ABSTRACT

Human Hagiography: The Saint Figure in Modernist British Literature

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Somewhat unexpectedly, saints' lives provided rich material for literary writing in the first half of the 20th century or modernist period. This study examines commonalities in how George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*, T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, and Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* interpreted and portrayed saints' lives and in how they used allusions to the saints to create a particular type of character, what I call the modernist saint figure, and a particular genre, what I call "human" hagiography. Some of these characters are actual saints, but others are fictional characters who possess the traditional characteristics of a medieval saint while bearing the marks of the modernist period. Many authors of the prewar and interwar period seem particularly interested in overturning prejudice against the medieval and the religious, instead appropriating spirituality as a contrary to some tendencies of modern thought and modern society. Specifically, these works often explore spirituality, subjectivity, humanism, compassion, aestheticism, and femininity as opposed to rationalism, legalism, absolutism, ideology, statism, and patriarchy. Although modernists often emphasized newness in all things and the breakdown of civilization, these works do not reject tradition, instead reinterpreting

stories and beliefs with an emphasis on artistic innovation and individual authenticity. One of the most interesting aspects of this modernist "hagiography" is that it does not idealize the saint but instead shows his or her moral failure and reluctance towards spiritual commitment. That this reluctance is overcome emphasizes the powerful compulsion of love and compassion in the saint while also establishing ordinariness as necessary for the modernist saint. The process of becoming a saint is an irrational, i.e. supernatural, process, not the product of the will, self-control, or reason. Fate, providence, miracles, and grace are present and challenge modern materialism. The saint figure is an individual, often at odds with institutions, even religious institutions, and with English notions of propriety and modern notions of the state. Spontaneity and paradox, as well as social exile, freedom, suffering, and disillusionment, are all important motifs. The freedom and exhilaration of Dionysian experience is an important analogy for spirituality and an essential component of modernism.

Human Hagiography: The Saint Figure in Modernist British Literature

by

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# DEDICATION

To Michael and Jane

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction: The Modernist Saint: The Exile from Polite Society

Is religion, especially orthodox Christianity, compatible with an examination of modernist literature? Orthodoxy may seem irrelevant in the period from roughly 1900-1945. Society seemed to have lost a sense of the real presence and action of God in the world, whether through grace, providence, or the miraculous, and in England the church seemed to be merely an extension of the secular state, irrelevant to actual life. A memorable scene in Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust* (1934) exemplifies this absence. Tony Last has lost his son in a hunting accident, and describes a visit from the local vicar: "I only wanted to see him about arrangements. He tried to be comforting. It was very painful … after all the last thing one wants to talk about at a time like this is religion" (158).

The loss of real religious faith was actually lamented by imaginative writers. In "The Decay of Lying" (1889), Oscar Wilde attributes the lack of creative imagination, the capacity to "lie," in his "prosaic century" with a lack of faith in miracles, thus connecting literature with the Christian imagination:

> As for the Church I cannot conceive anything better for the culture of a country than the presence in it of a body of men whose duty it is to believe in the supernatural, to perform daily miracles, and to keep alive that mythopoeic faculty which is so essential for the imagination. But in the English Church a man succeeds, not through his capacity for belief, but through his capacity for disbelief. Ours is the only Church where the sceptic stands at the altar, and where St. Thomas is regarded as the ideal apostle….The growth of common sense in the English Church is a thing very much to be regretted. It is really a degrading concession to a low form of realism. (494)

Using a lovely oxymoron, Wilde especially disdains those "uneducated" clergy "from either University"—Cambridge or Oxford—who explain away Noah's ark and similar stories. Wilde seems to be proposing a new definition of culture and sophistication that is not skeptical in the sense of strict scientific positivism, but is in fact skeptical of such skepticism and thus open to the miraculous, the fantastic, and even the orthodox. In fact, he praises the fantastical "Lives of the Saints" as great stories in which "facts are either kept in their proper subordinate position, or else entirely excluded on the general ground of dulness" (486-7). Thomas Heffernan, a theorist of hagiography, contrasts medieval saints' lives with late-Victorian biography, which "sought to be purely empirical"; to the Victorians, "'hagiography' … became an epithet for the unreliable" depiction of a life (39-40). In "The Decay of Lying," Wilde is obviously resisting the empirical urge in Victorian writing and recommending something closer to hagiography, with its fantastical elements, as an antidote to a mode of writing he saw as sapping the beauty from human life with its excessive skepticism, realism, and didacticism. Wilde is a precursor to the modernists, and some modernist writers who came after him actually did embrace the miraculous and even the orthodox as essential themes of their literature. They were not limited by empirical realism, but were searching for a way to give meaning to life in a culture that was fragmented, where traditional institutions like the church lacked force and authority, and where conventional morality and scientific rationalism had also failed to give a sense of coherence and purpose to life. Surprisingly for an era fixated on newness, they reached into the past, and they managed to make old ideas new by presenting them according to the artistic modes of their time.

Pericles Lewis, in *Religious Experience and the Modern Novel,* corrects a common misunderstanding of modernist literature as a complete replacement for religion, an idea that would seem to render religious discussions irrelevant in studies of this period (1). Lewis agrees that beginning with Matthew Arnold in the 1880s, there was a 100-year process in England of replacing traditional religion with artistic culture, but he argues that God and religion never disappeared from England or English literature, especially not by the early twentieth century, except maybe among elite intellectuals (1, 3). Even among elites, though, a desire existed for "ritual or sacramental power" in order to "channel it into their own work" (4). These modernist writers saw themselves as heirs to the church, now a "broken container of a sacred essence," and literary works as the new containers of this essence (4). Lewis identifies several key aspects of what he calls modernist spirituality: "borderline states of consciousness, forms of the divided self, the process of conversion, the function of ritual, the magical potential inherent in words, moments of sublime experience, and the relationship between social life and the sacred power" (5). This spirituality is not a "substitute" for religion but rather a new "explanation" of it, and indeed an important innovation in the genre of the novel that gives it a spiritual dimension (5). Lewis, then, identifies a movement toward spirituality, albeit an unorthodox spirituality, among writers like Henry James, Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce.

Even though she was not orthodox or a church member, Virginia Woolf, for example, described Joyce's *Ulysses* in her essay "Modern Fiction" (1925) as a "spiritual" response to "materialism" (2432). She defines spirituality as depicting the "flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain," messages which

often lack "probability, or coherence" and which require the reader "to imagine what he can neither touch nor see" (2432). Joyce's spiritual approach consists of abandoning the restricting "conventions" of realistic fiction and finding "that life exists more fully in what is … commonly thought small" (2432). Woolf defines materialistic realism as excessive attention to plot, genre, and the "body" at the exclusion of the "spirit"; materialists write about "unimportant things" and are skilled at making "the trivial and the transitory appear the true and the enduring" (2431). Woolf's comment that spirituality in fiction is a response to materialism contextualizes modernist spirituality as a response to capitalism and to bourgeois concepts of moral respectability inextricably tied to social status and wealth. She believes that a more "comprehensive and compassionate" perspective that incudes "utmost sadness" as well as a certain "inconclusiveness" are necessary to remake and renew fiction (2434).

Woolf actually describes the willingness to dispense with literary convention for a more spiritual mode in terms of saintly exile, recommending that "English fiction" should reject materialism and go "into the desert" for the sake of its "soul" (2430). She also recommends emulating Russian fiction, for "in every great Russian writer we seem to discern the features of a saint, if sympathy for the sufferings of others, love towards them, endeavor to reach some goal worthy of the most exacting demands of the spirit constitute saintliness" (2434). Woolf defines a sort of secular sainthood in terms of a new modernist literature, thus reinforcing my sense that both spirituality and sainthood were of marked interest to the major authors of this period.

R. W. B. Lewis has also identified prominent religious themes in modernist fiction but focuses on the figure or type of the "picaresque saint," which he defines as a

"paradoxical hero" who is "something of a rogue" and who is one of the "characteristic metaphors" of late modernism (10). Lewis argues that modernism should be divided into two phases or generations: the first generation, which included high modernists like Joyce, was primarily "artistic" in its values, themes, and aims, producing literature that invites "close technical analysis" as the main mode of criticism (9). The second generation is primarily "human" in its themes, trying to restore what Camus called "the sense of life" in an era characterized by death, decay, waste, and "nothingness" (18, 27). For artists like Joyce, "art was the answer" to death and nihilism, and their focus on art moved them away from actual life in a "redemption of the actual by the poetic" (20-21). Late modernists, however, were characterized by an "agonizing dedication to life" and an examination of human nature in all of its "aspiring, sinful" passion (27, 9). The typical figure of this life-oriented fiction is the "picaresque saint," a hero suiting this age, who conveys "the sense of life" but is "antic," even "godless," a paradoxical figure for a "paradoxical age" (31). Joyce's typical hero was the artist and late modernists' was the picaresque rogue (31). Lewis clarifies that in his definition, the saint was devoted not so much to God as to the human community and to what is sacred in it, despite its fragmentation. Like Pericles Lewis, R. W. B. Lewis outlines prominent features of modernist spirituality, identifying conversion, which he defines as any "wholehearted shift," and companionship, which he defines as sharing "pain," "bread," and "drink," as its main features (28-29). These themes are life-oriented reactions to death. They are primarily "human" in the sense that this "saint," above all else, shares in the suffering of those around him, bearing the consequences of human sin and destruction (32). These saints are outsiders whose "impurity allows them fellowship with suffering humanity"

(33). Even though they do not fit in and societal structures are fragmented, these "rogues" are always trying to reestablish human relationships in some way (30).

In her study of T. S. Eliot's 1935 play *Murder in the Cathedral*, a very famous example of modernist "hagiography," M. Serena Marchesi argues that the play is best understood as a particularly modernist work of art, not as devotional or religious art, contending that even for the post-conversion Eliot, artistic concerns took precedence. Eliot, she points out, wanted to avoid producing works of "pious insincerity" in which writers write as they "want to feel, rather than as they do feel," and this sentiment reveals an important aspect of modernist hagiography which is an insistence on an honest portrayal of the spiritual life (qtd. in Marchesi xxi). For him, the goal of the Christian artist is "to realise religious feeling in the terms of his own time" (qtd. in Marchesi 131). Marchesi explains that *Murder in the Cathedral* is modernist in theme because of its emphasis on dissent in a time when totalitarian governments and their demands of conformity were on the rise (xii). Thomas Becket is thus an anti-authoritarian saint. The play is also modernist in its lack of didacticism and lack of romantic individualism, both of which were strains of Victorian writing that Eliot rejected. Eliot's Saint Thomas Becket is vulnerable and even unsympathetic at times, not a "robust" individualistic hero as in Tennyson's popular play *Becket* (xxiii, xxiv). Evil is so alluring that the play cannot be considered merely devotional or didactic, and it avoids dwelling on issues of social injustice as Victorian literature did. Instead of the pious insincerity Eliot disliked, the play shows a willingness to present "ugliness" and "the unpleasant," valuing "truth" over "beauty" (xxviii-xxix). As in Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," there is a sense of disillusionment with romanticized notions of life and an honesty in presenting

the ugly particulars of life rather than its ideal forms. Eliot believed that the ugly had a fascination that paralleled the fascination of the beautiful and that the ugly provided not only a contrast with the beautiful but also illuminated how the beautiful is destroyed (xxix). An emphasis on ugliness is at odds with the typical connotations and even denotations of "hagiography," which usually means an idealized portrait that is scrubbed of evil and ugliness. Key to the definition of a *modernist* "hagiography" are the presence of evil, of contradiction, paradox, irony, and ugliness, concomitant with more orthodox understandings of holiness, i.e. how people live their lives in light of spiritual realities.

Another unique and unexpected aspect of modernist hagiography is the seemingly contradictory emphasis on tradition and innovation. Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of reified discourse and how it is made new in the novel illuminates how religious orthodoxy can be made new in the modern novel through dramatic tension between good and evil, saintliness and sin, spiritual and secular. In "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin's emphasis on newness connects him to the "make it new"[1] spirit of modernism, especially when he defines the fresh, individual "word" as emerging from current discourse—"unresolved contemporaneity"—and leading to the production of new art-forms or modes of expression (346). In contrast, authoritarian discourse reifies words and impedes "stylistic development": for him, art and authority are completely incompatible, and authors who try to convey "official-authoritative truth" or "virtue (of any sort: monastic, spiritual, bureaucratic, moral, etc.)" in novels necessarily fail in the endeavor, because novels are dialogic by nature (344). This theory precludes didacticism in true art. Bakhtin associates the "monologic" authoritative word with force: it does not have to be "internally persuasive," because its "language is special" and privileged, having come

from a "prior discourse" in history; "one must either totally affirm it, or totally reject it [for] it is indissolubly fused with its authority" (346). Because this prior discourse is thought to have special power, and is put forth by some authority, the individual cannot assimilate it in a way that is compatible with his personal integrity; if he does accept it, he can never realize his human identity, which must be unique to him. Authority "demands … we make it our own" (342), so it does not really become *our* own unless we are persuaded by it intellectually or emotionally. Because novels are dialogic, privileging many voices at the same time so as to necessitate the individual synthesis of ideas by the reader, they are well-suited for the modernist project of replacing conventions with more authentic personal identities and forms of expression. Orthodox religious writers such as T. S. Eliot and Evelyn Waugh could achieve the newness Bakhtin describes without sacrificing belief in what he would call an authoritative discourse. They use the dialogic art forms of modern literature, with their paradoxes and various voices, to provide a complex and almost non-dogmatic way to apprehend dogma. The challenge of presenting religious orthodoxy or tradition in the twentieth century was to engage with the old without being old-fashioned.

The main paradox of modernist portrayals of sainthood, the way the type of the saint is made new, lies in their presentation of characters with a very literal sense of spirituality, including the miraculous at times, in tension with an unflinching portrayal of seeming immorality—an indecency or unconventionality that at times seems strangely necessary for the sainthood of the character. What both of these impulses have in common is an essential suprarationality or irrationality that rejects Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Victorian rationalism in favor of medieval Christianity reinterpreted

for the modern world. Paradoxically, these saints are not considered "decent" by those around them, but instead are exiled from polite society, and this is what makes them both modernist and medieval figures. They are modernist in that they are irreverent, paradoxical, spontaneous, and sincere: they represent new, human ways to understand orthodox ideals. They are medieval in that this unconventionality means living for a spiritual realm and being rejected in a worldly realm. They are exiles, but what is unexpected is that they are sometimes exiled, slandered, and persecuted by people who seem decent and idealistic, at least according to agreed-upon norms.

The project of hagiography as it is commonly understood seems incompatible with the project of modernism, and it is. The impulse to promote a dogmatic concept of virtue which in traditional hagiographies turns the saint almost into an abstraction conflicts with the modernist impulse to reveal the inner conflicts and subjective consciousness of characters, often in violation of conventional morality and rejecting conventional understanding of virtue. Yet many writers in the late Victorian and modernist periods were interested in and wrote hagiographies. Yeats's friend Lady Gregory even wrote a book on the three saints of Ireland, Brigid, Colmcille, and Patrick, and their miracles. This book is more a study in folklore than a realistic biography because it dwells on the fantastic-seeming miracles of these saints. It reveals an interest in miracles at the *fin de siècle* that perhaps relates to Oscar Wilde's critique of the skepticism of his culture and his connection of belief in miracles with imaginative beauty in art. Even for writers without an orthodox agenda in writing, there was an interest in restoring a sense of the spiritual or the supernatural to life.

Hagiography of the Middle Ages was clear cut: its saints were virtuous and exemplary, and stories of their lives not only seem to gloss over sin, weakness, and worldliness, but also to violate any sense of mimetic realism with fantastic tales of strange miracles. Modernist literature, in contrast, presents unconventional, often non-virtuous behavior and emphasizes the fragmentation or disillusionment of the individual's mind and experience. Realistic portrayals of characters in modern fiction, drama, and poetry are more complicated than traditional hagiographical portrayals with their didactic messages. An Adulterer, an Alcoholic, and an Anarchist—these seem unlikely representatives of religious orthodoxy, yet these figures appear, sometimes repeatedly, in modernist fiction, as saints and heroes. Detectives, artists, writers, hedonists, aristocrats, and soldiers also appear, and what they all have in common is a willingness to dwell on the margins of society and middle class respectability. Many modernist authors create such characters, flagrant sinners or unorthodox artists who are nevertheless upheld as exemplars of medieval, otherworldly religious values.

Some of these authors deal with the question of whether modern secular life can be sanctified in the way that the vocations of medieval monastics were inherently sanctified. Characters who are priests, such as Chesterton's Father Brown, do not leave the world for the cloister, instead delving into the muck and danger of the world. Paradox and irony are at the center of meaningful portrayals of religious truth, for unexpectedness and even contradiction characterize these novels. Negotiating between Victorian *mores* of respectability and sobriety and modernist mores of innovation and aestheticism, authors writing at the *fin de siècle* and in post-war Britain manage to both question and affirm simplistic dogmas of either era and thus hold opposites in

paradoxical, meaningful, complex contradiction. Frederick Beaty identifies "contradiction," "incongruity," and "unexpected[ness]" as the hallmarks of irony, whether situational or verbal (4). It seems natural that modernists would adopt this technique, marked as the times were with a sense of fragmentation, disillusionment, and questioning of convention. However, it seems unexpected, perhaps ironic in and of itself, that irony could be employed in the genre of hagiography, the writing of a saint's life, or in fiction that alludes to the saints and presents saintly virtues. Many modern writers are consciously playing with the genre and updating it in fiction and drama. They are able to recast a medieval genre for a modernist conception of the world. Novelists such as James Joyce, Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene use references to the saints in creating fictional characters, appropriating this medieval type as a metaphor made new for their era—a saint for art or a martyr for self-expression. Dramatists such as T. S. Eliot, G. B. Shaw, and Dorothy L. Sayers write plays explicitly based on the lives of the saints, but created a new modernist form of hagiography in the process. What makes this type, the modernist saint, unique and characteristic of its age? Why were writers in this period interested in the saints? How does understanding this figure shed light on the literature of this period?

Aspects of medieval hagiography, especially relating to renunciation of the world, are reinterpreted by modernist authors as renunciation of society and its *mores*. Thomas Head identifies four types of saints in medieval hagiography: martyrs, ascetics, clerics, and virgins (xiv). These saints performed miracles both before and after death and were known for virtue: the word "virtue" comes from the word "power" in Latin and can refer to either superhuman morality or miraculous powers (xiv). After death, their relics were often revered and pilgrims came to the shrines that housed the relics, believing them to

hold sacramental power (xvi, xix). In medieval hagiography, the Christian nobility faces the question of its proper role in secular endeavors like war; members of the nobility who become saints often forsake wealth and privilege (xx-xxi). All of these recurrent themes in medieval hagiography have analogs in modernist hagiography.

In her study of medieval hagiography and how it influenced Renaissance literature, Julia Reinhard Lupton defines this influence as a kind of typology, meaning a paradoxical relationship between an older text and a newer interpretation of it, "in which the prior text forms both the hallowed origin and the superseded beginnings of the latter work" (xvii). This theory of typology applies to modernist hagiography as well. Lupton identifies "annunciation, vocation, trial, martyrdom, iconoclasm, [and] reliquary encryption" as features of hagiography that are repeated in Renaissance literature (xxi). These aspects also appear at times in modernist literature. Lupton's notion of typology illustrates how the medieval saint who was physically martyred or who otherwise rejected the world through asceticism or virginity becomes the type of the exile in modernist literature, seeking freedom from a society that is incompatible with spiritual vocation. Evelyn Waugh defined vocation as a type of exile in the modern world in his diary:

> Abjuring the realm. To make an interior act of renunciation and to become a stranger in the world; to watch one's fellow countrymen, as one used to watch foreigners, curious of their habits, patient of their absurdities, indifferent to their animosities—that is the secret of happiness in this century of the common man. (783)

Heffernan explains of traditional hagiography that "the saint, unlike the rest of humankind, lived simultaneously in two worlds, the heavenly and the earthly" (10). They "intersect" but are "fundamentally different" (10). Modernist hagiography is rooted firmly in the world and in the full spectrum of worldly behavior, but it still presents the

secular and the spiritual as different and incompatible. The characters do not really "abjure the realm" by entering a cloister; in fact, some of them, like Waugh's Sebastian in *Brideshead Revisited* or Graham Greene's whisky priest in *The Power and the Glory*, seem to not only blend in to secular society but also actually to outdo their contemporaries in sinning.

I define this kind of hagiography as particularly *human*, in several senses. In vernacular usage, being human means sinning and making mistakes. Modernist saints are flawed, but they are also misinterpreted and persecuted, their actions considered indecent by the arbiters of social propriety but containing a spiritual or virtuous motivation. Some of these characters are acutely aware of their lack of self-control. These moral shortcomings demonstrate the insufficiency of convention and reason to produce holiness, discipline, or a consistent, coherent moral life. Something more than self-discipline or social pressure is needed: the intervention or transformation of grace. Saints always begin as sinners, and this reflects a biblical understanding of sainthood since Christ "did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Luke 5.32). The individual's behavior does not make sense at times, and like St. Paul, he often does what he hates and does not do what he wants to do (Romans 7.15). This lack of self-control emphasizes the real existence of God and the primacy of God's sovereignty, which is a profound part of their orthodox aspect. Claire Booth Luce, an editor of books of saints' lives during this period, wrote that the hagiographer should not selectively present facts of the saint's life to emphasize moral triumph: "the editing of sinner-into-saint is done not by man's pen but by God's grace" (3).

*Humanity* also refers to humility and compassion, the virtues in which modernist saints excel. They are acutely aware of their weakness, baseness, and kinship with *humus* (earth), the Latin root of "humility" ("Humility"). This spiritual virtue of humility certainly counters the modern tendency toward individual self-assertion, enlightenment, and power. Even though he is sinful, the modernist saint's strict beliefs, his "tortured literalism" as John Updike puts it in his introduction to *The Power and the Glory* (v), sanctifies him because it demonstrates faith, an ability to live according to what is invisible, to stake his life on the reality of the spiritual plane. These saints are those "of whom the world was not worthy," those who "wandered" (Hebrews 11.38). Wandering and being homeless are marks of sainthood, indicating characters that are to be admired even though their societies reject them. Saintly characters have an awareness of their own sin, feel unworthy to be considered saints, and also have an intimate knowledge of the darkness in those around them, going beyond utopian notions of human perfectibility and Victorian notions of public respectability, and instead approaching the evil in those around them with honesty and compassion. This unflinching honesty in these modern saint types allows them to minister to others and to effect goodness and justice in their lives exactly where goodness is most needed. As R. W. B. Lewis notes, "impurity" allows roguish saints, who are outcasts, to share in the suffering of humankind (33), which in turn sanctifies them. The honest presentation of sin also brings to mind Eliot's theory about the fascination of ugliness and the grotesque; the presence of sin in the depiction of a saint's life makes these works modernist hagiographies.

Beyond awareness of sin, another aspect of humility is earthiness, which I define as an acceptance of human limitations and a strong awareness of impending mortality.

The modern saint recognizes that human knowledge is limited, which leads to a holy form of skepticism that rejects the over-confidence of scientific positivism, for example, but is open to gleaning knowledge from various sources from modern science to traditional religion, not feeling too enlightened for religion or too spiritual for science. They integrate the old and new and thus are truly unconventional, adhering neither to Victorian conventions nor to a modernist dogma that insists on newness in all things. They also have a strong sense of their own mortality and impending judgment, which, perhaps unexpectedly, leads to a certain *joie de vivre*. G. K. Chesterton articulates a connection between human limitations and the need for earthy "jollity," as opposed to Victorian sobriety or coercive moralism, in his 1914 novel *The Flying Inn*. His Irish hero Captain Dalroy, who is defending the right of taverns to exist in the face of state prohibition, states:

> I don't know whether God means a man to have happiness in that All in All and Utterly Utter sense of happiness. But God does mean man to have a little Fun; and I mean to go on having it. If I mustn't satisfy my heart, I can gratify my humour. The cynical fellows who think themselves so damned clever have a sort of saying, 'Be good and you will be happy; but you will not have a jolly time.' The cynical fellows are quite wrong, as they generally are…. God knows I don't set up to be good; but even a rascal sometimes has to fight the world in the same way as a saint. (59)

Dalroy goes on to differentiate between spiritual happiness, "Peace and Joy, and all the rest of it," which he admits he cannot "pretend" to, and jollity: "'I haven't been happy, … but I have had a jolly time" (59). Chesterton connects the practice of jollity with saintliness, because the saint is fighting the world for joy, but those who do not pretend to sainthood can still carry on this good fight for happiness. A lack of confidence is actually key to happiness because the saint lacks illusions about himself or human abilities, and is not trying to control others or form a utopia based on his ideology (in contrast with, say,

the communist lieutenant in *The Power and the Glory*). The saint is ultimately pursuing happiness, not just self-denial or self-negation for its own sake. He is also not seeking moral success: to be considered proper or to survive in society, so his means of pursuing happiness can be offensive and seem nonsensical to those around him. Any denying of the world by the medieval saint was done in pursuit of a more lasting happiness, not just for the sake of being good or achieving heroic self-discipline, and certainly not in order to be accepted by or succeed in polite society. Earthiness means, then, enjoying the things of this world without putting one's hopes in this world—jollity, according to Chesterton's character, actually implies an antagonism to the world and its forces of evil, indicating humility and contentment. In the early twentieth century, the fictional saint character must resist worldly forces such as nihilism and totalitarianism that dehumanize in the name of progress.

Being a human saint also means resisting the dehumanizing tendencies of secular society, destroyed as it was by war and dominated by political systems that sacrifice the individual to ideology, as in the state-dominated society of Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and Greene's *The Power and the Glory*. This resistance manifests mostly in compassion and attentiveness to the concrete individuality and intrinsic value of people they encounter. Saints are marked by a striking lack of self-interest, which also makes them outsiders in capitalist societies. They are not particularly efficient or productive but have idealism that sets them apart from pragmatists and those for whom the ends justify the means. There is a sort of recklessness in their compulsion to serve others, a freedom from middle class obligations that makes them unsuccessful according to secular values. Accepting this stigma is part of their sacrifice. Even though few of them are actual

clergy, they have jobs or roles that allow for the freedom that comes with an outsider status in society.

In *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (1952), German philosopher Josef Pieper critiques the modern culture of "total work." He argues compellingly that the loss of a sense of purposeful leisure, traditionally experienced in holidays and festivals founded in divine worship, has dehumanized man by reducing his identity to that of worker. He defines leisure as receptivity to revelation and wisdom, the opposite of striving and anxiety. In fact, he locates modern man's obsession with work, both in capitalist and Marxist philosophies, in a lack of inner peace and a need to drown out feelings of despair and emptiness through constant activity. The ability to embrace and practice leisure is dependent on the practice of divine worship, which reveals to us the full meaning of being human and of the world beyond us and our immediate, utilitarian concerns. This anxiety, a work ethic that reduces our humanity, promotes work without context or a larger purpose, and creates a work life unpunctuated by times of divine worship or revelation, creates the restlessness many of these characters experience. Their excessive drinking, to bring up one prime example, is an attempt to experience such rest, to take themselves out of the world of "total work," to choose not to participate in the modern economy.

It is no coincidence that many modernist heroes are artists, writers, and detectives, who are observers of society that sometimes exist on its margins, like ascetics or exiles, and who can unexpectedly have a great capacity for faith. They are skeptics in the sense that they are equally skeptical about pieties of their own age and class as they are about pieties of the past, applying an open-minded and expansive logic combined

with a comprehensive knowledge of human nature to the world around them. Soldiers also fall into this category as they have observed the self-destruction of secular society and thus have a particular honesty about human nature. All of these types, or vocations, see the emptiness of conventions and thus do not accept religion because it is conventional, in fact rejecting simplistic and stale ways of understanding it and coming to a more full understanding of how orthodox religion can engage with the individual consciousness and be relevant to all facets of human nature, even those that are not acceptable in polite society.

Many of these characters drink alcohol with gusto. Thomas Gilmore jokes that the modernist era could be called the "Age of Literary Alcoholism" (15). The decent, temperate Victorian spirit that inspired American Prohibition was present in Britain as well. The prominence of alcohol in *Brideshead Revisited* is in line with the generally Dionysian spirit of modernism, which Monroe Spears examines in his study of modernist poetry, *Dionysus and the City* (1970). Victorian moral values such as sobriety, respectability, order, and industriousness are often associated with Christian morality. What is unexpected then is the positive attention given by orthodox Christian writers to supposedly uncivilizing impulses. The civilization other modernists were questioning or reinventing was the same one that writers like Waugh were showing as a spiritual wasteland from which the saint must escape. For Waugh, British civilization in the early twentieth century was so far from being equated with Christendom that its standards of decency might actually be the worldliness characters need to rebel against. Polite society can be charming and beautiful, but its charm is deceptive and its beauty is fleeting. The central conflict of *Brideshead Revisited* is not an alcoholic's conflict with himself or a

homosexual's struggle against repression, as a recent film version posits, but is rather the struggle of a saint in the making against the empty rituals and social dictates of the desiccated shell that is Christendom.

James Nicholls articulates other fascinating connections between alcohol and modernism, quoting Ernest Hemingway's description of drinking culture in Paris, which equates drinking with a replacement for spirituality: "the drinks 'entered you like the Holy Spirit'" (5). Alcohol is related to the modernist desire for newness in art, to "redefine our perceptions of the world itself" (6), which could be construed as analogous to religious inspiration. Nicholls argues that both drunkenness as a form of "temporary madness" and the "waste and inactivity" of bar culture were ways to reject the primacy of rationalism and of capitalism (9). Being drunk, he writes, emphasizes the chaotic "unpredictability of subjective identity" and helps "aid and comprehend the inevitable dissolution of the coherent self in the chaos of the modern city" (13). Drunkenness can also parallel other anti-moralist forms of behavior that pursue ecstasy and escape from the excesses of reason in secular polite society. In Fyodor Dostoevsky's minor novel *The Gambler*, he shows addiction to gambling as a reckless and irrational but selfless pursuit that reflects the gambler's faith, if not explicitly in God, at least in destiny. Dostoevsky contrasts his Russian gambler, Alexei, with English and German moralists and capitalists, who are prosaic, calculating, controlling, and self-interested. He is rebellious, honest, poetic, a risk-taker, and noble, at least in his own eyes, because of his mystical bent. Gambling and love dominate his thoughts. He sees the risk-taking nature of extreme self-abandonment in these experiences as noble in and of itself, and in the sense that recklessness is akin to faith and to sacrificial love, it is indeed noble. Gambling in this

novel provides a useful analogy for reckless behavior in modernist novels. There is something compelling about the alcoholic as saint, but it is difficult to articulate why it is compelling or why it makes any kind of moral sense. Alcoholism in fiction is often a reaction against modernity that evidences the saintly impulse to reject the secular world and live for a spiritual world. Alcohol is a literal "opiate of the masses" that shows that humanity has not progressed beyond a need for religion, ecstasy, transcendence, community, and sacramental experience of spiritual reality in the physical body.

### *The Non-Orthodox Saint*

Non-orthodox writers of this time used hagiographical references as well, reinterpreting sainthood metaphorically. A clear example is found in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man;* the hero Stephen Dedalus is a sort of martyr for art and serves as a useful counterpoint for other modernist saint characters. Stephen is named after the first Christian saint, the martyr St. Stephen, who was stoned for his faith, and the mythical figure of Daedalus, a sort of classical saint, a tragic hero whose son is martyred for his daring ambition, innovation, and art. These names are significant, for Stephen sheds the Catholic identity indicated by his Christian name and affirms in the final line of the book that Daedalus, the "old artificer," is his father as an artist (276). In embracing his identity as an Icarian artist, Stephen leaves orthodoxy, both religious and political, behind in order to create something "new," what he calls "the uncreated conscience of my race" that will come from "the reality of experience" and his own "soul" (275-6). He rejects the influence of his Catholic father, Simon, and his heavenly father, God, as well as other paternal authorities such as his Catholic instructors and the Catholic writers he previously revered. Both of Stephen's names bespeak a certain

recklessness: St. Stephen was reckless in his willingness to die rather than deny his faith, choosing to sacrifice his life in this world rather than conform to the conventions of his culture. At one point in his Catholic youth, Stephen finds an aesthetic appeal in this reckless devotion: "It would be beautiful to die if God so willed" (157). Associating himself with Icarus is also reckless in that Icarus's father's artifice, the wings he creates, leads to his death in the ocean, but Stephen seems to embrace this promise of inevitable destruction and thus accepts a new kind of martyrdom, a martyrdom for art. As an artist, Stephen longs to express himself in "unfettered freedom" (267) which seems to relate to the image of Icarus leaving earth—even if death is inevitable, it is worth it for this freedom. He is even willing to risk hell for it. Whereas previously Stephen had longed for the saint's experience, "the attitude of rapture in sacred art" through "prayer" and mortification of the senses (162), his main attraction to saints is aesthetic rather than spiritual, and he eventually comes to embrace aesthetic ecstasy as a complete replacement for religious ecstasy. Joyce continues the use of Icarus imagery in Stephen's admiration of birds for their innate "knowledge" of the "order" of things; he claims they have not ruined that sense of order through "reason" as men have done (244). He is even willing to embrace "exile" to achieve bird-like freedom (269). St. Stephen can be understood as an exile, if martyrdom is an exile from this earth, but Stephen Dedalus's martyrdom is figurative, a rejection of the stifling orthodoxies of Irish society.

Stephen feels free to play with orthodox dogmas, appropriating them in new ways as an artist: repeating the words of Christ and then changing them; comparing his Catholic friend Cranly humorously to John the Baptist, the "precursor," the "child of exhausted loins" with a "stern severed head" (270). Stephen sees Cranly's parents,

Victorian and respectable, as old and dried-up like Sts. Elizabeth and Zecharias, and Cranly as an overly serious ascetic martyr like St. John the Baptist. John was the precursor to Christ, the one who ushers in a new covenant in a culture whose creativity is "exhausted," and Stephen implies that he himself, the artist, is the messianic fulfillment for which the dried-up Catholic culture of Ireland is the precursor, necessary as an antecedent but soon to become irrelevant, replaced by something radically new. Even the order of Stephen's name reflects this concept of the precursor: his Christian name is first and his pagan name second, and for him a pagan aesthetic sensibility is the fulfillment of Christian culture, in a radical reversal of traditional understandings of European culture in which Christendom was a superior replacement for paganism. Stephen not only appropriates the saints in this way,[2] but also appropriates Irish nationalism as his own, crossing the famous St. Stephen's Green in Dublin and noting that he is "Crossing Stephen's, that is, my green" (271). He uses aspects of tradition and makes them his own, playing on words and breaking with an orthodox understanding of his cultural inheritance. Instead of divine revelations, he has aesthetic revelations, waking from a dream with a poem in his mind, an event which he describes in terms of Gabriel's annunciation to the Virgin Mary: "In the virgin womb of the imagination the word was made flesh" (236). He remakes Catholicism without literal, orthodox underpinnings, rendering it figurative and aesthetic.

Choosing Daedalus rather than St. Stephen as his figurative father also shows that he embraces pride as an artistic value: he will trust himself rather than established authority and will even risk hell for it, like Milton's Satan. The conventional understanding of the Daedalus-Icarus myth is that the son was sacrificed to the father's

pride, but Stephen revels in his own pride, consciously accepting his possible destruction as part of artistic daring and the result of devotion to new artistic creation. His acceptance of pride, represented by flying high and trusting one's own artifice, and of pride's possible consequence, falling low, also contrasts him with the modernist saint who is marked by humility, self-doubt, submission, and fear of God. However, even when humble, the modernist saint is perceived by polite society as prideful, showing that nonconformity, genius, subjectivity, inspiration, and originality are often misinterpreted and persecuted as pride. In some cases, it is their orthodoxy that puts them at odds with society. Stephen is unorthodox, but he is a martyr in his reckless devotion to art, his willingness to accept destruction for it, his exile, and his refusal to conform to polite society.

*Chapter Abstracts*

In chapter two, I examine George Bernard Show's play *Saint Joan* in light of my theory of modernist sainthood. Although Shaw was an unorthodox innovator in religion, he sought to show Joan's church persecutors as sympathetic characters rather than dismissing them as backwards and superstitious. He believed that the saint, or "genius," will inevitably be rejected by society, even when that society is made up of educated and decent people, because they are restricted by their adherence to empty discourses of "law" and therefore cannot understand the saint's originality and wisdom. I attempt to explain how Shaw, while not literally believing in miracles and voices, was open to these fantastic elements of Joan's story, and why that openness, and Shaw's general disdain for realism, are particularly modernist. I also show how Joan's earthiness and the presence of other ordinary characters is a tendency of modernist hagiography, and how Joan's more

"human" version of nationalism is a challenge to modern nationalism and to the violence caused by abstract ideologies.

In chapter three, I analyze the language of T. S. Eliot's verse play *Murder in the Cathedral*, another dramatized hagiography, which tells the story of St. Thomas Becket, a central figure in English history but one whom Eliot depicts as persecuted by the English state, also showing England itself as a spiritual wasteland. Although Thomas's ordinary qualities and human weaknesses are not as evident as those of fictionalized saint characters, I argue that Eliot does create a particularly modernist portrait of a saint by emphasizing Thomas's deep knowledge of the unpleasant realities of social exile and physical death, in contrast with the sophisticated representatives of society's institutions, the Priests and the Knights, who use natural and abstract rhetoric and reveal the shortcomings in modern perspectives on reality. I explore the importance of the female characters in the Chorus in revealing his subjective experience and in creating a modernist poetic meditation on community. I also examine his acceptance of fate and his struggles to form a proper understanding of time and a spiritual perspective, against the temptation to control the past, present, and future. In refusing to assert his will and accepting fate, Thomas, like other modernist saints, resists tendencies of modern individualism while also becoming the ultimate individualist, the one who is killed for his nonconformity.

In chapter four, I examine what I call a fictional hagiography, the modern story of a saint figure, in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. I use Waugh's allusions to saints and his forays into hagiography and biography as a starting point to explain how sainthood sheds light on this enigmatic novel. The novel has remained popular since

Waugh wrote it during World War II, and its heavy use of irony, paradox, and ambiguity in characterization is surely a reason for this popularity. Its presentation of religious characters who are hopelessly flawed has an enduring appeal. I explain how Waugh's creation of unlikely saints is part of his exploration of divine providence, emphasizing both the failures of human will and the reality of the supernatural. I examine Charles Ryder as a typically modernist figure, an artist, and how his character's conversion demonstrates the possibility of making the old "new." I explore the importance of love, friendship, leisure, and pleasure to spiritual vocations and their incompatibility with the world. I also contrast saint figures such as Sebastian with the characters such as Rex who represent English polite society, arguing that saints must exile themselves from England to find purposeful vocations and spiritual happiness and that their seemingly improper behavior is often an attempt to find this happiness.

# CHAPTER TWO

## "She did come from God": Shaw's Heretic Saint as Modernist Genius

A materialist, positivist approach is what one might expect from an author like Shaw, a religious freethinker who was a member of many "heretical societies," who "considered himself a sceptic from early childhood," and "developed his own substitute religion" (Smith 334-6). However, as Warren Smith points out, although Shaw was "the great idol-smasher, he made it a point always to have replacements for the broken crockery" (336). This point is important for understanding Shaw and other modernists, because although they often rejected traditions of the past, they were actually quite open to many aspects of religion, even if not the whole orthodox kit and caboodle. As in Oscar Wilde's "The Decay of Lying," many writers were open to the imaginative, beautiful, and wondrous aspects of religion, including supernatural miracles. In this way the modernists reject the excesses of the modern trust in science and reason, Yeats's "grey truth," and also reject realism as the literary mode most true to life (7). They challenge the idea that the bleak and industrial visible phenomena constitute the whole of reality as Tolkien did, defending the escapism of fantasy as a desire for the "joy of deliverance…, Joy beyond the walls of the world" (77). As Virginia Woolf writes, it is an "unscrupulous tyrant" who makes an author create "an air of probability embalming the whole"—realism, she implies, kills the character (2431). They reach back beyond the modern to an understanding of factual truth that in some ways shares more with medieval hagiography than with nineteenth century social realism or scientific positivism. It is also akin to myth, "an exaggerated or idealized conception of a person or thing" that is nevertheless

"widely held"—in other words, a story that is not factually or historically true but that still resonates (*OED).* Karma Waltonen points out Shaw's "skepticism of Darwinism," of an over-reliance on scientific thought and extreme views such as Darwin's insistence that science has rid of us of "strange superstitions and customs" and thus helped us to evolve intellectually (189-190). This skepticism, not because of science but about science, is at the root of why many modernists were actually open to religion and did not just reject it out of hand, even while they were interested in shattering dead conventions and institutions. Shaw, Waltonen explains, actually described science as a new religion that required just as much credulity as traditional religion (190) and thus could not claim a monopoly on self-evident truth.

At first, Shaw's *Saint Joan* (1923) seems very different than some of the other works in this study: it is drama rather than fiction; it is an explicit hagiography about an actual historical saint; and Shaw himself was not an orthodox Christian. This last fact in and of itself is important for understanding Joan as a particularly modernist saint, though. The modernist saint is above all else paradoxical. The paradox of Joan is that she is both a heretic and a saint at the same time, and Shaw wants to emphasize rather than disprove the charges of heresy against her, a sentence which is supposedly "broken, annulled, annihilated, [and] set aside as non-existent, without value or effect" by official church proceedings in the play's Epilogue, based on the retrial that occurred about thirty years after her execution (218). The multiple synonyms here highlight Shaw's irony on several levels. Ladvenu, the Dominican monk who regrets his role in Joan's trial, proclaims this reversal of her sentence triumphantly as if Joan is now vindicated and justice is done. However, not only does Shaw want Joan to still be seen as a heretic

despite this lengthy insistence on her innocence, but also, he is calling into question the value of official church pronouncements, and of the very concept of "law." By "law," he means the official actions of all systems and institutions, not just of the church, but as many have noted, his play was a reaction against another church pronouncement, that of Joan's canonization in 1920. As Nicole Coonradt writes, Shaw had "the hope of rescuing what he considers her tarnished reputation as a result of her canonization by the Catholic Church in 1920" (92). In Shaw's mind, her official Catholic sainthood nullified her actual sainthood while her label of heretic proved it.

Shaw's advocacy of abstract, non-particular religion and the potential of the secular nation state make him modern; his openness to irrationalism, the aesthetic imagination, the elevation of the ordinary person, and the rejection of moralism make him modernist. As with other modernist "hagiographers," he writes the saint's life in such a way as to challenge the complacency of scientific rationalism as well as religious moralism—in other words, he challenges dogmatic institutions and the imposition of coercive order upon individual freedom and inspired innovation. He takes the medieval saint and recasts her virtues as politically secular, her morals as rebellious against polite bourgeois society, and her irrationality as evidence of her imagination and creative genius.

If modernity is defined as beginning in the Renaissance and encompassing the Enlightenment, Romantic, and Victorian periods, Shaw's praise of the medieval can be seen as a clear critique of modernity and its conventions: this critique is part of the essence of literary modern*ism* (as opposed to modernity or modern). Although *Saint Joan* presents Joan as an unfairly persecuted prototype of modernity, especially in her

nascent Protestantism, nationalism, and individualism, and is quite obviously a critique of institutional religion and legalistic dogma, Shaw does not blame the church for its persecution of Joan or assume that a modern court would have been more sympathetic to her. He explains that "society is founded on intolerance," meaning that institutional standards and dogmas are necessary for stability, and that independent geniuses like Joan will always be persecuted simply because they have evolved beyond the current understanding and knowledge of truth.

Shaw believes the saint cannot survive in the worldly system and will always be expelled from it, similar to the forced exile from polite society in other works about modernist saints. In this case, the saint is exiled physically and completely through martyrdom. Shaw does not emphasize Joan's sinfulness or self-indulgence, but she is rough, ordinary, and rebellious, trusting her own genius rather than the pronouncements of her social betters. When Joan proposes resurrecting herself as one of her saintly miracles, her repentant former persecutors reject the idea: Cauchon, the French bishop, explains, "the heretic is always better dead. And mortal eyes cannot distinguish the saint from the heretic" (226). This statement means that the heretic and the saint are one and the same as far as we know, thus questioning the limits of perspective and the authority of institutions, both typically modernist themes. The saint is destabilizing to civilization—Cauchon warns that "private judgment" will bring the "mighty structure of Catholic Christendom" to "barbarous ruin and desolation" (203)—but for Shaw it is civilization's fault. Cauchon admits in the Epilogue that institutions fall short: "the world is saved neither by its priests nor its soldiers, but by God and his Saints" (221). Instead of the institutional church, he learns to look to the individual—"Saints"—and the

spiritual—"God," and this lesson is Shaw's theme (221). Cauchon believes Joan will usher in an individualistic, non-institutional spirituality for humble and ordinary people, showing the "girls in the field…that there is nothing between them and heaven" (226). However, the institution will always temporarily win. Dunois, Joan's comrade in arms who then fails to protect her from persecution, explains, "we are not yet good enough for you" (226). It is clear that if she were to come back, despite their repentance, she would only be martyred again. In the final line of the play, Joan laments, "O God that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive Thy saints?" (227). Shaw echoes the biblical formulation of sainthood as those who have faith and hope in a reality beyond the one that is visible in the world and who are thus elevated and superior to the world, "those of whom the world is not worthy." Death is, ironically, the necessary and inevitable fate of the saint or what the Inquisitor calls the "living soul" (226). It is the outcome of the clash between the "blindness and bondage of the law" and its opposite, "the vision and freedom of the living soul" (226). In this way, death is actually an affirmation of life, a release from the weight of the body and from earth and its systems, an escape into life defined as freedom. It is significant that the Inquisitor contrasts the bondage of the law with the freedom of the soul since during Joan's trial he represents the height of scrupulous, sophisticated knowledge of the law and trust in the law, but here he admits that it causes "blindness" and "bondage," the opposite of Joan's "vision" and "freedom." Through her death, Joan has vindicated the way of life and freedom, which for Shaw is the opposite of the law.

*Joan's Virtuous Pride*

If Shaw's Joan is a modernist saint in her apparent pride and actual humility, what makes her also a traditional saint? How is this play a hagiography in the medieval tradition? Shaw emphasizes her heroic virtues, otherworldliness, and asceticism. As David Farmer explains, in discerning if someone is a saint, first the life is examined, and then miracles (xii). Joan's life is practically flawless and impossibly brave, and in this way Shaw's hagiography is actually more traditional than Evelyn Waugh's or Graham Greene's fictional saints. There is a strong sense of dualism in the play, an emphasis on the freedom and purity of the soul in contrast with bodily and earthbound existence.

However, Joan is not self-flagellating. If she is guilty of pride, she does not worry about it too much: "Oh, never mind whether it is pride or not: is it true? Is it commonsense?" (192). Her flippancy about whether she is officially considered a sinner or not and also about disobeying the church (193) marks her as a modernist sinner-saint, although we are obviously not meant to ultimately agree with the church's judgments of her sin. She insists she cannot be proud because she is "poor" and "ignorant" (193), which makes her positiveness even more unexplainable and thus miraculous. Shaw is differentiating between the classical concept of hubris as tragic flaw, the legal religious concept of pride as sin, and Joan's own admirable self-confidence, which may appear as pride or even be pride, but is evidence of genius, which is Shaw's unorthodox, secular definition of sainthood. For Shaw, pride is actually not a sin, partially because he is seeking to redefine religious devotion in opposition to nineteenth-century virtues of self-denial, morality, and duty.

Shaw's emphasis on death and life as being paradoxically connected fits with R. W. B. Lewis's theory of early modernist literature as seeking an answer to the pervasive death culture (17). Lewis explains that many early modernists posited art and aesthetic experience of life as the answer; for Joan, it is Shaw's Vitalist brand of spirituality, defined as "the theory that the origins and phenonema of life are due to or produced by a vital principle, as distinct from a purely chemical or physical force" ("Vitalism"). Vitalism was a reaction, then to positivism and materialism, a recognition that these systems could not fully explain life, and that they could not account for its meaning. For Shaw, his Vitalist belief meant living for a higher purpose and being open to new ideas, what he calls "the law of change" or the divine will. His association of change with life and purpose shows his affinity with the modernist *zeitgeist*. Joan makes dualism, the conflict between body and soul, explicit when she states in the Epilogue's dream-vision that "men destroyed my body, yet in my soul I have seen God" (226). Shaw's definition of the saint, then, is one who lives on a spiritual plane with an expansive perspective, having a "vision" of spiritual as well as earthly reality. The saint is also one who is truly free, not only from forces of evil, but also from supposed forces of good, because his depiction of the law is not primarily a critique of corruption or evil in the system but of necessary legal procedures and power structures that are in many ways beyond reproach. Even at its best, the system is against the genius or saint. Shaw's presentation of institutional authorities is another way in which Shaw's portrayal of sainthood is paradoxical, because Joan is not persecuted by liars and blackguards but by dutiful, lawful men who even, at times, examine their own motives for upholding the law. Their good motives also add to the sense of tragedy and cynicism in the play because there is

something inevitable and unexplainable about Joan's fate. Fate, it seems, as a force of inevitability seen working through societal institutions, is cruel, because neither Joan nor anyone else has really done anything wrong, yet justice is elusive, and because no one is to blame, there is no clear lesson to learn or cause-and-effect to analyze.

Does Joan bring about her own death through pride, i.e. does Shaw emphasize her flaws, making her a particularly sinful saint? This portrayal would anticipate Evelyn Waugh's sinful saint characters; however, for Shaw, although Joan is perceived as sinful by her persecutors, she is not in reality. Shaw does not make her sinful, although he does make her ordinary, earthy, and misunderstood as improper and therefore impure; like other modernist authors, he is questioning the social concepts of propriety and challenging the way saint figures are perceived. He also depicts the Dauphin (King Charles) and the English Soldier (who goes unnamed) as modernist saint figures, and in their case he does emphasize moral weakness, but redeems it by also establishing their compassion and humility.

Coonradt has addressed the issue of how to define *Saint Joan*'s genre, arguing that it is not a tragedy with a prideful hero, but an antitragedy, a satire, and a romance. She argues that when Shaw uses the conventional language of tragedy in his Preface, he is being ironic, for example by implying that Joan's "overweening presumption" is her tragic flaw; his use of the word "overweening" seems to associate Joan's presumption with hubris, which the Archbishop also accuses her of (94). Coonradt's suggestion of Shaw's irony highlights the difference between worldly and spiritual perception. In terms of secular values and worldly systems, and our limited perspectives, the saint is a heretic or a prideful tragic hero. Joan's confidence, which Shaw emphasizes throughout

the play and which speaks to her freedom, vision, and fully realized individuality, is misinterpreted by us—the audience as well as her judges—as pride or hubris. The character in the play who calls her prideful is the French Archbishop, a good man whose flaw is being too "by the book," knowing and adhering to moral and legal principles in a way that misapplies them to real situations. When she challenges the Archbishop's and Charles's desire to stop fighting, claiming "it is not God's will that [Charles] should take his hand from the plough," the Archbishop interprets Joan's boldness as pride and casts Joan as a Greek tragic hero who will be punished for her "hubris," even though he admits that in the past when the army took her advice, "God has blessed your enterprises" (190). By forcing Joan into the tragic hero template, he foreshadows and justifies her death as an inevitable fall, thus absolving himself of guilt in it, but are we to believe his assessment of Joan?

On the one hand, Shaw could be showing ironically that the Archbishop is an unreliable judge of motives, but on the other, Shaw could be indicating that Joan is indeed prideful, but that this kind of pride is a virtue. Both are true. The Archbishop is wrong in interpreting Joan according to his laws, whether the literary law of hubris and downfall, or his interpretation of religious law and propriety. Shaw is also showing that Joan has the right kind of pride, not pride in her status, education, looks, power, or money, but in knowledge that she is "right," which she differentiates from being "proud" (190). The Archbishop considers conviction and pride one in the same, as she has no right to consider herself "right." He does, because, as he says, "I interpret [God's] will with the authority of the Church and of my sacred office" (190). His is the actual pride, pride of place, because it is evident that his position in the church has no correspondence

with the rightness of his opinions. The Dauphin also has pride of place and is confused: "Why don't the voices come to me? I am king, not you" (190). Joan's lack of respect for titles and offices annoys the Archbishop, as he thinks she should defer to them automatically even when she thinks she is right.

Shaw uses these ironic accusations of Joan's pride to overturn assumptions about what is sin and what is sainthood: the saint is by definition prideful, even "self-selected" (The Preface 33). The saint must be willing to be "alone" in her convictions, which makes her appear prideful, an outcast, and an exile. As the Archbishop accuses her, "You stand alone: absolutely alone, trusting to your own conceit" (194). Joan accepts her lonely status; she recalls that she is an outcast even from her own family and calls her "loneliness" her "strength," becaue it is God's strength (194). Shaw means this "conceit" or pride as a mark of sanctity because it is a willingness to be outcast from polite society, from belonging to a group, and in Joan's case, from life. But for Shaw the saint's pride must be the right kind of pride, a pride that is paradoxically down-to-earth and founded in commonsense, not in esoteric knowledge.

