is evil, but Anton Reiker, a German soldier, is good; Patty's mother and father, her natural parents, are incapable of loving their child, but Ruth, a black maid, loves her as if she were her own child; Patty can choose to filled with hate, or she can choose love. She chooses the latter.

Nilsen and Donelson suggest the importance of the historical setting for Summer of My German Soldier:

. . . Bette Greene's Summer of My German Soldier could not have happened at any time other than during World War II. Without the war, there would not have been German prisoners in this country, nor would there have been the peculiar combination of public and private hysteria that worked on Patty Bergen's southern Christian community and her Jewish family. . . . (63)

Patty Bergen first sees Anton as an anonymous member of a company of POWs getting off the train. She searches their faces to see if they are truly the monsters she has heard so much about:

The prisoners were unhandcuffed, unchained young men carrying regulation Army duffel bags. They wore fresh blue denim pants and matching shirts, and if it hadn't been for the black "POW" stenciled across their shirt backs you could easily have mistaken them for an ordinary crew from the Arkansas Public Works Department sent out to repair a stretch of highway. I tried to read their faces for brutality, terror, humiliation--something. But the only thing I

sensed was a kind of relief at finally having arrived at their destination. (Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 3)

One of Patty's first lessons about the inhumanity of her fellow citizens and her father's passive acceptance of it occurs when Chu Lee, the Chinese grocer, is run out of town. He is not Japanese, but that doesn't seem to matter to the town of Jenkinsville; he is, after all, oriental. This scene is particular important because it parallels Hitler's persecution of the Jews. The town of Jenkinsville, whose citizens are so quick to shout out, "Nazi!", can persecute an innocent man simply because he is a member of an Asian race. But the scene is also important because it shows Mr. Bergen's passive acceptance of discrimination, even though he is a Jew and he knows the pain of discrimination. Is he any different than the German citizens who turned their eyes away from the atrocities Hitler was committing?:

I would have forgotten all about it except for what I happened to hear Mr. J. G. Jackson say to my father. "Our boys at Pearl Harbor would have got a lot of laughs at the farewell party we gave the Chink." Then Mr. Jackson laughed and my father gave a weak laugh, too, as though his heart wasn't really in it but still he wanted to keep the respect of so important a man as Mr. J. G. Jackson.

Later, when I asked my father what Mr. Jackson meant by that, he told me that I was never in my life to mention it again. All I know is that if Mr. Lee had been Japanese, then it might have made more sense. Anyway, there's probably a simple logical explanation. It couldn't be what I think. (Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 18)

Patty's attraction to Anton probably can be attributed to several sources. First, he is a soldier, a knight, from a distant land. Second, he is a handsome male and Patty is at the age of sexual awakening. And, he is a kindred soul, a kind, gentle man. After waiting on Anton in her father's store, and holding a conversation with him, Patty is excited. She wants nothing more than to have him for a friend:

As he turned to go, my eyes closed. I found myself carrying on a silent conversation with God. Oh, God, would it be at all possible for Frederick Anton Reiker to become my friend? I understand that it's not an easy request, but I would be so grateful that I'd never bother you for another thing. But if this is something you can't arrange, then could you please keep him safe so that he can return to his own country and become a doctor? Thank you, dear God. (Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 37)

When Patty tries to share her feelings about Anton with her sometime friend, Edna Louise, Patty gets another lesson in blind, unfounded prejudice. Edna Louise is horrified at the thought of Patty's association with a German:

"A German prisoner!" repeated Edna Louise. "That's almost as bad as going out with a nigger!" Repelled by the comparison, I shouted, "It isn't!"

"It is too. God is on America's side and anybody who's against us is on the devil's side, and that's the truth."

"The truth is that he's a very good person," I said with full conviction. . . . (Greene, The Summer of My German Soldier, 45)

The tragic irony of this scene isn't so much Edna Louise's blind prejudice and conviction that God is on America's

side. This is simply a reflection of the rhetoric she hears every day. The irony is in the subtle revelation of Patty Bergen's own prejudice. When Edna Louise compares dating a German to dating a nigger, Patty is repelled. She never even associates the term with the Bergens' maid, Ruth, who is probably the person Patty loves most in the world.

