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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Wallace McDonald Beasley, Jr. entitled "The Self as the Source of Knowledge: A Philosophical Study of the Identity Theme in the Adolescent Novel." I 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 SELF AS THE SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE: A PHILOSOPHICAL
STUDY OF THE IDENTITY THEME
IN THE ADOLESCENT NOVEL

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Presented for the
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For my wife, Mary, who typed my drafts, who listened to both my ideas and my groans, and who loved me, words cannot express the depth of my debt or the measure of my affection.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine some of the ways in which the protagonists' search for identity in the contemporary adolescent novel recapitulates the larger search-for-identity theme that has influenced past movements in philosophy, religion, and world literature. The general identity theme was broken down and examined in terms of three categories: the search-for-self theme, the rebel-victim theme, and the loss-of-innocence theme. As a background for an analysis of these themes in the adolescent novel, the author first established a philosophical overview in terms of Socratic philosophy, Sophoclean drama, Old Testament and classical myths, Zen Buddhism, modern existentialism and the tradition of the Byronic hero in English literature. A background section was also included on the philosophical history of the problem of identity as it evolved through the thinking of Parmenides, the German Idealists and the modern phenomenologist, Martin Heidegger.

The novels selected for analysis were from a list of nine books dealing with adolescent identity. These selections were recommended in the January 1979 issue of The English Journal, based on results of its annual "Books for Young Adults" Book Poll: Lynn Reid Banks' My Darling Villain, Gunnel Beckman's That Early Spring, George Bower's November . . . December, Hila Coleman's Sometimes I Don't Love My Mother, Charles P. Crawford's Letter Perfect,

Alice Hoffman's Property Of, Irene Hunt's William, Norma Klein's It's OK If You Don't Love Me, and Ursula LeGuin's Very Far Away From Anywhere Else.

The major conclusion of the study was that the contemporary adolescent search for identity, as depicted in the nine novels selected for analysis, does indeed reflect the same kinds of universal human concerns and experiences that were dominant in past philosophical, religious and literary movements. Considerable thematic consistency was found to exist in the novels, although the social context and the quality of the identity experience varied greatly from novel to novel. Very Far Away From Anywhere Else, That Early Spring, November . . . December, and It's OK If You Don't Love Me were found to contain significant elements of the search-for-self theme as it was manifested in Socratic philosophy, Sophoclean drama, Zen Buddhism and existentialism. My Darling Villain and Sometimes I Don't Love My Mother were found to reflect important elements of the same rebel-victim theme that prevailed in Prometheus Bound, in Manfred and Cain, and in the paradigm of metaphysical rebellion articulated in Albert Camus' The Rebel. Letter Perfect and, to a lesser extent, William contained significant aspects of the loss-of-innocence theme as it was depicted in the story of Adam and Eve as described in Genesis and in Paradise Lost. In fact, Letter Perfect, in several instances, made direct reference to Paradise Lost

as a thematic backdrop for the loss-of-innocence theme as it unfolded in the novel itself.

In general, the adolescent identity experience involved a threefold process: first, the adolescent perceived personal freedom as being limited by some sort of external authority; second, the adolescent rebelled against that authority; third, the adolescent underwent some sort of "fall" or "loss of innocence" which attendantly served to usher in a new measure of moral or intellectual awareness. In all the novels examined, authentic identity was depicted as flowing or being created from within. None of the adolescents found identity in churches, schools, or social groups.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION.	1
II.	FROM SELF TO OTHERS: A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.	10
III.	THE KNOW THYSELF THEME IN PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE AND IN FOUR CONTEMPORARY ADOLESCENT NOVELS	30
	<u>Very Far Away From Anywhere Else</u>	54
	<u>That Early Spring</u>	66
	<u>November . . . December</u>	71
	<u>It's OK If You Don't Love Me.</u>	84
	Summary	94
IV.	THE REBEL-VICTIM AND LOSS OF INNOCENCE THEMES IN PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE AND IN FIVE ADOLESCENT NOVELS	98
	<u>My Darling Villain.</u>	121
	<u>Sometimes I Don't Love My Mother.</u>	139
	<u>Property Of</u>	145
	<u>Letter Perfect.</u>	155
	<u>William</u>	169
	Summary	180
V.	CONCLUSION.	183
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.	189
	VITA.	198

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As a literary and philosophical concern, the search for authentic personal identity is as old as Sophocles' Oedipus the King and as fresh and modern as the young heroine in Carson McCuller's A Member of the Wedding. The Socratic dictum "know thyself" has played a crucial role in the moral and philosophical literature of East and West alike. From the dialogues of Plato and the plays of Sophocles to the cryptic admonitions of 13th century Zen monks, from the tortured outcries of the Byronic heroes in English literature to the lonely voices of the existential and absurd heroes of France, Germany and America, comes the double-charged cry: "know thyself" and "to thine own self be true." Perhaps nowhere, however, does this perennial theme come into more poignant focus than in the modern novel of adolescence.¹ Because of the unique pressures which modern society brings to bear on young people and because of the parallel lack of any formal initiation rites,

¹The term "novel of adolescence" refers to novels such as Huckleberry Finn or The Catcher in the Rye, which were not written specifically for the adolescent reader although the main characters in the novels are adolescents. The term "adolescent novel," by contrast, refers to a specific genre of works that is written specifically with the adolescent reader in mind. A more detailed distinction between these two terms will be presented in Chapter II.

the modern adolescent often finds himself or herself singularly caught up in the limbo between two worlds set in seeming opposition to one another: the world of childhood dependence on the one hand, and the world of adult responsibility on the other. William Hugh Agee in his analysis of the initiation theme in the novel of adolescence makes the following observation:

In our society the adolescent, on the threshold of adulthood, experiences no formal rites of passage. Caught between childhood and adulthood, he is a member of neither world. His initiation, instead, becomes an unguided, trial-and-error search for identity and confirmation within the adult community.²

According to Agee, as the adolescent balances uncertainly between childhood dependency and adult responsibility, he or she often undergoes a kind of identity crisis which shares certain parallels with the initiation rites of primitive societies. The adolescent identity experience can also be profitably viewed in terms of certain philosophical and literary traditions of the past. Accordingly, a major purpose of the present study will be to demonstrate that the search for identity in the adolescent novel is, in actuality, a modern continuation of a larger universal theme that has dominated past movements in philosophy, religion and world literature.

²William Hugh Agee, "The Initiation Theme in the Modern American Novel of Adolescence" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1966), pp. 1-2.

Although this larger identity theme shares certain similarities with the initiation theme, there is a fundamental difference between the two: the final object of the initiation rite is the adoption of the initiate into the social structure of the adult community; the object of the identity search by contrast is the achievement of individual rather than social identity. In the struggle for individual identity, the searcher moves from the negative freedom of external constraints to the positive freedom³ of self-imposed order; from dependency on external authority to the responsibility of self-direction or what Abraham Maslow calls self-actualization. In a very basic sense, therefore, the identity theme and the initiation theme are cross directional, the initiation experience being what David Reisman has termed "outer directed," and the identity experience being "inner directed." The present study will deal with those types of identity experiences which lead to self actualization, rather than conformity to and acceptance by the adult community.⁴ A major purpose of

³Negative freedom is the kind of freedom a child enjoys within the structure of discipline externally imposed by parents; positive freedom refers to the type of freedom a yogi enjoys within the framework of a self imposed discipline. Robert Frost was describing positive freedom when he referred to his choice of working in traditional forms, rather than free verse, as a way of "working easy in harness." For an interesting political analysis of positive and negative freedom see Isaiah Berlin's Two Concepts of Liberty (Fair Lawn, N.J.: Oxford University Press, 1968).

⁴The two are not mutually exclusive, however. Sometimes the process of self-actualization may lead to activity

this study then will be not to show how the adolescent identity experience can be compared with the ritualistic conformity of primitive initiation rites, but rather how the adolescent, in his or her struggle for personal identity, recapitulates the same metaphysical search for self theme that that has dominated past movements in philosophy, religion and world literature. This "man's search for himself"⁵ identity theme will be broken down, in this study, into three separate categories or sub-themes: the "Know Thyself Theme," the "Rebel-Victim Theme" and "Loss of Innocence Theme."

These three themes were selected for two reasons. First, they have all served at one time or another as focusing points for writers and philosophers wrestling with the identity problem. Secondly, they seem to correspond rather well to three types of identity experience: one the individual begins to question the authenticity of personal identity or personal life; two, the individual questions and rebels against some kind of authority that he

that is fruitful within and acceptable to the norms of society. Thus did two self actualized giants, Beethoven and Einstein, both find authentic identity and societal praise and acceptance within their lifetime. The self-actualization process of others, however, has run counter to the norms of society and set these individuals in positions of isolation or even tragic rejection. Gallileo and Servetus classic examples.

⁵Rollo May, Man's Search for Himself (New York: W. W. Norton, 1953).

or she feels subject to; and three, the individual sacrifices an old identity in order to gain a new identity. This last type of identity experience usually involves a loss of innocence or a "fall" of some kind as, for example, in the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. These three types of identity experience may and often do occur simultaneously, but for the purpose of analysis they will, in this study, be considered individually.

The "Know Thyself Theme" will be defined in terms of those types of intellectual and emotional yearnings that lead the individual to reject or find as inadequate a life of belief and values dictated solely from external sources such as parents or society, and to search instead for some sort of deeper, truer identity that flows from within. The present study will explore the parallels between the treatment of this theme in the modern adolescent novel and prior manifestation of the theme in such diverse paths as Socratic philosophy, Sophoclean drama, Eastern psychology, and existentialism. An underlying assumption, of course, is that such a universal theme is cross-cultural and deserves an eclectic examination in order to underscore the full range of possibilities of the adolescent identity experience and to elevate it to a high plane of philosophical regard.

The "Rebel-Victim Theme" will be defined as the moral and social dilemma in which a character is both in

rebellion against and is a victim to certain forces in society that are beyond his or her control. (A classic example is Sophocles' Antigone, who is a victim of a royal decree that forbids the burial of her brother and at the same time she is set in passionate rebellion against the harshness of that diktat.) This theme will be examined in terms of the myth of Prometheus, the tradition of the Byronic hero in England, the existential philosophy of Albert Camus, and the modern adolescent novel.

The "Loss of Innocence" theme will be analyzed in the modern adolescent novel with parallels drawn to the same theme in the Old Testament and Milton.

The term "identity theme" will have two frames of reference. From a broad perspective, the term will refer to the philosophical search for self understanding that has underscored the intellectual and spiritual progress of men and women throughout history. In relationship to the adolescent novel, however, the "identity theme" will be more specifically defined as the intellectual and emotional struggle of an adolescent protagonist as he or she attempts to cross the bridge between the negative freedom of childhood and the positive freedom of self-actualization.

The novels to be examined in this study will be from the annual list prepared for the January 1979 issue of The English Journal, by G. Robert Carlsen, Elizabeth A. Belden and Anne S. Harker of the University of Iowa Books

for Young Adults Program.⁶ According to the conductors of the poll, these books were very popular in 1978 among young readers who were "eager to discover characters their own age or just a bit older who face the problems which accompany establishing roles or identities in the adult world."⁷

These favorite books were said to "describe passages or turning points for their adolescent protagonists which expanded our readers' experience with choices facing young people."⁸

The novels are My Darling Villain by Lynne Reid Banks; That Early Spring by Gunnel Beckman; November . . . December by John Bowers; Sometimes I Don't Love My Mother by Hila Golman; Letter Perfect by Charles P. Crawford; Property Of by Alice Hoffman; William by Irene Hunt; It's O.K. If You Don't Love Me by Norma Klein; and Very Far Away from Anywhere Else by Ursula LeGuin.

A note should be made concerning the use of these novels for analysis. In William Agee's study of the initiation theme, he purposely selected for analysis only those adult novels which he knew ahead of time to contain significant adolescent initiation experiences. In this study, however, I have used an objective list of specific adolescent

⁶Each year the University of Iowa conducts a poll to determine the most popular novels of the year among adolescent readers. The results of the poll are published annually in The English Journal.

⁷"1980 Books for Young Adults Book Poll," The English Journal, January 1979, p. 56.

⁸The English Journal, January 1979, p. 56.

novels recommended by The English Journal, rather than picking books I personally knew as containing significant adolescent identity experiences. Although some of these novels are not particularly profound in their vision nor very artfully contrived in their thematic structure, I, nevertheless, feel that the analysis is worthwhile in that I am examining those novels of 1978 that adolescents themselves, rather than literary critics, found to be most rewarding. Therefore, whatever insights I am able to achieve in my analysis will constitute insights that are directly related to the interests of the teenage reader rather than to the more sophisticated taste of the mature adult or the literary critic.

The research in this study will involve a combination of historical and thematic analysis. The research plan for the study is as follows. Chapter I will introduce the topic and explain the rationale of the study. Chapter II will present both a discussion of the adolescent novel as it has evolved into a genre, and a review of recent criticism of the adolescent identity theme. Chapter III will present a philosophical overview of the problem of identity, a discussion of the know thyself theme in Socratic philosophy, Eastern psychology, and existentialism, and an analysis of the know thyself theme in four contemporary adolescent novels. Chapter IV will review the rebel-victim and loss of innocence themes in philosophical and literary perspective and will analyze these two themes in the remaining

five adolescent novels. Chapter V will contain a brief summary of the study and its findings.

CHAPTER II

FROM SELF TO OTHERS: A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

From a philosophical point of view, the progress of humankind might be examined in terms of such great individuals as Socrates and Jesus, Lao Tsu and Martin Luther King, Pierre and Madame Curie, individuals whose own personal self-actualization attendantly served to push forward the intellectual or spiritual progress of the race. If the progress of humankind often hinges on the new vision provided by such authentic individuals, we must see on the other hand that the average, ordinary person also needs a measure of authentic identity, both as a source of joy and as a source of sustaining strength amid the myriad social and psychological problems that define the human condition. Maurice Stein juxtaposes the external problems of modern society with a corresponding poverty of individualism:

Modern social life is clearly laden with savage destructive possibilities at the individual, the organizational, the national, and the international levels. The mushroom cloud is a good symbol for the worst extreme, but neither can we ignore the incredible inhumanity involved in the Nazi concentration camps. The threat of world destruction and the disappearance of genuine individuals hangs over our age.¹

¹Maurice R. Stein, Identity and Anxiety: Survival of the Person in Mass Society (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1960), pp. 30-31.

In discussing the need for such genuine individualism, among young people, Louise Rosenblatt also sounds a note of concern and puts the issue into modern pedagogical perspective:

In an unsettled world . . . the student must be helped to develop the intellectual and emotional capacities . . . the knowledge, the habits, the flexibility, that will enable him to meet unprecedented and unpredictable problems. He needs to understand himself; he needs to work out harmonious relationships with other people. Above all, he must achieve some philosophy, some inner center from which to view in perspective the shifting society about him.²

Sensitive and intelligent teachers of literature can aid students in the search for the kind of "inner center" described above, by exposing to students and sharing with them, authentic literary experiences. As Rosenblatt has pointed out, such literary experiences can lead the student toward "a greater knowledge of himself, and an increasing refinement of his values."³

Perhaps one of the most valuable sources of authentic literary experience for young people is the adolescent novel itself, a genre that often addresses itself specifically to the types of problems that the adolescent reader experiences in his or her own personal struggle for identity. Robert Carlsen has stated that "young people find their satisfaction

²Louise M. Rosenblatt, Literature as Exploration (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1938), p. 1.

³Rosenblatt, pp. 1-2.

in the adolescent book: the book written especially for him, to evoke his emotions, problems, dreams, and life."⁴ Carlsen is essentially referring to the need for identity when he points out that

Young adults choose books in which individuals are looking for a direction in their lives. They are interested in characters caught in a value conflict, in a book in which value decisions are being formulated. Whether the book presents a resolution is not so important as the actual detailing of the search itself. Young adults of all generations and particularly of our are desperately aware of the need to find significance in their own lives.⁵

According to Dorothy Petitt, such novels often picture "a crucial stage in the search for self-definition which all of us have made, are making, and will be making."⁶ William Hugh Agee, along with Carlsen and Petitt, also advocates the value of adolescent books, especially those dealing with the initiation theme:

Students will find in the study of adolescent initiation in fiction a theme that is vital to their ends and interests as they make that awesome journey across the threshold of adulthood. As their mentors we can guide them and counsel with them through a series of literary experiences that,

⁴G. Robert Carlsen, "For Everything There Is a Season," Literature for Adolescents, edited by Richard A. Meade and Robert C. Small, Jr. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1973), p. 116.

⁵Carlsen, Literature for Adolescents, p. 118.

⁶Dorothy Petitt, "A Search for Self-Definition: The Picture of Life in the Novel for Adolescent," The English Journal (December 1960), pp. 616-626.

we hope, will lead them to confirmation rather than alienation in our world.⁷

Assuming that the adolescent novel can be a valuable source of insight for students engaged in the pursuit of identity, the present chapter will approach this genre in three ways: first, the adolescent novel will be distinguished from its literary antecedent, the novel of adolescence; secondly, there will be a brief examination of the origins and early development of adolescent fiction; and third, there will be an examination of some of the various aspects of the adolescent identity theme as it has evolved over the years, with particular attention being paid to recent trends.

Carlsen specifically defines the adolescent novel thusly:

It is a book written by a serious writer for the teen-age reader. The writer tries to evoke through his use of words the feelings and emotions, the triumphs and failures, the tensions and releases, that people in the age group of twelve to twenty normally experience.⁸

The novel of adolescence, on the other hand, while dealing specifically with adolescent heroes, is not specifically written for adolescent readers. At its birth the novel of

⁷William Hugh Agee, "Adolescent Initiation: A Thematic Study in the Secondary Schools," Literature for Adolescents, p. 137.

⁸G. Robert Carlsen, Books and the Teenage Reader (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 45.

adolescence was little more than a book written for adults, which adolescents adopted. Carlsen refers to them as "literary accidents" which were "actually written for an adult audience but were later claimed as his own by the teen-age reader hungry for good books at his own level of interest and ability."⁹

According to Carlsen, Little Women and Huckleberry Finn were two of these literary accidents that became permanent fixtures in adolescent literature. So too were many of the novels and stories of Robert Louis Stevenson and Jack London. Although these books were originally written for adults, teenage readers found in them a language of experience with which they could identify and thus was created a new market for fiction. The fiction written for this market has catapulted into the full-fledged literary genre known as the adolescent novel. Although the borderline between adolescent and adult fiction can probably never be permanently fixed, the literary quality of certain adolescent books is so outstanding that the works may become classics for adults as well as children. On the other hand, a great many of the adolescent novels written over the years have admittedly been of spurious literary quality. Stephen Dunning in a study done at Florida State University in 1959 found that many adolescent novels consistently avoided unpopular subjects and were

⁹Carlsen, Books and the Teenage Reader, p. 41.

often unnecessarily didactic. Dunning found that in the typical junior novel "racial, sexual, and other basic problems of human relations are assiduously avoided,"¹⁰ because of the possibility of offending parents or students. Nevertheless, Dunning concluded his analysis by stating that "the thirty popular junior novels selected for this study reflect a difference of literary quality paralleling that which one might expect in a selection of popular adult novels."¹¹ Although much of the early literature written specifically for teenagers has been trite, there has nevertheless emerged a significant body of classic adolescent literature and from all indications it appears as if the genre will continue to grow in range and quality as more and more serious writers turn their attention to it. Al Muller, in a study done in 1974, found overwhelming evidence that the genre is growing qualitatively as well as quantitatively. In analyzing thirty adolescent novels and comparing them with a similar study done a decade earlier by James E. Davis,¹² Muller found that many of the old taboos and stereotypes that characterized much of the earlier adolescent literature were being discarded as

¹⁰Arthur Stephen Dunning, "The Literary Quality of Books for Adolescent Readers," Literature for Adolescents, (February 1962).

¹¹Dunning, Literature for Adolescents, p. 154.

¹²James E. Davis, "Recent Trends in Fiction for Adolescents," The English Journal, May 1967, pp. 720-724.

serious writers began to portray adolescent characters whose maturation process often involved controversial problems, including "premarital pregnancy, the violence of street life, alcoholic parents, drug abuse, mental illness, and death."¹³ Muller's study found evidence that the adolescent novel had taken "a trend toward a more candid treatment of life in a genre which was once dedicated to protecting young readers from the real world."¹⁴ In the thirty novels examined by Muller, he found that the characters were very realistic indeed: they "die, are divorced, drink, fight, use drugs, and participate in other activities formerly only described in books for adults."¹⁵

The literary forefather of the adolescent novel was the novel of adolescence. Hugh Agee, in discussing the origins of the initiation theme in novels of adolescence, made a rather important historical point:

When a reader encounters adolescents in the novels of the eighteenth century and most of the nineteenth century, he finds them thinking and behaving, for the most part, like adults; in much nineteenth-century American sub-literary fiction, they are depicted as "little men" and "little women."¹⁶

¹³Al Muller, "Thirty Popular Adolescent Novels: A Current Analysis," The English Journal, September 1974, p. 98.

¹⁴Muller, p. 98.

¹⁵Muller, p. 98.

¹⁶Agee, "The Initiation Theme in the Modern American Novel of Adolescence," p. 43.

According to Agee, the "turning point for the development of the novel of adolescence comes with the publication in 1869 of Thomas Bailey Aldrich's The Story of a Bad Boy."¹⁷ Agee quotes William Dean Howells as pointing out that this particular novel marked a new beginning in the realistic treatment of the adolescent hero. Leaving behind the didactic sentimentality of previous authors such as Horatio Alger, Jr., and William T. Adams, Aldrich's The Story of a Bad Boy established the tradition of a new type of realistic adolescent hero, a tradition "that was carried on by Charles Dudley Warner, William Dean Howells, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, and in the twentieth century by J. D. Salinger and a host of others."¹⁸

Following the tradition of Aldrich's The Story of a Bad Boy, Huckleberry Finn set the stage for the kind of search for self theme that has continued to characterize the best of the novels of adolescence. Huckleberry Finn's decision to rebel against society and opt for a personal, authentic relationship with a runaway slave is the moral, existential decision which sets in motion the process of identity and self actualization. It is the kind of

¹⁷Agee, "The Initiation Theme in the Modern American Novel of Adolescence," p. 44.

¹⁸Charles E. Samuels, Thomas Bailey Aldrich (New York: Twayne, 1965), pp. 83-84 (as quoted by Agee, "The Initiation Theme in the Modern American Novel of Adolescence," p. 54).

decision in which an adolescent protagonist begins to discover that personal identity often involves existential commitment to others. It is the kind of moral commitment that Holden needs to make but doesn't. In a sense Holden and Huck are both alienated from society, but whereas Huck finds a kind of self identity through his moral commitment to Jim, Holden remains alienated in the isolated wilderness of his own egocentric concerns. In fact, Agee points out, Holden's "obsession to be the catcher in the rye is but a distortion of his self image, rather than a verification of his saintliness."¹⁹ In contrast to Holden's relentless immaturity, Huck seems to be almost the prototype of Albert Camus's existential rebel hero who, finding the world absurd, rebels against that absurdity through the imposition of his will onto reality (i.e., in Huck's case, he takes off down river with Jim). Although Huck's moral decision is not on the conscious "left brain" level, his intuitive action places him squarely in the tradition of the existential hero. Similarly, Huck can also be viewed in the tradition of what Marion Montgomery once called the standing hero in Southern fiction. Montgomery made the interesting point that heroes in Southern fiction can be compared with Greek heroes who find their integrity not by changing fate or by "sagging" from it, but by "standing

¹⁹Agee, "The Initiation Theme in the Modern American Novel of Adolescence," p. 171.

tall" in the face of it.²⁰ One hesitates perhaps to think of the picaresque Huckleberry Finn as an existential or a Greek hero, but a case could be made for both comparisons. If there is a key to Huck's growth as an individual, that key is his personal, authentic relationship with a runaway slave. Nowhere perhaps is there a simpler, more concrete example of the identity process at work than when Huck Finn intuitively sacrifices his artificial cultural identity and finds in such sacrifice the larger realization of authentic personal identity. The irony, of course, is that Huck thinks he is doing the wrong thing.

Huck's psychological extension of self to another is an example of what many psychologists agree to be the core of the identity process. Maurice Stein, for example, says:

The young individual must learn to be most himself where he means most to others--those others, to be sure, who have come to mean most to him. The term identity expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others.²¹

Baird Shuman, in discussing this same aspect of the identity theme in Steinbeck's The Red Pony, could just as easily have been describing Huck's relationship to Jim as Jody's

²⁰Marion Montgomery, "The Sense of Violation: Notes Toward a Definition of 'Southern Fiction,'" The Georgia Review, Fall 1965, p. 279.

²¹Stein, p. 38.

relationship to his grandfather; Shuman delineates Jody's passage from egocentric boy to compassionate manhood thusly:

When Jody offers to make a lemonade for his grandfather, for the first time in the story Jody is shown to be doing something exclusively for another human being. This act marks a turning point for him; he is passing from the self-centeredness of childhood to the social concern of one member of society for another member of the society, in this case for an older member of the society.²²

Both Steinbeck's Jody and Twain's Huck take a step toward maturity and authentic personal identity when they sacrifice consideration of self for consideration of another. The failure to do so might be seen as the failure to grow up in any human sense. The adolescent must relinquish the lesser self of childhood in order to discover and create a larger identity based on concern for others. The Catcher in the Rye might thus be considered to have failed its own rite of passage as a significant contribution to the moral literature of adolescence since Holden does not undergo the moral transition from self to another; unlike Huck and Jody he does not make a commitment to humanity but remains instead in the limbo of adolescent alienation. Except for the poignant passage in which he and his younger sister follow each other down the street, he takes no positive steps toward finding himself in the greater love for another.

²²Baird Shuman, "Initiation Rites in 'The Red Pony,'" The English Journal, December 1970, pp. 1252-1253. For a discussion of the role of the elderly in adolescent literature, see the reference to Richard F. Abrahamson as given in the Bibliography, page 195.

If one had to choose one axiom by which the adolescent protagonist might be guided in his or her search for self, it might be the nineteenth century romantic paradox that one has to lose oneself in order to find oneself. Huck and Jody are able to lose themselves, i.e., they give up their narcissistic concern for self in the existential extension of themselves into the greater arena of love and commitment to others. Holden makes no such extension of self and therefore remains locked in the prison of his own egocentric vision. Central then to the maturation aspect of the identity theme in adolescent fiction is a universal and profound truth about the human condition. Put simply, we must sacrifice for others in order to free ourselves.²³ We free ourselves from the isolation of self love in accepting the greater freedom of humanistic commitment. Thus is the identity crisis of the adolescent protagonist translated into the religious and philosophical language by which we examine our loss of innocence and our realization of tragedy, our expulsion from Eden and our commitment to the larger world of moral choice.

In any discussion of moral choice in adolescent fiction we are immediately brought into one of the central

²³One of the most profound examples of this idea is in Tolstoi's The Death of Iván Ilyich. The dying hero is able to conquer his fear of death by giving himself over completely to the transcendental experience of loving others.

focuses of current concern: the focus on the problem of good and evil. One of the most disturbing trends in the literature is what Paul Beattie calls "the beast within"²⁴ and what Jean Kelty refers to as "the cult to kill."²⁵ Beattie postulates that the ritual of violence portrayed by the adolescent protagonist is a legitimate reflection of the violence inherent in the rites of passage in primitive cultures and in many ways is a reflection of the capacity for violence in man's basic nature. In many cases violence is treated as a necessary part of growing up. Such is the case, for example, in Faulkner's "The Bear," an archetypal story in which an adolescent boy establishes his manhood by killing an animal and smearing its blood on his face. Even in the tender vision of The Yearling, we see Jody following in his father's footsteps, as a hunter, and his final test of manhood seems to come when he shoots the fawn he has grown to love so much, the fawn which in a sense represents his alter ego, his childhood freedom from the adult world. When Jody shoots Flag, he symbolically shoots the child in himself and thus becomes a man. Similarly in Old Yeller, a young boy must shoot his tame

²⁴Paul Beattie and Richard Lederer, "African Genesis and Lord of the Flies: Two Studies of the Beastie Within," The English Journal, December 1969, p. 1316.