Shaw emphasizes how "common" her commonsense is when Joan unexpectedly insists that her voices are actually irrelevant because the "blacksmith" could tell you to "strike when the iron is hot" (190). She cannot understand why such wisdom is not self-evident, why the Archbishop cannot see that Charles should keep his "hand to the plough," as a farmer's daughter assuming that hard work is an obvious virtue (190). She is folksy, clichéd, and ordinary here, the opposite of prideful, sophisticated, and elegant. Commonsense is available to all, even to the Dauphin, who is not disqualified by his position but is blocked or distracted by it to the point that he cannot hear voices or access

commonsense. Joan admonishes him for the empty rites of his religion: "you cross yourself and have done with it; but if you prayed from your heart, and listened…you would hear the voices as well as I do" (190). She has a proper pride in her own wisdom, zeal, and revelations, not in external factors and positions, which she is quite humble about: I'm a poor girl, and so ignorant that I do not know A from B. How could I be proud?" (193). This humility contrasts with the empty pride of the powerful, who lack both religious inspiration and practical wisdom.

*Joan's Miracles: "The girl herself is a bit of a miracle"*

Shaw's Joan is a modernist saint in her ordinariness, earthiness, and unique genius, but she also resembles the traditional medieval saint in her performing miracles, which after heroic virtue is the most noteworthy feature of traditional hagiography. Whether Shaw presents them as "real" miracles is much-debated. Some dismiss her miracles in the play as obviously only existing in the eyes of the superstitious medieval beholders. Karma Waltonen claims, "Joan never performs a miracle in his play" (190). Waltonen implies that any apparent miracles stem from Joan's own perceptions, her subjective "conception of God," and that Shaw gives alternate explanations for the supernatural components of her story. The Archbishop claims, pragmatically, that "a miracle…is an event which creates faith" and such an event, even if it does not happen, cannot be a "fraud" because it leads to some kind of truth about God; here, Shaw seems to advocate a belief in abstract religious principles but not in specific instances of divine revelation or action (166). If we are to believe the Archbishop's strange, anti-supernatural statement, a paradoxical combination of faithlessness and faith, then it is possible that Shaw includes Joan's miracles because they "*seem* very wonderful" and are

therefore "true;" that is, they do not need to be true in a scientific or factual sense to be essentially true because they have the proper effect of appealing to the imagination and creating faith (166, emphasis mine). Coonradt, however, takes issue with the claim that there are no real miracles in the play. She acknowledges claims that many of Joan's miracles—the surprise victory of the French over the English at Orleans, the change in the wind's direction when she first meets Dunois, and the punishment of the swearing soldier who falls into a well—could be explained away as "coincidence" or "luck" (105). She points out, however, that there is no rational explanation for the miracle that opens the play, the miracle of Robert de Baudricort's eggs. Robert's four hens, she explains, would "lay one egg a day, *at most"* (104). They stop laying eggs while he withholds help from Joan, who needs assistance and armor for traveling to the Dauphin, but when he agrees to help Joan, they lay "five dozen" eggs in short order, as Coonradt says, "an impossible fifteen eggs per hen" (104). Shaw definitely portrays the incident as miraculous.

If this really is a miracle, why would Shaw have created and included it? Why would he add to the historical record in a play that is at other times based on historical facts? Why would he create an event with no other explanation but the miraculous one, especially when he himself considered the notion of miracles akin to God's "cheating at cards" ("Belloc" 310)? Perhaps the explanation for Shaw's creation of the apocryphal egg miracle lies in its symbolic significance: like the Archbishop, Shaw seems to think that the purpose of a miracle is to teach a spiritual lesson, and as a dramatist he is at liberty to create fantastic symbols and miraculous narratives, even if he does not believe they actually happen. In other words, he is not striving for realism in the play, placing

him in line with Oscar Wilde's rejection of realism and desire for more miraculous elements in stories, and not implying an orthodox or literal belief in their occurrence in history.

The egg miracle is highly symbolic and reveals Joan's life-giving power as a woman and an inspired individual, in contrast with the dead institution of feudalism represented by Robert. In the play, Robert initially calls it "blasphemy" when his servant attributes the egg shortage to an "act of God" (151). Robert is by no means in a hurry to attribute natural phenomena to supernatural intervention. He wants to blame his servant for the shortage, in fact, and takes the shortage as a challenge to his position in a clever instance of foreshadowing later events in the play in which God's actions through Joan threaten the security of other powerful men in their positions. Robert, like other powerful people Joan meets, is powerful but empty—lacking confidence, zeal, activity, and all the other marks of the "living soul" that Joan bears. The egg shortage is an interesting symbolic choice on Shaw's part as it relates to Joan's historically absent menstrual period, but also to Robert's own lack of life-giving power: Shaw describes him in the scene notes as having "no will of his own,…a trodden worm, scanty of flesh, scanty of hair, who might be any age from 18 to 55, being the sort of man whom age cannot wither because he has never bloomed" (151). Neither Joan nor Robert seem capable of physical reproduction as they seem to lack femininity and masculinity, respectively, an asexuality which hints at a sort of natural celibacy, of being left out of the world's systems of gender, marriage, and reproduction: one mark of the traditional ascetic or virgin saint. Joan's official classification by the Church is as a "Virgin" rather than a "Martyr," so this is a positive way to interpret lack of fertility or virility, as a holy sacrifice, or in Shaw's

mind, perhaps, as a refusal to participate in conventional marriage and gender roles. A more compelling explanation for the infertility, perhaps, is Charles Berst's argument that Joan's France can be considered an infertile "waste land" with many similarities to T. S. Eliot's poetic description of modern society, and this miracle imbues scene 1 with "fertility magic *a la* Frazer and Eliot" (117-118). When Joan's arrival restores eggs to Robert's castle, she brings and restores life in a non-sexual way: that is, not how one would expect a woman to do so, which emphasizes her virginity but also shows that she embodies the essence of femininity in a spiritual sense. Her physical infertility could be interpreted as blight from a natural perspective, but from a spiritual or miraculous perspective she restores fertility to the land.

Robert is the first of several ineffectual men in the play, among them the Dauphin, but Robert is transformed from skeptic to believer by Joan's arrival and restoration of the eggs. He acknowledges that the only thing that can save France is a miracle, but laments that "The only difficulty about [miracles] is that they don't happen nowadays," a line that could be spoken by any modern materialist (156). However, he is convinced to bet on Joan rather than allow France to be defeated, an outcome that seems otherwise inevitable. He does not exactly have faith, but makes a calculated risk to play "the last card left in our hand" (156). His advisor Poulengey has become a whole-hearted believer in Joan, not because of a miraculous act, but because "the girl herself is a bit of a miracle," and thus convinces Robert that it is not a great risk (156). Joan's confidence, the fact that "she is so positive," has convinced Poulengey, who may only be used to indecisive and unsure men like Robert (152). The irony is that, as Robert says derisively, "any slut of a girl" can be positive (152), yet a powerful and rich man like Robert is not. Robert is

afraid, Shaw says in stage notes, that "a crazy female, and a social inferior to boot" has made him look foolish (160). Shaw's emphasis on Jane's ordinariness, her humble status, and the ease with which the powerful can dismiss her as insane or as a woman, combined with her unshakeable confidence, courage, and manly attributes, the attributes that actual men lack, contributes to the paradoxical nature of her sainthood. Robert, however, despite his indecision and lack of will, is rewarded for even the little faith he shows in making a "gamble" on Joan when the egg-laying is restored in a deluge. He crosses himself and exclaims "Christ in heaven!" and "She did come from God" (160). Robert is the first of many skeptics to encounter and be changed by Joan's miracles in the play, and the figure of the skeptic-convert is common in modernist hagiography. As Poulengey says, she herself is the miracle, as apart from any specific acts that can be attributed to her. In this way, Shaw can allow himself to create a myth of her miracle-working, similar to traditional hagiography's use of fantastical miracles without concern for a limiting concept of factual truth, and show how these fantastical events are essentially, if not historically, real. For if the real miracle is Joan's own self, her preternatural confidence and firm convictions, this type of miracle—of a completely positive individual—could still occur and have the same effect on a modern skeptic that the sensational incident of the egg-laying had on the skeptical, indecisive, weak-willed, calculating Robert.

### *Imagination and Ideology*

Shaw's ironic reversal of Joan's supposed tragic flaw of "presumption" or pride, which is actually her confidence and faith, is the key to her heroic virtue, as it is the key to Stephen Dedalus's aesthetic sainthood. Pride is a noble motivation for these two

saints, even though it leads to death, as in classical tragedy; for them, pride is part of the sacrifice of their martyrdom. Pride and the aesthetic imagination are related in that the saint must be confident in his or her own imagination. Shaw plays with the word "imagination" to ironically undermine the modern tendency to dismiss imagination as mere fancy that can lead to deception or even insanity. When Joan explains that the impetus of her mission is voices "come from God," Robert responds, "They come from your imagination," a riposte he obviously believes will shut her down immediately (158). Here, as in his earlier insistence that miracles "don't happen nowadays," Robert is a modern logical positivist, and Shaw is questioning the firmness of his beliefs, assumptions which were already conventional enough for Shaw to take aim at them. Joan's response to Robert's intended insult is simple and brilliant: "Of course. That is how the messages of God to us" (158). As Poulengey responds, "Checkmate." The reader feels this sense of victory, too, in Joan's challenge to conventional wisdom and her easy triumph of reason over this powerful man who considers himself rational. Shaw believed that the saint, the true genius and free soul, had a great imagination. The subjective imagination, far from being a source of irrational deception, is the source of Joan's "commonsense," which is actually somewhat rare, and a way to apprehend knowledge that is excluded by solely relying on science and reason. This is a reversal of Milton's dichotomy in *Paradise Lost* of the fancy and reason in which the reason must guide the fancy or else the fancy will deceive, as it does with Eve after the pleasant dream that begins her temptation (V.102). To some extent, Shaw means it literally when Joan insists that *God* speaks to the imagination although he does not believe literally in the medium in which she receives divine wisdom, saints' voices. The genius, like the artist,

must surely trust in the voices he or she hears in the imagination, while the orthodox saint insists that they come from a personal outside source. Shaw's Joan is a modernist heroine, an individualist, but whether she is an orthodox saint who heard actual saints speaking to her is less important. He took pains, however, to show she was neither a lunatic nor a liar but rather akin to an imaginative artist.

Imagination elsewhere in the play, too, enables the apprehension of truth. Far from implying that the imagination should not be shaped by biblical stories, Shaw implies that a developed religious imagination increases humane compassion, which is one of the prevalent themes in modernist hagiography. Especially after World War I, it was clear that abstract political ideology was dehumanizing, and that the concrete reality of violent death called the value and truth of abstract ideology into question. This is clear in much literature of the time; for example, in the wartime poems of Wilfred Owen, he repeatedly challenges notions of nationalism and honor with images of what it is like to watch soldiers die in war, something he had to do in his years as an officer. There is a parallel character in *Saint Joan,* the English nationalist Chaplain De Stogumber, who also becomes disillusioned with nationalism. Throughout the play, he is the most zealous in insisting on Joan's death because he feels she has insulted England. It is clear that Shaw wishes the Chaplain to be associated with nationalism and imperialism: "Certainly England for the English goes without saying: it is the simple law of nature. But this woman denies to England her legitimate conquests, given her by God because of her peculiar fitness to rule over less civilized races for their own good" (186). De Stogumber is a social Darwinist who attributes his ideas to being based in nature and God, purely rational, common sense, yet throughout the play, we can see that Joan's is the real

commonsense as it is based in concrete individual reality rather than these types of abstractions. In his critique of modernity, philosopher Stephen Toulmin argues that modern thought is to purely "theoretical" and would benefit from a more "practical" approach; Joan exemplifies this practicality, which Toulmin calls "post-modern" in the sense of correcting a problem with modernity (11). Besides nationalism, imperialism, and racism, Shaw also connects De Stogumber with another conventional Victorian ideology, domesticity, in recommending that she "stay at home" and do "woman's work" (206). De Stogumber reasons that her "rebellion against England" must be based in rebellion against God since English superiority is divinely ordained, thus showing the flaws in this kind of self-interested ideological "reasoning" (186). Then, significantly, he recommends that "it is expedient that one woman die for the people" rather than "infect the whole flock" (186), in an eerie echo of the High Priest Caiphas's words in John 18.14 that it is "expedient that one man should die for the people." His advocacy of scapegoating as tied to nationalism, justified through social Darwinist laws of "God" and "nature," is also an eerie prophecy of Naziism. It is important to notice how De Stogumber recommends the sacrifice of the individual for the good of the group, a sacrifice of the concrete body to an abstract ideology. He is so confident in the rightness of this logic that he claims "I would burn her with my own hands" (186). The claim that he is so committed to her death that he would physically participate in it is ironic because of his change of heart upon actually witnessing violence against the individual. After De Stogumber attends Joan's execution, he is a changed man:

> If I had known, I would have torn her from their hands. You don't know: you haven't seen: it is so easy to talk when you don't know. You madden yourself with words: you damn yourself because it feels grand to throw oil on the flaming hell of your own temper. But when it is brought home to

> you; when you see the thing you have done; when it is blinding your eyes, stifling your nostrils, tearing your heart, then—then— (215)

He has experienced the consequences of his ideas with his senses. De Stogumber lacked imagination to understand ahead of time "what it would be like" (214). He later calls the burning of Joan a "great shock"; Shaw's language almost seems to explicitly refer to shell shock, to the trauma of witnessing dehumanizing violence that haunts a person forever, as in the case of Septimus Smith in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. De Stogumber unexpectedly becomes a compassionate man because of Joan's suffering, so he is a paradoxical modernist saint as well. His sanctification begins with extreme self-criticism, the knowledge that he is not a saint, and in the same stroke he renounces his nationalistic and personal pride, talking about himself in the third person at first: "There was only one Englishman there who disgraced his country; and that was the mad dog, de Stogumber…Let them torture him. Let them burn him.…I am no better than Judas: I will hang myself" (216). When he appears in the dream-vision in the Epilogue, de Stogumber reiterates that "you must see" what "cruelty" looks like "and then you are redeemed and saved" (223). Such trauma develops compassion which leads to salvation and possibly sainthood. As Wilfred Owen so famously states in the Preface to his *Poems,* "The Poetry is in the pity" (192); in *Saint Joan,* the Inquisitor significantly admonishes his fellow officials at Joan's trial to "cast out pity" but to use "mercy" and above all strive to enact "justice" (202). "Mercy" and "justice" are the official legal and theological concepts the church *is* striving to adhere to, but Shaw juxtaposes them with the absent and superior emotion of "pity."

Joan is also a nationalist, but in contrast to De Stogumber's prideful nationalism, her nationalism is earthy, a nationalism of the land, informed by her intuitive connection

to the soil as a farmer's daughter and by the commonsense fact that the French speak French and therefore should be allowed their own nation, France. Her nationalism is not an abstract ideology or prejudice on behalf of one's race or *ethnos*, but a desire to be left alone within one's natural physical boundaries, a limited rather than imperialistic nationalism, a nationalism located in time and place rather than seeking globalization and universality.[1] In the type of nationalism Shaw promotes through Joan, he is modernist rather than modern, focusing on the ordinary folks and on individual identity rather than on capitalist conquest justified as a superior nation's manifest destiny. Shaw's personal brand of nationalism was linked to his Irishness: "as an Irishman, he claimed to have learned from experience: that every nation has a natural right to self-government and that no army of occupation…can, in itself, be otherwise than pernicious" (Searle 118). Shaw saw the right kind of nationalism as linked to individual freedom; the first step in establishing freedom is for the individual genius, like Joan, to "destroy" systems in the way of "personal liberty," and the second is to "enlarge" that freedom into "national liberty" (Reddy 58). He also had a positive and even religious view of the state's ability to create an evolved society; instead of the church, the state was the new "instrument of the will of God" (Searle 118). Searle argues that Shaw saw Joan's religious "vocation" as "political radicalism" and "revolutionary political action" which leads to "salvation"; this fit with his idea that human effort leads to spiritual salvation and as he said, that "man must be his own Providence" (Searle 118-9). The idea of a *political* rather than a religious vocation is a modern one, of using the state to accomplish the divine will rather than the church or more otherworldly spiritual practices like prayer, fasting, and poverty. Christ said, "my kingdom is not of this world" and also taught his disciplies to say, "thy

kingdom come," a prayer which Shaw rejected as passive. This Marxist idea of inevitable progress and improvement on earth is not only in conflict with scriptural understandings of God's kingdom, but also with the medieval idea of Christendom which ended with the rise of Protestantism and nationalism.

Even though Shaw wants to recover an understanding of the medieval mind, he seems to reject the ideal of Christendom in the character of Cauchon, the French churchman who resists Joan's new ideas about natural divisions between nations, warning that it will lead to Christ being dethroned and the nation being exalted. His warning seems melodramatic and reactionary in light of our modern belief in the separation of church and state, but the rise of secular states and the loss of Catholic unity in Europe did lead to the loss of many vocations by replacing them with secular jobs. The difference with Shaw is that he saw Joan as fighting against Christendom and for her nation, and he was not worried about Christ being dethroned by Joan's nationalism—this was an inevitable evolution. For Shaw, one did not have to be marked by the cross or the name of Christ or blessed by the Christian church to be doing God's will or fulfilling a spiritual vocation, since the idiosyncratic images and terms of particular religions did not matter,[2] preferring the "Life Force" to a God with a "personality" (Smith 338-9), and since religious institutions are inevitably legalistic, desiccated, and stale. Inspired, energetic, courageous individuals working in the secular state could therefore do God's will without knowing it, as long as they allow natural evolution, have a sense of higher purpose, and avoid moral absolutism and military conquest. Joan is a secular saint, then, a saint devoted to her nation, the land, and its people, a saint of secular political action rather than of the church or Christendom.

In the cast of Joan's persecutors, de Stogumber represents modern nationalism (and conversion from such ideology), while Cauchon represents sincere religion in his desire to uphold the church's teachings, and thus the best attempts of institutional religion at doing good. Just as Shaw uses the figure of Joan, the individual genius, to challenge the institution of the modern nation state and its violence, he also uses her to challenge the institution of the church, showing the inaccuracy of its doctrinal and spiritual judgments. After Joan's death, he defends his actions as "just," "merciful," and "faithful to my light" (220). He does not claim to have shown pity: he refers to the important religious virtues of justice, mercy, and faithfulness, but also reveals the limits of "his light," that is, of understanding mediated through the teachings of the church, which in the play are legal teachings lacking humanity. Cauchon, upon learning of de Stogumber's newfound humility and compassion after witnessing Joan's burning, actually rebukes de Stogumber by asking why meditation on Christ's passion had not already provided the same redemptive awareness of suffering (223). De Stogumber explains that reading of suffering and even seeing pictures of it is not enough, showing that his imagination was undeveloped. De Stogumber's comments seem to question knowledge that is mediated by books, words, and images as less immediate and less real than personal experience, as if education has actually distanced people from humanity because texts are dead. Significantly, Joan cannot read or write. Shaw explicitly veers from orthodoxy and seems to create a new religion in which compassion, identification in another's suffering, is the source of redemption: de Stogumber replies to Cauchon's rebuke, explaining, "it was not our Lord that redeemed me, but a young woman who I saw actually burned to death" (223). The individual's sufferings are more important than

the seemingly distant historical occurrence and the seemingly abstract spiritual purpose of Christ's death; in contrast, actually witnessing "cruelty" burns it into the imagination. This is perhaps the reason that cults of the saints grew up in the first place and why their stories remained resonant even in the modernist era to a non-orthodox writer like Shaw. Their stories provide individual examples and concrete details of what heroic spirituality looks like for ordinary people, and they provide sufferings and virtues to identify with. Cauchon is disturbed by this new religion of humanity and compassion as it seems to stray from Christ and necessitate violence: "Must then a Christ perish in torment in every age to save those that have no imagination?" (223).

Lack of imagination, the lack of ability to see what cruelty really is, thus causes violence, and it seems inevitable that the saint figure must provide this picture of cruelty through rejection and suffering that becomes imprinted on the imaginations of witnesses. Bystanders are brought to faith through witnessing the saint's suffering. De Stogumber fits into this category except that he seems to be drawn away from orthodox Christianity by his experience of concrete human suffering. However, his progression is saintly in that he moves from big ideas such as nationalism and Englishness to a life of littleness. Upon reintroducing himself to the men he conducted Joan's trial with, he emphasizes his weakness and smallness: "Only a poor old harmless English rector" to a "small village with a few simple people….and I am able to do a little good" (223). This humility is reminiscent of St. Therese of Lisieux, the French woman who died in 1897, was canonized not long after Joan in 1925, and who defined sainthood as a "little way," the way of a "little flower" who tells "very simply and fully of all that God has done for it" rather than complaining of its limitations (21). The weak people of the world are "His

wild flowers whose homeliness delights Him" (20). Their weakness allows him to show his kindness as it "is love's nature to humble itself" and he humbles himself to dwell with them (20). Therese's emphasis on the homeliness and littleness of the saint and of Christ echoes the English medieval saint Julian of Norwich. "The little way" is perhaps a uniquely feminine spirituality that resonated as a contrast with the modernist era's nationalist, capitalist, and evolutionary ideologies that emphasized growth and strength. The emphasis on personal weakness is universal to the modernist saint portrayals I am examining, and it always serves to emphasize divine grace and divine intervention. Reluctant and unlikely converts are common in these narratives and the radical, unexpected, almost irrational nature of their conversions also implies the action of the supernatural or at least the super-rational. In the case of De Stogumber, he remains a Catholic and a priest but becomes a very different kind: he is converted from ideas to people, the universal to the individual, from laws to "love" (223). His conversion can be considered one of Joan's miracles, and in him we see the answer to the violence of the modern era, violence which many had only recently witnessed a few years before the play was written and performed.

### *Irrationalism and the Saint*

Besides the miraculous conversions of the skeptical Robert de Beaudricort and the nationalist John de Stogumber, the other major "miracle" of the play is of course Joan's voices, the three saints that tell her to go into battle. Although Shaw does not seem to believe Joan actually heard voices, again, this fantastic element of the story has symbolic resonance and shows why the supernatural aspects of hagiography appealed to modernist authors, even when they did not believe in them literally. The three saints Joan hears

were all popular in France at the time (Margolis 806). St. Michael the warrior angel was a protector of France and its royalty; St. Margaret of Antioch was a heroic virgin with skills at "verbal combat" in resisting a suitor; and St. Catherine of Alexandria won over the Roman Emperor's pagan counselors in debate (806). Both women were martyred, and Margaret was known for dressing as a man to protect her virginity (806-7). Joan had also rejected a marriage her parents arranged for her, so she had much in common with all three saints. Because the information about Margaret and Catherine is mainly in the form of folklore with few historical records from their lifetimes, some think that their very existence is mythical, let alone such miracles as Catherine's severed neck emitting milk instead of blood after her decapitation (Farmer 95). Farmer attributes her popularity to the colorful aspects of her "legend," such as being tortured on a wheel, "strongly appealed to the imagination of artists" (95). Margaret also appealed to the visual sense of medieval church artists because she escaped from a dragon who swallowed her by bursting out of its stomach (345). Since Joan was illiterate, it is significant that these saints had visually vivid stories of suffering that Joan might have learned of through images that captured her imagination. These incidents in the hagiography of her saints are also interesting in their parallels with Joan, who was also a staunch virgin from all accounts, also skilled at verbal sparring with more educated and powerful men, also a cross-dresser, also a warrior, and also a martyr executed very publicly. These connections seem to imply that these particular saints were chosen by Joan or her hagiographers because they appealed to the symbolic imagination.

Did Shaw consider Joan's voices real, either factually or essentially? Since all of what was known of these saints came from folklore, scripture, or visual art, Joan's belief

in them certainly highlights her very medieval, rather than modern, notion of truth: hagiography does not need to be provable or feasible to produce real faith, so it has much in common with modernism and its interest in imagination rather than strict realism.

Another passage in the play illustrates Shaw's modernist attitude toward the voices and what he meant by Joan's insistence that God speaks in the imagination. Joan tells Charles that he is able to hear the voices too if he "sat in the field in the evening listening for them" and "listened to the thrilling of the bells in the air after they stop ringing" (190). Joan's dependence on natural or aesthetic experience to hear the voices of the saints seems to imply that they are not literally speaking to her, but that in some real way they speak through her sensory experience of the field and the angelus bells. The way that Joan perceives the "voices" emphasizes not only that natural and aesthetic experience is necessary for her to hear them, but also the necessity of leisure, which is surprising in light of Shaw's religious philosophy, which heavily emphasized work and action. Her insistence on embracing leisure, enjoying nature, and really listening to the ubiquitous church bells is reminiscent of other modernist characters (such as Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway) who resist the labor-dominated, mechanical, dehumanizing tendencies of modernity and learn to fully experience the sensuality of moments in an almost spiritual way.

Shaw's attitude toward her voices reveals both his modern skepticism and his particularly modernist mysticism. William Searle's research and Shaw's Preface indicate that he explained Joan's voices as the product of a scientifically explainable imaginativeness combined with the culture in which she grew up, a culture which encouraged her to think of saints as real. In this, Shaw likens her to a creative writer with

a highly developed imagination (Searle 107). As Shaw writes in the Preface, "sane people" have "hallucinations" because "the mind's eye is more or less a magic lantern" (19). He based his theories on the work of Sir Francis Galton, who explained that visualizers have a unique perception of reality, creating "fanciful perceptions of objects actually seen" (Searle 104). Shaw wanted to give Joan's voices a scientific explanation, but he also wanted to emphasize the importance of subjective, fanciful perspective in giving new color to reality, making Joan analogous to a mystical visionary but removing the religious or supernatural aspect from the process. In praising her abilities as a visualizer, he privileges visual and imaginative thought over verbal and rational thought. Shaw thought that the key fact about Joan's voices is that they gave her sound, commonsense advice, so she was logically, obviously, not insane, even though the voices were not supernatural. The idea that irrational or imagined revelations can be rational in content and have a scientific explanation seems paradoxical. As Shaw wrote, "She saw imaginary saints just as some other people see imaginary diagrams and landscapes with numbers dotted around them, and are thereby able to perform feats of memory and arithmetic impossible to non-visualizers" (Preface 18). "Visualizers" are people whose "mind's eye is more or less a magic lantern" (19).

Searle identifies three criteria Shaw used to determine whether "hallucinations" were "sane": 1) they "transcend the limitations" of "perception"; 2) they are superpersonal rather than only self-interested in motive; and 3) "will not unfit one for constructive action in the real world" (110). The first criterion shows that Shaw is interested in what is beyond the five senses, empirical observation, and scientific positivism, all of which limit the kinds of knowledge they allow humankind. Shaw's idea

of Joan's revelations accords with his idea of artistic inspiration; he claimed that the writing process is also inexplicable and relies on "inspiration," which brings new knowledge to the revelator. Such knowledge cannot be explained as arising from a biological source and is not merely "guided by principles" (Searle 105, 107). Shaw believed that Joan's new knowledge, her "wisdom" about martial and political matters, was evidently miraculous because her humble background could not explain it (105). In this belief, Shaw went beyond Galton; Shaw wanted a more "mystical account" of Joan's voices that would better suit the twentieth century, which he believed had moved beyond purely scientific and thus limited explanations (105). Shaw believed that the modernist period was uniquely "mystical" as opposed to the rational nineteenth century.

The second criterion for Shaw's evaluating "hallucinations" hints at a saintly motive that must underlie the genius's inspiration: the visualizer must have a desire to serve humanity. In other instances, Shaw argued against the concept of selfless duty, believing that the "superpersonal" action actually coincides with pleasure and self-respect rather than constraint and self-denial; an example is when his Joan chooses martyrdom out of a self-serving desire to preserve her freedom and avoid being cut off from the pleasures of nature. Self-respecting behavior can also serve humanity in Shaw's conception, which is significant in its rejection of the Darwinian survival drive as the primary motivation of life. Shaw thought Darwinism only justified the selfishness of capitalism by making it seem "scientific" and also that explaining all human behavior as survival-oriented saps the "purpose" from the "universe," making men "cowards" and life "meaningless" (Searle 100). Darwinism cannot explain martyrdom if one assumes that the martyr is a superior sort of person, which Shaw did—because the martyr's choices do

not lead to social success or physical survival. He believed "metaphysics," not just science, is needed to explain the motives behind such super-personal actions (100).

Shaw's third criterion for evaluating "hallucinations" shows his interest in human effort and work as religious activities. His concept of humanity, even in a religious sense, as primarily defined by work, is, according to Pieper, a uniquely modern definition. Defining man by his work radically differs from the medieval concept of man which assumed that being human also necessitated participation in divine worship, religious holidays, and other leisure time. Pieper argues that "leisure" was "the basis of culture." Although Joan did insist leisure was necessary to listen for her voices, making her something of a contemplative, the voices not only did not make her unfit for action, they made her more active, manly, courageous, and effective than anyone in France, which for Shaw proves the rationality of her voices' messages.[3] In his speech "The Religion of the British Empire," he explained how important work was to his concept of religion: "If you don't do his work it won't be done; if you turn away from it, if you sit down and say, 'Thy will be done,' you might as well be the most irreligious person on the face of the earth" ("The Religion of the British Empire" 6-7). Trust and resignation are not virtues. He goes on to refer to doing God's "work" as "business" and a corrective to "all that religion which is made an excuse and a cloak for doing nothing" (7). This is in contrast to Milton's conclusion in Sonnet XIX that "They also serve who only stand and waite," a comforting reassurance that even the unproductive or incapacitated can serve God, who already has "thousands at his bidding" with "no rest" and "doth not need/ Either man's work or his own gifts" (9-14).

Shaw also did not like the idea that God would intervene on one side of a war because it seemed unfair and inspired nationalistic presumption rather than action; as Dunois says in the play, God must "be fair to your enemy, too" and "he who plays the war game best will win" if we do not "trust to God to do the work we should do ourselves" (191). Human actions, like Joan's, could be inspired by the divine will, but they are done by humans themselves, not aided by supernatural miracles, which Shaw called God's version of "cheating at cards" ("Belloc" 310). In this philosophy, Shaw seems strangely to embrace something akin to a capitalist and Darwinist ethic of survival of the fittest, or at least a middle class work ethic, and reveals his discomfort with grace, providence, and miracles. Rejecting reliance on the supernatural, he critiques the excesses of religious credulity, while in other ways he critiques the excesses of rationalist skepticism.

One of the paradoxes of *Saint Joan* is that she receives her wisdom through irrational means but the wisdom is "commonsense," while the hyper-rational legal principles of her persecutors are devoid of commonsense. Shaw criticized rationalism at length in his Preface, defined as the treatment of scientific principles as new dogmas that could be just as irrational and dehumanizing, in fact more so, than religious dogmas. In his 1939 play *In King Charles's Golden Days,* he attacked the primacy of science and the assumption that it is the best and only way to understand nature and the universe, arguing that art is a better way to explain nature (Searle 109). "God does not own a ruler," he writes, for "the straight line is a dead thing" and the cosmos is not mere "mechanical gadgetry" but an "inspired piece of craftsmanship" made by God, who is an artist, not a "draughtsman" (108). Creativity is "organic" and marked by "freedom and spontaneity"

rather than by neat principles and calculated control (108). This attitude reflects a modernist aesthetic, an interest in returning to nature and resisting the effects of mechanization, industrialization, and theories like Darwinism that seemed to explain everything but were actually limited in scope and problematic in their implications.

Along with looking to art rather than science, Shaw and other religious Vitalists and literary modernists looked to myth as a non-scientific, irrational way to explain life. One Vitalist theologian said that the Genesis myth is "the most scientific document we possess at present," while not believing it was literally true (qtd. in Searle 111). Such a statement recalls Oscar Wilde's longing for a clergy that believes less in science and more in scripture, not because it is true but precisely because it is a "lie." Other modernists, of course, like T. S. Eliot, were interested in myth through James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Jesse Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. The imagination that creates and interprets myth is unlimited by the constraints of scientific principles and observable phenomena. While considering scripture as a myth or a lie is unorthodox, it shows an interest in alternative ways of gaining knowledge, especially imaginative means, that is akin to religious belief in not requiring rational proof. Shaw pointed out the logical flaw in trusting only reason as a source for knowledge and wisdom, since ratiocination cannot produce new ideas, but only help understand them; "inspiration" must come first, then "ratiocination," as with Joan's voices and subsequent rational explanations of her military strategies (109).

Indeed, through the character of the military commander Dunois, Joan's comrade-in-arms, Shaw takes great pains to emphasize the rationality of what the voices tell Joan, even though they represent an irrational means of knowing that is not scientific but

religious and artistic. This complex paradox is Shaw's attempt to show the proper uses and limits of reason and to critique the excesses of rationalism. Joan explains the rationale behind her military plans to Dunois, a pragmatic cynic and skeptic who sees the sense of her advice and becomes friends with her after her presence supposedly changes the wind's direction. Although the change in the wind could be a mere coincidence, it fulfills Cauchon's practical definition of a miracle, an event which creates faith: as Dunois says to Joan, "our hearts changed when you came" (191). Dunois's faith is yet another of Joan's conversion miracles; Shaw is very interested in the process by which rationalist skeptics might develop faith, which recalls one of his main criticisms of modernity: the lack of religious faith. As Pericles Lewis notes, "conversion" is a common motif in modernist literature. While there is not always a conversion to orthodox faith, the trend demonstrates an interest in mystical experience and the radical changes it can effect, despite the lack of rational explanation for them.

After their initial victory at Orleans, which Dunois attributes to Joan, he becomes cynical, warning that she is becoming hotheaded and that they need to realize "when we are beaten" (191). Joan's rejoinder is "You never know when you are victorious; that is a worse fault" (191). Here she, and Shaw, critique rationalists as tending to believe the worst, assuming that being rational means that there is no purpose in life, for example, or that fighting is in vain. The rationalist mindset assumes that a pessimistic worldview is one that just faces the facts. Joan's critique of Dunois's assumptions is interesting because it introduces a concept of faith in the efficacy of one's actions: her faith is actually more rational and more open-minded than cynicism because it allows for the possibility of good as well as for the inevitability of bad things, and is based in

commonsense logic. The leaders of France are defeated and joyless, lacking faith in their purpose and their ability, and these are the two things Joan miraculously believes in; it is her confidence that seems miraculous because it is unexplainable. Cynics believe they are scientific, but Joan challenges the accuracy of such perceptions: "I shall have to make you carry looking-glasses in battle to convince you that the English have not cut off all your noses" (191).

*Joan and Gender*

In her biography of the real Joan, saint historian Nadia Margolis notes that all of the saints Joan heard, even Margaret and Catherine, were somewhat "manly" (806). And in Shaw's play, France needs and lacks a decisive, courageous, confident, "manly" person to lead it. The fact that Joan was a woman emphasizes the miracle that was Joan and her military victories: the paradox of a manly woman, like a holy sinner implies divine involvement or some other "irrational" explanation by overturning the conventional, the expected, and the logical. Shaw certainly creates a France without naturally occurring male heroes: as Joan says, "There are plenty of other women to do [woman's work]; but there is nobody to do my work" (206). Theirs seems to be a society without men, just as Evelyn Waugh's post-Great War society in *Brideshead Revisited* seems to have few honorable men and certainly no meaningful vocation for men.

Joan does the opposite of what she is supposed to do as a woman, which is part of the reason for her persecution. As in the mythical hagiographical image of Margaret emerging from a dragon or Catherine from a torture wheel, this rejection of marriage and sexuality is Joan's assertion of freedom; in the traditional saintly sense, she frees herself from the world, and in the modernist sense, from bourgeois conventions. Similarly, she

chooses freedom from an actual prison by choosing to be burnt instead. Besides remaining virginal and choosing death, the other way that Joan frees herself is by wearing men's clothes. There is a sense in the play that identity does not correspond to physical facts of the body and sex; it is something in the soul, transcendent and free, while the body is bound by limitations.

Joan has feminine and maternal aspects as well, but they are metaphorical. Since she is physically and literally virginal and amenorrheic, she is free to be a mother to all, as the Virgin Mary is sometimes described. Besides the miracle of the eggs, which is obviously maternal, there are also hints that she becomes Dunois's mother, calling him "child" and wishing she could "nurse" him (174, 188). Joan is also associated with the Virgin Mary: Dunois addresses a kingfisher as "Mary in the blue snood," praying for a change in the wind, right before Joan arrives and the wind does change (174). Both birds and the wind are free, and biblical symbols of the Holy Spirit, and here Shaw associates Joan with both, and also with femininity as a free and wild force: Dunois calls the wind "wanton," "willful," "womanish," "false," and an "English harlot" (173). His page describes the kingfisher's "flash of blue" as "frightfully jolly," and wants to actually catch and trap the "lovely" bird until Dunois rebukes him (173). Joan, who is jolly and lovely like the bird, cannot and should not be caged, and it seems Shaw is replacing Dunois's initially negative descriptors of feminine freedom with the delightful image of the bird. Charles A. Berst points out the richness of Shaw's poetic techniques in this scene and his similarity to T. S. Eliot in using fertility myths. In the course of the scene, Dunois progresses from addressing the wind as "wanton" to connecting "the wind and the kingfisher to the Virgin and Joan, fusing nature and the mystical," thus rejecting

Shakespeare's harlot Joan (Berst 114). Shaw was conscious that Joan had been wrongly presented as a "harlot" by Shakespeare and believed this was because of his fear of offending "English patriotism" (Preface 23). Joan's sexuality was maligned, perhaps, because her celibacy and manliness challenged polite notions of women's proper roles and because she challenged English prerogatives. Shaw replaces the association of Joan with sexual deviancy with one of innocent, playful freedom from convention, a typically modernist theme. According to Berst, the kingfisher scene "highlights her androgyny" (115) by associating her with both "male and female fertility symbols" (117). Androgyny is a particularly modernist phenomenon because of the desire to reject Victorian conventions and because traditional understandings of gender identity and corresponding vocations were fragmented. Other modernist literature, particularly the prophet Tiresias in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, also presents androgynous figures as a sign of the spiritual desolation and cultural infertility of modernity. Another similarity between Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* and Shaw's play is the prominence of androgynous and celibate saint figures who reject the conventional gender roles offered to them by society. These saint figures also fail to reproduce, but their sacrifice or exclusion bring about spiritual fecundity in the end.

Berst argues that Shaw's play surpasses Eliot's poem by providing an added hope of "healing, spirit, and transcendence"; he sees Shaw's Joan as the "questing knight" of the Grail legend who must restore an "impotent" king of a wasteland, the Dauphin whose virility she challenges, asking why he will not "gird on the sword" (121, 118).[4] Indeed, by the Epilogue, the Dauphin is a changed man who fights and leads: he brags to Joan, as to a mother: "Do you know, I actually lead my army out and win battles? Down into the

moat up to my waist in mud and blood….Like you" (*Saint Joan* 219). Joan's response is the response of a mother, or father: "Did I make a man of thee after all, Charlie?" (219). Berst notes that Joan's association with birds, wind, and land is feminine, while her prominent use of the sword and baton is masculine (118-9). Masculine leadership must exist for the land to be fertilized again, and Joan both provides and inspires it. Both men whom Joan rouses into action, Dunois and Charles, are known as bastards and their legitimacy is questioned, so having a saintly virginal mother adopt them restores a sense of spiritual, if not physical, purity to their identity. Joan treats the Dauphin with familiarity and a scolding tone as if she is his mother; his own mother has called his divine right into question, but Joan asserts it. In the Epilogue, Charles has a picture of the Virgin Mary near his bed, a new mother for him, right before Joan appears to him.

Along with virginity, a mark of the medieval saint, and androgyny, a mark of the anti-conventional modernist, the other way in which Joan transcends the Victorian feminine role which for Shaw represented convention is through clothing. She chooses to wear men's clothes so she can do men's work and "in every action repudiate the conventional character of a woman" (Preface 20). Shaw states that if she "had not been one of those 'unwomanly women,' she might have been canonized much sooner," although "it is not necessary to wear trousers and smoke big cigars to live a man's life"—masculinity is a matter of "manag[ing] [one's] own affairs and other people's," not of clothes (20). Throughout the play, Shaw emphasizes the meaninglessness of clothes as signs of identity. When the modern clerical "gentleman" appears in the Epilogue, the medieval men tease him for his "comic dress" while he remarks on their "fancy dress," showing that such markers, which these men and their society put so much stock in, are

only meaningful relative to their time period and in other eras would lose their meaning altogether. They are not truly or universally significant. Dunois remarks, "All dress is fancy dress, is it not, except our natural skins" (224). In Scene 5, the Archbishop accuses Joan of coming "clothed with the virtue of humility" when she is meek and reverent upon their first meeting, but then later staining it with "the sin of pride" when she becomes more outspoken (190); it is actually the opposite: Joan is actually humble, but appears prideful because of her confidence, which the archbishop thinks is unjustified and would be quelled by proper humility. The clothing he speaks of is metaphorical, but speaks to the deceptive nature not only of literal clothing, but also of seemingly apparent virtues and sins, of notions of respectability and heresy. Clothing covers up natural reality; it is a way of projecting a public image and of hiding or stifling private fears, as when T. S. Eliot's J. Alfred Prufrock wears decisive, tasteful clothes in public, a "collar mounting firmly to the chin, / My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin" to compensate for his thinning hair and body, his weakness, and indecisiveness (4).

### *The Dauphin as Cowardly Saint*

Charles the Dauphin is a character like Prufrock, a case in which the clothes do not make the man. Joan both takes his royal identity seriously and refuses to treat him with obsequious propriety, seeing the man beyond the trappings and proposing that he should act according to his identity by leading his nation in battle and being crowned in Rheims cathedral. He is far from accomplishing the first when Joan first encounters him. "What is your crown worth without your capital?, " she asks him, which is a play on the occupied capital, Paris, and the etymology of "capital," from the Latin "head" (*OED*). What is clothing worth without the body inside? What is the symbol worth without what

it represents—your rightful land and your rightful headship? Joan can see through pretentious clothing, but also through ordinary clothing. In order to test Joan's prophetic powers, Charles disguises himself upon their first meeting, and she finds him in a crowd of ordinary people, recognizing "the blood royal" (168). The stylish Duchess de la Tremouille is pretending to be the queen for the ruse, and she laughs at Joan's hair, her lack of fashion, and her lack of femininity, a rejection from polite society that bothers Joan not at all (167-8). As Shaw says in stage directions, the Duchess is "pretending to be Queen," and her snobbery about styles only highlights the superficial nature of her authority (and how beholden she is to the ephemeral trends Joan transcends) (167). Her husband also "pretends to command the army," in Charles's words, and he notes, "She thinks she is the queen" (169). They are pretenders not just for the ruse but also as heads of state. The power of upwardly mobile social climbers is a sham undergirded by their propriety and stylishness, two qualities Joan lacks. As Shaw says of Joan in the Preface, "She knew nothing of iron hands in velvet gloves: she just used her fists" (22).

Charles has been letting la Tremouille and the Archbishop, the military state and the church hierarchy, run the government, but Joan wants him to take his rightful authority, and Shaw makes Charles a modernist saint figure as well. Is Shaw upholding the divine right of kings? It is significant that Joan calls Charles "Gentle little Dauphin" (168) and "Charlie" and also that he only claims to be a good "fellow in his little way," echoing the language of de Stogumber after his conversion (221). Unlike the pretenders, there is an unexpected humility and littleness in Charles's divinely ordained power because he does not manipulate or magnify the appearance of power, just as Joan does not particularly strive for the appearance of obedience or humility to appear saintly or

feminine. Charles also does not have the pretensions to goodness, pretensions that prove dangerous, of the ambitious men that perform Joan's trial. He does not claim to be brave, either, and finds armor and swords "too heavy" (169). He has no pretensions to manliness and no insecurities about his power in the way that ambitious men do, because the authority is either his, if he is legitimate and is crowned, or it is not, and he does not try to change it either way. He "take[s] the world as it is," unlike the "good" men who are always trying to change and improve it, "trying to turn the world upside down"; Charles "keep[s] [his] nose pretty close to the ground" (221). Shaw seems almost nostalgic for a medieval monarchial system. His Dauphin is weak and ridiculous but paradoxically has power that cannot be taken away, similar to the miraculous grace given to saints, which in modernist hagiography is a persistent presence and identity that even endures personal failings and social rejection. In the reality and permanence of his authority and identity, he parallels Eliot's Thomas, whose spiritual authority as Archbishop is shown to be more enduring than his power as Chancellor. Charles is unlike other powerful characters in the play that seem to represent the bourgeois middle class in both their social climbing and interest in appearing good and virtuous. They overreach while Charles is only the "little" Dauphin. He, like Robert, Dunois, and de Stogumber, is an unlikely convert; he becomes a warrior, which is surely a miracle. He does not "pretend" to run the army or be king as le Tremouille does and thus provides a glimpse at how sainthood might look in the wielding of earthly power: he does not seek power, he only receives it when it is given to him and does eventually fulfill his vocation as king because of Joan's miraculous influence. Charles has no pretensions to sophistication, goodness, or changing the world. Rather, he sees his role as a "little way."

He does not aspire to masculine power or see himself as a patriarch, and in this littleness he is a modernist saint. Shaw even makes the reference to sainthood explicit with Charles. Charles lists off all the roles he does not want: father, son, warrior, king (171). "I don't want to be a son: especially a son of St. Louis," he protests; "I want to be just what I am" (171). Shaw again emphasizes the real or natural human being inside the clothes or roles; Charles is no pretender, he is the real thing. It is his very denial of his fitness for royalty and sainthood, combined in the figure of St. Louis, that qualifies him as king and saint.

Joan's support for Charles's kingship is also markedly populist and related to his sartorial humility; she again brings up the issue of clothing, wondering why he is not dressed "properly" for a king, but assuring him that the sacramental anointing is more important: "Dressing up don't fill empty noddle. I know the people: the real people that make thy bread for thee; and I tell thee they count no man king of France until the holy oil has been poured on his hair…" (170). Charles explains, "I should look ugly anyhow," even if dressed like a king; he lacks vanity, like Joan, which highlights the existence of real authority rather than the ability to create an image. He wants to put off coronation because he cannot afford the clothes for his wife, thinking that a humble appearance disqualifies him (171). Charles's mention of his ugliness also connects him to the ordinary earthy people like Joan who will support his authority as king. His mention of ugliness is another modernist paradox, that of celebrating ugliness. Authority comes from the people and the land, not from beauty or clothing. Joan as representative of the people who are close to the land and of the land itself, brings strength to Charles: "I come from the land, and have gotten my strength working on the land; and I tell thee that the

land is thine to rule righteously and keep God's peace in, and not to pledge at the pawnshop as a drunken woman pledges her children's clothes" (171). Joan fulfills Marx's ideal of the worker who is not alienated from his labor and thus not commodified, and she critiques the unnatural, dehumanizing effects of a capitalist economy that would basically sell off land that naturally belongs to France and the French people by refusing to defend it and seeking personal gain and safety instead. Shaw's concept of the divine right of kings is more a concept of the populist right of kings; Charles is a natural part of the French people with a divine vocation or calling that cannot be escaped, as much as he would like to: as Joan says, "thou must face what God puts on thee" (170). If he fulfills his vocation, as God's "steward," "the very clay of France will become holy" (171). Earthiness, and earth, are sanctified. "Common folks understand" what they are really fighting for: "for France and for God" and "the right," not just to play a safe war "game" like "tennis," protected by armor and horses, guided by a sophisticated "art of war" (191-2). Shaw continues the clothing motif: the common people do not expect to be safe because, as Joan says, "they cannot afford armor and cannot buy ransoms; but they followed me half naked into the moat and up the ladder and over the wall" (192). They are fighting for something natural and concrete, for France, its land, and people, while the powerful stay protected by their money and their education, alienated from the land and the people, and do not know or believe they are fighting for anything tangible—only for more capital or the pride of winning. In contrast, common soldiers are like martyrs: "they will give up their lives out of their own hand into the hand of God when they go into battle, as I do" (192). Capitalists fight without real purpose while workers are

viscerally connected to their purpose. This contrast hints at Shaw's views on modern society, which he thought lacked courage and purpose.

### *The English Soldier as Ruffian Saint*

Along with this praise of ordinary soldiers, Shaw repeatedly emphasizes Joan's roguishness, making her an example of R. W. B. Lewis's theory of the picaresque hero as typical of modernism. It is interesting that in the dream-like Epilogue, ultimately her only adherent among all the pious men who appear from beyond the grave is a "ruffian," an average English soldier who is visiting from hell. This is an obvious paradox, the damned devotee, and in his devotion to Joan, he parallels Joan herself in her devotion to the saints. Both Joan and the soldier are ordinary commoners with "commonsense" and a playful sense of humor. Lewis defines the picaresque or roguish saint of late modernism as someone with "a touch of criminality" or "impurity," falling short of "official morality…or any other kind," which is what shows their "trust in life" and what makes them "recognizable" and "persuasive" as characters (32-3). These roguish saints must become "both a saint and a sinner" and not too much of either (33). The picaresque saint is on a journey, as in *Don Quixote* or a medieval romance, and must "outwit" various characters who are obstacles to his progress, also experiencing moments of human fellowship or "communion" along the way (34). Joan is definitely a rogue, accused of criminality and immorality, and a lover of life, even though she accepts martyrdom—she accepts it because she cannot bear to live locked away from the full experience of life and freedom. After her death, Joan has the commonsense idea to resurrect herself since she can work miracles, but her repentant former persecutors admit they do not want her back—they have learned to admire her and regret their role in her death, but they still

cannot accept her and believe her death would only be inevitable again. Shaw implies that those who understand how to live are the ones who will die, which is the same paradoxical coexistence of pervasive death and the "sense of life" that Lewis notes in late modernist novels. Joan is more a rogue than an aesthete or artist like Stephen, although for Shaw, her voices are akin to artistic inspiration. Besides her playful irreverence in calling the Dauphin "Charlie" and Dunois "Bastard," nicknames which emphasize their ordinariness and imperfection as well, Shaw also describes her as answering Cauchon "rather roughly" in stage directions, which is why he accuses her of hubris. Dunois also accuses her of "impetuosity"—she is not cool-headed, rational, calculating, and sophisticated, but brave, wild, and passionate, as one might imagine an average soldier working up courage before battle (190-1).

In many modernist hagiographies, there is a particular type of character who becomes the saint's adherent or devotee, usually a skeptic or a fellow rogue. Joan makes several such converts, but in the final scene of the play, Shaw creates and emphasizes the bond between her and the English soldier, interestingly since she is French and a proto-nationalist. Here the bonds of fellowship between ordinary soldiers transcends nationalism. Nationalism rightly conceived of, for Shaw, is only an outgrowth of ordinary identity and would actually help regular people live at peace. Joan has nothing against English soldiers, only their leaders who are breaking God's law by trying to rule people that are culturally separate, i.e. that speak French and are French. Her brand of nationalism is commonsense, what seems readily apparent —Shaw contrasts it with the prideful imperialist nationalism of de Stogumber, an ideology that creates wars such as the one Joan is fighting and World War I. Joan's nationalism is a folk nationalism and a

connection with the land, land that is intrinsically French because of the ordinary French people who live on and work the land: "She was a thorough daughter of the soil in her peasantlike matter-of-factness and doggedness, and her acceptance of great lords and kings and prelates as such without idolatry or snobbery, seeing at a glance how much they were individually good for" (Preface 21). Allowing English rule of French soil would be artificial and unnatural, and thus against God's will as discerned through commonsense, just as all imperialism is by logical extension.