Patty's mother and father are cruel people, incapable of giving Patty the love she needs. Bette Greene does not really provide a satisfactory explanation for the evil that possesses the Bergens. It is far too severe to be merely the cliched "bad parent" which appears in many adolescent novels. The Bergens are not incapable of love, for they lavish love on Patty's sister, Sharon. Yet, they have none for Patty. The only possibility that suggests itself is that the author wanted to illustrate how love and hate could exist simultaneously as extremes in the same person. When the hatred is directed at one person--in this instance Patty--it becomes a destructive force that parallels Hitler's army sweeping aside the Jewish race. It becomes a juggernaut, devastating in its power to destroy. Since Patty sees that her parents are capable of love for her sister, she can only assume that something is wrong with her:

The problem must be me. I've never been what she wanted, never done what she asked. Always making my own little changes and addi-

tions. Why do I do it? Why can't I be better? More obedient? More loving?

I leaned over, placing my lips against hers. Those lips suddenly tightened. And there I stood, still bending over her. Ugly, naked, and alone.

She opened her eyes. "I wish you wouldn't bother me when I'm trying to sleep."

(Greene, The Summer of My German Soldier, 22-23)

This scene illustrates an important difference between Patty and her mother. Patty's mother will not acknowledge or respond to Patty's attempt to show her own love and affection. And Patty, who inevitably blames herself for her mother's indifference, is not bitter; she still has the capacity to love her mother, even though that love is not returned.

The cruelty of Patty's father is more terrible to observe. He is brutal, violent, easily enraged, as illustrated in this scene where he brutalizes Patty for accidentally breaking a car window:

Only one foot advanced before a hand tore across my face, sending me into total blackness. But then against the blackness came a brilliant explosion of Fourth-of-July stars. Red, yellow, blue, and then green. I never knew those stars were real; I had always thought they were only in comic books. The pain was almost tolerable when a second blow crashed against my cheek, continuing down with deflection force to my shoulder.

Using my arm as a shield, I looked up. I saw the hate that gnarled and snarled his face like a dog gone rabid. He's going to find out someday I can hate too--"Ahhhh!"

Knees came unbuckled. I gave myself to the sidewalk. Between blows I knew I could withstand anything he could give out, but once they came, I knew I couldn't.

Hands that were in the throes of a fit worked to unfasten his belt buckle. Rolling over, I hugged the hedges. He bent low to send the black leather flying.

"Ahhhheeeehh!" My God! Legs--on fire? After the first flash of piercing pain subsided, my hate roared up strong enough to keep the tears away.

. . . "Nooo--ohhh! Please!" I begged. Can't stand more--can't.

I heard the leather sing as it raced against the air--my eyes clamped closed.

And then they came, ugly and unexpected, those violent little cries that seem to have a life of their own. Short yelps of injury mingled with anger and defeat. (Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 58-59)

Because of the intense pain he inflicts on her, Patty can hate her brutal father. This beating is significant, for when it is reenacted later in the novel, Patty endures the extreme pain and violence rather than let Anton Reiker interfere to save her. For Patty, this act will symbolize the sacrifice of love.

Anton Reiker escapes and Patty hides him in the rooms on top of the Bergens' garage. Anton is shocked when he learns that Patty is Jewish. He had supposed that Bergen was a German name. Clearly, Anton feels the irony of his situation:

"It's truly extraordinary," he said. "Who would believe it? 'Jewish girl risks all for German soldier.' Tell me, Patty Bergen--" his voice became soft, but with a trace of hoarseness--"why are you doing this for me?"

It wasn't complicated. Why didn't he know? There was really only one word for it. A simple little word that in itself is reason enough.

"The reason I'm doing this for you," I started off, "is only that I wouldn't want anything bad to happen to you."

(Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 83)

Patty's unspoken word is, of course, love.

When Anton finds out that the FBI is looking for him, he is frightened. He asks Patty for courage: "A bit of your courage, P. B." (Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 104). Anton makes Patty feel like "a good and worthy person" for the first time in her young life (Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 104). But when Anton remarks about going back home, Patty is shattered when she realizes that she isn't in his plans:

. . . "After the war when I'm with my family again I'll tell them about you. How an American Jewess protected me."