²⁵Jean McClure Kelty, "The Cult of Kill in Adolescent Fiction," The English Journal, February 1975, p. 57.

but rabid dog in order to pass his rite of passage and enter the world of the adult where group survival is determined by practical consideration, not childish sentiment. Beattie argues that violence is a reality to be reckoned with and that in books like Lord of the Flies, Golding is merely holding up to the mirror of literature those tendencies toward good and evil which are inherent in the very nature of man. While Beattie thus defends the notion that man is basically capable of evil and that no society is any better than its collective safeguards against individual mayhem, Kelty, on the other hand, argues that individual acts of violence and aggression have no place in the initiation theme in adolescent literature. Just as we should not stereotype female protagonists with sexist roles, so too we should not saddle the adolescent with the pseudo-macho dictum of violence as a passageway to manhood. Kelty voices an eloquent plea against "the stereotype initiation of the male character who persistently becomes a man when he performs an act of violence against an animal and/or the natural world."²⁶ Kelty further states:

Such a pattern is hardly consistent with the ecological revolution of our age. If we are to live in harmony with nature, rather than in attempting to conquer it as we have done in the past, we must reshape our attitudes toward nature, and an excellent place to begin may be by examining just how boys in

²⁶Kelty, p. 57.

fiction are encouraged to regard nature as hostile and alien, something to be overcome.²⁷

If there is an antidote to the assumption that adolescent behavior is essentially primitive (e.g., Lord of the Flies), it may lie in the research which documents the adolescent reader's quest for standing heroes. Stanley Bank finds that young readers are not looking for literary models of ineffectual alienation and/or disdainful apathy; rather they are looking for heroes who display qualities of courage in situations of physical and moral confrontation.²⁸ Serpico is cited as a very popular book among adolescents because of the way in which the young cop hero sticks to his values in the face of overwhelming group pressure. Adolescent readers often seek elevation as well as clarification of their values. They readily seek out those fictional heroes who come to grips with life and who make authentic ethical choices. Hopelessly idealistic insofar as they believe in the values which adults preach but do not always practice, adolescent readers reach out for those heroes who carry out in fictional lives the fictional values of real parents. Adolescent readers often seek identification with heroes who are good and brave and true, honest and loyal and loving. One might

²⁷Kelty, p. 57.

²⁸Stanley Bank, "A Literary Hero for Adolescents: The Adolescent," The English Journal, October 1969, p. 1013.

establish a kind of Huck- Holden moral dichotomy in which Huck carries away the prize. Huck, the all-America-loved bad boy hero of the past, not Holden, the shifty-eyed loser of the present, is the one who finds himself in existential clarity to be on the moral side of right. Perhaps Mark Twain lived in a world in which the clear-cut moral decision was possible; Salinger, on the other hand, may inhabit a world in which the certain perception of right and wrong is progressively difficult. The relative pluralism and the "situational ethics" of the modern world may have taken their toll on adolescent fiction.

Salinger's hero is in what Bonnie Jo Lundblad calls the tradition of the rebel-victim. Holden as "one who renounces and is rejected, one who opposes and is oppressed"²⁹ is part of that current of rebel-victim literature which has existed from the Greeks to the existentialists. The importance of this tradition lies in its unique way of reflecting and holding up to view the value of individual freedom in relationship to pressures from society. Antigone refused to obey Creon's order concerning the burying of her brother and in so doing set the stage for the rebel-victim theme which has continued throughout the history of western literature and which seems to have taken a particularly strong hold in the adolescent literature of the 1960's and

²⁹Bonnie Jo Lundblad, "The Rebel-Victim Theme: Past and Present," The English Journal, September 1971, p. 763.

1970's. Holden, like Antigone, is both rebel and victim: rebel against a callous world and victim in it. Similarly, Hesse's adolescent hero in Under the Wheel becomes a victim to the tyranny of the German school system. Larry McMurtry's protagonist in All My Friends Are Going To Be Strangers becomes a rebel-victim to his own slavery to writing and finally saves himself by destroying his manuscript. McMurtry's hero is also portrayed as the victim of a straight society in which people are always urging him to get a haircut. McMurtry's protagonist plays out the identity theme with all the fervor of a doomed romantic hero, but in the end he comes to the realization that whatever definition of himself he is to achieve must be worked out within the limits of what society expects of him. The theme of McMurtry's novel, like the theme of most literature of self discovery, is that one must somehow evolve a system of integrity in one's life, a system in which one can simultaneously satisfy the demands of society and the yearnings of one's soul.

In his dissertation study, Hugh Agee has approached the problem of the social adjustment of the adolescent in terms of primitive initiation rituals. According to Agee, the stages of adolescent development often correspond to the stages of the initiation rites in pre-historic cultures. These stages are three-fold: separation from childhood freedom and innocence, traumatic transition, and final incorporation into the adult society. Agee examines these

stages as depicted in The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter, The Mountain Lion, Other Voices, Other Rooms, The Grass Harp, Catcher in the Rye, The Adventures of Augie March and The Member of the Wedding. In each novel he examines the processes by which adolescents are ushered into the adult world and in each novel he finds the process wanting. Agee argues that our society does not adequately prepare adolescents for the confrontation with adult realities and therefore most of the initiation in the modern American novel of adolescence tends toward alienation rather than confirmation.³⁰

Ironically perhaps, this tendency toward alienation has often produced some of our best contemporary fiction. The existential literature of France and Germany, for example, has embraced the alienation and rebel-victim theme and has projected unto the modern imagination some of the most profound and lasting of fictional images. The existential writers have asked the same basic questions that underscore the adolescent protagonists' quest for meaning and value. In fact, Michael A. D'Ambrosio makes the assumption that the existential identity crisis or the question "Who Am I?" is the central focus point for

³⁰ Another explanation might be that adolescent alienation is just one aspect of a larger pattern of alienation that characterizes the metaphysical condition of modern man.

adolescent literature.³¹ According to D'Ambrosio this dominant note is symbolically struck when Lewis Carroll's Alice says, "I'm sure I'm not Ada . . . and I'm sure I can't be Mabel . . . she's she, and I'm I." Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass extend the existential questions of what is real and "who am I" into the child fantasy genre, but both novels "serve to emphasize the necessity for those intrinsic rules which guide the individual in society . . . and by honestly uncovering the shortcomings of both the child's and adult's world, a constructive effort is made to establish a rapport between the two."³²

The difficulty of the adolescent identity crisis is compounded today by the quick-silver fluidity of society itself. The world that we go to sleep to at night is not the same world we wake up to in the morning. The rites of passage were often violent in primitive societies, but at least they were definite, clear and consistent within the framework of the society's values. Today, however, the world itself is in constant flux and there is no unifying world view, and no one culturally established rite of passage through which the adolescent may quickly and safely pass into adulthood. Thus, the adolescent often becomes

³¹Michael A. D'Ambrosio, "Alice for Adolescents," The English Journal, November 1970, p. 1074.

³²D'Ambrosio, p. 1074.

alienated, as Hugh Agee observed, or worse still, in urban jungles, desperately searches for identity in alcohol and drugs and the violence of street gangs in the back alleys of the night.³³ Who can say with any degree of authority just exactly where the world is or where it's going? Who can tell the adolescent in search of himself or herself just what constitutes the authentic values of the adult world? The Madison Avenue hucksters? The Hollywood producers? The political demagogues? The Billy Grahams with their offers of instant salvation? In a multi-dimensional plastic world, what chance does the adolescent have to develop noble values and authentic identity? One hope, of course, is in the home where if a child is lucky, the parents will engender within their offspring, by precept and practice, those values of honesty and courage which will sustain the child as he or she grows into adolescence and must seek rites of passage outside the home, in the frightening battleground of peer competition and institutional indifference. Teachers of literature can supplement and widen the scope of these home values by the skillful introduction and teaching of those novels of adolescence which contain realistic treatment of humanistic values and in which the direction of identity flows from self to others.

³³In fact, one of the novels selected for analysis in this study, Property Of, places the identity theme in just such a setting of drugs and violence.

CHAPTER III

THE KNOW THYSELF THEME IN PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE AND IN FOUR CONTEMPORARY ADOLESCENT NOVELS

The first part of this chapter will involve two concerns: one, the philosophical problem of defining the self; and two, the know thyself theme as it has been variously treated in Sophoclean drama and Socratic philosophy, in certain Eastern ways of liberation and in existentialism. The second part of the chapter will examine the problem of identity in four contemporary adolescent novels. The general goal in this chapter will be to see in what ways and to what extent the identity theme in the contemporary adolescent novel reflects the larger identity theme of past movements in Eastern and Western philosophy.

In trying to sketch a philosophical background for an examination of the know thyself theme, one of the first problems one is confronted with is the problem of the self. The problem of the self has plagued many philosophers and perhaps the best approach here is to begin by examining the negative side of the issue, i.e., that school of thought which denies the existence of self. According to the behavioristic school of thought, there is no mind, just a brain, and there is no self, but rather a bundle of conditioned reflexes that operates in a manner that is both empirically explainable and predictable. Following this

view, the social sciences have often grown to look for their explanation of human behavior, not in the realm of a self actualizing "self," but rather in the external factors of environment and heredity. Such a concept of self, or more accurately, such a denial of the existence of self, has precluded the possibility of freedom of the will since there is no personal identity or "self" to do the willing. In the defenestration of the self and freedom of the will, such existential and humanistic questions as "Who am I?" or "What is the purpose of life?" become meaningless. Humanists and third force psychologists have all, in one way or another, tried to reestablish in modern thought the importance of the self and freedom of the will. So too have the phenomenological and existentialist thinkers. Perhaps, however, it was the pre-Socratic philosopher Parmenides who was first in Western thought to put forth the case for the preeminence of the self when he stated that "thought and being are the same."¹ In contrast to Aristotle, who later invented a structure of reality in which mind and matter, thought and being were separate, Parmenides presented a holistic model of the universe in which there is no difference between reality and the structure of thought. In his rationalistic search for the basic substance of the universe, Parmenides' logic led him

¹"Being" is to be understood here as synonymous with "identity."

to the conclusion that physical reality and mental thought are one and the same thing: the world is what we think it is.² Although Parmenides simply meant that by being logically consistent we can attain an accurate knowledge of the world, since "what is knowable" is "what is," his doctrine, when taken literally, has profound implications, the most obvious being that if mental knowledge of the world and the physical world are identical, then we can alter the reality of the world by changing our thought structure of it. This exciting idea corresponds with Einsteinian physics in which the reality of time and space are shown to be inextricably connected to the frame of reference of the observer. If we accept the idea that physical reality is a structure of thought, then we have a plausible explanation for such phenomena as levitation (Jesus walking on the water) and firewalking, both of which occur but neither of which are possible from the point of view of empirical science. The self when it unifies thought and being is the source of miracles. The Parmenidian concept of identity was for centuries overshadowed by the problem of metaphysical dualism that followed on the heels of Aristotle's categorization system. There was, however, among the German Idealists (beginning with Leibniz and Kant and ending with Heidegger) a rekindling of interest in the

²W. T. Jones, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1952), pp. 42-43.

Parmenidean perspective, a renewal of interest that inspired a turning point in modern philosophy. At the hands of the German Idealists, Parmenides' concept of identity as the unity of thought and being began to undergo certain changes of emphasis which directly influenced the evolving concept of self in Western philosophy. Whereas Parmenides stressed the concept of identity as unity (e.g., "thought and being are the same"), such philosophers as Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling moved toward a dialectical concept of identity in which being becomes an attribute of thought. The logical extreme of this position surfaced in Hegel's notion of the absolute Idea; in Hegel's famous metaphysical synthesis (Being, Not-Being = Becoming), the manifest being of the physical world is seen as an unfolding of the absolute Idea thinking on itself. In our own century, the German phenomenologist Martin Heidegger, in his treatment of the identity problem, has attempted to go beyond both the "identity as unity within itself" concept of Parmenides and the "identity as transcendental synthesis" of Hegel. In Identity and Difference³ Heidegger brought a new focus onto the identity problem by stressing not thought or being but rather the way in which the relationship between the two fundamentally serves to alter the structure of both.

³Martin Heidegger, Identity and Difference (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

According to Joan Stambaugh who translated and wrote the introduction for Identity and Difference,

What is new about (Heidegger's) understanding of identity as a relation is that the relation first determines the manner of being of what is to be related and the how of this relation.⁴

Heidegger's stress on relationship as a structuring agent bears an interesting parallel with Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy. According to Whitehead, the process of perception alters both the nature of the perceiver and the nature of the object perceived. Similarly, in relativity physics, a subatomic particle can be both a wave and a particle at the same time depending on the frame of reference of the observer; and the process of observation itself influences both the experimenter and the object of the experiment.⁵ The findings of Parmenides, Heidegger, Whitehead, and relativity physics all seem to suggest a definition of identity and a model of the universe out of which the self can be seen as a self-actualizing agent which both creates and discovers the reality out of which, paradoxically, it derives its own

⁴Heidegger, p. 12.

⁵The British biologist Lyall Watson in Lifetide: The Biology of the Unconscious (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979) has even gone so far as to suggest that the universe itself may be a collective thought. This idea is not new in Eastern philosophy, but it takes on a new degree of scientific respectability when physicists and biologists lend the support of their findings to it.

ground of being. George Kelly has subsumed this subjectively relativistic definition of reality and the self when he argues that mental patients can be helped by teaching them to alter their "constructs" or ways of patterning the world.⁶

Parmenides, the German Idealists, the phenomenologists, George Kelly and many others have all contributed significantly to the evolving concept of identity but perhaps the most interesting recent thought on the subject has derived from the work of such fourth force⁷ psychologists as Robert Ornstein and Lawrence LeShan. Ornstein in such works as The Psychology of Consciousness and The Mind Field has worked toward a new theory of consciousness which in essence returns the self to the holistic concept of Parmenides as well as to such esoteric psychologies as Taoism, Vedanta, Janism and Zen. Ornstein's work originally grew out of his interests in hemispheric research but his writing has developed to include far ranging

⁶George Kelly, A Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963).

⁷The term fourth force psychology refers to parapsychology, to certain aspects of hemispheric research, and to psychologists and thinkers in general who are willing, in their search for understanding, to look beyond the limits of empirical science and to learn what can be learned from such esoteric psychologies as Vedanta, Yoga, and Zen. The preceding forces in the history of modern psychology are as follows: Freudianism (first force), Behaviorism (second force) and Humanism (third force).

philosophical and psychological implications. Basically, Ornstein has developed a "split-brain" metaphor in which he shows how the self has become divided into two often opposing modes of consciousness: the "left brain" mode which is analytical, linear, rational, and the "right brain" mode which is intuitive, synthetic, and holistic. What Ornstein argues for is a new model of consciousness in which the self can be returned to a position of holistic unity. Western society, Ornstein feels, has overemphasized the importance of the rational, linear, empirical mode of perception and as a result, the individual has lost contact in many ways with a basic aspect of self. As one contemporary educator rather dramatically put it, modern man "has had an operation performed upon his own brain--a metaphorical severing of his corpus collosum through which he has lost touch with his right brain, with half his humanity."⁸ In working toward a more holistic, unified concept of consciousness and self, Ornstein has suggested a look at some of the esoteric psychologies of the East such as Vedanta and Yoga, psychologies in which the concept of self involves unity with external reality rather than, in the Aristotelian tradition, separateness from it. Lawrence LeShan, in his theory of multiple realities, has approached the problem of consciousness and

⁸G. Lynn Nelson, "Toward a New English Teacher," English Education, Spring 1977, p. 134.

identity in a similar way. According to LeShan, the empirical mode of perception which has prevailed in Western culture is only one of many valid ways of structuring reality and while the empirical mode has paid large dividends in terms of "scientific progress," it has not been adequate to meet the needs of many personal and social problems.⁹ From the point of view of the self, what is important to note here is that not only does the way of structuring reality determine the nature of that reality, conversely, it also influences the nature of the self which is doing the structuring. Just as Heidegger pointed out that the relationship of being and thought influences both, and Whitehead pointed out that the process of perception alters both the nature of subject and object, perceiver and object perceived, so too does the structure of reality which an individual employs both define and limit the nature of reality and the nature of the self. A holistic sense of self must perforce involve a holistic way of structuring reality, a way that involves both sides of the brain, the intuitive as well as the analytical. In other words, any substantive definition of self must also involve a definition of the reality structure out of which the self operates. Thus the search for self theme that has concerned thinkers from Socrates to Rollo May

⁹Lawrence LeShan, Alternate Realities (New York: Ballantine Books, 1976), p. 37.

and the search for the metaphysical source of identity that has concerned philosophers from Parmenides to Heidegger can only be meaningfully understood within the ground of being, or the structure of reality out of which identity and the self are possible. In a very real sense the search for self has involved a search for a valid way of structuring the world. Since, as George Kelly points out,

Man looks at his world through transparent patterns or templates which he creates and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is composed [,]¹⁰

any attempt to examine the search for self theme in philosophy, literature, religion or art must also involve an attempt to understand the reality structure out of which the search was conducted and out of which the definition of the self must ultimately evolve.

In looking then at the search for self or search for identity theme in Sophoclean drama or Socratic philosophy, for example, one must also understand something of the way in which Sophocles and Socrates viewed¹¹ the world about them, i.e., what reality structure made their view of the world possible. The structure of reality out of which Sophocles drew and extended his perception of tragedy is

¹⁰Kelly, pp. 8-9.

¹¹"Viewed" not in the sense of passively receiving visual information, but "viewed" in the sense of the creative perception of discovery.

essentially what LeShan has referred to as the "mythic mode of Being."¹² Sophocles did not, however, limit himself to the vision of the world that existed in his mythic sources; in fact, the dramatic tension of his work is probably due in large part to the unique way in which he was able in his tragedies to fuse together the elements of two separate reality structures, the mythic and the analytical. On the one hand Sophocles was dealing with a mythic structure of reality in which the fate of human beings was inexorably involved with oracular clairvoyance and the will of the gods; on the other hand he was dealing with a new spirit of analytical inquiry that grew out of the teaching of the Sophists and which reached its most humanistic expression in Protagoras' famous proposition: "man is the measure of all things." Creativity and new vision are often the results of two conflicting reality structures that historically overlap one another;¹³ Sophocles was

¹²LeShan, p. 84.

¹³This principle is the basis of Arnold Toynbee's theory of history. The same idea has also been eloquently expressed by the physicist Werner Heisenberg: "It is probably true quite generally that in the history of human thinking the most fruitful developments frequently take place at those points where two different lines of thought meet. These lines may have their roots in quite different parts of human culture, in different times or different cultural environments or different religious tradition: hence if they meet, that is, if they are at least so much as related to each other that a real interaction can take place, then one may hope that new and interesting developments may follow" (quoted in preliminary pages of The TAO of Physics, by Fritjof Capra (New York: Bantam Books, 1975)).

no exception. Out of the dynamic tension between the ancient religious view and the contemporary secular perspective, Sophocles was able to project onto the human imagination a new synthesis between man and god, a new humanistic vision of tragedy in which the protagonist is able to achieve authentic identity and a full measure of human dignity. Oedipus' search for authentic identity provided a new reality structure in which man is perceived as possessing both the freedom of will necessary for existential choice and the capacity to suffer with heroic dignity the oftentimes ironic and tragic results of that choice.

In Oedipus the King the identity theme is examined within the context of man's relationship to the gods; in effect, man's search for himself involves a way of trying to come to grips with such questions as freedom of the will, human dignity and the role of the gods (or fate) in human destiny. With Socrates, however, the search for self was integrally connected with the search for universal truth, a search which calls into question the whole range of human knowledge. If Sophocles dealt with the identity theme within the context of mythical religion, Socrates extended that context to include the entire range of knowledge available to fifth century Athenians. Not only was he dissatisfied with the scientific speculation of his time, he questioned the whole spectrum of belief on every moral and social issue of the day. Socrates shook the very tree of

knowledge itself and, in the onslaught of his surgical logic, commonly held assumptions about knowledge and virtue fell to the ground like so much overripe fruit. For Socrates, the search for self understanding entailed the search for universal truth and this in turn must begin with an acceptance of one's own ignorance. His "All I know is that I know nothing" stance anticipated by twenty-five centuries Sartre's doctrine of the acceptance of nothingness¹⁴ as the beginning point for authentic knowledge. In contrast to Sophocles' Oedipus, whose search for truth led him more deeply into a profoundly tragic understanding of himself, Socrates' search for truth led him ever outward to a progressively intense understanding of and conflict with the political and social forces around him. The social thrust of the ancient gadfly has been summed up rather well in The Reader's Companion to World Literature:

When a man realizes his ignorance, he sets out on the search for truth, as Socrates has done, and he wished the other Athenians to do also. To help them, he had exposed the folly of their traditional ideas of virtue and urged them to examine their moral concepts until they could define them in terms admitting to no exceptions, for only definitions which possessed universal validity could provide a sure foundation for a science of human conduct.¹⁵

¹⁴Jean-Paul Sarte, Being and Nothingness (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958).

¹⁵Calvin S. Brown, general editor, The Reader's Companion to World Literature (New York: The Dryden Press, Inc., 1956), p. 417.

Socrates' search for truth within the larger context of society led to a rather socialistic¹⁶ definition of man that is ultimately and inexplicably interwoven with his definition of justice. According to Socrates (perhaps as much created as quoted by Plato), justice is manifested only within a social and political context in which the individual is performing to the best of his ability the role that is optimally beneficial to society or the state as a whole. Ironically, Socrates, considered by many to be the ultimate individual, in his search for authentic identity and universal truth, traveled toward and eventually found an essentially social rather than individualistic definition of man and the self.

Despite the individualistic sound of Socrates' call to "know thyself," his search for truth and identity was analytic and dialectical in methodology and the basic context of the search was always political, social and outer directed. In contrast, the "know thyself" theme in Eastern philosophy has generally involved an inner as opposed to an outer directed search for identity. Most of the esoteric psychologies,¹⁷ especially Vedanta, Yoga,

¹⁶ Bertrand Russell has even gone so far as to suggest that Plato's Republic is in actuality a perfect model for a communistic, totalitarian state. Russell referred to the Republic as a "totalitarian tract."

¹⁷ "Esoteric psychologies"--Robert Ornstein's term. Allan Watts referred to Taoism and Zen as "eastern ways of liberation." Both writers were trying to avoid using terms like eastern philosophy, religion or mysticism, all of which are misleading.

Taoism and Zen , are concerned with the stripping away of those notions of the self which are outer directed, which are based on role playing, and which are centered in the symbolic structure of language or any other cultural or societal distraction. The object of the esoteric psychologies is not to debase the importance of social interaction, literature or art per se, but rather to focus the search for authentic identity in the context of an inner reality that both transcends the individual self and at the same time links it in psychic unity with all of the universe. Within this frame of reference, the self is in no way an entity that is separate from what is "out there." The Aristotelian classification system and the Cartesian split¹⁸ are both regarded, from the esoteric point of view, as suffering from "maya" or the illusion of separateness and duality. Also considered as "maya" or as distracting illusion is the very concept upon which much of modern psychology sustains itself, the concept of a personal ego. The Indian-American scholar Anand Malik has stated that while the "know thyself" theme is the "keynote of all Indian philosophy, both Buddhist and Upanashadic," the object of both of these schools of thought is "the

¹⁸The "Cartesian split," in philosophy, refers to Descarte's famous separation of the doubting entity from the body in which the entity is contained: "I think, therefore I am."

elimination of the ego in order to achieve cosmic consciousness."¹⁹ One of the stumbling blocks in the attempt to achieve "cosmic consciousness," or the obliteration of the ego in the greater identification of self with all, is what Allan Watts has referred to as the "conventional self."²⁰ As young children we are in a Wordsworthian state of mystical identity²¹ with all that is around us and we have not as yet been closed in the "prison house" of social identity, have not as yet lost the capacity for what the phenomenologists refer to as eidetic intuition and what Carlos Castaneda calls "seeing." Both the "eidetic intuition" of the phenomenologists and the "seeing" of Castaneda refer to the act of perceiving the world sans prior descriptions of it, particularly the prior descriptions dictated by the Western scientific or empirical mode of consciousness. According to Watts, as we get older we begin to take on the blinders of a social, historical or "conventional" self:

We learn very thoroughly . . . to identify ourselves with an equally conventional view of "myself." For

¹⁹Anand Malik, Comparative Theories of Knowledge: An Essay on Existential Man (New Delhi: East-West University Publishers, n.d.), p. 130.

²⁰Allan Watts, The Way of Zen (New York: Random House, 1957), p. 6.

²¹The sense of mystical identity with nature pervades much of Wordsworth's early work and the child is often viewed as being in a state of perception and knowledge that is more pure and immediate than that of the adult.

the conventional "self" or "person" is composed mainly of a history consisting of selected memories, and beginning from the moment of parturition. According to convention, I am not simply what I am doing now. I am also what I have done, and my conventionally edited version of my past is made to seem almost more the real "me" than what I am at this moment. For what I am seems so fleeting and intangible, but what I was is fixed and final. It is the firm basis for predictions of what I will be in the future, and so it comes about that I am more closely identified with what no longer exists than with what actually is.²²

The attempt to strip away all false definitions of the self, including the historical or conventional self described above, has often led Eastern seekers on a sort of pilgrimage of the soul. In modern literature, Hesse's Siddhartha and Robert Persig's Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance are two outstanding examples of the search for self theme within the framework of this pilgrimage of the soul tradition. Although Persig's work is brilliant, it is Hesse's book that follows closest to the traditional Buddhist search for self enlightenment. Persig's work branches out into questions of aesthetics, and the search for self is conducted within a more formal and analytical style of inquiry; in fact, many passages in the book read like a philosophical treatise. Also, Persig ultimately finds the Buddhist approach to an understanding of reality to be inadequate and inconsistent with his own evolving system of understanding. His rejection of the doctrine of illusions marked a turning point in his search for

²²Watts, The Way of Zen, p. 6.

understanding and he left the Zen school where he was studying, to return to the states and his own unique brand of analytic inquiry. In Siddhartha, by contrast, the seeker of enlightenment follows a more traditional Buddhist path to knowledge, a path in which the search for self is a corresponding search for Nirvana, or the freedom from illusion. In some of the Buddhist traditions, Nirvana has been interpreted to be a state of bliss in which the individual searcher finds release from self in a final and ultimate unification with the all of being, and this state of pure being is reached only after many successive stages of development or "incarnations." According to Allan Watts, however, this view represents a misunderstanding of Nirvana. To Watts, Nirvana is simply the state one reaches when one is able to cast aside certain preconceptions of time and space and is able to live in "the eternal now" of the world as it is. As long as our awareness of self is experienced in terms of external illusions such as separateness and duality, we constantly have to "recreate ourselves" from minute to minute in time and space, and this for Watts is what is meant by reincarnation. When we find the freedom to just be, without filtering our experience of the world through prior descriptions of it, we begin to live authentically in Nirvana, the existential state of clear consciousness in which experience of the world is direct and unified. From the Zen point of view, the discovery of self can only be attained within this framework of

direct and unified consciousness of the world. Paradoxically, we find our self when we become selfless, i.e., when we shut off all abstract, extrinsic definitions of self that distract from the immediate, direct conscious experience of oneness with the world as it is.