The English soldier from hell is the first average soldier besides Joan—who combines genius with ordinariness—that we meet in the play. He is only introduced in the last half of the epilogue, but his earthiness and roguishness, combined with his compassion and commonsense, unsophisticated notions of goodness, make him another modernist saint figure. His sufferings again show the impact of abstract political ideology on concrete individual humanity. An unnamed soldier is the kind of person who fights the battles decided on and caused by the powerful, an outsider from good society just as Joan is. He is also a spiritual outsider, being a resident of hell, and he is another paradoxical modernist saint figure in the play. In "The Soldier," who is unnamed so as to represent all ordinary soldiers, Shaw creates an counterpart for Joan whose character emphasizes earthy elements of Joan's character, significant because Shaw, as he explains in the Preface, took pains not to romanticize her as a "heroine" (10-11). When the soldier enters, he is described in stage directions as "rough" and "ruffianly" and is called "villainous" by Dunois the general, who is offended by his boisterous singing (221). His song is significant because it is "improvised" by him, an ordinary man, arising

spontaneously and incomprehensible to authorities, a parallel to the messages Joan brings to authorities:

> Rum tum trumpledum,
> Bacon fat and rumpledum,
> Old Saint mumpledum,
> Pull his tail and stumpledum
> O my Ma—ry Ann! (221)

The song is fun-loving and nonsensical, a love song with a reference to a nonsensical "Saint mumpledum," a touch of irreverence toward the subject of sainthood, the subject of the play. The soldier explains that no "troubadour" or sophisticated, official authority on music taught him the song, which Dunois dismisses as "doggerel." The soldier explains, "We made it up ourselves, as we marched. We were not gentlefolks and troubadours. Music straight out of the heart of the people…" (221). Shaw's soldier's composition and the method of composing is reminiscent of Wordsworth's Romantic theory of poetry as depicting "common life," ordinary men speaking "language really used by men" (1497).[5] Its spontaneity and apparent nonsense also challenge authoritative concepts of dogma and even of art: it arises from the rhythm of marching, so rhythm is the primary element of the song, not words that make logical sense, convey a message, or express an ideology. This art, beyond words and beyond conventional ways of using words, represents a modernist loss of faith in official sources of truth and develops the play's theme of questioning the humanity of the monologic "Law." Even if law is followed scrupulously, with good motives, by educated men, it cannot comprehend someone like Joan, who expresses a brand new truth that is marked by its spontaneous origins. Joan is illiterate after all, and cannot draw on written truth. This emphasis on spontaneity and even on apparent nonsense is also similar to the innovative, experimental

approach to poetry used by modernists like T. S. Eliot, and illustrates Bakhtin's theory of language reification. Joan and the ruffianly soldier, her one true comrade in the end, are uneducated in the intricacies of political and religious dogma, a fact which unexpectedly makes them especially perceptive of truth. They are more imagination-oriented than word-oriented, which makes them artists who rely more on inspiration and innovation than education and tradition. As R. W. B. Lewis argues, the artist is the predominant hero of early modernism because art provided a replacement for the dying elements of culture and a life-affirming answer to the pervasive presence of death. Joan and the English Soldier are artist saints, but this art is not sophisticated; it is ugly, but from the people. The soldier goes on to explain that his song "don't mean anything, you know; but it keeps you marching," making an explicit connection between art, spontaneity, irrationalism, and the ability to continue on with life, as opposed to dogma, which leads to death and would lead to death again if Joan were to return to earth (222). The nonsense song is perhaps a modernist replacement for polished liturgies, sophisticated law, and conventional art.

The English soldier is another of Shaw's paradoxical modernist saints: the saint whose heroic virtue seems to be that he is a champion sinner. He introduces himself to the company of powerful men including Charles, Cauchon, and Dunois, saying "Who asked for a saint?" and insisting he is a "saint" who is "straight from hell" (222). Shaw emphasizes the oxymoron by having Dunois question it: "A saint, and from hell?" The soldier is allowed one day off from hell per year for his single good work in life: he made a cross of sticks and gave it to Joan before she was burned. On his day off, he is a "saint," but after midnight, he goes "back to the only place fit for the likes of me" (222).

He is comically self-deprecating and humble and is also very breezy about hell, calling it a "treat" after fifteen years of war (222). Shaw uses the soldier to not only highlight what the ordinary man suffers in war and to destroy conventional understandings of hell and sainthood, but also to promote a Marxist idea that religion is the "opiate of the masses," that promises of reward and punishment in the afterlife only intoxicate workers so they do not demand change in how they are treated in this life. The socialist element is also evident when the soldier explains why he gave Joan the cross: "She had as good a right to a cross as they had; and they had dozens of them. It was her funeral, not theirs" (222). The cross he makes for her is humble and comes from the land, not purchased, and throughout the play Shaw shows the capitalist economy as a cheapening and deadening influence that alienates people from the land and their labor.

The soldier is in reality good, but not in the eyes of the law. In this sense, he is a parallel to Christ, who was convicted as a criminal by legal authorities and was often criticized based on his perceived violations of legal technicalities. Even though the soldier's good deed earns him a day off from hell, the deed would have been considered a crime by the authorities overseeing Joan's burning. Although he is a ruffian and damned, he is good-hearted in the commonsense, humane way that Shaw is advocating in place of official morality or conventional propriety. The soldier is similar to Christ himself in that his charitable acts were often rebuked by authorities because they broke a rule; in response to this criticism, Christ explained that the natural impulse to help others should not be suppressed in deference to a legal technicality, thus advocating compassion over legalism (Matthew 12.11). Cauchon, the representative of the church throughout the play, represents this legalistic moralism, and his response to hearing of the soldier's good deed

is satirical: instead of praising the soldier's act of mercy, he exclaims, "Wretch! In all the years of your life did you do only one good action?" (222). Shaw is showing the absurdity of an excessive focus on law that quantifies sin and goodness, and is satirizing the entire idea of hell as a punishment for the ruffian or sinner. This soldier is in reality a saint, although the church, represented by Cauchon, calls him a "wretch," mostly for being a rough and ordinary person, it seems. Shaw is calling notions of heaven and hell, goodness and evil, into question: the respectable are not necessarily good, and the sinners are the saints. The soldier's motive and attitude are noteworthy: he does not take much credit for his good deed, calling it the "silliest thing" and demonstrating his humility: "I never thought about it: it came natural like. But they scored it up for me" (222). Morality should arise spontaneously and naturally, like his song, rather than through rational calculation—"thought"—or for legalistic rewards—"scores." The soldier seems to find the idea that anyone credits him with a good deed as laughable as hell itself.

In fact, the soldier likens hell to perpetual drunkenness "without the trouble and expense of drinking"—a working man's dream, apparently (222). He is one several alcoholic saints in modernist literature. It is implied that his earthly life was one of drunken dissipation, and that his afterlife is the same way, i.e. not a punishment. The soldier's description of hell as a pleasant state of drunkenness also relates to a possible Marxist reference. So far from religion being the "opiate of the masses" to keep them intoxicated, deceived, and complacent with their sufferings in earthly life, obedient and submissive to their bourgeois masters in the hope of earning an escape in the afterlife, here the opiate is hell, a release from earthly life rather than the intended threat of punishment. Hell is this saint's reward. The soldier not only accepts hell as his destiny,

he seems to relish it as an irrational, Dionysian release from war, moralism, and institutional religion. The drunkenness that sober, respectable religion warns against becomes a literal "opiate of the masses" instead of religion itself being the opiate. Drunkenness is treated humorously as an understandable escape from earthly life. Shaw creates a modernist religious paradox by making hell a kind of heaven, so that the hope of heaven is no longer the opiate, nor are self-control and sobriety the marks of goodness. Instead, jollity and earthiness, what some consider sin, and the accompanying release from social pretensions, represent freedom from earthly suffering. The soldier's drunkenness is no longer limited by his low wages and lack of power in the capitalistic system, either, making hell seem like a true paradise. Shaw's soldier exemplifies the Dionysian aspects of modernism here, asserting freedom and release from harmful and repressive forces of order by emphasizing the soldier's spontaneous music, ongoing drunkenness, and transcendence of logic. The working man *needs* an opiate and there is no shame in it, but it is not conventional religion that serves as the release.

Even though Shaw's Joan is not particularly self-indulgent, she is very interested in pleasure, finding it in nature and spirituality, and Shaw ends the play with a prominently drunk saint character. This represents a rejection of religion that values self-control and respectability above all else. In his writings, Shaw made connections between spirituality and indulgence. He insisted that he himself was a "voluptuary" despite his own abstinence from alcohol and meat, which was founded in dislike rather than in self-denial (Peters 223). In the Preface, Shaw explains that for Joan, religion was a pleasure: "to her, confession and communion were luxuries beside which the vulgar pleasures of the senses were trash," in contrast to "the formally dutiful people whose

religion was only a task" (28). Here he contrasts Joan to the work-oriented respectable people, who can correspond to the successful bourgeois of the nineteenth-century, again upholding leisure as a contrast to industrial values. Joan's moral purity does not come from self-denial but from self-indulgence, and she is not interested in the propriety or task-orientedness that might lead to upward mobility. She is pursuing spiritual pleasure when she obeys her voices and loves religion, just as she is pursuing pleasure, paradoxically affirming the "sense of life," when she chooses death. Upon being sentenced to life in prison, she explains why she will choose death instead:

> You think that life is nothing but not being stone dead. It is not the bread and water I fear: I can live on bread: when have I asked for more?...But to shut me from the light of the sky and the sight of the fields and flowers; to chain my feet so that I can never again ride with the soldiers nor climb the hills; to make me breathe foul damp darkness, and keep from me everything that brings me back to the love of God…all this is worse than the furnace in the Bible that was heated seven times. I could do without….if only I could still hear the wind in the trees, the larks in the sunshine, the young lambs crying through the healthy frost, and the blessed blessed church bells that send my angel voices floating to me on the wind. But without these things I cannot live… (212)

Searle traces how Shaw appropriates Joan as a hero who dies not for God or out of selfless love, but because of "enlightened self-love" that is paradoxically also "disinterested" (143). Shaw's saint "makes a merit of personal pride" unlike the typical Christian saint (144). Joan's martyrdom is actually an act of self-fulfillment, especially because in Shaw's play she chooses it over a constrained, inferior life of imprisonment, afraid of a life of sensory and aesthetic deprivation, a life not worth living for her. Her recantation of her recantation, Searle points out, is a "reaffirmation" of "life" (133), defining what kind of life is worthwhile. Joan fulfills R. W. B. Lewis's description of the late modernist hero who is searching for the "sense of life," what it means to live fully

and in the moment. In this way, she fits with other modernist saints whose seeming self-interest is pure and leads to sanctity.

A desire for self-fulfillment or pleasure seems contradictory to the ascetic ideal of the virgin, martyr, clerical, and monastic saints, but Joan's love of spiritual pleasure enables her self-denial and martyrdom. She is not gritting her teeth; she is pursuing happiness. Shaw made it clear that he detested duty-oriented Victorian concepts of religion, which is why he denies that self-denial is a virtue. Shaw saw the excessively competitive spirit of Victorian capitalism as dehumanizing. Those who step out of the rat race to pursue happiness are more human but appear immoral or dysfunctional. Shaw saw people like Joan as participants in the "evolution" of the human race—i.e. improving society and our understanding of how to live, not evolution in the sense of survival of the fittest, since Joan obviously could not survive. Even though Shaw is not an orthodox believer, his renewed focus on the humanizing, pleasurable aspects of spiritual sacrifice and martyrdom is a balance to the excesses of Victorian religion and a return to a medieval focus on spiritual happiness rather than work and duty. In a paradox that seems almost Wildean, Shaw thought that "temptation and inspiration mean the same thing" (qtd. in Searle 131), so following one's natural inclination, what is sometimes called temptation, is actually the path to spiritual enlightenment. In contrast, a religion that emphasizes self-denial, duty, sobriety, and respectability, is against nature and will never work—in fact, it is almost mechanical, part of the dehumanizing tendency of capitalism, since it is a mere cover for bourgeois selfishness. Shaw is interested in the idea of the Puritan, like Shakespeare's Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, as selfish, greedy, and competitive underneath a cover of moral discipline and scriptural orthodoxy.

After explaining the pleasures of perpetual drunkenness in the afterlife, the English Soldier continues to paradoxically redefine hell as a holy and good place when he kneels to Joan, saying "The wicked out of hell praise thee, because thou hast shewn them that the fire that is not quenched is a holy fire" (226). The wicked are not wicked at all if they revere a saint. Joan is a renegade type of saint that the wicked can revere and still remain rebels. The soldier equates hellfire with "holy fire," biblically a symbol of zeal, purification, and the just vengeance of God. Instead of being burned by hellfire as punishment, the soldier associates the fire of hell with the fire of holy zeal, not the fire of torment or purification. Hell is more a place for social outcasts than for sinners. Shaw is also alluding to the fire in which Joan was burned, making denizens of hell her devotees and connecting them through their common experience with fire, thus extending the sinner-as-saint and hell-as-heaven paradoxes.

In another ironic paradox, it is the consecrated ones, church and royal officials, who end up in hell, which turns the powerful into outcasts. The English Soldier jokes that the "company" in hell is "top": "emperors and popes and kings and all sorts" (222). In hell, these officials still cannot let go of their legalism, rebuking the soldier for helping Joan, emphasizing their inability to discern saints from sinners. The soldier "stand[s] up to them proper" with his irreverent familiarity and working-class dialect, mocking them and the supposed sufferings of hell: "All they can do is gnash their teeth, hell fashion; and I just laugh, and go off singing the old chanty: Rum tum trumple…" (223). When justice is done in the afterlife, it subverts the social order completely. The powerful suffer in hell while the working man gets drunk, laughs, and sings. It seems that the upright men actually deserve hell while the soldier only deserves hell in their eyes and

not in any sense of actual justice. The soldier highlights this irony when he notes that all "these kings and captains and bishops and lawyers and such like" do not "amount" to much: "you meet them down there, for all the airs they give themselves" (227). Their "airs," their authority on earth, are not only empty, like air, but also hide their real nature by making them seem respectable, holy, and authoritative. Notably, he includes "lawyers" in this list of the powerful, further emphasizing Shaw's critique of "Law" or official dogma. He is calling into question not only institutional actions such as Joan's trial, but also the idea of codifying truth and goodness. The soldier highlights the lack of compassion of these powerful men, which was the main problem with authority in religion or government: ""they just leave you in the ditch to bleed to death," unlike the soldier himself, who showed compassion by helping the condemned Joan on the way to her burning (227). This "ditch" seems to refer to the trenches of World War I, so recently ended five years before. The soldier articulates the anti-dogma theme when he observes to Joan, "you have as good a right to your notions as they have to theirs, and perhaps better" (227). The individual's ideas and perceptions are just as good and probably better than official or institutional versions of reality, especially because they are more humane. This is a major theme not only of *Saint Joan* but also of modernist literature dealing with religion.

Despite his critique of their dogmatism and the connection of dogmatism to inhumanity, Shaw very intentionally wanted to make Joan's powerful persecutors sympathetic characters rather than the villains they were often made out to be in past renditions of Joan's life. This attempt contributes to the paradox in modernist hagiography that good and moral people are the persecutors of the saint, while the saint

figure is problematic, a sinner, heretic, or outcast from good society: as Shaw himself says, Joan is "insufferable" (The Preface 7). Shaw criticized as simplistic versions that either romanticized Joan or vilified the church: Joan was not the "beautiful" and "ladylike Victorian" or "goodygoody" that Mark Twain made her, and Cauchon was not the "vulgar villain" Twain and Andrew Lang made him out to be (Preface 25, 28). The problem with Victorian and Romantic hagiography of Joan was that it was too exaggerated on behalf of the saint, much like medieval hagiography, but actually because of an anti-medieval bias that led to a misunderstanding of her trial: "Her ideal biographer must be free from nineteenth century prejudices and biases; must understand the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Holy Roman Empire" (Preface 10-11). Shaw wanted to represent the complexity of the conflict rather than showing Joan's opponents as merely corrupt and deceitful. To do this would be to downplay Joan's genius and heroism and to absolve the good people in the audience from identifying with her judges. To make both Joan and her judges essentially good emphasizes the inevitability of the saint's exile from polite society and the unexpected confusion in modernist hagiography over who actually is the hero, since the saints are often "insufferable" and their persecutors often seem quite admirable.

The Archbishop, Cauchon, and the Inquisitor both represent the best efforts of medieval churchmen striving to do right. The Archbishop embodies a Victorian, sober propriety that Shaw contrasts with Joan's humor, passion, and truthfulness. His propriety is, however, connected with upholding his position of secular power. Upon Joan's first meeting of the Archbishop, it is clear that he is really running the state, not Charles. When Joan informs Charles that she will crown him, he refers her to the Archbishop,

implying he is preventing the coronation through his pretense of power. Joan's "reckless happiness" and excitement at meeting someone she naively assumes is "filled with the blessedness and glory of God Himself" quickly meets the reality of his killjoy rebukes (168). Joan bows to receive his blessing, having a simple faith that both he and Charles are chosen by God, but this faith does not lead her to blindly submit to everything they say, which offends his sense of propriety just as her zeal does. First, the Archbishop tells Joan she is "too in love with religion," rebuking her sincere spiritual enthusiasm. Then he rebukes the men around him, who find Joan's excitement about meeting the "blessed" Archbishop ironic and start to laugh: he tells them, "your mirth is a deadly sin." He then warns them, "you will be hanged in [your sin] if you do not learn when to laugh and when to pray" (169). His sense of propriety does not allow for levity or informality, and he approves of the rumor that Joan's prophecy led to a "blasphemer" being "drowned in his sin" (168). He is comfortable with determining people's fates and meting out capital sentences, again foreshadowing his role in Joan's trial, and approves of Joan's reputation for causing a man's death.

Shaw calls the man who falls in the well "Foul-Mouthed Frank," adding a touch of irreverence and making the blasphemer appear harmless, thus questioning the historical record on this miracle that some saw as proof of Joan's sainthood. This supposed miracle is one of those that creates faith, whether it was really Joan's miracle or not. However, Shaw has Joan deny responsibility for it, becoming "distressed" and exclaiming "No!" when the Archbishop gives her credit for it (168). Shaw chooses to disassociate her from this "miracle" of killing an average man for impropriety while he chooses to create the miracle of the eggs to show her as a life-giving rather than a

punishing force. Propriety is the mark of the pretenders at court; the Duchess la Tremouille who scorns Joan's lack of fashion is "coldly" polite when she passes Joan, who is kneeling, without a view to propriety, to "fervently" kiss the Archbishop's robe (169). Joan's faith and emotion is contrasted with the cold calculations and pragmatic skepticism of the powerful. Even though the Archbishop prides himself on representing the principles of the church, both his rebuke of her enthusiasm and his explanation for miracles are faithless; Joan's faith is superior in her implicit trust in her voices. His moralism and skepticism speak to a rationalist strain in the church that Shaw is criticizing. He respects Joan's fervent beliefs as evidence of imagination, inspiration, and innovation even though he does not share them literally.

### *Shaw's Preface and Modernity*

Despite showing obvious shortcomings in the Archbishop as a representative of the Church, in his Preface Shaw claimed at length to be showing the churchmen in a good light. He wanted to show the church as good to emphasize the paradox that Joan was both a heretic and a saint, both truly rebellious and truly religious. As he says in the Preface, "Many innovating saints, notably Francis and Clare, have been in conflict with the Church during their lives, and have thus raised the question whether they were heretics or saints" and "It is therefore by no means impossible for a person to be excommunicated as a heretic, and on further consideration canonized as a saint" (29). Strangely, there is a thin line between the two. Shaw defends Joan's judges in being unable to tell the difference: "the tribunal was not only honest and legal, but exceptionally merciful in respect of sparing Joan the torture which was customary" and

"Cauchon was far more self-disciplined and conscientious both as priest and lawyer than any English judge ever dreams of being in a political case" (30).

Shaw also argues in the Preface against the modern tendency to assume our advanced way of thinking is more accurate and humane than those with religious prejudices. Rather than simply scolding Cauchon and feeling superior as "enlightened" modern people, we should "blush for our more complicated and pretentious savagery" (30). Shaw finds that her trial was above reproach in many ways, especially in comparison with modern "materialist" dogmatism and political persecution (30, 34). He calls the Catholic notion of infallibility "modest" in comparison with our "infallible democracies, our infallible medical councils, our infallible astronomers" (29).

In several sections of the Preface, Shaw compares medieval and modern credulity, cruelty, toleration, and education, unexpectedly favoring the medieval. On the topic of credulity, Shaw insists that modern "blind faith" in doctors, rather than priests, is "grosser," because doctors make money off of coercing and controlling people, while priests did not and also had the fear of hell to keep them somewhat honest (34). Doctors are not only corrupted by their participation in capitalism but also by the "political power" they have been granted, which allows them to "coerce," just as medieval priests did when given such power. Money and secular power are the source of corruption in institutions, but according to Shaw, modern corruption is worse. He also points out no shortage of modern credulity in "mediums, clairvoyants, hand readers, slate writers, Christian Scientists, psycho-analysts, electronic vibration diviners, therapeutists…, astrologers, astronomers…, physicists…, and a host of other marvel mongers whose credulity would have dissolved the Middle Ages in a roar of skeptical merriment" (40).

The problem with science is that it has created an "anti-metaphysical temper" but also "convinced us that nothing obvious is true" and that everything "heartless" is "scientific" (40-1). Scientific beliefs often go against commonsense and have become the new dogmas that it is "heresy" to question (41). Replacing religion with science has led to "vaccination" and "vivisection" instead of baptism and communion, and "hypochondria, melancholia, cowardice, stupidity, cruelty, muckraking curiosity, [and] knowledge without wisdom,…instead of the virtues" (17). The modern age is not better off: "If you…are quite convinced that the world has progressed enormously, both morally and mechanically, since Joan's time, then you will never understand why Joan was burnt, much less feel that you might have voted for burning her yourself…;and until you feel that you know nothing essential about her" (25). Shaw is interested not only in rehabilitating Joan's medieval persecutors, but also in puncturing the modern complacency that allows us to look down on them. Toulmin sums up this modern complacency: "For the first time, Humanity seemed to have set aside all doubts and ambiguities about its capacity to achieve its goals here on Earth, and in historical time, rather than deferring human fulfillment to an Afterlife in Eternity" (ix).

Again, this point highlights the theme that it is the respectable people who persecute the saint, not apparently worldly, evil, or irreligious people. In his defense, Shaw takes issue with assumptions that "Cauchon was a vulgar villain" guilty of corruption and "cozenage": "Nothing was easier than to accuse him" (28). After Joan's rehabilitation trial, which vilified Cauchon, Cauchon's body was disinterred and thrown into the city sewers. Shaw regrets this unfair slander against Cauchon and thus sought to rehabilitate his reputation in the play. Shaw repeatedly defends Cauchon and the other

judges in the Preface, pointing out that it is "easy to say" that they should have excommunicated Joan and let her live, but this idea is an oversimplification that neglects the reality that "society is founded on intolerance," and justifiably so, for "society must always draw a line somewhere between allowable conduct and insanity or crime, in spite of the risk of mistaking sages for lunatics and saviors for blasphemers" (35-6). This oversimplification seeks to eliminate the very ideas of heresy and orthodoxy, something Shaw knows the medieval church could never have done; he lambasts this anachronistic modern judgment of the medieval church even as he wishes the modern church would embrace an ethic of change. He explains that "intolerance" is necessary for stability, but that going forward, the church must allow evolution and be careful of whom it persecutes, because the "Law of God is a law of change" and "improvement is founded on tolerance" (34). Despite this admonition, he seems to see the conflict between the institution, which is essentially and understandably intolerant, and the innovative saint or genius, as inevitable, and thus the church cannot really be blamed: "all evolution in thought or conduct must at first appear as heresy or misconduct" (34). Regarding cruelty, Shaw insists that modern political persecutions such as the trials of the German Edith Cavell, the English Roger Casement, and the Irish Sylvia Pankhurst were much worse: Cavell's crime was declaring "Patriotism is not enough" during the war and "she was shot out of hand," not given a careful trial by thoughtful men (26). Here Shaw not only vindicates Joan's judges by the comparison, but he also connects Joan to modern political dissenters, rebels against the secular state, which reveals his definition of modern sainthood is not religious but instead relates to the conflict between the "individual" and the "official organization" (33).

Shaw saw the medieval church, often dismissed as superstitious and prejudiced by modern thinkers, as superior to the new orthodoxies of science and rationalism, and where the church has gone wrong, it is because of rationalism. Criticizing rationalism, he states that "reasoning and rationalizing" are actually the same, overturning the assumption that reason is unprejudiced, unbiased, and purely objective (qtd. in Searle 123). Shaw's critique recalls Stephen Toulmin's observation that modern thinkers consider themselves more "*rational"* than medieval thinkers who were hindered by "superstition and mythology" that can and should be eradicated to achieve absolute certainty (11). In Shaw's rejection of religious orthodoxy he was rejecting a certain kind of hyper-rational, institutional, dogmatic, uninspired orthodoxy, but he was drawn to what William Searle calls the "irrationalism" of medieval thought, which is akin to the irrational religious revelations of a genius like Joan, or of an artist (121). He disliked the Pauline "theological rationalism" he saw dominating the modern church because it substitutes the "postulate," i.e. words, rules, and theories, for the "real thing" (Searle 123). As he says in the Preface, "The Churches must learn humility as well as teach it," not blindly trusting in principles like Apostolic Succession (32), which can be merely a justification for overconfidence and abuse of power. Assuming that all church actions are by definition inspired neglects the reality that "tongues of fire have descended on heathens and outcasts too often…, leaving anointed Churchmen to scandalize History as worldly rascals" (Preface 32). "The Holy Ghost…flashes with unerring aim upon the individual," while certain realities of institutional structure actually preclude inspiration (33).

Joan's trial scene reveals the church's over-reliance on reason, as opposed to her commonsensical and spiritual wisdom. Despite showing the shortcomings of their rational approach, Shaw attempts to show the church sympathetically because they have done the best they could from their own limited perspective, which values order above all. Their well-intentioned blindness can be taken as a warning against fascistic tendencies in the modern state, which are also alluded to by Eliot and Waugh. The officials appeal to law and principle, and the irony Shaw creates is in the way these apparently good things justify their inhumanity to Joan. The Inquisitor absolves the court of any wrongdoing, proclaiming that the officials have "proceeded in perfect order" and also, quite rationally, that "it is not our business" what the secular English might do with Joan (213). He admits that Joan is a "young and innocent creature crushed between these mighty forces, the Church and the Law," revealing the sacrifice of the individual to institution, and also that "She did not understand a word we were saying," because their legal discourse is essentially foreign to her commonsense (213-4). He is comfortable, however, with their verdict because "pity" plays no part in the rational "procedure," and his legal responsibility has been fulfilled. He considers himself merciful, and the prosecution of heresy a merciful duty, but "natural compassion" is not relevant (201-2). Shaw is trying to show that the Inquisitor was scrupulously attendant to church principles, even mercy, but differentiates between the principle of mercy and actual pity or compassion. Cauchon agrees with the Inquisitor's lengthy speech, calling it "sane" and well "spoken"—rationally and rhetorically sound (202). Cauchon is also very insistent that "everything is done in order" (213).

In contrast to the churchmen, the English Lord Warwick sees her as a threat to international feudalism and admits his "political" self-interest in advocating her death; he also marks himself as a capitalist. Shaw shows how both politics, money, and custom, as well as law and principle, crush the ordinary individual, the martyr to the state, the church, and the economy. Warwick explains he "bought her from the Burgundians for a very handsome sum," supposedly to see her "brought to justice" (198). Another inquisitor, Courcelles, insists that "torture is customary," and custom to him is the same as "the law," but the Inquisitor challenges him on his knowledge of "legal business"; Cauchon also attempts to restrain Courcelles out of mercy, showing that the church attempts to transcend mere social convention, and excessive conventionality hinders humane action (205). Joan makes fun of Courcelle's rationale of "custom," calling him a "rare noodle" (205).

The Dominican Ladvenu demonstrates the shortcomings of rationalism in his attempts to apply logic when Joan chooses death: "You wicked girl: if your counsel were of God would He not deliver you?" (212). Joan's response is both scriptural and irrational: "His ways are not your ways" (212). This appeal to a higher truth or mysterious knowledge represents a challenge to rationalism and a reversal of her earlier assumption that "commonsense" tells her not to "walk into a fire" (210). Spiritual commonsense is different from legalism, rationalism, and self-protective survival impulses. Her commonsense now tells her that their "counsel is of the devil" and they "are not fit that [she] should live among [them]" (212); she not only condemns their reasoning as contrary to spiritual reasoning, but also highlights her status as a saint who

according to the biblical definition is essentially a foreigner, an inevitable misfit or exile, in the world.

Her crime, heresy, is in challenging institutional absolutism, stating that it is possible for the church to be "contrary to God," that she will follow God before the church, and that she will use her own judgment to discern (206-7). Her testimony seems prideful, but actually reveals humility, stating she believes "God is wiser than I" and that she is not sure she is in a state of grace: "If I am not, may God bring me to it: if I am, may God keep me in it" (207). Joan is finally forced to accept that these men will never understand her "commonsense" or wisdom, and her exile and death are therefore inevitable. The Inquisitor and Cauchon repeat in several different phrases that Joan must be "cast out," "segregate[d]," "excommunicate[d]," and considered to have the "leprosy of heresy," among other things (213). Shaw emphasizes her outcast status through the repetition; ironically, it is the excommunicated and the heretic who is the saint, not the scrupulous masters of church doctrine, as much as they attempt to do the right thing.

Advocating intellectual modesty rather than the confidence of dogmatism or absolutism reflects a modernist reaction to authoritarian monopolies on truth. Here Shaw also seems to be rejecting the abstract tendencies of modernity as some religious modern writers did by becoming interested in physical phenomena such as the sacraments, miracles, relics, or in the case of T. S. Eliot, in being rooted in "time and space" (Berst 116). This movement towards the concrete and the particular naturally has affinity with what Toulmin calls humanism (23) and with a more literal belief in sacramental and miraculous experience as grounded in physical particularity. Shaw, however, advocates that the church embrace a constant spirit of change at the expense of orthodoxy and

insists that the particulars of various religions do not matter because the underlying beliefs are essentially the same; he also thought of God as a force rather than a personality, rejected literal miracles in *Saint Joan*, and implies that physical sex and gender identity are unrelated: all of these tendencies point to a more modern way of thinking in which ideas transcend the limits of experience and its concrete particulars. On the other hand, modernist religion, as opposed to modern religion, is naturally akin to humanism in its acknowledgment of limitation in perspective and subsequent focus on experience, ambiguity, irony, and physicality. The conflict is not a moralistic conflict between right and wrong or respectable and scandalous; it is a conflict rather between nineteenth-century or modern values and modernist or humanist values. Irrational or super-rational religious notions could very naturally be re-appropriated as modernist notions, allowing for mystery instead of demanding systematization in provable rational absolutes. For example, Shaw defines a saint in the same way as the official church definition, as someone who displays "heroic virtues" and has "revelations" that are "supernatural," but he also redefines a saint as a "genius" of "moral originality and energy," someone "whose private judgment is privileged," basically an "enlightened heretic" (qtd. in Searle 114, 116). He defines a saint as someone inevitably in opposition to the church, which explains his interest in Joan, a martyr who was killed by the very institution that canonized her and which she believed in. This rebellious paradox is typical of Shaw's treatment of Joan. Other paradoxes include her "sane" hallucinations, her "temptation" by humility, her self-serving martyrdom, and her "immoral" inspiration. All of these paradoxes of Shaw's indicate his attempt to redefine religion in opposition to modern or Victorian notions of duty, reason, and morality.

Shaw emphasizes the limitation of perspective in the conflict between Joan and the officials. As Jean Chothia notes, Shaw found in the historical accounts "a struggle not of right and wrong but between those who believe themselves to be righteous: an Hegelian clash of contrary forces that chimed with his own dramatic strategy" (xxi). Joan's persecutors are particularly rational, i.e. modern. They give "reasoned" speeches, but "this doesn't mean that Shaw endorses their arguments" and the speeches subtly show "the ways in which the characters are victims of their limited vision" (xxi). In other words, her persecutors are sympathetic characters like Lady Marchmain in Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. They seem logically and rhetorically sound, like Thomas's persecutors in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral;* Eliot implies that effective speechmaking as a particularly English skill and shows it to be dangerously deceptive precisely because the speakers are so confident and seem so reasonable but cannot see the limitations in their perspective. By making some of Joan's persecutors skilled, meticulous, pious, and even compassionate, and others at least understandable to a modern audience in their motives (de Stogumber's motive of national strength, Cauchon's motive of religious order, and Warwick's motive of aristocratic stability), Shaw creates the situation typical of modernist saint stories in which the saint is the outcast, heretic, or sinner, and her attackers are apparently good and rational.

He also emphasizes the cultural constraints of individual perception, a typically modernist concern, and he does it in the unexpected way that many modernist authors do: not by privileging modern perception as enlightened and vilifying medieval perception as backwards, but by showing how similar they are, both being limited by a form of dogmatism. He uses "history to ask questions of the present" by including "deliberate

anachronisms" in the play which make the characters appear more modern (Chothia xxiii). He especially elaborates on the similarity between the modern and the medieval in his Preface in his attempt to shatter modern prejudices against the medieval, the pride modern people take in their rational point-of-view, assuming they have moved past local prejudices and limitations imposed by culture: specific beliefs and particular practices. Toulmin also notes a parallel between modern "rationality" and medieval "theology" in that both can tend to absolute thinking, and notes that modern thinkers must now question the assumption that modern thinking is superior and that being rational means having no bias (23).

In the eighteenth century, David Hume recommended transcending one's culture and "prejudice," especially religious prejudice, through reason, seeking to discover instead universal absolutes (240), but in the twentieth century this trust in reason began to disintegrate. Toulmin notes that the modern concept of rational truth led to a loss of humanistic culture, of particular local identity, of intellectual modesty, and of a sense of being rooted in a time and place (25, 35), and all of these phenomena have serious consequences. Modernity had already produced the Great War and the excesses of science and the state, which Shaw criticizes at length in his Preface to the play. It had also produced a loss of religious faith, imagination, and intuition that Shaw seeks to recover. Shaw as a modernist critiques modern overconfidence in rationalism simply by choosing to write a work of hagiography in which the heroine hears voices. He also has to go to some lengths to present the medieval churchmen as sympathetic to a modern audience, attempting to utterly reject the villain role for Cauchon. Chothia notes that Shaw's decision to show Cauchon as someone "who believes he is acting justly" is

"Shavian distortion, important to the play's dialectic" (xxii). Shaw's choice to go against the historical record, or at least to exaggerate elements of it, shows again the "essential truth" he believed he was getting at—the idea that this was not a good vs. evil story, but rather a story of pious men dealing with a rebel. In modernist hagiography, the rebel against conventional piety is the saint.

His concept of inspiration was that the wisdom of the inspired genius or saint would be free, playful, spontaneous, and therefore dangerous to established institutions and their absolute laws. That is why Shaw has Dunois compare Joan to the wind and to the kingfisher, and rebuke his page who wants to physically trap the bird. Therefore, the respectable, "conscientious" people who are trying to do what is right will inevitably hate the genius (Searle 126). In fact, inspiration will always be "immoral" as well as "irrational"; in Shaw's words, it will "blaspheme" and "outrage good taste" (125). These paradoxes mark the similarity between Shaw's hagiography and that of other modernist writers who create saints that offend polite society. His use of morality and taste as criteria are ironic, since he does not agree with the official arbiters of these things or that they exist in an absolute sense. Shaw pointed out that "responsible lawyers and churchmen" killed Socrates, Christ, and Joan, so logically we must question what we think is good, who seems good, and accept that we have no ability to judge right from wrong (126). In his speech "Parents and Children," he scolded any person who teaches morals to children and claims his principles to be "absolutely right" or "the will of God"; he said such a person is a presumptuous "blasphemer," an "amateur Pope" with pretensions to infallibility and who wants to ruin the freedom of "experiment" in children (qtd. in Searle 113). This redefinition of the moralists as the blasphemers is why he took

such pains to present the churchmen such as Cauchon sympathetically, to show that they were the good men of their day, not just villainous conspirators plotting for personal gain, and that we are more like them than we want to admit. Burning Joan *was* reasonable (124), but being reasonable is not enough to accommodate genius and originality, which in Shaw's theory, the church and society have to do in order to evolve and not wither away. Reason, or the appearance of reason, is not trustworthy because "a skillful debater can argue with equal cogency on both sides of any question" (124). The notion that any idea can sound good, but may dangerously preclude new truths and kill heroic geniuses, naturally leads to a distrust of dogmatic truth and an elevation of private revelation.

For Shaw, morality was not absolute but rather an arbitrary product of its time, a local prejudice in Hume's formulation, as with Joan's dress and the church's obsession with her wearing of male clothes (125), a strict defining of gender roles that modern people would see as a shortsighted prejudice rather than an absolute moral law, but that is similar to Victorian delineations of what is acceptable for each gender. Society seems to make a link between gender and piety, assuming that Joan cannot be pious without being feminine, but she clearly is pious, so the gender dictates are satirical and make Victorians and other conservatives seem ridiculous and pharisaical. Joan rejects the female gender role because there are no men willing to fight as she is. Since Shaw clearly admires her rejection of feminine expectations and facades, Joan's saintly "heroic virtues" are at their heart a rejection of societal morality, another paradox.

As Searle points out, Shaw's Joan is actually tempted by conventional morality and humility, rather than by sin and pride (116). Shaw likes her pride, her "presumption," "postiveness," and self-sufficiency, although he understands why these

qualities irked people and upset order (116, 101). She was not considered moral by those around her, but Shaw also pokes holes in the notions of pure integrity and of faith in the unseen leading to martyrdom. Her martyrdom is heroic not in choosing the unseen but in choosing the seen, not in staying true to her voices but in staying true to the ideal of freedom. Shaw has her recant her claim to have heard voices for pragmatic reasons, because she wants to live, and also begins to doubt the voices—so she is not particularly self-denying, heavenly-minded, or unwavering in her faith. She seems ordinary, even flawed, but more comprehensible to those who do not pretend to have heroic virtues, which is the gist of modernist hagiography, to show the saint as less than transcendent. She is conflicted: her body and soul are in conflict when she signs the recantation, which she then recants to avoid life imprisonment. These struggles, internal conflicts, and multiple recantations make her a human or ordinary saint who recognizes the limits of her perspective, despite having a more expansive perspective than the law- and ideology-bound men around her. By pitting Joan against respectable institutions, making her criminality rather than her canonization the proof of her sainthood, Shaw creates a particularly modernist saint who brings a new, earthy wisdom to challenge the reified abstractions of law and rationalism.

### *Shaw's Modernist Rejection of Realism*

Although Shaw was not himself orthodox, and his definition of sainthood is not orthodox, one of the most important ideas he shares with orthodox modernist authors is in elevation of imagination as opposed to reason. For him as for Wilde, there is a clear link between imagination and religious belief, accessing a part of human understanding not engaged by science and reason—although he satirically insists that the scientist who

believes in the electron has just as much credulity as the scholastic who believes in angels, countering the modern sense of rational superiority. It is in the Preface that he makes clear that he does not believe Joan's voices were factually or objectively real, but that they were real nevertheless, and this anti-realism is also a rejection of excessive reliance on science and the illusion that an author can or should be true to life in its factual details only. In "The Decay of Lying," Wilde uses satirically exaggerated and paradoxical terms to explain that "lying" in literature is superior to telling the truth—one could say that lying actually leads to the truth. What Wilde means by "lying" is the author's use of imagination, his trust of his own perceptions, his refusal to be limited by facts and what is objectively true or scientifically provable. He makes clear how this is related to the religious belief in miracles, which seems to imply that it does not matter whether the miracles really happened or not. This is Shaw's idea about miracles also. In this sense, they have sympathy with medieval hagiography and its fantastic content. Of course, in the modern age, "hagiography" has become a byword for what is exaggerated or untrue, but that is the exactly what made it attractive to authors interested in the imagination as a valid way of apprehending truth and as a balance to excessive trust in science at the exclusion of other ways of knowing. Although Evelyn Waugh insisted on the importance of actually believing in the miraculous, even in relics, which Mark Twain famously made fun of in *The Innocents Abroad*, for Wilde and Shaw their significance is to the creative imagination, but they are no less real. They are challenging scientific and rational notions of the real as objective by locating reality in the subject's perceptions. Interestingly, Mark Twain was also a transitional figure in this challenge to Victorian realism. Although Shaw criticizes Twain's prejudice against medievalism in the Preface

to *Saint Joan,* Twain was also engaged in questioning the ability or desirability of literature reaching a level of verisimilitude on par with nonfiction. For example, in his *Life on the Mississippi,* a book that, like *Saint Joan* and other saints' lives is "based on a true story"—one Twain personally lived through and witnessed—he continually insists on his strict adherence to the facts while continually undermining that claim through obviously fabricated or fantastical events. He also seems to be differentiating between the "essential" truth, which is more colorful and more interesting, as Wilde explained in such a colorful and interesting way, and the factual truth that is assumed to be superior or more real. Shaw explains quite clearly why he was not limited by the dictates of realism or historical accuracy, even though much of *Saint Joan* is based on actual trial proceedings and he unequivocally claims that his play is the true story of her life as opposed to past romanticized, idealized, or biased literary versions of her. It is the most true and the most accurate precisely because he did not worry too much about accuracy, in another lovely paradox of modernism that makes it similar to medieval notions of hagiography and history (which was more interested in typology, akin to scriptural typology, than fact).

What makes Shaw's hagiography particularly modernist? He combines a realism which emphasizes the importance of the ordinary individual's experience and a non-realism which emphasizes the fantastic and the importance of the imagination in presenting and understanding the truth. By emphasizing Joan's ordinariness he is similar to other writers of modernist "hagiography," although Joan is without vices, unlike the "saints" of Waugh's and Greene's fiction. Shaw claims to not romanticize Joan, although in presenting her as ordinary, he is romanticizing the type of the peasant or commoner

who is connected with the land, continuing in Wordsworth's footsteps but adding a more explicit nationalism and a Marxist sense of the worker who is not alienated from nature through commodification. It is true that Shaw's Joan probably could not exist without realism, and Shaw is consciously seeking to create a realistic Joan in contrast with Shakespeare, Twain, and others. M. H. Abrams defines realism as seeking "to represent life as it really is" as opposed to romantic fiction, which shows "life as we would have it be—more picturesque, fantastic, adventurous, or heroic than actuality"; realism gives the "sense that its characters might in fact exist, and that such things might well happen" by focusing on "the commonplace and the everyday" in a "matter-of-fact, seemingly unselective way" (174). Twentieth century innovations on realism such as magic realism use the same realistic narration techniques but present "fantastic" events, e.g. Gregor Samsa's matter-of-fact transformation "one morning" into a "monstrous vermin" in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. Magic realism is then similar to modernist hagiography in its use of the everyday and the ordinary, even the previously unmentionable, in conjunction with the fantastic and the sacred.

In his use of intuition, imagination, epiphany, and revelation, Shaw and other modernists veer from nineteenth-century realism and their openness to these experiences also makes them open to religion, which is perceived through these means of knowing. Shaw makes it clear that he did not strive for realism, ultimately, by justifying his alterations to the historical record. In his words, he gives "the essential truth" but an "inexact picture of some accidental facts" (43). His main goal is to make the essential truth "intelligible" to a twentieth century audience by giving Cauchon, Lemaitre, and Warwick, who represent the medieval institutions of the Church, the Inquisition, and

feudalism, respectively, the "consciousness to enable them to explain their attitude to the twentieth century" (44). They "say the things they would have actually said if they would have known what they were really doing" (44). The consciousness of Shaw the author is imposed on and expressed through them with the omniscience of a third-person narrator or a running commentary (44). He says, paradoxically, that he sacrificed "verisimilitude" for "veracity," using a combination of both the available "documentation" and his own "divination" to create characters that may not be realistic, but that are real. Unlike realism, which often purports to be reportage, he admits that another sense besides the intellectual is guiding him. And even though his understanding of sainthood and the church are not orthodox, the play inspired "faith" in Sybil Thorndike while she was playing Joan. She had a spiritual experience, not a religious one exactly, but an intuitive experience that "confirmed my faith, it confirmed something in my life that I've always known intuitively from my father's saintliness and my mother's ridiculousness, and all the things I had to say were things I wanted to say" (310). This epiphany seems exactly in line with the modernist sense that the ordinary can inspire the transcendent revelation. Often such an epiphany is a manifestation of aesthetic beauty or of disillusionment, but for Thorndike Shaw's work seems to have struck the chord of the religious imagination.

Shaw makes it clear in his Preface that he rejects romantic embellishment in favor of a more realistic approach that shows Joan as ordinary, but also that he was not striving for realism in the sense of historical accuracy to the facts. Sybil Thorndike, the actress who first acted Joan and for whom Shaw wrote the part, noted that all of her lines were from the trial records except for her two great speeches on God and freedom, which were

"sheer poetry and pure Shaw" (310). Shaw insisted on simplicity and ordinariness in Thorndike's speech and dress, as she explains:

> Of course I had to speak in a dialect, because Shaw said he wasn't going to have one of those ladylike Joans. He made me invent a dialect, a sort of Lancashire cum the West cum this and that---…Lumpshire. I even used a bit of my Cornish maid's odd speech. In fact, I used something of her country-girl nature too. (310)

Shaw's main strategy for avoiding idealization of Joan as a melodramatic heroine or a Victorian lady was making her working class, even if the dialect was fictional and Joan was actually French and medieval. Some critics had trouble with Shaw's use of "slang," seeing it as undignified, but as Chothia argues, the various modes of speech used by the characters are unrealistic but significant (xxv). It is important to Shaw's concept of Joan as ordinary, earthy, roguish, humorous, and irreverent that she use slang and dialect in a way that a modern audience would understand as signifying those qualities. It was meant to achieve a realistic effect for the audience rather than to copy life. The realistic effect must be a humble one, not a portrayal of a lady.

This was his plan for the scenery and costumes as well. In the Preface he satirizes the priorities of theatres in response to critics' suggestions that he shorten the play considerably:

> The experienced knights of the blue pencil, having saved an hour and a half by disemboweling the play, would at once proceed to waste two hours in building elaborate scenery, having real water in the river Loire and a real bridge across it, and staging an obviously sham fight for possession of it, with the victorious French led by Joan on a real horse. The coronation would eclipse all previous theatrical displays… (45)

The realism he is interested is not verisimilitude achieved by expensive scenery—in the modern iteration, cinematic Computer-Generated Imagery—or the adventurous, romantic spectacle of watching a medieval battle. These were the values of the Victorian stage and

its melodrama which Shaw was striving to move past. Their values of beauty and excitement were quite the opposite of his; he insisted all three-and-a-half hours of dialogue were necessary to the meaning of the play, while spectacle only exists for crass "profit," to draw in more paying audiences (45). He is quite willing to part with those audiences who only go to the theatre to be seen and find actually watching a play tedious, but he does insist the script of the play simply presented will be enjoyable enough to make its "purgatorial" moments pass quickly (47). The dialogue he has so carefully written provides the "why" of Joan's burning, whereas the spectacle of her being burnt on stage would appeal to the baser instincts of those who "can pay to see it done" (45). By refusing to create spectacle, Shaw is also upholding the value of imagination, even in a visual medium like the theatre; it is implied that the audience will enjoy the play more if they are imagining it for themselves rather than witnessing meaningless, sensationalized visual spectacles. Thorndike also sheds light on Shaw's thoughts on costumes, remembering that he lamented loudly when he saw the dress rehearsal:

> "You've spoiled my play," he said, "dressing yourselves all up like this. Why don't we do it just as it was in rehearsal? Sybil in her old jersey and the rest of you just as you were. You looked much better than all dressed up with that stuff on your faces." He really was in despair, but we promised him… "It won't be a costume play by the time we've done with it." (311)

Shaw did not want his Joan to be beautiful because then she would be oversimplified like the Joan of the "Jeanne d'Arc melodramas, reducing everything to a conflict of villain and hero, or in Joan's case villain and heroine, [and these melodramas] not only miss the point entirely, but falsify the characters, making Cauchon a scoundrel, Joan a prima donna, and Dunois a lover" (Preface 44). To make Joan a conventional heroine would be to make her a merely "physically beautiful lovelorn parasite" when she was in fact "a

genius and a saint, about as completely the opposite of a melodramatic heroine as it is possible for a human being to be" (10). The problem with trying to fit Joan into a conventional type, the heroine of the theatre, is to see her according to the type and not as she was; similarly, to see her as a woman tempts the person with "nineteenth century prejudices" to see her according to the romantic type of womanhood with "specific charms and specific imbecilities" rather than as simply "human" (10-11).

In the Preface he includes an entire section on "Joan's Good Looks" in which he explains that to describe her beauty is to romanticize her, and he also points out that it would be historically inaccurate, according to available records, to claim that she was beautiful (11). He wants his Joan to be "prosaic," i.e. real, but also "wonderful" (11). Paradoxically, he wants her to be ordinary but thoroughly individual, describing a statue from her time, made in Orleans, as "unique in art in point of being evidently not an ideal face but a portrait, and yet so uncommon as to be unlike any real woman one has ever seen" (11). It is significant that Shaw's critique of the entire history of art for its use of ideals comes after the Victorian period with its common practice of creating idealized women in art, a practice Christina Rossetti criticized in her poem "In An Artist's Studio." Rossetti and Shaw both seem to believe that to idealize is to de-individualize. Shaw wants to believe the Orleans statue is of Joan because it seems realistic, a "portrait," yet also "uncommon" and "unlike" the reality one has experienced up until seeing it. This combination of the realistic and the fantastic or the wonderful is exhilarating and typical of modernism. For example, James Joyce transferred the previously religious meaning of "epiphany" as a manifestation of divine presence onto the experience of "revelation" an individual has when seeing something ordinary (Abrams 57). It is also related to the

modernist interest in newness as opposed to convention. Shaw rejected both romantic and realist conventions but also incorporated elements of both. If, as Oscar Wilde claimed, realism was too drab, Shaw's description of the statue is the answer to this problem without veering too far into unrealistic melodrama or idealizing romanticism. Shaw's experience of the statue of Joan is a revelation, an epiphany, an experience of newness by seeing wonder in something ordinary rather than in something that is classically beautiful. The wonder he experiences is subjective, not necessarily describable as an objective quality of the statue because it cannot be defined according to established standards of beauty. This subjective confirmation that the statue is actually a representation of Joan is all Shaw needs as "proof," in another instance of his undermining scientific language and values by claiming his subjective intuition is proof enough: he can "dispense with further evidence," as it is not necessary (11).

Shaw loves to explain as thoroughly as possible what he means, as an author thus transcending the normal limitations of time, place, and consciousness imposed by a literary genre. His tendency to explain is evidenced by the long Preface, the thorough stage directions, and the post-canonization epilogue he so defended. These may seem like overkill, as if he is not trusting the audience to use its powers of imagination. His long-windedness may also seem overly didactic, a reliance on the abstract and the theoretical that does not allow the literary work of art to stand on its own with a symbolic significance or overall impression that is ultimately beyond complete explication or rational comprehension. Perhaps it is these things. He seems to be trying to control the meaning of his text in a calculating, almost scientific manner, and to clarify again and again what he means by it.

Elsie B. Adams summarizes the main belief of aesthetes: "in a world where religious, social, and moral values had collapsed, art was, if not an absolute, at least a tentative answer to the need for a faith" (xxiv-xxv). She explains, though, that for Shaw, the style and form of art were not enough to constitute a faith; ideology and meaning were of utmost importance. She cites his criticism of "the reverend rector [who] can agree with the prophet Micah as to his inspired style without being committed to any complicity in Micah's furiously Radical opinions" (xxv). Shaw's rejection of pure aestheticism, favoring at least a political interpretation, if not an orthodox religious one, of scripture, is interesting in comparison to other modernist authors with religious interests. In Wilde's thoughts on scripture, he seems drawn to it for mainly stylistic and aesthetic reasons, not for the need to agree with its "opinions." Shaw's portrayal of Joan is a combination, then, representing the meeting of several eras: his lengthy and explicit arguments and scientific skepticism of miracles seem modern and Victorian while the figure of Joan is surely modernist in her innovative and super-rational wisdom, her confidence in subjective experience, and the challenges she poses to the rationalism and overconfidence of institutions and dogmas. In rejecting the romantic Joan of melodrama, the harlot Joan of Shakespeare, the realistic Joan of history, and the idealized Joan of canonization, he creates a saint with the traditional virtuous and miraculous elements of sanctity reinterpreted for his milieu as an unconventional social exile and an original imaginative genius.

## CHAPTER THREE

### "Where is England?": T. S. Eliot's Disillusioned and Suffering Saints

In 1927, eight years before writing *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), T. S. Eliot wrote that "wisdom consists largely of scepticism and uncynical disillusion…and scepticism and disillusion are a useful equipment for religious understanding" ("Francis Herbert Bradley" 200). This paradoxical statement locates Eliot in the center of my definition of the typically modernist mode of orthodoxy, a mode that often unites profound skepticism with very literal religious beliefs. The modernist saint character is reluctant, weak, ordinary, and even sinful, but is driven by a firm belief in the unseen and demonstrates a heroic level of faithfulness to these beliefs. The saint's behavior seems irrational to observers who represent the dominant values of modernity. But does Eliot's Saint Thomas Becket fit this definition? Is he a skeptic, a disillusioned modernist character who nevertheless also exemplifies the qualities of saintliness? Or is Eliot's depiction more of a traditional, idealized hagiography, a man who embodies spiritual ideals and has few similarities to ordinary people? Upon a first reading, he may seem to be the latter, as his theological pronouncements are clear and unwavering and his martyrdom thoroughly brave and resolute. Is he "hardly flesh and blood," as Charles Berst says (122)? Indeed, many critics see him as impervious to temptation, with the noteworthy exception of Serena Marchesi, who argues that the Tempters actually seem to triumph over Thomas throughout the play because of their "unimpeachable rhetorical energy" and "considerable verbal allurements" (3). Marchesi's contention contributes to understanding the paradox of the play.[1] Eliot's Thomas is both the triumphant medieval

saint and the ordinary modernist saint, a man who is human in the sense of consistently demonstrating weakness while also transcending the limits of earthly perspective and knowledge. Weakness is a virtue in the value system of modernist sainthood. Eliot's play is hagiography in the sense that is not historical realism by any means, but it takes liberties in order to elaborate on the spiritual, miraculous, emotional, and psychological implications of the historical story. Unlike traditional hagiography, it does not idealize Thomas by implying that he was a mythical super-hero with supernatural powers or a man without weakness—in fact, it seems to dwell on his weakness.