I searched through his words for even a slight implication that when he was with his family again I'd be there too. But I couldn't find it. I was close to coming right out with it--asking him, begging if that would help, to let me go where he goes. (Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 104)

Anton almost reveals himself when he tries to rescue Patty from another beating from her father. He father is angered because he sees a boy he told Patty not to associate with in the yard. He begins to beat Patty. Anton rushes out to save her, but she cries out to him, and he retreats:

Metal clicked against metal. A leather belt rushed through fabric loops. As the belt whipped backward, I saw Anton with raised fists racing toward my father's unsuspecting back.

"Nooo!" I shouted. "Go way! Go way!"

The belt came down. "Ohhhh-nonono!"

Anton, his hands outstretched before him, froze. His face was like I had never seen it, dazed with horror. Then he clapped his hands to his eyes and backed towards the garage. (Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 108)

Ruth sees Anton rush out to help Patty. She knows that for him to do that, he must be a good man who cares about her Patty, and she agrees to help Patty conceal him:

. . . "That man come a-rushing out from the safety of his hiding 'cause he couldn't stand your pain and anguish no better'n me. That man listens to the love in his heart. Like the Bible tells us, when a man will lay down his life for a friend, well, then there ain't no greater love in this here world than that."
(Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 114)

Anton reveals an insight into the character of Patty's father. After Mr. Bergen beat Patty, he went inside the garage, repeating over and over to himself: "Nobody loves me. In my whole life nobody has ever loved me" (Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 116). This may help account for, but not excuse, the evil that is inside him. Anton compares the cruelty of Patty's father to the cruelty of Hitler:

. . . "Cruelty is after all cruelty, and the difference between the two men may have more to do with their degrees of power than their degrees of cruelty. One man is able to affect millions and the other only a few. Would your father's cruelty cause him to crush weak neighboring states? Or would the Fuhrer's cruelty cause him to beat his own daughter? Doesn't it seem to you that they both need to inflict pain?"
(Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 117)

The night arrives when Anton must leave Patty. His departure is difficult for her. She wants to go with him. As she struggles to tell him her feelings for him, Anton reveals his own feelings for her. Patty desperately tries to find the words she needs:

"Don't talk. Listen to me." It was my hurdle, and I had to clear it myself. "I don't think you oughta leave me, not now. I haven't learned all those things you were going to teach me--things about Emerson and--and--Oh, Anton, let me be with you, go where you go."

His thumb pressed against my palm. "You know what you are asking is impossible, but if you're saying that you love me--"

"Yes," I answered, wondering if it came out audibly. "Yes."

"Then know this, Patty, it's not completely one-sided. I love you too, and in my own way I'll miss you."

(Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 133)

As Anton leaves, he gives Patty the treasured ring that had belonged to his great-grandfather. The ring symbolizes Anton's belief that Patty is a person of value:

"The greater the value, the greater the pleasure in giving it. The ring is yours, P. B." Then in the darkened silence, I heard him breathe in deeply. "Am I still your teacher?" Without pausing for an answer he continued, "Then I want you to learn this, our last, lesson: Even if you forget everything else I want you to always remember that you are a person of value, and you have a friend who loved you enough to give you his most valued possession."

"I will, Anton. I'll remember."

I saw or felt it coming--my chin tilted up as my eyes closed. Then our lips touched, lingered together briefly before going their own separate ways. When I opened my eyes Anton was gone.

(Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 135)

Anton Reiker is killed while trying to avoid arrest. Patty Bergen is sent to a reform school for aiding him. Only Ruth and the reporter Patty befriended visit Patty. When a discouraged Patty asks Ruth what is wrong with her, the gentle maid responds: "There ain't nothing wrong with you . . . there ain't nothing bad about you, and that's the

God's truth" (Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 190-91).