Oddly enough, language itself is often pointed out by scholars of Eastern thought as a hindrance to the development of cosmic awareness. Allan Watts and many other scholars have repeatedly pointed out how the abstract nature of language often leads us mistakenly to identify reality with the symbols of reality.²³ From earliest infancy we begin learning to "see" the world through the language system of our parents and our culture and all too often this pattern of perception is all that we ever know of the world. (In a sense, one can say that the job of the artist is to reopen our eyes to the freshness of the world uncluttered by staid patterns of prior description.) The search for self in the esoteric psychologies of the East has often involved an attempt at immediacy of experience uncluttered by the abstract symbol system of language. Language, as documented by hemispheric research, is connected with the speech centers of the left hemisphere, and as such is to be associated with the analytic, linear mode of perception. (An exception, of course, is the

²³ In recent Western philosophy, Suzanne Langer has made this same point in her brilliant ground-breaking book Philosophy in a New Key (Cambridge, Md.: Harvard University Press, 1957).

language of poetry in which there is a holistic fusion of the rational and the intuitional.) The overdependence on analytical and abstract language has traditionally been regarded in the East (especially by thirteenth century Zen monks in Japan) as a distracting element in the search for self.²⁴ One can imagine a Zen monk telling Socrates to shut up and listen to the truth within himself instead of searching for it outside in the endless cobweb of logical argument. According to Zen, trying to find truth by looking for it outside oneself is like trying to chase the horse one is riding on. Professor Malik, in discussing the two ways of thinking, i.e., with and without language, makes the following distinctions:

Thinking with language involves experience, discursive thought, and concepts. Thinking without language takes one to the realm of pure thought, to boundless space, to boundless consciousness, beyond duality of perception and non-perception, beyond language, and into complete nothingness.²⁵

This state of nothingness is not, however, to be confused with a void or a vacuum. It is the state of nothingness in which one discovers the oneness of everything and experiences the freedom of "Nirvana." It is the state of clear consciousness in which one experiences the marriage of the inner self with the external world, and like all good

²⁴The school of Eastern thought called Namansis is a major exception to the distrust of analytical language.

²⁵Malik, p. 128.

marriages, the two become united in a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Experiences of psychic oneness between the self and the world have taken various forms of expression ranging from sitting meditation to certain forms of exhilarating physical exertion of which the Dervish dance and the contemporary joggers' "third wind" are examples. The degree of intensity of the oneness experience varies greatly with the individual. The interpretation of the experience, however, seems to be universally bound up with the intellectual or cultural frame of reference of the individual. Thus in Siddhartha, the hero's sense of ultimate oneness took the form of the traditional mystical experience in which the Atman or "phenomenal self of waking consciousness"²⁶ was united with the Brahmin, the source of all consciousness. In the context of Western religion, by contrast, such figures as Saint Augustine and Master Eickhart were conditioned to interpret the experience of oneness in terms of a mystical unity and identity with the Christian god. In Western literature, Walt Whitman's experience of oneness was interpreted in terms of a pantheistic identity with nature and a mystical identity with all of mankind. Hart Crane's mystical experience often took the form of identification with the sea and it is

²⁶Malik, p. 131.

perhaps no small or accidental irony that Crane took final refuge in the waters of death.

Although existentialism is not often thought of in an Eastern or mystical context, there are, as Professor Malik has pointed out, certain basic similarities between the search for self theme in existential philosophy and this same theme in certain Eastern traditions, especially the Buddhist tradition.²⁷ Just as the Buddhist seeker of self must begin with a rejection of what Watts has called conventional knowledge, so too must the existential seeker begin with what Heidegger and Sartre have referred to as the "encounter with nothingness." The nothingness of Heidegger and Sartre can be compared with Husserl's didactic reductionism. According to Husserl, the search for authentic knowledge involves a series of mental training²⁸ in which one learns to reduce or block out all prior descriptions of the world in order to reach a state of presuppositionlessness or nothingness out of which one can then begin to perceive the world as it really is and begin to create an authentic existence. For the existentialists, the searcher of truth must begin by not accepting anything as "given"; instead, as Camus argues in The Rebel, we

²⁷Malik, pp. 122-133.

²⁸An American philosopher, Don Ihde, has written a book containing exercises in such mental training, Experiential Phenomenology (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1977).

must realize that the world is absurd, that there are no ultimate answers, no absolutes, and that we must rebel against the absurd by imposing our will onto reality. Thus it is that in the act of will we create whatever meaning there is to be had in the world, and in the process of willing we achieve authentic identity. In the words of Mathew Arnold, "We are here as on a darkling plain/Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,/Where ignorant armies clash by night." In such a world view we must see, according to the existentialists, that truth or meaning must be created from within rather than passively received from without. Such a view of man and the world sets the search for self theme at its inception in the context of an almost nihilistic individualism. As the search matures, however, the emphasis is generally directed away from alienation and toward humanistic commitment.²⁹ In other words, the existential search for identity begins with a philosophical acceptance of nothingness and the absurd, centers itself in the isolation of individual self awareness, but moves progressively toward an imposition of will in which the individual creates meaningful identity through engagement in humanistic commitment or social action. Such has been the case with Sartre, Camus, and Merleau-Ponty,

²⁹This is the main thrust of Jean-Paul Sartre's Existentialism and Humanism (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Haskell House, 1977).

all of whom were active in the French resistance movement during the Nazi occupation of France. According to such existentialists, the shaking off of preconceived notions about reality and the world frees one for the kind of authentic identity that often leads directly into the world of social or political experience. Sartre has even gone so far as to claim that knowledge, if it is to have any validity at all, must be based on experience within the actual world rather than in mere abstract speculation. The search for self within an existential context begins in isolation and ends in commitment, begins in despair but ends in laughter.³⁰

The second part of this chapter will use the ideas discussed previously as a springboard for an analysis of the know thyself theme in four contemporary adolescent novels. An attempt will be made to determine in what manner and to what extent the identity experience of the adolescent protagonist can be related to the larger know thyself theme that has been previously discussed in terms of Sophoclean drama, Socratic philosophy, Eastern psychologies, and existentialism. An assumption is that the adolescent identity theme is a continuation in miniature of the traditional know thyself theme of past movements in

³⁰The shift from despair to humor is apparent in the difference between the tone and vision of Sartre's early novel Nausea (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1959) and his later autobiography The Words (New York: G. Braziller, 1964).

literature and philosophy. Whether the adolescent search for identity takes on an Eastern or Western flavor, whether the search is intuitive or analytical or both, whether the search is inner or outer directed, whether the context of the search is secular or religious, whether the search ends in alienation or affirmation, whether the search ends in identity and enlightenment or conformity and ignorance, whether the search ends with tragedy or continues with dignity--these are the questions that will guide the direction of the inquiry, an inquiry which the author hopes will be intuitive as well as analytical.

The novels to be considered in the second part of this chapter are Ursula LeGuin's Very Far Away from Anywhere Else, Gunnel Beckman's That Early Spring, George Bower's November . . . December, and Norma Klein's It's OK If You Don't Love Me. Of the nine novels selected for this study, these are the four that were found to be most suitable for an analysis of the know thyself theme.

The know thyself theme from Sophocles to the existentialists begins with an uncertainty or dissatisfaction with self identity. In the case of Sophocles' Oedipus, his search for self originated from an uncertainty concerning his literal identity. (As a youth he had been told by an inebriated guest at a banquet that he was not the real son of Polybus and he went to the oracle at Delphi to question the gods about his true identity.) Socrates, on the other hand, had no doubts about his literal identity, but he did

question the Delphic oracle that cast him as the wisest of all men. With Socrates the search for identity was really a search for abstract truth. For the Zen novice and the existential hero the identity search is more akin to that of Oedipus than that of Socrates. The existential question "Who am I?" that has been a motivating force in Sophoclean drama, Eastern ways of liberation and modern existential philosophy and literature is also the same force that propels the search for identity in the four adolescent novels to be examined in this chapter.

I. VERY FAR AWAY FROM ANYWHERE ELSE

In Ursula LeGuin's Very Far Away from Anywhere Else, the know thyself theme centers itself at the beginning in the adolescent hero's existential conflict between the demands of his inner voice and his corresponding need for approval from "the others." From the existential and Buddhist points of view, authentic identity must be created from within rather than inherited from external society. The Danish existentialist Soren Kierkegaard has even gone so far as to state flatly that "the crowd is untruth." Once one is able to perceive the crowd as "untruth," one also begins to feel a sense of isolation and alienation from the conforming others. In Very Far Away from Anywhere Else, the adolescent protagonist begins his search for self with just such an awareness of alienation from the

crowd. According to Socrates, confusion is the beginning of wisdom, and it is, appropriately, in a state of confused identity that Owen Griffiths begins to cast about for a path out of the fog. Because he has not yet attained authentic identity and the inner strength that goes with it, Owen, who thinks of himself as a "bright little jerk" who would rather read books than play sports, feels a sense of panic at the discovery that he is alienated and alone:

I think what you mostly do when you find you really are alone is to panic. You rush to the opposite extreme and pack yourself into groups--clubs, teams, societies, types. You suddenly start dressing exactly like the others. It's a way of being invisible. The way you sew the patches on the holes on your blue jeans becomes incredibly important. If you do it wrong you're not with it. You have to be with it. That's a peculiar phrase, you know? With it. With what? With them. With the others. All together. Safety in numbers. I'm not me. I'm a basketball letter. I'm a popular kid. I'm my friend's friend. I'm a black leather growth on a Honda. I'm a member. I'm a teen-ager. You can't see me, all you can see is us. We're safe.

And if We see You standing alone by yourself, if you're lucky we'll ignore you. If you're not lucky, we might throw rocks. Because we don't like people standing there with the wrong kind of patches on their blue jeans reminding us that we're each alone and none of us is safe.³¹

The danger to the individual, which Owen describes above, has often been the theme of existential writers,

³¹Ursula LeGuin, Very Far Away from Anywhere Else (New York: Atheneum, 1976), pp. 5-6. Hereinafter cited parenthetically in the text as LeGuin, VFA.

from Dostoevsky to Camus. In the famous "Grand Inquisitor" scene in The Brothers Karamazov, for example, Dostoevsky illustrates how Jesus himself would be rejected if he re-appeared in a manner that was different from expected. And in Camus' The Stranger, Meursault is condemned to death, not because he is guilty of murder, but because he is guilty of the greater crime of being different.

Owen's insight, in the passage quoted above, is remarkable. Perhaps it is just because of such insight that he is unable to achieve or to be satisfied with the kind of comfortable conformity of the crowd, the kind of conformity in which others seem to swim with such easy mindlessness.

Owen's identity problem is further complicated by the fact that his mother and father desperately want him to be "normal." Like the jury in Camus' The Stranger, they feel threatened by anyone who is different, especially if the one who is different is their son. When Owen's father gives him a car for his seventeenth birthday, Owen sees the car as a sad reflection of his father's wanting him to be normal. When Owen doesn't drive the car to school, his father feels somehow betrayed and Owen, though guilt laden, is unable to explain to his father that the car poses a threat to his identity:

I couldn't tell him why not. I only half understood it myself. If I drove the thing to school and parked it in the school lot, I'd given in. I owned it. It owned me. I was the owner of a new

car with all the extras. People at school would say, "Hey how about that. Hey wow. How about Fastback Griffiths!" Some of them would sneer, but some of them would honestly admire it, and maybe me for being lucky enough to own it. And that's what I couldn't take. I didn't know who I was, but I knew one thing; I wasn't the seat-fixture of an automobile (LeGuin, VFA, p. 11).

Albert Camus in The Rebel has argued that the highest form of rebellion against the absurd lies in the realm of artistic creation. The artist creates, out of the chaos around him, his own unique world of order and harmony. This is what Owen does. Ever since the sixth grade when he began to be aware that he was different and alone, Owen has been creating a mythical world called Thorn:

I had this country called Thorn. I drew maps of it and stuff, but mostly I didn't write stories about it. Instead I described the flora and fauna, and the landscape and the cities, and figured out the economy and the way they lived, their government and history (LeGuin, VFA, p. 50).

For Owen, the imaginary island of Thorn represents the existential imposition of will onto reality. Thorn is the created world in which he finds an outlet for his dreams and his desires. At one point, Owen compares himself with "the Bronte kids" who had similar fantasies.

What the Bronte kids did for years was write stories and poems about these countries they made up. Maps and wars and adventures and all. Charlotte and Branwell had "Angria," and Emily and Anne had "Gondal" (LeGuin, VFA, p. 50).

Just as the Bronte kids escaped from the lonely isolation of their "vicarage in a village on a moor in the middle of Nowhere, England, a hundred and fifty years ago," so, too,

does Owen escape to his self-created world where he is free to be himself;

The only place for me, actually, was on Thorn. Thorn didn't have much government in the usual sense, but they had some institutions people could join if they liked; one of them was called the Scholarly. It was built part way up one of the highest mountains, out in the country. It had a huge library, and laboratories and basic science equipment and lots of rooms and studies. People could go there and take classes or teach classes, however it worked out best, and work on research alone or in teams, as they preferred. At night they met, if they felt like it, in a big hall with several fireplaces, and talked about genetics and history and sleep research and polymers and the age of the Universe. If you didn't like the conversation at one fireplace, you could always go to another one. The nights are always cold on Thorn. There's no fog there up on the mountainside, but the wind always blows (LeGuin, VFA, p. 63).

If Thorn represents the ideal world for Owen, the image of the fog represents the world of conformity and "quiet desperation." Owen uses the image of fog again and again both to describe his own state of alienation and the kind of lost, inconsequential life of his parents.³² In one passage late in the book, Owen has just come from Natalie's concert where he has been liberated from the fog of phoniness, but when he enters the house he says:

My father was watching TV, and my mother was sitting doing crewelwork. She said, "Short movie?" and I said it was, and she said, "Did you enjoy it? What was it?" and I said, "Oh, I don't know," and went upstairs, because I'd walked right out of the night

³² An interesting comparison would be LeGuin's use of the fog image and Ken Kesey's use of that same image in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1977).

wind back into the fog. And I couldn't talk in the fog. I couldn't say anything true (LeGuin, VFA, pp. 75-76).

Owen is caught in a double bind: he cannot find authentic identity or satisfaction of the soul in the fog, in the quiet desperation of conformity, nor is he strong enough to stand alone, like the Byronic hero, outside of the crowd. Intuitively seeking a guide to lead him out of his dark night of the soul, he turns to Natalie, an outsider like himself but one who is more sure in her inner direction; and together they seek to create a world for two in which they can be free to be themselves. Natalie's ambition is to be a great composer and she spends much of her time practicing on the piano, the viola and the violin. Owen wants to be a scientist and he spends a great deal of time reading books that are over the heads of his teachers. Together Natalie and Owen form a friendship and a mutual trust out of which both of them are able to grow as individuals.

It is no accident that Owen chooses the beach as the place for his first real date with Natalie. Thorn, his created world of the imagination, is located on a small mountainous island, and when Owen drives ninety miles to a deserted sea shore, he is symbolically taking Natalie to his own world. He selects a weekend in February when he knows ahead of time that the weather will be clear and, importantly, there will be no fog. One way for Owen

to escape the fog, i.e., the loneliness and alienation of his meaningless existence at school and at home, is through genuine, spontaneous, open and free communication with another human being. The other human being is Natalie and together, on a rocky Pacific shore line, they spend an afternoon which for Owen is the high point of his life. It is an afternoon in which he intellectually, at least, makes the existential discovery that life has no meaning other than the meaning that the individual creates for himself, that from the existential point of view, life is the question and the individual is the answer:

Then we did some cliff climbing and some rock throwing, and built a sand castle. Then we came back and built up the fire, because it was getting colder, and we watched the tide get closer to our sand castle, and talked. We didn't talk about problems, or parents, or automobiles, or ambitions. We talked about life. We decided that it was no good asking what is the meaning of life, because life isn't an answer, life is the question, and you, yourself, are the answer. And the sea was there, forty feet away and coming closer, and the sky over the sea, and the sun going down the sky. And it was cold, and it was the high point of my life (LeGuin, VFA, p. 43).

As a kind of solemn token to the wonder of the world and the wonder of each other, they ceremonially give each other a special beautiful rock that each has found in the sand. This experience with Natalie is the high point for Owen because it is the first time that he has had another person with whom he can share the joy of the "high mountain" of awareness of oneness with the world:

I'd had high points before. Once at night walking in the dark in the rain in autumn. Once out in the desert, under the stars, when I turned into the earth turning on its axis. Sometimes thinking, just thinking things through. But always alone. I was on the high mountain with a friend. There is nothing, there is nothing that beats that. If it never happens again in my life, still I can say I was there once (LeGuin, VFA, p. 43).

The mountain image which Owen uses to describe the spiritual high point in his life bears a striking correspondence to the allegorical mountains of Zen and other major religions. As Robert Persig points out,

Mountains . . . and travelers in the mountains and events that happen to them . . . are found not only in Zen literature but in the tales of every major religion. The allegory of a physical mountain for the spiritual one that stands between each soul and its goal is an easy and natural one to make . . . most people stand in sight of the spiritual mountains all their lives and never enter them, being content to listen to others who have been there and thus avoid the hardships. Some travel into the mountains accompanied by experienced guides³³ who know the best and least dangerous routes by which they arrive at their destination. Still others, inexperienced and untrusting, attempt to make their own routes. Few of these are successful, but occasionally some, by sheer will and luck and grace, do make it. Once there they become more aware than any of the others that there's no single or fixed number of routes. There are as many routes as there are individual souls.³⁴

For Natalie, Owen's female counterpart in the search for identity, music is the path that leads to the high

³³As was the case with the cultural anthropologist Carlos Castaneda and his spiritual guide, Don Juan.

³⁴Robert Persig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance (New York: Morrow, 1974), pp. 181-182. A recent work which sets the search for self within the mountains is Peter Mattiessen's The Snow Leopard (New York: Bantam Books, 1979), a beautifully written, sensitive account of the "high country of the mind."

country of the mind and the means by which she extends her understanding of herself and the world. Like Mick in Carson McCullers' The Heart is a Lonely Hunter, Natalie is able to find only in music the form of expression that is adequate to her emotional and spiritual needs.³⁵ Natalie has already found her path; she in turn is Owen's guide as he begins his own search for identity and the high country of the mind. Although he has already had a temporary, mystical glimpse at the top of the mountain, for the most part he is still in the fog of alienation and insecurity, stumbling about in the dark, blocked often in his search by his own overdependence on the opinion of "the others." Owen, although he is bright and can see through the phonicness of "the crowd," is still rather sadly and helplessly attached, for his self image, to the opinion of others. He is afraid of what others will think if he does not bring his relationship with Natalie to sexual consummation:

So I began thinking, what am I doing. I mean, I see this girl all the time and spend a whole day at the beach with her and somebody says, "Hey man, so what happened?" and I say: "She gave me a black rock and I gave her an agate." Hey, yeah? Wow! (LeGuin, VFA, p. 46).

It is this weakness for the approval of the crowd that leads Owen to his first fight with Natalie. In an effort

³⁵ Although Owen is a scientist and Natalie is a musician, there is a commonality of creativity underlying their experience. For a discussion of a common logic that may underline art, music, and mathematics, see Howard Gardiner, "Strange Logic of the Mind," Psychology Today, March 1980, pp. 72-84.

to prove to the boys at school that he is "with it," he tries to push the relationship with Natalie beyond the limits of what she feels is right--not right in the moral sense: "She didn't mean morally right. She meant right the way the music or the thought comes right, comes clear, is true" (LeGuin, VFA, p. 58). Owen, unlike Natalie who as has been noted finds her strength of identity in music, somehow feels that in order to come into his own as a person, he has to prove his masculinity--not only to the boys at school but also to himself. Perhaps subconsciously, he is trying to compensate for his inability or unwillingness to handle the responsibility of the car; at any rate, his desire for masculine identity becomes confused with his genuine love for Natalie and when the two emotions are merged in a sexual context, both Owen and Natalie are shattered by the experience. On a second trip to the beach, one which he forces Natalie to take against her will (she has to get a substitute to take her place at the music lessons she gives to kids), Owen tries to force himself on Natalie but once he touches her he begins to fall apart:

I put my arm on her shoulders. Then my heart started hammering in this terrifying way, and I felt really crazy and dizzy, and I took hold of her really hard and kissed her. We kissed, and I couldn't get my breath. I hadn't meant to grab her like that; I meant to kiss her and tell her, "I love you" and talk about it, about love, and that was all. I hadn't thought any farther. I didn't know what would happen to me, that it would be like when you're in deep and a big breaker hits you and pulls you over and down and you can't swim

and you can't breathe, and there is nothing you can do, nothing.

She knew when the breaker hit me. And I guess it scared her too, but she wasn't caught in it. Because she pulled free after a bit and drew back, away from me. But she kept hold of my hand, because she saw I was drowning (LeGuin, VFA, p. 57).

Natalie tries to explain to Owen that, although she loves him, she is not ready yet for sex and that neither, for that matter, is he. As he desperately tries once more to force himself upon her, her own anger and frustration come to the surface:

"No!" she said. "I won't get into this bind with you! I thought we could manage it, but if we can't, we can't, and that's it. That's all. If what we have isn't enough, then forget it. Because it's all we do have. And you know it! And it's a lot! But if it's not enough, then let it be. Forget it!" (LeGuin, VFA, p. 88.)

Taking the rejection personally as a rejection of him rather than as a rejection of a situation for which she feels they are not emotionally prepared, Owen turns bitter and his progress toward identity takes a step backward. His bitterness turns inward as well as toward Natalie, and a few days later he subconsciously tries to commit suicide by "accidentally" driving his car off a cliff, a symbolic gesture of rebellion against his parents as well as a reaction to Natalie's rejection. (The car, which he never wanted and which he considered as a symbol of conformity, had been forced on him as a birthday gift from his father.) Owen recovers from the "accident" but continues to brood over what he considers his failure to achieve manhood

(with Natalie) and his failure to terminate his worthless life ("I couldn't absentmindedly drive off a cliff and kill myself"). The turning point in his search for identity and understanding comes a few weeks later when he anonymously attends Natalie's first concert. For the first time in his life he is able to clear away the cobwebs of his own ego-centric concerns and he totally forgets himself in the pain and beauty of the music which Natalie has composed. In a sudden, overwhelming surge of understanding and love for Natalie, he loses himself and finds himself:

I began crying, and I couldn't stop when it was over and they were clapping and Natalie had to stand up and take bows. I got up and blundered around the back of the pews, by feel mostly because I couldn't see for crying, and got out of the church into the night.

I started to walk up towards the park. The street lamps were big blobs of light with rainbow haloes, and the wind was cold on the tears on my face. My head was hot and light and ringing with the singer's voice. I didn't feel the pavement under my feet, and if I passed anyone I didn't see them. And I didn't care if they saw me walking on the street crying.

There was glory in it. It was too much for me to take, everything coming together at once, but there was a glory in it. And that was partly love. I mean real love. In the song I had seen Natalie whole, the way she really was, and I loved her. It was not an emotion or a desire, it was a confirmation, it was a glory, like seeing the stars. To know that she could do that, that she could make a song that made people be still and listen, and made me cry, to know that that was Natalie, it really was, it was her, herself, the truth (LeGuin, VFA, pp. 73-74).

As Owen leaves the concert and walks out into the night, he feels that he is no longer a stranger to himself and that he is at home in the world. The sensations which he

feels bear a similarity to the Zen experience of clear vision and a sense of oneness with the world:

I just walked into the night, and I could have been doing it forever and gone on doing it forever. Only the sense of strangeness was gone. Everything was familiar, the whole world, the stars, even, I was home. Now and then there was the smell of fresh earth or flowers from a dark garden (LeGuin, VFA, p. 74).

Owen's identity crisis was over but his search for identity, like the ripples made by a pebble dropped in the water, was to be a continuous process of expanding consciousness. In his own words:

I don't know what I achieved in the six months. . . . I achieved something all right, but I think it may take me the rest of my life to find out what (LeGuin, VFA, p. 3).

The finding of identity does not mark the end of growth; rather, it opens a new door of perception, a new awareness of oneself and the world, a new realm of experience, a new structure of reality. What it was that Owen was to take the rest of his life finding out was the possibility for the continuous discovery of beauty in a world well loved.

II. THAT EARLY SPRING

Like Owen, the adolescent heroine in Gunnel Beckman's That Early Spring is also striving for authentic self identity. At the beginning of the novel, Mia finds that she is not really sure of who she is, longing on the one hand for the familiar security of childhood, and yet wanting

at the same time to experience the freedom and excitement of approaching maturity. In recalling her recent childhood, Mia says:

It seemed an eternity ago now, and yet it was only a few years ago. It was horrible that things went so quickly, because you didn't seem to be able to keep up. You didn't know who you were . . . or who you should be. . . . One moment you felt safe and happy and almost grown-up, and the next moment you longed terribly for Mother and you just wanted to cry.³⁶

Mia's identity crisis is compounded by her parents' recent separation and the fact that she is left to live alone with her father whom she loves but does not really know very well. Her father, preoccupied with business matters and with his own sense of isolation at the departure of his wife, is unable to communicate with Mia. In search of love and understanding and a meaningful relationship, Mia becomes sexually involved with Martin, a young music student who she feels is very attractive and masculine. Here again, however, Mia runs into a wall of misunderstanding. In a sense, the misunderstanding hinges on the question of sexual liberation. Mia, who has already had one unsuccessful love affair, is searching for a relationship that will be based on more than sex. She seeks for a relationship in which she can find what is missing from within, a sense of authentic identity and the strength of

³⁶Gunnel Beckman, That Early Spring (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), p. 69. Hereinafter cited parenthetically as Beckman, TES.

character that goes with it. Because she demands from her boyfriend what can only come from within, her second affair also becomes increasingly disappointing. Martin, who, like Natalie, seems to have found himself through his music, does not need or want the kind of "clinging vine" relationship that he perceives Mia as offering. His idea of a relationship is primarily sexual and does not involve the kind of heavy communication that Mia needs. Feeling that she is being used as a mere sex object, Mia breaks off the relationship temporarily but finds herself once again lonely and in despair with no one to talk to or share her problems with.

The turning point in her search for identity comes when Mia invites her ill and aging grandmother to come and live with her. In William Agee's study, he pointed out the importance of an adult model in the adolescent initiation experience, and in That Early Spring, Mia's grandmother serves as such a model for Mia's mental and emotional maturation. The two have long honest talks together and Mia begins to find a certain strength in identifying with her emotionally self-reliant and loving grandmother. The older person furnishes a source of insight which in turn helps Mia to see her own problems in a more enlightened perspective. It is the grandmother who points out that Mia must stop looking to others for what she can find only within herself. She tells Mia that she must be interested

in being her own person even if she is a woman. When the grandmother dies, Mia is able to accept the finality of death; she is spiritually supported by the nature of the authentic relationship she has been able to develop with her grandmother;

Mia suddenly felt so grateful, so grateful that she had liked Gran so much. It was strange, but it was easier to bear that she was dead when you liked her so much (Beckman, TES, p. 119).

After leaving the hospital where her grandmother died, Mia sits down on a bench in a nearby cemetery and begins to feel a new awareness of the physical world, an awareness that is similar to Owen's experience after Natalie's concert. Because Mia has grown, has achieved a measure of identity, her perception of the world has altered and she is aware for the first time of how strange and beautiful the ordinary world can seem when seen from the perspective of a newly discovered self:

The strong light poured down around her, the ground steaming with damp after the long spell of rain, smelling of brown earth. The buds on the bushes almost swelled as you watched them, and the birds were making a tremendous racket, drowning even the sound of the traffic on the main road on the other side of the railings.

It was strange to think that out there was a perfectly ordinary morning for most people. . . . It was life, the same old life as usual.

But on a bench inside the churchyard sat Mia, and for her this morning was a morning that she would remember all her life (Beckman, TES, p. 119).

In learning to love and care for her aging grandmother, Mia discovered a new source of strength within herself. When her grandmother dies, the mantle of maturity passes

on to Mia and the reader is left at the end of the novel with the feeling that Mia will be able to handle whatever problems the future may bring.