Thomas shares many elements in common with other modernist saint figures who reject the predominant values of modernity: he embraces the complexity of paradox, refuses to assert his will and personal autonomy, transcends the limits of rationalistic and scientific perspectives, rebels against the secular nation state and questions its claims to be an instrument of progress, undermines confidence in Western civilization as an unmitigated instrument for good, refuses to place faith in physical and mental strength for success and survival in nature, and reveals ideological propaganda to be a means of justifying dehumanizing violence. The irony is that Thomas's religious orthodoxy is often less dogmatic than the more modern values of the Knights, which are supposed to be progressive and evolving. T. S. Eliot's Thomas, Chorus, and even Priests are particularly modernist saints in their weakness, disillusionment, and suffering. They recognize that England is a spiritual wasteland, and thus challenge English civilization by refusing to participate in the violence of the natural order as represented by the political state and polite society. England is revealed to be a savage wasteland rather than a place of civilized order, but wastelands are traditionally the habitations of saints who are

willing to be exiled from the comforts of home, and through their sacrifices in these wastelands, they bring renewal to spiritually barren cities and nations.

Thomas, like many modernist characters, is middle-aged and past the prime of his life, and although he is tempted to be nostalgic for the past, he is disillusioned both with the romantic pleasures of youth and with the failed promises of his civilization. He is also a saint with an ordinary biography who must deal with haunting memories and accusations against his character while still believing in the rightness of his present actions. Historian David Farmer observes of the real Thomas: "Although he had not always lived like a saint, he certainly died like one" (506). He strives to experience internal unity when temptations threaten to divide his will from his convictions, and this ability to integrate himself in the "now and here" represents his abandonment of his past and of his former confidence in rational self-interest. He achieves self-realization through submitting rather than asserting his will, which makes him a saint but puts him at odds with the modern principles of those around him. In Thomas's past, he has advanced into the heights of polite society, as a member of the bourgeois who through education, connections, and "administrative" skill becomes the most important bureaucrat and adviser to the king, only to abdicate his position and power upon his ordination as a priest and Archbishop of Canterbury.

Eliot elaborates on the well-known historical conflict between the prerogatives of church and state that plays out between Henry and Thomas, reflecting on the implications of a society without the presence of God, i.e. without the Church, that Henry's triumph logically leads to. In the play, Eliot seems to locate the rise of the secular modern nation state as beginning with Thomas's martyrdom, and for Eliot this is the loss of England's

identity and glory: rather than a great civilization imbued with sacred meaning and the divine presence, England has become a "desecrated" wasteland, the antithesis of civilization, a place where men like "beasts" run wild and eventually vulgar "sightseers" will trample over sacred ground (221).

One of the many paradoxes of *Murder in the Cathedral*, however, is that the wasteland is the source of renewal even as it is the site of death and violence. Thomas's choice not to participate in a survival-of-the-fittest struggle, which his fellow priests and the murderous knights engage in, allows his death to transcend the violence of nature: he triumphs through his death rather than passing into oblivion because of his failure to survive. A wasteland may be the antithesis of civilization, a place of danger and isolation for the vulnerable individual, but it is also the traditional place of saintly exile, the place in which saints renew civilization through spiritual testing and sacrifice. Eliot uses the paradoxical wasteland/civilization dichotomy to question English nationalism and show the emptiness of modern society, a supposedly advanced civilization in which the "Church lies bereft" (*Murder* 219).

Pericles Lewis also theorizes that modernist authors are responding to the destruction of the church: "they find their own form of religious experience in meditating on the sacramental power that can no longer be contained in the church"; for them, the church is "the broken container of a sacred essence, which the author seeks to transmit in the frail vessel of the novel or poem" (4). Modernist writers are striving to build new tabernacles for the sacred. Eliot, however, is not seeking to replace the church with the "novel or poem," but is interested more literally in reconstructing a new notion of the church and even asserting its persistence, despite all appearances to the contrary. Eliot's

play examines the hopeful notion that the desecrated church is also the indestructible church because men like Thomas are willing to die for it. His death represents the death of the church but also the secret of its renewal.

Eliot's examination of a victimized, weakened, persecuted church applies not only to the specific medieval instance of Becket's challenge to Kingly authority: it is also a meditation on a society in which the church is threatened with more complete destruction, i.e. his own society. His narrative of decline and waste calls into question the nineteenth-century narrative of constant evolution and inevitable progress as well as the middle-class goals of personal advancement and comfortable domesticity. The rejection of these specifically modern values brings the traditional exile, martyrdom, and sacrifice of a saint into a modern setting and a capitalist incarnation. The modernist saint, like the traditional saint, is willing to be exiled from polite society and from home and comfort, and the Chorus of women in the play expresses this struggle, torn between everyday "living and partly living" (180) on the one hand and the visceral suffering of identifying with Thomas, on the other.

To be in spiritual community and to be identified with the church means to suffer. The Chorus describes the concrete realities of suffering, in contrast with the deceptive, abstract, principled rhetoric of the Knights, who justify violence in the name of ideology, and the pseudo-scientific rational arguments of the Priests, who inveigh against the necessity of suffering. The Chorus' and Thomas' vividly corporeal renditions of suffering, death, and evil are juxtaposed with the blithe sacrifice of humanity to abstraction and rationalization, and in this contrast Eliot demonstrates my theory that to be a modernist saint is to resist these abstract tendencies of modernity and in

consequence, to sacrifice social acceptance. The saints in this play, including both Thomas and his most faithful adherents in the Chorus, are deeply ordinary and deeply, physically aware of hardship, violence, and evil, yet are willing to endure it rather than pursue financial comfort and moral respectability, the rewards of conformity. They are not respectable, but are social outcasts accused of insanity, pride, disobedience, and disturbing the peace, while the murderous Knights convincingly brag of their own respectability, citing their religious upbringing and patriotic values. Literary critics such as Charles Berst are tempted to treat the Chorus derisively, as social outcasts or hysterical "simpletons," showing that the impulse to reject them as uncouth is natural (123). In his criticism of the Chorus, however, Berst is missing the point: their hysteria indicates their honesty, passion, and willingness to sacrifice the esteem of polite society, which is exactly what qualifies them as saints. They lack polish and education, but sophistication is not a sign of goodness. Berst likens the Chorus to the "wild women" accused of following Joan in *Saint Joan*, but this intended insult should be taken as a compliment, since it was made by Joan's law-bound, respectable persecutors. The martyr and the martyr's adherents should be considered radical to those who are more interested in propriety and appearances than in self-sacrifice.

Although the play is set in the medieval time period, throughout the play Eliot is also criticizing modern political dogmas, identifying the modern belief in the secular state as a reason civilization has become a spiritual wasteland. In his essay "The Idea of a Christian Society," Eliot contrasts a hypothetical "Christian society" with actual "Western Democracies," correcting the misconception that Western democracy is inherently Christian (7). Like Shaw in the Preface to *Saint Joan*, he is interested in

disabusing the modern Englishman of his confidence in his civilization. Eliot warns against assuming that modern England is more Christian than Nazi Germany or communist Russia because the West is tempted by fascism, too: "in our loathing of totalitarianism, there is infused a good deal of admiration for its efficiency" (7). Eliot describes the three stages of a society: pagan, Christian, and post-Christian, in which "Christians must be recognised as a minority" (9). In the third stage, "prosperity in this world for the individual or the group has become the sole conscious aim," and the society is more accurately called a "financial oligarchy" than a democracy (10-11). The problem with "Democracy" or "Liberalism," systems to which we wrongly attribute "sanctity," is that they are a force of negation rather than creation, destroying people's "social habits," "collective consciousness," and "wisdom," and replacing them with little but "cleverness" instead of "wisdom" and the goal of "*getting on"* in the absence of any other purpose (12-13). The modern "progressive" impulse is to reject tradition without replacing it, eventually leaving a vacuum and "chaos."[2] Chaos and purposelessness make way for fascism, "artificial, mechanised, or brutal control," as a "remedy," a way of imposing order (12). This is the irony of the modern state: it claims to encourage freedom above all, but leads to authoritarian control because it has not offered a "positive" vision, a meaningful way of life to replace the old. Fascism rose quickly in Germany, but Eliot sees "*etatisme,"* or statism, developing in England and America as well, albeit more slowly. He predicts that the growth of state power will be perceived as a necessity even by ardent advocates of liberty (14). In this way, he attempts to dismantle confidence in the state as a source of progress and a guarantor of freedom and shows that a Christian society is not the same as a democratic one. A Christian society would be a

positive and definite thing with meaningful traditions and habits, while democracy seems to eat away at these structures. Eliot's criticism of modern society is woven throughout *Murder in the Cathedral,* notably through his depiction of England as a wasteland and through his use of the Knights and Tempters as representatives of modern statism.

### *England as the Wasteland*

Berst has noted that Shaw's play *Saint Joan* and Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* both make use of wasteland imagery and the notion of a quest to restore the land, based on the Grail myth of the "questing knight" and on the fertility myths of the "impotent king" who must be "killed and resurrected" to restore life to a sterile land (117). Berst makes a fascinating case, but neglects the fact that Eliot also carries this imagery into *Murder in the Cathedral,* a play which Berst dismisses as a "medieval reliquary" (124). Eliot's description of a desolate wasteland in *Murder in the Cathedral* connects the medieval Thomas of the thirteenth century with the problems of his own time, and even seems to imply that Thomas's martyrdom was a turning point, the beginning of the decline of England. Modern England is a wasteland not only because of the potential disappearance of the church, but also because the church's influence has been replaced by that of the aspirational middle class and the growing state bureaucracy.

Besides showing the social and political manifestations of modern society as a wasteland, *Murder in the Cathedral* also hints at the wasteland-Grail myth in its use of an impotent king figure and a restorative resurrection narrative. Although never on stage, Henry's impotence as a king is evident in his anxiety about his authority and in his futile attempts to usurp spiritual authority, authority which comes from Rome and heaven, rather than England, and thus transcends his national-level reign. His misunderstanding

of these levels of authority leads him to elevate the state's authority over all, and the dominance of the state leads to the spiritual barrenness of the wasteland. Eliot repeatedly develops the contrast between secular and church authority, one which must be secured through manipulation, violence, self-assertion, and strategy, and the other which is bestowed irrevocably and does not produce aspirational anxiety. Henry is not killed, as in the Grail myth, but Thomas becomes a scapegoat for problems with his rule. Thomas is murdered as a traitor to the throne but continues to live in heaven, whence he can intercede for and restore England: after his death, a priest asks Thomas to "Pray for us" and "Remember us" and thanks God "who has given us another Saint in Canterbury" (220). Although Thomas is now in heaven, he is still closely associated with place, i.e. with England, and the Chorus states explicitly that his blood "Shall enrich the earth" and his "blood" will act as a fertilizer to "create the holy places" (221).

Because modernists were so interested in death, resurrection myths also had resonance in modernist literature. As R. W. B. Lewis argues, death is the most pervasive presence in modernist literature, evident on the first page of Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914) with the death of the priest, and the death of this priest in some sense represents the death of European tradition and civilization (17-8). Modernists are responding not only to literal mass death but also to figurative cultural death. Eliot wrote of *Murder in the Cathedral* that his goal was "to concentrate on death and martyrdom" ("Poetry and Drama" 140). The play develops the notion that death is in fact a necessary precursor to life and growth, an idea which has natural resonance in an age marked by an inescapable awareness of death. Eliot treats death as both a finality, a symptom of the wasteland that is society and an occasion for heart-rending grief, and as a commencement. Thomas's

martyrdom represents the tearing-down of the church in modernity but also the creation of a powerful and eternal church community that is English by virtue of Thomas's membership in it. Although Thomas does not appear after death, the Third Priest reflects on Thomas's "new state" of "glory" in the "sight of God," which is "hidden from us" but nevertheless real, and the fact that Thomas is after death a "saint in Canterbury" indicates he is still present in the land (220). If Berst is right in his criticism that Eliot's *The Waste Land* "features a want of healing, spirit, and transcendence" (121), then *Murder in the Cathedral* completes the cycle of desolation and rebirth, in which England is still a wasteland but can be redeemed because of the death of its saint.

The wasteland motif is also evident in the inability of characters to reproduce, which means a failure to succeed from a modern evolutionary standpoint. In modernist literature, families are often physically infertile, failing to survive by failing to reproduce the next generation: Faulkner's Compsons apart from Caddy, Waugh's aristocratic Marchmains, and of course martyrs like Thomas and Joan fail to produce heirs. This infertility represents a blight on the city of man and a direct challenge to a belief in the strength of Western civilization and to confidence in its future. Time and memory were also favorite themes of modernists, who were showing the necessity of being in the present and the impossibility of return to an illusory past. Eliot, unlike Shaw, is also showing the notion of the inevitably evolved future to be illusory. The modern narrative of progress requires trust in the city of man as opposed to trust in the city of God. Thomas dwells on the promise of a heavenly future, not an earthly one, and this only as he becomes fully realized in the present moment, accepting what will come, moving beyond the fear of death, and transcending the survival motive because his perspective is

more expansive than that of pure materialism. The pattern of non-reproduction and early death is important to the modernist saint narrative because it unexpectedly glorifies failure instead of strength and also shows that physical death is actually necessary for the spiritual regeneration of the wasteland. Thomas's notion of fate is quite the opposite of Shaw's notion that the state will slowly create a more utopian and developed society or the confidence in science that promises that man will eventually overcome death and eradicate suffering through reason and calculation. Fatalism was a typically modernist response to the narrative of progress, and *Murder in the Cathedral* is an explicitly fatalistic play.

Modernists were also often tempted by nostalgia, the desire to return to the former glory of youth or of past civilizations. Finding this return impossible, the acceptance of loss is the antidote to the temptations of memory, but a more common response is a refusal to grieve. Eliot seems nostalgic for the medieval period because he perceived that the medieval church somehow sanctified English society, which has since become empty and vulgar. Disillusionment with modern life usually accompanies nostalgia, but in the case of nostalgia for the medieval, Eliot also perceives an antidote to disillusionment. Many authors became disillusioned with nationalism: Eliot expresses this pride in national identity in the Knights' propagandistic appeal to English virtues, all for the purpose, ironically, of justifying murder, a murder which actually represents the decline of England. In contrast, in Thomas, Eliot presents a disillusioned saint who systematically rejects nostalgia and nationalism and instead embraces mourning.

*The Chorus, the Seasons, & Suffering*

Eliot begins the play with striking imagery of the seasons, a motif he continues throughout the play and one that illustrates the cycle of the wasteland and its renewal while clearly emphasizing the importance of the wasteland phase itself. Winter is a necessary season that cannot be skipped over to reach spring. Winter is the season of death in which the earth becomes a wasteland. Winter is a fitting emblematic season for modernism because of the pervasiveness of death in recent history and the disillusionment of modernists with the naïve and romantic notions of youth that are associated with spring. Surprisingly though, in Eliot's opening descriptions of the seasons, death is inherent in all the seasons. His focus on winter demonstrates an understanding of history that is cyclical rather than progressive, i.e. the modern world has not progressed beyond the reality of death for all its advancements, and ironically, it seems to have brought more death upon itself.

The promise of modernity was the ability to exert some control over nature and to overcome its ravages. However, modern man could not overcome death or what Sigmund Freud called the "fear of death" ("Our Attitude" 25). Freud accused civilized society of denying the reality of death and refusing to speak of it, having a tendency to "rule out death from the calculations of life" (5). In the last year of World War I, he predicted "that the war must brush aside this conventional treatment of death. Death is no longer to be denied; we are compelled to believe in it. People really die . . ." (7). Freud also explained in "The 'Uncanny'" that modern rationalism has failed to overcome both death and the fear of death. Because of the "insufficiency of scientific knowledge," we cannot yet explain the mysteries of death, and our "original emotional reaction"—honest,

visceral fears from childhood—may reemerge in adulthood despite our rational sophistication in all other matters (526-7). Freud is somewhat surprised that education and rationalism have not banished the fear of death and that the religious "superstition" primitive people created to deal with the fear of death persists even in modern times. He provides his own explanation, however, in admitting the inability of science to explain or eradicate it: "Biology has not yet been able to decide whether death is the inevitable fate of every living being" (526). Therefore, the "primitive" awareness of death lurks, but is repressed in polite conversation and rational thought. In modern society, "no human being really grasps" the reality of his "own mortality" because the idea of human mortality seems abstract and distant from the individual (526). However, reminders of death bring about epiphanies in which individuals come to grasp this horror. World War I was one such reminder, as is the Chorus's trauma of witnessing Thomas's murder in this play.

Thomas and the women of the Chorus both display what Freud calls a "primitive" awareness of death that he says has reemerged in modern consciousness. In the first lines of the play, the Chorus decides to stand near the cathedral in anticipation of Thomas's return from exile: "their eyes are compelled to witness" and their "feet" are "forced" to the place of "danger" (175). They know they are being "drawn" to witness violence, and ask "what tribulation / With which we are not already familiar?" (175). It is evident that they are familiar with suffering and do not deny the reality of death, which is why they describe "sombre November" when "the land became / brown sharp points of death in a waste of water and mud" (175). With this imagery, Eliot depicts winter as a season of violence and the winter landscape as a wasteland. The ugliness of this description is one

of the aspects of the play that Serena Marchesi identifies as particular to modernism: death, winter, and waste are connected and often manifested in the play as grotesque and violent physical imagery. Eliot believed that "beauty" and "ugliness" have an "equally intense fascination" ("Tradition" 42). This understanding is significant for a study of how modernists presented "hagiography" because it is so at odds with the typical definition of "hagiography," an idealized portrait that is scrubbed of evil and ugliness.

The play takes place in December, the actual month of Thomas's death, but it is also "winter" for the Chorus in the sense that they are suffering because of their spiritual and communal identification with Thomas. Their "summer" is over and their bountiful "golden October" is in decay because "the Archbishop left us"—his exile of seven years and the absence of his "kind" leadership has left the land desolate and lonely, devoid of life and almost, it seems, of the divine presence; they also lament that "God is leaving us, God is leaving us" (195). This is an England without the church. In his place are the "King" and "barons" who represent "various oppression" but also a sort of quasi-peace, "quiet seasons" in which the women are "left alone" (176). The void left by Thomas's absence is a negation of the positive of community; the greatest virtue the Chorus can claim for their current way of life is aloneness, which is the logical outcome of a society without the church, a society Eliot seems to imply is one without God whose presence is evident in Thomas's human kindness.

Even though winter is the most obvious season to represent death, the paradoxical seasonal imagery that opens the play establishes that death is inherent in the other seasons as well. The women of the Chorus fear the ferocious cold fronts of "Winter … bringing death from the sea" but also "ruinous spring," "Disastrous summer," and "decaying

October" (176). Summer brings heat, drought, and is "barren," no "consolation" for winter. The storms of spring are violent and will "beat at our doors," and even the new growths of spring are intrinsically violent: "Root and shoot shall eat our eyes and our ears" (176). The onslaught of spring activity overwhelms the senses. Although fall is bountiful, it is the beginning of the decline and decay of winter. This imagery brings to mind the phrase *Et in arcadia ego,* which is death's proclamation that he is present even in the youthful, pastoral paradise of Arcadia. The Arcadian aspects of spring, summer, and fall coexist with death, which is as intrinsic and only waiting to show itself. Eliot describes seasons normally considered beautiful in terms of ugliness and highlights the violence in the seasons usually considered peaceful. Walton Litz explains that Eliot considered it his duty as a poet to "make poetry out of the unexplored resources of the unpoetical"—"what had been regarded hitherto as the impossible, the sterile, the intractably unpoetic" (Eliot qtd. in Litz 473). Litz contrasts this prototypically modernist way of approaching nature with the more romantic, personal approach Eliot took in his youth. His desire to write "unpoetical" poetry is analogous to the non-hagiographical hagiography common in modernism in that both resist idealizing their subjects. Eliot's attraction to unexpected subjects also explains why he evokes the ugliness and death inherent in nature rather than idealizing its beauty or life.

Not only are spring, summer, and fall unexpectedly harbingers of death, but also, winter is unexpectedly a season of life. In their paradoxical address to winter, the Chorus welcomes "happy December," for in winter, "The New Year waits, breathes, waits, whispers in darkness" (177, 175). In this sense, winter is both the most desolate and the most hopeful season, while the beauty of the other seasons seems to obscure reality and

delay the inevitable, producing an illusion. To be in the middle of winter is to be both stripped of illusion and to be awaiting a change for the better, i.e. life and renewal, while to be in the living seasons is to await death, the "malady" the women feel sure "is coming upon" them (176). They are acutely aware of impending doom, the figurative end of summer, and also of their powerlessness to alter these trajectories: "For us, the poor, there is no action, / But only to wait and to witness" (177).

This powerlessness marks them as people without will, or the ability to effect their will, which places them in the category of saints such as Thomas in the play. Waiting signifies relinquishing the individual will and accepting the divine will or what Eliot most frequently calls "fate" or "destiny" in the play. In contrast, men of power or "statesmen" are those "Who *do*, some well, some ill, planning and guessing" (176, emphasis mine). But their ability to act is an illusion covering up their actual powerlessness since "Destiny waits in the hand of God" (176). The Chorus is not under this illusion, knowing their job is only to "wait and witness," to experience and identify with inevitable suffering and await the unfolding of fate. Like winter itself, which they call "happy," their virtue resides in their already-disillusioned state, more raw and less polished than that of the beautiful seasons or of the persuasive statesmen we meet later. The Chorus, like Shaw's nameless English soldier in *Saint Joan*, is ordinary, powerless, and acquainted with suffering, and also like Shaw's soldier, they become the unlikely adherents of the saint—unlikely because they are ragged and improper, seemingly unsaintly, but also because they are reluctant and skeptical devotees.

Just before Thomas's impending return after seven years of exile, the Chorus's fearful anticipation builds, realizing Thomas brings figurative and literal winter with him.

They lament the lateness of "the time," repeating "late" six times in one line and noting the "grey" sky four times in the next line and again alluding to decay: "rotten the year" (180). They know that Thomas brings this "evil…wind" and "bitter…sea" and abjure him repeatedly to "return" to his exile and "leave us," even though earlier they grieved the loss of his kind presence. Their contradictory attitudes toward Thomas make them reluctant martyrs. They are reluctant because they are unpretentious and do not fancy themselves saints—and because they are aware of what Thomas's martyrdom means for them. Any ordinary person would want to avoid such suffering, and they are ordinary.

In their lyrical meditations on the seasons, the Chorus also introduces the figure of the laborer, a human representation of the motions of the seasons. They describe this "labourer" as an ordinary man who is "earth-colour" with "muddy boots" (175). Like the Chorus, he simply wants to be left alone as he waits by the fire, trying to last through the winter. As he waits, the holiday of All Hallows' Day on November 1 makes him remembers the "martyrs and saints who wait"; the feast day of martyrs and saints happens to fall at the onset of the winter cold, tying his waiting through the lengthy hardships of winter to their religious suffering and waiting for redemption or vindication (175-6). Eliot takes pains to associate saintly longsuffering with the ordinary man as well as with the famous and well-educated saint. The laborer's association with the earth speaks of his humility, literally a kinship with earth, but also of his kinship with the seasons. In this humility, there is a submission to the limitations and parameters of a life exposed to danger and to nature. His muddiness also hints at the necessity of the dirty ugliness of nature for fertility and renewal of life: the mud produces the "brown sharp points of death" in winter but it also hides the waiting seed for the "root and shoot" of spring.

Eliot associates the laborer and the Chorus explicitly with both waiting and with sainthood from these opening scenes: waiting is all they can do, aware they cannot change fate and therefore not trying to exert their will for self-protection.

In contrast to the acute awareness and prescient understanding of the Chorus, which represents the suffering church, the Second Priest represents the propriety and rationalism that marks the formal institutions of polite society. He rebukes the Chorus for "croaking" about "whatever you are afraid of, in your craven apprehension," obviously unaware of Thomas's fate and dismissive of their hysteria as irrational and cowardly, enjoining them to behave more properly and "put on pleasant faces" to give a "hearty welcome to our good Archbishop" (182). Their behavior does not comport with the expectations of the Priests' polite society. In the juxtaposition of the Chorus and the Priest, Eliot contrasts private and public notions of suffering: the Chorus knows that Thomas's suffering will be that of the entire community, one they must share as the church. Their "private terrors" and domestic problems, which were merely a "minor injustice" and were always balanced with good fortune, will be replaced by a sublime "fear not of one but of many," an overwhelming communal experience of death (181).

The Chorus sees Thomas as a great man who can handle martyrdom, "assured of [his] fate" but see themselves as too "small" to bear the suffering (181). Their smallness is reminiscent of the "littleness" of Shaw's de Stogumber, who is converted from prideful abstract nationalism to humble concrete love by witnessing suffering, and of the "little way" which seems to characterize modernist saints in general. Eliot describes the mundane habits of their everyday life, "living and partly living," denoting a certain unpredictability in everyday life but also a compensatory balance in nature—drought

balanced by rain, abundance by famine, "oppression" by "luxury," etc.—and juxtaposes this relatively bearable suffering with their present all-consuming "fear like birth and death" (180-1). This fear threatens to dismantle their hearts and brains, implying that the fear is beyond both their rational comprehension and their emotional capacity: in other words, traumatic, causing a "wound" to the psyche ("Trauma"). Their experience of suffering is sublime in its incomprehensibility and *unheimlich* in its invasion of the previously safe space of domesticity (181).

The "small folk" cannot handle being "drawn into the pattern of fate" (181). Their description of domestic habits—""We have kept the feasts, heard the masses,/ We have brewed beer and cyder, /…We have seen births, death and marriages," (180)—echoes the description of social habits described in Matthew 24.38: "in those days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark." The Chorus's sense of impending calamity parallels this warning from scripture about the lulling effect of the ebb and flow of everyday habits in pre-apocalyptic times. They wish to return to these small patterns and avoid the suffering required by larger pattern of fate. The Chorus's patterns of eating and drinking, however, cannot stave off "doom." Significantly, one of their yearly habits is that they "Gathered wood against the winter," echoing their earlier description of the laborer who waits by the fire throughout the winter, remembering the saints and martyrs on All Hallows' Day, and hoping for the New Year (175). Gathering wood does not lessen winter's inevitable harshness; it only lessens their experience of it. As earthy folks, they are tied to the cycles of nature, and this makes them aware of what the coming of winter means. Despite their attempts to gather wood against the winter, it still comes,

and in the case of their impending communal suffering, there is no similar comfort; they are completely exposed. The ordinary women of the Chorus are also tied to the cycle of the annual church calendar, piously observing alternating times of celebration and of fasting. Just as suffering is communal, so are habits of feasting. They have long kept these social patterns that tie them both to the suffering and the redemption of the church, and consequently they cannot extract themselves from the communion now that doom approaches, even though they long to. Demonstrating that community means suffering, these ordinary women ironically constitute the church more than the powerful, male priests and knights do.

The liturgical calendar is indeed significant in the play; Eliot refers to it constantly to show that the ordinary people are tied to the cycle of the year and to show the concurrence of death and life in the year. The sacraments and holidays they repetitively celebrate are not mundane like their eating and drinking, but have greater spiritual significance. Because of these practices, they have invited fate and eternity into their small lives. Celebrating a saint's feast day, for example, ties them to his death or martyrdom, and celebrating masses ties them to Christ's suffering and death in a very real sense. That the Chorus, made up of ordinary church members, has "kept the feasts, heard the masses" among all their other annual patterns, means that they cannot escape what they are called on to do, even though they would rather go on "living and partly living" (180). Their "living" is a state of balance between alternate times of painful suffering and consolatory triumph. However, Eliot's repetition of the phrase "partly living" indicates that this balance leads to a lack of spiritual joy and life. To achieve such life means first facing death more directly.

The Chorus is afraid of the unbalanced, unmitigated suffering they are now called to; this fear is beyond rational comprehension because it will exceed the moderate suffering they have faced in the past and overwhelm their physical and emotional capacities. It seems strange that they are pious enough to faithfully observe the liturgical calendar, yet reluctant to join with Thomas. They even call on him to return to exile, but this is only because they are aware of what is coming and lack confidence that their smallness can handle it. Reluctance is natural, as in Christ's prayer that the cup of his suffering might pass him if possible, while also accepting his fate. Christ suffered much in anticipation because of his awareness of future doom and visceral knowledge of what it would be like, even to the point of sweating drops of blood, and the Chorus is similar in their knowledge. As with the disciples who fall asleep in the garden, the priests awaiting Thomas's arrival and who are present during his murder are similarly unaware. Thomas, however, is not alone in his fate because the Chorus seems to share it.

This communal notion of suffering relates to Pericles Lewis's observation that for modernists, spirituality is above all social, a "social supernaturalism" in which the community of other human beings is the dwelling place of the divine presence (4). It also confirms R. W. B. Lewis's observation that in modernist literature the roguish hero is marked by "authentic human friendship" and by breaking bread with friends (29). This communitarian tendency is a reaction against the individualistic autonomy and solitary romanticism often prized in the modern world. In modernist saint narratives, true friendship, often among outcasts, is frequently contrasted with the false community and violent self-assertion of polite society. Later on in the play, the Knights refuse to share a meal with Thomas, which shows that they are not part of the (church) community. They

have replaced community with the state, which values order and power and not only does not embrace suffering, but inflicts it on others. In contrast, the church—Thomas and the Chorus here—is marked by compassion or co-suffering. Thomas as the modernist saint is tied to his friends, the Chorus, in an almost physical way, and they to him. In fact, they may be said to speak for him in a kind of lyrical rendition of his stream-of-consciousness, which accounts for the repetitive, emotional, impressionistic, and obscure, even nonsensical lines of the Chorus.

The Chorus not only represents the community of the church, but also expresses the thoughts of Thomas's subjective consciousness poetically. Eliot was influenced by Japanese *Noh* drama in his writing of the play, an influence which contributes to its highly stylized, symbolic, and repetitive "ritual character" (Lee 44). Like Yeats, whose use of verse rather than prose drama influenced Eliot, Eliot was attracted to the conventions of Japanese drama as a means of "expressing in elaborately constructed lyrical language the feelings the inner conflict of the hero arouse in the audience," especially through use of a chorus (45). The poetic musings of the Chorus, therefore, are all-important to understanding the consciousness of the saint. The Japanese aspects as well as influences from Greek tragedy and Catholic liturgy all contribute to the non-realistic feel of the play. The Chorus's use of repetition and other poetic devices adds to the lyrical and ritualistic qualities of their lines, in contrast with the prose used by the Knights in addressing the audience and the more rational and controlled, often rhyming, discourse of the Tempters. In other words, the Chorus's manner of speaking seems more modernist. Eliot is not interested in mimesis of actual speech, but he is attempting to represent the authentic, spontaneous, subjective consciousness of the Chorus and Thomas

through poetry that seems disorderly, almost chaotic, and is a marked contrast not only to the highly calculated speeches of the Tempters and Knights, but also to Thomas's spiritual musings. The Chorus's rhetoric is an antidote to more reified or dogmatic ideological rhetoric, which tends to be devoid of concrete imagery and therefore lacks honesty about the impact of ideology upon humanity.[3]

Eliot's choice to let ordinary people and specifically unpolished women speak for his famous male martyr and ascetic signifies how Thomas fits the type of the modernist saint. Richard Badenhausen discusses the significance of the Chorus as women, arguing that their femininity is a manifestation of Eliot's growing comfort with and identification with feminine discourse as it was later defined by French feminist theorists. Badenhausen's analysis is relevant to my argument because the feminine strain in the Chorus's discourse parallels other feminine tendencies in modernist hagiography. Badenhausen contrasts traditionally male and female ways of thinking, especially reason versus emotion and action versus passivity (196). The Chorus demonstrates the feminine aspects of discourse by using an "experiential language of the body diametrically opposed to the world of logos" that is represented by the male characters with an interest in institutional order. Although Badenhausen attempts to prove that Eliot identifies with the Chorus more than with Becket and also attempts to show the superiority of their feminine discourse over his masculine discourse, his textual evidence for this argument is not convincing. However, his comparison of the female Chorus and the male characters who represent polite society—the Priests and Knights—is much more compelling; the juxtaposition shows the shortcomings in the Priests' and Knights' hyper-rationality and the superiority of the intuitive wisdom of the Chorus. It seems more accurate to consider

the Chorus as an analogue and a complement to Thomas than as competitors who are superior to him. As in *Noh* drama, the Chorus is meant to speak for the main character rather than to outshine him, but the fact that Eliot chooses to give such a prominent role to the women of the Chorus is a primary way in which he gives the historical hagiography a modernist character. Eliot is promoting both "masculine" and "feminine" approaches to sainthood: Thomas's more masculine, rational, and theological approach to martyrdom and the more feminine approach of the Chorus, which is obviously important throughout the play. Both Thomas and the women are exiles from the society represented by the Priests and the Knights. As Badenhausen notes, the Second Priest rebukes the women for their boldness in speaking, calling them "foolish, immodest and babbling women" and noting that in feminist theory, the female act of speaking and of speaking honestly have traditionally been seen as transgressive acts (198). The Second Priest is annoyed by "the chatter of these foolish women," which distracts him from his desire to seem proper and orderly upon Thomas's arrival (*Murder* 182). He is dismissive of the content of their words as mere "chatter" precisely because they are "women." The Chorus's insightful words from the margins of society are easy to dismiss because they are merely women and nameless at that, just as Thomas's words are easy for the Knights to reject once he gives up his position as the king's favored chancellor and advisor, and just as Shaw's Joan is dismissed for being ordinary, improper, and a woman.

Eliot's choice to reflect Thomas's consciousness in a feminine Chorus is not only significant because of their marginal status, but also because of their unique knowledge of and acceptance of pain. The tradition of women who closely, almost physically, identify with suffering goes back to scripture: the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, and

Mary of Bethany grieved for and were in close proximity to Christ in his sufferings or in his anticipation of them. This tradition relates to Helen Cixous's theory that women are traditionally more comfortable with anonymity and thus willing to suffer, not fearing castration or the loss of authority, power, identity, or title—"cap" or "crown"—as men do (Badenhausen 202). According to this theory, women can actually become "stronger through a negation of identity" (202). Interestingly, this process makes them analogous to martyrs like Thomas and offers one explanation of why Eliot's women are his saint's closest acolytes. As they say, "our hearts are torn from us, our brains unskinned like the layers of an onion, our selves are lost lost" (181). Their emotions and minds are over-capacitated and finally their identities are obliterated through suffering, even though as characters they never have individual identities to begin with.

The feminine discourse of the Chorus also counters the modern rationalism seen in the discourse of other characters. Shaw's Joan could be construed as his "feminine" resistance to the rationalist excess of modern institutions, but so can other, male characters of humble origins such as his English Soldier. Similarly, Eliot shows the limits of reason by balancing rationality with other ways of knowing through his use of the female Chorus. They "know" in ways the Priests, Knights, and possibly even Thomas do not. Unlike the grand rhetoricians around them, their speech is honest and humble, admitting they would rather be safe at home and left alone. They are unaware that they are saints, but because their compassion and awareness compel them to suffer, they become saints along with Thomas without an intentional act of their will or an effort to achieve sainthood. Rather than exerting their wills to coerce others or control nature, they are internally compelled, indicating the submission of their wills to an outside

reality. This lack of aspiration and calculation qualifies them as modernist saints according to my definition of modernist sainthood.

Badenhausen explains that their physicality and emotionality place them in line with theories of feminine discourse. It also places them in line with the generally modernist tendency to resist and question abstract ideology. The Second Priest's rebuke, which ridicules them as "babbling" and "croaking," hints at a speech that is beyond the rational, a speech that is nonsense to the powerful and to pure rationalists, but that is also quite poetic. As Badenhausen explains, Eliot considered music a "'deeper' level of communication, less rational, less controlled, less complete" than assertive forms of communication which claim to be definitive and authoritative (199). The Chorus's speech is "open-ended," "impressionistic," and "experiential," rather than fixated on the "telos" or outcome of actions or on finding "closure, balance, reason" (200-1). They also understand pain in a physical way that Eliot believed was important in depictions of martyrdom—their physical language is "remote from Becket's more cerebral existence" and from his "discussions of history, theology, philosophy, and ethics" (201). The Chorus is not only not cerebral; they actually complain of the "strain on the brain of the small folk," those like themselves who must endure the doom brought upon them by the actions of great men and by other forces beyond their control or comprehension (*Murder* 181). Their understanding of suffering on a bodily level makes them parallel to Shaw's de Stogumber, the English nationalist cured of his abstract ideas by physically witnessing and identifying with Joan's pain.

Besides being comfortable with non-rational discourse and with the loss of identity, the Chorus also seems to find a kind of feminist pleasure in pain that connects

them with both aestheticism and martyrdom. Badenhausen identifies a particularly feminine connection between ecstasy and pain in the the language of the Chorus and in Eliot's early poem about the martyrdom of St. Sebastian (203).[4] In *Murder in the Cathedral,* Badenhausen notes the Chorus's use of phrases like "the lust of self-demolition" and "the final ecstasy of waste and shame" (204). These phrases hint at a liberating pleasure or romantic ecstasy[5] found in the loss of self rather than in the assertion of self. Eliot saw violent martyrdom as evidence of devotion, and obviously this interest in martyrdom represents a revival of a medieval value that sees suffering as evidence of strength rather than as a failure or simply as a sign of oppression. Badenhausen notes the potential significance to feminism of identifying suffering as a "positive trait," in contrast with "feminist critics such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar that perceive female suffering solely in negative terms" (205).

This reversal in how literary suffering is viewed also relates to how male weakness is portrayed. The shift toward accepting and valuing suffering represents another challenge to the values of modernity, a change in the assumption that humans can or should control their environment. In contrast, modernist literature upholds a more passive and feminine role that involves bodily suffering and relinquishes illusions of control. As I note in the introduction, Joyce's Stephen Dedalus seems to take pleasure in the idea of martyrdom in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* transferring a fascination with his namesake St. Stephen's extreme religious devotion as the first martyr to his own willingness to be damned for artistic expression. Part of this willingness to be martyred is the willingness to stand alone, to be the outcast, exile, or individual. This privileging of individual perspective and fresh self-expression is obviously tied to the

*avant-garde* literary innovations of the modernist period, but it also explains why martyrs, part of a spiritual *avant-garde* and willing to be alone or rejected for their uniqueness, are expressive of the *zeitgeist* as well.

Along with seeming to take some pleasure in suffering, the Chorus is uniquely accepting of destruction as its fate, which represents the relinquishing of the prerogatives of the individual will as well as an acceptance of the limitations of human reason and power in light of mystical knowledge. The Chorus has no illusions about fate; it is already in a state of disillusionment, not expecting safety, comfort, or victory. After Thomas is visited by the Tempters, the Chorus interjects: "We are not ignorant women, we know what we must expect and not expect," i.e. "oppression and torture, … extortion and violence, / Destitution, disease" (195). Indeed, they are the opposite of ignorant: their most marked characteristic is knowingness. But over time they have found comfort in life: they have "gone on living , / Living and partly living, … / Building a partial shelter, For sleeping, and eating and drinking and laughter" (195). This is what Thomas cannot do as he begins to wrestle with the idea of fate and with prophetic knowledge of his own particular fate. As the voice of his consciousness, the Chorus joins him in this dreadful anticipation. Their previous means of coping with the knowledge of suffering and death—"sleeping, and eating and drinking and laughter"—recall Shaw's ordinary English Soldier and his Dionysian means of getting through the horrors of war: singing, nonsense, and drinking as much as he can afford. The women are not, and know they are not, fully sheltered, only "partially sheltered" from danger. Their domesticity, wanting to be left alone in their homes to carry on their daily business, has provided a temporary illusion of safety, but home is only a partial shelter against destiny just as spring,

summer, and fall are only partially seasons of life, and can obscure the coming winter but not avert it. The Chorus, the Priests, and the Tempters all warn Thomas that a man is never safe, not even in the light of day, in his own home, or in sitting down to dinner. The Chorus describes inevitable "Terror" and "despair" which "none can avert" and "none can avoid, [and are] flowing under our feet and over the sky; / Under doors and down chimneys, flowing in at the ear and the mouth and the eye" (195). The terror envelops and invades even the safe, intimate spaces of the home and the body. They also understand the full spiritual implications of Thomas's impending death; they prophesy that it will mean the loss of the divine presence and the arrival of "Lords of Hell" (195-6). They ask him to "save yourself that we may be saved," but they do not deceive themselves that they can prevent fate by an act of will or go back to domestic lives of comfort (196). This kind of honest disillusionment is perhaps an example of what Eliot was describing in saying that "wisdom" comes from "uncynical disillusion." It also shows how the Chorus reflects modernist tendencies yet again by facing the loss of safety and of illusions of peace in the world. Terror and despair's invasion of their domestic lives is illuminated by Freud's theory of the uncanny, the presence of the unfamiliar specter of death that infects and deforms the familiar setting of home: "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" ("The 'Uncanny'" 515). We remember our primitive childhood fears of loss and our first encounters with death in the context of our family of origin, childhood home, and other settings that are seemingly safe.

The Chorus's knowledge of the inevitability of suffering also stems from their profound experience of the darkness and suffering of winter. After Thomas's Christmas

sermon, which occurs in the center of the play and is bookended by his encounter with the Tempters on one side and by his encounter with the Knights on the other side, the Chorus speaks again to open Part II of the play: "What sign of the spring of the year? / Only the death of the old: not a shoot, not a breath" (201). There is no sign of spring, of plants growing, of life. Christmas falls near the Winter Solstice, the time of the year when days get longer, and this natural change is often thought to symbolize the persistence of hope in the midst of darkness, but the Chorus only sees "signs of a bitter spring," and days that are longer but actually "darker" (201). Eliot also emphasizes the repetitiveness of the yearly seasonal calendar, evoking a sense of futility rather than of resurrection in the coming of spring: "The ploughman shall go out in March and turn the same earth/ He has turned before, the bird shall sing the same song" (202). The problem with looking forward to spring is that it obscures the "work" and "wrong" that must be done in winter. In other words, spring hides the reality of the death that has occurred with the sensory experiences of the "bird's song," the "green tree," and the "fresh earth" (202). This "work" must be done "between Christmas and Easter," i.e. in the deprivation of Lent and in the darkness of winter. If this work is not done, then "we shall have only / A Sour spring, a parched summer, an empty harvest" (201). This dwelling on the death inherent in winter without thinking of spring emphasizes the finality of loss. The Chorus's meditation on death examines the experience of darkness without consolation or mitigation; death is not just a brief stopping-off point on the road to an easily-won redemption. Eliot shows the importance of darkness through the Chorus's experience of it without hope.

Eliot's paradoxical theme is that the cleansing spiritual violence of winter is necessary because the earth has been fouled by natural violence: "the world must be cleaned in the winter" (201). The cleansing is achieved through "death in the Lord," which "renews" (201). Winter—and violence—have two contradictory effects: fouling and cleansing. There is a difference between two kinds of violence associated with winter: "And war among men defiles this world, but death in the Lord renews it" (201). Human violence fouls, while spiritual violence cleanses, and this dichotomy explains how the season of winter can encompass opposite functions. The difference between the two types of violence is the primacy of human will in the first; similarly, Eliot contrasts political and spiritual advancement, the former of which requires an assertion of the will and the latter which requires submission of the will. The "war among men" that "defiles" is the worldly system of exerting power over and inflicting pain on others, a political and social phenomenon that parallels Darwinian explanations of nature. Eliot is clearly contrasting the violence that accepts martyrdom with that which makes a victim of others, i.e. war and murder, natural outgrowths of the natural system of political and social hierarchy represented by the Knights.

Because the play dwells so much on the darkness and death of winter and the wasteland, waiting is a recurrent theme. Forms of the word "wait" are repeated constantly throughout the first part of the play. Unexpectedly, the waiting is not for relief, spring, or what most people perceive as "peace," but for the arrival of the moment when fated suffering will come to bloody fruition. "Peace," as Thomas redefines it in his Christmas sermon, actually means "to suffer death," and this moment is what the Chorus waits to "witness" or share (199). In contrast to the Chorus, who wait with Thomas, the

Priests advise him to wait for peace in the conventional sense of it, as if one could outlast or avoid fate: "*wait* for the sea to subside," they exhort him, and "do not sail the irresistible wind" (194, emphasis mine). Their argument is to avoid a doomed battle altogether, implying that death, fate, and the dangers of winter weather are optional if one is clever and strategic enough to stay under shelter. This passage is the first indication that the Priests are operating from a natural rather than a spiritual perspective; the "war among men" must be won because they are not aware of the alternative type of violence, submission to "death in the Lord," and they do not understand the mystical realities of unavoidable fate and of cleansing bloodshed. When the Priests make their commonsense appeal to Thomas to find "shelter," Eliot's rejoinder can be found in the Chorus's earlier observation that shelter in winter is only partial. Strategic protection from fate is an illusion. Knowing that fate is unavoidable, their waiting is the opposite of hopeful: it is a form of suffering in and of itself. Waiting is both long and short; because the dreaded event is arriving too swiftly, it seems short, but because their knowing anticipation is so painful, it seems long: "the time is short / But waiting is long" (202).

Eliot's focus on fate and destiny indicates a modernist rather than a modern treatment of the will. *Fatalism* is "submission to everything that happens as inevitable" ("Fatalism"). This definition speaks of the relationship of the will and fate: to believe in fate is to submit to it. Eliot contrasts submission with attempts to control or change the future and also with assumptions that the future will be better than the present because progress is inevitable. Thomas connects fate and the will explicitly in his Christmas sermon: "martyrdom is no accident," nor is it "the effect of a man's will to become a Saint, as a man by willing and contriving may become a ruler of men" (199). Thomas's

insistence that his death will be "no accident" implies the existence of fate and is essential in establishing many major themes of the play such as the futility of the exertion of the will and the concurrent need to accept fate or the divine will, and it is through this distinction that the play establishes the difference between the Saint and the self-made modern man. Martyrdom and sainthood cannot be achieved by "the design of man, but in contrast, "a man by willing and contriving may become a ruler of men" (199). This contrast shows the difference between secular and spiritual vocations and criticizes an age marked by the glorification of the will, a belief in unfettered personal autonomy, the justification of violent revolutions in the name of ideology, the decline of sacred vocations and their replacement with capitalist and bureaucratic aspiration, and by the veneration of labor as the central aspect of human identity.

Eliot continues to develop the theme of fate through the notion that there are no random accidents. In Thomas's Christmas sermon, he points out that the feast of the first martyr, St. Stephen, falls on the day after Christmas. He asks the congregation: "Is it an accident, do you think…? By no means" (199). Indeed, the juxtaposition of these dates is clearly not an accident, because their close proximity reveals the spiritual principle that death and birth are closely related and may even occur at the same time. The coincidence of dates also reveals that the day on which death occurs is destined and not a random instance of impersonal violence in nature. This is why Thomas emphasizes the "here" and "now" in which his death occurs—he almost revels in these particular details, not seeking to plan, calculate, or control them. Eliot's concurrently emphasizes place and time in the play, for these are the two factors in which a fated event is anchored in human

experience. The only way to embrace fate is to submit to the limitations of one's control over time and place, to embrace the unfolding of fate in a particular time and place.

The natural and the liturgical calendar are both highly significant to the development of this theme because nothing in them occurs without meaning. The deep symbolism of the seasons and their relation to the most essential truths of human life and to spiritual reality is no accident, and neither is the pattern of feast days and masses. In both the natural and the church calendar, a pattern of feasts and fasts, of celebration and deprivation, provides balance and restoration over the course of the year, but it is an illusion to understand the life of spring as nullifying the experience of death in winter, or to understand Easter as making Good Friday unnecessary. The calendar year may be peaceful enough, as it provides a sort of partial peace and moderate happiness to the Chorus, with winter balanced by consolations such as a beautiful spring or a good fire, but there is no domestic peace for martyrs in their moment of suffering as commemorated on their feast days or for Christ who was already destined to suffer upon his birth. The idea of balance or of partial shelter, of partial living, that the Chorus longs to take refuge in is false because it seems to promise that the moment of fate and bloodshed will never come, to imply that one can be protected within the bosom of civilization.

The title of the play emphasizes this apparent paradox, destroying the illusion that the cathedral, both a bastion of religious civilization and a seemingly defensible physical structure, can provide safety. As the Chorus declares in the opening lines of the play, "there is no safety in the cathedral" (175). In fact, no place on earth is safe from such a fate, but suffering is less expected within the apparent safety of Christendom than in the lands outside of it, in deserts or other wastelands where a person is exposed to natural

dangers and is isolated from community protection. Thomas is just as vulnerable and isolated within Canterbury cathedral, in fact moreso, despite rules of civilized order such as the law of sanctuary in cathedrals. The irony of the play, which makes it similar to other modernist works about saint figures, is that religious people pose the danger rather than providing the haven. This paradox is also contained in the title. Thomas's suffering in the cathedral not only demonstrates the inescapability of fate but also the corruption and emptiness of Christendom when infected by secular principles such as the preeminence of the state and of social mobility. Obviously, the persistent theme that "there is no safety" accords with the feeling of vulnerability and danger that had undermined confidence in the safety, peace, rationality, and orderliness of Western civilization during the interwar period.

### *The Violent Peace of the Christmas Sermon*

Thomas's Christmas sermon is his most important statement about peace, violence, and the intersection of earthly and spiritual time in the unfolding of fate. Christmas falls at the end of December, in the death and darkness of winter, but it celebrates a birth. Eliot emphasizes this ironic layering of death and birth in the opening lines of Thomas's sermon, when he notes that "at the same moment," the Christmas mass will "re-enact the Passion and Death of Our Lord … in celebration of His Birth" (198). An event can be both based in a particular time and place (e.g. the mass they will celebrate) and recur eternally outside of time and place (e.g. the death and birth of Christ). He considers their Christmas remembrance of the death and the birth of Christ as making these past events present simultaneously, making it possible to "both mourn and rejoice at once and for the same reason" (198). The liturgical calendar and the sacrifice

of the mass are all-important because both make eternal events present and current in specific places and times, thus emphasizing the real divine presence in the particular sacraments and celebrations of the church. Besides noting the paradoxical miracle that two antithetical events can occur simultaneously, thus evoking the spiritual significance of Christmas and implying that the birth and death of Christ are actually reoccurring through his celebration of Christmas mass, Eliot also invokes the present time by noting that the martyr St. Stephen's feast is only the day after Christmas, and invokes the present place by reminding them that Canterbury already has its own martyr, Archbishop Elphege. In other words, their specific location, Canterbury Cathedral, and their specific time, Christmas day, are both highly significant and are both strongly connected with death, not safety or peace. Later, at the moment of Thomas's death, he exclaims "Now and here!" (204). This exclamation again links seemingly mundane details of time and place to their invisible meaning, a meaning that includes death and redemption inextricably woven together. The church calendar and the particulars of place and time are imbued with spiritual reality, which is neither abstract and disembodied nor mundane and materialist, but is rather both grounded and transcendent. Through this sermon, Eliot is resisting the tendencies of modernity toward both materialist and abstract extremes.

Eliot is also redefining the peaceful, comfortable, civilized connotations of Christmas and cathedrals in unexpected ways through associating them with violence in both the title of the play and in the sermon. Thomas explains how it is that on Christmas the angels could have "announced peace, when ceaselessly the world has been stricken with War and the fear of War" (199). Was this promise a "disappointment and a cheat"? Should we, in other words, become disillusioned with notions of peace, birth, and life,

especially when they are obscured and tainted by violence and death? Does the fact that death and life coexist and are remembered together mean that death is the final reality, the winner? Thomas's response to such doubt and disillusionment is to correct the commonly misconceived definition of peace, replacing expectations that civilized religion or society guarantee peace with the honesty of "uncynical disillusion" that Eliot said was a key to wisdom. Thomas explains that peace is not "the kingdom of England at peace with its neighbours, the barons at peace with the King, the Householder counting over his peaceful gains, the swept hearth, his best wine for a friend at the table, his wife singing to the children" (199). These things are not peace, nor are they promised. Again questioning the possibility of achieving the bourgeois ideal of domesticity, as well as the possibility of achieving nationalist ideals, he redefines peace paradoxically. The Christmas gift of peace is "Not as the world gives." In fact, unworldly "peace" leads to "torture, imprisonment, disappointment, [and] to suffer death by martyrdom" in the world (199). Violence is inherent in human fate, as in Matthew Arnold's vision of a chaotic natural universe in which we are "pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling" in the "turbid ebb and flow / Of human misery" at the whim of "confused alarms of struggle and flight / Where ignorant armies clash by night" (10, 17-8, 36-7). However, while Arnold implies that such violence is without meaning, Eliot explores the eternal, invisible, and redemptive ramifications of a saint's willing submission to suffering.