Patty responds that Anton loved her, and "maybe one day my mother and father will too" . . . but Ruth says that isn't possible:

. . . "I ain't nevah 'fore cast me no 'sperions on other folks' folks," she said slowly, "but your folks ain't nevah gonna feel nothing good regarding you. And they ain't the number one best quality folks neither. They shore ain't. When I goes shoppin' and I sees the label stamped, 'Irregular' or 'Seconds,' then I knows I won't have to pay so much for it. But you've got yourself some irregular seconds folks, and you've been paying mor'n top dollar for them. So jest don't go a-wishing for what ain't nevah gonna be." (Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 192)

When Ruth leaves, Patty feels that her life raft has floated away from her. But she realizes that she has to make it on her own:

I watched her. It was like watching my very own life raft floating away towards the open sea. And yet somewhere in my mind's eye I thought I could see the faintest outline of land. Then it came to me that maybe that's the only thing life rafts are supposed to do. Taking the shipwrecked, not exactly to the land, but only in view of land. The final mile being theirs alone to swim. (Greene, Summer of My German Soldier, 198)

Because Patty has become a "person of value," she can make that last mile on her own.

The moral lesson implicit in The Summer of My German Soldier is that each person is a person of value. The greatest injustices are often the cruelties each person is capable of inflicting on another human being who shares his or her world.

A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich

Alice Childress' A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich is a moral lesson about the tragic consequences of drug abuse and social indifference. The protagonist of the novel is Benjie Johnson, a thirteen-year-old, black city-kid, who is on the road to drug addiction. Benjie lives with his mother, Rose, his grandmother, Mrs. Bell Ransom, and his commonlaw stepfather, Butler Craig. Each of these characters, as well as Benjie's friend, his teachers, the principal of his school, and a pusher, has a narrative section in the novel. This rather unusual technique allows Childress to avoid the excessive, tedious, and repetitious moralizing that so often occurs in a didactic novel with only one narrative voice. Ken Donelson comments on Alice Childress' skill as a novelist:

. . . The characters could have easily become mere stickfigures walking through a moral tale, but they are not. In a world riddled with frustration and hypocrisy, they live through an often unpleasant but always real world. We are never allowed to forgo that experience along with the characters, just as we are never allowed to forget Childress' major theme, that we are responsible for our actions. Good intentions are never enough. Performance counts. (4)

Benjie, like the typical drug addict, denies that he has a problem. He especially resents his best friend, Jimmy-Lee Powell thinking that he is a user:

I don't mind too much when parents and teachers, social workers and head shrinkers tag names on me and go to generalizing. They

ole and it's parta they nature to be sayin things like they know facts and you don't know nothin! But, man, it can get to you when your best friend, least somebody you thought was your friend, talkin at you and sayin you on skag and how you better kick. When I head the word "kick," I think bout somebody tremblin and shakin and vomitin and screamin and goin crazy. Thass not me. I take somethin sometime, but I ain't no user. Fact is, I used to skin-pop only on weekend cause I wanted to keep my mind on school and wasn't near ready to give up on the society. (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 10-11)

Butler Craig, Benjie's mother's live-in boyfriend, is trying to be a father figure for Benjie. But he has trouble dealing with a thirteen-year-old who is addicted to heroin:

I've seen a lot in my lifetime, but never anything like this. Bein strung out on junk wasn't invented yesterday, no indeed, been going on a long time, but damn if it ain't gettin worse. This is the first time I've seen a child junkie thirteen years of age. I have heard of it, everybody has, and even heard worse; but I've never lived with it. I don't know what to do, and nobody else seems to either, no matter how much they be tryin, because there's too much jive talk about "program" and "understandin." Damn, I understand it. The kid got to hangin round those that's in a junk bag and then got in one himself. How he's to get out is what's to be dealt with. (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 16)

Jimmy-Lee Powell doesn't like the changes he sees takin place in Benjie. He used to be Benjie's best friend, but now they can't even talk:

Now he'd soundin like from another planet, sniffin snot back up his nose, and eyes runnin water while puttin the beg on for more bread. One minute lookin pitiful, next minute mean and evil enough to cut out your heart with a dull knife. Sometime a junkie get mad with you cause he got a jones and you ain't. That's why Benjie come down on me so hard. (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 22-23)

Bernard Cohen, Benjie's white teacher, is afraid to say anything, afraid to get involved, for fear of turning it into a racial matter, even though he knows Benjie has some sort of problem. When Nigeria Greene, the militant black teacher, admonishes Cohen for it, Cohen says he can't interfere:

. . . "What do you want from me?" I said. "Remember I'm whitey. Nobody needs to hear me call Benjie or any other Black kid a junkie. . . ."