Throughout That Early Spring, Mia's steps toward identity follow closely the path of Mahayana or "large wheel" Buddhism. According to this school of Buddhism, Nirvana is attained by an abundance of love for others.³⁷ Nirvana is the state of existential clarity in which one is free (moska) from fake illusions (maya) and in this freedom one finds the capacity for lived as opposed to abstract truth. The truth that Mia comes to know firsthand is the truth of love--in Mia's case, the selfless love for her dying grandmother. At the beginning of the novel, Mia's relationships with others are basically self centered. She thinks in terms of what others have done "against" her or in terms of what others can do "for" her. She thinks, for example, of her parents' divorce, not as a means by which her mother and father are seeking for a more honest and fulfilling life, but rather as a betrayal of Mia:

At first, when Dad told her about it (the divorce) that evening, she felt a strange rage against them both, because they had betrayed her; because they weren't happy; because they'd been unhappy for a long time (Beckman, TES, p. 14).

³⁷In contrast to the earlier or "small wheel" school of Buddhism which stressed meditation and asceticism as the way to enlightenment and Nirvana.

She looks at things not from the point of view of others but from the point of view of what is best for Mia and thus in her relationship with Jan and later with Martin, she is always searching for something from them that she can only grant to herself. As Eric Fromm has pointed out in The Art of Loving, the only kind of love in which one can find genuine fulfillment is the kind of love freely given, without ulterior demands or motives. ("Love alters not when it alteration finds.") One has to learn to love others as they are without trying to change them into something that they aren't. Mia discovers this kind of free love in her relationship with her grandmother and in the process of this love Mia finds her own path to identity. Her search for identity, her attempt to know herself, follows in an almost classical pattern, the Mahayana journey from self to other. The paradox of this kind of self discovery lies in the fact that there is no self to be discovered until that self has materialized in the transforming and transcendental experience of love for another. Mia's search for identity leads her to the understanding that only in the love of another can one grow to know oneself.

III. NOVEMBER . . . DECEMBER

In George Bower's November . . . December, the adolescent protagonist is also searching for his place in

the sun, but in Jordan's³⁸ case, he begins his search with a much firmer sense of self than does either Owen or Mia. Unlike Owen, Jordan is very popular in school; he is tall, he is good looking and he is an excellent basketball player. Unlike Owen who longs for popular acceptance, Jordan neither needs nor seems to desire the spotlight of peer admiration. Nor is he like Mia who feels insecure in the never-never-land between childhood and adult maturity. Jordan's identity problem takes the form of trying to maintain his independence of spirit in a world which continuously presses him toward popularity and conformity. Jordan, like Owen, is sensitive and perceptive, and romantically capable of standing outside himself, regarding himself regarding others. At the beginning of the novel, on the train trip home from college for the Thanksgiving holidays, Jordan is portrayed as a sort of classic cloak-and-dagger figure, clandestinely spying on the rest of the world as it slides imperviously by. He perceives the world "through a glass darkly," and finds a kind of Byronic strength in his self-imposed isolation. Riding the train home from Boston to Lawrence, his sensations and perceptions

³⁸ In the novel, Jordan is often referred to by his nickname, B.D. As B.D. begins to mature, however, the author progressively underscores the identity process by an increased use of the character's given name. In this analysis, for the sake of consistency, the hero will be referred to as Jordan.

are those of a disembodied spirit silently observing the shadows of another world:

They (Jordan and the other passengers on the train) moved in and out of another station, the waiting room lights yellowing away into the dark. Shadows moved and some of the maroon-scarfed girls slipped silently, on the other side of glass, into the arms of parents. It seemed odd, he thought, a bit old-fashioned for 1962. But perhaps the girls needed this kind of welcome as much as he did his isolation.³⁹

Jordan's sense of isolation and strangeness from the external world is very similar in tone and feeling to both Kafka's alienated hero in The Castle and Camus's outsider in The Stranger. In Jordan's case (unlike Owen's and Mia's), his alienation is not so much a reflection of any inner weakness of identity as it is a reflection of the inability to plug this identity into a meaningful place in society. His identity conflict is initially based on the refusal to be a "jock," a role which his natural athletic ability and the desires of family and friends seem to push him toward, but which, in his sensitivity as an individual, he fights against. His refusal to "play ball" is not the vehicle of rebellion through which he discovers himself, but rather the vehicle of rebellion by which he holds onto an identity which is already strong for his nineteen years. His desire to remain aloof, his absence of

³⁹George Bower, November . . . December (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1977), pp. 2-3. Hereinafter cited parenthetically as Bower, ND.

commitment to any sort of external influence, is reflected in the contents of his bedroom at home: "He hadn't been home since September, and the bedroom looked amazingly the same--in place, clean, without pictures or posters or pennants" (Bower, ND, p. 23). Jordan's self image is "clean," without the superficial trappings of external society, but, alas, his identity is not "in place." Both on the literal and the figurative level he has not yet found a place in which he feels free to develop the self which he has already begun to protect. On the literal level, he feels out of place, a loner by choice, at the college that he is attending. After going to Andover for a year after his regular high school was over, in order to get a better placement in college, he intentionally does not go to Yale or Harvard because he feels that in some way these schools represent a certain image which threatens his identity. He describes both schools as cold, barren places where people ~~are~~ are indifferent to each other as a defense against their own isolation. Just as Owen did not want to be a seat fixture on an automobile, Jordan does not want to be a "Harvard man," or a "Yale man." Instead he temporarily opts for Tufts University, a kind of "flakey" place where he feels free to drift for awhile until he can become more certain of just exactly where he does want to go and what he wants to be. On the figurative level, he also feels out of place, not having reached any philosophical

understanding of himself or the world of human relations out of which he must carve his identity. As he casts about for some sort of physical and metaphysical place to be himself, he heads, like Owen and Mia, in the direction of love and sex. Like Mia, he seeks for a relationship that transcends as well as embraces the element of sex: he seeks to define his identity in terms of a lasting moral and intellectual commitment with another. Unfortunately, the object of his desire does not want to become involved beyond that degree of sexual intimacy which she seems to be able to slip in and out of as easily as one puts on a coat. Like Mia, Jordan tries to make both Lori and his relationship with her more than they really are. He expects more commitment from Lori than she is willing or capable of giving. In his attempt to make her over into the image of what he needs, he often becomes blind to her selfishness, petty egoism and shallow values; he perceives her through the screen of his own illusions. Not only does he make cumbersome demands on her psyche, he is also not really very proficient as a lover and the two factors finally combine to diminish his appeal. The irony of the situation is that Jordan has always been good at everything, good almost without trying: he makes good grades, he's an outstanding natural athlete and yet in what he feels is his first real test of sexual manhood, he experiences the bitterness of failure. He is unable to satisfy the girl he

loves and, perhaps, for the first time in his life, he begins to feel insecure about himself. It is not the same insecurity that Owen and Mia felt, but it is the kind of questioning of oneself that often precedes significant growth in identity. On the way home from a weekend at the beach where he has been less than perfect in satisfying Lori's sexual needs, Jordan wonders if he has failed his sexual rite of passage:

When she spoke at all now it was about all the work she had to do. Had he really satisfied her? Would she look at him at the door of her dormitory and say that he'd failed the test, that the weekend had proved that they shouldn't see each other any more? He gripped the wheel hard. He couldn't think like that. It was so damn foolish to think like that (Bower, ND, p. 86).

Paradoxically, had Jordan been as successful in bed as he was on the basketball court, his progress toward a larger identity might have become permanently arrested. He may have become so satisfied with himself that he would no longer have felt the need to look beyond the limits of his own athletic and sexual prowess for a larger, more extensive understanding of himself or the world.

Jordan's sexual failure with Lori is ironically balanced against his almost arrogant self-confidence in the natural athletic ability of his body, a self-confidence which is illustrated in a one-on-one basketball game that he has played earlier with his younger brother. Although Tom is in better physical shape, Jordan is able to beat him soundly in a seemingly effortless, natural way. As

he is winning, Jordan thinks of the contrasts between their two philosophies of sport, in a way their two contrasting philosophies of life:

His young brother, Jordan thought. He really thought he (Tom) was going to show him something, perhaps even to teach him a lesson. Show him that work and dedication to sport--practice and discipline--were what really mattered. He still didn't know, did he, because he was so damn young, that it was free-wheeling ability that counted, and very little else, except maybe the willingness to endure pain. A great, free-wheeling athlete could easily get into shape, and concentrate when he felt like it. Especially at nineteen (Bower, ND, p. 44).

Jordan would like to think of himself as a great free-wheeling individual both on and off the basketball court, capable of matching his natural abilities against whatever challenges life might offer. This image, however, is not always the picture that others have of him. Lori grows to see him, beneath the halo of good looks, good grades, and an athletic reputation, as sexually inadequate and something of a clinging vine. His brother sees him as arrogant, spoiled and stupid:

"You play like a bastard," Tom said, his voice graveled with emotion, and yet, somehow, too damn high. "You get all the fucking good grades and can go to any school you want. Andover, and the Ivy League if you wanted to go, and play ball. But you're too stupid to take advantage of it (Bower, ND, p. 44).

Tom's diatribe makes little or no impression, but Jordan's failure with Lori is another matter and the "great free-wheeling athlete" begins to understand that the world is not always going to be a piece of cake.

His experience of failure with Lori marks the beginning of a new awareness for Jordan, but the real turning point in his identity struggle comes through his relationship with his father. Just as Mia's grandmother had been a model of gracious, strong and intelligent maturity, so too does Jordan's father serve as a source of understanding and strength. While Jordan has been looking for fulfillment in his relationship with Lori, an "older woman" one year ahead of him in college, his father, in contrast, has been having an affair with a beautiful and sensitive girl half his age. The two romances ironically parallel one another and, in both cases, father and son seek in the arms of women a relief from the inadequacy of their own lives. Whereas Jordan is an alienated athlete floundering in the uncertainty of his own ambitions, David, his father, is a defeated politician who has been nursing his political wounds for years. He is also the tired husband of a nagging, washed-out wife who alternately spends her time in the kitchen, the pantry or in front of the television set. David, when he is not at the office of his flagging law practice, spends his time drinking Scotch, rereading Faulkner, visiting his mistress, and worrying about how to get out of the trap he's in without hurting his wife or children. Ever since he lost the election for mayor, he has been sinking progressively more deeply into a life of quiet desperation in a quagmire of small town

anonymity. In projecting the desperation of his own situation, he tries to warn Jordan about the tyranny of small town mediocrity:⁴⁰

Try to stay out of this fucking town, B.D. It'll kill you if you don't. Look at me. It's killing me. I'm slow. I'm not even fifty and I'm dying. It's a fight. Just being a man here is a fight (Bower, ND, p. 58).

Although his father has always been strong and understanding, Jordan does not have the kind of long, heart-to-heart talks with him that Mia had with her grandmother. Instead, their communication is more in the form of intuitive glimpses into each other's problems and their verbal communication is often limited to a kind of shorthand of sarcastic, masculine humor and monosyllabic repartee. Nevertheless, Jordan and his father are able to confide in each other and during the Christmas vacation they take a walk together down by the river to talk things over. After some painful hesitation, David tries to explain his love for another woman and his plans for an impending divorce. At first Jordan, like Mia, feels a surge of hostility, not, however, because he feels betrayed himself but because he feels sorry for his mother:

Jordan saw his mother then, older looking than she was, sexless, without a chance now. His mother,

⁴⁰ In considering David's following comment, one is reminded of de Toqueville's famous indictment of America as a place where the greatest threat to individual liberty was not political tyranny, but rather "the tyranny of public opinion."

nagging, intolerant, but still his mother, and he felt very bad, very sad, very sad for her, and he knew it was important that he respect and like his father. Otherwise he might want to hit him (Bower, ND, p. 136).

His hostility may also be tinged with a degree of jealousy; he is shocked that Carol, his father's mistress, is only twenty-three, just a few years older than Lori, the irony being that his father has been able to attract and hold a younger woman while he, Jordan, has failed his own sexual rite of passage. He is also concerned about what his friends might say:

The fact that she was so much younger, even though twenty-three seemed so much older than he was, would be very hard to accept, Jordan knew. He wouldn't even try. It would just have to go down or not go down. He could already hear the goddamn cute remarks now. He'd bust any fucking mouth that made them (Bower, ND, p. 136).

Obviously Jordan is redirecting his hostility away from his father and toward those who might make "cute remarks." In a way his own self image may be threatened by his father's success with a younger woman. At any rate, his love and admiration for his father overcome his other emotions, and, feeling the need to lighten his own burden, he turns to his father as a source of sympathetic but objective understanding:

He looked at his father then--there was never any bullshit about him. Never any bullshit at all. . . . It was very good to be talking to someone who obviously understood what he was talking about (Bower, ND, p. 141).

With his father as sympathetic confidante, Jordan is able to be honest with himself, to bring his failure with Lori out into the clear if painful light of objective analysis:

Jordan breathed and put his hands deep into his chino pockets. "We had a fight, and then got together again Wednesday night. We spent it together in a hotel in Washington Square. . . . Somewhere in the evening we went to Cronin's for a while. Cronin's. Really romantic on the last night before Christmas vacation." (He'd known before, or realized before and knew again now, that she'd probably missed a connection with someone else and had substituted him.) "Just after we got there she left the booth to go to the bathroom. A minute after she left I had to get up to hang up my coat and I saw her on the pay phone near the rest rooms. . . . I guess she could very well have been using me. Why not? The novelty just took a while to wear off. I fell in love and she didn't." He hesitated. "That was hard to say" (Bower, ND, pp. 140-141).

The truth is hard for Jordan to say, to realize, to accept, because the truth is painful. Like a hero in a Greek tragedy, he is beginning to realize that wisdom comes through suffering. For Jordan, his experience with Lori is the first time in his life that he has tried very hard to succeed at something and failed. His acceptance of this painful truth is both a measure of his maturity and a necessary first step toward a deeper understanding of himself and the world. Such understanding provides the foundation upon which he may continue to build the structure of authentic identity.

Just as they finish their talk, Jordan's father is fatally stricken by a heart attack. After the funeral

Jordan realizes that there are two more steps that he must take in order to complete the cycle of growth that began with his admission of truth to himself and to his father. He must completely break away from Lori and he must leave Lawrence for good. On his last visit to Lori, she tries to hold onto him as a sort of substitute for when she runs out of dates with other guys. She is still attracted to him but unable to love him:

"I just can't give myself completely to you. I am very much attracted to you. And I hurt desperately for you right now" (Bower, ND, pp. 173).

Jordan realizes, however, that to go back to Lori, on her terms, would kill something in himself that he is struggling to hold onto, a kind of pride and a kind of independence of spirit which he realizes he must take with him if he is to continue his journey toward identity: "He knew enough to know that staying would kill him, that he'd follow her through the winter and become a fool" (Bower, ND, p. 173). As he walks away from her he realizes that he never really knew her and that walking away constitutes a kind of existential freedom that only he can grant to himself. He is free from the illusion that she loves him and he is freed from the type of psychic bondage involved in such overly dependent, one-sided love. Just as importantly, he sees that he is paying a sort of homage to his father, granting to himself a kind of freedom that his father did not live to achieve:

He waited for her to cry, but she didn't. He knew nothing about her. He'd never know a thing about her. She was much too good looking to walk away from, but he walked away from her. He inhaled the cold December air. Sonovabitch. It was a damn good exit to give to his father (Bower, ND, p. 173).

As a final tribute to his father and as the next step in his progress toward maturity, he makes the existential decision to alter for good the direction of his life by leaving Lawrence, the town that killed his father. After the funeral he had visited and had become instantly attracted to Carol, whom his father had loved so much; he and Carol had planned to meet again but he realizes that even this meeting could lead to a kind of bondage to Lawrence, to mediocrity, to a life unlived:

Halfway back to the house he stopped for a red light. He'd call Carol the next week and tell her he couldn't see her. Seeing her on Friday would only become an excuse for seeing her again. For coming back to Lawrence again and again. How easy it would be to become the very good friend, the very good son, the strong excellent brother. He'd have to do what his father had told him to do at the end of Thanksgiving vacation, something he, his father, couldn't do. He'd finally have to grow (Bower, ND, p. 176).

As Jordan begins making his plans to leave Lawrence, he decides to go to U.C.L.A. where he will play basketball, not for others but for the sheer joy of the sport and the challenge to himself; he also will study to be a writer, a profession which he feels will allow him the most freedom to grow and to learn and to be his own man and to continue his journey of the self.

IV. IT'S OK IF YOU DON'T LOVE ME

In Norma Klein's It's OK If You Don't Love Me, Jody, the adolescent heroine has an identity problem that she herself perceives as attributable to ethnic and sexist prejudice. Actually, however, her identity crisis stems from a basic insecurity that lies within herself rather than in the external prejudices of society. Her mother has been married twice and for a year has had a live-in lover named Elliot with whom Jody has a casual, friendly rapport, but who is certainly no substitute for a real father. Her mother and father divorced when Jody was three years old and she only sees her "real" father once a year in a painful, superficial meeting that she always dreads. The closest approximation to a father is Phillip, a strange, sensitive man that her mother was married to for five years. Jody says:

When Mom and Phillip broke up, I did take it pretty hard. I was eight when they got married and thirteen when they split, and even though Mom says those five years were the hardest of her life, for me they were kind of nice. I really liked Phillip a lot. I was still at the age then when I hoped Mom would stop working and have more babies. I remember I used to beg them practically all the time to have babies. I guess I was kind of a pest.⁴¹

⁴¹Norma Klein, It's OK If You Don't Love Me (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1977), p. 20. Hereinafter cited parenthetically in the text as Klein, IOK.

Although Jody, a senior in high school, visits Phillip from time to time, she has lived without the security and comfort of any kind of father since she was thirteen and, before that, from age three to eight, she had no father image at all. Such a difficult and complicated parental background may in large measure explain some of the difficulty that Jody has in her relationships with boys. As the novel begins, Jody is playing tennis with Lyle, a boy she has recently met on her summer job, and during their first tennis match together, a basic tension between the two begins to develop, a tension which grows out of Jody's basic insecurity of identity and which manifests itself in a defensive obsession with winning. Lyle tries to persuade her to rally just for fun but she insists on playing a set, thinking that she can beat him. As the game progresses, however, she realizes how good he is and as she begins to lose, her insecurity surfaces in a form of frustration and hostility that seeks for an explanation beyond the game itself.

After the third game I really felt disheartened. I know you're supposed to never give up, but the sheer dumbness of the thing overwhelmed me. . . . I was making a complete ass of myself, not even getting near the ball. I had too much pride to just say in the middle, "Let's stop," so I floundered for the next three games. When we'd change sides and pass each other on the side of the court, he'd smile, sort of sheepishly.

I'd just glower (Klein, IOK, pp. 5-6).

When the game is over they plump down on the grass to rest and Jody turns her anger on Lyle:

"So, why didn't you tell me?" I felt depressed enough to kill myself on the spot.

"Tell you what?"

"That you were so good!"

". . . I thought I did tell you that I'd played a lot in Ohio" (Klein, IOK, p. 10).

Lyle reminds her that he did not want to play a set and asks her why she had insisted on it so strongly. Her answer and the internal monologue that follows reveal her habit of shifting the focus of her identity problem away from herself and outward toward society. She tries to justify her obsession with winning in terms of her sensitivity to ethnic prejudice:

Lyle was looking at me curiously. "Why did you want so much to play a set?"

"Why shouldn't I have?" I felt defensive. I always feel defensive about being interested in and caring so much about sports. I've read in all these magazines that Jewish girls aren't supposed to be interested in sports, that they're afraid they'll get their hair messed up, stupid stereotypes like that (Klein, IOK, p. 12).

Actually, Jody's obsession with winning is more deeply connected with her own basic insecurity. In order to survive psychically the emotional trauma of growing up without a father, she has had to cultivate a kind of hard, masculine independence of spirit which sustains itself on competitive aggression in sports.

When Lyle tells her that she is the best girl tennis player he has ever played, she says, "Lyle didn't realize that to me that kind of compliment is like a punch to the vital parts" (Klein, IOK, p. 13). Still trying to ease her bitterness at losing, Lyle really angers her even more

when he suggests that maybe he only won because, being a boy, he has a physical advantage of height and weight.

"So doesn't it stand to reason that I have a slight advantage, just physically?"

"Yes, only--I hate that!" I said fiercely, yanking up a piece of grass.

"Why? What do you hate?"

"It's so unfair," I said. "Why do men have to be bigger than women? It's one of those completely unnecessary things" (Klein, IOK, p. 14).

But when Lyle asks her again why she is so obsessed with winning, she is still emotionally unable to make the connection between her need to win and her identity problem with the opposite sex. She subconsciously feels the need to win in order to prove to herself that she is as strong as men and that she does not need a father. Instead of facing this truth about herself, she continues to hide behind the illusion of ethnic sensitivity. When Lyle tells her that he enjoys tennis for its sake and that he doesn't really care very much about winning, she replies:

"Maybe that's because you're not Jewish. Jews always want to win, to be the best."

"Not in sports, though."

"They just didn't go into sports, because they couldn't be the best."

"Are you Jewish?"

"No, I'm a Zen Buddhist."

"How could I have told?"

"Because I'm a certain type. In New York girls like me are a dime a dozen."

"What type?"

"Sort of aggressive, but insecure. We all end up being doctors and lawyers and being analyzed for nine million years" (Klein, IOK, p. 16).

As the novel unfolds, Jody's struggle for identity is reflected in the progress she is able to make toward an

authentic relationship with Lyle, a relationship which she gradually and painfully learns, must be based on more than sex. Like Jordan, Lyle is sexually inexperienced and is prone to premature ejaculation. Additionally, he brings into their physical relationship a puritan guilt that is foreign to Jody's liberal upbringing and her personal scheme of values. Jody thinks of sex as a physical act to be enjoyed for its own sake, while Lyle, who has just moved to New York from a small town in the Midwest, feels that love and sex must go together.

In their first moments of intimacy, Lyle refrains from going further than the kissing stage, but Jody, who is already sexually experienced, feels no moral compunction to stop short of sexual consummation. She lets Lyle know, in effect, that "it's ok if you don't love me," that he doesn't have to feel guilty about sex without love. Because of Lyle's continued reluctance to have sex without love, their intimacy remains, for awhile at least, limited to heavy petting. Over a period of time, however, Lyle gradually begins to feel less threatened by sex, and their love making successively progresses from petting to mutual masturbation to intercourse. After their first intercourse, when Lyle is no longer a virgin, Jody feels that Lyle has finally given himself over to her in complete trust:

. . . afterward, when we were lying side by side, I felt so happy. . . . I don't think it was just triumph I was feeling. It was also that I felt

Lyle trusted me. I'd never thought of it that way before, but it is a kind of trust to put part of your body into someone (Klein, IOK, p. 133).

Although Lyle, in his hurry and inexperience, does not bring Jody to fulfillment, she nevertheless is moved by his vulnerable innocence and sincerity. For the first time almost without realizing it, she grants to him something greater than sex, a part of herself that she has been withholding:

"Lyle, listen, what if I love you?" I said. "Is that okay?" I didn't mean to say it. It just slipped out (Klein, IOK, p. 133).

They both admit to loving one another and it is at this point that Jody's progress toward identity takes a significant step forward. Even though three "fathers" left her in her childhood and early adolescence, she is nevertheless able to grant to herself the freedom to once again trust and love a member of the male species. She has traveled a long way from the sexist hostility on the tennis court to the trusting love of a mature relationship.

Her original hostility toward Lyle may have been a kind of transference of the hostility she feels toward the father that deserted her when she was three years old. Every year she dutifully goes to visit him, at home with his second family, and every year her resentment and hatred are rekindled. When she takes Lyle with her on her annual visit, her hatred of her father and her love for Lyle become psychologically interwoven in an interesting sexual

context. Even though she is sexually experienced, having had a lover before Lyle, she has never been able to achieve orgasm during intercourse. On this visit, however, her mind and body undergo certain significant changes, changes which begin when she and Lyle play tennis doubles with her father and his business partner. Her father repeatedly tries to cheat during the game, but she and Lyle win anyway, and in the victory Jody feels a sense of psychological liberation. The tennis victory is symbolic. With the help of Lyle she is able to defeat her father, to put him away, out of her life for good, and afterwards, when she and Lyle are taking a shower together, she is able to complete her cycle of symbolic liberation; for the first time she is able to reach an orgasm during intercourse:

I don't know what it was, doing it in the bathroom, having beaten Daddy and Gilbert at tennis, having just showered together, the way Lyle looked as he entered me, but all of a sudden, right in the middle, I came. I was really surprised. I opened my eyes and said, "Oh!" very loudly. But Lyle was sort of into his thing, muttering something like, "Jo . . . sweetheart," so I don't think he even noticed (Klein, IOK, p. 178).

Afterwards she feels great and shares her excitement with Lyle:

Afterward we lay on our backs, staring up at the ceiling. The whole bathroom, including the ceiling, had blue and yellow elephants dancing in one long endless line.

"That was incredible," Lyle said finally.

"It was pretty good wasn't it?" Then I couldn't restrain myself. I sat up and gleefully shouted, "I came!" (Klein, IOK, p. 178).

Ironically, however, her orgasm, the crowning touch to her final liberation from her father, leads to a kind of confrontation that is not without its humorous overtones:

"Huh?" Lyle turned to look at me, puzzled.
 "What do you mean?"
 "I came! I had an orgasm!"
 "Don't you always?"
 "Never, I never have in my whole life." He looked flabbergasted.
 "What do you mean, Jo? You never had one? How is that possible?" (Klein, IOK, p. 178).

Lyle is more than flabbergasted. Like Jordan in November . . . December, his masculine self image suffers a hard blow; he has been failing to satisfy the girl he loves. In trying to atone for his sin of omission, he goes overboard in the opposite direction and much to Jody's chagrin, he begins to analyze the whole business as if it were a scientific experiment. He tries to figure out why she was able to have an orgasm this time when she had not in the past:

"I think maybe this time you lowered your legs more," Lyle said. You could tell it appealed to his scientific mind, trying to analyze the whole thing.
 "I thought I kept them up more."
 "More in the beginning, but toward the end you lowered them. Also, well, it ought to be the other way around, but I think I did it a little faster than usual" (Klein, IOK, p. 180).

Realizing that this kind of madness could go on forever, Jody tries to shut him up:

"Listen, Lyle, it's sweet of you, but I don't want to get too self-conscious about it. I'm afraid then it'll never happen again" (Klein, IOK, p. 180).

He does not shut up, however, and in their next sexual encounter he is almost clinically concerned with the problem of her orgasm, so much so that Jody becomes too nervous to have one right off and he tries to tell her to take it easy and relax. She finally does reach a climax but she is appalled at the way their sex roles have become reversed:

It was a little peculiar, having things reversed so totally. Here I'd spent five months convincing him sex was a good thing and now I was the one who was being reassured and told to relax and enjoy it. I wasn't sure how I felt about that. It seemed to put me in Lyle's power in some way. Even though I knew he wasn't the kind who would misuse that power, it made me uneasy (Klein, IOK, p. 193).

Perhaps it is this feeling of uneasiness that prompts her, during a period when Lyle is away, to turn temporarily for one last fling with her former boyfriend, Whitney, who is in town for a holiday. In trying to assess, afterwards, her motives for cheating on Lyle she says:

Really, I know why I did it, and I'm not too proud of my reasons. I did it because I'd been looking about a hundred times better this year than I did last year when I'd gone with Whitney. I'd lost about ten pounds, and my figure had kind of settled into the right places. More than that, this particular morning, looking at myself in the mirror, I knew it was one of my good days. Taken all in all, for me, I felt at my peak. I wanted to show Whitney all of me, show him how I'd improved. And, sad to say, I wanted to show him I could now come when we made love, that I was on my way to being a liberated woman, all that junk (Klein, IOK, p. 216).