As in other modernist saint narratives, Eliot emphasizes the role of divine sovereignty in a saint's becoming a saint, implicitly undermining modern confidence in the efficacy of human effort and in rational self-control. Elaborating on fate, providence, and the divine will also questions the materialist sense of the universe as primarily

governed by somewhat random laws of nature such as natural selection. Martyrdom is "no accident," as Thomas says; it is not "the effect of a man's will to become a Saint, as a man by willing and contriving may become a ruler of men" (199). He significantly contrasts spiritual greatness and advancement with social and bureaucratic mobility. Thomas's acceptance of the divine will in the sermon, having "lost his will in the will of God, not lost it but found it," indicates that at least intellectually, he has resisted the temptation of the Fourth Tempter to willfully grasp martyrdom as a way of attaining personal advancement and lasting glory (199). He somehow equates the loss of the will in martyrdom with "freedom," reminiscent of Shaw's St. Joan's choice of martyrdom because it represents freedom from a physical prison, although for Shaw this freedom is an admirable assertion of her will while for Eliot it is the admirable negation of Thomas's will.

The emphasis on waiting in the play also correlates to a loss of the will and to a belief in fate, indicated by the strong sense of anticipation of a specific, destined event. The play begins during Advent, and both the Christmas sermon and Eliot's emphasis on the calendar hint that Advent is symbolically resonant in the play. Advent is the church's yearly period of waiting, preparation, and anticipation of life, even as days get shorter. In light of Thomas's sermon, however, Advent is redefined as a time of anticipating bloodshed since Christ's passion is celebrated even in the Christmas mass. In this way, Eliot ironically reverses the usual associations with Christmas, Advent, and peace; death, as well as life, is part of the awaited destiny.

*The Tempters, Time, and the Will*

The saint in modernist hagiography must properly orient his will to time, whether past, present, or future, learning to abandon illusions of returning to the past, preserving the present, and controlling the future. Thomas's visitation by the four Tempters, like his sermon, explores the proper response of the will to fate and the relation of both to time, and they tempt him with illusions about the present, past, and future. One of the Tempters' chief temptations is to seize the day, a common theme of the Metaphysical poetry Eliot was interested in: "Power is present. Holiness hereafter," the Second Tempter notes succinctly (186). Thomas rejects the Tempter's implication that what occurs in the present moment is the sum and total of what is real, revealing the first of many differences in perspective between Thomas and his opponents. Perspective determines how knowledge is perceived or not perceived. While Thomas is fixated on anticipating and embracing destiny in a particular moment and location, he also perceives the limitations of a perspective that only sees present reality and does not see the past or the future accurately. The *carpe diem* temptation is fallacious because the future, fate, is real and unchangeable and because Thomas has knowledge of such things even though they are not empirically observable. Perception of unseen reality is, of course, the definition of faith, "the evidence of things not seen," and also of hope, the perception of events that will take place in the future (Heb. 11.1). He also must accept his death, which is already embedded in the future and only waiting to unfold, just as death is always intrinsic in spring, summer, and fall. The Tempters also tempt him with the illusion of future peace, and the process of being tempted crystallizes Thomas's disillusionment and loss of naïveté, expressed in his redefinition of peace as suffering in his sermon after the

temptations. One of the Tempters' other major themes is nostalgia, the pain of longing for the past to reoccur: all of their temptations hearken to Thomas's past. When Thomas dismisses the Fourth Tempter's offers of glory as mere "Dreams," the Tempter replies with an accusation that refers to Thomas's past: "You have often dreamt them" (193). Temptations may be illusions, but they are illusions Thomas has entertained and thus cannot easily dismiss. He must accept the finality of time's progression, i.e. the death of the past: "time past is time forgotten." Thomas must accept that the past is over and that the future is destined in order to live fully in the present.

The First Tempter attacks Thomas through memories. Thomas must realize "the good time cannot last" and "summer's over," the two things the First Tempter says are not true (183). His approach is to remind Thomas of friends and "good time past" (183): his is the temptation of past mirth and the dream of an endless summer. Upon his concurrent ordination as bishop and as a priest, Thomas became an ascetic (Farmer 505), but the Tempter's reminiscences reveal that Thomas was something of a rogue and a reveler, like other modernist saints, and therefore ordinary, not the traditionally otherworldly subject of hagiography. The interaction between Thomas and the First Tempter recalls Falstaff's attempts to remind Henry V of his days as Prince Hal in *Henry V*. The Tempter suggests that it can be summer again, that winter can be over, and that Thomas's pervasive melancholy can be drowned out or balanced with mirth. When he advises that "wit and wine and wisdom" and "fire" will "ea[t] up the darkness" of winter and that "Mirth matches melancholy" (183-4), the First Tempter seems to echo Milton's praise of "December merry-making" in Elegy 6 (196) or his praise of wintertime mirth in Sonnet XVII:

> Now that the Fields are dank, and ways are mire,
> Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the fire
> Help wast a sullen day; what may be won
> From the hard Season gaining: time will run
> On smoother, till *Favonius* re-inspire
> The frozen earth (257)

As in Milton's sonnet, the Tempter advocates the pleasures of drinking, friendship, and domesticity as suitable consolations for depression, deprivation, and waiting of winter. He claims "amity" has returned between Thomas and Henry, so "gaiety" and "sportfulness" can also return for both "clergy and laity"; he does not acknowledge that as clergy, Thomas has grown to see the consolatory pleasures of youth as "fancy" and that the political friendship he shared with Henry cannot be restored (183). Instead of balancing melancholy with mirth, Thomas must embrace melancholy, or winter. In response to the temptation, Thomas expounds on the properly passive attitude towards time, explaining that almost everything about the future is unknown except that it will always repeat certain events of the past in a cycle brought about by the "wheel" of fate; however, "in the life of one man, never / The same time returns. [Therefore] Sever/ The cord, shed the scale" (184). The First Tempter twists Thomas's principle of cyclical and repetitive time, referring to "good times past, that are come again," but obviously Thomas's concept of cyclical time does not mean that a return to youth is possible (184). Rather, time keeps moving forward with predictable seasons occurring. Eliot especially emphasizes the fact that winter will always come no matter how delightful spring, summer, and fall seem. If winter is inevitable, it seems logical that spring is also inevitable. However, the spring that follows a hard winter will not be the same as the spring of one's youth, before winter is ever experienced. The difference is that the

innocence of youth is "springtime fancy" while the experience of age is "uncynical disillusion," or "reality" (185, 209).

Eliot's Thomas is indeed susceptible to temptation, which enhances his profile as a particularly modernist saint figure with struggles and weaknesses. Temptation appeals to his non-rational faculties, his emotional, aesthetic, and even physical longings; even though he can answer the First Tempter's appeals to nostalgia logically, he admits that "The impossible is still temptation" (185). Serena Marchesi differs with critics who see Thomas as the undisputed "winner" of his contest with the First Tempter, noting that "Paradoxically, the agent of evil is not humbled and defeated by the saint, as usually happens in hagiographical literature: he simply leaves—unmoved, undaunted and scornful" (17). She cites "Thomas's discursive weakness" when compared to the brilliance of evil characters (17). Marchesi notes both traditional hagiography and film versions of Eliot's play tend to emphasize Thomas's superiority over his tempters, a tendency she sees as a misreading of Eliot's play. Eliot's Saint Thomas is, rather, "a vulnerable man, endowed with a limited power to resist the allurements of evil" from the first Tempter on, admitting that the "impossible is still temptation" (185). He knows rationally that it is both impossible and "undesirable" to regain the youthful life of his memories since he cannot return to the temporary illusions of "springtime fancy" (185). If he dwells on nostalgia, "the mind may not be whole in the present" (185).

This final response to the first Tempter represents Thomas's triumph over his allurements, but Thomas is tempted nevertheless. Marchesi connects his temptations to the "sensuous images" of decadent 1890's poets such as Swinburne, whom Eliot grew to dislike as he became older and more conservative (10-11). Thomas's concurrent

attraction to memories of youth and disillusionment with the pleasures of youth seems uniquely modernist. Whereas Tennyson, in his play *Becket,* implied that Becket had been innocent of youthful dalliance and of assisting the King's sexual "follies," Eliot alludes to the "kissing-time below the stairs," referring either to Becket's own sexual past or his past service as a "pander" to the King during his liaisons (Marchesi 9). This shift is significant because the Victorian version of Saint Thomas idealizes him while Eliot's modernist version asserts Thomas's sinful past, making him another roguish saint with a history of indiscretion and weakness.

The Second Tempter also appeals to Thomas's memories, asking him to re-embrace his former position of power, promising a "life lasting, a permanent possession," and its ensuant "glory": "A templed tomb, monument of marble" (185). This is the temptation to limit one's perspective to what is present and visible and also to try to control the future. The alternative, asserting the reality of something unseen and unrealized, but better than the present option, is what makes the saint appear insane to onlookers with a materialist or limited point-of-view. The rejection of the guaranteed rewards of self-interest is thus contrary to the modern impulse. The Second Tempter makes the compelling argument that Thomas should seek what is tangible and therefore real: he should "shun" the "shadows" of both his past mirth and his current love of God for the "solid substance" of political power (185). Youthful mirth makes a person weak, "melting strength into weakness," and the love of God is a futile, unproductive vapor that ends up "lost in God" (185). The Tempter's implication that Thomas lacked self-control makes him an unlikely moralist, but it is significant that Eliot chooses a Tempter to preach the need for moral "strength," thus questioning this philosophy and implying that

such weakness is less sinful than the "strength" he tempts Thomas with. If Thomas was formerly susceptible to the temptations of mirth, as Eliot implies, the "weakness" it indicates in him makes him fit to be a modernist saint. He does not become a saint because he is strong but because he is weak. Besides maligning Thomas's history of mirth and his current love of God, the Second Tempter also says his position in the church is too intangible to be real: as a churchman, he is after all a "realmless ruler" (186). Therefore, he should pursue visible, present power in the secular state.

The rhetorical evidence the Tempter presents for this claim appeals to beneficent, even saintly, impulses rather than to selfish ambition, insisting on all the good Thomas can do through the state, the most possible good that can be done "Beneath the throne of God" (186). He promises working through the state will lead Thomas to "thrive on earth, and perhaps in heaven" (186). Even though the crux of the temptation is the promise of present gratification, the Tempter also hints that political work is actually God's work and will lead to the same future end as the path of saintliness: reward in heaven and remembrance on earth as a great man with a "monument of marble." In other words, the Tempter proposes political or state-sponsored sainthood, an idea common in modern conceptions of the state's power to advance utopian aims. For Thomas, this is a clever temptation because it plays on his desires to do good and to achieve lasting reward, but it provides a shortcut to those ends that bypasses suffering and replaces it with the attractive substitute of gaining the admiration of both the ordinary folks he would help and the powerful members of polite society he would impress.

To get what the Second Tempter calls "Real Power," Thomas must pay with "submission," but this tempter's concept of what is "real" is limited by his purely

political perspective (186). Interestingly, this temptation also plays on Thomas's saintly desires and his theological beliefs: he will later explain that submission of the personal will is the saintly ideal, and here the Tempter appeals to that ideal but transfers it to the state hierarchy. One must submit to power to gain power, whether that power is from the state or from God. This true principle reveals the common misconception that the modern state encourages complete individual autonomy while religion subjugates the will and obliterates individuality. In reality, submission of the will is required in either system. That the Tempter can also invoke the ideal of submission shows that submission in a vacuum is not a virtue and that by itself it is too simplistic a moral principle, if the submission is in the wrong context and to the wrong authority or institution. Eliot implies is that modern individualism is mere illusion because everyone submits to some institution, but which institution or authority makes all the difference. Either source of authority—the secular or the divine—will give Thomas power if he submits to it first. When Henry historically pressed Thomas to submit to two institutions or authorities at once—by remaining chancellor when he became archbishop—it was a logical impossibility for him to do so, as a man cannot have two masters. Eliot's implied warning here against the dangers of submission is surprising in a play that largely promotes the submission of the will, but it was timely: as Eliot was writing this play in 1935, Adolf Hitler, the former chancellor of Germany, was consolidating his power by demanding the submission of generals and other officials, all in the name of helping the German people renew their cultural strength after their post-war decline. Clearly, Eliot's play warns against such submission, which places the state in a supreme role, and against trusting in the use of government force to effect cultural reform and renewal.

Again misapplying Thomas's theological principles, the Second Tempter exhorts him to return to the state "for the power and the glory," echoing the Lord's Prayer without acknowledging the divine sovereignty referred to in that phrase. This distortion again shows that a principle cannot be abstracted from particularity and context and retain its meaning or even its goodness.[6] The temptation is for Thomas to seek his own power and glory by sharing in the state's rather than to acknowledge and share in God's power and glory. The Tempter promises that if he chooses the route of bureaucratic self-exaltation, "Dignity still shall be dressed with decorum" (186). This promise speaks to the temptations of belonging and succeeding in middle class polite society. Thomas the statesman will appear sophisticated and proper, not power-hungry or vulgar. In contrast, accepting his martyr's fate leads to his rejection by polite society when the knights accuse him of indecorous treachery and give him an undignified death. But Thomas's response to the Tempter's promise indicates that he has a sort of proper pride in the superiority of the authority he submits to; he will not "descend to desire a punier power" (187). In this reversal of the Tempter's argument, Thomas points out that the natural desire for power actually leads him to God rather than the state, dismissing the power of the state as piddling. Again, Thomas's dismissive attitude emphasizes a difference in their perspectives on reality. The Tempter's perspective is quite modern: the promotion of social good through political power is taken for granted and considered inevitable, but the pitfalls of submission to the state are not recognized. The state's beneficial policies and actions are visible, making it preeminent in a strictly materialist version of reality. Thomas does not reject the notion that influence is desirable and can achieve good, but instead reapplies the secular principles of the Tempter to invisible spiritual realities that

only he can perceive. The reality is that Thomas's current authority is already quite grand, giving him the "keys / Of heaven and hell," making him "supreme alone in England," and allowing him to "condemn kings, not serve among their servants" (187). Social climbing and political aspiration are not necessary for someone so powerful and ironically would represent a decline in terms of real power and glory.

Next, the Third Tempter tempts Thomas with enticing talk of revolution, aligning himself with the common people rather than the politically powerful: "I am no courtier," he says, just an ordinary "country-keeping lord" and a "rough straightforward Englishman" (188). Each Tempter plays off of the last, attempting to show himself as virtuous in contrast with the Tempter Thomas has just rejected and to appeal to some other principle of Thomas's. Thomas responds to the Third Tempter's assertion that he is honest and ordinary, piercing his rhetoric by associating him with life at court: "For a countryman / You wrap your meaning in as dark generality/ As any courtier" (188). Thomas associates the Tempter with abstract and deceptive "generality," implying that polite courtiers can be mendacious; the Chorus with their acute physicality, raw honesty, and ties to natural reality are the truly earthy characters. This Tempter asks Thomas to join his ecclesiastical power with the feudal power of "country" lords like himself to fight the "tyrannous jurisdiction / Of king's court" over both and "fight for liberty" (189). He appeals to the sense of marginalization Thomas must be feeling as a church official, since Henry has recently consolidated power by taking it from local bodies such as the church courts and baronial judiciaries. Henry is centralizing power in the state and moving away from more diffuse and democratic forms of government, a move which parallels modern fascism. The Third Tempter appeals to Thomas's natural love of liberty and hatred of

tyranny. These principles provide a strong rationale for an uprising in modern political revolutionary logic: the answer to state oppression is the formation of a new state that restores a better balance of earthly power. "Church and people have good cause against the throne," the Tempter insists (189). Eliot is markedly against revolution here, even though the king is threatening the church's proper ascendancy. Eliot is suspicious of the formation of a new state, also founded on violence, in the vacuum left by the old—revolution would not, in the end, produce a significant change and would not renew the wasteland. As Thomas earlier differentiated, there are two kinds of violence, the "war among men" and the "death in the Lord"; the former is the basis of revolution, but the latter is the violence that can actually effect change, although the change might not be tangible and political. Therefore, revolution is the more obvious materialist course of action, while martyrdom seems irrational and ineffectual, a sign of weakness. Another reason for Eliot's opposition to revolution is that the modern state system is inescapably secular. Thomas responds that even if he has lost faith in secular authority, having suffered from its tyranny personally and having witnessed its unjust assaults on the church, this political skepticism only gives him "good cause to trust none but God alone" (189). His disillusionment with the state, then, does not logically lead to revolution, which would be a violent act of his own will to replace a state created by the King's assertion of his will—in other words, it would be no better in spiritual terms. He is not convinced to use violence to assert the church's power or to replace the king with a new state dominated by the nobility, even though such a government might appear more democratic or more friendly to the church. Through Thomas's rejection of the Third

Tempter, Eliot forcefully questions the modern principle of justified revolution, predicting that it leads to more of the same.

The Second Tempter, who calls for political reform, and the Third Tempter, who calls for political revolution, both make their appeals to Thomas's desire for self-assertion but cover this raw appeal with the rhetoric of political ideals like humanitarianism and liberty. These ideals are illusions, as are the promises of reform and revolution, disguising the essentially violent nature of the state and its desire to replace the church. For Thomas, it is important that he reject the temptation to ascend to personal power, even if in the name of liberty. Thomas had such power in his past as chancellor, just as he had days of youthful mirth and friendship behind him, which the First Tempter reminds him of; these past experiences become his present temptations, but he refuses to become a traitor to the king or to violently "break" the power of the state which he himself established: "if I break, I must break myself alone" (190). In other words, he refuses to justify violence with ideology; violence would be the assertion of his will at the expense of others. Thomas's rejection of the Second and Third Tempters represents Eliot's critique of the modern political system and its pretensions to goodness.

The Fourth Tempter, who is unexpected, moves away from the temptations of the past and of the state and tempts Thomas with the subtle misuse of the spiritual power he already has: "You hold this power, hold it" (191). This temptation reveals a paradox: Thomas has immense power, but only as he does not grasp it or pretend to own it; he must not treat it as the visible, tangible power of the state is often treated. The Fourth Tempter also invokes the glory of martyrdom, appealing to Thomas's spiritual pride: "King is forgotten, when another shall come:/ [but] Saint and Martyr rule from the tomb"

(191). In this way, he quite accurately acknowledges the superiority of eternal, spiritual power to temporal, earthly power, an accuracy which seems to increase the possibility that he will succeed in corrupting Thomas: "Seek the way of martyrdom, make yourself the lowest/ On earth, to be high in heaven" (192). This fourth temptation, like the last two, exploits Thomas's virtues and principles because he does believe in the biblical principle that the persecuted will receive rewards. The Fourth Tempter's version of this principle is close to virtue except in its exhortation to "make yourself" low rather than to simply allow himself to suffer if it is so destined. This temptation is well-constructed and creates a real struggle in Thomas because it forces him to question the rightness of his motives and to believe that his pride is insurmountable, so close is it to humility. His lack of confidence in himself increases.

After failing with this temptation, the Fourth Tempter and the other Tempters try once again to avert Thomas from his fate by asserting the futility and meaninglessness of suffering and by accusing him of perverse pride and willfulness:

> This man is obstinate, blind, intent
> On Self-destruction,
> Passing from deception to deception,
> From grandeur to grandeur to final illusion (194)

Thomas's submissive acceptance of suffering is called into question by the Tempters' implication that he is willfully self-destructive and even anarchic, an "enemy of society, enemy of himself," also implying that he is motivated by "illusion," especially that of "his own greatness" (194). They imply that his selflessness is only a façade obscuring his self-interest. Berst argues that ultimately the martyrdom in the play is tainted by Thomas's ineradicable sins of pride and willfulness, but his very conviction that he is damned in his pride proves his saintly humility and lack of pretensions: "Is there no way,

in my soul's sickness,/ Does not lead to damnation in pride?" (193). The profound self-doubt the temptation creates in Thomas is providentially turned to good in that it contributes to Thomas's loss of trust in his own will, which enables his sainthood. Because he is convinced of his own guilt, he gradually loses his powers of decisiveness, preparing him to accept martyrdom rather than to will it.

Thomas's middle age is a time of disillusionment with himself, which is what allows him to resist the illusions of temptation and also what makes him a particularly modernist saint figure. He reflects on the reason his middle age has been characterized by ambition, after the loss of the naïve confidence and pleasurable quests of his youth: "Ambition comes when early force is spent / And when we find no longer all things possible" (196). He implies that political ambition was his compensation for aging, but now he has an epiphany about his own motives, becoming disillusioned with his own disillusionment. Ambition is perhaps borne out of cynical disillusionment, and in contrast, Thomas is now developing the "uncynical disillusion" of "wisdom." He is afraid that his sin of ambition is now manifested in even worse ways, tainting his spiritual authority and virtuous desires: "those who serve the greater cause may make the cause serve them" by "mak[ing] that cause political" (196). He makes the point that those with a spiritual calling are actually more susceptible to "greater sin / And sorrow" than those who are ambitious in the secular realm (196). It seems that bearing the knowledge of his own unchangeable sin and guilt is part of the sacrifice of his calling[7]. This is unexpected because the burden of sainthood is usually that of purity and self-denial. Besides an acute awareness of his own sin, Thomas is also aware of his own reluctance: "To become servant of God was never my wish" (196). His guilt and his reluctance make him

analogous to other modernist saint figures, who are not idealized. Rather, their creators seem intent on establishing their moral failures. For Thomas, youth was a time of "natural vigour in the venial sin," meaning his former sins of mirth are understandable and sympathetic, another way in which Eliot employs the modernist paradox that the sinner is most qualified to be a saint (196). Thomas has outgrown the sins of youth; the disillusionment of middle age with "spring" pleasures seems to enable his asceticism, but it is significant that Eliot chooses to make Thomas a man with a history of indulgence who still feels that he is beaten by sin. Youth, a time of relatively innocent sin, has given way to greater sin, ironically, in his role as an Archbishop: "Sin grows with doing good," he says (196). He is afraid of doing "the right deed for the wrong reason," and of making his cause "political," because his nature and skills are political (196). As an aspiring martyr and servant of God, he also sees himself as the greatest sinner. Again, ironically this qualifies him for sainthood.

Thomas is dismayed by how incisive and clever each tempter is: they know what tempts him and what has tempted him in the past, from "The prizes given at the children's party" in youth to "The Scholar's degree, the statesman's decoration" in middle age (194). Their temptations reveal his weaknesses and remind him of his disillusionment with those things, tempting him to extend the disillusionment also to the present and to doubt his spiritual commitment (194). Thomas is convinced that he is a sinner: "Is there no way, in my soul's sickness,/ Does not lead to damnation in pride?" (193). He feels overcome by sin and therefore has no will because he believes following his own will will lead to evil. Understanding the connection between his conviction of his sinfulness and the subjugation of his will is important on many levels. It disproves

Berst's argument that Thomas pridefully wills his own martyrdom. This is also an accusation the Knights level at him after his death. His trust in his own will is broken down through his struggle against the Tempters and his consequent awareness of his personal weakness. The modernist saint believes he is a sinner, not a saint, and this very humility marks him as a saint. Thomas explicitly renounces the idea that he has made a *decision* to be martyred at several points in the play, stating that "decision" implies the intention of only a part of the self, i.e. the will or the reason, while his act of submission comes from his entire being: he implies that it is not an act of will or of self-control. At other times, he remarks on the need for the loss of his will in the divine will, but it is not immediately clear that he achieves this ideal unless we consider that his own self-doubt and guilt erode his confidence and pride, thus allowing him to submit to fate instead of trying to control it by either willing or avoiding his murder. Thomas's martyrdom is not imposed on the rest of his being by an admirable gritting of his teeth; his desires are in alignment with his will and his actions follow from this natural integration. The modernist saint is not a preeminently respectable and self-disciplined man. A man who is convinced of the deceit of his own will and his susceptibility to sin is particularly well-suited to be a humble instrument of the divine will rather than a prideful practitioner of self-control. The modernist saint's lack of will and lack of trust in his will reveals that divine providence guides his fate, and his sin shows the role of divine grace in effecting his sainthood. Modernist authors were drawn to saints and to create saint characters because they represent a radical rejection of nineteenth-century values such as the assertion of the will to power, the middle class goal of social advancement, and the democratic ideal of unfettered autonomy.[8]

The Tempters end their appeals with the image of a wheel, often a symbol of fate, trying to make Thomas question his perceptions of reality and whether his convictions about fate are real: "All things are unreal, / Unreal or disappointing:/ The Catherine wheel, the pantomime cat" (194). The Catherine Wheel, referring to the wheel on which the legendary St. Catherine was tortured and martyred, symbolizes the passivity of suffering and patience because of its namesake, but also the mobility of action and movement because it is a wheel. A wheel obviously symbolizes action, but the center of a wheel may be considered a still point: a "wheel may turn and still / Be forever still" (182). These antitheses of passivity and action will eventually be united in Thomas's death. Earlier, Thomas has already introduced the wheel image, noting that only a "fool…may think / He can turn the wheel on which he turns"—control is an illusion because we are inside the wheel of fate and time (184). The Tempters go on to list other "disappointing" and "unreal" things, and all are childish delights, such as the "pantomime cat," that one becomes disillusioned with after losing the naïveté of childhood and seeing their flimsy reality. It is interesting that the Tempters group a torture device with childhood toys to tempt Thomas into thinking martyrdom will not live up to its promises either; is it only an "illusion" as well? They are exploiting Thomas's past by reminding him of his repeated disillusionment, which is both a natural part of growing up and a particularly modernist experience. Thomas is not only disillusioned with the toys and fantasies of childhood, but also with the comforts and indulgences of his young adulthood and with the illusions of effecting earthly good that he presumably harbored in his days as a high-ranking bureaucrat and socialite. They tempt him at first with nostalgia, urging him to recreate the past, but when this does not work, they decide to exploit his

disillusionment with the past. The question is whether his religious convictions should also fall victim to the disillusionment that has disabused him of his former desires. If he finds his desire to submit to God to be merely an illusion motivated by pride and the desire for glory, then he will become disillusioned and question the necessity of suffering, especially if he believes that he, and not God or fate, has willed his own destruction.

An important element of accepting fate throughout the play is accepting the particular time and place at which destiny plays out instead of allowing misconceived notions of the past and the future to interfere with the unfolding of the divine will. When Thomas is killed later in the play, he says "Now and here!," practically welcoming the Knights who are to kill him (204). He is flexible, recognizing he cannot control these particulars or avert his fate: "Here, here, you shall find me ready, … / At whatsoever time you are ready to come" (207). The First Knight tries to torment Thomas with accusations about his past, implying that past sin disqualifies him from present sainthood: "Of your earlier misdeeds I shall make no mention" (204). He suggests "burying the memory of your transgressions" (205) as a guilt-ridden attempt to coerce Thomas into submission, but Thomas resists being haunted by the past just as he resists longing for the past. He overcomes the intrusions of the past in order to live in the present moment, a pervasive theme of much modernist literature.

The question of what is real is also central to Thomas's struggle: the Tempters imply that he cannot have faith in the invisible the same way he could not trust appearances in the past, e.g. "the pantomime cat." A common accusation leveled by bystanders against the modernist saint figure is that he believes in nonsense, i.e. his

beliefs are not rational, commonsensical, or scientific. The saint's persistence in maintaining his own individual perspective, in this case a perspective that sees beyond observable phenomena and things he has already experienced, makes him compatible with not only the modernist emphasis on the importance of individual perspective but also with the classic definition of a saint as one who can see beyond this world and thus "of whom the world is not worthy" (Heb. 11.38). Both perspectives, the subjective and the spiritual, challenge the dominant rationalist perspective of modernity which assumes that non-materialist and non-empirical perspectives are superstitious, backwards, or insane.

*The Knights, the State, and "Order"*

After the Christmas Sermon interlude, the Knights who are to murder Thomas arrive, justifying their intentions to murder as restoring order in an ominous manifestation of modern fascist statist ideology. Eliot has addressed this theme earlier: the second temptation, that of doing good through utopian political reform, is described by Thomas as the temptation to use "Temporal power, to build a good world, / To keep order, as the world knows order" (187). Thomas again differentiates between the limited perspective of what the "world knows" and a more expansive perspective that allows for the existence of non-visible and non-rational phenomena. When the politically revolutionary Third Tempter first arrives, he also invokes order, attempting to build his respectable credibility in Thomas's eyes by claiming he keeps his "estates in order" and "minds his own [domestic] business"; he also claims to "know" and "care for the country" (188). The Priests are also concerned about order and fear chaos. Thomas assures them that if he dies, he will "try to leave them in order"; when the Knights arrive, Thomas tells the

Priests that he has left his "papers in order" for them (182, 203). They also boast to him that they have kept church matters "in order" during his seven-year absence (182). Thomas concedes this administrative necessity to them as fellow church officials, but he knows neither bureaucratic nor domestic order will protect him from exposure to the violent natural chaos of the wasteland. The Chorus women also desire and cherish order: we "are content if we are left alone. / We try to keep our households in order;" (176). Like the Second Tempter, they are adept at business and private life. Their reliance on order reflects an illusion of control, however, which they lose throughout the play.

The most ominous expositions on the need for order are found in the Knights' propaganda in the final section of the play. As Eliot states in "The Idea of a Christian Society," even avowed democrats are attracted to the idea of order, and secular democracy eventually leads to fascistic developments because it does not provide a meaningful sense of order in everyday life, a function the church used to serve. Democracy, Eliot argued, is a negative rather than a positive force, eradicating traditions and habits and leading to the aimlessness of individual autonomy. Therefore, the Knights should not be read as merely a warning against Naziism or communism, but also as a commentary on the tendencies of supposedly enlightened modern Western states. The beginning of the rise of the secular modern state is sometimes located in the English Reformation. Henry VIII asserted his own authority and rejected the authority of Rome, soon after dismantling and pillaging monasteries and enriching secular lords in the process. The rationalist tendencies of modernity also began to emerge during the Reformation and Renaissance, flourishing in the Enlightenment and the ensuing age of science. It is interesting, then, that Eliot chooses a medieval saint story to illustrate

problems with the modern state, but the conflict between Henry and Thomas, with Henry triumphing, obviously lends itself to this theme. The Knights are Henry's representatives in promoting "order" as the highest priority of government, and they represent modernity in their love of bureaucracy, propaganda, nationalism, sophistication, and social mobility.

The Fourth Tempter actually makes reference to the future Reformation, foretelling the decline of the church and its replacement with modern secular order, a societal structure Eliot calls a "financial oligarchy" in "The Idea of a Christian Society." This Tempter torments Thomas with prophetic descriptions of the desecrated church, enticing him to endure martyrdom as a means of ensuring his own personal glory in ages to come when the church's glory will fade. He argues that only the glory of sainthood will endure when the church has been desecrated, predicting

> That the shrine shall be pillaged, and the gold spent,
> The jewels gone for light ladies' ornament,
> The sanctuary broken, and its stores
> Swept into the laps of parasites and whores.
> When miracles cease, and the faithful desert you,
> And men shall only do their best to forget you. (192)

This description is of the coming English Reformation and the corrupt motives behind the dissolution of the monasteries. In Eliot's rendering, this dissolution will mark the ascendancy of greed as the driving purpose of society and the end of sacred vocations in England, the disappearance of people who live outside the financial oligarchy and provide "sanctuary" for the presence of God, space for "miracles." He is describing the onset of the modern spiritual wasteland, complete with its polite society of well-dressed ladies and social-climbing "parasites." Vulgar capitalism replaces Christendom, and miracles pass away with the rise of rationalism.

He goes on to torment Thomas by describing the scientism of the modern age that would follow the Reformation: not only would the "faithful desert" Thomas and, by implication, the church, but

> later is worse, when men will not hate you
> Enough to defame or to execrate you,
> But pondering the qualities that you lacked
> Will only try to find the historical fact. (192)

At least during the Reformation, the conflict between church and state still existed, but in the modern era the church is treated as a mere historical relic and as a subject of scientific study: the attitude of modern scholars toward Thomas will be "that there was no mystery / About this man who played a certain part in history" (192). By writing a modernist verse drama about Thomas, Eliot counters this trend and restores the sense of mystery and miracle to his memory, not limiting himself to the pseudoscientific realism of the "historical fact." The Tempter's speech echoes Oscar Wilde's complaint about the writing of modern nonfiction and biography and its tendency toward the limitations of scientific materialism. Wilde criticized Victorian writing for stripping its subjects of aesthetic interest and color, but also for eliminating supernatural aspects from stories, thus limiting what is considered real to dull and material aspects of existence. Wilde praised "The Lives of the Saints" and other works loosely historical biographies because "facts are either kept in their proper subordinate position, or else entirely excluded on the general ground of dulness" (486-7).[9] Later in the play, the First Knight also embodies this rational modern spirit: justifying his murder of Thomas, he notes simplistically after his speech that "These are the facts," as if this insistence shuts down all moral objections to the murder (205). In modern scholarship and rhetoric, "facts" carry weight and are often thought to provide incontrovertible proof, but Eliot uses irony to satirize that

assumption by placing it in the mouth of a murderer, thus bringing the question of interpretation into the picture. He calls into question supposedly objective "facts" by making the interpreter of said facts an apparently rational but deeply inhumane man whose limited sense of reality is dictated by the social and natural rat race. His appeal to scientific rationalism ironically reveals his small-mindedness.

The Knights accuse Thomas of being "in rebellion to the king and the law" (203), a man of questionable character and a rebel against order. They see his authority as worldly in origin, coming from the King, and thus his duty is to loyally execute the will of the king (203). To them, he appears prideful, an individualist who is against social order, which is enough reason to exile him from society. This view of Thomas reveals them to be more interested in maintaining social order than in promoting the democratic values they claim to believe in. Their definition of loyalty only allows for one object of loyalty: the state. The First Knight's opening line is to give an identity to his party: they are "Servants of the king" (202). In this way, Eliot marks the Knights as submissive—the difference between them and Thomas is in whom or what they submit to. Thomas earlier refuses to "serve among … servants" (187). He is somehow elevated beyond servanthood by his submission; he is "supreme alone in England," which is ironic because the Knights and Tempters keep encouraging him to return to his former position of power as chancellor (187). Only Thomas knows that to do so would be to "descend." Thomas is a rebel against the King in the sense that God has given him a position above the King, but his supremacy is real and just, so not an act of rebellion. The difference between his "supreme" position and his former position as chancellor, so admired by the Knights, is that one was a gift and one was acquired through an act of will. Because of

this difference, citing his present supremacy is not an act of pride but rather evidence of contentment. Snobbery is a phenomenon of the modern middle class: only those who aspire beyond their destined place in life become polite snobs like the Knights. Those who are secure in their status have no need to look down on others or exert their will violently to keep them down. Eliot reveals two scandalous shortcomings of democratic society: it encourages snobbery, which breeds violence, and it easily develops into totalitarianism, which is also violent. Thomas tells the knights that if he has been lawfully condemned, they should announce the king's command publicly, but they want to murder him "here and now," in secret (204). Even though this is illegal and unjust, Thomas submits rather than rebelling against fate, God's will, or the King, again showing his rejection of revolutionary violence, even refusing to assert his will in the name of justice. He in fact reiterates the Knights' insistence on murdering him immediately, saying "Now and here!" (204). For the Knights, their urgency reveals the impatience and insecurity of the secular authoritarian will, and Thomas points out that they do not even adhere to the legal principles of the government they claim to represent. They abandon trials and procedures in order to quickly restore fascistic order by killing the rebel, defined as the one with loyalty to something other than the state. For Thomas, his agreement to dying "now and here" it is the opposite of their impatience: a submission to fate rather than an assertion of will. It is the climax in which Thomas embodies a *carpe diem* ideal of living in the moment, accepting the unfolding of fate in a particular place and time, that the play has been building towards. His version of *carpe diem* is spiritual rather than materialistic, a contrast to the Tempters' insistences that he seize the day by grasping at power and fame.

Besides critiquing fascism and greed, Eliot also satirizes another, related aspect of secular modernity: the moral and spiritual emptiness of bourgeois or polite society. Membership in its ranks comes at too high a cost and its snobbish sophistication obscures its vulgar and savage character. The modernist saint is rejected from it when he refuses its obligations and demands, a form of independent individualism that rejects the bourgeois version of individualism, which is more interested in image and self-advancement than in spirituality or humanity. The Priests are members of polite society, powerful officials who would rather be left in peace and comfort than be forced into exile or suffering with Thomas. We see them offering "hospitality" to the knights, who respond "Business before dinner" in a particularly bourgeois euphemism for the grisly murder they are about to commit; their reference to "business" and "dinner" alludes to both capitalism and domesticity, preeminent values of the Victorian period (202). The Priests' hospitality is a pretense: they pretend they can interact with the Knights in a polite and decorous manner, but there is a recurring theme throughout the play that mirth, manners, and domestic customs do not keep us safe from the violence of nature, and the Knights, beneath their refinement, are part of the violent natural order. The Priests' show of hospitality may be considered hypocritical since it seems to be borne out of fear of the Knights' savagery. It is satirical and ironic that they offer dinner to characters they soon will be calling "beasts." Thomas is more knowing and honest than the Priests, but still extends hospitality, showing openness to fate in contrast with the Priests' fear: "You are welcome, whatever your business may be" (203). Thomas offers hospitality to men he knows to be his murderers, revealing that although he is an outcast, he is the sincere exemplar of this virtue, inviting men to dinner who are not polite friends but violent

enemies. Thomas does not exclude them even though he is excluded by them. The Priests give up their practice of hospitality upon realizing why the Knights are there. The Knights are in reality savages, a motif which Eliot develops in likening them to lions, but they are also well-bred capitalists: "Business before dinner. We will roast your pork / First, and dine upon it after" (202). The juxtaposition of polite customs of "business" and "dinner" with their real intentions, to figuratively eat Thomas for dinner, highlights their real nature: socialites are really savages at heart.

Both the Priests and the Knights reject Thomas upon realizing that he does not fulfill their expectations of propriety, thus revealing the emptiness of a society that prizes decorum and respectability above all else. The Priests think Thomas is "reckless, desperate and mad," making him a social exile even to his supposed attendants and fellow church officials. The Knights taunt Thomas in the moments before they kill him as "the Cheapside brat" and "the faithless priest," "the traitor to the King," calling into question his respectability and his origins (212). Questioning Thomas's fidelity represents a secular misunderstanding of loyalty, one that places loyalty to the state above loyalty to God or the church, but it allows them to destroy his reputation, making him unfit for their society and for life. The other accusation reveals the Knights as snobs and gatekeepers of polite society who wish to impugn Thomas as a vulgar middle-class social climber. Their snobbery shows their desperate vulgarity contrasted with Thomas's confidence in his position, acceptance of exile, and serenity regarding the loss of the King's favor. Formerly, Thomas was a member of this class, politically skillful and upwardly mobile, an open enemy of "The raw nobility, whose manners matched their fingernails," rejecting their crudity. In contrast, he pursued sophistication: "I searched all

the ways/ That lead to pleasure, advancement and praise. Delight in sense, in learning and in thought,/ Music and philosophy, curiosity," etc. (196). These pursuits were part of his relatively innocent "venial sin," borne out of the "natural vigour" of youth (196). He was young, refined, attractive, and popular. He now accepts that he will be an outcast who loses not only his life but also his reputation: "my history / Will seem to most of you at best futility,' Senseless self-slaughter of a lunatic, / Arrogant passion of a fanatic" (197). The modernist saint must seem insane and irrational, immoral and rebellious, to those who determine what is sophisticated and acceptable.

The Knights also point out Thomas's middle class origins to imply that he owes his current position to the King's promotions:

> This is the man who was the tradesman's son: the backstairs brat who was born in Cheapside;
> This is the creature that crawled upon the King; swollen with blood and swollen with pride.
> Creeping out of the London dirt,
> Crawling up like a louse on your shirt. (203)

They level insults typically aimed at the aspirational middle class, accusations of overreaching pride, not knowing one's place, vulgarity, "ambition," and parasitic behavior, all to argue that Thomas is indebted to the King for his position of authority and that his pretensions to an independent spiritual power are just cover for prideful ingratitude. He is just a social climber, in other words. This is yet another subtly deceitful temptation to undermine Thomas's confidence. But Thomas no longer relies upon the same means of social climbing or gaining power because as part of his religious vocation he has extracted himself from the middle class system of "*getting on*." He has a confidence that transcends his social position and threats to it.

Is Thomas prideful, as the Knights and some critics say? If so, is his pride sinful?[10] When he refuses to return to his youthful self-indulgence, the First Tempter abandons him to "the pleasures of your higher vices," i.e. pride, calling into question whether his martyrdom is ultimately borne of pride (184). The "higher" sins Thomas is accused of and tempted to return to: ambition, pride, and greed (204), are those of his more recent past and those of the middle class. The Knights accuse him of manifesting those vices in his aspirations to martyrdom, and he must parse out what his real motivation is—is it simply a new form of ambition, not to be chancellor but to be saint? This is a significant interpretive question to answer about the play because if martyrdom is simply a new form of success, then Thomas is not making a sacrifice at all and has not become an exile from polite society. The Knights accuse him of challenging the king's power merely to gain power for himself, as if the church is a rival insurgent state rather than the representative of an invisible realm and of divine government. They also accuse him of having left England for France as a political trick: "not exiled / Or threatened,…but in the hope/ Of stirring up trouble" (204-5). The knights claim the King has offered him "peace," forgiveness of his "transgressions," and "honours" and "possessions" to effect reconciliation (205). Thomas has already explained in his Christmas sermon that his definition of "peace" is bloodshed, the opposite of the comfort the knights are offering him. There is also a misunderstanding of authority here; they accuse Thomas of lack of "gratitude" as if the source of his status is the King; they see the secular state, rather than God, as the ultimate source of all blessings and success (205). Thomas corrects their misconception about the source of his power and position—it does not come from middle class striving or maneuvering, or from the secular favors of

the King as his chancellorship and previous success in society did—in fact, Thomas has no desire to diminish secular power, only to exercise proper spiritual authority. The knights accuse him of disloyalty for enacting a papal order against the bishops who crowned the King's son. He answers the knights' accusation with this defense:

> I would wish [the prince] three crowns rather than one,
> And as for the bishops, it is not my yoke
> That is laid upon them, or mine to revoke.
> Let them go to the Pope. It was he who condemned them. (205)

The Knights consider Thomas, who is merely the vessel "through" which this order was enacted, as the cause of it, in ignorance of basic principles of vicarious authority. They try to coerce him with earthly force to offer absolution to the bishops, an absolution which he explains would not be effective since the authority to bind or loose comes from the Pope rather than from himself. In similar confusion about the sources of authority, they attribute spiritual authority to the secular office of the King, as if he is the dispenser of Thomas's "honours" and the absolver of Thomas's "transgressions." For them, the only sources of authority are the self and the state, and these parallel each other because the state is fueled by self-interest. They misunderstand church authority, which is physically manifested in Rome and has an invisible source in heaven; it is universal rather than national and transcends national seats of power. This understanding of authority threatens a purely nationalistic notion of English royal power and parallels the conflict of the English Reformation between Rome and the King. The Knights' and the Tempters' accusations of pride against Thomas are unfounded because his confidence is again a matter of perspective, not of self-assertion. To assert secular power to rival the King would be prideful, but they only assume he is doing this because state power is the only authority they can see and they therefore see it as ultimate.

Thomas's perspective has changed, however, since his days of ascendancy in the state hierarchy, a change which has transformed his understanding of human community. False accusations of pride, treachery, vulgarity, and insanity do not touch him. He fears not banishment from the King's or society's good graces but alienation from communion with the church: he fears being "alone" if the king were "To deprive my people of me and keep me from my own" (205). His "people" are ordinary people, represented by the Chorus, with whom he has deep sympathy. The Knights, on the other hand, fear a threat to the state bureaucracy, which they understand as community. Thomas's obedience to the Pope interrupts "The King's faithful servants, everyone who transacts/ His business in his absence, the business of the nation" (205). Eliot's use of the words "business" and "nation" makes an explicit connection between Henry's version of royal government and modern systems of capitalism and bureaucracy.

The Knights also perceive Thomas's reference to another authority—"there is higher than I or the King"—as rudeness: ""gross indignity," "insult," and insolence (206). Thomas is too disloyal for bureaucracy and is too rude for polite society, and the knights equate lack of politeness, as they define it, with immorality and rebellion. Thomas continues to challenge their definitions of morality by explaining that the authority he acts on does not come either from him or the king. In a moment of self-deprecation, he almost brags of his lowly origins:

> It is not I, Becket from Cheapside,
> It is not against me, Becket, that you strive.
> It is not Becket who pronounces doom,
> But the Law of Christ's church, the judgment of Rome. (206)[11]

In the same breath as his self-abnegating epithet he paradoxically speaks of his own grandeur, for he is the embodiment of Rome: "let Rome come / Here, to you, in the

person of her most unworthy son" (206). This paradox emphasizes both his dignity and his lack of pride: his grandeur is not dependent on his personal qualities or efforts. Highlighting his birth in Cheapside and his unworthiness shows his humility, willingness to sacrifice social status, and consequent affinity with other modernist saints. Like both Christ and Joan, he is an individual faced with the power of a legal institution that misinterprets law as a way to assert control rather than as a way to enact justice. In a parallel to Christ's trial by Pilate and Joan's by the church judiciary, Thomas is prosecuted and condemned by the flimsy sham-court set up by the Knights. These earthly courts all perceive faith in the unseen as rebellion against the state, and fear anarchy and chaos. Thomas is confident, however, in the existence of a better community and a just government, so he will "submit [his] cause before God's throne" (206-7). He repeatedly differentiates between the King's justice and transcendent, real justice, calling the state's institutional pronouncements and seemingly sovereign power into question. Thomas is not a rebel because he does not dispute the moral obligations of loyalty to the King as his secular lord, but he rejects the repeated accusations of his treachery. His response to their refrain of "Traitor! Traitor! Traitor! Traitor!" is to point out that one of them, Reginald, is actually "three times traitor" in three realms of authority, because Thomas is both his "temporal" lord and "spiritual lord," and because in killing Thomas he is also "Traitor to God in desecrating His Church" (213). Reginald is traitor to his secular, ecclesiastical, and divine obligations. It is ironic that as a murderer he claims to represent official justice and condemns Thomas for crudeness and immorality. Eliot is calling the moral judgments of the state and of society into question.

Thomas is perceived by the Knights as disobedient and rebellious, which like the perceptions of Shaw's Saint Joan's pride, is mistaken. He is, like Joan, confident in his direct connection to God, a higher authority than the state or society, and he is true to his conscience. He is not a modern individualist or a revolutionary, but he is perceived as both by those around him; this perception makes him a sympathetic modern character, an outcast and exile, while also a saint who is self-denying and spiritually-minded. He seems to be an individualist because he makes moral exceptions to obeying the law and seems to assert his own will, but Eliot also questions the modern values of self-assertion and autonomy throughout the play. It is clear that Thomas's actions are not selfish; rather, he asserts himself as a representative of God and the church. The modernist saint becomes an outcast exactly because he refuses to participate in the middle class narrative of individualism, not because he is an individualist. He is a rebel because he does not promote his own interests. Berst criticizes Eliot's Thomas, arguing that he takes pride in "his archbishop's role," his membership in an "order," and in "the glory of martyrdom" (122). Berst also claims that Thomas takes pride in "the Church that exalts him," but this is contradictory—it is not pride because he has not exalted himself, he has only accepted the Church's will as he accepts God's will in the matter of martyrdom. Berst misses, however, the great pains Eliot takes to differentiate between Thomas's two powerful positions as Chancellor and as Archbishop, emphasizing that the first position represented his rise to power through intellectual skill, criticism of others, cultural sophistication, submission to secular authority, and possibly pandering, while the second position is not an achievement at all. He can be sure of his position without taking pride in it; through repeatedly contrasting notions of earthly and spiritual authority, Eliot shows that an

expansive perspective on both the visible and invisible is all-important. From one perspective, i. e. in the "sight of God" as the Third Priest finally acknowledges at the end of the play, Thomas is indeed "just," a reality Thomas takes comfort in while the Knights are accusing him of treason. They are confused by why he would surrender his power as Chancellor to the King, repeatedly reminding him of the heights from which he has fallen, but they assume his resignation from the Chancellorship must be a strategy to gain absolute power. It is actually the opposite, revealing a willingness to abdicate earthly power.

The conflict between the state and the church is not just a power struggle, but also a conflict between real and false versions of religious community. The Priests and Knights claim to be religious, but it is the Chorus that feels the pain of his exile and of his death, while the Knights inflict pain and the Priests try to avoid it. Membership in community is an experienced marked by suffering. Thomas makes this point when he speaks of his isolation from community during his exile:

> seven years were my people without
> My presence; seven years of misery and pain.
> Seven years a mendicant on foreign charity
> …Never again, you must make no doubt,
> Shall the sea run between the shepherd and his fold. (206)

Exile was painful, so he now refuses to leave his home, vocation, and community and thus brings about his own death because of his commitment to community.[12] He also implies that in death he will have permanent unity with them; although he will be exiled from his home in this world and England, he will have a new home, united spiritually and irrevocably with his co-sufferers. Eliot's prioritizing of real community again brings to mind Pericles Lewis's description of the spirituality of modernist writers as a particularly

"social supernaturalism" which locates sacred power neither in a church building nor in a romantic experience of nature, but in "society," or community (4).

### *The Priests and Survival*

Throughout the play, Eliot implies that "order" and "civilization" are illusions because they cannot protect against death. The Chorus, Priests, and Tempters all join together in a kind of super-chorus to ominously warn Thomas that "Death has a hundred hands and walks by a thousand ways" (194). No matter what he does to be safe, he cannot avoid the cruel irony of fate: "A man may walk with a lamp at night, and yet be drowned in a ditch" (195). The Priests, however, are deluded as to this reality when the moment of danger comes, insisting "We are safe. We are safe./ the enemy may rage outside, he will tire" (211). They repeat "we are safe" two more times, putting their trust in the barred doors of the cathedral to resist the Knights. Thomas explicitly rejects the warlike definition of *sanctuary* the priests are using, saying he "will not have…The sanctuary turned into a fortress" because "The church shall protect her own, in her own way, not / As oak and stone" which "decay" (211). The church building will decay, while "the Church shall endure" (211). The Church is a sanctuary for the divine presence but not a protection against physical threats or a tool of warfare. Thomas is determined that the "church shall be open, even to our enemies," making it the opposite of a "fortress" (211). This differentiation is essential because it further develops the contrast between action/violence and passivity/suffering and reveals the difference between natural and transcendent perspectives on what is real.

Eliot hints at the limitations of modern scientific thought when Thomas rebukes the Priests for their refusal to suffer: "You argue by results, as this world does,/ To settle

if an act be good or bad./ You defer to the fact." (212). He implies through his use of the word *fact* that facts are limited in their significance, or at least that human interpretation of facts is necessarily limited, thus questioning both rationalism and pragmatism as means of gaining wisdom and discerning morality. The "fact," he implies, is not necessarily true, which seems to contradict the very meaning of the word fact and undermines the reverence with which facts are held in modern society. Thomas goes on to explain his critique of factual knowledge. At this moment in the play, the Priests want Thomas to keep the doors barred and to use common sense to protect himself from men they call "beasts" (212). In other words, they advise him to follow basic survival instincts to protect himself from dangerous forces of nature. They argue that the end, safety, justifies the means, self-defense, but Thomas's response indicates that "results" or ends are impossible to empirically observe because "in time results of many deeds are blended/ So good and evil become confounded" (212). In fact, no cause-and-effect relationship is completely knowable and provable; the "fact" the priests "defer" to is thus an illusion based on a pseudo-scientific theory of how to thrive in the world. Their perspective is curtailed by its false confidence in empiricism and its ability to predict the future. Even if he were to accept that survival is the desired end or purpose of human life, Thomas is arguing that survival is not a guaranteed result of self-assertion. The Priests "argue…as this world does" and are based "in time," while Thomas makes his decision "out of time," i.e. on another plane, not in this world: submitting "To the Law of God above the Law of Man" (211, 212). Thomas does not expect the Priests to understand his type of wisdom, identifying them as given over to "the Law of Man" and therefore unable to "know what [he does]" (212). He is dismayed though, in his realism,

lamenting that these supposedly religious Priests lack knowledge as much as the murderous, political Knights do. Both groups are operating within nature, on a physical, survival-oriented plane that the Priests see as obviously real but also as the sum total of reality. The opposite of their survival philosophy and their reliance on physical "fighting" and mental "stratagem" is Thomas's paradoxical plan to "conquer…by suffering," which is "the triumph of the Cross" (212). They make their argument from nature, insisting it is only natural to physically resist attackers, just as one would resist the attacks of beasts, since these violent men are basically "beasts." Their reduction of the Knights to beasts is dehumanizing and a clear attempt to rationalize their own violence.