He said, "Benjie is one of the best kids we'll ever see. If I could save him, I would--"

There's nothing to do when people shut me out. Some of the more refined Black teachers are cooperative and kindly, but they're clannish, too, when it comes to race matters, afraid of taking the part of a white person when another Black is in the picture. (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 37-38)

Nigeria Greene feels like he has lost his vision, his purpose to help his people. Now he and his wife make the rounds of the black social and intellectual circles, while kids like Benjie Johnson die in the streets:

Me and my socializing African queen cabbed back uptown, with a few other tolerated squares, tryin to talk ourselves into likin what we've been doin, but bein and feelin less like ourselves, less and less. Now, in the calm of the mornin after, I'm askin myself what else is there? With a splittin headache, I'm facin my fate as a plain, uninfluential grade school teacher . . . knowin there are some black children to be met, knowin there's nothin heard last night that can be passed on to them with pride. If they are shootin shit in the arm, their elders are shoutin shit in the head . . . but we never OD out. Benjie killers! Laughin Benjie on to early death; drinkin his blood from a champagne glass. We're in some terrible trouble, but the kids don't need any more tired, opportunistic advice. (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 99-100)

Rose Johnson, Benjie's mother, feels guilty. She works hard trying to make ends meet, but she is also trying to make a life with Butler.

The school brought me the news, but I had been suspicious before, but the thing seemed to get by me because you hate for a child to believe you always thinkin somethin's wrong. Maybe I haven't been takin enough time with Benjie since meeting Butler, my common-law husband, but Butler's been takin time. He bought tickets for a ball game so they could go together like father and son; I'da gone too, but here lately my mother been turnin on the gas and forgettin to light it with the matches, another time she left bath water runnin and flooded the downstairs apartment. Butler is not one of those men who can't stand the step-child because it's not his. He'd be crazy about Benjie if only the boy would let himself be liked, but the child is contrary and actin like he can't stand anybody. (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 52)

Rose wants to help her son, but she doesn't know how to talk to him--doesn't even know how to tell him that she loves him:

I wish I knew how to talk to Benjie. I feel shy or ashamed when I want to speak my real feelins. Be fine to tell him that something nice can happen for him in life, something like how it is with me and Butler. One day I almost said it . . . after goin over the words in my mind, "Benjie, the greatest thing in the world is to love someone and they love you too." But when I opened my mouth, I said, "Benjie, brush the crumbs off your jacket." (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 54)

The principal of Benjie's school is a coward. He doesn't want to deal with the reality of the drug problem. He prefers to ignore it, viewing it as hopeless anyway. He is the worst kind of educator, because he has abandoned

his kids. Since he doesn't think anything can be done, he doesn't try:

Experience has taught me to avoid the subject, except for the occasions when we have a scheduled visiting speaker who gives an assembly talk on drug abuse. Very often the speaker is an ex-addict. I get an uncomfortable feeling that he is being projected as a heroic figure, and I fear that some of our students may see drugs as something to use and then bravely give up. The speaker does not mention that he is one in a hundred who was able to kick the habit . . . after all, it is the nature of each human being to think of himself as a one-in-a-hundred person.

. . . Each day I remember to praise honor and dignity, celebrate worthy heroes . . . and bear in mind that I shall soon reach the haven of retirement. No matter what I do or don't do there are drug addicts. (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 57-58)

Walter, the pusher, is a hardened cynic. He has no sympathy for the junkie, or anybody else:

If I quit pushin tomorrow; you think any junkie is gonna do without this poison cause I didn't show? You need a straightjacket if you do! From city to city, town to town, from block to block and house to house, there is someone who will get you anything you want, if you got money! . . .