In a way Jody is trying to test her identity, proud of her newly discovered self confidence and anxious to test herself sexually against Whitney, a more accomplished lover

than Lyle; afterwards, however, she discovers a new emotion: guilt:

Whitney is good in bed. He always was, but this time I felt I was too, and that did add a certain something. Still, when it was over, I felt basically ashamed, like it had been something I had to do (Klein, IOK, p. 216).

Just as she felt she had to have this one last fling with Whitney--to prove something to herself--so too does she feel compelled to reveal her unfaithfulness to Lyle when he gets back in town. She tries to explain what happened but needless to say Lyle finds it difficult, actually impossible, to understand the identity conflicts that motivated Jody's unfaithful behavior. Lyle becomes angry and walks away, but unlike Jordan, he comes back after a few days of licking his wounds. The novel ends with their impending reconciliation, back on the same tennis court where the romance first began.

This is the weakest of the nine novels selected for this study, weak both from the point of view of literary quality and weak from the point of view of significant philosophical ideas. Nevertheless, the know thyself theme does play significantly as the motivating factor in Jody's change from hostile, insecure adolescent to loving and trusting young adult. Her identity search essentially involves the existential acceptance of responsibility for her own actions and behavior. In learning that winning is not as important as loving, she gains a deeper understanding of herself and the world around her, an understanding

out of which she is able to grow both in relationship to Lyle and in relationship to herself.

V. SUMMARY

Considering the length of this chapter, a summary is now in order. In the first part of the chapter, a definition of self was drawn from several sources: the concept of identity as it evolved from Parmenides to Heidegger; the split-brain metaphor of Ornstein; LeShan's theory of multiple realities; the Buddhist concepts of maya and Nirvana; the existentialist concepts of alienation and freedom; and the Janistic model of reality now being suggested by relativity physics. From these several sources, the self was shown to be the agent of consciousness through which reality is both structured and interpreted. Paradoxically, the self both creates and is responsible for the reality out of which it defines itself. Thus it was shown that any analysis of self must also consider the reality structure out of which the self operates. After this definition of the self was established, there followed an analysis of the self as the object of knowledge in Sophoclean drama, Socratic philosophy, Zen Buddhism and existentialism. Three of these philosophical outlooks were found to be consistent with the definition of self as structuring agent of reality: Sophoclean tragedy, Zen, and existentialism. In all three, the self is viewed in

an individualistic context as the center of the universe: in Sophocles, the self was seen as the synthesizing agent for the marriage of two alternate reality structures, the mythic and the analytic; in Zen, the self was shown as the agent of consciousness by which internal and external realities are fused in mystic oneness; in existentialism, the self was seen as the free agent of consciousness by which meaningful order is imposed onto a meaningless universe. In contrast to these three views of the self, Socratic philosophy was seen to embrace the definition of self in a social rather than an individualistic or existential context. To Socrates the self would be defined in terms of social harmony in which a person discovers his authentic selfhood in dedication to the greater good of the state. The Socratic idea of self was found to lie closer to social Marxism than to authentic individualism. To Socrates, "know thyself" really meant know thy place in society, whereas with Sophocles, Zen and existentialism, know thyself meant to tap into an authentic identity that flows or is created from within.

In the second part of this chapter, four contemporary adolescent novels were analyzed in terms to the know thyself theme. In the first novel, Very Far Away from Anywhere Else, the adolescent protagonist was seen to be following the example of Oedipus and the Zen monks, in trying to find beneath the surface of things a deeper more authentic

understanding of his true identity. His moments of understanding were seen to correspond rather closely to the Zen experience of clear vision and a sense of mystical oneness with the external world. His identity struggle was set in terms of the existential conflict between the self and the "crowd." His identity was achieved by his turning away from the crowd and turning toward his own capacity for freedom and love. In That Early Spring, the adolescent heroine's identity crisis was viewed in terms of the Mahayana journey from self to others, from the prison of egocentric self concern to the freedom that derives from loving and caring about another. In November . . . December, the hero was observed to find his identity in the existential turning away from the crowd and the kind of meditative introspection that breeds self knowledge. Furthermore, the hero was able to define himself in terms of the existential assumption of responsibility for his own life; this assumption of responsibility took the form of authentic choice: he took charge of his life, rather than drifting, by choosing to leave both Lori and Lawrence. In It's OK If You Don't Love Me, the heroine's search for identity took the form of trusting and loving a boy even though she felt threatened by the feeling of dependence on a member of the opposite sex. Her journey toward identity followed in some ways the Buddhist path by which one learns to see through the veil of one's illusions and thus discovers the

freedom of authentic self knowledge. With Jody, this path toward identity began with the illusion that ethnic prejudice was responsible for her irrational hostility and insecure, competitive aggression; the path ended, however, in her awareness that she herself was responsible for her actions and that she must leave behind the insecurities and rationalizations of childhood if she is to enjoy the greater freedom of adult love and authentic identity.

CHAPTER IV

THE REBEL-VICTIM AND LOSS OF INNOCENCE THEMES IN PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE AND IN FIVE ADOLESCENT NOVELS

In Chapter III of this study, an account was given of the search for self theme as it flowed in and out of various literary and philosophical movements. In this chapter, the theme of metaphysical rebellion will be examined in philosophical perspective as well as in the adolescent novel. This time, the global concept of metaphysical rebellion will be broken down and analyzed in terms of two sub-concepts: the concept of the rebel-victim and that of the Fall of Man or Loss of Innocence. These two sub-concepts or themes will be examined as interlocking rather than as separate ideas. An assumption will be that metaphysical rebellion generally involves a holistic circle of rebellion, expulsion and new awareness: the metaphysical rebel first of all rebels against some form of authority to which he stands as subject or victim; secondly, the rebel is rejected or expelled from the state in which he finds himself as victim; third, the rebel finds new identity or awareness in his outcast or "fallen" state. The process of rebellion, expulsion and new awareness will be viewed as a paradigm of the spiritual evolution of man from primitive supernaturalism to existential humanism. This

paradigm of evolving consciousness will be examined in terms of specific types of metaphysical rebels, ranging from Prometheus, Satan, Cain and Manfred, to the present hero of the absurd. Following this philosophical overview of the rebellion theme will be an analysis of five contemporary adolescent novels. Rebellion will be viewed both in the novels and in the philosophical overview as a positive step toward self actualization, rather than as simply a negative reaction against authority.

Concerning rebellion in modern literature, Ihab Hassen makes this observation:

Obviously, a dark impulse of resistance permeates contemporary letters. Novelists are not afraid to admit it. A Christian writer like Flannery O'Connor and a radical novelist like Norman Mailer concur that violence and distortion must be the means of projecting a vision to which society is hostile. They would further agree that the contemporary world presents a continued affront to man, and that his response must therefore be the response of the rebel or victim, living under the shadow of death.¹

What is there about the contemporary world that constitutes the "continued affront to man" which Hassen speaks of above? The threat to life posed by the dangers of nuclear war? (On the Beach, Alas, Babylon.) The threat to individual liberty by totalitarian systems of government? (Brave New World, 1984, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, Gulag Archipelago.) The demeaning injustice of racial prejudice? (Invisible Man, To Kill a Mockingbird.) The spiritually

¹Ihab Hassen, Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary Novel (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), pp. 4-5.

debilitating experience of war? (All Quiet on the Western Front, The Moon Is Down, The Deerhunter.) The tyranny of sexism? (Hedda Gabler, The Diary of a Mad Housewife, The Bell Jar, Lessing or Drabble heroines.) The pressure toward mediocrity and conformity symbolized by the mental institution? (One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.) All of these and more. There is no one cause of modern discontent and Orwell's projection for a totalitarian mind sweep does not seem to appear on the immediate horizon after all. The counter-revolution in China is finally taking democratic shape and even in the U.S.S.R. there is still alive an internal thirst for freedom as manifested by the periodic rebellion of artists and scientists alike. And, although the political picture is less than perfect, there exists in America and Western Europe a hitherto unparalleled concern for individual liberty and social justice, especially in the protection of minority rights. Perhaps an overwhelming irony of our times is that so many books of rebellion have and are being published in places where freedom has never before been so firmly established both as political principle and public concern. Could it be that in the final analysis freedom is a quality of perception that one can only grant to oneself? Albert Camus stated in The Rebel that "With rebellion, awareness is born."² Perhaps the proliferation

²Albert Camus, The Rebel (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 15.

of rebellion literature in our time stems not so much from a reaction to any specific factor of political, racial or sexual repression, but rather from a general characteristic of man, the characteristic desire to grow, to change, to try out new roles; and perhaps one must also realize that such growth and change automatically involve a rebellion of one kind or another against already established norms or forces of authority. From this point of view the rebel-victim theme can be viewed as organically related to the Old Testament fall of man theme in which rebellion and new awareness go hand in hand.

As Arthur Lovejoy has pointed out, the fall of man in the Adam and Eve myth is actually a "fortunate fall," one in which man sacrifices innocence for knowledge. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, through their disobedience to Him, they simultaneously propelled themselves into a new state of awareness in which authentic moral freedom was made possible for the first time. Prior to this rebellion, their state of perfect innocence precluded the possibility of moral choice as well as the possibility of atonement and redemption for which God was to sacrifice Himself in the form of his only begotten son. Lovejoy puts the matter in theological perspective thusly:

No devout believer could hold that it would have been better if the moving drama of man's salvation had never taken place; and consequently, no such believer could consistently hold that the first act of that drama, the event from which all the rest of it sprang, was really to be regretted.

Moreover, the final state of the redeemed, the consummation of human history, would far surpass in felicity and in moral excellence the pristine happiness and innocence of the first pair in Eden--that state in which, but for the Fall, man would presumably have remained. Thus Adam's sin--and also, indeed, the sins of his posterity . . . were the conditio sine qua non both of a greater manifestation of the glory of God and of immeasurably greater benefits for man than could conceivably have been otherwise obtained.³

As the Archangel Michael tells Adam, in book twelve of Paradise Lost,

. . . for then the Earth
Shall all be Paradise, far happier place
Than this of Eden, and far happier days.⁴

When Adam learns, from Michael, the details of the fortunate fall, how evil will ultimately be used for good and how his own transgression was a necessary first step in bringing about the redemption of man for the greater glory of God, he is overcome with joy:

O goodness infinite, goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good; more wonderful
Than that which by creation first brought forth
Light out of darkness! full of doubt I stand,
Whether I should repent me now of sin
By me done and occasion'd, or rejoice
Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring,
To God more glory, more good will to Men
From God, and over wrath grace shall abound.⁵

³Arthur O. Lovejoy, "Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall," Essays in the History of Ideas (New York: The John Hopkins Press, 1948), pp. 278-279.

⁴John Milton, Paradise Lost (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), Book Twelve, lines 463-465.

⁵Milton, lines 469-478.

One can see in the Fall myth the interconnected principle of rebellion and awareness which Camus spoke of in The Rebel.

Looking at the issue from a positive point of view, one can argue that the psychology of rebellion often involves not so much a reaction against something as an action toward something, toward a new state of moral awareness, a new state of political liberty, a new definition of the self or a new structure of reality. From this frame of reference one can see, for example, that Antigone's rebellion against Creon (and the royal decree that forbade the burial of her brother) was really the vehicle by which Sophocles was able to project a new concept of justice, one in which the personal dignity of the individual takes priority over the impersonal mandates of the state. Similarly one can argue that in modern times Thoreau's decision to go to jail rather than pay taxes in a slave state was a positive expression of his belief in the freedom and dignity of the individual, as much as it was a negative political reaction. Similarly one can readily see how Martin Luther King's philosophy of non-violent resistance was, as he himself reported, a continuation of the doctrine of positive rebellion espoused by Tolstoy and Ghandi.

Looking at rebellion in this positive light, one could even make the sweeping generalization that the rebellion of Adam and Eve set in motion a process of events which ultimately reflect a theological softening of the ancient

Hebraic concept of deity. Adam's "sin" could be viewed, metaphysically, as the necessary first step in the development of the Christian model of salvation and redemption, a model in which the stern, imperial image of Jehovah is replaced as a point of focus by the Pauline image of Jesus as kind, loving savior. A similar historical change in the concept of deity can also be seen in Aeschylus' Prometheus trilogy where is developed "the concept of a Zeus whose character combined wisdom with authority maintained by force, and who evolved from the tyrant of the first play into a benevolent deity, the enlightened ruler of the world."⁶ In Shelley's treatment of this same material, Prometheus' rebellion can be symbolically viewed as paving the way for a new moral order in the universe, one in which man himself must take responsibility for the gods and demons he creates, which are after all only the reflection of man's own innate capacity for both good and evil. According to Shelley's view, the ultimate redemption of mankind depends not on Jehovah or Christ, but rather on man's own capacity for love and moral imagination. One can readily perceive how Shelley's creation of Prometheus, the "new man," prepared the way for Nietzsche's superman, for Dostoevsky's Ivan and the host of existential heroes in French and German literature. The Promethian rebellion

⁶Brown, p. 368.

set the stage for a new philosophical awareness in which man is seen as the creator of his own fate. In rebelling against victimization by the gods, man both creates and accepts the responsibility for his own destiny. M. H. Abrams in his introduction to Shelley's Prometheus Unbound gives a rather concise description of this new moral awareness and the existential responsibility contained therein:

Implicit in Prometheus Unbound . . . is the view that both the origin of evil and the possibility of reform are the moral responsibility of man himself. Social chaos and wars are a gigantic projection of man's moral disorder and inner division and conflicts: tyrants are the outer representatives of the tyranny of man's baser over his better elements; hatred for others is an expression of self contempt; and successful political reform is impossible unless man has first reformed his own nature at its deep roots, by substituting selfless love for divisive hate.⁷

In modern philosophy, Albert Camus has taken up the case for metaphysical rebellion; in fact, he coined the term. Although there are forms of metaphysical rebellion in ancient Greek drama, in the Old Testament, and in English, German, and French literature, Camus feels that

Metaphysical rebellion, in the real sense of the term, does not appear, in coherent form, in the history of ideas until the end of the eighteenth century--when modern times begin to the accompaniment of the crash of falling ramparts.⁸

⁷M. H. Abrams, general editor, The Norton Anthology of English Literature (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1968), p. 1586.

⁸Camus, The Rebel, p. 26.

Camus sees a direct relationship in modern times between social and political revolution on the one hand and, on the other hand, the dramatic growth of the rebellion theme in literature and philosophy. The surge of political revolutions which destroyed the old autocratic systems of government, and the surge of reason and science which destroyed the old religious credibility, have continued to provide a new consciousness in which metaphysical rebellion is fully possible. For according to Camus, true metaphysical rebellion must include a rebellion not just against God or political tyranny but also against the absurdity of the whole universe and the sentence of death to which man is so indifferently subjected. In other words, as long as man was rebelling specifically against a political or heavenly tyrant, his rebellion was limited in scope and meaning by the very nature and structure of that against which he rebelled. With the death of God⁹ and the death of the old political order, however, man becomes free to extend his awareness of himself in authentic, existential rebellion against the whole of creation itself, unlimited by a specific political or religious context:

⁹Camus allows elsewhere that God is not completely dead yet even in the romantic tradition. For Camus, God is dead in the sense that, for the thinking Western man, the old ideas of God as a supernatural being have been rendered implausible by modern reason and science.

Metaphysical rebellion is the movement by which man protests against his condition and against the whole of creation. It is metaphysical because it contests the ends of man and of creation. The slave protests against the condition in which he finds himself within his state of slavery; the metaphysical rebel protests against the condition in which he finds himself as a man. The rebel slave affirms that there is something in him that will not tolerate the manner in which his master treats him; the metaphysical rebel declares that he is frustrated by the universe.¹⁰

For Camus, metaphysical rebellion involves our resistance to being fortuitously born into a meaningless universe in which there are no absolutes or ultimate answers and in which every man, woman, and child, no matter how good or how great, is sentenced to death at the moment of birth. If Camus' vision seems bleak, it does, however, contain its own antidote. For paradoxically, man, in realizing that he is alone in the universe, also realizes that he is alone together. This awareness of being alone together on a drifting star in a meaningless universe, is the awareness by which man defines his identity and discovers his integrity. Even in the small absurdities of daily existence man uncovers his collective as well as his individual identity. If Descartes found the proof of his existence in the "cogito," or the assertion of metaphysical doubt, Camus found the proof of man's existence in metaphysical rebellion, even the small aspects of it in our daily lives:

¹⁰Camus, The Rebel, p. 23.

In our daily trials rebellion plays the same role as does the "cogito" in the realm of thought: it is the first piece of evidence. But this evidence lures the individual from his solitude. It finds its first value on the whole human race. I rebel--therefore we exist.¹¹

Thus far in this discussion of the rebel-victim theme there has been very little mention of the tradition of the outsider or the anti-hero. Adam and Eve, Antigone, Prometheus, and Camus' prototype rebel can all be viewed as making, in one form or another, some sort of positive contribution to the development of man: Adam and Eve's transgression symbolically issued in the world of moral choice and made possible the atonement of Christ and the redemption of mankind for the greater glory of God; Aeschylus' Prometheus brought man fire, the symbol of reason and intelligence, and also a new concept of deity in the form of a more human portrayal of Zeus; Shelley's Prometheus established a kind of existential humanism in which man is morally free but at the same time must accept the terrible burden of responsibility for this freedom; Camus' metaphysical rebel shoulders the burden of absurdity for the whole of creation but in doing so finds the freedom to be himself, alone together with his fellow creatures in a world open to creation by the imagination and will of the individual man. However, the tradition of metaphysical

¹¹Camus, The Rebel, p. 22.

rebellion has also had its "dark souled"¹² heroes--those proud rebels, both ancient and modern, who bask neither in the radiance of divine approval nor the warm glow of human kindness: Milton's Satan, Byron's Cain and Manfred, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Melville's Ahab, and many others both in Europe and America, all have cast their dark shadows on the tradition of metaphysical rebellion.

If Adam and Eve rebelled in order to gain knowledge or a new awareness of themselves--and this is suggested in Milton's treatment of the myth--Satan, on the other hand, rebelled against God out of pride and the desire to accumulate greater glory for himself. Despite Blake's claim that Milton subconsciously sided with Satan by giving him the best lines of dramatic poetry, Marjorie Nicolson and C. S. Lewis have both been firm in their rejection of Satan as the hero of Paradise Lost. Satan is a rebel victim and a heroic one, but his motives are far removed from the humanistic sympathies of Prometheus. Satan is a rebel against both God and man. He attempts to subvert the will of God and to trick Eve into the commission of sin and the woeful state of affairs that he knows will attend her and her descendents--unless of course we attribute to Satan foreknowledge of the divine scheme of redemption, in which case Satan would have to be seen as being in alliance with,

¹²I took this term from Peter L. Thorslev's The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1962), p. 3.

rather than rebellion against, the will of God. Satan is a victim as well as a rebel, but he is more a victim of his own pride and hunger for power than a victim to any divine tyranny on the part of God. Hence, Satan, as depicted both in the Old Testament and in Paradise Lost is the metaphysical forerunner of the Byronic hero,¹³ the hero who by his own proud volition acts in such a way as to both incur and sustain the conditions of his outcast state, a hero who is possessed of "a cosmic despair engendered by contempt for mankind."¹⁴ Despite this contempt for mankind, readers throughout the history of Western literature have felt fascination and sometimes even sympathy with these often larger than life, dark heroes of metaphysical rebellion. Even in the Old Testament treatment of Satan, non-orthodox religious thinkers such as those in the Manichean and Gnostic traditions have often found ways to play down the glory of God and apotheosize Satan's role in the drama of the fall and redemption of man. Blake, for example, perceived the Jehovah of the Old Testament as an almighty tyrant and a fake ideal of deity while Satan, on the other hand, was to be viewed as a glorious rebel in the cause of justice. In my own readings of Paradise Lost, I have often been prone to sympathize with the dark hero and have questioned outright

¹³For a full defense of this assertion, see Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony (New York: World Publishing Company, 1933).

¹⁴Brown, p. 65.

both the justice and logic of a divine foreknowledge that wrote the script for the drama of the Fall and then castigated the actors for carrying out their assigned roles in it. According to some theologians, foreknowledge does not preclude the possibility of free will: the logical inconsistency is said to be a paradox; for my part, however, the inconsistency constitutes a flat contradiction. C. S. Lewis has made an interesting point concerning this issue of interpretation, not only of the paradox of foreknowledge and free will but also as to just who is to be considered the true hero of the epic drama, Christ or Satan. According to Lewis, one's interpretation will be determined by one's own position regarding the authenticity of Christianity. For Lewis, as a Christian, he could only perceive Christ as the hero and the point of philosophical inconsistency as a paradox.

If one has difficulty in withholding sympathy and admiration from Milton's Satan, the difficulty only increases when one turns to Byron's dramatic heroes--Manfred and Cain. In the case of Manfred, for example, the aspect of his character that endears him to the modern mind is his Faustian insatiability for knowledge. Unlike Satan who wanted power for its own sake, Manfred exhibits "the ceaseless quest after knowledge," trusting "in the strength of mind to attain a spiritual revelation of the mysteries

of the universe."¹⁵ Despite contempt for man (in contrast to the positive relationship between Prometheus and man) the Byronic figure does have a place in the history of man's evolving consciousness. Although the Byronic hero's rebellion is often against man as well as against the gods, that rebellion, nevertheless, carries with it a new type of moral sensibility and corresponding expansion of intellectual awareness which Thorslev identifies as "Satanism."¹⁶ The moral sensibility is self directed, i.e., the Byronic hero, when faced with moral conflict, follows his own inclinations, often in flagrant disregard for human or divine law, even if his own moral inclination leads to incest¹⁷ (Byron himself and perhaps the secret crime of Manfred) or even to murder (Cain and, later, Dostoevsky's Roskolnikov). The Byronic expansion of intellectual awareness led to the questioning of religious dogma which in turn opened the way for Nietzsche's model of the superman and for the atheistic existential rebels, such as Camus and Sartre, as well as the Christian

¹⁵Samuel C. Chew, Jr., The Dramas of Lord Byron (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1964), p. 79.

¹⁶Thorslev, p. 188. (I think this is an unfortunately chosen term; although Thorslev merely means by it the habit of questioning religion, the term carries today a suggestion of melodrama that one associates with pop culture novels and movies such as The Exorcist and The Omen.)

¹⁷"The movement to weaken the incest taboo demonstrates the force, in our time, of a particular sense of the self" (Psychology Today, March 1980, p. 11).

existentialists like Kierkegaard, Buber and Tillich, who insisted first and last that relationship with God, if it was to be authentic, must be personal rather than doctrinal. The Byronic sensibility, often noted for its negative aspects--rebelliousness, pride, remorse, contemptuousness, morbid introspection--also has a positive side. As Thorslev has pointed out:

All of these heroes have souls of sensibility: Gatz and Karl Moor no less than Byron's Manfred or Cain. They appreciate natural beauty . . . often they long for some kind of absorption in the universe around them (as do Werther, Childe Harold, and Cain); and above all they have almost infinite capacities for feeling: especially, of course, for the tenderness and the passion of love.¹⁸

In the development of human consciousness, the above mentioned characteristics derive their novelty from the fact of their mutual coexistence with the other characteristics of the Byronic hero, particularly the "Satanic" characteristics. In other words, what the Byronic hero tradition contributed to life and literature was a Manichean model of consciousness, in which the human being could be viewed as simultaneously possessing both the virtues of the saint and the stubborn pride and willfulness of the devil. This development parallels Nietzsche's dichotomy of the Dionysian Frenzy and Apollonian Calm. In some ways the Byronic hero can even be seen as anticipating Freud's theory of the neurotic, the man torn apart by the turmoil of conflicting emotions. Perhaps more important, at least to the history

¹⁸Thorslev, p. 188.

of ideas, was the development of that aspect of Byronic intellectual awareness by which religious dogma and pietism were called into question and attacked. The intellectual and moral progress of the race can be directly related to man's courageous ability to question and defy antiquated definitions of deity. This intellectual ability to question the religion of the times may have been the major contribution of the Byronic tradition to the history of Western philosophy. In fact, the grand nihilism of Nietzsche, for example, may not have been possible had not such English poets as Byron, Shelley, and Blake first set the stage for rebellion with their divinely defiant attacks on orthodox religion. The following comments of Thorslev are relative to this point:

But Satanism is also directly related to pietism, although a form of rebellion. This is especially evident in Blake's reaction against the repressive effects of religious dogma (especially sexual repression, but also social), and against the ever present danger of hypocrisy in pietism, but I think it is also evident in Byron's Don Juan, or in Shelley's youthful and militant atheism. And fifty years later it is still evident in Nietzsche's reaction against the Lutheran pietism of his own early environment.¹⁹

The metaphysical rebellion of the Byronic hero can be viewed positively as the vehicle for a new assertion of religious consciousness. This new religious consciousness, which questioned old dogmas and which relegated to man not only the right but the dignity to question, is the consciousness

¹⁹Thorslev, p. 189.

which made possible both the atheistic and religious existentialism of the twentieth century.

In the theme of metaphysical rebellion, there is a natural, historical progression from the tradition of the Byronic hero in England, Germany, and Russia to the existentialism of France and Germany to the novel of the absurd in America. The metamorphosis of the rebellion theme has been intrinsically connected with the fall of Christianity and the death of God as a viable force in the affairs of men. From Prometheus and Satan to Manfred and Cain, the hero conducted his metaphysical rebellion in a religious context; in fact, the narrowness or the inhumanity of established religion often provided the source of antagonism out of which the rebellion sprang. In modern times, however, established religion has ceased to be a dominant unifying force in the lives of men and this state of affairs has left the metaphysical rebel with no target but the universal condition itself, a condition which the modern rebel perceives as a vast, meaningless void. David Galloway has described the way in which modern writers have turned their attention to this "absurd" state of affairs:

The decay of traditional Christianity as a unifying force in the life of Western man, whether it be mourned, celebrated, or merely acquiesced to, cannot be ignored . . . the theme of the exiled

individual in a meaningless universe²⁰ in which precepts of religious orthodoxy seem increasingly less relevant--has challenged the imagination of American writers with an almost overwhelming urgency. Despite the persistence of institutional Christianity--as measured by church construction and attendance--modern man seems continually less able to find order and meaning in life. . . . Thus, what might be called the "religious quest" continues to exert a powerful influence on the minds of western thinkers.²¹

The term "religious quest" is an appropriate one with which to describe that process of metaphysical rebellion whereby man pushes himself forward into new realms of experience and awareness. In its deepest sense, the term "religious" might refer not to the mute acceptance of clerical authority but rather to those authentic intellectual and emotional yearnings of the soul by which man reexamines in each succeeding age the following humanistic relationships: man's relationship to nature, man's relationship to his fellow man, man's relationship to diety and man's relationship to his own inner self. From this humanistic frame of reference, the history of the hero in Western culture can be viewed as the corresponding history of man's religious quest for new understandings of himself and the world, a quest in which the image of the hero, like the image of

²⁰As opposed to the Byronic theme of the self exiled individual in a universe directed by the inscrutable will of a haughty tyrant.