Thomas plays on the Priests' argument, agreeing that it is right to fight against beasts, but insisting they have actually already "fought the beast/ And have conquered" (212). He transfers the struggle between men and beasts to a spiritual rather than a physical plane and also refuses to consider the Knights as mere beasts whom he can violently attack with moral impunity. He also overturns common notions of time by insisting the battle has already been fought in the past. The victory that comes from suffering instead of fighting has already occurred with the Cross, and is eternal, outside of time, so still real in this moment. In contrast, their natural argument is based "in time," but being in time is what limits knowledge and perspective, making the real consequences of actions unknowable. The scientific worldview falls short, therefore, of guiding behavior in this case: what seems practical "in time" and based on "results" and "fact" lacks the perspective on actions that occur outside of time. Thomas desires

victory, triumph, and ultimate safety as much as the priests do, but his idea of how it is achieved is antithetical to theirs.

These notions of perspective have serious and practical implications for action; perspective and knowledge lead to action. How does Thomas know that it is a better idea to "unbar the door" than to bar it, as the Priests advise? His insistence does seem mad and contrary to natural common sense, an act of "senseless self-slaughter." He is sure of what to do, however, because his "whole being gives entire consent" (212). He hints at a faculty beyond the intellectual faculties that produce fear, one that unites his physical, intellectual, and emotional being and transcends the objections of fear and common sense. Therefore, he cannot use the word "decision" to describe his acceptance of suffering. "Decision" implies a rational process based on weighing results, consequences, and facts, and implies an internal debate or a struggle to make the will conform to reason, but he is not internally divided in this way, and he implies that he is not a man of superior self-discipline or self-control who has simply overcome his fears through the strength of his will. Rather, he is unified, whole, and integrated, which shows that he has triumphed over the the four Tempters who told him to assert his will in order to regain the past or force the future, actions which would have prevented his "mind" from being "whole in the present" (185). Thomas's rebukes to the Priests imply that he possesses an esoteric knowledge beyond common sense, which seems to make him a foil to Shaw's Saint Joan and her reliance on evolved consciousness, which she calls ordinary common sense, in the face of the complicated laws of educated men. However, the ordinary women of the Chorus share Thomas's type of knowledge, the wisdom of suffering, and they describe it in a graphic physical manner. Because the

Chorus can be considered a reflection of Thomas's consciousness, their descriptions counter the impression some may have of Thomas as otherworldly, idealized, and abstracted, a man who accepts martyrdom easily because he is a superior human being. Both plays assert the wisdom of the ordinary and powerless as opposed to the knowledge of the educated and powerful.

Thomas continues challenging the survival-oriented rhetoric of nature in his confrontation with the Knights who are about to kill him. They mock him as "Daniel," beckoning him to their "lions' den" (213). This allusion emphasizes the conflict between the saint and the state, a common theme in modernist hagiography: calling Thomas "Daniel" links him to the Old Testament martyr whose submission to divine law came into conflict with the secular royal bureaucracy of Babylon. The Knights' choice to call themselves the lions of Babylon shows not only their allegiance to the state over God or the church, but also their identification with nature and its uninhibited, instinctual ferocity. They are operating on the same natural plane as the priests, who have already called them "beasts." Thomas, however, plays on the lion comparison and makes it his own by applying the natural motif to spiritual realities:

> It is the just man who
> Like a bold lion, should be without fear.
> I am here.
> No traitor to the King. (213)

With this response, he defends himself against their attacks on his moral character as "faithless" and lowly. They hurl class-oriented insults, calling him a "Cheapside brat" to imply that he is unworthy of the spiritual authority he claims since he is a low-born social climber who has "arrogated" his "powers" and "appropriated" the King's "money" (213). They attempt to associate him with bourgeois aspiration and illegitimately grasped

power. This theme recurs throughout the play, the contrast between status gained through social mobility and that gained through irrevocable gift. The references to class parallel the references to nature: society and nature are analogs in that force, aspiration, and self-assertion are necessary for success in both. Thomas is not part of either system, as his current position was not gained through political or social aspiration, and he is a "lion" without being savage and violent. He is a lion in the sense that he is fearless because of his moral self-assurance in the present moment: he is "just" and therefore is "without fear," like the lions the Knights claim to be. He also rejects the accusations that he is a "traitor" and a power-hungry social-climber by explaining his identity in terms of spiritual authority but not in terms of power: he is a "priest, / A Christian, saved by the blood of Christ, / Ready to suffer with my blood" (213). His boldness comes from embracing suffering rather than avoiding it through physical or strategic prowess, again placing him outside the system of nature in which survival is the instinct that takes precedence.

Suffering, or as Thomas puts it, "blood," "is the sign of the church always" (213). Eliot's use of the more elemental "blood" as opposed to an abstract word like suffering adds another concrete image, akin to those of the Chorus in their laments. Thomas's meditation on "blood" also counters the misinterpretation of his character as purely spiritual and without struggles in the flesh. His corporeal suffering is undertaken in full awareness of what it means. This fixation on "blood" ties Thomas and Eliot to the medieval traditions of meditating upon and sharing in Christ's physical suffering, as well as to meditation on the Eucharist as the actual body and blood of Christ. Thomas not

only specifies that he is "Ready to suffer with my blood," but he also repeats "blood" seven times in a relatively brief speech.

Blood also has symbolic significance for the wasteland; paradoxically, the earth is both fouled and cleansed with blood in winter. At the exact moment that the Knights kill Thomas, the Chorus cries out: "Clear the air! clean the sky! wash the wind!" (213). Blood has fouled nature through violence: "The land is foul, the water is foul, our beasts and ourselves defiled with blood" (214). However, blood shed by saints, rather than in mutually hostile warfare or in battles for survival, cleanses nature. Thomas refuses to be part of the natural order of violence oriented toward survival, and in offering his blood he cleanses nature of that defilement. The idea that winter is a necessary and unavoidable season of bloody death is reiterated upon the exact moment of Thomas's death in the Chorus's invocation of nature's defilement. Winter kills, but it also makes way for the life of spring. Neither can be avoided, which is what the Tempters lie about when they tempt Thomas to return to "springtime fancy" without first enduring the winter of suffering. His middle age is this winter of suffering while his youth was a springtime illusion since winter did not come first.

Along with images of defilement, foulness, blood, and winter, Eliot returns explicitly to the image of the wasteland. England is the blighted wasteland because of its allegiance to the temporal over the eternal. Eliot makes the lament over England's loss of identity pointed when immediately after Thomas's death, the Chorus asks "Where is England? Where is Kent? Where is Canterbury? / O far far far far in the past; and I wander in a land of barren boughs: if I break them, they bleed" (214). Here Eliot contrasts history with the present, perhaps referring to modernity, and describes England

as "barren," an infertile wasteland that inspires the wandering quest. The mention of wandering also reemphasizes the motif of exile, which is the loss of home. England is not home for the saint in modernist fiction. Eliot is also undermining modern nationalism here by describing the loss of England's health and of England itself, asking where it has gone. However, as the Chorus says, "It is not we alone, it is not the house, it is not the city that is defiled,/ But the world that is wholly foul" (214). Although Eliot emphatically locates the wasteland in England, he also implicates the rest of the world, giving the death of saints global spiritual ramifications. It is implied that Thomas's death is not just for England, since he is a saint of the universal church. The event of martyrdom occurs in a specific place and time in which the saint accepts the will of fate, but in that moment of acceptance, his act becomes transcendent and eternal, occurring outside of place and time as well.

In addition to affecting England and the world, the foulness has infected the intimate realities of the Chorus's lives: they cry out to "wash the bone, wash the brain, wash the soul" (214). Compared to the everyday suffering they were familiar with in the past, "the private catastrophe" that had "a limit" and "a definition," this new infection is "out of life,…out of time,/ An instant eternity of evil and wrong" (214). These women were familiar with suffering in their private lives, but it was in time and limited, not cosmic and eternal. Their suffering parallels Christ's suffering, which is both corporal and individual, corporeal and spiritual, and has eternal dimensions, occurring both in time and outside of time. This kind of suffering is overwhelming to the individual and is an experience of an internal spiritual wasteland, an experience of utter darkness and spiritual abandonment. Eliot, in other words, does not idealize suffering. The wisest people have

the deepest knowledge of it. They doubt now that there is any escape from their awareness of "reality," predicting that even their domestic life, "the day and its common things," will be "smeared with blood" (214). The trauma of violence will affect them forever, and daytime, which should be predictable and peaceful, will be transformed. They also doubt they can ever experience "the soft quiet seasons" again and implore the "sun," "day," and "spring" not to come at all (214). The filth that defiles them and the world, the blood, is one they "cannot clean," a "supernatural vermin" they are "united" to (214). Their utter desolation shows that the "reality" of their sharing in Thomas's bloodshed is spiritual and psychological as well as a physical trauma, and it represents a final loss of private innocence and domestic illusion. They will never experience life again without the presence of death.

*The Hope of the Chorus and the Conversion of the Priests*

The final transition in the play, from the Knights' crafty speeches, which use nationalistic ideology and bourgeois ideas of success to justify murder, to the final heart-wrenching lyrics of the priests and Chorus, is a stark juxtaposition of dogmatism and sincerity. After the First Knight's police-like exhortation to keep order, to "not to loiter in groups at street corners," the First Priest begins his lament in response to Thomas's death. His words speak of the mysterious finality of loss and grieve for the loss of Thomas's "presence" in language that seems to allude to the loss of the divine presence. "The Church lies bereft," the priest notes, predicting that "the heathen shall build on the ruins, / Their world without God" (219). His prayer to Thomas—"How shall we find you [?]"—seems almost blasphemous, as if Thomas is God, but the language indicates the importance of the Church as the earthly vessel of the divine presence. To destroy

Thomas is to destroy the Church in which Christ makes himself present to the world, to create a vacuum and make it possible to build a "world," or a civilization, "without God" (219). The Church imbues a civilization with the divine. The First Priest laments the loss not only of Thomas's presence, but also of his guidance, protection, and strength. Eliot implies that the Church provides these in service to the people, and without the Church, the people will be lost, unprotected, and weak. The Third Priest counters these bleak prophecies, which seem to clearly predict modern secularism and divine absence from the wasteland, with a paradoxical insistence that the "Church is stronger" for "persecution," echoing Thomas's own view of suffering (219). Which priest's prophecy is correct? Also paradoxically, both of them are correct.

The First Priest grieves for the loss of an earthly home or dwelling-place for God, and perhaps specifically for the loss of an English home for God, while the Third Priest differentiates between the realms of earth and heaven. He implies that the loss of an earthly home or nation is the sign of the possession of a heavenly one. This concept of home connects Thomas to the Old Testament saints who "wandered": "they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11. 16, 37). Even though Thomas's martyrdom is a sign that it has lost its earthly home, the Church paradoxically gains its victory from martyrdom, because "so long as men will die for it," showing their belief in the reality of heaven, the Church will be "supreme" to earthly powers. Continuing the motif of home, the Third Priest pities the Knights because they will now be "homeless in earth or heaven"; they must be exiles on earth because of their crime, but they will also be exiles from heaven. The Priest describes the Cain-like exile the Knights will

experience, attempting to find "forgetfulness" and "oblivion" as they wander through the earth (219). They will search for the peace and pleasures of home, never to find them, thereby losing the comforts of home in England, which they claimed to fight for. Ironically, their violent efforts to protect home will lead to their loss of it. This irony shows that nationalistic violence is ineffectual in achieving the ends it so values. The Third Priest describes inhospitable foreign places they will wander to, all "heathen" and with harsh, un-English climates and cultures. They may escape physical punishment, but they will be mentally tormented, forced to "tramp and tread one endless round / Of thought,…Pacing forever in the hell of make-believe / Which never is belief: this is your fate on earth" (220). They will endure the futile, cyclical psychological torment of "make-believe" i.e. illusion. Eliot draws an interesting contrast between illusion and "belief," especially in light of the rationalist assumption that belief in the unseen is "make-believe." The Knights' exile is a loss of the comfort and peace of home. In contrast, Thomas is in a "new state" of "glory" and unity, "Conjoined with all the saints and martyrs" (220). In his heavenly exile from earth, he is no longer alone as he was as an earthly exile in France (220). Thomas was willing to sacrifice his home in England as a seven-year exile and now as an exile from earth, but he has found a home as a result. By contrasting these two homes, the wasteland of England and the community of heaven, Eliot again undermines nationalistic loyalties. The willingness to become an exile from one's nation and from the comforts of society and family means believing in an unseen home, which the Third Priest has come to do. He seems to have an epiphany, realizing the limits of his own perspective in typically modernist fashion. He now acknowledges

that Thomas's "state is hidden from us" but it exists in "the sight of God," using language that explicitly relates to perspective (220).

Just as during the murder they sang their own version of the "Dies Irae," the Chorus now sings Eliot's version of the "Te Deum," the traditional song of praise from the Church to God. Stage notes indicate that monks sing an actual "Te Deum" in the background in the Cathedral. The Chorus's hymn is the final word of the play. In it, we find the completion of the paradox of their earlier poetry, which is highlighted by the juxtaposition in how quickly this song of praise follows the song of wrath. In their earlier laments, they seemed to assert a nihilistic view of death, and in the final hymn they meditate on darkness and absence, proclaiming that "all things exist only as seen by Thee, only as known by Thee,…and Thy glory is declared even in that which denies Thee; the darkness declares the glory of light" (220). In the all-encompassing divine perspective, darkness exists, but it paradoxically reveals light; rebellion against God leads somehow to the glorification of God. They also reiterate their ordinary identity: "we, the scrubbers and sweepers of Canterbury" live with "back bent" and "knee bent" under the "toil," "sin," and "grief," of both everyday drudgery and acute suffering. Yet, they say, we "praise Thee," joining their voices with the sounds of nature, "the voices of seasons, the snuffle of winter, the song of spring" (221). Not just winter (death) and not just spring and summer (life), but all the seasons united sing songs of praise. This indicates that experiences of both death and life, suffering and renewal, contribute to a full understanding of transcendent reality. Their final words do not reject their earlier meditations on suffering, but complete them by uniting them with the springtime reality that follows suffering. Winter must come first, however; it was not avoidable as the

Priests and Tempters claimed. If winter does not come first, springtime is a mere "fancy" or illusion, and the play chronicles the process of disillusionment for the Priests and Chorus. It is an "uncynical disillusion," however, in that suffering is not ultimately futile. The Chorus prophesies that Thomas's blood will forever sanctify the ground, although "armies" and eventually "sightseers" will invade it; the violent, ugly, and vulgar crowds of modernity cannot desecrate it (221). This implies that although modern England may be a spiritual wasteland, at least partially because of Thomas's death and the decline of the church, it is also fertile ground because of the providential redemption of his death. His death is then a sign of the winter wasteland but also a sign of a coming spring. The Knights and the King did desecrate the church in a real sense with the murder of the Archbishop, but the desecration is turned to sanctity just as exile is turned into a home and bloodshed into peace.

Also completing the cycle of wasteland imagery in the final lines, the Chorus explicitly describes the contrast between wastelands and civilizations. Unexpectedly, they speak of "holy ground" as stretching from Canterbury to the desolate places where the "western seas gnaw at the coast of Iona" and to the "forgotten places" of "death in the desert" (221). If holy ground can be considered the opposite of a spiritually empty wasteland, this statement is paradoxical in that the most desolate places are considered sacred and fertile. The reason is that these wastelands are the traditional homes of saints. Eliot describes them as raw, exposed, and vulnerable to the violence of nature, places of death and suffering, which is the definition of a wasteland, and physically parallels the social wasteland of England; both are inhospitable places for a saint. Ancient saints literally fought lions and beasts, while Thomas and modern saints figuratively resist the

savage violence of the state and of society. The Chorus notes that these dangerous, desolate places also emit water "which forever renews the earth" (221). There is glory in ugliness, suffering, and death: even "the worm in the belly" brings glory to God simply by "living" (220), and the theme of the play is that there is peace in violence, redemption in the grotesque. In mentioning Iona, the Chorus alludes to the great Irish scholar Saint Columba, who established a monastery on the isolated island of Iona that went on to evangelize the wild wasteland of Scotland. They also allude to the Syrian ascetic Saint Simeon Stylite, a hermit who lived and died on his long-time desert perch on a ruined column. The Chorus refers to a "broken imperial column," a symbol of a dead empire and another civilization that became a wasteland (221). Paradoxically, the desert wastes are the source of renewal for the centers of civilization, which are in reality the spiritual wastes. This is the dynamic of the saint's relationship with civilization; it exiles or martyrs him, and he provides renewal from the very conditions that led to his exile or martyrdom. Now that Canterbury has its own instance of bloodshed, it has also been given the same "blessing" as sacred wastelands such as Iona and the desert hermitages. English civilization as represented by Canterbury Cathedral, the center of the English church, is desecrated, now a site of violence, but in becoming an uncivilized and wild place where savages and beasts prevail and the weak suffer, it will become a source of renewal.

Eliot also returns to the theme of the reluctant suffering of the Chorus, who throughout the play longed to return to their quiet domestic life, "living and partly living" (221). In the final lines, the women ask forgiveness for their pursuit of comfort and identify themselves as only the

> type of the common man,
> Of the men and women who shut the door and sit by the fire;
> Who fear the blessing of God, the loneliness of the night of God,…
> Who fear the injustice of men less than the justice of God;
> Who fear the hand at the window, the fire in the thatch, the fist in the tavern, the push into the canal,
> Less than we fear the love of God. (221)

"Loneliness," they realize, is actually the "blessing of God," and the "love of God" is in some sense terrible because it promises suffering, but also more real than their fear of human violence and illusions of protection from it. They must accept loneliness rather than seek acceptance in society; loneliness, as a form of social exile, marks them as those who know the love of God rather than the approval of polite society. The Chorus represents the typical modernist saint and his adherents: they are not particularly high-minded and freely admit their weaknesses and fears. Eliot's presentation of Thomas himself seems more traditionally hagiographical and idealized, although he is plagued by inner conflict, temptation, and angst. The Chorus women are his hesitant but faithful converts, faithful in their compassion and identification with his suffering. They do not think of themselves as saints, only as those who preferred lives of relative comfort and peace, sitting by the fire, to the type of peace Thomas was offering, a "peace" which was "loneliness," "deprivation," and "surrender," but also "blessing." They considered the immediate violence of man and the rejection of powerful and respectable men more real than the eternal reality of divine "justice" and "love." This transformative shift in awareness, knowledge, and perspective from the seen to the unseen takes place for both them and the Priests. In their repentance for their weakness, they take responsibility for Thomas's death and for all the "sin," "blood," and "agony" of the world, doing what the Knights refused to do.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## "Abjuring the Realm": Evelyn Waugh's Unlikely Fictional Saints

In the original manuscript subtitle of *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), Evelyn Waugh calls the book "A Theological Novel," and in his letters he remarks that "not…six Americans will understand it" and that "the whole thing is steeped in theology but…theologians wont recognise it (*Letters* 177, 185). His private statement proved prophetic when American critic Edmund Wilson, who had praised Waugh's early comic novels, lamented the novel's religious character, calling it "disastrous" (245). *Brideshead Revisited* deals with the downfall of the aristocracy: the discontentedness of its members, the destruction of its homes, the decline of its aesthetic refinement, and the end of its hereditary line. The flavor is no longer primarily satirical, like his earlier novels, but nostalgic and disillusioned. However, the novel ends on quite a different note: happiness. Despite being "homeless, childless, middle-aged, loveless," the narrator ends the novel "looking unusually cheerful" (350-1). Although he has lost all temporal consolations, these losses have allowed him to transcend his typically modernist disillusionments with English society. Waugh in fact presents modern society and spiritual joy as mutually exclusive; the former must be sacrificed to gain the latter. He saw suffering and sacrifice, in the traditional manner of the saints who rejected the world to pursue religious callings, as necessary for happiness. The saint is marked by a paradoxical combination of mourning and happiness, as is not only Charles but also Sebastian, the novel's most magnetic and enigmatic character. Waugh develops the theme that suffering leads to both happiness and sainthood, and this is true for beautiful, charming, and refined

characters such as Sebastian just as it is true of those whose suffering is easier to understand.

What makes *Brideshead* endlessly attractive to religious and non-religious readers alike is Waugh's paradoxical presentation of spirituality, in which immoral characters such as Sebastian Flyte, Julia Flyte, Lord Marchmain, and Charles Ryder are vindicated, and the seemingly faultless Lady Marchmain is strangely destructive of happiness and love. The enduring charm of the novel seems to lie in its aristocratic Marchmain-Flyte family and their colorful adulterous, alcoholic, aesthetic, and homoerotic experiences. The religious conversions can perhaps be overlooked by an unsympathetic reader savoring the nostalgic mood and beautiful settings at Oxford and Brideshead Castle. In 2008, the novel was adapted as a feature film starring Emma Thompson. This film altered the major conflict of the story, creating a struggle with homosexuality and romance for Sebastian that is absent from the novel.[1] As Thomas Hibbs states, "In a major departure from the book, the film reduces the cause of Sebastian's decline into self-destructive behavior to his jealousy over Charles' affection for Sebastian's sister, Julia"; Hibbs faults the filmmakers' "conventional conception of love" and reduction of "*Eros* to sex." Although as Charles Hutton-Brown remarks, "Orthodoxy, social or sexual, was never one of the things which Waugh strove to maintain in his writing" (3), in emphasizing issues of sexuality, morality, and repression, the film neglects the primary conflict of the novel, which is somewhat mysterious presentation of Christian themes. Intriguingly, the immoral escapades of its main characters, especially Sebastian, are integral to his development as a saint-like character who rejects the worldly values of his family to follow a spiritual vocation. His alcoholism is actually an attempt to transcend the

emptiness of the life his mother encourages him to lead as a respectable young society gentleman. Sebastian's older brother Bridey attempts to live this life by conforming to empty aristocratic traditions and ends a vapid, unproductive man. Sebastian seeks spiritual happiness, however, and chooses to live a life of charity; his alcoholism only emphasizes divine grace. Father Mackay's biblical quotation in reference to Lord Marchmain—"'Christ came to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance'"—can be taken as an important thematic statement for the novel (336). While critics have recognized Sebastian's saintliness in passing, little has been done to explain why Waugh chooses to make his saints sinners, to explicate the ways in which the entire novel functions as a hagiography, or to explore how it compares to Waugh's more explicit hagiographies, which present a similar focus on the achievement of sainthood through faithfulness to a religious vocation and rejection of material comfort and social prestige, especially among characters who are not idealized as in traditional hagiography.

Waugh develops Sebastian as a distinctly saint-like character because he honors God over himself, and even sacrifices his own beauty and charm for the sake of his spiritual sorrows. Waugh's hagiographical mindset, specifically a connection between Sebastian Flyte and St. Sebastian, is made quite explicit by the flamboyant Anthony Blanche when he says, "My dear, I should like to stick you full of barbed arrows like a p-p-pin-cushion," a reference to St. Sebastian's martyrdom (33). Waugh's Sebastian is "magically beautiful" and "epicene" (31). Sebastian's name may then come from St. Sebastian, an army officer who according to legend was tied to a tree and used as target practice when his Christianity was discovered. St. Sebastian's image became popular in gay folklore because in the Renaissance he was portrayed as a mostly nude, effeminate

youth being penetrated by arrows (Farmer 429), his expression a mixture of pain and pleasure. On one level, Blanche likens Sebastian to the famous saint because Sebastian is beautiful and desirable and is associated with aestheticism and decadence, but Waugh also means to hint that Sebastian is also an orthodox and otherworldly saint figure, a motif which is continued later in the novel.

*Brideshead's* combination of homoeroticism, aestheticism, and Catholicism is one of its many enigmas. In his book *Decadence and Catholicism,* Ellis Hanson explains why many aesthetes of the decadent movement of the 1890's were drawn to Catholicism, and his explanation seems to shed light on characters like Blanche and Sebastian, both of whom associated with the aesthetic movement—Blanche is the "'aesthete' *par excellence,* a byword of iniquity" at Oxford (32). Although both Anthony and Sebastian are Catholic, neither of them seem very pious at times. Sebastian fits Hanson's definition of "the typical decadent hero" who is "an upper-class, overly educated, impeccably dressed aesthete, a man whose masculinity is confounded by his tendency to androgyny, homosexuality, masochism, mysticism, or neurosis"; he is often "a collector of objets d'art, and a connoisseur of brilliant sensations" (3). Sebastian fits all of these characteristics. How is this decadence related to Catholicism? Hanson explains that "decadence is an aesthetic in which failure and decay are regarded as seductive, mystical, or beautiful" (3). Sebastian is surely marked by failure: socially, physically, educationally, and in most venues valued by his society. There is something beautiful and mystical about his weakness, if only because he refuses to enter into the vulgar and self-serving options for grown men in his society: the aspirations for power and money of his brother-in-law Rex, the priggish, insincere intellectualism of his minder Mr.

Samgrass, the adventurous hedonism of Anthony Blanche, and the ridiculous, ineffectual passivity of his brother Bridey. Sebastian's childlike ways and seeming unsuitability for masculine adulthood contribute to the sense of his failure but also of his mystical otherworldliness. As Hanson notes in describing J. K. Huysmans, decadence is "an essentially Roman Catholic revolt against the materialism of the age" (5). Both Catholics and decadents were often considered scandalous, sensual, exotic, and "subversive" by respectable members of nineteenth-century polite society. Hanson maintains that despite the moral incompatibility between the two movements, both emphasized what Baudelaire called an "unquenchable thirst for all that lies beyond" (4) as well as a sense of melancholy and of "guilt, shame, and sorrow" (24), and both offered a respite from the dull restrictiveness of a materially oriented society.

However, Blanche's vision of Sebastian as pierced with arrows, a decadent martyr for beauty, pleasure, or homosexuality seems invalidated when Sebastian actually loses his looks and lives a celibate life in his later years, dying an early death and being praised by monks for his goodness and charity. Like his sister Cordelia, he spends his youth in service rather than in developing worldly sophistication and social success like Charles, in achieving an advantageous marriage like his sister Julia, or in playing at feudal roles like his brother Bridey. Waugh connects saintly suffering to the loss of beauty and refinement: Cordelia becomes "so accustomed to gross suffering as to lose the finer shades of pleasure" (300) in her years of service to the sick and injured. It is significant that Blanche references the Renaissance version of St. Sebastian's image, connecting it with aestheticism and pleasure, but Waugh later develops him as a different kind of saint, i.e. not a beautiful one. Charles shifts similarly as a character: as an artist, he first sees

himself as "a man of … Browning's Renaissance" who "spurned the friars" as restrictive to his aestheticism, but he eventually comes to identify more with the crusaders of the Catholic middle ages and also admits that his aesthetic tastes run to the medieval, which Waugh implies is more timeless and enduring than the worldliness of the Renaissance (222).

Besides Blanche's mention of St. Sebastian, there are other hints that *Brideshead* exemplifies fictional hagiography, a novelistic rendition of a fictional saint's life. Waugh was a prolific hagiographer apart from his novel writing, and he combined the two genres quite explicitly in *Helena*, which told the life of St. Helena Empress in a "racy modern idiom" (Stopp 325). In *Ronald Knox,* a biography of his friend the Oxford priest, Waugh set out "to tell the story of his exterior life" rather than to simply write of his spiritual achievements, i.e., he resisted the tendency of hagiography to make the saint a mere symbol of piety, abstracted from the particulars of everyday life and without real struggles (133). Waugh defended his candid, realistic method: "[Ronald] knew…my curiosity and lack of discretion. He knew the kind of book I was likely to write" (134). In other words, Waugh's approach to biography was antithetical to the common definition of "hagiography": "the writing of an idealized biography of someone," which implies a dishonest flattery of the subject ("Hagiography"). Waugh's approach to Ronald Knox is similar to his approach to the fictional Sebastian Flyte; in bringing a modern novelist's eye to bear on the subject of sainthood, Waugh unflinchingly records the behavior of his subject even when it reveals the person's moral weakness. Failure of morality or self-control did not disqualify a person for sainthood, because saintliness in Waugh's mind accorded with a providential view of sanctification. As Thomas

Heffernan explains, in traditional hagiography the saint's venerable behavior is not "self-directed" as in a romance, but is rather the "gift of Providence" (143). The saint's actions are dependent, "moved" by God, whereas a romance hero is autonomous; he "moves" those around him (143). Heffernan's differentiation relates to one of the central themes of this study: the modernist saint resists the modern tendency to affirm the efficacy and goodness of assertion of the will because his weakness makes evident the action of providence, an unexplainable and supernatural force.

Waugh also contributed to Claire Booth Luce's anthology of hagiographical pieces *Saints for Now* (1952); in the introduction, Luce rejects the "cloyingly pietistic school of hagiography which depicts the saint as a superhuman character who is constitutionally unable to yield to [temptation]" (2). Luce states, "the very meaning of the lives of the saints for us lies in the fact that they were sinners like ourselves trying like ourselves to combat sin," but in contrast to non-saints, "they kept on trying" (that is, they do not necessarily succeed) (3). She specifies that the hagiographer should not selectively present facts of the saint's life to exclusively emphasize moral triumph: "the editing of sinner-into-saint is done not by man's pen but by God's grace" (3). Waugh, writing of Hollywood film censorship in 1947, expressed reluctance about the tendency of censors to sanitize stories of sin and guilt: "[censors have] a conception of innocence which has little relation to life" (Beaty 196). As George McCartney observes, Waugh "harbored a congenital distrust of decency and innocence" (xiv). Instead, he sought to create realistic characters who had firsthand knowledge of sin and evil, while in *Brideshead* combining this knowledge and experience with hopeful and meaningful supernatural experience.

In the sense that hagiography is a narrative rather than an expository form, Waugh's hagiographies continue in the medieval tradition. The genre of hagiography, developed in the Middle Ages, has always been primarily "dramatic" rather than "rhetorical," focusing on a "saint's deed" rather than employing "complex language," showing that "narrative can reflect both actual circumstances and metaphysical truth" (Heffernan 4-6). However, in that medieval hagiography aimed to show "the saint's life [as] the perfect *imitatio Christi*" (20), Waugh differs by emphasizing the saint's imperfect actions. The miraculous and supernatural aspects of hagiography are also a major departure from the realistic fiction and biography of the Victorian period, both of which Oscar Wilde criticizes in *The Decay of Lying* for their lack of fantastic elements, wishing for modern authors with imaginations to match those on display in the colorful aspects of Biblical stories and of traditional hagiography. Waugh has Lady Marchmain express a similar sentiment in explaining to Charles that religion has aesthetic interest and color because, for example, "Animals are always doing the oddest things in the lives of the saints": "It's all part of the poetry, the Alice-in-Wonderland side, of religion," she explains (127).[2] Heffernan similarly contrasts medieval hagiography with late-Victorian biography, which "sought to be purely empirical"; to the Victorians, "'hagiography'… became an epithet for the unreliable" depiction of a life, so they did not include details that could not be explained or proven (39-40). Empiricism in biography precludes the inclusion of supernatural elements as well as unexpected imaginative elements. Waugh combined both medieval and Victorian traditions: the hagiographical focus on spiritual virtue and the realistic focus on exterior events, but he also resisted empirical Victorian tendencies by insisting on literal miracles and literal orthodoxy. Waugh, like Wilde, also

resisted Victorian moralism by favoring the colorful and the beautiful over the dull and the ugly, even though colorful characters are often shockingly immoral, unlike the traditional saints of hagiography. John Henry Newman criticized hagiography that focused on the virtues of saints rather than on their gradual development and on life events (Capps 218n). He called the virtue-based hagiography "moral science" rather than "history," and not very good moral science because it neglects the "conflict…between what is divine and what is human" and sacrifices a sense of "moral unity" in the saint's personality (218n). Newman's theory of hagiography seems to describe Waugh's (and Graham Greene's) novelistic "hagiography," which shows both human and divine actions rather than separating them dualistically as either mimetic realism or theological symbolism. Realistic hagiography was actually somewhat popular in England of the 1930s and 1940s: in 1932 the Jesuit C. C. Martindale gave a series of talks about the saints on the BBC in which he defined saints as "real persons…not theories or fictions" (Luce 14-15). It is significant that he redefines saints in opposition to how they were defined by hagiography. His comments reveal the kinds of saints that would appeal to a modernist audience, which would be held in thrall by neither an overly-idealized character nor a dully realistic one.

Modernist hagiography emphasizes the role of providence rather than that of morality or other human effort and accordingly, Waugh wrote to his friend Nancy Mitford that *Brideshead Revisited* is primarily "about God," not, as it might seem, about the narrator Charles Ryder (qtd. in Beaty 147). God drives the mysterious actions of the main characters, and apart from considering the role of God it is easy to misinterpret characters' motives. Even Sebastian's alcoholism and Lord Marchmain's adultery can be

construed as attempts to escape the oppressiveness of the world as manifested in English society and to suffer for God. Waugh believed that including divine presence in a story was actually necessary to portray human experience concretely and realistically: he wrote in *Life* magazine in 1946, "I believe that you can only leave God out by making your characters pure abstractions" ("Fan-Fare" 250). He saw "the failure of modern novelists" as a failure to present "the whole human mind and soul" by leaving out its main characteristic, that of being "God's creature with a defined purpose" (250). His references to wholeness, the soul, and purpose are noteworthy because they are all important motifs in the novel. Frederick Stopp, a critic Waugh admired for his interpretations of *Helena* and *Brideshead Revisited*, wrote that the "apparent incongruity" between spiritual theme and worldly medium in the two novels is actually a "congruity, that between the supernatural and the natural" (325). This congruity caused what Stopp called "discomfort" among his fellow critics (325). Modern novelists were expected to be the opposite of medieval hagiographers; the former presented the natural and excluded the supernatural, and the latter presented the supernatural and excluded the natural. Waugh excluded neither. Frederick Beaty identifies *Brideshead Revisited* as a "modified *Künstlerroman"* in that it traces the development of an artist, Charles Ryder, on a spiritual as well as a natural plane (145). Conversely, the novel is also a modified hagiography in that it traces the development of a saint on a physical as well as a spiritual plane. When MGM considered making a movie of *Brideshead* in 1947, Waugh instructed them that the main theme of the novel was "the operation of Grace" or "the unmerited and unilateral act of love by which God continually calls souls to himself" (Beaty 146). His emphasis on the primary importance of God's "unilateral" action,

however, is easily obscured by the almost titillating fascination of the morally ambiguous, charming character of Sebastian Flyte, and by other characters with mysterious motives and paradoxical behavior.

Waugh's own theology is relevant to understanding *Brideshead Revisited,* for he was careful about the theological messages his work conveyed and was dismayed when his Catholic friend Graham Greene seemed to undermine orthodox faith in his novel *The Burnt-Out Case* (Devereux 118-9). Waugh wrote that the theme of faith developed in the novel was "personal" and important, but also clarified that being thought of as a propagandistic or simplistic "Catholic artist" was "odious" (*Diaries* 775). Waugh's own paradoxical religious life sheds light on the conflict of the novel: like the Flytes, he wanted to rebel against the Church at times. He writes in his diary of an irritating, unrefined Irish priest he heard preaching on the depravity of those who leave mass before the last reading; Waugh promptly got up and left before the last reading (634). This urge surely anticipates Sebastian's rebellion against Mr. Samgrass and other enforcers of proper behavior. However, Waugh remained an exceptionally traditional Catholic from his 1930 conversion to his death. Faith was not easy for him, but he consoled himself that mystics are one part "despondency" and one part "exultation," both of which are "valid evidence" for God's presence (*The Later Years* 192). Like Sebastian, he felt caught between sadness in the face of earthly reality and joy in the apprehension of heavenly reality. Although Waugh admitted that Catholic literature could tend towards propaganda, his goal was to avoid this tendency and to portray Catholics realistically, as "unlikeable" at times and as "tortured by their faith," so as not to falsely imply that Catholicism was an easy path (*The Later Years* 216). For Waugh, "faith offered release

more than it demanded sacrifice"—it was a source of freedom and happiness; however, faith also demanded the sacrifice of the temporal experiences most valued by English society. Waugh showed in *Brideshead Revisited* and in his hagiography *Edmund Campion* that to achieve sainthood, one must reject the good things about his earthly home in favor of the better things promised in a heavenly home.

Many have called Waugh an elitist without seeming to consider his criticisms of the spiritual emptiness of England's secularized aristocracy. In 1946, Donat O'Donnell lamented what he perceived as Waugh's "almost idolatrous reverence for birth and wealth" and his excessive "patience with mortal sin among the aristocracy" combined with an "unchristian petulance towards the minor foibles of the middle class" (258). Kurt Reinhardt claims that Waugh was a "contradiction in terms" because he thought he could be a "Christian gentleman," both a "man of the world" and a "follower of Christ" (203). However, Waugh shows throughout *Brideshead* that the values of English polite society are the primary enemy of one's divine vocation, precisely because polite society tends to excel in charm, aesthetics, or morality in a way that is independent from grace. As Waugh wrote, European civilization was built upon Christianity, but without its Christian essence it "has no significance or power to command allegiance" (qtd. in Phillips 54). In medieval England, society itself was Catholic, so the worldly endeavors of the aristocracy such as marriage, knighthood, and feudalism could be divine callings, imbued with inherent grace and higher purpose, allowing for concurrent spiritual happiness and engagement with society. Waugh identifies the English Reformation as the point in which society became modern and its institutions basically secular. To be both a faithful Catholic and a loyal Englishman—aspiring to the pinnacle of English society's

aristocratic values—then became mutually exclusive pursuits. His theory that Catholics have essentially been foreigners in English society since the Reformation is important for understanding why his saints must be in some sense non-English, willing to leave England or be rejected by the English.

When society became secular, the sacrifice of worldly pursuits became necessary to achieve a divine calling, but characters such as the Flytes are caught between the aristocratic world, with its shams of formerly sanctified callings, and the Church, with its formal vocations that require rejection of society's rewards and of worldly comforts. Waugh implies, for example, that the Brideshead house seems to evoke the otherworldliness of a monastery: Charles sees Brideshead as "a world of its own of peace and love and beauty [where] the rest of the world [is] abandoned and forgotten" (321). However, Charles then describes Brideshead distinctly as a worldly temptation: "such a prospect perhaps as a high pinnacle of the temple afforded after the hungry days in the desert" (322). In this equation, English institutions such as the country house thus have only the appearance of sanctity and are akin to the temptation of the fasting Christ with worldly power and comfort. Sebastian must leave such confusion—the temptations of English charm and refinement—for a wilderness, like Christ and many saints before him. As in *Murder in the Cathedral*, the supposed centers of civilization such as Brideshead are actually the wastelands, while the literal wasteland to which Sebastian exiles himself is a place of spiritual growth and life. Waugh quotes Eliot's *The Waste Land* in the character of Anthony Blanche in this novel, but also in the title of another of his novels about the emptiness of high society, *A Handful of Dust*, implying that he views modern England as such a wasteland. One clue to Sebastian's sainthood is his desire to

leave England and work with lepers, which is reminiscent of an epithet applied to his father, who even though his exile from English society is self-imposed and immoral, is described as a "social leper," implying a kind of suffering and also alluding to the decay of the civilization he has escaped (102).[3] Exile from the spiritual wasteland of civilization and to the physical wasteland, a place of sacrifice and discomfort but also of happiness, recurs often in modernist hagiography.

One of the vocations originally available to noblemen, that of military service, is skewered by Waugh in the Prologue, when he describes the pettiness of senior officers and the vulgarity of junior officers, and all the military bureaucracy seems to exist without purpose, as they never see action. It does not live up to the dreams of boyhood, the stories Charles was raised on which romanticize the military with images of "Henry's speech on St. Crispin's Day" and "the epitaph at Thermopylae" (9). The army, his "last love" (5), loses its luster along with his socialite marriage and the aristocratic charm of the Flytes. There is no meaningful vocation available to him or Sebastian. Historically, Lord Marchmain remembers, the Marchmains were "barons since Agincourt" and although he initially finds purpose in his Catholic conversion, as it restores him to the faith and purpose of his medieval ancestors, he also notes at one point that "no clerk sings" in their ancient family church (332). All of the modern institutions of England that have ancient roots seem void of meaning because empty of their original spiritual essence.

Waugh recorded his definition of modern spiritual vocation as temporal sacrifice which leads to spiritual happiness, in his diary:

> Abjuring the realm. To make an interior act of renunciation and to become a stranger in the world; to watch one's fellow countrymen, as one

> used to watch foreigners, curious of their habits, patient of their absurdities, indifferent to their animosities—that is the secret of happiness in this century of the common man. (*Diaries* 783)

Waugh here connects exile with happiness, which is significant because of his consistent exploration of happiness throughout the novel. Sebastian is "unhappy" and "ashamed of being unhappy," and this is why he begins "running away" (136-7). As Heffernan explains of traditional hagiographical themes, "the saint, unlike the rest of humankind, live[s] simultaneously in two worlds, the heavenly and the earthly" (10). They "intersect" but are "fundamentally different" (10). Waugh draws a similar contrast between society and the cloister, but for him there are no clear places of intersection between spiritual vocation and temporal life in the modern world, so saints must wander in search of them. Waugh decried the fake medieval imagery that was popular in the Victorian era as accepting the "decorative value" of the past while rejecting its "metaphysical" value (McCartney 4). He also devalued his own occupation in comparison with religious vocations, implying that his own vocation was secular: "The Church and the world need monks and nuns more than they need writers" (*Essays* 387). Writers "merely decorate, whereas from cloisters "Grace spreads to an entire people" (387). His distinction between mere decoration and conduits of grace is essential in the novel, as well, since Charles eventually comes to find cheerfulness in contemplating the sacramental presence of God despite the vulgarity and ugliness of his surroundings.

The Marchmain-Flyte family exemplifies the conflict between English worldliness and Catholic retreat. All of the Marchmain children are torn between celibate vocations and social expectations: they all end up somewhere in between these two provinces. As Cordelia says, there are "people who can't quite fit into either to the world

or the monastic rule" (308). A saint can be immoral or moral, sophisticated or dull; however, to fulfill a vocation a person must be willing to sacrifice certain conventions and the perceived security they promise. Waugh is more concerned with happiness than convention, and to him happiness is achieved through a process of sainthood which seems to involve rejecting empty convention. The word *happy* and its cognates appears often not only in *Brideshead* but also in Waugh's journalism and private writings as he seeks a remedy for his own and his generation's disillusionment. The world is not intrinsically bad, but sainthood meant, in his own words, to abandon "all smaller loyalties and affections; all that most men found desirable, home, possessions, good fame, increase, security in the world, children to keep fresh their memory after they were dead" (*Edmund Campion* 37). This definition is significant because Sebastian has access to many of these things and chooses to abandon them, and he and his siblings all fail to reproduce. Of Waugh's own generation, he wrote in an essay in 1921:

> because they are clear-sighted, they will not be revolutionaries and they will not be poets and they will not be mystics…but they will have—and this is their justification—a very full sense of humour…they will watch themselves with…a cynical smile and often with a laugh. It is a queer world which the old men have left them and they will have few ideals and illusions to console them when they 'get to feeling old.' They will not be a happy generation. (*A Little Order* 2)

This passage recalls Eliot's recommendation of "uncynical disillusion" as useful for "religious understanding." Waugh admits that his generation will be unhappy because they will lack illusions; Sebastian and Lord Marchmain both fit this description in their unhappiness about growing up and losing their "boyhood illusions." They have no consolations in their old age and its attendant disappointments. As Waugh says in the passage, neither politics nor art nor religion seem available to his generation because his

contemporaries lack the ideals that would allow them to believe in these things; they are "clear-sighted" and see these institutions with a critical eye, having been failed by their civilization. Because of this disillusionment, their tendency is to cynicism and to a comfortless, rootless, and unproductive middle age. He recommends humor, i.e. accepting irony, contradiction, chaos, ambiguity, disappointment, and lack of control. Despite this pronouncement of inevitable unhappiness, in his private writings, Waugh constantly refers to both aesthetics and alcohol as sources of comfort, which of course they are in the novel. On the other hand, in 1945 he writes to his wife that he is "very well and happy," and the primary reason he gives is that "My work consists solely in doing good. I distribute food to the needy"; he goes on to list the benefits of his military assignment in Yugoslavia: "good architecture, good food, wine, blameless life" (*Letters* 197). He still enjoys sensual pleasures, but only as complements to charity, which gives him a sense of vocation and purpose.

Waugh's explanation of St. Helena Empress in *Saints for Now* illuminates his philosophy of sainthood and its relation to modernity. Helena's holiness was "not exceptional … in contrast to all that moderns think of as sanctity…. She just discovered what it was God had chosen for her to do and did it" (*Later Years* 273). Waugh wants to correct a misconceived definition of sainthood that makes it seem inaccessible to ordinary people. Similarly to St. Helena, Sebastian Flyte lives out his saintly calling in obscurity, and the tasks he fulfills are humble. Waugh wrote that sainthood meant the completion of "a single, concrete, practical task" given by God to "each of us, [something] laborious or easy, conspicuous or quite private, but something which only we can do and for which we were created" (*Saints for Now* 43). Sainthood is not unique to a few: we must each

become a saint "either here or in the fires of purgatory" (39). Athough the process of purgation implies suffering, Waugh defends St. Helena's life of comfort, similar to Sebastian Flyte's, explaining that although poverty usually accompanies a saint's calling, wealth is a "state of life full of dangers to the soul in which many foundered" (41). Indeed, Sebastian's main temptation is to live at the pinnacle of charm and wealth in English society, but he knows he can have neither happiness nor purpose as an English aristocrat. One of the main targets of Waugh's satirical humor in the novel is the polite society Sebastian is expected to enter in to. Those who accuse Waugh of elitism because of his admiration for the traditional heritage of the aristocracy seem to miss his constant criticism of the modern aristocracy and the fact that Sebastian rejects this lifestyle, choosing not to live as a "milord."

### *Edmund Campion and the Reformation*

Waugh displays his affinity for hagiography in his 1935 biography *Edmund Campion*, the story of the Oxford scholar and English Jesuit who was martyred under Elizabeth, which sheds light on Sebastian's sainthood in *Brideshead*. In *Edmund Campion*, Waugh envisioned the supernatural work of God in Reformation-era England. Both Edmund Campion and Sebastian Flyte attend Oxford, both are associated with Catholic aristocratic families, and both rebel against modern English society by maintaining an alternate value system and giving up position, wealth, talents, and safety to achieve a happiness apart from English society. Campion and Sebastian both cease to practice their Catholic faith while at Oxford; both then decide to leave Oxford, sacrificing promising futures and become exiles from England. Campion himself was a popular and successful student who abandoned a literary career at Oxford, similar to how Sebastian

abandons the privileges of his education at Oxford and the expectations that go with it (27).

In both *Edmund Campion* and *Brideshead Revisited,* Waugh finds a similar English worldliness in both the Elizabethan and modernist periods. This view of the English Reformation parallels Eliot's pointed description in *Murder in the Cathedral* of the dissolution of the monasteries as the beginning of modern, money-oriented vulgarity, the society without meaningful tradition or habit, in which the only greater purpose is, as Eliot called it, "*getting on*" ("Idea" 12-13). In *Edmund Campion,* Waugh locates the roots of modernity in the legacy of the Tudors: "They left a new aristocracy, a new religion, a new system of government….England was secure, independent, insular; the course of her history lay plain ahead; competitive nationalism, competitive industrialism, competitive imperialism" (8). Waugh traces how Campion's allegiance to Rome and his Jesuit readiness for martyrdom were heroic responses to an English society where spiritual values could no longer be lived out in safety: physical sacrifice had become necessary to secure spiritual happiness. Although "Campion loved his country and his countrymen" and "the way was easy for him to live among them in honour and authority," it was unfortunately "the duty of a loyal Englishman to throw in his lot with the Government" and this was something Campion could not justify (20). Like Eliot's Thomas Becket, Campion must resist the temptations of social and political success through service of the secular state, and he chooses to sacrifice a position of power. The temptation to conformity was "acceptable to countless decent people, then and later, but there was that in Campion that made him more than a decent person; … the love of holiness, the need for sacrifice" (21). Waugh privileges the martyr who is anti-society

above the decent person who reaps the benefits of society, just as he does in *Brideshead* by contrasting Sebastian with Lady Marchmain. Oxford under Elizabeth rejected not only the "cloistered formality of the Middle Ages" but also the true spirit of the Renaissance: "the spacious, luminous world of Catholic humanism" (13). Unlike modern secularism, which Waugh finds restrictive and tasteless, Catholic humanism is "spacious," allowing for freedom, exploration, and "luminous" beauty.

In describing Pope Pius V, who excommunicated Queen Elizabeth, Waugh calls him a "Saint" of "profound spiritual life" who "seemed always to expect events in the world to take place without human agency" and through prayer saw the situation of Elizabeth and England "with complete clarity" (29). Here Waugh directly juxtaposes what he sees as the divine inspiration of the saintly pope, which is distinctly non-rational and non-secular, with the values of the new England under Elizabeth. During the counter-Reformation, Waugh claims that the English Catholic church, in its new status as a persecuted outsider, was forced to become pragmatic and abandon its cultural, scholarly, and aesthetic glory; however, he quotes Campion writing that despite these sad and "wretched changes," the "relics of the Saints and the chair of the Fisherman" survive (41). The real identity of the Catholic Church is in the endurance of miracle and sacrament, a spiritual rather than an aesthetic identity, although Waugh does grieve for the decline in art he associates with the secular modern era.

### *The Flytes as Unlikely Saints*

Another indication of Waugh's hagiographical intentions in the novel is his use of saints' names for characters, as well as his other allusions to saints. Besides St. Edmund Campion and St. Sebastian Martyr, there are several other real saints who are possible

inspirations for Sebastian's character. Waugh was fond of the lesser saints (Hutton-Brown 2). Many of them are possible namesakes for the unlikely saints he creates in *Brideshead*. There was an English martyr named Sebastian Newdigate, a Cambridge graduate, who was martyred under Henry VIII. Newdigate, like Campion, at first accepted the English monarch as head of the church but later returned his allegiance to Rome (Walsh 536). Charles Hutton-Brown connects Sebastian's character to St. Aloysius Gonzaga, the patron saint of "young Catholic students" and a possible namesake for Sebastian's teddy bear (3). St. Aloysius was a nobleman who turned his back on the dissolute habits of his wealthy family to serve plague victims, rejecting worldly pleasures and dying of the plague himself at a young age (5).[4] St. Aloysius Gonzaga is also the name of the Catholic church in the city of Oxford, founded in 1875 and served by Jesuits, "successors of those who had kept the Catholic faith alive in Oxford during the long years of persecution"; Charles mentions St. Aloysius church briefly in the novel ("The Oratory Church" 59). Waugh's interest in Oxford, the Jesuit response to modernity, English persecution of Catholics, church architecture, and the modern revival of Catholic tradition mean that his naming the teddy bear Aloysius can hardly be a coincidence, especially since the bear is so important a figure during the scenes at Oxford. It seems clear that he does mean to compare Sebastian to St. Aloysius. The interesting *difference,* however, between Waugh's Sebastian and Gonzaga is that Sebastian adopts the opposite approach, rejecting his mostly pious family to pursue dissolute habits. Although both his and Gonzaga's families were wealthy and aristocratic, and both "saints" leave their families to pursue their callings, Sebastian seems to react against his family's faith and decency rather than their self-indulgence. It

is this twist on traditional hagiography, in which decency is associated with worldliness, that makes *Brideshead* interesting, a product of its era both in its revival of archaic saintly values and in its thoroughly non-moralistic, non-idealized portrayal of saint characters.

Cordelia's descriptions of Sebastian's fate also reveal that he is meant to be seen as a saint, making the novel hagiographical fiction.[5] In Tunis, Sebastian has been rejected as a lay brother, but is "with the monks," has grown a beard, and is "very religious" (302-4). Sebastian volunteers to go as a missionary to "the simplest people" or the "lepers" and calls himself "nothing," his failures of self-control having produced humility that is a pointed contrast with the characters that represent modern society such as Rex and Celia (305). The Superior of the monastery where he volunteers recognizes "holiness" in him despite his extreme bouts of drinking, and he is "happy" with "his old sweet manner" when he can care for his friend Kurt (306). Cordelia calls him "very near and dear to God" and points out that even if he dies drunk, if he can get the last sacraments "it's not such a bad way of getting through one's life"; her association of spirituality and spirits indicates that alcohol will give him some happiness despite his intrinsic sadness (308-9). She also associates his drinking with a sort of spiritual suffering: "One can have no idea what the suffering may be, to be maimed as he is—no dignity, no power of will. No one is ever holy without suffering" (309). Her word choice is significant—Sebastian is "maimed," permanently weak and injured, and lacks "dignity" and "power of will." His sainthood consists in giving up physical strength, social respectability, and psychological resolution. Waugh chooses to define sainthood in this manner, which is an innovation on hagiography, emphasizing failure rather than triumph, and also opposes survival-oriented evolutionary and social values. Cordelia

goes on to imply that Sebastian will be recognized as a saint after death, forming "intense personal cults of his own" as he is remembered by the monks and fathers (309). Her prediction brings out one of the ironies of sainthood, that the outcast on earth becomes venerated and rewarded in death.