Me, I say screw the weak and screw the power. If it's call free enterprise, then let it be free. Nother thing, If I had my way about it, I wouldn't be related to a Black-ass nigga on this earth. All them that wanta die let em put a five in my pocket, and I'll help em to slowly make it on outta here, with a smile on their face . . . and one on mine. Less of them makes more room for me! The hell with the junkie, the wino, the capitalist, the welfare checks, the world . . . yeah, and fuck you, too! (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 61, 64-65)

Benjie is placed in a detoxification program. After he goes back home, Butler tries to talk to him like a father, to show him that he cares:

My so-call stepfather, Butler, come in the room to have one-a them draggy heart-to-hearts. He tellin me how buddies is suppose to stick close to each other and tell and confide. All of a sudden my mama standin in the doorway listenin to how it's all going down, so I move in and take over and say, "Relax, pal, you just a maintenance man--and we livin in a time when a hero ain't nothin' but a sandwich--so don't strain yourself tryin to prove nothin." Butler turn round and ast Mama, "You wanta go over to the Paradise Bar for a cold brew so I can clear this boy outta my head?" (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 75-76)

After Benjie steals a neighbor's toaster to get money for drugs, Butler Craig chases him down on the rooftops. Benjie loses his balance and starts to fall. Butler grabs him:

. . . He's standin there, slippin, losing his balance. I'm behind him as he slides down and almost straddles the top. I got one arm, he hits and flails out the other and goes over the edge. My hand is grabbed tight around his right arm, just above the elbow. He's swingin down over empty space, looking up at me, weighin a ton and crying like crazy. With my other hand I grab his jacket. His face is scared and pinched in like a skinny old man. The weight of him is growin heavier, feel like holdin a baby grand piano by one leg. He's pullin me down on the wet, icy edge. Can't feel my fingers, have to watch to make sure they don't let loose. Cold as I am, hot sweat breakin out all over. Hands beginnin to sweat, can't tell if it's from Benjie's hand or mine. Wet hands can't hold much longer. He looks down at the courtyard, then up at me, growin heavier and heavier. "Let go, Butler," he says, "let me die. Drom me, man!" He's flailin his legs, tryin to work loose my hold, hollerin and fightin to die. "Let me be dead!" (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 109-110)

Butler doesn't let go, and eventually he convinces Benjie to climb back onto the roof.

Butler is, quite literally, the strongest embodiment of a moral force in the novel. Though he is not even Benjie's real father, he strains physically and emotionally to save the boy, to show him that he cares. Benjie's tragic plea for Butler to drop him, to let him die, illustrates the depths of Benjie's despair, his sense of helplessness. But Butler Craig won't give up on Benjie. He says: "I'll die if I lose him! Can't lose him!" (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 110)

Butler has become Benjie's spiritual father, even if he isn't his blood kin. After they attend the funeral of one of Benjie's friends who dies of an overdose, a friend who has just turned fifteen, Benjie says that he is sorry, and wants to quit using drugs. He tells Butler he can do it "long as somebody believe in me" (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 120). Butler's angry response reflects his own formula for survival, and his need to teach Benjie that he has got to believe in himself:

"Dammit, Benjie," he say, "you gotta do it even if nobody believe in you, gotta be your own man, the supervisor of your viens, the night watchman and day shift foreman in charge-a your own affairs." (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 120)

The novel ends with Butler waiting for Benjie to show up at the rehabilitation center for his next treatment. Benjie's advisor had told Benjie that he needs "some male hero figure he can identify with," and then given him a list

of books about black history, black movie stars, and black sports figures (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin But a Sandwich, 126). Butler knows that Benjie's only chance for survival is to learn to identify with him, or someone like him:

I gave the adviser some advice. I say, "Some these big-time, celebrity-high-lifers can't take care-a themselves, they in as much trouble as you and Benjie. Yall gotta learn to identify with me, who gotta get up to face the world every damn mornin with a clear head and a heavy heart. Benjie once told me a hero ain't nothin but a sandwich--and you say a hero is a celebrity! Listen to my credentials; then maybe yall can pin me on a hero button. I'm supportin three adults, one chile, and the United States government on my salary . . . and can't claim any of em for tax exemptions. So, explain me no heroes. Yeah, and som-a our neighborhood success stories are livin offa Benjie's veins, while they ridin round in limousines and grand-standin to win everybody's admiration! (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 126)

The last scene of the novel leaves Butler standing alone in front of the center, waiting for Benjie to show up for treatment. His last words reflect his own fear that Benjie won't make it:

The wind is blowing colder now, but if I go in--he might get this far, then lose courage. Come on, Benjie, I believe in you . . . Benjie, don't hold back, come on, I'm waitin for you . . . hurry up, I'm waitin, boy . . . I'm waitin right here . . . Its nation time . . . I'm waitin for you. . . . (Childress, A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, 127)

Alice Childress leaves the question of Benjie's fate unanswered. Nilsen and Donelson comment on the ambiguity of the novel's conclusion:

. . . In A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich, Alice Childress didn't think it fair to predict either that Benjie would become a confirmed drug addict or that he would go straight. Boys in his situation turn either way and Childress wanted readers to think about this. . . . (49)

Benjie has a choice to make, and only he can make it. Alice Childress' novel indicts the social system, the educational system, even, less severely, the family structure in American society. But, mostly, she indicts the individual, who must take charge of his or her own life to survive.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to provide a broad frame of reference for analyzing the concept of the hero in selected adolescent novels. The study was initially divided into three heroic frameworks: the mythic hero, the alienated hero as outsider, and the hero as moralist. Secondly, the study was to analyze the theme, characters, and plot of the selected novels to determine how the concept of the hero develops in each work. This analysis was accomplished by a content analysis of each novel.

Chapter I was introductory. It established the purpose and design of the study and concluded from the research that two limitations were necessary: (1) that adolescent novels would be defined as "those novels specifically written for adolescents," and (2) that the adolescent hero would be defined as "the central character in a work of fiction who confronts a conflict and by conscious choice achieves a resolution of the conflict."

Chapter II examined the historical evolution of adolescent literature, the critical reception, and the role of the adolescent as reader. Several criteria of adolescent novels emerged from an examination of the secondary material. After concluding the research, the following characteristics of adolescent novels, as distinguished from mainstream novels, can be established:

1. The adolescent novel is usually shorter than the average mainstream novel.
2. It is written specifically for an adolescent audience.
3. It most often presents a world that is familiar to the adolescent reader.
4. It usually has other adolescents with which the protagonist can interact.
5. The protagonists of adolescent novels are always adolescents.
6. Usually, the adolescent protagonist serves as narrator, and the novel is told in first person.
7. Frequently, the adolescent novel is a "problem novel," dealing with issues of concern to adolescents, such as drugs, alcohol, pre-marital sex, family problems, or social integration.
8. With rare exception, adolescent novels achieve a successful resolution of the central conflict.

Chapter III examined the concept of the quest-hero in five adolescent novel. Preliminary conclusions, based on research, suggested that the adolescent quest is most often a quest for self-identity or self-esteem. The content analyses did not entirely support the preliminary findings. Both Deathwatch and Z for Zachariah violated the thematic quest for identity. These novels were not quest novels. Rather, they might be more appropriately characterized as "adventure" novels, which are "largely devoid of characterization . . . and pit one human against another" (Nilsen and Donelson, 137). The Last Mission was a traditional warrior-quest, containing the separation, initiation, and return phases of the heroic quest. The conclusion of the novel resulted in the protagonist's successful return from his initiation into war, with a self-identity largely changed by his experience. Both Winning and One Fat Summer support the preliminary ex-

pectations of an adolescent protagonist's successful completion of a quest for self-esteem.

Chapter IV examined the concept of the alienated hero as outsider. A preliminary review of criticism suggested that most adolescent protagonists exhibit alienation either from self, family, society, or a combination of these. Resolution of the conflict is expected. With one exception, the content analyses of the novels supported the preliminary expectations. Home Before Dark has a protagonist who is alienated from her family and from society by a sense of rootlessness, and a desire to establish a sense of place, a necessary element of social integration. When she finds this sense of place, she achieves social integration, but experiences a conflict with her family. The conflict is resolved and both familial and social integration are achieved. Jacob Have I Loved is about alienation from self and family. It contains, as well, elements of a quest for self-esteem. The protagonist achieves successful re-integration into her family and, by so doing, finds a sense of self. The Outsiders has a protagonist who is alienated from self, family, and environment. He achieves a sense of self-identity and familial integration by the end of the novel; however, there is only the possibility of social integration. In Where the Lilies Bloom, the protagonist is alienated from society and her own family by her actions to preserve the family and protect from a perceived threat. Both conflicts

are resolved at the end of the novel. The Chocolate War is the exception to the preliminary expectations. It has a protagonist who is alienated from self, family, and society, and achieves no resolution or integration.