²¹David Galloway, The Absurd Hero in American Fiction (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), p. 5.

deity, reflects the evolving consciousness of man as it seeks for higher states of awareness. The picture of the hero, from classical to romantic, to modern times, can therefore be seen as reflecting an anthropocentric progression from primitive supernaturalism to existential humanism. This "new religion of man" is at present caught in the dilemma of doubt in which man seems unable to make the leap of faith to religious orthodoxy and at the same time is incapable of wholly projecting himself into a Nietzschean nihilism. Galloway puts it slightly differently, but essentially in the same frame of mind: "While he seems increasingly reluctant to take the leap into faith, nihilism rarely produces card-carrying agnostics."²² Caught in the vacuum between the absence of religious conviction and the as yet untried, incomplete moral order of secular humanism, modern writers often turn to the absurd as the only viable means of expressing their perception of the modern condition. However, this absurdist perception need not be automatically pessimistic. In the absence of a state religion (such as medieval Catholicism or Soviet Marxism), modern man finds himself free to create his own values and his own destiny. Consequently, the pessimism that seems to underly so much of both existential and absurdist literature need not be viewed as intrinsic to the movement of metaphysical rebellion out of which this

²²Galloway, p. 5.

literature derives its philosophical point of view. Both Anand Malik and David Galloway have insisted that pessimism is incidental rather than germane to the modern existential and absurdist points of view. Regarding existentialism, Professor Malik makes this point:

In my free discussions with the contemporary German existentialist Fritz-Joachim von Rintelen of the University of Mainz, whose major work has recently been translated in English under the title Beyond Existentialism, Professor Rintelen agreed with me that pessimism may be the beginning of the current existential awareness but is not an integral part of the basic existential mode.²³

Similarly, Galloway points out that there are two sides to modern absurdist literature, positive as well as pessimistic:

Albert Camus repeatedly suggested that man could, despite the hostility of an absurd environment, establish a new and viable basis for heroism and thus for human dignity; the "non-hero" who populates so much contemporary drama and fiction is thus not the sole or unavoidable product of such a milieu. In short, absurd literature can be either optimistic or pessimistic; the fundamental and determining issue is whether, in the conflict between man and his "absurd" environment, man or environment will emerge victorious; whether, in terms of the individual, humanistic or nihilistic impulses will dominate; whether, denied conventional social and religious consolation, man is capable of producing adequate spiritual antibodies to resist despair.²⁴

From an optimistic frame of mind one might argue that just as rebellion, in the past, has led to new awareness, so too will the present absurdist rebellion lead to a new

²³Malik, p. 49.

²⁴Galloway, p. viii.

awareness or a new way of structuring reality. Galloway, for example, says:

I continue to believe that there is a recognizable tradition in Western literature whereby the absurd becomes a way of affirming the resources of the human spirit, of exalting sacrifice and suffering, of ennobling the man capable of sustaining the vital opposition between intention and reality.²⁵

In contrast to the pessimism and "grotesque absurdities encountered in Beckett or Genet or Kosinski,"²⁶ Galloway cites Updike, Styron, Bellow and Salinger as examples of authors who have created absurd heroes who in turn have rebelled against the absurd by a reaffirmation of the value of individual dignity and freedom and the sustaining power of love. One could readily add Faulkner to the list and cite his Nobel prize speech as a declaration of metaphysical rebellion against the absurd: according to Faulkner, 'man will not only survive, he will "prevail."

If man is victim to non-voluntary birth into a meaningless universe in which physical decay and death are the ultimate price one must pay for living, he is also charged with the total, awesome freedom to become what he will in his own uniquely human way. In our own time the perception of absurdity may be the beginning point for a new humanistic awareness in which we realize that we are alone together on spaceship earth and that our dignity as

²⁵Galloway, p. xiii.

²⁶Galloway, p. xiv.

individuals and our survival as a species are largely a matter not of divine providence but our own human capacity for freedom and good will.

I personally perceive the long line of metaphysical rebel victims (from classical to Byronic to Absurdist) as a reflection of man's basic yearning for new types of intellectual and moral awareness. I think that the present sense of the absurd is in the process of decay and in its place a new model of the universe is forming. This new model of the universe, which exalts man to the level of a creative god, began when the first metaphysical rebel lifted his head upward to the skies to question the gods and then turned his vision inward to discover that he himself was the source of answers to his metaphysical questions. The oracle at Delphi, which answered Socrates' quest for wisdom with the dictum "Know Thyself," rightly placed the burden of knowledge in the heart and mind of man. Shelley and Blake foresaw that man must begin his understanding of the heavens by first establishing a new moral order here on earth, a moral order in which man himself is understood as the creator of good and evil, happiness and despair. The realization of the absurd, in our own times, is only one more finger pointing in the direction of human responsibility for the created world. The phenomenologists, the existentialists, the purveyors of the absurd in literature, music and art, are all marching

in the same direction, a direction now joined by relativity physicists and the new "biologists of the unconscious." The direction of this march is toward the ancient Taoist knowledge that the world may very well be a collective thought and that we as individuals must assume responsibility for the structure of reality which we create and which we continue to sustain through the active force of imagination and will.

I. MY DARLING VILLAIN

For the adolescent protagonist, the course of self direction often begins with rebellion against some force of parental or societal authority to which the adolescent feels victimized. In Lynn Banks' My Darling Villain, the rebel-victim theme is set in the class conflict of contemporary England. The heroine, Kate Dunhill, is caught in the struggle between loyalty to her middle class parents and her conflicting but liberating love for a boy from London's working class. Like the metaphysical rebels discussed earlier in this chapter, Kate manages to use the vehicle of rebellion as a means of discovering new realms of intellectual and emotional awareness, and her process of identity recapitulates, in a modern context, some of the same themes of disobedience and expulsion that were found in the Adam and Eve myth and in the tradition of the Byronic hero. Just as Milton's Adam and Eve, for example,

disobeyed God and partook of the "forbidden fruit" in order that they might acquire a new dimension of moral awareness,²⁷ so too does Kate disobey or rebel against her parents in order to partake of the liberating experience of love, a love that, in her case, is forbidden but so authentic that it eventually leads to a transcendental experience by which both Kate and her parents are able to grow as individuals and to achieve a new depth of understanding about themselves and their world.

In the tradition of metaphysical rebellion, the rebel victim generally undergoes some sort of expulsion, be it literal or symbolic, physical or psychological: Prometheus and Satan (for quite different, even opposite reasons) are expelled from the Greek and Christian heavens; Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden (symbolizing man's transition from the insularity of primitive innocence to vulnerable alliance in the human venture into consciousness, moral choice and psychic pain); Cain is expelled from the company of his fellows; Antigone is expelled from life, being sentenced to death by Creon (although she takes her own life before he can rescind his mandate); Byron, in "real life" is expelled from England. Thus if, as Camus

²⁷ It is interesting to note in this context that in Milton's version of the myth, Eve, on the night before the fall, dreams that she is flying. Such dreams, in Freudian psychology, are said to indicate the desire for freedom or escape. In My Darling Villain, Kate feels that she is flying when she rides on Mark's motorcycle.

has noted, rebellion engenders awareness, it also seems to invoke expulsion. In the adolescent novel, rebellion, awareness, and expulsion also go hand in hand. Sometimes the expulsion may be literal as well as symbolic; this is the case, for example, with Holden's expulsion from Prency prep. In the case of My Darling Villain, the expulsion theme is similar to that of the Fall of Man or Garden of Eden myth: the rebel victim is cast out of the innocent security of childhood and into the expanded consciousness of moral choice and existential responsibility. In general, the adolescent experience of rebellion, expulsion and new awareness can be viewed as a reenactment of the ancient theme of metaphysical rebellion whereby mankind liberated itself from the structure of supernatural dependency and propelled itself into the new arena of existential humanism. In this specific novel, My Darling Villain, the transition from adolescent rebellion to adult responsibility is not only the process by which the heroine achieves authentic human freedom and dignity, it is also the process by which the particular absurdity of class prejudice undergoes a stringent analysis and a final indictment.

Like the star-crossed lovers in Romeo and Juliet, or, in more recent times, like the ethnically opposed lovers in West Side Story, Kate and Mark reach out to each other across the invisible wall that separates the British social classes. A foreshadowing of this class barrier

comes early in the novel when Kate stumbles upon a copy of Nancy Mitford's Noblesse Oblige:

One day I found a book lying around the house called Noblesse Oblige by Nancy Mitford. Mum saw me at it and said, "Oh, you've got hold of that thing! You won't understand it. All that's a thing of the past now, but we thought it a scream when it first came out."

I didn't think it was a scream. I wasn't so sure it was a thing of the past, either. It was mostly about the way people talk, and how you can tell whether they're upper, middle or lower class from the words they use for different things. "Toilet" for "loo" for instance. We always called it a toilet at school and a loo at home. I'd never realized it before. Same with "dinner" and "lunch." Whoever heard of a "lunch-lady" at school? Was it all a joke, as Mum said, an anachronism, or did it mean something?

It wasn't till that year when I was fifteen that I found out how important all that was going to be to me.²⁸

Although Kate's parents pay lip service to egalitarian ideas and scoff at such outward class distinctions as the ones mentioned above, in point of truth they hold many deep-rooted prejudices of which they are unaware. Although Kate's rebellion does not take actual form until she becomes involved with Mark, the seeds of rebellion are planted when she begins to perceive certain inconsistencies between what her parents preach and what they practice. For example, although her father votes labor and claims to be a socialist, he is torn apart on the question of whether to send his son, Alastair, to public or private school:

²⁸Lynn Reid Banks, My Darling Villain (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 10. Hereinafter cited parenthetically in the text as Banks, MDV.

Being a Socialist, Dad isn't supposed to try to get a "privileged" education for his children. So when Alastair failed the eleven-plus, as I've mentioned, Dad shouldn't have minded the idea of his going to the local secondary mod, which, after all, was a good democratic school where everybody sent their kids if they didn't get into a grammar. Or did they? (Banks, MDV, p. 9.)

Apparently they don't. As Kate gets her first lesson in social reality, Alastair ends up at "Burnfield Court," his father's socialistic idealism is shattered, and Kate begins to take politics seriously:

I hope you won't think badly of Dad's will-power when you hear how it all ended. He was overpowered, and not just by Mum and Grandad, but his own reluctance to send Alastair to that grotty school. He not only stifled his conscience, but let Grandad pay the first year's fees . . . it was a total defeat, both for Dad and for socialism. . . . It was as though he'd been pulled in half, and had stuck himself back together again not quite straight.

I think it was when I realized this that I decided to take a serious interest in politics (Banks, MDV, p. 10).

Her developing interest in politics may partly explain her fascination with a boy from a social class different from her own. At first Kate cannot understand why political issues are so important to her father but as she begins dating Mark, she slowly begins to understand from first hand experience the vicious rigidity of the British class system and the confused socialistic conscience of her father. Nowhere in the novel is the wall of class consciousness more clearly realized than in the section that describes Kate's first visit to a "segregated" tavern. The segregation is not mandatory by law, as it recently was in

the American South; rather, it is a voluntary reflection of society itself and its desire to remain segregated.

Mark tries to explain to Kate the inevitability of these voluntary class barriers:

"And," Mark went on, "it's not just a hangover from a less civilized past either. If they build a new pub today, don't you think they make sure there's a snob's side and a yob's side? And here's another thing. Once you could have written 'Bosses' and 'Workers' or even 'Rich types' and 'Poor types' on those doors instead of the code-names 'saloon' and 'public.' But now some of these blokes are poorer than some of the ones next door,²⁹ and some of them are less ignorant than the ones in here. But the funny thing is that every man in Britain turns automatically into one bar or the other, whatever pub he goes in to. Why do you think I feel happier over there while you couldn't wait to come here?"

"Because you can't get rid of it," he said. "You can't, Kate, no matter what you do. Laws can't do it, politics can't do it, even education can't do it. And that's something the Labor government had better look into before they go much further. We're not a classless society and we never will be, because we don't want to be" (Banks, MDV, p. 148).

On the other hand, when these levels of voluntary differences take on the nature of vertical social distance, one level being perceived by itself as superior to rather than simply different from another and becomes institutionally rigidified, a sinister element creeps into the picture, an element which, in its lowest form of expression, manifests

²⁹ Mark has deliberately "gone out of his natural element" and has taken Kate to the saloon or "snob" side of the pub. (She was uncomfortable in the other side.)

itself in social snobbery. It is this level of expression that Kate elects as the object of her rebellion, with her parents being the focusing point for immediate observation and judgement. For example, when her brother Alastair announces that he wants to be an auto mechanic, Kate perceives with a critical eye the snobbish inconsistency between her father's liberal pronouncements and his actual values:

"You mean you want to be a mechanic? As a career?"

"Yes."

"Work with car engines all your life?"

"What's wrong with that?"

"Nothing really. I'd have like to see you aim a bit higher, that's all."

"Higher how? If it's the money that's worrying you, let me tell you that in a year or so's time I can be earning--"

"That's only part of it. When I say 'higher' I mean literally higher than lying on your back in a puddle of grease. You talk about hands--look at yours! And that's the way they'll be all your life--like a sign pinned to your chest saying 'Manual Worker--Social Category D.' Have you thought a bit about what that'll mean in terms of how you live, who you meet, how people react to you? A man isn't judged by his accents nowadays, or the school he went to, or what his father did. He's judged by his job. And whether it's right or not, a mechanic is judged to be a whole lot lower down the scale than a man with some education who can wash the day's dirt off his hands easily after he's finished work."

Alastair had listened to all this carefully. Now he just said, "Well, Dad, I must say you disappoint me." And went back to eating his lunch.

Dad threw his napkin on the table and stamped out (Banks, MDV, p. 162).

At this point Kates begins to see her older brother Alastair in a new light; Alastair begins to serve as a model of inner strength and his rebellion against the

system and his father is manifested simply but profoundly in his quiet determination to be himself.

He was himself. He'd made up his mind. Dad could roar the place down and Mum could go as quiet as she liked, and Alastair wouldn't change. He knew he wouldn't and accepted the cost and didn't fight against it, even inside. I envied him suddenly with all my heart--(Banks, MDV, p. 163).

This is the first time that she has envied Alastair and this envy signals a new stage in Kate's intellectual and moral development. Like so many people who are intellectually gifted, Kate has had a tendency to overestimate the importance of "left brain" intelligence and to underestimate the importance of what D. H. Lawrence once referred to as the intelligence of the heart:

I think it was the first time I ever had envied Alastair. I had always been cleverer than he was. Perhaps I had even looked down on him because of it--I had certainly called him "dumb" and "dopey" about a million times, up until just the last year or so. And all of a sudden I remembered Dad . . . telling me not to run him down, and only now I understood what he'd meant. I felt absolutely certain I would never run him down again, even in my mind. He was streets ahead of me as a person, and brains had nothing to do with it (Banks, MDV, p. 163).

Perhaps it is Kate's new insight into Alastair that helps her to develop her own inner strength as the conflict between her and her parents continues to intensify. She and Mark continue to see each other, feeling all the while both the weight of her parents' disapproval and the social distance between the values and life styles of their two families. The building tension comes to a head one night

when Mark brings her home late from a rock concert. At the concert the crowd got out of control and in the melee that ensued Kate's dress was badly torn. To make matters worse, when they finally managed to get back on the street, they discovered that Mark's motorcycle had been stolen.

(Kate has been strictly forbidden to ride the motorcycle and Mark always leaves it around the corner from her house where they later fetch it and roar off in the speed of sudden freedom.) When they get home late, Kate's dad is in a rage, although he tries at first to maintain a calm exterior. Mark's attempts to explain why they are so late only serve to inflame the situation. When he inadvertently reveals that they have been on a motorcycle, this shocking revelation represents, for Kate's parents, the last straw. The forbidden motorcycle has been a symbol of surreptitious freedom for Kate; for her parents, however, the motorcycle is a hairy spider, a threat, an open symbol of everything they fear and distrust about Mark and his working class background. When the word "motorbike" leaps out of Mark's attempted explanation, the whole scene becomes electrified:

I quailed at the word "motorbike." Mum sat forward and her mouth opened.

"What motorbike?" she asked.

"Mine."

"You took Kate out on your motorbike?" she asked incredulously.

Now Mark looked at me--a helpless look. He didn't know how to answer without getting me into trouble (Banks, MDV, p. 209

At this precise moment, Kate makes her first existential leap into self responsibility. She begins to take over her life:

I had to take over.
 "We always go on it," I said. "We have for ages. I'm sorry, Mum."
 Mum looked at Dad. Dad stood up. He was looking at Mark, not at me.
 "I don't remember giving permission for Kate to travel round London on a motorcycle," he said, quietly but dangerously (Banks, MDV, p. 209-210).

Kate's attempt to "take over" is temporarily blocked by her father. He will not allow her the dignity of assuming even a part of the responsibility for her and Mark's actions. Instead, he treats her as a child and turns to a confrontation with Mark, trying to shift the burden of blame away from Kate. In the process Kate thinks she sees her father's deep-rooted prejudices begin to surface in full force:

The "discussion" deteriorated into an outright row . . . and Dad, who had always been so polite to Mark, let his true feelings break out. He said he was a young ruffian with no proper standards or sense of values. I knew what he really meant and that pushed me over the brink (Banks, MDV, p. 212).

Kate "knows" that what he really meant is that Mark is not good enough for her because he is "lower class":

I began to shout too.
 "You've never liked him! You think he's not good enough!"
 "I think he's irresponsible and tonight proves it," Dad yelled.
 Mark had gone oddly quiet. "What does that mean, exactly?"
 "That I don't want you taking her out any more!"
 "I thought we'd come to that. Well," said Mark, turning to me, and he seemed very calm now that I'd blown my top, "I think that's up to Kate."

"Oh no, it's not!" said Dad.

"It is. She's sixteen. That happens to be the age of consent."

"Consent?" roared Dad. "Consent to what, for God's sake?" I tell you as long as she's living under my roof--" (Banks, MDV, p. 212-213).

"Living under my roof" is an unfortunate phrase because it rubs against Kate's newly developing awareness that she must be herself despite the consequences--even if the consequences involve leaving home. Both Mark and Kate's father seem, at this point, determined, in the fury of their own self righteousness, to place Kate in the impossible situation of having to decide, instantly, between them. Neither seems to realize that the choice cuts to a deeper level of meaning where what she is really being forced to consider is the authenticity of her identity, her very existence: is she to turn back to the security of childhood or is she, like that first Eve, to take the awesome step forward into the adult world of freedom and responsibility? Kate realizes more than Mark or her father the implications of the choice they are demanding that she make. Perhaps in her heart she already knows that if they pursue the issue, that if they force her to choose between them, that they will really be forcing her to choose herself. What she really wants is for both of them to love her enough to back off, to be patient with their own injured pride, and to grant to her the freedom to grow up, to make mistakes, and to learn, at her own pace. She does not want her identity to be defined in terms of

their needs, their male egos, their impetuous righteousness. In trying to protect the purity of her own search for identity, Kate equivocates, refusing at least temporarily to make any choice at all. At the end of the scene, "ignorant armies" have "clashed by night," but nothing seems really settled: Mark shoulders his injured pride and, like a Manfred or a Cain, stalks off into the night; Kate's parents go silently to their room, confused, angry, exhausted, not understanding really what has happened or why. Kate understands what has happened: a class war, with herself as the prize, has been conducted in the living room of a once but no longer safe, upper middle class home.

Kate can't get to sleep and her sobs eventually bring Alastair to her room to find out what has happened. They go down to the kitchen for some warm milk and together they try to sort out the situation and to decide what if anything must be done. Kate tries to describe what has happened in terms of her parents' class prejudice, but Alastair suggests that maybe it is Kate who is obsessed with class:

"You talk about class, which incidentally I bet Dad didn't. I've often thought you're a bit obsessed on that subject. What you'll have to ask yourself is, not so much whether Mark's accent and background and so on bother Dad and Mum, but whether, deep down, they bother you" (Banks, MDV, p. 217).

Kate is shocked at the suggestion that she herself may be prejudiced but Alastair points out to her that she may

have acquired her parents' class-consciousness without even having realized it:

"Look, what do you think class-consciousness is, or racialism, or sexism, or any of the other prejudices? They're things you drink in from your environment when you're a child, and they grow up with you and probably get passed on to your kids, if you're not damn careful (Banks, MDV, p. 217).

With specific reference to Kate and himself, Alastair says, "if we manage to grow up free of class prejudice then we can give ourselves a pat on the back, because both our parents, in their very different ways, are snobs" (Banks, MDV, p. 218). Alastair's greatness as a person lies in the fact that he can still love his parents despite their prejudice:

"We needn't love them any less for it," said Alastair, "but we have to recognize it. I did, a long time ago, when Dad was forcing me through that crammer course to get me into Burnfield Court. I made up my mind then to break free of all that" (Banks, MDV, p. 218).

As Alastair talks on, Kate begins to really understand him and respect him in a way that she has been incapable of doing in the past. She begins to see in his wisdom a reflection of her own knowledge, a knowledge of herself and the world that has been trying to surface for some time but which has been held back by her own emotional immaturity, her own reluctance to see things in clear perspective. Alastair also warns her that if she is to continue seeing Mark it must be because she really wants to, for herself, not just as a reaction to her parents

or as a way of proving to herself that she is not prejudiced:

"You mustn't keep on with him just as a reaction to Dad's snobbery. That would be stupid. Just as stupid as if I'd said to myself, 'I'd rather go back to school, but I'm going to stay on at the garage just to show Dad what I think of his wrong ideas.' Do you see what I'm getting at?"

I saw. Oh, I saw all right! I never saw anything clearer in my life (Banks, MDV, p. 219).

The point here, and it is a very important one, not just for Kate but as a general principle applicable to all cases of growth by rebellion, is this: rebellion, if it is to be fruitful, must be positive rather than negative; rebellion against authority, whether it be religious, social or intellectual, must not be for the sake of rebellion alone; rather, rebellion must be understood as a freedom one grants to oneself, a freedom to develop, at the expense of the old order of authority, a new depth of self realization, a new dimension of moral, social, religious or intellectual awareness. (In my own life, at this time, I am in the process of intellectual rebellion against what I consider to be the limited reality structure of the Western empirical mode of being. I do not, however, let this rebellion cancel out my appreciation of the very real contributions that Western thinkers and artists have made to the cultural bank of humanity; rather I see my rebellion as a positive reflection of the freedom I grant to myself, the freedom to grow, to change and to explore new ways of structuring my experience of the world.) The willingness

to grow, to accept responsibility for thinking and feeling for oneself, is also a sign of self respect. For Kate, this aspect of self respect is what is at stake when she faces the showdown with her father the next morning:

"So you think you're now grown up enough to make your own decisions," said Dad.

"I don't see how I can accept your decision about a thing like this."

"If I actually forbade you to see him, what would happen?" (Banks, MDV, p. 221.)

Instead of rebelling negatively, instead of just saying to herself "you can go to hell, because I'm going to see him anyway," Kate, in her mind, examines her impending rebellion in a positive context: she considers her father's love for her; she considers the possibility of the validity of his concern for her well being; she considers Mark, with his stubborn pride and his genuine signs of love and protectiveness toward her; and, most importantly, she tries to consider her own true motives; she tries desperately to be honest with herself. From all these considerations she is able to cast her rebellion in the context not of blind, negative reaction against the authority of her father or the absurdity of the British class system, but rather in the context of her own need for a new, authentic relationship and experience with Mark, without which her growth as an individual may be arrested. First she considers her father:

I looked at him. I thought of all the lovely, sweet things he had done for me, and of how much I loved him and how much I knew he loved me. Was this threat just stubbornness or did he really feel that strongly about it? Was it to protect me that he wanted to ban Mark from my life, or was it some kind of warp in himself? (Banks, MDV, p. 221.)

Her ability to consider her father's love in the face of his hostile obstinacy is both a measure of her expanding sensitivity, her "intelligence of the heart," and a measure of her progress toward authentic identity.

As Kate continues to weigh things in her mind, she considers for the first time that maybe she and Mark are too different from each other, that maybe the social distance between them and their families is too great to be safely crossed:

I remembered the crowd Mark had gone around with, about the scene at the pub, about his family and their prejudices which must have rubbed off on him. . . . Maybe we were too different. Maybe I was just being carried away by physical attraction . . . (Banks, MDV, p. 221).

On the other hand, Kate remembers the good things about Mark, those qualities of human greatness which transcend the limitation of social class:

But then I thought of other things. How Mark looked after and protected me, even from myself. How clever and sensible he was, and how honest and strong, despite his strange anger and stubbornness. . . . All his "bad" experiences--drug taking, nearly getting that girl in trouble and so on--he had learnt from, they had all made him grow. He was a man, not a boy, and I respected him. That wasn't just physical (Banks, MDV, p. 221).

So when her father, looking into her eyes, asks her if she would see Mark even if he, her father, asked her not to, Kate replies:

"I'm afraid so. I think I'd have to."

"You're that keen."

"It's not only that. I can't let you decide for me. If it's a mistake, I have to find it out for myself" (Banks, MDV, p. 222).

This exchange points up what must truly be one of the hardest decisions any parent has to make, the decision to grant to one's children the freedom to make their own mistakes. It is a decision that carries profound, existential implication. Those of us who are in positions of authority, as parents or as teachers, must realize that each individual must ultimately strike out and follow his own path in life, and that we as figures of authority, if we truly love and respect our children and our students, must grant to them the freedom and dignity to make choices for themselves, even if we perceive dangers in those choices. If and when we do perceive such dangers, our role must be that of guide and model, not tyrant. Kate's father wisely decides not to block her decision, but rather to grant to her the right to follow her own conscience in the matter. His decision to let her pursue her relationship with Mark may be seen as an act of faith both in Kate and in himself, for Kate's ability to choose wisely in life is as much a reflection of the values he has instilled in her as it is a reflection of Kate's own developing awareness.

In the final pages of the novel, the love which Kate and Mark feel for each other acts as a catalyst in which both families are brought closer together in spite of their obvious social differences. Almost as a deus ex

machina, Mark is seriously injured in a motorcycle accident and during the weeks in which he struggles for life, in the intensive care section of a hospital, the two families perceive, in Kate's utter, selfless devotion, a type of love which makes them aware and ashamed of their class prejudices. Through the transcendental experience of love, Kate, Mark and both their families undergo a change of spirit in which all of them put aside considerations of social differences and discover in its stead the common bonds of humanity.

As indicated previously in this chapter, the rebel-victim theme involves a protagonist's rebellion against his or her victimization to some form of authority. In adolescent fiction this rebellion may be directed against society (Holden Caulfield and Huckleberry Finn are both examples) or, as Tasker Witham has noted, it may be more specifically directed toward the family, a member of the family or against family status.³⁰ In The Adolescent in the American Novel: 1920-1960, Witham points out that

Breaking family ties is a normal part of growing up; the adolescent who fails to break them prolongs his period of dependency and thus adds to his problems. Under ideal conditions, the ties are gradually weakened with the knowledge and under the guidance of the parent, so that the adolescent

³⁰T. Tasker Witham, The Adolescent in the American Novel: 1920-1960 (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1964), p. 65.

develops strength for the complete independence which he must eventually assume.³¹

Just as man has grown up by shuffling off his ties with an anthropomorphic deity, so too does the adolescent grow and mature by freeing himself from an overly dependent relationship to his parents. Sometimes, however, the child's breaking away may become violent:

There is violent revolt, perhaps because one or both parents try to prolong parental control or to exercise it in an unreasonable way, or perhaps because of a deep-seated antagonism which is more than just a transitional phase of adolescence. In such cases, of course, the problems of revolt are intensified.³²

II. SOMETIMES I DON'T LOVE MY MOTHER

In Hilda Coleman's Sometimes I Don't Love My Mother, the rebel-victim theme hinges on the situation outlined above: the adolescent heroine's mother tries "to prolong parental control," she exercises her control "in an unreasonable way," and the adolescent daughter herself has a "deep-seated antagonism" toward her mother, an antagonism that is "more than just a transitional phase of adolescence." The death of Dallas' father marks the beginning point of her conflict with her mother. At the wake, Dallas begins to feel herself in competition with her mother for the sympathy of family friends:

³¹Witham, p. 65.

³²Witham, p. 65.

Everyone had been extremely solicitous of Mrs. Davis. Dallas admired the way her mother has held up during the day, keeping herself under control and breaking down only when her father's partner in their architectural firm had arrived. Then she had clung to him and wept unconsolably. Dallas kept herself busy pouring coffee, serving cake, answering the phone, and a few times she had thought, my mother lost her husband, but no one seems to remember that I've lost my father.³³

Dallas feels that she has a special claim on grief because "her father hadn't been just an ordinary father, and no one in the world, not even her mother, knew of the special relationship they had had" (Coleman, SID, p. 17). Their special relationship was based on their similarity of personality and character. "In so many ways Dallas was like her father, strong and outgoing" "They also did things together, just the two of them: he took her to a special place in the woods where he "had taught her the names of the wild flowers, and, one summer, had helped her build a tree house" (Coleman, SID, p. 19). Her father

was the one who brought vitality into the house. He liked to have people around. He was always suggesting that they ask someone over or go on an outing somewhere (Coleman, SID, p. 19).