Beyond the obvious hagiographical references in names such as "Sebastian" and "Aloysius," Waugh gives Sebastian a magical, luminous inner quality that conveys his sainthood while also making him aesthetically beautiful. He is often depicted with otherworldly or elevated imagery. At Oxford, he lives "at Christ Church, high in Meadow Buildings" (31).[6] In the published novel, the memorable scene where Sebastian teaches Charles to appreciate strawberries and champagne in the woods demonstrates the importance of Sebastian's beauty: "Sebastian's eyes on the leaves above him, mine on his profile" (24). Sebastian's eyes are raised, perhaps to some unseen spiritual reality, indicating that Sebastian is already otherworldly even during his youthful days of hedonism, and his hedonism and spirituality seem connected. In Waugh's manuscript draft the imagery was further developed: as Sebastian is "gazing into the…foliage above him," Charles is "looking/turning sideways [at] his delicate gem-cut profile." Throughout the novel, Charles is a developing aesthete with an appreciation for physical beauty, which he eventually transcends in the final scene, but in his attraction to Sebastian, it seems that he and others are already drawn to qualities beyond his physical beauty, e.g. his innocence, freedom, capacity for friendship, and unpretentious desire to be happy. Cordelia claims that "no one can hate a saint," implying that the beauty of a saint's soul is naturally attractive, analogous to physical beauty. Even his landlord in Africa, who cheats him of money, "loved him" and called him "such a *good* man" (304).

Like Ronald Knox, the priest Waugh wrote an admiring but candid biography of, he has a "continually widening circle of friends" even among strangers, and this capacity for friendship is an important theme throughout the novel (198).

Sebastian's sainthood is also evident in his combination of childlike innocence with the desire for a meaningful adult vocation, a pursuit which requires him to leave England. In contrast to Boy Mulcaster, another aristocrat who is truly stunted, a "boy," and according to Anthony Blanche a "real degenerate" (48-9), Sebastian maintains the good elements of his childlikeness—his "nursery freshness" and "innocence" (45)—but eventually gains an adult purpose by "hav[ing] someone to look after" (215). Sebastian identifies this task, looking after Kurt, as the alternative to his aristocratic life at home, in which he was always being cared for and minded as if still a child (215). Kurt is "gruesome, but as long as Sebastian had him to look after, he was happy," and Sebastian at times actually gives up his drinking during this practice of charity (306). As the British Consul says of him, "what he needs is occupation" (209). Just as St. Helena's task was to discover a relic of the "true cross" and St. Edmund Campion's was to be martyred under Queen Elizabeth, Sebastian's task is concrete and specific. While at Oxford, Sebastian considers his vocational options as an adult man and laments that there are no wars for him to serve in as a soldier. As a younger son, he is not expected to carry on the family line or to oversee the tenants and the estate as Bridey is, although Bridey's fulfillment of these duties seems mechanical and empty. Sebastian, however, according to a Franciscan monk, becomes "a real Samaritan" (214). He is not only grown into a man, but has also found a religious calling in living on the periphery of a monastery, and both of these developments make him incompatible with his "home," just as his father

was after his service in World War I led to his disillusionment with England. At home, Sebastian is kept a child by his mother's controlling schemes and by Nanny Hawkins' doting on his youth (302). Most importantly, there is no way for him to become a man and live as a man with a sacred vocation in England, and it is this disappointment with the prospects for adult manhood that he shares with his father. World War I represents the end of their boyhood illusions about adulthood and vocation in England (103).

Sebastian's sadness and love also indicate his sainthood. His inner conflict is revealed, as Beaty notes, in the chaotic "jumble of objects" and guests that always fills his room at Oxford (157). Cordelia explains that "no one is ever holy without suffering" for it is "the spring of love" (309). Sebastian's main characteristic is love, and as Charles remarks early on, "to know and love one other human being is the root of all wisdom" (45). For Waugh, sainthood was impossible without suffering, and the idea of "purgatory obsessed him, the painful road towards his destiny as St. Evelyn Waugh" (*The Later Years* 274). Sebastian's one attempt to achieve happiness in England, his drinking, is actually part of his suffering on the way to sanctification, and the different reactions of those around him to his drinking reveal their own level of sympathy with his suffering.

Despite his dissolute behavior, Sebastian early displays a sense of guilt and a sensitive conscience: "I am very contrite. Aloysius won't speak to me until he sees I am forgiven," he writes to Charles after drunkenly vomiting through his open window (30). This innocent-sounding apology is funny in light of the non-innocent nature of the infraction, a juxtaposition which again highlights his unlikely sainthood. Sebastian apologizes to Nanny like a little boy to his mother: his sense of guilt is childlike, stemming from the Catholic beliefs he formed as a child and cannot escape despite his

apparent libertinism. In fact, as Charles says, "Sebastian's life was governed by a code of…imperatives" which are almost compulsive (39). He claims to be "very, very much wickeder" than Charles, and Anthony Blanche recounts how frequently he went to confession as a student at Eton, despite being relatively innocent (86, 51). Although Sebastian is aware of his failures, they are not failings of love, and he maintains moral sensitivity towards others, even displaying sympathy and affection for his mother. Julia also has an active conscience and cannot escape a sense of sin with which she was indoctrinated as a child; despite their worldly sophistication, both Sebastian and Julia display childlike faith.

Like Sebastian, Julia is an unlikely saint figure. The Flytes' sadness, a result of their religious orthodoxy and spiritual awareness, explains why they are "naughty," "bad," and "wayward." Even though one of Julia's most prominent mature characteristics is sadness and her most significant scene is an expression of grief for the sufferings of Christ, Julia says, "I'm not one for a life of mourning. I've always been bad" (340). Here she connects her sadness with her bad behavior, an attempt to achieve happiness, which makes her analogous to Sebastian and makes her immorality, strangely, part of her saintly call to suffering. However, being "bad" disqualifies them for pursuing formal vocations, and even Cordelia and Bridey are in a sense too worldly for the monastery or the convent.

Cordelia is another saint figure, "full of good works" (310). She is not "bad" like Julia and Sebastian, but there is an earthy worldliness about her sense of humor and love of food that also marks her as a non-ascetic saint; notably, she attempts to join a convent but cannot fit in, saying it was "no good" and paralleling Bridey's and Sebastian's

failures to enter religious orders (300). The modernist saint does not fit in with either secular or religious institutions; Shaw's Joan and Eliot's Thomas are antagonized by both the church and the state.

Cordelia is also a saint figure in that she refuses to take part in polite society, especially its exalted activities such as "falling in love" and marriage, and her refusal to judge or control Sebastian also makes her a saint in the scheme of the novel, setting her apart from gossips and schemers who coercively enforce propriety. Like her mother, she is unfailingly orthodox, but unlike her mother, she is free and allows freedom to others. Cordelia chooses exile from England in order to pursue a meaningful occupation as a celibate nurse, something between the convent and the world. Cordelia's character represents a perfect saintly response to modern English society. Her good works bring her happiness untainted by her mother's temporal attachment to the family line or by a puritanical insistence on moral rectitude. Like Sebastian and Julia, Cordelia has a natural magnetism as an "engaging child," but also like Sebastian, who ages prematurely in Africa, Cordelia sacrifices and transcends the charms of her youth. When Charles meets her again after her years of service, he is chagrined that she is "so accustomed to gross suffering as to lose the finer shades of pleasure" (300). In Charles' judgment as an aesthete, this is a tragedy, but his judgment is mistaken in that she continues to be straightforward, humorous, unaffected, and display gusto, even after her years of service.[7] Like Waugh, she seems to have found happiness in a combination of worldly consolations and sanctified work, and although she loses her looks, she retains those elements of worldliness that Waugh seems to connect to happiness.

Cordelia's name, like Sebastian's, is allusive. In the novel's manuscript at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas, Waugh's original name for Cordelia was "Brigid," probably a reference to St. Brigid of Ireland, who was a courageous, independent, celibate abbess known as a healer and as "the personification of compassion" (Farmer 71-2). St. Bride's, one of the oldest churches in England, is located on Fleet St. in London and is named for St. Brigid, also known as "St. Bride,"; like Cordelia, she was the daughter of a nobleman who was known for her charity and whose religious vocation was at first resisted by her father ("St. Bride's: History"). The name of that church is one possible source for the name of Brideshead itself. Although the present church is Anglican, in 1940 it was bombed and evidence of six previous churches was discovered underneath, including evidence that St. Brigid herself founded the church ("St. Bride's"). Deep Catholic layers underlying a modern English church might have been symbolic to Waugh, who wrote in 1949 that "Catholic structure still lies lightly buried beneath every phase of English life; history, topography, law, archaeology everywhere reveal Catholic origins" (*Little* 149). Perhaps "Brigid Flyte" or "Brigid Brideshead" would have been too obvious a reference, so she became Cordelia. The most obvious source of Cordelia's name is *King Lear,* in which Cordelia is also the youngest daughter, is also honest and loving, and is almost saint-like in her willingness to sacrifice the rewards of society, inheritance, and home. She dies a martyr-like death as a young woman in service of her father that parallels Cordelia's sacrifice of her youth and beauty for service.[8] The difference between Cordelia and her otherworldly namesakes, however, is found in Waugh's emphasis on her earthiness and her knowing, worldly-wise quality.

*Anti-English Sainthood*

Modernist sainthood is defined in opposition to modern Englishness for Shaw, Eliot, and Waugh in various ways, and for Waugh it is Catholic and universal, more oriented toward Rome than London, pan-European in its connection to Christendom rather than modern secular nationalism. In the novel, Waugh favors classical, medieval, and neoclassical civilization over modern England, also comparing England and Germany unfavorably with Italy, Greece, and North Africa, the former locations of the Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Catholic empires. Waugh looks back to what he perceives as pre-nationalist periods to restore a sense of purpose to a society in which nationalism continues to wreak havoc and destruction and in which Englishness does not provide a meaningful alternative to more ominous forms of nationalism. The rejection of Englishness is therefore a motif throughout the novel, made most explicit by the cosmopolitan Anthony Blanche in his critiques of England's supposed virtues and made most evident by the self-imposed exile of most of the Flytes in pursuit of vocations. Cordelia, Julia, and Bridey all end up in the Holy Land in World War II, and in the last scene, Charles imagines the Crusaders and knights of old seeing the flame indicating the presence of God in the tabernacle at Brideshead chapel, the same flame that burns for modern soldiers "far from home, farther, in heart, than Acre or Jerusalem" (351). Waugh develops a motif in the novel of the soldier as an exile, similar to a saint in his sacrifice of home for his sacred mission; home should be a place of spiritual rest, and there is hope that Brideshead and England can be restored to that purpose even though they are apparently in decline; paradoxically, that restoration occurs by leaving home. This is the hope of restoration of the spiritual wasteland. The Flytes leave England but they have

achieved a spiritual continuity, represented by the flame, with the Christian inheritance of England that predates modernity and that can endure even as institutions like the English aristocracy and the English church physically disappear. Their sojourn to the Holy Land is also significant in light of how Charles mocks the empty ritual of Bridey's membership in the Knights of Malta, originally an order of Catholic crusaders and an example of the unifying of religious service and worldly activity; Bridey's service in the Holy Land indicates that he actually has revived his spiritual heritage in a real sense—by leaving England.

Leaving England represents transcending modernity but also transcending the limitations of nationalism by becoming part of the universal church communion. When Cordelia predicts that cults will spring up around Sebastian in North Africa, she mentions that the monks will laugh and remember him in "their various accents" (308). This internationalism contrasts coercive modern nationalism, most on display in Kurt's kidnapping, indoctrination, incarceration, and death at the hands of the Nazis, representatives of his "home."[9] As Cordelia says, "[Kurt's death] was the end of Europe for Sebastian," and he returns to North Africa for good as a direct result of violent nationalism (307). Waugh contrasts Northern Europe with Mediterranean countries, which he associates with the more humane and expansive Catholic and classical civilizations[10]; when Sebastian and Kurt go to Athens, a "classical country," Kurt becomes almost "human" and begins to "grow up," but is then forced to return to Germany (306-7). English society is also harsh and inhospitable compared to these more ancient cultures; Sebastian's African neighbors are shocked that his family would abandon him, implying that such social exile is a particularly English phenomenon and

recalling Julia's insensitive wish that Sebastian would leave England and misbehave elsewhere so as not to embarrass the family (304).

This anti-English bent relates to the novel's pervasive themes of home and homelessness. In early scenes, Charles remarks on Sebastian's feeling that Brideshead is not his home, and he only seems at home with Nanny, who represents his childhood, or at Oxford. His behavior gets him sent down from Oxford because he is expected to study and pursue an occupation, but Sebastian's experiences leisure, repose, and happiness there, which are his first attempt to exile himself from society. Although Waugh describes him as a pagan and a hedonist, his experience of leisure reminds us that Oxford and all medieval universities were once monasteries and places devoted to seclusion, contemplation, and a vocation apart from the world's economy. Monasteries were dissolved during the English Reformation, the turning point at which England became secular in Waugh's mind, but Oxford retains some monastic feeling just as Brideshead retains a feeling of feudal retirement and a sense of continuity with the medieval crusaders. After his arrest, Sebastian insists he "'won't go home. I've nowhere to go. Let's just slip back to Oxford and wait for *them* to bother *us*'" (121). Oxford is the closest thing to home that he knows. He insists he'd "sooner go to prison" than face "Mummy and Bridey and all the family and the dons," and first considers going abroad to escape home, as "people do when the police are after them" (121). Home should be free, especially for someone of Sebastian's birth, but it is a prison, as is Kurt's Germany. It is particularly ironic when Sebastian insists to Charles that he can drink feely in his own house while at the same time his mother schemes with the servants to hide the alcohol

from him. Freedom and home are aspects of grown-up manhood that are missing or unattainable.

Waugh contrasts the freedom of ancient civilization with the restrictiveness of modern England, a contrast which explains Sebastian's choice of exile in North Africa and Athens, and Lord Marchmain's in Italy. At first, Morocco strikes Charles as "suburban and up-to-date," but once in the city of Fez, he is impressed by its age. Unlike the "new, white settlements" and the "smooth, strategic road" of the sections that have been modernized by Europeans, the city where Sebastian lives is "gentle;" the street walls "opened to the stars;" the "dust lay thick;" "figures passed silently, robed in white, on soft slippers;" and "the air was scented with cloves and incense and wood smoke": the city is silent, peaceful, leisurely, atmospheric, and evocative of the past rather than of modern efficiency, activity, and change (21). The thick dust creates a sense of changelessness, a place without disturbance. Charles realizes "what had drawn Sebastian here and held him so long," and the description of Fez markedly contrasts descriptions of modern cities like London and New York City (210). Charles' guide in Morocco scorns the city dwellers as "dirty peoples," uneducated and French, the opposite of "British," which he associates with colonial efficiency; he prides himself on being associated with British modernization as a policeman from British Sudan. Waugh is clearly criticizing colonial education and cleanliness. He equates modernity with British colonization and spacious freedom and peace with the ancient culture that seems uncivilized from a modern perspective.

In contrast with Fez, the modern aspects of Oxford frighten Sebastian, and he associates them with growing up and with restriction. He makes fun of what he will have to do to "mend [his] ways" and please his mother, the dons, and the local Monsignor:

> They all say that I made a very bad start last year, that I have been *noticed*, and that if I don't mend my ways I shall get sent down. How does one mend one's ways? I suppose one joins the League of Nations Union, and reads the *Isis* every week, and drinks coffee in the morning at the Cadena café, and smokes a great pipe and plays hockey and goes out to tea on Boar's Hill and to lectures at Keble, and rides a bicycle with a little tray full of note-books and drinks cocoa in the evening and discusses sex seriously. (105)

Propriety means having one's daily activities prescribed, a lack of freedom. Moral rectitude means being dull and passionless, respectable and intellectual, in the acceptable manner, just as Charles' cousin Jasper was (105). Notably, it is all to avoid public notice and means drinking coffee, tea, and cocoa (again, at the prescribed times) rather than alcohol, a drink associated with manhood, freedom, and the ancient, as well as with a headiness at odds with Victorian notions of sober respectability.[11] Jasper, the exemplar of Oxford propriety, goes on to a political career, and dull, strategic, money-oriented men like him are the models of masculine vocation that frighten Charles and Sebastian. As George McCartney notes, Waugh was wary of "decency without force," of "morality and manners" without the underpinning of "strong convictions" or "metaphysical principles," i.e. propriety that lacks the vigor of spirituality and passion (14).

Besides Sebastian, many other characters are homeless in the novel, and Waugh's use of this motif emphasizes the need for exile or "abjuring the realm" even for worldly saints. In the Epilogue, Charles calls himself "homeless," an especially pointed comment in light of the fact that Brideshead, which he is revisiting, was almost his through marriage. He loses it because of Julia's (and possibly his own) conviction that their

relationship is sinful and that she must be alone, which makes his loss of this home an act of saintly sacrifice, especially because he speaks of Brideshead as one of his main temptations (350). Brideshead and England are not home, contrary to appearances and despite Charles' aesthetic nostalgia for aristocratic homes. He is also homeless as a Bohemian exile; like other artists of the time period, Charles lives in Paris for an extended time, and he also spends two years abroad in South America, never returning to his marital home afterwards and avoiding his father's home as much as possible, too. Kurt, Sebastian's German friend, is a drifter and a ne'er-do-well who is in and out of prison and who, like Sebastian, can find neither a respectable vocation nor settle in his native home. The friar Charles speaks to in Morocco praises Sebastian as a "real Samaritan" because he found Kurt "starving…and took him in and gave him a home" (214).[12] Lord Marchmain is also homeless in many ways, with a "fluctuating and mobile household" (311). When he finally returns to England after twenty years, he calls it "cold" and sits in an "inhospitable" heraldic chair (315). At one point, almost every major character is homeless: Charles, Julia, and Rex because of their divorces, but also Bridey and Beryl, who have been suddenly displaced by Lord Marchmain's return. They are all moving furniture back and forth, trying to sort out their confused households, and Charles remarks that "we were all … homeless," emphasizing the instability of family and civilization. Waugh creates examples of instability and homelessness with the breakdown of marriage and primogeniture throughout the book (311).

Homes in the novel are spiritually empty and sometimes physically empty, eventually to be destroyed altogether, often because of the money-driven modern economy. While Julia and he are married, Rex pays the bills at Brideshead, while Bridey

does all "the feudal stuff," now just a sham, but without Rex's help it is implied that the Marchmains cannot sustain their homes, and they eventually sell one of them (289). The aristocratic homes have become objects of nostalgia to be memorialized by artists before they are sold to apartment developers or become places for tourists to visit. Resisting this trend, Lord Marchmain insists on using the very rooms and furniture that are least practical and usually only viewed by tourists upon his return to Brideshead, choosing to be nursed in the ornate Chinese Drawing Room and sit in heraldic chairs that speak of his position. His choices are his attempt to return to the past, when the wealth and splendor of Brideshead may have had a real purpose and the house really served as a home, a place of rest and hospitality.

Restlessness of spirit is a motif related to homelessness, and many characters are restless, wandering or drifting without direction. Waugh shows that Lord Marchmain's aristocratic furniture is inefficacious; it does not provide rest or consolation in the face of death, and his last hours are characterized by fear of death.[13] In contrast, the flame in the Brideshead tabernacle, i.e. the presence of God, does provide continuity with the past and a sense of home even for Charles as a soldier, reversing the cruel irony of his visit to Brideshead as an outsider and the disappointment of having lost possession of it. Through this happy reversal, Waugh shows that the material and aesthetic grandeur of the house does not ultimately make it a "home" in the sense of a place of spiritual rest, but the revival of the flame and the divine presence in the chapel restores it as a home.

Brideshead should be a place of safety and repose, but it is described as a waste land full of dangers, the opposite of home and of civilization. At first, Charles considers it a place where "the rest of the world [was] abandoned and forgotten; a world of its own

of peace and love and beauty; a soldier's dream in a foreign bivouac," i.e. a place of safety from the dangers and discomforts of service abroad (321-2).[14] Home, at least a feudal home, should be almost monastic, alluding to the idea that a feudal lord or knight has a sanctified vocation, worldly activity imbued with spiritual purpose and refreshed by spiritual repose, in his participation in warfare, government, marriage, patronage of the church, and care of the tenants and land. Waugh uses three key words in this passage to define the spiritual happiness of such a place and such a life, lived for a vocation: "peace and love and beauty," the three things Charles and others pursue throughout the novel. Anticipating their marriage, Julia insists they could be "happy here" at Brideshead, thus mentioning the fourth elusive ideal that the saintly characters pursue (321). Brideshead promises these things; however, it cannot really provide them, nor does it provide safety from the exposure to war and danger that comes with leaving home to fulfill a dangerous vocation—in fact, the war and modernity invade Brideshead. When Charles and Sebastian discuss Brideshead's former status as a medieval "Castle," Sebastian notes that now "it's full of ravening beasts"—in other words, a waste land, a place where the protections and graces of civilization have broken down (79). Ideally, the lord's life would be a balance of crusade-like sacred missions and restful restoration at a retired home, but as soon as Charles describes this "vision" of Brideshead's purpose, he reflects that his vision is "such a prospect perhaps as a high pinnacle of the temple afforded after the hungry days in the desert and the jackal-haunted nights" (322). It is, he says, understandable the vision was alluring although in retrospect he knows it is false.

This apparent paradox—how Brideshead can be a place of beauty, love, peace, and happiness but also represent the temptation of Christ in the desert—relates to the

paradox of the entire novel. Charles' impulse to desire these things is good, for they are good, but Brideshead is ultimately not the right place to seek them, just as Sebastian's desires for freedom and happiness are good desires that Cordelia implies will lead him to God. Brideshead's medieval past evokes the sacred vocations of the Middle Ages: monasticism and feudalism. It provides an image of the rest, contemplation, and spirituality that those vocations offered; this rest seems absent in the modern world. Waugh sees such vocations as figurative models, still relevant for those who abjure the world, although they have either disappeared or are not viable options for the modern characters.

Waugh continues to use wasteland imagery, showing that England is no longer a safe home or a spiritual center of civilization but a desolate place. In the final pages of the novel, Charles muses on the growth and decline of a civilization through meditation on Brideshead's physical architecture as a symbol of England: first, the house was "enriched and extended" in every generation, growing with the "ripeness" of "timber in the park…until, in sudden frost came the age of Hooper; the place was desolate and the work all brought to nothing" (351). His natural metaphors hint at wasteland imagery; a civilization that was once fecund is now "desolate" as in the dead "frost" of winter. Wasteland imagery is important not just for the parallels with other modernist literature and the irony that a highly evolved civilization would become primitive and savage, but also because it is the classic dwelling place of the saints and of Christ himself, alone and exiled, away from the protective comforts of civilization. Exile to a wasteland serves to emphasize and reveal the shortcomings of the world; it is an exercise in realism and disillusionment. Julia uses such imagery in her description of Christ's suffering: Christ

could find no "shelter" in the "castle walls," "outcast in the desolate spaces where the hyenas roam at night and the rubbish heaps smoke in the daylight" (288). Her description of Christ in a medieval castle is anachronistic, her reference to a castle reminding us of Brideshead Castle. Despite appearances, this "castle" is no true refuge from the realities of suffering, death, and other inevitable fates; Julia's description of "castle walls" that cannot protect also undermines trust in European Christendom in general. She describes Christ as an outcast, which is highly significant in that the modernist saint figure is always an outcast, and her rubbish heaps outside the city recall Gehenna, the trash dump outside Jerusalem's city walls that is a biblical image of hell, and also seems to prophesy the "dumps" that surround Brideshead when the army takes possession of it. The protection offered by Christendom is an illusion, as was evident while Waugh was writing the novel during the Second World War, but Christ himself dwells in the wastelands outside the castle, showing that such exposure is necessary for sanctification. While having this vision, Julia begins to realize that she and Charles cannot be "happy" at Brideshead, dispelling the illusion of home and comfort. In her imaginings, Christ is also alone and without "comfort," luxury, or friendship "except a sponge of vinegar and the kind words of a thief (288).[15] He is also "nameless," without status, reputation, pedigree, family, or inheritance, and "dead, like the baby they wrapped up and took away before I had seen her"—cut off from life, blighted, without a future (288). Waugh's images of Christ in the wasteland can be taken as a model for saints as well; they leave or are exiled from home and from the illusion that they have a home on earth. Instead, they wander and live in dangerous lands. Julia goes on to describe a sick and crippled old man searching through her imagined rubbish heaps for something "marketable," a damning

image of modernity and the marketplace (288). The wasteland, like Christ and like the Flytes themselves, is physically cut off, blighted and infertile, but it is in this setting that spiritual growth, regeneration, and perseverance paradoxically come forth.

*Remoteness and Agelessness*

Charles uses the words "remoteness" and "agelessness" to describe Bridey's strange "dignity" (282), and these virtues are two keys to understanding Waugh's concept of modern sainthood. These qualities allow the saint to transcend time and place, i.e. modernity and England, to reject the rewards of conformity, and to find continuity in the midst of constant change. The saint resists embracing newness simply because it is new and resists seeking the approval of his contemporaries through following the latest fashion.[16] Charles mentions agelessness in the context of beauty when he praises Julia's more mature beauty as timeless, in contrast to her fashionable "spidery" look when he first met her (179-180). During Julia's epiphany about sin and her spontaneous meditations on it, Charles describes her as remote and describes himself as on a "strange sea," "as far from her in spirit" as when he was "in the jungle" (288). The value Waugh places on remoteness again emphasizes the anti-English and anti-nationalist essence of modernist sainthood. In contrast, Charles' wife Celia is thoroughly of her age and of her milieu in her love of "Art and Fashion" (276), and significantly, Charles decides early on that his tastes in art run toward the medieval rather than the modern. The saint is not a slave to time and place. This is an important theme in an age that is not only changing rapidly but that prizes innovation. Waugh shows the problem with that tendency by emphasizing the quick changeability of fashions in Charles' discussion of aesthetics with Bridey; he acknowledges that although Brideshead's art-nouveau chapel is currently out

of style, that it will probably come back into style again. Although the specificities of time and place are the anchors of experience, and Waugh emphasizes the importance of spontaneous and new experience, the changes he describes in the modern world usually represent decline, and the saint transcends them. As Charles says of Bridey, "there seemed no spark of contemporary life in him" but rather "an indifference to the world, which compelled respect" (282). Although Charles detests Bridey's lack of taste and grace, in this sense he is a model and achieves the paradoxical biblical virtue of living in the world but not being "of the world" (John 15.19). In the same verse, Christ promises the world will love you if you are "of" it, while it will hate you if you are not, which perhaps explains Charles' distaste for Bridey. Sebastian's motto, "*Contra mundum,*" or "against the world," has a significance beyond mere Bohemian social and moral rebellion, although that is one dimension of his opposition; the other is a clear-sighted spiritual apprehension and rejection of the secular world, in the biblical sense (144).

Waugh also develops a theme of the importance of continuity with an ageless or long tradition; Lord Marchmain and Charles both seem to revel in Brideshead's medieval past and see Catholicism as part of that inheritance they can share in. When Charles puts Julia to bed after her outburst, he sees her lips move and wonders if it is a prayer, "some ancient pious rhyme that had come down to Nanny Hawkins from centuries of bedtime whispering, through all the changes of language, from the day of pack-horses on the Pilgrim's Way," i.e. the road to Canterbury (293). Here he refers not only to England's medieval past, but also specifically to Saint Thomas Becket of Canterbury, England's great saint and a martyr at the hands of the monarch, like Edmund Campion. Thomas represents the one part of English identity that can and has endured. The ageless prayer

also transcends changes in language, making it universal and transcendent of national identity or differences in culture over time. This reference to language implies that while linguistic and cultural changes may abound, specific religious practices are more enduring, not what David Hume called a local "prejudice" that needs to be shed to discover rational absolutes (240).[17] Julia also refers to the timelessness of the crucifixion, paralleling Eliot's implication that Christ's sacrifice recurs in specific times and places. She describes Christ's hanging "year after year" (288), outside of time, yet he is also located in a specific place, outside the castle walls. Her identification with Christ's suffering—"she wept her heart out for the death of her God" (290)—shows that an ancient event can be ever-present and thus modern.[18] This is significant for modernists fixated on newness and the loss of the past, because an eternally significant event is understood to be new and present all the time, not dead or reified.

For Waugh, the modern break with the past was something he lamented, in the loss of tradition that gives meaning and sanctity to life, but also something he celebrated, in a spirit of release from meaningless conventions of more recent eras. Modern conventions in Waugh's books are less enduring than older traditions, seeming stale and clichéd, while the revival of ancient and meaningful tradition promises invigoration of a decaying culture. This explains why he often reaches back in history beyond the Victorian period, the Enlightenment, and the Reformation to find an enduring definition of Englishness in medieval Christendom, finding the spiritual traditions of that age both ageless and remote, at odds with modern fashions and political nationalism.

*Vocation and Work*

An important concept to define in discussing sainthood in *Brideshead* is that of "vocation," which is not only a religious calling or a specific occupation but also a means of sanctifying everyday life, of giving work spiritual dimension, of finding happiness, and of becoming wholly human. Waugh combines two seemingly contradictory critiques of modernity, pointing out both the lack of vocation and the lack of leisure. Both lead to restlessness, but in advocating leisure, he is not advocating doing nothing, as vocation, occupation, and purpose are also major themes in the novel. Waugh contrasts faulty modern understandings of one's "job" with a proper understanding of both leisure (with its religious associations of worship, contemplation, and seclusion) and work (with its religious associations of vocation, service, and sanctification). An understanding of what Waugh might mean by vocation, which can also be thought of as purpose or *telos*, therefore complements our understanding of the importance of leisure, both of which are lacking in the modern world.

A. J. Conyers' article "The Meaning of Vocation" provides a helpful definition of vocation by correcting two modern misconceptions about the concept: the first is the idea that vocation must mean a "monastic" calling that rejects the world completely; and the second is the notion that vocation means merely a secular occupation, a concept that in Protestant thinking implies that all secular institutions are sanctified and that in bourgeois thinking leaves out a sense of the sacred altogether (11-12). Conyers suggests a middle way between these two excesses that seems to parallel Waugh's sense of vocation in *Brideshead*, in which he repeatedly lambasts the emptiness of secular institutions but in which no one takes religious orders or withdraws from the world completely, not even

Cordelia. The proper definition of vocation includes both what Bonhoeffer called a combination of "'yes'" and "'no'" to the world and its institutions, "'never a sanctioning of worldly institutions as such'" (12). The modern struggle to strike this balance is perhaps what accounts for the struggles of Bridey, Sebastian, Julia, and Cordelia, as well as the Marchmain parents and eventually Charles, to discover and respond to vocations without erring on the side of a "yes" or a "no" to the world. The Flytes are too worldly to become actual monks, priests, or nuns, which is one way in which they are unlikely saints. They avail themselves of worldly as well as spiritual consolations rather than living what Julia calls a "life of mourning" (340). However, their struggle with vocation explains their restlessness and malaise; the pressures of English society threaten to dissuade them from their vocations, but they all seem to eventually discover a middle way.

Conyers defines vocation as having four key features, all of which are "distinctly non-modern": first, a person is called by an "agent outside" of the self and "does not simply 'choose'" a path; second, the vocation contradicts "the will of the one who is called into service," resulting in the person's complaints, doubts, protests, and attempted evasions of the calling; third, vocation brings about "hardships" such as death, sickness, injury, and "exile"; and fourth, the person called can be "distracted" from the task by the world (13-14). As Cordelia explains, vocation is inescapable: "If you haven't a vocation, it's no good however much you want to be [a nun]; and if you have a vocation, you can't get away from it, however much you hate it" (*Brideshead* 221). All four of the aspects of vocation that Conyers identifies are evident in *Brideshead*, and pairing this definition with Waugh's own definition of sainthood, it becomes clear how vocation and sainthood

relate. Waugh believed that anyone could become a saint if he or she discovered a specific task and sought to fulfill it,[19] no matter how menial or silly the task might seem, as in Sebastian's task of serving the pitiful, vaguely criminal Kurt. Conyers cites Calvin's idea that when work is given by God, "'no task will be so sordid and base…that it will not shine'" (18).

Conyers' second point about vocation, that it contradicts the will of the person who is called, also sheds light upon the common phenomenon of the reluctant convert in *Brideshead Revisited* and other modern literature, e.g. Bendrix in Greene's *The End of the Affair*.[20] In the context of vocation, the convert is reluctant because from his perspective he cannot see how the task he is called to will be accomplished, because he wants to avoid the hardships it will bring, and because he did not choose it himself; nevertheless, in Charles and other reluctant converts like Lord Marchmain, the convert is somehow compelled to submit, and the mystery of how this processoccurs emphasizes the mystery of the process of conversion and of sainthood; the choice of authors to create reluctant convert characters emphasizes the irrational or super-rational nature of spirituality and in this case, illustrates how providence can work without violating free will. It would be natural to protest that the idea of compulsion is contradictory to the idea of free will, which Waugh also asserts in the novel, but as Conyers discusses in his definition of vocation, the explanation of how compulsion and free will can coexist requires differentiating between two definitions of freedom: "the freedom [of the person called to a vocation] is not an inner-directed impulse, but the use of the will to respond to an unforeseen and perhaps unknown reality" (12). In other words, freedom is evident in a freely chosen response to the calling, rather than in unfettered autonomous choice as

exercised by the individual (this would be more like deciding than being called; Eliot makes a similar distinction between decision and submission to fate in *Murder in the Cathedral*). Vocation is a function of relationship between the one called and the one calling rather than an isolated activity of the individual, without reference to anyone outside of him. He is free in that he can choose submission, an idea which perhaps seems objectionable to modern ears. Obviously, in using the former definition of freedom, Waugh is countering a more modern and autonomous definition, and it is clear in the novel that pure freedom does not lead to happiness but that a free response to a narrow and limited way does. Waugh paradoxically proposes that one must have freedom first in order to find and follow a defined and disciplined vocation. Lady Marchmain is a hindrance to this freedom because of two misconceptions: first, that opposition and control can coerce a person into pursuing his vocation; and second, that a person's vocation will conform to societal expectations and lead to inclusion, i.e. not require isolation, sacrifice, or exile. In contrast with Lady Marchmain, Waugh's concept seems more individualistic, even more modern, in seeming to approve of social rebellion, but at its heart it requires submission of the will and sacrifice of autonomy. One key difference between the two concepts is that one requires submission to the visible world and one to an invisible voice; both require submission, and therefore the modern dream of complete autonomy is an illusion.[21]

In *Brideshead*, modern "work" has replaced vocation. Sebastian unexpectedly remarks to Charles, "'It's rather sad to think that whatever happens you and I can never possibly get involved in a war'" (101). The word "work" in Charles' observation that the work of generations has now "been brought to nothing" encapsulates the themes of the

novel, which hinges on the lack of meaningful work available in modern England and the sense that work is futile. Sanctified vocations are difficult or impossible to find in the world of polite society because they require a monastic exile, a complete rejection of society, and occupations in the world such as artist, professor, student, politician, socialite, soldier, clergyman, landlord, and journalist seem meaningless or ominous, having been detached from the spiritual source of culture. The motif of work, jobs, vocations, and occupation is pervasive throughout the novel, and the emptiness or lack of work hinges on the question of purpose. The reason Charles has fallen out of love with the army, which in his boyhood dreams promised a grand sense of fulfillment or even a spiritual sense of purpose, is the meaningless tasks of the bureaucracy; they constantly move from camp to camp, conduct practice maneuvers, make messes, clean up trash dumps, and follow army regulations, but all to no purpose except, it seems, to fulfill the whims of the commanding officers. The men under his command, who were also idealistic at first, have become lazy and slovenly because of this lack of purpose and the lack of proper leadership—all ranks and classes seem to lose heart. When Charles returns from his tour of the house, he finds "no sign of work" and that Hooper cannot even give orders to the men (349). Hierarchy has broken down, and work is nonexistent or ineffectual. However, even in light of these realities, Charles seems to recover a renewed sense of purpose in his work after visiting the chapel. His men have neglected to clean up Brideshead, which the last regiment had defaced, and Charles faults himself "for going away," deciding to begin exerting his authority "till the job's done" (350).

Similarly, Julia lacks vocation. Charles locates Julia's mysterious sadness in having a lack of purpose: she is beautiful, fashionable, and has secured a strategic

marriage, but when he re-encounters her after many years on their trans-Atlantic journey, he imagines her wondering "Surely I was made for some other purpose than this?" (310). Lack of purpose is the source of Sebastian's malaise as well. A pointed example of purposelessness is the irony of his trip with Mr. Samgrass through the Levant. Mr. Samgrass, the thoroughly modern intellectual who is a successful don and socialite, views the ancient Byzantine monasteries as a tourist, which is indicative of how he treats religion in general. He knows people in the Vatican and "knew more than most Catholics about their Church," keeping up on its politics and gossip, but as Charles notes wryly, "he had everything except the Faith," only attending chapel at Brideshead as a "Victorian tourist, solid and patronizing, for whose amusement…foreign things were paraded" (110). Tourism represents the loss of civilization's original purpose and spiritual life. Sebastian escapes Samgrass' watch on their tour of monasteries, disappearing to drink, which is ostensibly just another instance of misbehavior, but we find out later that Sebastian actually wants to be a monk, and Waugh's real point becomes clear in the juxtaposition of the two—Sebastian's irresponsibility is preferable to Samgrass's insincerity, emptiness, sophistication, and opportunism (304). Sebastian fears and resists growing up in England for this reason, because he is clear-sighted and therefore disillusioned, mocking all the proper, driven students at Oxford and the dons like Samgrass, but he grows up when he leaves and finds purpose. Sebastian's aimlessness is paralleled by Kurt's. He explains to Charles why he joined the Foreign Legion:

> …we said: 'What the hell? There is no work in Germany. Germany is down the drain,' so we said good-bye to our professors, and they said: 'Yes, Germany is down the drain. There is nothing for a student to do here now,' and we went away and walked and walked and at last we came here. Then we said, 'There is no army in Germany now, but we must be tholdiers,' so we joined the Legion. (212)

Although Kurt's lack of purpose stems from the post-war Depression economy in Germany and Sebastian's to the irrelevance of the aristocracy, he, like Sebastian, feels there is no purpose in study and that a masculine occupation in the army might provide a meaningful task, as well as a chance to wander from home. However, in post-World War I Europe, Germany was not allowed to have an army and England did not anticipate fighting in a war again so soon, so even this option is unavailable. Even Charles, who does eventually serve in the next war, finds that military service falls short of his anticipation. When Kurt's friend in the Legion dies, he remembers saying "'What the hell?'" again and shooting his foot to get out of the army (212). Later, he is arrested and forced into service in the Nazi army. Both his self-inflicted wound and Nazi coercion illustrate the seeming purposelessness and emptiness of military service in an age of secular nationalism and statism; as in *Murder in the Cathedral,* the state seems unable to provide a vocation, only a means of advancement, and it persecutes non-conformists who do not submit to it. As is evident in Bridey's membership in the ineffectual Knights of Malta (281) and Charles's military service, the military no longer provides a meaningful vocation for men, leaving them drifters like Kurt and Sebastian. In the modernist period, drifter characters are Bohemian, immoral, or criminal, but by their wandering, becoming exiles from their homes in this world, they are saints.

Lady Marchmain holds on to anachronistic pre-Great War notions about masculine heroism, commissioning a book to venerate her brothers[22], who were killed in the war and thus avoided having to eke out a vocation in the midst of post-war apprehension of reality as Lord Marchmain, Bridey, and Sebastian must do. Especially in her expectations of Bridey and Sebastian, Lady Marchmain hinders the free pursuit of

vocation and progression into adulthood of her children. McCartney explains that Waugh's "decent characters" like Lady Marchmain seem to hold on to the past but do not understand the spiritual essence of "their cultural heritage" and have an "idealized portrait of Western civilization" (95). Bridey, who attempts to live out Lady Marchmain's aristocratic plans for him, is a man Waugh describes as "completely without action in all his years of adult life" and with "no real zest" (280-1); he "does all the feudal stuff with the tenants" (289) and wears "the robes of a Knight of Malta" in his mock "order of chivalry," which Charles describes as "ceremonious buffoonery" (280-1). Beaty highlights the irony that in marriage Bridey "neglects the very obligations [of reproduction] for which he gave up his spiritual vocation" (162). The Flyte family dies out with this generation, which perhaps relates to Waugh's belief that "physical sterility, whether artificial or organic, results from sterility of spirit" (qtd. in *The Early Years* 293). However, physical failure, even though it indicates the decline of a civilization, does not preclude spiritual vocation, it only moves the pursuit of that purpose to the margins of society and to a paradoxical, spiritual notion of success—the essence of sainthood. In *Sacred Biography*, Heffernan identifies celibacy as a typical theme in hagiography: the sacrifice of domesticity and social prestige is a "martyrdom of the spirit" in traditional saints' lives and a way of "living in the world as if one were dead to the world" (232-3). Therefore, Cordelia, Sebastian, and Julia, eventually, live out this vocation of celibacy as a sacrifice of temporal things for spiritual service. Bridey ends up in a kind of limbo as a "half-baked monk," but does, at least symbolically, seem restored to a sense of religious vocation by his eventual sojourn with the army in the Holy Land (176).

Although Lady Marchmain's Victorian notions of propriety and manhood are stifling and anachronistic, Waugh differentiates between this mere conventionality and true agelessness, which resists modern fashions but also empty conventions. Charles, for instance, detests Bridey's lack of social grace and aesthetic tatste, but he also admits that those very shortcomings indicate his agelessness. Charles' love of the aesthetic and the proper is a modern bias that Bridey's agelessness transcends. In his only instance of praising Bridey, Charles describes him as having "an indifference to the world, which commanded respect" (282). There is something admirable about Bridey in his orthodoxy and "rectitude": "he was still half-child" and even more importantly, "there seemed no spark of contemporary life in him" but rather "an indifference to the world, which compelled respect" (282). He is necessarily half-child because there is no way for him to achieve manhood; unwilling to be physically exiled as Sebastian is, he still maintains an emotional and moral separation from society. Both of them are apparently failures because they do not participate in the modern economy, but this failure is a withdrawal from the world that parallels the contemplative withdrawal of religious vocations and the saint's exile from the world.

One way in which characters do find purpose or vocation is through friendship, which Waugh portrays as related to vocation and sanctity. Friendship gives meaning to Charles' and Sebastian's time in college, and friendship is also what prevents drinking from becoming sad and empty; ideally alcohol should enhance friendship. In several scenes of the novel it becomes clear that Sebastian has found a vocation, his specific task, in friendship and in charity. Charles is shocked at Kurt's manner of dependence on Sebastian and his obvious vulgarity, but Sebastian explains that "'it's rather a pleasant

change when all your life you've had people looking after you, to have someone to look after yourself. Only of course it has to be someone pretty hopeless to need looking after by *me*'" (215).

This explanation indicates that taking care of Kurt represents a transition into adulthood for Sebastian, who always feared growing up. He alludes to still being immature, but in this admission he is again clear-sighted in his humble self-assessment and in his insightful realization that he needs purpose. As with his alcoholism and Julia's adultery, there is a paradox at work that is central to understanding the novel but that is difficult to understand. Childishness, alcoholism, and adultery are not in and of themselves good in Waugh's moral universe, but they are understandable reactions to reality rightly apprehended. Sebastian's reluctance to grow up and do what would be expected of him at home flows from his insight into the lack of meaningful paths available to a man in England. Rather than conform to one of them, as Charles does in both his marriage and in his art career, both false versions of vocations, Sebastian abjures the realm. Although any number of careers or domestic arrangements in England would have provided him with comfort, he cannot abide the restrictive spiritual reality that adulthood in England would mean for him, and this explains his compulsive need for escape, expressed through drinking and exile, but also explains how running away and drinking are both acts of sacrifice in the manner of the saints.

Julia represents the feminine nobility of England, just as Sebastian represents the male, and neither can find a meaningful vocation while living in the "world," i.e. England. Like Sebastian, Julia's beauty is timeless: although she "conformed to the fashion" of the 20's, her "ignoble" clothes, "clownish" makeup, and boyish hair "could

not reduce her to type" (179). There is something about her that is not modern and that does not conform to her time, that makes her more ageless, suited "by right" to be the "centre" of the society of "historic" families (179). In other words, her beauty and pedigree represent the height of English civilization, all that was good, inspired, and strong in it. Waugh even contrasts her beauty with the bleakness experienced by those returning from foreign "waste lands," i.e. the hardships of war and exile from home; they see in Julia "a glimpse of the world they had believed lost for ever among the mud and wire" (179-80). As a woman, her potential calling in the world is marriage, just as men's calling should be war, and Waugh uses war as an analogy for marriage: "marriage [was] the beginning of individual existence; the skirmish where one gained one's spurs, from which one set out on the true quests of life" (181). Charles compares young men's first year at Oxford to "being launched in society" just "like their London sisters" (107). For both Sebastian and Julia, their young adulthood or adolescence is where they must face the difference between expectation and reality. To her, marriage is an "abstract" game of strategy or a math problem, just as to Sebastian the idea of serving in a war and fulfilling his uncles' legacy is abstract and ultimately an illusion (180). Both at first embrace the purposes imposed on them by society but both also eventually seek vocations. Despite their beauty, grace, and family name, both Sebastian and Julia are "unfitted for the highest honours" in England (181). They are both foreign to the society they should dominate because of two reasons: their "waywardness" and their "religion" (181). These seem to be antithetical reasons, which is part of Waugh's paradox—he draws an analogy between impropriety and orthodoxy, both of which make a person an outsider in modern society and therefore a saint. Their Catholicism prevents them from conforming to their

peers; when they do, guilt and the fear of hell haunt them and draw them back. Their waywardness means they lack the self-control to succeed in society or the economy, again failing to conform. Knowing they can never fully conform because of these two reasons, they reject society altogether, opting out of respectable and expected paths. In the "feminine" modern world, there are no options for masculine vocations, but traditionally feminine vocations are also empty.

### *Emptiness and Charm*

If the modernist saint, as I propose, is essentially anti-modern or a corrective to the excesses of modernity, we must define modernity as it relates to polite society in the novel, the "realm" that the saint abjures. For Waugh, modern man is marked by a lack of wholeness and by an incongruity between outer appearance and inner reality. This is related to an inner emptiness which has its parallel in empty houses and tabernacles in the novel—the loss of the divine presence and of human inhabitation leaves structures that are beautiful but that are ultimately empty shells, like the human beings who inhabit society and show all the signs of civilization, but inwardly lack inspiration, purpose, and life. As Charles notes of the country houses that for generations were the homes of the aristocracy, but are now under threat of destruction, a development which leads to his success as a commissioned painter of these homes, "When the water-holes were dry people sought to drink at the mirage," i.e. his paintings (227). Charles distinguishes between reality and image, and the analogy seems to apply to the conflict between spirituality and appearance throughout the novel. This distinction between fullness and façade applies not only to homes but also to the Church, art, and individual souls. Lord Marchmain echoes the motif of emptiness, when he recounts the history of his family,

noting that now "no clerk sings" in the "chantrey" and prophesies that "soon the fountain will be dry" (332-3). His reference to the emptiness of the chantrey is important because it indicates the end of the aristocratic endowment of spiritual vocations and thus the end of one sacred purpose of his family and of his wealth. His prediction that Brideshead's beautiful Renaissance fountain will soon dry up, a prophecy which comes true during World War II, also indicates that the aristocracy has become an ancient but empty shell, akin to Charles' mirage, a merely ornamental institution that lacks inner reality, fullness, and the purpose or telos it was built for.

The absence of water is drought, the absence of fullness is emptiness, and death is the absence of life; Waugh associates these images with the absence of the divine presence, another image of emptiness, in Cordelia's description of the deconsecration of the chapel at Brideshead. The priest "blew out the lamp in the sanctuary and left the tabernacle open and empty, as though from now on it was always to be Good Friday" (220). After the priest leaves, Cordelia goes on to say, "suddenly, there wasn't any chapel there any more, just an oddly decorated room" (220). The extinguishing of the flame and the removal of the Eucharist represent the absence of God, which Christ experienced on Good Friday just before his death; therefore, alienation from or loss of the divine presence in society is one explanation for the death pervasive in modernity and for Waugh's imagery of emptiness in individuals, institutions, and physical structures. The idea of a perpetual Good Friday is highly resonant in the modernist period, imbued as the culture is with death, loss, and mourning. Modernist authors tend to dwell in the existential experience of death, meditating on its reality as if it is permanent, rather than emphasizing images of resurrection and regeneration. In the scene Cordelia describes,

she establishes the dominant mood of modernism and the spiritual, cultural, and psychological apprehensions of many modernists. Cordelia's description of the empty "decorated" chapel as a mere room also emphasizes the insufficiency of aesthetics, art, and design on their own to restore actual life or the presence of God to the culture and foreshadows Charles' own encounter with this presence in the chapel in the final scenes of the book, scenes which represent a distinct change in mood from the nostalgia, sadness, and disillusionment of the vast majority of the novel. Waugh questions the replacement of religion with art while also showing that spirituality is the basis of art that is living and original.

Charles further describes the emptiness and fragmentation of modern human identity that parallels Cordelia's image of the empty chapel. Expanding on his water and well imagery, he describes the "hours of afflatus in the human spirit, the springs of art," periods of inspiration that produce culture and beauty, and explains that both individuals and civilizations experience these periods, but that both also have periods of decline in which "the vision fades, the soul sickens, and the routine of survival starts again" (225). In decline, the civilized return to a wild, natural state, and Waugh, like Eliot, describes modernity in animal and evolutionary terms in which primitive survival instincts engage—as when Sebastian describes his home as full of "ravening beasts"—and inspiration, the basis of human culture and the difference between human and animal, dries up, leaving a wasteland where man is exposed to danger and poses a danger, acting on his basest instincts of survival and domination. In contrast, the periods of inspiration, which Charles calls "classic," allow cultures to become civilized and people to become individuals, "single or unique" in identity; otherwise they are merely types, and types are

essentially false identities. We become "counterfeits of ourselves—the sensual man, the economic man, the man of reason, the beast, the machine and the sleep-walker" (225-6).

This list seems to correspond with the types of modern men and women that Waugh creates in the novel, and he personally believed that true identity is always individual, resisting the simplification of a type, which is always a false impression (*The Early Years* 454).[23] For Charles, his periods of "afflatus" are those in which he encounters Sebastian and Julia, both themselves and individuals. They and their family members are often described throughout the novel as "odd," "queer," "strange," etc., and these adjectives can be interpreted as high praise in light of Waugh's philosophy of types. The modern counterfeit types of personality, Charles explains, seem like "ourselves to the outward eye" but are the result of conformity and passivity (226). The only way to restore life or fullness to the façade and to "breathe freely" is to "drop behind unnoticed," "dodge down a side street," "push ahead," or "have a secret we will never share" (226). This definition of inner "life" relates clearly to the saint's experience of exile, either self-imposed or imposed by society. Sebastian is the clearest example of one who refuses to conform in an attempt to "breathe freely," as Waugh uses an image motif of being trapped and seeking escape to describe Sebastian's reasons for drinking and for leaving England. Charles' description of how to resist becoming a modern counterfeit defines such resistance as above all an experience of privacy and aloneness, putting the individual at odds with modern over-exposure in the press, the cinema, crowds, and the gossip and image-oriented relationships of polite society: none of these can represent the inner life of man or articulate its mysteries. Rather, they crystallize counterfeit identities by treating them as real, and Waugh parodies these modern institutions for this reason.[24]

Seclusion is necessary to integrate inner and outer identity and to fill the empty room of the individual soul, as in the contemplative lives of saints. Charles' relationships with Sebastian and Julia loom so large in his memory because they are periods of "life" for him, of non-conformity, privacy, and authenticity untainted by self-promotional survival motives. In the sense that both Sebastian and Julia are modernist saint figures, Charles is their unlikely acolyte and reluctant convert.