Chapter V examined the concept of the hero as moralist. Two expectations emerged from the research: (1) that adolescent readers could recognize the desired moral outcome in the adolescent novel, and (2) that the adolescent protagonists recognized a moral conflict, engaged in moral reasoning, and achieved a successful resolution of the problem. The content analyses of the novels did not reflect these early expectations as completely as anticipated. A Day No Pigs Would Die is a straightforward didactic novel in which the moral lessons of a father are passed on to a son. There is a clear recognition and acceptance by the protagonist, and easily recognizable moral lessons for the reader. The Pigman uses two protagonists to examine moral responsibility. The outcome is somewhat ambiguous, but there is a clear moral recognition by one of the protagonists, and at least the beginnings of moral awareness by the other. The desired moral outcome should be easily recognizable by an adolescent reader. Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry is less successful as a didactic novel. Its protagonist simply experiences one episode of racial prejudice after another, with no clearly delineated moral outcome or evidence of moral growth which is accessible to either protagonist or reader. Summer of My

German Soldier fails as a didactic novel because it is burdened by a lack of focus. There is some recognition by the protagonist of her sense of self-worth, but the larger theme of good versus evil is too diluted to be made effectively. An adolescent reader will be horrified by the father's brutalization of Patty, but will probably miss the larger message of inhumanity. A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich is a successful moral novel about drug abuse, despite the ambiguity of the ending. The protagonist confronts a moral conflict and is given a clear choice. Though the author does not reveal the choice, the adolescent reader should have no doubt that there is a right choice and a wrong choice.

The content analyses offered in this study and the conclusions about the adolescent hero should prove useful to a classroom teacher who would like to teach an adolescent novel. Each of these chapters offers only one possible approach to the novels discussed, but together they at least offer some unified framework for the examination of the hero in the adolescent novel which does not at present exist.

Further research is indicated. Certainly more novels need to be examined to determine whether these patterns hold true for a majority of novels. Further, surveys of classroom populations and their interaction with selected novels would be useful to determine whether the readers can clearly identify the moral conflicts, assess the possible choices, and exhibit moral reasoning as they agree or disagree with the moral outcomes.

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APPENDIX

SURVEY RESULTS

34 surveys were mailed and 22 responses received, for a percentage of 65% responding.

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>AUTHOR</u>	<u>VOTES</u>
The Chocolate War	Robert Cormier	15
A Day No Pigs Would Die	Robert Newton Peck	11
The Outsiders	S. E. Hinton	11
Summer of My German Soldier	Bette Greene	11
One Fat Summer	Robert Lipsyte	9
(The Contender)	Robert Lipsyte	8
The Pigman	Paul Zindel	7
(After the First Death)	Robert Cormier	7
A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich	Alice Childress	7
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry	Mildred Taylor	7
Winning	Robin Brancato	7
The Last Mission	Harry Mazer	6
Deathwatch	Robb White	6
Z for Zachariah	Robert C. O'Brien	5
Home Before Dark	Sue Ellen Bridgers	5

These novels represent the top choices in the survey. In order to balance the novelists chosen, repetition by author is eliminated. The Contender and After the First Death have been eliminated. Two novels with female protagonists have been selected from the next highest ranking to replace them:

Where the Lilies Bloom	Vera & Bill Cleaver	4
Jacob Have I Loved	Katherine Patterson	4

Of the novels remaining in the study, 9 received 3 votes, 22 received 2 votes, and 110 received 1 vote each, for a total of 164 responses.

The data for the above selections are available.

VITA

Gary Simmers was born in Havre de Grace, Maryland on July 27, 1950. He was raised in Georgia and attended elementary schools in Oakdale and Acworth, Georgia. In 1968, he graduated from North Cobb High School, Acworth, Georgia. He served in the U. S. Navy from 1968-1972, and his service included a combat tour of duty in Vietnam.

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