In contrast, Dallas' mother

was more withdrawn, moodier. She didn't like to give parties--she said they made her nervous--and when her parents did have them, her father was the one who did most of the work, with Dallas helping (Coleman, SID, p. 19).

³³Hila Coleman, Sometimes I Don't Love My Mother (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1977), p. 17. Hereinafter cited parenthetically in the text as Coleman, SID.

Dallas' mother Ellen is described as a helpless individual who encouraged her husband to treat her like a little girl. When her husband dies, Ellen turns to Dallas to take his place. Instead of going off to college as planned, Dallas is required to stay home to babysit with her mother who seems to thrive on grief and self pity. After about a month of this babysitting, Dallas begins to feel that she is trapped. Discussing her mother with a girl friend, Dallas says:

My father would want me to go to Dartmouth, I'm certain he would. He was so happy when I was accepted, right? But how can I leave her? She looks at me now as if I'm all she has in the world, and I guess I am. I can't go, but--I wouldn't say this to another soul--I'm scared stiff of staying home. I don't think I can bear living alone in that house with my mother. Not that I don't love her, I do, but I have an awful feeling I'll be with her the rest of my life (Coleman, SID, p. 27).

The entire novel is devoted to the developing tension between Dallas' desire to break away and her mother's need to lean on her. Dallas feels sorry for her mother and she also feels that to leave her now would constitute a betrayal of her father. Deep down she has always loved her father more than her mother but now, ironically, she feels that she must be the one to carry on the tradition which her father began, the tradition of taking care of Ellen as though she were a dependent child. At the same time, Dallas also knows that sooner or later, for her mother's sake as well as her own, that she must cut the umbilical cord and force her mother to develop a life of her own. The situation

comes to a head when Dallas is invited by her friends to take a summer trip to California and Ellen insists on going with them. Dallas decides that the time has come when she can take no more, when she has to let her mother know once and for all that each of them must go her own way in life and that she, Dallas, can no longer carry the burden of being a surrogate husband for her mother:

"I want to talk to you," Dallas said firmly. "I've made up my mind to go to California with the kids, but not if you come. I'm not going to baby-sit for you anymore. You've used me, you've used my friends, you've taken over my life until it's unbearable. I've got to lead my own life, and I hope you can lead yours. I can't replace Dad, and I don't want to try. Maybe you're going to hate me, to think I'm a terrible daughter, but I can't help it. I've stuck it out as long as I can, and now I've got to take a stand. You talk about being friends--I hope we can be friends--but you want to own me, and that's not love or friendship" (Coleman, SID, p. 188).

What finally pushed Dallas into this declaration of independence was her prior decision to marry her boyfriend. In discussing their future plans, Vic had told her that he wanted to marry her, not her mother. Furthermore, he set up the trip to California as a symbolic test of Dallas' willingness to make the necessary break with her mother. If Dallas did not go with him and leave Ellen home, he would take it as a sign that Dallas was too weak to establish her freedom and that there would be no need to proceed any further with plans to marry. So Vic's position is the final spur that Dallas needs to assert her independence from her mother and to begin living her own life.

After Dallas makes her speech, Ellen herself sees that Dallas is right, that the cycle of dependency must be broken if either of them is to grow or to lead a normal life. Ellen's sudden understanding of the situation has been foreshadowed by a scene in which she has had to resist her own dominating and overly dependent mother. The roles are changed and Ellen is placed in the same position that Dallas has been in; Ellen, in order to protect her own identity, has to rebel against her elderly mother who insists that they live together:

"I was thinking, Ellen," her mother continued, "if I sold my condominium in Florida, I could add on a room and bath here for myself, and maybe we wouldn't have to be so lonely. Someday I may be too old to live alone."

"But you like Florida," Ellen said firmly, "and you don't like the cold weather."

"I could still go down for a couple of months in the winter. Maybe you'd come with me." Her tall, imposing mother, sitting in her chair, looked at her wistfully, but Ellen shrank from being taken in by her mother's wiliness. No, she said determinedly to herself, I am not going to end up living with my mother. She is a remarkable woman, and there's a lot to admire, but not for me to live with (Coleman, SID, p. 172-173).

As Ellen's mother tightens the knot of dependency, Ellen begins to understand that she has been doing the same thing with her daughter, Dallas. So when Dallas finally does declare her independence, Ellen is able to see the issue in perspective and admit her own weakness in unreasonably trying to prolong her daughter's period of adolescent dependency:

"I suppose I have this coming to me. What can I say? I'm not surprised. You've been trying

to tell me this right along, but I didn't want to hear it. I haven't faced that Hank is dead. I haven't faced being alone. I've been putting everything off. . . . I'm glad you had the courage to come out with what you think. I probably never could. . . . It's funny, isn't it? I seem more the adolescent than you. I guess growing up has little to do with age (Coleman, SID, p. 189).

Although the literary and philosophical quality of this novel is marginal, hardly above the level of soap opera, the work nevertheless treats the very important rebel-victim theme in a language and a setting with which the teenage reader can readily identify. Carlsen has observed that

The adolescent today believes intensely in his own individuality and in his right of self-determination. Today's adolescent doesn't want to wait until he is twenty-one to begin exercising adult rights.³⁴

Sometimes I Don't Love My Mother examines this "right to self determination" within the context of the ancient and yet still contemporary rebel-victim theme, a theme just as instructive for today's youth as it was for the ancient Athenians. Specifically, the theme, as treated in Coleman's novel, points up the need to balance rebellion with extended sympathy. In a very interesting contrast, Dallas is able to extend to her dominating mother a degree of understanding and sympathy that Antigone should have but did not extend to Creon--who was in his own way a victim to the established authority of religious precedent.

³⁴Carlsen, Books and the Teenage Reader, p. 14.

III. PROPERTY OF

In Property Of, Alice Hoffman invokes the rebel-victim theme within the context of big city gang violence. The seventeen-year-old narrator heroine (who remains nameless throughout the novel) develops a fatal fascination for McKay, the doomed hero of a street gang called "The Orphans." At first the heroine is fascinated by McKay: he is proud, darkly handsome, forboding, self willed, strong, aloof, dedicated to his code of gang ethics, and above all, he is a leader. In the language of McKay's gang, the heroine becomes his "property," a position of subservient adulation which she readily accepts at first but gradually begins to rebel against. McKay himself undergoes a progressive physical and moral decline, changing over a period of time from strong, unchallenged gang leader to pathetic, helpless, physically and morally weak heroin addict. Just as McKay is hooked on heroin, the narrator, or the "number one property" as she is sometimes called in the novel, is hooked on McKay. She is a victim of her own love and fatal fascination for McKay and yet she instinctively fights for psychic survival by periodically rebelling against him. The new awareness that she achieves as part of her experience with McKay is that she must develop her identity as an individual rather than as a member of a gang or as an emotional leech to McKay. Her loss of innocence is based on the shattered illusions which she carries with her at

the end of the relationship when she finally manages the strength to leave McKay and the dream of lost glory that he represents. During the course of the narrator's tragic affair with McKay, the author manages to evoke a darkly haunting picture of doomed romantic love.

Perhaps the narrator remains unnamed to make a point. The point may be that the narrator has no authentic identity; rather, she is a piece of property, an appendage to McKay and the Orphans. At one point the narrator tries to justify her reasons for placing herself in the position of "being owned":

. . . it is not so very despicable to belong. Oh, yes, yes, I know: cities have been pillaged, countries ruined. Yes, I know the position of Property is always on its back. But still, it is not so very despicable to belong. I admit belonging, being owned is always sad. You think that is a peculiar word to apply to tragedy? You think "sad" is an inadequate word for a historical force? But I do not speak of the property of capitalism, the historical sort that is discussed at the cocktail parties of the world. The property I speak of is the self. The self that does not belong, is not owned by itself but by others. By another.³⁵

The narrator says that when one does not belong to oneself, one tries to find identity with another or with others and that this kind of identity is better than none at all:

This Property is the self which is sold because its position is on its back, because it is starving, dying of thirst, it is suffering the torment of plague, civil war and sadness. And when the soul is dying

³⁵Alice Hoffman, Property Of (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1974), p. 81. Hereinafter cited parenthetically as Hoffman, PO.

of thirst, it is not unusual for a canteen to be accepted in trade. Particularly when what is sold had never belonged to itself (Hoffman, PO, p. 82).

The tragedy of Property, as the unnamed narrator of this novel will henceforth be called, is that she seeks for identity outside herself, with McKay and the Orphans, and although this sort of identity will suffice for many, it will not suffice for the great spirited such as herself. She cannot find her strength from within at the beginning of her journey into McKay's world but by the time she reaches the needle at the end of the track she is ready to try again. Thus her journey toward self is a self structured experiment in the descent and ascension from hell. In considering her plight one cannot help being reminded of the French symbolist poet Arthur Rimbaud's A Season in Hell or the American playwright Eugene O'Neill's Long Day's Journey into Night, or Pauline Réage's The Story of O. Property structures a situation in which she plunges to the bottom of the well in order to see the sky, not realizing that the sky is neither above nor below but rather within herself. Having watched McKay during her early adolescent years from the emptiness of her own windows, she feels, when she finally is able to meet him, that she has no choice but to love him, to enter his world of drugs and violence and death, to plunge into the well to find the sky. Leaving to go "defend his honor" in a gang war (right after they have met for the first time),

McKay tells her "You know you don't have to wait for me," but she convinces herself that she has no choice:

Why did he keep insisting that I had a choice? How many hours of watching McKay from second-story windows, how many pages of dialogue planned, how many ways to scrawl his name had I known? There was no question of choice (Hoffman, PO, p. 19).

Part of her feels she has no choice. Another part fights for survival as an individual spirit, fights to hold back some aspect of individual identity that she wishes to keep inviolate. In fact, when they first meet and McKay asks her if she "belongs" to Danny the Sweet, the gang member who introduces them to one another, Property answers that she belongs to no one but herself:

"You belong to him?" McKay said.

"I don't belong to anyone," I said. McKay smiled down at me. Amused? We'd see if McKay stayed amused. "I belong to myself," I said. I belong to myself; not bad. Not bad at all (Hoffman, PO, p. 16).

When she thinks to herself "not bad . . . not bad at all," it is as though she is entertaining the notion of freedom as a possibility while realizing at the same time that her declaration of freedom is but a stance, a way of tricking McKay with words, tricking him into becoming interested in her, accepting her as a challenge. He does accept her challenge and she tries to develop the relationship into love. McKay, however, will have no part of love; it would detract from his strength, from his vision of himself and the Orphans. Property, who ironically possesses incisive insight into the vehicle of destruction that their

relationship becomes, comes to the realization that it is McKay's inability to love her that partly accounts for her fascination with him. He is unable to love her because all of his emotional energy is directed toward the preservation of honor. He finds his strength of identity in his love for his vision of himself and his vision of the Orphans. It is as though he were nothing before he joined the Orphans and that his concept of personal identity is so involved with being "President of the Orphans" that he has no physic room left over in his scheme of values for such soft emotions as Property's proffered love. Understanding all this, Property opts to take him as he is. Shortly after they've met, McKay asks her what she wants of him:

"What I want," I said as McKay stood in the street, one arm leaning upon the glass of the car window, "is for you to fall in love with me."

"No," said McKay.

"No?" I said.

"No. I don't go in for that," said McKay. "That falling in love, I don't go for that."

"All right," I said, as he closed the door of the car. Through the black-tinted windshield I watched him walk to the other side of the Chevy.

"All right," I said, as McKay opened the door of the driver's seat and was there beside me. "Then I'll take what I can get" (Hoffman, PO, p. 37).

Property realizes that what she can get will be what is left over from his affair with himself as leader of the Orphans, in reality, an affair with his own code of honor. Property thinks from time to time that she would prefer to settle for love and let the honor go, but on a deeper level of understanding she knows that it is McKay's reputation for, and manifest concern with, honor that mainly constitutes

the source of her attraction to him. Perhaps she sees in him something that she seeks for in herself. At one point, soon after they met, he catches her staring at him and asks:

"What are you staring at?" said McKay.
I was staring at myself, myself reflected in
the dark of his eyes.
"You," I said, and it seemed that I could not
turn away (Hoffman, PO, p. 51).

Property's relationship to McKay is in the tradition of the split spirit in English literature, the tradition in which two characters, such as Heathcliff and Katherine, for example, are seen as alter ego to each other in a relationship in which neither can psychically survive without the other. For Property, she seeks in her relationship with McKay some part of herself that is missing or undeveloped. In Property's case this "part" is the sense of personal identity that is based on dedication to a code of honor or a system of belief that is greater than oneself. At one point in their experience together, McKay has to fulfill his duty to honor by going into enemy turf to pay his respects, as President of the Orphans, to a member of a rival gang who has been killed in a street fight with the Orphans. Afterwards, McKay tries to explain to Property the concept of honor that propels his ritual actions. Honor is what lends him his identity and his reason for living. As he talks, Property begins to understand:

I believed I did know the reason McKay attended the wake: not to gloat, and never for pity, only because he could not walk down the Avenue with the same step if he had not knelt before the coffin (Hoffman, PO, p. 72).

As they are driving away from the wake, McKay says, in summation of his reasons for attending the wake and his reasons for living as he does, "What's dead is dead, and then it's not" (Hoffman, PO, p. 72). What he means is that although the physical body may die, the person lives on in the honor he has attained during his life. For McKay, honor is a form of immortality. In contrast to McKay's sense of honor, Property thinks of her love as an order of secondary importance:

At the altar, by the coffin, they could not see that McKay did know something. I listened to McKay now. For me, it was only³⁶ love. But not for McKay. What he wanted was honor (Hoffman, PO, p. 72).

McKay's dedication to honor unfortunately leads him more deeply into a life of drugs and violence and as he becomes progressively more and more addicted to heroin, Property gradually begins to perceive that she herself is on a downward spiral into hell and that her only chance for survival is to break with McKay and the Orphans. This break is not an easy one to make since Property has already forfeited over 90 percent of her soul in her union of identity with McKay. As he begins to deteriorate, however,

³⁶Italics mine.

both physically and in inner resources, Property's determination to survive strengthens and she gradually begins to regather the percentage of herself that she has lavished on McKay. The final straw for Property is McKay's insistence that she prove her love for him by sharing in the ceremony of the needle. On several occasions she does get high with him as a way of sharing his self destructive destiny but finally she can take no more. Her own victimization of the soul is great but even greater is her sense of horror at seeing the object of her love and adulation sink before her eyes into the abyss of self destruction. When McKay, weakened by drugs, loses his position as President of the Orphans, his whole world falls apart and also his reason for living. What temporarily saves his life is a drug arrest which sends him to prison for a short spell. When he gets out, however, he goes right back on the needle and becomes a drug pusher, this time with no concern whatsoever for the honor he once held so precious. Although Property still loves him as an individual man, she no longer is enslaved to him as a god of honor. He no longer possesses what was absent in herself. One has the impression, however, at the end of the novel, that Property, because of her journey into hell, because of her willingness to lose herself in the cause of McKay, has indeed found a new measure of strength upon which she may continue, on her own, the journey toward understanding and identity. She came into her experience with McKay

scrawling his name on subway walls; when she leaves him, she envisions him back in the apartment shooting up, but it is her name now, not his, that she traces on the window of her soul:

I walked to the subway station, and, as the doors of the train closed behind me, I imagined he had pulled the belt tightly around his arm. The heroin would melt like snow into the blue liquid that ran through his veins. I knew that as he sat on the rim of the bathtub, his dark eyes were closed. . . . I rode through the tunnel between cars unable to see into either because of the underground grime that covered the windows. And as the subway followed tracks, and as it hid hard against the tunnel walls, I traced the letters of my name in the dust of the window. I erased the print with my palm. Then I wrote my name again with the very edge of my fingertip, and I could not help but smile (Hoffman, PO, p. 248).

The symbolism of this last paragraph of the novel may be a little heavy, but it is effective. The unnamed narrator traces her identity in her mind, ever so delicately, with the very edge of her fingertips only, but it is her identity, not McKay's, that she is traveling toward. Her descent and ascent from hell has been characterized by victimization to an emotional bondage of her own making, but in the end she has met the enemy, herself, and conquered that enemy by final rebellion against McKay and the death of honor that his way of life has become. In the process she has found a new awareness of herself and the possibility for individual identity in a world free from bondage. She has found a way to grant to herself what McKay never could; she has become the property of herself.

My Darling Villain, Sometimes I Don't Love My Mother, and Property Of have all been discussed in terms of the rebel-victim theme. In My Darling Villain, the rebel-victim theme is conducted within the context of social class prejudice; Kate and Mark are victims to British social class barriers as well as victim to their own prejudices within themselves and in their families. In rebelling against these forces of prejudice, they discover new awareness and new measures of personal identity. Kate, especially, in direct confrontation with her father, defines a new dimension of personal awareness and a new understanding of existential responsibility. In Sometimes I Don't Love My Mother, the rebel-victim theme is set in the context of adolescent resistance to an overly dependent parent. In this novel the adolescent is victim to the tyranny of a weak mother, but she is also victim to the tyranny of her own guilt as she tries, at first unsuccessfully, to break away. She finally achieves liberation by a direct confrontation in which she flatly refuses emotionally to carry her mother any longer. In Property Of the rebel-victim theme is set in the context of a young woman's fatal fascination with a teenage gang leader and his dedication to his code of honor. The protagonist is seen as being both victim to and in rebellion against McKay and her own human bondage to him.

The last two novels to be examined in this chapter are Charles Crawford's Letter Perfect and Irene Hunt's

William. These two works will be more specifically analyzed in terms of the fall of man or loss of innocence theme. The previous three novels were assessed primarily in terms of the rebellion and victimization aspects of meta-physical rebellion, but the loss of innocence is also a very important aspect of rebellion and one which figures prominently in these last two books.

IV. LETTER PERFECT

In Charles Crawford's Letter Perfect, the rebellion theme is set in the context of a power play between an aggressive, sarcastic English teacher and a group of his students who attempt to blackmail him. One of the students, Chad Wilson, goes along with the blackmail plot because he is too weak at first to resist the pressure of his peers. At first he is with them in spirit as they search for a way to rebel against the biting, dehumanizing sarcasm of their teacher, but as things progress, Chad finds himself sinking into a sordid element of crime that runs counter to his basic values. For a while he is victim to the pressures of his "friends," but finally he summons strength to rebel against his peer group and to establish his identity as an individual. The psychological force of the novel turns on Chad's conflict within himself and the progressive loss of innocence he experiences as he allows himself to be manipulated by his peers. In the end,

however, his loss of innocence brings with it a new layer of moral awareness out of which he is able to redeem himself and atone for his transgression.

Chad's conflict between loyalty to himself and loyalty to his peers is foreshadowed early in the novel when he reluctantly allows one of his friends to copy from his paper during an English exam in Mr. Patterson's class:

I felt B.J.'s eyes on my paper . . . his eyes were halfway out of his head straining to see what I was writing. I was a little angry. After all, I'd loaned B.J. my notes the night before. You wouldn't think he'd need to look at my answers too.³⁷

The intense need for peer approval and the fear of rejection by one's friends seem to have a particularly strong influence on adolescents and Chad is no exception. He instinctively knows that cheating is wrong, but what can he do? B.J. is his friend:

He gave me a feeble grin and a little shrug of his shoulders. I moved my right arm down to my side and shifted my test paper so he could see better. What could I do? After all, a friend in need, and all that crap. You can't exactly throw away a friendship that went back to the second grade over some dumb piece of paper (Crawford, LP, p. 2).

Although Chad does not realize it at the time, more is at stake than a "dumb piece of paper." His allowing B.J. to copy from his paper leads to a series of events that end

³⁷Charles P. Crawford, Letter Perfect (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1977), pp. 1-2. Hereinafter cited parenthetically as Crawford, LP.

in Chad's participation in a crime and what comes to be at stake is Chad's identity as an individual.

Mr. Patterson catches them cheating and mortifies both of them in front of the class. As the class laughs derisively (is there a greater pain for the adolescent than the derisive laughter of his peers?), Mr. Patterson continues his sardonic ridicule:

"Now I know why B.J. wears that unruly shock of hair. I used to think he was trying to hide fact that he had no ears, but now I clearly realize that it is to cover that extra set of eyes that not only sets him apart from us standard, ordinary models of the human race, but also provides him with hindsight on tests. Or should I say sidesight? Mr. Masterson and Mr. Winston, who is the source of B.J.'s inspiration, will see me after class" (Crawford, LP, p. 3).

Chad's chances for the A he has been aiming for in the course are shattered when Mr. Patterson tells them after class that he will let them share their grades since they have shared their information:

"Collaborators should share the credit. I'm convinced that you two have come up with a superior test paper. It only seems fair that I grade both papers, average the scores, and divide by two so you both get equal credit for your work. For instance, if the two papers average out in the range of a 96, then you'll each get a 48" (Crawford, LP, pp. 5-6).

Chad is, of course, bitter about his low grade and this bitterness is partly responsible for his later going along with a blackmail scheme which B.J. dreams up against Mr. Patterson. More important than his bitterness, however, is the factor of his own moral weakness as he allows himself

to be manipulated by the sinister B.J. and another crony appropriately called "Toad." D. H. Lawrence once wrote that for every murderer there is a murderee, meaning, of course, that we as individuals are often at least half responsible for whatever dire circumstances befall us in the realm of human relations. B.J. could not manipulate Chad if Chad did not first allow a structure of friendship to develop in which manipulation was possible: had Chad been forthright and strong in voicing and demonstrating his moral convictions to start with, then B.J. would never have felt free to urge on Chad his own system of values. B.J.'s value system is characterized by a disdain for education and teachers and for every other aspect of society that does not lead to direct, practical information on how to get ahead of the other guy. In the following dialogue between B.J. and Chad, B.J.'s cynicism is obvious:

"I don't know why we're spending half our life studying crap like Great Expectations anyway. What good is it? Name me one thing this year that will do us any good when we get out of this dump."

"How about algebra?" I suggested. "That's practical."

"Like hell. I can just see myself balancing my checkbook by going $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$. You haven't convinced me yet."

"Well, that's what college is for," I said.

"Don't believe it. I have a brother in college right now. The courses he's taking are more useless than ours. Whoever heard of making a living off of Transcendentalism in Colonial American Literature or Medieval Art 301-302. You don't find out what the world's like until graduate school--law school or something--and you're old by then" (Crawford, LP, pp. 10-11).

Chad tries to introduce a humanistic value (learning for its own sake) but he is swept over by the force of B.J.'s argument. It seems that, like in Paradise Lost, which they are ironically studying in Mr. Patterson's class, the negative argument seems easier to defend than the positive, and B.J.'s arguments come off as dramatically arresting while Chad's plea seems lame by comparison:

"Oh I don't know, B.J.," I said. "It seems to me that there are lots of things that are good to know even though you may never use them" (Crawford, LP, p. 11).

So much for the timid, equivocating "Oh, I don't know" voice of reason. Make way for the firm voice of the cynic:

"I can't buy it, Chad. We should be learning important things we can use. Like how to lie if you want to be a politician or how to make it with the producer if you want to be in the movies or how to cheat on your income tax if you want to be just about anybody" (Crawford, LP, p. 11).

Both Chad and Toad are impressed by the force of B.J.'s logic and his obvious energy. As B.J. continues his cynical diatribe, he warms up to the subject of crime and the practical skills needed to be a successful criminal:

"Take crime, for instance. You have to learn all kinds of skills to be a criminal. You don't just walk out and rob a bank for the first time without learning a lot first . . . practical stuff, like how to drive a car, how to write concise, clear notes to pass to the teller, how to count up the cash once you've got it. Crime is totally interdisciplinary. That's the kind of thing we should be learning in school. Stuff you can use once you get out in that world out there" (Crawford, LP, p. 12).

B.J. is, of course, talking with his tongue in his cheek, but beneath the surface of his humorous sarcasm lies a real criminal mentality. At the end of his speech he suggests that the three of them play a game he has invented, a game in which they will plan the perfect crime. First, however, they will have to practice some skills of the professional criminal without actually committing a crime. Each of them in the next few days plans and carries out a series of "practical jokes" around the school: Chad unscrews some bolts on the library shelves so that they collapse when a student moves a book from one of them; Toad sneaks in after school and puts a bra on the school's stuffed animal in the science lab; and B.J. puts a stink bomb in the radiator in Mr. Patterson's room. Not satisfied with these pranks, the group turns to more serious maneuvers, such as spying and tailing teachers and other students. Chad follows Mr. Patterson home one afternoon and steals a letter from his mailbox. When the letter is opened, he discovers, along with B.J. and Toad, that Mr. Patterson has a secret in his past, he has had a nervous breakdown. This is the turning point in the novel for Chad. Up to this point he has enjoyed the games in which he and his cohorts have had fun at the expense of others. Now, however, he enters into a struggle with his own conscience. On the one hand, something deep down in him rebels against B.J.'s plan to use the purloined letter as a source of blackmail against Mr. Patterson; on the other hand, Chad, like the

narrator of Property Of, feels a strong need to seek his identity outside himself--specifically with B.J. and Toad. It is an old theme: the conflict between loyalty to one's inner voice and loyalty to the group or source of authority with which one identifies. At this point the rebellion theme becomes complicated. Chad's weaker self seeks to join in his peers' rebellion against the authority of the system, specifically represented by Mr. Patterson, while his stronger self seeks to rebel against the tyranny of his two friends, specifically the sinister, manipulating B.J. To cite Lawrence again, one of that novelist's major concerns was the "sin" of one person's using others as "things," manipulating them at will to achieve one's own ends. In Letter Perfect, B.J. manipulates Chad and Toad and uses them for his own amusement as pawns in his sinister scheme. One could also make a connection between Letter Perfect and Paradise Lost. Whereas Satan manipulates Eve by appealing to some of her baser desires--for example, her jealousy of Adam and God who have talks without her, so too does B.J. manipulate Chad by appealing to his fear of being unpopular and his fear of being called "chicken." At any rate, Chad, in moral weakness, agrees to go along with the blackmail plot, and together the three boys compose an anonymous letter to Mr. Patterson in which they demand sixty dollars for return of the incriminating letter. Mr. Patterson resists the blackmail attempt and leaves, instead of money at the drop off place, a note

that says "To whom it may concern: Go screw yourself" (Crawford, LP, p. 98). B.J. will not give in, however, and the boys continue writing the blackmail letters, making specific threats to send Mr. Patterson's letter to the school board. Meanwhile, Mr. Patterson, much to B.J.'s delight, but to Chad's sorrow, begins to deteriorate in class. He is nervous and shaky and he stops his former sarcastic remarks and tone of voice. Even during exams he stares despondently out of the window instead of monitoring the students. Where he still has his old power is in his reading aloud from Paradise Lost. In fact, the drama of man's fall seems to take on unique significance both for Mr. Patterson and Chad. Chad thinks Mr. Patterson suspects that someone in the English class is responsible for the blackmail plot, and as Mr. Patterson reads certain passages aloud, Chad begins to feel that the teacher is reading them directly at him:

"Our better part remains
to work in close design, by fraud or guile
what force effected not: that he no less
at length from us may find, who overcomes
by force, hath overcome but half his foe."

And when he boomed out his melodramatic reading of Satan's suggestion to seek revenge against God by trying to undermine the Garden of Eden, not with violence, but with Tricks, I almost thought he was reading it right to me (Crawford, LP, p. 93).

Mr. Patterson has formerly played the part of God in the dictatorial way he manages his class, and Chad identifies with Satan's plot to rebel against God by the use of tricks. In spite of Chad's former bitterness toward his teacher,

a voice of human kindness starts to register deeply within and he begins to see Mr. Patterson in a new light both as a human being and as a teacher:

Then Mr. Patterson read Beelzebub's speech supporting Satan's idea to destroy the Garden of Eden. It was easy to get involved when Mr. Patterson read stuff out loud. All the poetry that seemed totally meaningless the night before when I read it for homework seemed to be real and convincing in class.³⁸ That was one thing you had to say about Mr. Patterson, he had a way with words (Crawford, LP, p. 94).

Although Chad begins to feel sympathy and even a measure of admiration for his now more human teaching, B.J., sensing signs of weakness in his prey, goes in for the kill. Without telling Chad, he arranges for Toad to feign a seizure in English class and during the commotion that insues, B.J. slips another blackmail note on the teacher's desk. When Toad "recovers" and order is finally restored in the room, Mr. Patterson goes back to his desk where he sees the note:

Mr. Patterson ripped the envelope open and took out a piece of paper. I could only see the back of it, which was blank. His shoulders pulled back and the color drained from his face. I thought for a minute he was going to collapse like Toad had, but then he dropped the paper back onto the desk, opened the center drawer, and slipped the paper and the envelope into it (Crawford, LP, p. 104).

The class is still chattering about Toad's seizure and Mr. Patterson tries to restore complete order by getting back into the previous night's homework assignment on Paradise Lost. During the discussion that follows a certain

³⁸Does this say something to English teachers about the value of oral reading?

sense of irony begins to develop in the parallel between Satan's rebellion against God in Paradise Lost and what is happening between Mr. Patterson and his tormentors. As the lesson begins, B.J. holds his hand up to ask a question:

"Yes, B.J. Don't tell me you have a question."
 "Yeah, Mr. Patterson. But not about what we read last night. Just a question in general."
 "Well, what is it?" Mr. Patterson had emerged from behind the podium and was pacing in front of the first row of seats.
 "Just that I don't see why we're wasting our time reading this stuff. I mean, who really cares what some guy named Milton said about Satan a couple hundred years ago" (Crawford, LP, p. 105).

This is the first time in class that anyone has challenged Mr. Patterson, who now tries to explain to B.J. that Milton, along with Shakespeare and Dickens, is part of the course, a course designed to introduce to students like B.J. a little culture. B.J., however, will not be put off:

"I know all about that, Mr. Patterson. My question isn't what we're doing in here, but why we're doing it. I mean, aren't there a lot of more relevant things we could be studying than some dumb epic poem about things that have no relationship with what's going on in the world today?" (Crawford, LP, p. 105.)

The irony, of course, is that what they are studying not only has a relationship to what is going on in the world today, it also bears a dramatic relationship to what is going on right in the very classroom where B.J. sits. The ancient drama of rebellion and loss of innocence is being reenacted in the classroom and B.J. doesn't even

realize that he is playing the role of Satan. Chad, however, who is taking in the whole scene, is painfully aware of what is happening and the role he has willingly played in the death of his own innocence. The question of free will becomes crucial at this point in Chad's growing awareness and he listens with more than detached literary interest as B.J. brings the point into the discussion:

"Milton has God say that whether Satan is able to corrupt Adam and Eve is up to them since they have free will, but at the same time He says that He knows it's going to happen. I mean, what kind of crap is that? What sense does free will make when everything is predestined anyway?" (Crawford, LP, p. 106-107.)

B.J.'s question is just as stock as Mr. Patterson's reply:

"The fact that God can see into the future doesn't mean that Adam and Eve's fall isn't due to their own weaknesses. Milton is saying that people lose their paradises through their own doing. Doesn't that make sense to you. . . . Do you accept the consequences of your actions?" (Crawford, LP, p. 107.)

There are two levels of irony here. First is the obvious one: B.J. doesn't realize that his line of questioning subconsciously reflects his own tendency to rationalize rather than face up to his own moral wrongdoing; on another level of irony, however, we must see that in a very real sense, Mr. Patterson himself has brought about his own undoing by the arrogant, ruthlessly sardonic way he has threatened and undermined the integrity of his students. Had he not been such a sarcastic tyrant to begin with, his students might never have turned so viciously against him.

In a sense he is reaping what he has sown, and B.J. is only mirroring the face of arrogant disrespect which he, the teacher first turned on his class.

In a very loose way, Chad and Toad are like Adam and Eve and B.J. resembles Satan, the one who leads them to rebel against God (Mr. Patterson) and in the process causes them to lose their innocence. The analogy is not really apt, however; Toad has no innocence to lose and Mr. Patterson resembles Satan as much as he does God, at least at the beginning of the novel. Perhaps a more useful Biblical parallel may be drawn between Chad and Judas. At one point Chad says that, in addition to the pressure from B.J. and Toad, another real factor in his continued complicity in the blackmail plot is his desire for the money. At another point of Biblical parallel is the suggestion of a comparison between Chad and Pontius Pilate. Shortly after the incident in the classroom, described previously, Chad and his friends go to Mr. Patterson's apartment and write "Psycho" on his living room window. Chad is cut when they are discovered by Mr. Patterson who, in a rage, throws a chair through the window. On the way home Chad hopes the snow will wash away not only the blood but his guilt:

I ran the rest of the way to my house, feeling the snow hit my face and gather on my eyelids, hoping it would wash away some of the blood and the image I had of Mr. Patterson's face as he threw the chair at the window.

The snow did a better job on the blood (Crawford, LP, p. 128).

The snow cannot erase the image of Mr. Patterson's face or the sense of guilt that has finally gnawed itself into Chad's conscience and has driven him to the point of despair. Water will not wash away guilt.

When he gets home something happens that helps Chad finally to come to his senses and to place the voice of his conscience above his mistaken and abused loyalty to friends who were never friends, just sources of false identity and surface security. His younger sister has been caught cheating at school and Chad is asked by his parents for his advice as to the justice of the punishment they are planning. They plan to cancel her television privileges for a week. Chad, overcome by the bitter irony of setting himself up as judge, confesses to his parents that he too has been caught cheating on a test. He says:

"I think you ought to take away the television. If someone had done that to me the first time I cheated, even if it was just on a little quiz or something, then maybe I wouldn't have gotten the F last week." Or gotten involved in some goddamn blackmail plot and been crueller to Mr. Patterson than any human has a right to be to another human being, I wanted to say; but I didn't (Crawford, LP, p. 133).

He does say, however, in answer to his parents' questions about why he has seemed so upset the past week that

"It's something at school. Something that didn't work out the way it started. It'll be all over tomorrow. . . . I've decided to return something that doesn't really belong to me" (Crawford, LP, p. 134).

The next day he returns the letter to Mr. Patterson, a symbolic gesture in which he returns something that does

not belong to him, and which is more important than the letter: he returns B.J.'s sense of values back to B.J., and he returns to himself his own capacity for clear vision and right action. His friends soon turn against him, but no matter, he has found himself or at least he has found a part of himself, a part that counts tremendously in the honest struggle for understanding and value. The novel ends on a tragic note: Mr. Patterson loses his job when he claims ownership of some marijuana that B.J. and Toad have planted in Chad's locker. Chad sacrificed his loyalty to his friends when he returned the letter and Mr. Patterson in turn sacrifices his job to keep Chad from being expelled from school.

At the end of the novel, Chad is without friends and he observes to himself, "I used to be comfortable and secure, and now I was starting from scratch all over again" (Crawford, LP, p. 163). Yes, but not from scratch. He now has a more authentic base of self respect, a surer grasp of values upon which to continue the search, not just for better friends, but a better self. His loss of innocence has been a learning experience. By returning the letter, he has redeemed himself in the light of his own values and by rebelling against B.J. and Toad, he has granted to himself a new moral awareness, a new degree of existential responsibility for the destiny he is now in a position to carve for himself on the sharp edge of dignity.

V. WILLIAM

Irene Hunt's hauntingly beautiful novel William deals with a world that, for nine-year-old William, is continuously falling apart: his father has been killed in an accident and his mother is dying of cancer; his younger sister is going blind and his thirteen-year-old sister, in an identity crisis of her own, is defensive, rebellious, sarcastic and difficult for William to understand or get along with. Knowing that she is dying, William's mother has made certain arrangements with an old family friend; these arrangements are rather complicated, however. The friend, Mary Hand, who owns the house next door, will eventually come back to take care of the three children-- William, Amy and Carla. In the meantime, Mary has to stay in New York to attend her dying father. Mary sends in her place a distant cousin, sixteen-year-old orphan Sarah West, who is carrying an illegitimate child and who needs a place to stay until the baby is born and can be given away in adoption. When Sarah moves into Mary Hand's house, next door to William, the two strike up a profound friendship and Sarah gradually becomes a mother figure for William and his two sisters. When William's mother dies, Sarah, who is a remarkably strong and sensitive individual, takes full charge of William and his sisters. Problems arrive, however, when Amy, who is almost as old as Sarah, rebels against Sarah's authority and runs away from home, once

again shattering William's desperate hope to hold together what remains of his family, which to William is his whole world. Unlike Chad in Letter Perfect, William's loss of innocence is none of his own doing, nor is it a loss in which he sustains a moral decline or a fall from grace. What William experiences is the sudden dissolution of the innocent, carefree world of childhood, the Eden of carefree innocence that most children possess as part of their birthright. At the beginning of the novel, William, his mother and Amy spend time together picking oranges in the garden behind their house on the Gulf Coast. During the course of a year, William's mother dies, his sister leaves home, and William himself is introduced into the adult world of bitterness and hate. What sustains him through it all is his profound and loving relationship with Sarah, who, although she is only sixteen, is both a talented artist and a sensitive young woman in possession of dignity and wisdom. Sarah also finds in William a source of love that in turn helps to sustain her in her own trials and tribulations. At the end of the novel Amy comes back home to get married and Mary Hand returns from New York to take charge of William and his sisters. During the period following his mother's death, William, with Sarah as his model and guide, does quite a bit of growing up for a young boy his age. His final test of maturity comes when Sarah, now publicly recognized as a talented artist, is offered an art scholarship in Chicago. She is torn

between her desire to fulfill her ambitions as an artist and her deep love and sense of obligation and responsibility toward William. The "turning point" which propels William into authentic identity as a unique, self-reliant human being is when he places Sarah's interest above his own and grants to her the freedom to leave him, to go to Chicago to make her own way in the world. In giving Sarah his blessing, William firmly establishes his own dignity on the altar of self sacrifice, and the novel ends on a note of humanistic optimism with William feeling not happy, but "strong enough to force unhappiness back, to face things as they were."³⁹

William's ability to grow as an individual hinges on the ability to see things as they are rather than as he would like them to be. In the beginning of the novel, William has a tendency to block out unpleasant thoughts and to try, often through the force of his love, to hold things together, even to hold back the flow of inevitable events. At the end of the novel, however, he learns from experience to accept the wisdom of Heraclitus which Sarah introduces him to: "As all things flow, nothing abides. Into the same river one cannot step twice." Heraclitus' concept which later surfaced as the cornerstone of Taoism

³⁹Irene Hunt, *William* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), p. 188. Hereinafter cited parenthetically in the text as Hunt, W.

is the dominant, controlling idea of the novel and William's spiritual progress can be measured by his growing ability to understand and accept this principle of eternal flow and change. William gradually learns, during the course of events in his life, the ancient Taoist and Zen wisdom that strength comes in being able to direct one's energy with rather than against the flow of events through time and space. This concept represents a fine but crucial difference between Western and Eastern ideas of rebellion, a difference which can readily be understood by comparing two styles of fighting, pugilism and karate. In one style the combatant stands up and swaps blows with his opponent; in the other style, the combatant utilizes the opponent's flow of energy to his own ends. This latter style represents, in the martial arts, the Taoist way of "going with the flow." The strength of this approach is traditionally compared to the image of water, which, though fluid and soft enough to dip one's hands into, is also strong enough to wear down rocks, to carve out the Grand Canyon. Thus the water image in the Heraclitus quote is the symbol in William of the type of strength that the protagonist must acquire if he is to survive and eventually prevail in a world where change is the norm and staticity is not only impossible, but anathema to growth as well.

In the beginning William is, understandably, incapable of accepting the impending death of his mother.

Amy has told him that the doctors have "found a sickness in Mama," and that medicine will do no good, and William himself sees that "her cheeks that used to be round as Amy's . . . seemed to be caving in lately; they plunged into hollows among the laugh lines on either side of her mouth" (Hunt, W, pp. 2-3). She is in almost constant pain and William knows subconsciously that she is dying, but whenever the shadow of the thought enters the level of conscious awareness, he becomes frightened and brushes it aside, taking refuge instead in the self-willed myth that his mother is only temporarily sick and that the medicine she takes will soon help her to get well again. She tries, in different ways to signal to William what is going to happen and to prepare him psychologically for the inevitable. In one particularly poignant passage, they discuss the puppies which Duchess, their golden retriever, has birthed into the world:

"What are we going to do about all you babies, Duchess?" Mama asked the beautiful retriever. "What are we going to do with all these little wrigglers you birthed into this world?"

"She's started to wean them," William said. "She's beginnin' to push the little guys away like she's sick and tired of them--"

"She has a way of knowing when it's time to push them aside. We must find good homes for them pretty soon. Try not to love them too much, William. Hard as it's going to be, we'll have to part with them--" (Hunt, W, p. 5).

William does not make the obvious connection but instead speaks to the literal level of her meaning:

"Yes, I know. Too many mouths to feed." It had become a habit for him to speak sternly to them each morning when he went out to look at the puppies. "I'll just pass the time of day with you little mutts," he'd tell them. "No cuddlin' you in my hands--no lettin' myself get hurt because I love you so much--" (Hunt, W, p. 5).

In a beautiful gesture of grave symbolism, William and his mother agree to give one of the puppies to Sarah, next door, so that she and William won't have to "give it away with the others and never see it again" (Hunt, W, p. 22). Actually the puppy can be viewed as representing William, whom his mother is turning over to Sarah, although William is unaware of it. With death drawing nigh, William's mother, Mrs. Saunders, and Sarah begin the process of transition by which William is to be given over to Sarah for safe keeping until Mary Hand can eventually return to take over. Although William still cannot admit to himself that his mother is dying, he does instinctively begin to spend more and more time with Sarah as Mrs. Saunders' illness intensifies and she becomes progressively confined to her bed. Because of the circumstances, William is prematurely forced into the transitional period of adolescent growth that Hugh Agee analyzed in terms of initiation rites. William's turning to Sarah as his adult guide corresponds with similar experiences that Agee found in the novels he used in his study. Here Sarah is almost the archetypical adult model, strong, sure of herself, and wise in the ways of the world. Together she and William have long talks in which she gradually initiates William

into knowledge of the world and his appropriate course of action in it. She seldom gives him any outright directives or advice; rather she communicates with him by relating stories of her own lost childhood, the good times and bad times with her loving but alcoholic father who was a great painter although his value as an artist was not recognized until after his death. Mainly she communicates her values through her art. William often watches her while she paints or sketches and he gradually comes to an understanding of the hard work it takes for her to achieve on canvas the originality of her perceptions and feelings. He begins to see also that the strength to be alone and to be true to oneself does not always come easily or naturally. Like a work of art, purity of vision and individual identity must be cultivated and protected. Sometimes what she teaches him is deceptively simple, like the skill of just sitting still and listening to the heartbeat of nature:

"Shall we sit out here and watch the woods for a while before it gets too dark?" At that he nodded happily and they sat together on the highest step, not saying anything--just watching the shadows close in around the crowd of high pines that stretched far out toward the Gulf. Once Sarah smiled at him and whispered, "Listen," and he did, leaning forward the better to catch the sounds of soft cracklings and scuttlings, slow movements of branches, one against the other (Hunt, W, p. 29).

As they are sitting quietly, relaxed, she tells him very gently, speaking to herself as well, "Being alone is not the worst thing in the world." What she is referring to and what William is to gradually understand is that

being alone is the existential starting point for wisdom and identity, not being alone so much in the sense of physical isolation from others--although that can often be a part of it--but being alone in the sense of psychic awareness of and identity with one's own innermost self, at the basis of which lies a sense of mystical union with all of the cosmos, including the little night sounds of creatures that softly scurry in the damp darkness of the woods.

Part of William's initiation into the realm of knowledge involves an understanding that grief is the face of joy viewed from a different angle. Just as the night can be full of damp softness, so too can it erupt into sudden violence or death. Even as they sit on the back porch peacefully listening to the "soft cracklings and scuttlings" of the woods, "once in a while there was a shrill cry out there that made him wonder--was something in the darkness hurt or scared?" (Hunt, W, pp. 29-30.) Not too terribly long after their time together on the porch, a devastatingly violent hurricane suddenly blows in off "the Gulf which looked as big as God," a hurricane which brings with it the interlocking mystery of birth and death. During the night of the storm, Sarah's baby is born prematurely and William's mother expends the last of her remaining strength in delivering the baby. The baby is born healthy and Sarah cannot help loving it once she has felt its warmth and the strength of its need. She

decides, or rather the storm decides for her, that she will keep the baby and she names it after William's mother who dies a few weeks after the storm is passed. Although he cannot articulate his knowledge, William understands that a mystery has occurred in which a little piece of life has changed hands; his mother is dead and then again she isn't. The miracle of life has not ceased; rather, it has manifested the indomitable circle of its power in a pattern of change. William himself is in a pattern of change, a state of becoming, which is his true nature as a part of the force of life. The certainty of his growing understanding and identity is comparable to the eye of the storm, calm and inviolate within a circle of turbulent, changing winds.

During the three years that follow his mother's death and Elizabeth's birth (named Elizabeth after William's mother), William's identity grows increasingly stronger. He thinks of himself as the "man" in the house and takes pride in tending the garden and carrying out various chores that he and Sarah agree for him to do. He is steadfast in his love for Sarah and his sisters, and although the years are hard ones in many ways--economical problems and periodic fights between Sarah and Amy--William is basically contented and happy, secure as long as the "family of kids" stays together. When Amy is sixteen, however, her rebellion against Sarah's authority intensifies and things begin to fall apart again; Amy, in a fit of anger against Sarah,

leaves home to live with a girlfriend in town; and Carla is sent to New York for eye surgery that may restore her failing sight. William feels that his world is once again about to be torn apart at the seams, but this time his internal security system is stronger than in the past. Although he suffers, he manages to hold firm during this crisis and after a time the storm subsides: the operation is a success and when Carla finally returns so does Amy. Shortly thereafter, Amy, now grown more mature, marries an old family friend that Sarah approves of and William loves like a brother. Amy and her new husband move next door and William feels that his family has been extended. Throughout the family crisis, William's love and steady devotion to all members of the family helps to hold the home together and to pave the way for the eventual reconciliation between Sarah and Amy. Once they are all reunited again, another sudden, unexpected storm blows in, the worst one of all and one which threatens to permanently destroy William's world: Sarah is offered an art scholarship in Chicago and the possibility that she will take it looms in William's mind like some terrible blow of fate from which he fears he may never recover. Meanwhile Mary Hand's father has died and Mary has recently come back home to join Sarah in taking care of the children. Mary is a loving but strong-willed woman who insists that Sarah is no longer needed and that she must go to Chicago and begin living her own life instead of that of a surrogate

mother. Sarah will not leave without William's blessing, however, and the inner turmoil that William experiences in trying to understand the situation defines his ultimate test of identity. Having lost one mother, and now to lose another, is not only almost more than he can bear, it is also almost more than he can understand. He is not old enough to fully grasp the significance of the art scholarship or the value that contact with other artists would hold for Sarah. William is, however, extremely sensitive, and he instinctively knows now that for "everything there is a season," and that the time has come for Sarah to leave, that she too must be allowed the freedom to grow and change:

Change. That was something Sarah had told him about, something that he suddenly realized was all around him and his family. Mama gone. Amy a married lady. Carla with eyes that could see. Elizabeth saying, "I want pig-tails, Amy. I'm getting too big for curls" (Hunt, W, p. 187).

William realizes from personal experience that change, which he has always feared, is something to be accepted as a necessary part of living and when he tells Sarah that he thinks she should accept the scholarship he is also granting to himself a passing grade in his final rite of passage into the world of adult knowledge and responsibility. His loss of innocence has been his loss of seeing the world from the perspective of an innocent but dependent child. His new perspective is based on the security of an independent spirit which perceives change as an integral part of life.

William, as he walks home from the train station where he had gone to meet Sarah, having dreamed the night before that she would return to him, takes a firm step into his own future, recalling to himself a phrase from Heraclitus which Sarah had taught him long ago when she had tried to tell him about change, and which he is now in a position to understand fully:

His step grew firmer as he went along the familiar road, still shadowy in the early light. Sarah had known what she was talking about; so had old Heraclitus centuries ago. "As all things flow," he whispered to himself, "nothing abides. Into the same river one cannot step twice."

He was not happy, but he felt strong enough to force unhappiness back, to face things as they were. He smiled ever so slightly, the smile being reluctant about coming to his lips.

I'll tell her all about this sometime, he thought. She'll laugh, but she'll understand. It will be something just between the two of us (Hunt, W, p. 187-188).

VI. SUMMARY

In this chapter, the global concept of metaphysical rebellion was defined and examined as an index to the religious, moral and social evolution of human consciousness. An underlying assumption was that the gods and heroes which man invents in each succeeding age reflect an anthropocentric progression of consciousness from primitive supernaturalism to existential humanism. This progression was illustrated by examining certain points of comparison and contrast between selected ancient, romantic and modern heroes in the metaphysical tradition. Each type of hero was seen as the

vehicle through which a new religious, moral or social paradigm was projected onto the human imagination. Each hero was seen as representing both a subjection to and a rebellion against some older form of religious or moral authority. The culmination of metaphysical rebellion in modern times was equated with existential humanism, a philosophy suggested by Shelley and brought to full analytical articulation by Camus. The rebel-victim theme was shown to be logically interconnected with the loss of innocence theme and both of these themes were used as springboards in the analysis of five contemporary adolescent novels. Of these novels, three were found to specifically exemplify the rebel-victim theme, although in varying degrees of thematic similarity, and in greatly varying personal and social contexts. These three novels were My Darling Villain, Sometimes I Don't Love My Mother, and Property Of. The other two novels, Letter Perfect and William, were seen to contain elements of the loss of innocence theme. This theme was found to be dominant in Letter Perfect whereas in William it played a less significant role and the term "loss of innocence" was qualified in a rather restrictive way. In general there was found a significant similarity of relationship between the themes analyzed in the novels and these same themes as they appeared in the works of religion, literature and philosophy discussed in the first part of the chapter. A researcher who

chooses to select specific adolescent novels, rather than going by a list such as the one used in this study, would probably have no difficulty in establishing more dramatic thematic similarities than the ones drawn in this chapter.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Two of the main tasks undertaken in this study were the following: the suggestion of a broad frame of reference for the philosophical and literary understanding of the search for identity theme and an analysis of this theme in the contemporary adolescent novel. The identity theme was broadly categorized as the process by which men in each succeeding age search for meaning within themselves as opposed to meaning transmitted externally from religion or society.

Chapter I contained a statement of purpose (to show that the adolescent identity experience recapitulates the universal search for self theme as manifested in past movements in philosophy, religion and world literature), a statement of the problem (to analyze the identity theme in specific contemporary adolescent novels) and a statement of the research plan of the study. Chapter I distinguished between the identity and initiation themes and further divided the universal theme of identity into three categories or sub-themes which were defined thusly: the know thyself theme refers to the search by an individual for a sense of authentic identity that flows from within, from the "self," as opposed to a religious or cultural identity that is superimposed from external sources of authority; the

rebel-victim theme refers to the situation in which a protagonist finds himself or herself both in the position of rebel and victim in relationship to the forces of external authority or internal passion; the loss of innocence theme refers to the "fall" or change from one state of awareness to another that follows as a result of rebellion.

Chapter II contained a review of related literature on two points of focus: the definition and historical origins of adolescent fiction and the stress on the identity theme in recent criticism. In the overview of recent criticism, a trend was found, a trend which was characterized by the transition of concern from self to others on the part of adolescent protagonists who successfully attained authentic identity. Briefly stated, the conclusion of this chapter was that in adolescent fiction the attainment of identity is achieved in a process whereby the protagonist extends his range of emotion from egocentric concern with self to altruistic concern for others.

In Chapter III the philosophical problem of identity was examined as a background for an understanding of the concept of self. An evolutionary pattern was discovered in which the definition of identity changed from the monistic concept of Parmenides (thought and being are the same) to the phenomenological concept of Heidegger (identity is the creative relationship between thought and being). Heidegger's concept of identity as the structuring agent

in the relationship between thought and being was seen to run intellectually parallel with Whitehead's process philosophy, and with the findings of relativity physics in which the relationship of the experimenter to the experiment influences the reality of both. Drawing on the work of Robert Ornstein, Lawrence LeShan, and George Kelly, a holistic concept of self was suggested. This concept presented the self in two ways: one, as the harmonious, functioning synthesis of the analytic and intuitive "modes of being" (LeShan's term) and as the structuring agent of alternative reality systems. Using the idea of the self as the structuring agent of alternate reality systems, I then discussed the search for self theme as it has transpired in Sophoclean drama, Socratic philosophy, Eastern psychologies and modern existentialism. From this discussion the conclusion was drawn that the search for self theme was outer directed in the case of Socratic philosophy and inner directed in the other three areas of concern. Socrates' notion of identity was seen as essentially social, the individual finding his identity in correspondence to the Platonic definition of justice. Sophoclean drama was found to project a model of identity in which the individual finds himself by making existential choices, and suffering with heroic dignity the oftentimes ironic and tragic results of those choices. In the Sophoclean view of identity, man finds authenticity

and integrity within himself rather than in any fulfillment of obligation to society. In reference to both Eastern psychologies and modern existentialism, it was shown that the flow of identity was from within rather than from without, although in the case of both, humanistic commitment is usually the result of authentic identity.

From the second part of Chapter III it can be concluded that the four novels examined all pivoted around one or more aspects of the search for self theme that was outlined in the first part of the chapter. Owen Griffiths in Very Far Away from Anywhere Else began his search for identity outside himself in the "crowd of untruth," but grew to find that his identity lay within himself all the time. Like Oedipus he looked, at first, to strangers for the secret of his true identity, but in the end he found within himself both a knowledge of his identity and the strength to bear the weight of that knowledge. In November . . . December, It's OK If You Don't Love Me, and That Early Spring, the protagonists all sought their identity outside themselves, in unsuccessful love affairs. Jordan was aided in his search for identity by a sense of his own sexual failure with Lori and the jarring reality of his father's death; Mia found her identity through love and devotion to her aging grandmother; and Jody found her identity by coming to grips with her defensive aggressiveness which had been caused by her father's desertion. Like

Socrates, Jody had to learn that in order to "know thyself," one first has to expose to light all elements of false knowledge and comfortable illusions with which we clothe our naked psyche.

Chapter IV presented an overview of the metaphysical rebellion theme from the Adam and Eve and Prometheus myths to the tradition of the Byronic hero and the modern existential hero of the absurd. Discussed was the way in which rebellion can be positively viewed as the vehicle of new awareness. In this chapter the rebel-victim and loss of innocence themes were found to be related and both themes were seen as still operative in the contemporary adolescent novel. In My Darling Villain the protagonist found identity by successfully rebelling against her victimization to social class prejudice; in Property Of the narrator struggled against and eventually escaped from her own emotional bondage to a doomed gang leader; in Sometimes I Don't Love My Mother the heroine was victim to the tyranny of an overly dependent mother against whom she had to rebel in order to firmly establish her own pattern of identity. Both Letter Perfect and William were seen as reflecting the loss of innocence theme: Chad lost his innocence when he went against his own conscience in the blackmail scheme against Mr. Patterson; William lost his innocent vision of family unity when he granted to Sarah the right to leave; both Chad and

William found a new measure of identity or a new dimension of insight and awareness as a result of their experience.

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