The types that Charles lists as "counterfeit of ourselves" are represented in the novel and demonstrate the lack of wholeness that defines modernity for Waugh. Anthony Blanche is "the sensual man," Rex Mottram "the economic man," and Charles "the man of reason"; Sebastian calls his family "beasts," and Bridey can be considered "the machine and the sleep-walker" at times (226). Mr. Samgrass (rational), Celia (economic), Jasper (economic), Hooper (mechanical), and Boy Mulcaster (sensual) also fit these categories. Charles explains that these counterfeit identities form as long as we are "unresisting" and "borne along" (226); therefore, wholeness—like sainthood—comes with active, even violent, resistance. Charles agrees with Celia that after two years of separation he has not changed, and he knows this is a bad thing because, he admits, change is "the only evidence of life" (231). He describes his two years abroad: "despite this isolation and this long sojourn in a strange world, I remained unchanged, still a small part of myself pretending to be whole" (229). Waugh's wording here echoes the biblical wording of Stephen, the first martyr, recounting God's word to Abraham that "his seed should sojourn in a strange land," which calls to mind Abraham's faith in leaving his home for a dangerous and unknown place, an act that made him a wanderer, one of "whom the world was not worthy" (Acts 7.6, Heb. 11.38). This is one of many references

to saints and exile in the novel. Even though isolation and exile are the conditions that produce life and change in the saint, after his "sojourn" Charles falls back into unresisting passivity and a fragmentary, counterfeit identity: he is "pretending," like most members of his social circles seem to be.

This lack of change is in some ways related to Charles' nostalgia, disdain for the modern, and longing for the past, which show an admirable resistance to modernity but also lead him to err in the opposite direction, toward the reified and dead past which cannot be recovered.[25] Celia teases him about his attachment to the past, insisting that if her ostentatious caviar-filled swan ice sculpture were described in a book about "a sixteenth-century banquet in Venice, you would have said those were the days to live" (241). Instead, he ridicules its excess and tastelessness as an example of modern vulgarity masquerading as refinement. Waugh, like Charles, is definitely nostalgic, and Bernard Schweizer criticizes Waugh's "elitist conservatism" (257), but Waugh is not so simplistic as to advocate an unmitigated longing for or impossible return to the past. Although Charles' obsession with the past is understandable in light of the decline he sees around him, his ultimate development is toward a discovery of how to live in the present, a common theme of modernism and a way in which Waugh's novel fits the modernist creed "make it new." Waugh's theme is about the proper intersection of old and new in an age perhaps excessively obsessed with newness, especially in art. After his trip to South America, an art critic calls Charles a "fresh young trout" and proclaims that "Mr. Ryder has at last found himself"; the press's easy attribution of newness and wholeness to Charles is another ironic discrepancy between outward appearance and inner reality, an irony which Charles reveals when he admits to Celia that he has not changed; outwardly,

however, as a "socialite artist," he seems alive and original (229, 231). The press gets it wrong again when a review of his art opening describes his paintings as inspired by his tour of "Africa," in one of Waugh's great satirical details. Waugh is making the point that the appearance of modernity and of fashionable newness does not indicate the presence of real life, originality, and inspiration, but also, he is of course lambasting the press and polite society for being satisfied with counterfeits rather than whole human beings whose artistic innovation springs from the soul more than from a desire to be thought edgy. It is not until the last paragraphs of the book that Charles fully demonstrates the change and "evidence of life" that the press attributes to him here. He honestly assesses his own art and life and finds both wanting, just as he previously assessed modern art as "bosh." Great art, as Charles says, comes from the inner "springs" of an individual artist or an entire civilization—the water of spirituality in a desert wasteland. Anthony Blanche confirms the falseness of Charles' supposedly "fresh" art in describing it as an "imposture," an assessment Charles calls "well-reasoned."

Besides emptiness, a prominent trait of Waugh's modern characters is charm, a trait which Waugh uses Lady Marchmain's character to establish as central to Englishness and as insidious because it seems refined, clever, and graceful. Charm in the novel seems to threaten sanctity, but why? Anthony Blanche criticizes the charm of Lady Marchmain on several occasions, criticism which is essential to understanding her role. Blanche criticizes English charm on aesthetic grounds, as an insipid marker of respectability which lacks both a "delicious" and spicy quality and a "forceful" and barbaric quality, making it the opposite of the independence, strength, and creativity which Waugh associates with a more manly culture. The emblem of modern "feminine"

society, Lady Marchmain is delicate, ironic, domestic, and controlling. Charm for Blanche is associated with propriety, and since he is obviously attracted to the "unhealthy" and decadent, charm and propriety are stifling (270-1). His praise of social aberrance for its pleasure, color, and freedom parallels the impulses of sainthood in the book, while the rationality, restrictions, and self-control of charm act as hindrances. Blanche goes on to explain the spiritual dangers of charm in addition to its aesthetic dangers: he calls charm "the great English blight," linking it to wasteland imagery of death and infertility; as he says to Charles, "It kills love; it kills art," and "I greatly fear...it has killed you" (273). Charm not only makes English culture a wasteland, but also causes a loss of the self and of spiritual wholeness, and thus prevents true artistic inspiration. Charm is coercive, enforcing conformity, and Charles has conformed to Celia's vision of himself. Sebastian echoes Blanche's warning of charm's destructiveness when he reflects that "poor Mummy…killed at a touch" and when he derisively describes his family as charming early in the novel (214). Anthony Blanche rejects the refined Englishness of Lady Marchmain even more strongly than he rejects middle class morality: "I am not English; I cannot understand this keen zest to be well-bred. English snobbery is more macabre to me even than English morals" (271). The problem with them, perhaps, is that they fall into the category of decoration. They are opposed to "love," which is one mark of the saint and of a vocation. Charm is more insidious than moralism, showing that Waugh is not just questioning a Victorian tendency to emphasize self-control and respectability, but that he is also questioning the more refined beauty and irony of the Flytes, which is seemingly unimpeachable.

It is somewhat unexpected that charm should be the opposite of art as the charming characters are the greatest advocates of "art," and Waugh makes them destroyers of life when they are so attractive, witty, and generally correct and tasteful. The key lies in the association of charm with control rather than freedom and in its association with self-interest, which puts it at odds with sainthood and vocation as well as with subjective authenticity. Charm is very English, the opposite of "abjuring the realm."

Besides Lady Marchmain, Celia is the other great embodiment of charm in the novel. In his initial characterization of Celia, Charles describes her as having a particular "charm" as well as being distinctly "English," being "neat and regular," having a polite "reticence" and a "modern" style, all traits which help her make friends quickly (234). It is at first strange that Waugh and Charles would be so critical of charm since Sebastian's charm seems to be part of his goodness, but his charm is distinctly artless and childlike; people are attracted to him because he is a saint, despite his lack of sophistication, which Blanche points out. In contrast, Celia and Lady Marchmain are both intelligent, witty, stylish, and tasteful, but it is clear that charm is paramount to falseness in Celia's penchant for flattery and insincerity (242, 244) and in her vigorous networking on board ship (235). The satire is thick as she repeatedly remarks on "such a lot of friends" on board, people she has only known for days, who have sent her expensive gifts to cement their friendship with her because she seems important, and whom Celia wants to use strategically to advance Charles' career (236, 242). Waugh's irony in her use of the word "friends" is significant because throughout the novel, friendship is a marker of the saint and one of the virtues that seems lost or at least elusive in the society he describes: this is why it is also so significant that Charles always calls Sebastian his "friend" and in the last

scene of the novel calls the Flytes his "friends," in contrast with many false friendships and with the general lack of friendship throughout the novel (350).

For Celia, friendship is about parties, looks, and striking the right tone, a matter of strategy. We are reminded that as a Mulcaster, Celia is a "Lady" (241), a noblewoman, and this status is something else she shares with Lady Marchmain, showing that the modern aristocracy is dominated by artful social ambition rather than its traditionally masculine purposes or occupations such as warfare, hunting, or government. Like Julia engaging in the marriage games of high society, Celia's character is marked by planning, strategizing, manipulating, and controlling (241), but since the strategizing is coupled with charm and delicacy, it is graceful and adept. It is all the more insidious, though: Waugh satirizes her ambition to reveal the vulgarity and decline of the aristocracy that should traditionally be above such striving. Celia, for example, "schemes" without "impoliteness," to improve their table on ship (248). According to Charles, modernity is characterized by alienation and isolation, the "cold interstellar space" between isolated stars, despite Celia's repeated use of the word "friends." Celia remembers that Charles was "a friend of the dipso brother," her flippant language about Sebastian revealing the lack of sympathy she has with Charles and lack of understanding she has of friendship; in contrast, Charles and Julia confide in each other the important memories of their past (240). In contrast, Celia is obsessed with surfaces and luxury, calling Julia one of her old "friends" but then displaying her shallow understanding of friendship by merely admiring Julia's "glamour" moments after Charles has had a moment of real friendship with her; Waugh's juxtaposition of real and false friendship here highlights the inadequacy of society friendship and explains why Charles is drawn to Julia, who is capable of real

friendship and love (240). Charles describes Celia getting ready for her cocktail party in their unnecessarily large and ostentatious state room: she "was adept in achieving such small advantages [as the state room], first impressing the impressionable with her chic and my celebrity and, superiority once firmly established, changing quickly to a pose of almost flirtatious affability" (240). Even her kindness is part of a strategy that is really meant to assert her superiority, stemming from an anxious and savage survival instinct rather than from friendship or love, which stem from freedom and peace. She is associated with fashion, posing, and manipulative insincerity here: she is essentially false, only a surface, and despite her deferential charm, focused on domination.

On the other hand, in the novel, friendship, like other truly good things, is characterized by natural enjoyment and liking, not manipulation or suffering through a conversation for the sake of personal gain. Waugh describes those on the ship as "boisterous," "restless as ants," and constantly drinking (236), juxtaposing their frenzied and restless socializing with the repose of Charles and Julia, sitting still on the ship's deck with their drinks, "on terms of long and unbroken intimacy" and "friendly candour," Julia's "hands folded in her lap, so still" that Charles does not see her at first (238, 237). Charles and Julia form a cocoon of rest in the frenzy of the ship's society, finding secret happiness that is analogous to the "still centre" of the storm, preceded and followed by the "full fury of the wind" (256). This image adds to the novel's motif that privacy and solitude, especially with a true friend, is a suitable retreat from the world and a form of saintly withdrawal. Ants are of course traditionally associated with industriousness, but here the connotation is clearly negative and associated with unhappiness, thus contrasting

the modern spirit of restless ambition with a sense of purposeful work and vocation that is also restful, meaningful, and life-giving.

Waugh satirizes polite society by showing the lack of pleasure found in the interactions among Celia's influential "friends." Pleasure is essential to real friendship, because pleasure is freely chosen, without coercion or ulterior motive. Waugh juxtaposes the tiresome, humorless, awkward conversation among the glitterati at the Captain's table (246) with the hours of conversation Charles and Julia share on board. As Charles notes ironically at Celia's cocktail party, "There were no friends of mine there, but I…talked away civilly enough" (242). Waugh highlights the false intimacy of this society when a woman Charles has never met tells him, "I feel I know you through and through, Celia's talked so much about you" (242). Charles mocks her in his mind: "Through and through is a long way, madam. Can you indeed see into those dark places where my own eyes seek in vain to guide me?" (242). Society is like the press here in accepting surfaces and counterfeits of human identity. Waugh highlights the shortcomings and superficiality of English charm and civility, contrasting polite behavior and conversation with that intimacy which explores the "unplumbed" mysteries of the individual soul, just as he highlights the inability of science to make sense of Sebastian's sadness. This lack of understanding of the soul concurs with a lack of interesting things to say: the civilized and sophisticated are merely "dull nobs"—as "nobs always are" (254). They lack color, interest, uniqueness, and "zest"; their company is not enjoyable, a sin to a generation scornful of being "bored" and to a connoisseur like Charles, who appreciates individuals like he appreciates wine and art. Their loudness, dancing, and crowds represent social interactions that try to gin up excitement without actual enjoyment, freely chosen (254,

263). Their pleasures are not really pleasing; although every luxury is at their disposal on the ship, allowing everyone to "behave like a film star," they are still boring, and to Waugh this indicates a spiritual emptiness, a lack of the color that comes with a whole human identity (251).

The answer to this boredom, however, is not ultimately to become the modern type of the "sensual man," engaging in the sordid escapades of perpetual children like Boy Mulcaster or of uninhibited hedonists like Anthony Blanche, who both seem to be responding to the lack of pleasure found among charming people. Although Blanche is an important contrary to English charm and propriety, and Boy's immaturity demonstrates Waugh's critique of blighted masculinity, ultimately the saint characters like Sebastian and Charles achieve more meaningful forms of leisure than perpetual pleasure-seeking or juvenile behavior; they engage in both of these but tire of them eventually. This is one of Waugh's nuanced paradoxes: hedonism is a means to sainthood but not its end. Leisure, in Josef Pieper's sense, is related to hedonism in that both resist the constant activity of modernity, but it is essentially different in encompassing maturity, love, friendship, and purpose.

### *Leisure and Happiness*

A helpful concept to understanding Waugh's critique of modernity, fascination with the aristocracy, and paradoxical treatment of hedonism and religion is that of "leisure" as defined by German philosopher Josef Pieper in *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (1952), written in the postwar decade only eight years after *Brideshead Revisited*. Pieper argues that one of the problematic tendencies of modernity is "overvaluing the sphere of work," defining man primarily as a worker rather than simply as a human, whether in a

capitalist or a socialist system (20, 22). Pieper links this contrast in definitions of the purpose of human beings to the traditional differentiation between the "liberal arts" and "servile work" (21), the first of which requires leisure and is obviously associated with scholarly study, but also with the contemplative life and the freedom of gentleman or an aristocrat as opposed to the bondage and drudgery of a slave (40-1). In this sense it is significant that Sebastian is both an aristocrat and a student at Oxford, a school with medieval, pre-modern roots, and that he ends up associated with a monastery; these associations with ancient, leisurely institutions explain why he is so fascinating to Charles, who is from a middle-class background more dominated by the restricting concerns of money, propriety, and striving for acceptance and success. Pieper admits that returning to this definition of man not as worker but as creature of leisure "sounds immoral" to a modern listener (20), which perhaps explains why Sebastian seems so immoral and also why Waugh makes such an immoral character his saint. Sebastian, in other words, should by rights have a life of freedom, but must adjust to the modern world. The modern definition of man as primarily a worker—one who "lives to work" (20)—is essentially anti-humanist. In *Brideshead,* Charles discusses "languor," describing it as the pleasure and "zest" of "youth," a connection which is essential in understanding Sebastian's yearnings for pleasure, freedom, and childhood. However, Charles gives languor a spiritual dimension as well, speculating that "perhaps the Beatific Vision itself has some remote kinship with this lowly experience" (79). Sebastian's and Charles' love of leisure is akin to a love of God, and Pieper also connects leisure and worship. Religious feast days are the traditional means by which leisure is built into a culture, both in classical and medieval times, and Waugh depicts both of these lost

European civilizations as "human" (306-7). Pieper cites Plato's statement that "recurring Feasts" were given to man by the gods, along with "the Muses…and Dionysus, as companions in their Feasts, so that nourishing themselves in festive companionship with the gods, they should again stand upright and erect" (17). Leisure feeds purpose and work, but more essentially, it allows for the pursuit of human wholeness, challenging partial definitions of humanity such as "worker" or Waugh's modern types. Leisure is also akin to freedom and therefore an antidote to the coercive tendencies of modernity, and the importance of leisure explains Sebastian's fears of growing up and of losing freedom.

Bridey's character, despite his apparent life of leisure, is a foil to Sebastian. Ironically, although Bridey does not really work and seems unable to discover a vocation, his life is one of self-imposed difficulty; Charles describes his "toiling lungs" (163), a phrase which hints at burdensome work but also at the restriction of free breathing, a motif Waugh uses to describe anxiety about social expectations and the fear of damnation in the novel. Pieper explains that the hallmarks of modernity are to be always "restricted" by "anxiety," to love difficulty for its own sake, and to consider it virtuous even if it has no greater purpose (35, 51). Bridey is moralistic, and for Charles this approach to religion is repellent, dwelling only on the anxiety of "moral obligation" and on avoiding what is "wrong" (164). In this critique, Waugh implies that there is a positive element of religion—one associated with beauty, pleasure, love, and the freedom to follow one's natural inclinations and spiritual vocation—that is neglected by a purely prohibitive religion. Bridey's fearful anxiety and negative approach perhaps explains why he does not ultimately pursue a religious vocation or any meaningful work—wanting

to avoid abandoning his worldly duties without becoming too worldly leaves him adrift, with no sense of freedom to pursue a definite path or enjoy the positive experience of religious happiness. In contrast, Sebastian's alcoholism and the affair between Julia and Charles are both attempts to recover experiences associated with leisure. However, leisure is not laziness, but rather animates work with transcendent purpose that is lacking from many modern occupations in the novel. Pieper's argument that leisure is the means to establish the spiritual foundation of not only spiritual health but also scholarly and artistic culture is also relevant to the novel.

Waugh links leisure with "happiness," a concept fraught with theological implications in the novel. Charles's likening of languor to the Beatific Vision hints that bodily pleasure and spiritual fulfillment are not wholly incompatible but possibly complementary, analogous, or even causally connected. In *Decadence and Catholicism*, Hanson makes a connection between the inherent "sensuality" of Catholicism and that of "paganism, even hedonism," as well as dandyism, all of which were considered "subversive" in Victorian England, characterized as it was by more Protestant, puritanical, and scientific impulses (6). This sheds light on Waugh's association of Catholicism with pagan aestheticism and with the unexpected notion that both are ways of rebelling against society and seeking some kind of transcendent happiness. The pursuit of happiness is not, in other words, sinful, selfish, or at odds with the process of becoming a saint. Pieper seeks to restore a Christian understanding of happiness, noting that the "Christian conception of sacrifice is not concerned with the suffering involved *qua* suffering" but rather with its end: "the fullness of being, and thus ultimately with the fullness of happiness" (35). Pieper is alluding to St. Thomas Aquinas's theology of

happiness—"The end and the norm of discipline is happiness." Waugh seems to be alluding to this idea of happiness as well. Aquinas connects virtue and pleasure, writing that "activities in accord with virtue are not only pleasurable but also beautiful and good" and that "happiness is the name of the ultimate end of man and of the highest good itself" (267, 191). Aquinas, of course, specifies that the "end of our desires is God; hence, the act whereby we are primarily joined to him is basically and substantially our happiness" (192).

Waugh's focus on pleasure, beauty, and happiness throughout the novel obviously counters the hagiographical ideal of asceticism for its own sake and the Victorian ideal of self-control for the sake of social acceptability, and explains why Sebastian's pursuit of happiness is not ultimately sinful. Aquinas contrasts the one "who makes money his end" with those who make happiness their end, for happiness is the proper end of human activity and so "the human act is judged virtuous or vicious according to the apprehended good toward which the will is essentially attracted and not according to the material object of the action" (191, 203). Sebastian's pursuit of "happiness" is a pursuit of saintly beatitude, which he seems to achieve despite the worldly means.

Love is another mark of the saint in *Brideshead Revisited,* and Pieper associates love with leisure and happiness, the opposite of the anxiety and "sadness" exacerbated by the modern work-oriented economy: love "is man's happy and cheerful affirmation of his own being, his acquiescence in the world and in God" and "brings a particular freshness and readiness to work along with it" (45). Aquinas also connects love with happiness and with saintliness: "If we are speaking of heavenly beatitude, which is promised to the saints, it is charity which perfects the will and orders it to the perfection of happiness"

(217). Therefore, it is theologically significant that Waugh dwells on Sebastian's love and the love others spontaneously and consistently have for him, on Cordelia's "burning love," and on Charles' and Julia's love for each other (300).

The search for happiness and love is necessary restless. Restlessness is a motif in the novel that indicates the need for leisure as an antidote for modern anxiety, but also a need for purpose and vocation. Waugh's motif of restlessness perhaps alludes to Augustine's famous statement that "our heart is unquiet until it rests in you" (39). Thomas Gilmore observes that it is "significant that the apparent end of [Sebastian's] pilgrimage is Carthage, vividly commemorated by Augustine" (44). This choice may allude to Augustine's statement about restlessness and enhances the impression of modernity as restless and the nature of Sebastian's quest as a search for spiritual rest. Waugh introduces modern restlessness in Charles' literal sleeplessness throughout the frame narrative of the Prologue and Epilogue, in his regiment's pointless moving from place to place without a home base or a destination, and in his unsettled thoughts and memories. Waugh also describes New York City, the prototypical modern city, in terms of restlessness verging on lunacy: upon his reunion with Celia after two years in the jungle, Charles explains that "neither of us was ready to sleep, for in that city there is neurosis in the air which the inhabitants mistake for energy" (231). In other words, restless ambition is not the same as purposeful work, and anxiety is not the same as spiritual energy, which in Waugh's mind seems to stem from Charles' "hours of afflatus in the human spirit, the springs of art" (225). Charles describes "the exertions of my wife's pleasures in New York," which have tired him out (247). His use of the word "exertions" and "pleasures" is a significant oxymoron underscoring the lack of rest even

in modern luxury. This is in contrast with the pleasurable "languor of youth" that so characterized his friendship with Sebastian. Leisure allows for friendship and love to occur as in Charles' friendship with Sebastian and his relationship with Julia.

### *Luxury and Suffering*

Although Charles is an aesthete who loves pleasure and shares the luxurious lifestyle of the aristocracy, Waugh reveals the irony that luxury actually contributes to restlessness.[26] This is one of the paradoxes of the book—the characters seem to revel in luxury, but Waugh differentiates between modern luxury and true leisure. Charles describes the cheap construction and modern design of the luxury liner that takes him from New York to London, elaborate but built without the skillful work of traditional craftsmanship—"wood which no carpenter's tool had ever touched"—and devoid of ornamentation, color, and beauty—"designed perhaps by a sanitary engineer" (237). It is impressive but ultimately pointless and not even pleasing: "huge without any splendour" (236). It does not fulfill its intended purpose, that of providing beauty and rest, and his reflection on the carpenter indicates that even the ship's construction reveals the absence of purposeful work, echoing his other sentiments in the novel that civilization is over when people cease *building*. Charles connects the supposed progress represented by the luxurious ship with the "ruins" he has just been touring in the South American jungles, the remnants of the glory of past civilizations. Ironically, in his return to Western civilization at its height of modern progress, he only sees ugliness: "wealth is no longer gorgeous and power has no dignity" (237). The wealthy are exemplified by Celia and the powerful by Rex—their wealth and power serve no aesthetic or higher purpose, only that of self-advancement. Luxury and power, the prerogatives of the aristocracy, have

degenerated in that they are animated by ambition rather than by contentment. Julia notes that life on ship makes everyone behave like a "film star," and Celia's party is "'a cinema actor's dream,'" Charles tells her, in a dubious compliment (241)—i.e. not real, only a counterfeit of pleasure, and his comment reminds her that she wants him to network with Hollywood executives at the party, calling attention to the false motives of her hospitality and friendliness. The luxury Waugh describes is at odds with leisure, and it is impractical, serving no purpose and providing no pleasure. With subtle humor, Waugh describes the gift sent to Celia by the chief purser on the ship, "the life-size effigy of a swan moulded in ice and filled with caviar" (240). Charles points out the impracticality of the caviar since there is nothing to eat it with or on, and the twin uselessness and showiness of modern luxury is a motif through all his descriptions of life aboard ship. Waugh associates Celia's idea of luxury with her anxiety about money—she secured the room "without paying more for it"; this fixation of hers associates her with *nouveaux riche* characters like Rex and the respectable middle class characters like Jasper, both of whom are obsessed with money, constantly talking about how much things cost, how to save money, how to spend money, allowances and bills, and what kind of debt others are in.

In a fascinating and symbolic passage that illuminates the relationship between luxury, freedom, and vocation, Charles strangely finds himself restless and uncomfortable on the luxurious beds in his state room: "In a narrow bunk, on a hard mattress, there might have been rest, but here the beds were broad and buoyant; I…tried to wedge myself firm, but through the night I turned with each swing and twist of the ship" (249).[27] Paradoxically, the wide berth seems to provide too much freedom and too

much comfort. The beds provide no stability in the midst of the storm, and the luxuries of modern life similarly provide no firmness in the midst of inevitable realities. They separate Charles from the acute, immediate ravages of nature but cannot protect him from destruction, chaos, and ruin because they are not "firm." As in *Murder in the Cathedral*, exposure to the danger of the elements is metaphorically linked to awareness of spiritual suffering. The domestic comforts of modernity protects us from awareness of both natural and spiritual danger until it is too late to prepare for them. The solution or protection Charles alludes to, a "narrow bunk, on a hard mattress," seems to recommend limitation rather than unfettered freedom and autonomous individualism. The image seems ascetic and monastic, bringing to mind the loss of vocations and the need for a defined purpose, such as monastic vows or some other obligation, to provide stability in the "storm." Throughout the novel, the coming storm is a symbol on many levels of the inevitability of suffering, seeming to refer to the impending war, the inevitability of death and divine judgment, and the inescapability of disappointment and loss. Julia and Charles are set apart from other members of polite society by their relative lack of illusions and anticipation of fate. They see through luxury, as when Julia mocks Charles' roses and living the life of a "film star" and when Charles mocks the false friendships at his wife's party or the intellectual pretensions of the Episcopalian Bishop.

Modern luxury obscures the knowledge of reality, especially the realities of sin, suffering, and death. This type of knowledge is an important theme of the novel as a whole and in modernist literature. Those who are knowing and sad are on the path to sainthood, like Julia, but luxury falsely obscures suffering. Charles describes Celia's seasickness, likening her to a woman in labor who all of a sudden realizes that despite her

"luxurious" hospital and her "well paid" doctor, "her labour is inevitable" (249). Neither money nor science can prevent the "inevitable," but both create the illusion of prevention until the suffering has already arrived. In contrast with Celia, Julia is knowing and sad, suffering because of her conscience and her clear-sightedness about the world.

In light of the sense of impending war and the pervasive war metaphors throughout the novel, Waugh develops a paradoxical definition of "peace" in which struggle and danger are inherent to peace, similar to Thomas's sermon on peace in *Murder in the Cathedral*. As Lord Marchmain lays dying, Charles want to "let him die in peace" by not allowing a priest into see him, which is ironic because Lord Marchmain is experiencing intense "fear of death" and of "darkness" and "loneliness" (331). Charles' modern version of peace is to deny these inner reality and to maintain appearances and avoid an "unseemly incident" (325); his definition of peace does not involve struggle or violence, which are inevitable even if he does not recognize them. As Julia says, the church "mean[s] something so different by 'peace'" than what Charles and most people mean (324). In the context of her expectations of imminent war and with the inkling that her relationship with Charles is also doomed, Julia brings up her longing for a moment of "real peace," implying that there is such a thing as false peace. Charles challenges as they enjoy the "glorifying" sunset in the quiet of Brideshead and he admires Julia's beauty, asking "'What do you mean by 'peace'; if not this?'" (279). His aesthetic notion of peace, like his polite notion of leaving Lord Marchmain in peace on his deathbed, is not sufficient, as she indicates by answering, "'So much more'" (279). Charles' peace is of the moment whereas Julia is anticipating the future, and an honest concept of peace must consider past, present, and future. Nostalgia (trying to regain the past), aestheticism

(dwelling in the present in denial of fate), and planning (trying to control the future) are each represented in excess, emphasizing the lack of control we have over time, despite modern illusions about progress and the power of the will.

*Feminine Sainthood*

Julia refers to herself as "hysterical" and "tired and crazy and good for nothing" after her lengthy, rambling meditation on sin and the suffering of Christ, an effusion which is brought on by a realization of her own guilt and a sense of how she has contributed to the suffering of others (289, 291-2). It is significant that she is physically weak—"tired"—mentally weak—"crazy"—and lacking the prepossession to be productive or simply control herself—"good for nothing." Although it is clear that Julia is speaking truth, she sounds irrational to Charles, who calls it "bosh" (290), and even to herself; she tries to dismiss her apparently nonsensical thoughts and words using the language of modern medicine, as if conscience and revelation are merely nervous disorders. Her speech seems incoherent, but is spontaneous, poetic, and impressionistic, with a mysterious origin in her own soul; she is not just repeating the dogmas taught to her as a child, but is repeating them as she has realized them afresh in that moment. In her ramblings she is akin to other modernist characters such as those of Virginia Woolf's Septimus Smith, who is considered insane but is knowing and insightful, and her spoken ramblings seem akin both to modernist poetry and stream-of-conscious narration.

Interestingly, Julia dismisses herself as just another example of a feminine type, reinforcing her psychological self-diagnosis and trying to discount her spontaneous self-expression: she is just one of those "hysterical women" and is ashamed of the scene she creates (289). This self-diagnosis is akin to some critics' and to other characters'

dismissal of Eliot's women in *Murder in the Cathedral*, in which they are the most wise and prescient characters but also seem irrational. Women often speak the most truthfully but because of their gender and the manner of their speaking, they are also the easiest for the rational, the educated, and the polite to dismiss, as in Shaw's *Saint Joan*. Julia's epithet for herself is contrary to Waugh's insistence on treating characters as individuals rather than as types, and he is obviously using irony to undercut her pseudo-scientific and misogynistic language because her speech is pivotal to the novel. Julia both apologizes for her impropriety and implies that her outburst is beyond rational explanation, at least to a rationalist like Charles whose perspective does not allow for religious mysteries: "'I'm sorry for that appalling scene, Charles. I can't explain'" (289). The content of her ramblings, however, shows acute imaginative awareness of grief, death, and suffering in which she shares in the physical suffering of Christ, as Eliot's Chorus seems to share a physical compassion with Thomas. Such co-suffering is of course typical of the saints, what St. Paul calls "the fellowship of his sufferings" (Phil. 3.10). The reason Julia's speech seems nonsensical is because such things are normally not spoken of so openly or felt so precisely, and because the newness and spontaneity of her experience make it difficult to articulate in a rational and orderly way. All of these qualities, however, also show that she is not just repeating authoritarian discourse or dogma. There are parallels between Waugh's and Eliot's suffering female characters—Cordelia as a nurse is also physically familiar with suffering, Lady Marchmain meditates on the Seven Dolours as she is dying, and both Julia and Cordelia keep vigil with their father on his deathbed (a contrasting image is that of Charles imagining Celia thinking she can avoid the pains of labor because of her luxurious hospital and well-paid doctor) The presence of these

characters again reaffirms that the modernist saint is in many ways feminine: perceived as weak and irrational, but honest, spontaneous, knowing, and compassionately joining in the suffering and grief of others. These women challenge the modern type of the "man of reason," and Waugh's depictions of them show a positive understanding of femininity that counters the simplistic accusations of misogyny made against him.

### *Alcoholism and Freedom*

A parallel with the seeming chaos of feminine sainthood is the paradox of alcoholic sainthood. Waugh had an idea for a story around the time he was finishing *Brideshead* in 1944 "of a man who gave up drink and became so clear-sighted that he could not abide any of his friends and had to take to drink again" (*Letters* 191). For Waugh, as for Sebastian, drinking was an escape from the shortcomings of those around him. Sebastian's alcoholism is a result of his clear perceptions of the "counterfeit" nature of society. McCartney proposes that Waugh drew on Nietzsche to portray Dionysian chaos and disorder as a means of transcending the "illusion of stability" produced by the modern focus on Apollonian reason and individuality (13).[28] In *Brideshead,* he shows the limitations of purely rational and scientific approaches to human existence; according to his biographer Martin Stannard, for Waugh, "color" in life came from "lunacy" or a "drunken challenge" to Materialism (*The Early Years* 170). He did not see hedonism as necessarily incompatible with faith; rather, they both sought the same ends—happiness and transcendence of the dullness of worldly existence. For Waugh's generation, hedonism represented their attempt to avoid growing up because of the pessimism about life engendered by World War I (154). As Stannard notes, "self-pity and asceticism…rarely troubled him"; rather, worldly pleasure "was a temporal recompense

for the demands of his spiritual commitment" (232). He believed that "temperance was an admirable virtue but it concerned the spirit rather than the liver" (232-3), that is, moderation of one's physical habits was not the ultimate goal of temperance. Rather, temperance is a discipline of the spirit towards deeper earthly temptations such as Julia's acceptance of discipline in her love for Charles.

According to Monroe Spears in his book *Dionysus and the City*, "If any god personifies modernism, it is Dionysus" (35). Nietzsche introduced Dionysus to the modern world in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), not just as a "jolly Bacchus" but as a more serious figure, the embodiment of "excess and *hubris*," "rapture and awe," and as opposed to the Apollonian "wisdom of moderation, self-knowledge, and self-control" (35-6). Apollonian wisdom is individualistic and "classical" while in Dionysian experience the "individual forgets himself," and feels bonded or united with others in a mode that can be considered "barbaric," opposed to civilized order (36). The spirit of Dionysus was also described by Nietzsche as a "contradiction, a delight born of pain" (37).[29] Nietzsche's dichotomy between Apollo and Dionysus parallels Bakhtin's distinction between authoritative discourse and that of the fool or rogue.[30] Where Apollo is associated with duty and patriarchy, Dionysus is associated with "joy" and "the people" (Spears 37). Although Waugh is sometimes accused of conservatism and sexism, the novel actually presents an authoritative and patriarchal discourse (religion) through Dionysian experience and creates a dialogue between rogue or fool characters and characters who represent orthodoxy. It is precisely Sebastian's rebellion against the false duties imposed on him (by modern individualism and convention) that makes him a Catholic saint as he searches for a new duty characterized by love, freedom, and joy.

The Dionysian nature of modernism relates to a rebellion against propriety, and this connection helps place Sebastian's behavior in context. Spears describes the Dionysian spirit as anti-Victorian: against the "normal and the rational,…the criterion of sanity and heath, [for Dionysus] represents the claims of the collective, the irrational and emotional and abnormal; of the feminine or androgynous or perverse; of intoxication and possession, surrender to non-human forces; even of disease" (41, 44). As Spears points out, "city" and "civilization" are both derived from *civitas,* and classically, both are supposed to be characterized by "an ideal of rational order" and a "striving toward a Heavenly City" (70). However, in modernist depictions, the city is Dionysian, dark, chaotic, underground, "collapsing and disintegrating," and "falling" or "fallen" towards hell (71-2). This tendency is seen, of course, in Eliot's depictions of the "ugliness" of the city, hitherto an unfit subject for poetry.

Waugh's most memorable city scene in *Brideshead* is the encounter with prostitutes at Ma Mayfield's and the subsequent arrest of Charles, Sebastian, and Boy for drunk driving, an experience which unites the dark chaos of sexuality and of intoxication for the naïve young men. Boy has idealized the prostitutes and tried to sound like the sophisticated man about town, but when Charles and Sebastian actually meet them, they are emaciated and deathly: "One had the face of a skull, the other of a sickly child. The Death's Head seemed destined for me" (116). Unexpectedly, Sebastian seems ready to engage one of them, eager as he is for rebellion and freedom, and he is later arrested for his chaotic driving, making a scene in the jail cell over feeling enclosed and restricted. The scene is Dionysian, like Charles' later visit to the underground Blue Grotto Club with Anthony Blanche, but both illustrate Waugh's paradoxical theme that civilization is

not civilized and that seeking freedom, even if it is sordid freedom, is a natural reaction to restrictive order. These scenes are reminiscent of Dorian Gray's and Dr. Jekyll's secret excursions into the London underworld, and both of those novels illustrate the problem with encouraging respectability and hypocrisy with no place for release, while also showing the death and decay associated with the characters' dark and chaotic experiences of freedom.

In *Brideshead*'s Ma Mayfield incident, the young men leave a society charity ball to explore the underworld in a brothel, while in the Blue Grotto scene, Charles leaves his bourgeois art show to visit the club. In both scenes, Charles symbolically leaves the orderly part of the city, which is in the light of Apollo, for the low company of the Dionysian underground, but in both scenes it is clear that Waugh favors neither the orderly society events nor the chaotic underworld experiences. At the Blue Grotto Club, Anthony also alludes to other cities in Europe in which Sebastian has continued his anarchic lifestyle, and it is always in cities that he escapes from Mr. Samgrass's watchful eye to disappear and drink on their tour of the Levant. The things the young men are escaping from—a charity ball, an art show, and a tourist expedition—are all lampooned by Waugh in the novel. They are attempting to escape the counterfeit Apollonian order of modern civilization, an order which has no underlying meaning, attention to the soul, or spiritual life.

Another Dionysian image in the novel is that of the dark underground of the human soul or consciousness, as when Charles criticizes the scientific explanation of Sebastian's alcoholism but cannot really provide an alternative explanation except to say that it is a mystery. Charles also refers to the mystery of his own soul when mocking the

shallowness of polite society, pointing out that no one can know the "dark places" inside of him and also likening his inner state to that of the storm at sea (242). Waugh believed that people use systematic rational thought to try to impose "comprehensible unity" on "irrational multiplicity," but that this tendency leads to false perceptions of reality; in other words, reality is more chaotic and plural, and reason cannot always make ordered sense of it (*The Early Years* 454). Sebastian's chaotic behavior comes from a mysterious sadness in his soul, and in emphasizing the soul Waugh challenges the false order imposed by modern notions of propriety and science, which are incomplete systems that oversimplify or deny the existence of mystery and spiritual reality.

Sebastian's alcoholism is one of the most enigmatic aspects of the novel. Gilmore acknowledges that Sebastian's alcoholism is a kind of "*felix culpa,"* but he argues that the religious content and "transcendent" concerns of the book eventually ruin the "complexity" and realism of its depiction of alcoholism as Sebastian fades into the background (37, 47-8). This is an interesting critique because it seems to imply that Waugh creates an idealized portrait of Sebastian, i.e. a traditional hagiography, in the second part of the novel, or that the paradox of an alcoholic saint is ultimately irreconcilable. However, when Cordelia and Charles encounter Sebastian in Africa, the details of his life there are not whitewashed, instead revealing his illness, emaciation, and isolation. Waugh combines realism—describing the emotional, physical, and relational effects of alcoholism—with a transcendent sense of the working of grace and a humane sense of the complexity of its causes, making the depiction nuanced and surprising.

Sebastian's religious faith is actually the cause of his drinking, for it is what makes him unhappy in England, the empty shell of a civilization that lacks spiritual

essence and life. He seeks happiness through the escape of drinking, and even the self-controlled Bridey admits that "God prefers drunkards to a lot of respectable people" (145). Charles is angry at religion for making Sebastian unhappy, and Bridey agrees that his faith has made him discontented (145). For Waugh, faith meant suffering, lacking contentment, and "abjuring the realm," and Sebastian's drinking is both a type of suffering and a way of exiling himself. Many religious characters have sympathy with his alcoholism. Cordelia sneaks him alcohol and resists Rex's plan to take him to a German "dipsomania" doctor (170). Even the lay brother at the monastery hospital acknowledges the link between Sebastian's happiness and his drinking: "Your friend is so much happier to-day, it is like one transfigured….You know why? He has a bottle of cognac in bed….It is good to see him happy when he has been so sad" (215). The monk's, Cordelia's, and Bridey's attitudes toward Sebastian's alcoholism seem to acknowledge that it is actually part of his sanctifying quest to find happiness. In his hospital bed, Sebastian gazes at an "oleograph of the Seven Dolours" (214), associating his self-induced state with the suffering of St. Mary. The brother praises his patience in suffering: he is "not like a young man at all. He lies there and never complains—and there is so much to complain of" (213). Sebastian is one of those "clear-sighted" members of the interwar generation that Waugh described as necessarily unhappy and unable to adhere to societal institutions and ideals—whether political, as "revolutionaries," artistic, as "poets," or religious, as "mystics"—because of their clear-sightedness (*A Little Order* 2). Sebastian's spiritual awareness leads to his unhappiness, which leads to his drinking, which leads to his unfitness for the formal religious life of the "mystic," ironically—but it is still a way in which he abjures the realm. The lay

brother at the monastery infirmary not only attributes maturity to Sebastian, in contrast with his usual childlike image, but also seems to connect his alcoholism with a willingness to endure "so much" suffering.

In contrast, the doctor who works at the monastery applies a scientific and moralistic judgment to Sebastian, "brutally" blaming him for his suffering: "What could one expect? He was an alcoholic" (213). Similarly, Lady Marchmain takes a moralistic approach, trying to control his drinking and make him into a respectable young man who will graduate from Eton and Oxford and fulfil the destiny of English manhood she imagines belonged to her dead brothers. While the characters who conform to the ideas of modern science or propriety judge and blame Sebastian, those who consider his soul actually revere him for his willingness to seek happiness despite the suffering and alienation the quest entails. These Catholics seem almost to approve of Sebastian's lack of self-control. Cordelia is a prime example of someone with an orthodox view of sin who is not proper or judgmental. Cordelia does not believe it is her business to judge Sebastian for his drinking or Julia for her adultery, yet when her father asks if he has committed a "crime" in leaving her mother, she replies both honestly and gently: "I think it was, Papa" (334). Similarly, Bridey mentions the "fact" of Julia's "sin" only when pressed, and calls it "a matter of indifference whether [she] choose[s] to live in sin with Rex and Charles or both" (285). Nanny Hawkins, whom all the children associate with the strict religious instruction of their youth, also does not criticize: as Charles says, "it was not part of her religion to question the propriety of Julia's actions" (301). Yet Waugh also ridicules the dissembling euphemisms of those who dishonestly sidestep the question of sin, like Celia, who tries to pretend she was never unfaithful to Charles, or

Rex, who strangely welcomes Charles as Julia's lover, saying "'It's great to have you back, Charles; like the old days'" (230, 234, 274).

The key to understanding the difference between an orthodox approach to others' sin and and a merely proper one is understanding the difference between freedom and coercion. Those who represent polite society meddle, strategize, and plan, like Lady Marchmain in her attempts to change Sebastian. Waugh also alludes to and criticizes determinism, showing it is essentially different from a belief in providence that affirms free will. One instance is in the context of the coming war, which people in the War Office refer to euphemistically as "'an emergency'" rather than as "an act of human will," Charles notes satirically (331). Charles, despite his disdain for both determinism and meddling, actually becomes a polite meddler in his attempts to block Lord Marchmain from having a priest at his deathbed. He treats orthodox religious practice as if it is a form of social waywardness and resists it in the name of propriety and avoiding a "scene," a paradox which is key to understanding the novel. In this instance, Charles acts as a plotter, like Lady Marchmain, and Julia rebukes him by asserting her father's freedom: "What's it got to do with you or me whether my father sees his parish priest?" (325). Waugh's aversion to the meddling of characters like Lady Marchmain is an affirmation of the essential importance of free will and of the idea that coercion does not a saint make, although it may make a "machine" or a "sleep-walker" who conforms to the expectations of society.

Waugh implies that the modern or clinical approach to alcoholism is deterministic, whereas a religious approach allows for freedom. Julia says, "'Poor Sebastian. It's something chemical in him'" (129). Charles remarks that not only is this

passing phrase based on a "misconception of popular science," but also that it betrays a belief in "the old concept of determinism in a new form" (129). The modern belief in "chemical" causes is a purely materialist explanation of Sebastian's angst, and Charles believes there is something more to it: "I do not believe there was anything chemical in my friend" (129). Rather, "He was sick at heart somewhere, I did not know how" (128). Charles takes the opposite of a clinical approach, reiterating that Sebastian is above all his friend, referring compassionately to his inner life, and approaching the problem from a humanist rather than a materialist point of view. Humanism, as put forth by Stephen Toulmin, is essentially restrained, avoiding the over-confident pronouncements of science, allowing for the unknown, and acknowledging the existence of mystery, as Charles does. Toulmin associates humanism with skepticism; characterized by "modesty," humanist approaches "recognize how philosophical theories overreach the limits of human rationality" (29-30). He locates the beginning of the overreaching strain of modernity in Enlightenment philosophy, which led to a rejection of "practical knowledge: the oral, the particular, the local, and the timely" in "favor of *proofs* that could be set down in writing, and judged as written" (30-1). Skepticism, then, unexpectedly allows for the existence of mystery and faith. As a reluctant convert, Charles embodies the paradox that skepticism, the opposite of rational absolutism, can lead to faith: as Julia says to him when he resists bringing a priest into the house, "'don't rant. I shall begin to think you're getting doubts yourself'" (330). As Eliot says, "scepticism" can be "useful equipment for religious understanding" ("Francis" 200).

Despite his orthodox and old-fashioned sensibilities in general, Bridey also articulates the modern, deterministic explanation for Sebastian's alcoholism, which

shows his discomfort with moral ambiguity and spiritual malaise. Bridey "hope[s] it is dipsomania" because that is "simply a great misfortune," i.e. determined by fate (163). The real explanation is not simple nor is alcoholism merely an illness that has befallen Sebastian against his will. Bridey fears the more complex and more disturbing explanation: "that he just got drunk deliberately when he liked and because he liked" (163). This explanation is unacceptable because the source of Sebastian's malaise and rebellion is difficult to identify and sympathize with; to Bridey, it makes no sense to do wrong when one can do right or to be chaotic when one can be controlled. He is uncomfortable with the notion of Sebastian's free will. To Charles, however, Bridey's logical, "Jesuitical" existence, with its clear-cut moralism and rational explanations, is a "dead world…of barren lava, on a plateau where the air struck chill, a high place of unnaturally clear eyes and of toiling lungs" (163). In Bridey's world, there is no Dionysian release, and Charles identifies these sober, respectable, self-controlled "clear eyes" as unnatural, again aligning himself with the Dionysian elements of modernism and by implication, aligning Bridey with a Victorian sensibility. Bridey's world is stark, lacking beauty, warmth, hospitality, friendship, love, and the benefits of leisure as enjoyed by Charles and Sebastian. Charles hints that man is more than a pawn of fate,[31] even as manifested in supposedly provable biological causes. Although Charles is an agnostic, he believes that Sebastian is more than a material or "chemical" being and most importantly, that he has free will. Charles' belief in Sebastian's free will is the unspoken basis of his resistance to Rex's recommendation of clinical treatment and to the controlling efforts of Lady Marchmain. Even before these controlling efforts at curing him begin, though, Sebastian is trying to escape or free himself from something through

drinking. Drinking is an attempt at holding on to the freedom of childhood and at finding spiritual happiness and purpose rather than conforming to the image of one of the soulless types of modern life. Charles makes it clear that control will have the opposite effect in helping Sebastian; far from securing his happiness, "If you worry him with keepers and cures he'll be a physical wreck in a few years" (163). The "cures" represent the clinical scientific approach while the "keepers" represent his treatment as an animal in a cage; both involve being examined, institutionalized, and hemmed in, images antithetical to beauty, friendship, love, and freedom, and to the ideal of aristocratic life.

Waugh satirizes the tendency of modern thought to assume that there is an easy and complete solution to a problem that is spiritual and intractable, showing this belief to be an illusion through Rex, who immediately has "a solution pat" to the problem that neither Sebastian nor anyone else can solve (165).[32] Rex's faith in the everyday "miracles" at the Zurich sanatorium parallels Lady Marchmain's "faith" in hunting as a cure (165). Despite the gulf between Rex's vulgarity and her subtlety, and despite his irreligiousness and her orthodoxy, Waugh's use of the religious terms "miracles" and "faith" in their diction indicates that religion has been replaced by science and pseudoscience for Rex and by the empty forms of aristocratic and polite life for Lady Marchmain. Waugh shows the inadequacy of Rex's simple solution when Rex admits that his alcoholic friend who was cured in Zurich became "rather a bore when he stopped drinking" (165). Sebastian wants freedom, pleasure, and beauty, and the sanitized world of medical cures—along with Bridey's moralistic solution and Lady Marchmain's aristocratic one—promises to destroy those qualities through rational control and a

strange, unappealing vision of what constitutes human perfection, i.e. becoming a lifeless bore.

Although Sebastian associates freedom with being childlike, it is also a necessary condition for maturity in Waugh's scheme. As Charles explains, Sebastian dwells in a solitary "Arcadia" in which "he was happy and harmless as a Polynesian," a state only interrupted by "the grim invasion of trader, administrator, missionary and tourist" (127). Commerce, bureaucracy, religion, and tourism are the restrictive burdens of order and civilization as are "his own conscience and all claims of human affection" (127). He is happier alone, as a pagan, and as a child. Charles uses language of bondage and freedom to describe Sebastian's alcoholism; he "drank to escape" his "bonds" (128-9). The connection between drinking, freedom, and childishness is also evident, especially in how he taunts Mr. Samgrass, the don his mother has assigned to mind him, while drunk: ironically, each insult Sebastian hurls at him "in some way strengthened his hold on Sebastian" (129). As he asserts his freedom by becoming more inappropriate, his bondage to the arbiters of social acceptability deepens.

Waugh's creation of a pagan saint is wonderfully oxymoronic. Besides Charles' depiction of Sebastian's Polynesian freedom, Nanny Hawkins lovingly notes that he was "always a little heathen" and "not one for church," in contrast with Bridey, naturally religious but not her favorite—people tend to like Sebastian and dislike Bridey (302). Nanny represents the children's innocent youth, and she seems to want them to stay in this state of happiness, resisting, for example, the suggestion of Julia becoming a nun when a priest likens her boyish haircut to a nun's because a religious vocation seems too restricting, too otherworldly, a waste of Julia's beauty and splendor (36-7). This

resistance is difficult to understand in light of Nanny's orthodoxy, but it is related to Julia' pronouncement that she cannot see herself living a "life of mourning": neither she, nor Sebastian, nor Cordelia are cut out for formal religious vocations because their ardent pursuits of happiness and freedom often take a worldly, i.e. pagan and childlike, form. In contrast, the "mourning" or seriousness of adulthood and the deprivation of religious life represent the absence of this natural beauty. Nanny goes on to create a surprising image of pagan innocence, incredulous that Sebastian is now "religious" and that he has a beard. She remarks that he "always looked clean" even when he was dirty, unlike Bridey, who looked dirty when he was actually clean (302). Waugh's paradox of pagan[33] sainthood again draws attention to the intrinsic problems with English civilization and order as represented by Bridey's propriety.

Sebastian's childlike persona is threatened by his mother, Lady Marchmain, whose presence drives him to extreme alcoholism. From early in the novel, women are associated with growing up and invading Sebastian's Arcadian existence. Lady Marchmain represents the "intimate feminine, modern world" and her dominating presence the loss of the "august, masculine atmosphere of a better age" (138). Bernard Schweizer dismisses this passage as "misogyny" (256), but it is an important commentary on both the lack of freedom Sebastian feels and on how changes in society affected young men, especially after World War I, a turning point in which Lady Marchmain's husband also became disillusioned with and refused to live with her in England. She is always plotting, strategizing, praying, and having "little talks" to exert her gentle influence, but there is something ominous in it. With the death of her brothers came also the death of a primitive and vigorous masculinity that predates modernity. Her brother

Ned, in Charles' mind, was "somber" and "grim," "a man of the woods and caves, a hunter, a judge of the tribal council, the repository of the harsh traditions of a people at war with their environment" (138). Her husband, Lord Marchmain, represents the august age, the "gracious" English aristocracy and the height of civilized refinement in European Christendom; despite his profligacy, he relishes the Catholic aristocratic heritage of his family, imagining his forebears as knights and crusaders (138). The primitive man has died out, and the gracious civilized man is relegated to an empty and unhappy life as a relic in modern society. There is a distinct sense that World War I was the end of men, or at least of men with purpose and vocation. Lady Marchmain's "splendid" brothers, whom Charles describes as "high-spirited, serious, chivalrous, [and] otherworldly" warriors, had to "die to make a world for Hooper" and "so that things might be safe for the traveling salesman" (139). The ugly and vulgar men like Mr. Samgrass have replaced them. World War I cut off the promising male line of Lady Marchmain's Catholic noble family, and Charles hints that her children are similarly marked for "destruction" (139). A certain type of women has also died out. Unexpectedly, Charles did not lose his father, but his mother, a nurse, in World War I; a woman with a purpose, like men with purpose, is cut off. Lady Marchmain seems unable to accept these realities, however, and her reaction is to strategize, plan, and control. This control may be an effort to help Sebastian, but the novel eventually demonstrates that only providence can bring about change and that freedom is necessary for sainthood.

One of Lady Marchmain's most pointed attempts at curing Sebastian through control is her encouragement of hunting, believing that because he is out hunting, "'There's nothing wrong with him really'" (162). Waugh uses hunting to show that the

modern aristocracy is merely a collection of habits and manners. Sebastian resists it just as he resists the dances in London society, another trapping of modern polite society that reveals the decline from the family's former purpose and calling. Lady Marchmain treats hunting as having almost a religious significance, feeling that if Sebastian will hunt, it would be like an "answer to prayer" (162). Charles drily remarks that "It was touching to see the faith which everybody put in the value of a day's hunting," all the while knowing that Sebastian is drinking in a local pub and not hunting at all (162). It is clear that hunting is a sham; no longer a masculine means of providing food for the family or of caring for the estate, it is a mere show.[34] Lady Marchmain seems to believe that hunting will instill in Sebastian a sense of the hearty, purposeful manhood of her brothers, but her own comments on hunting reveal why this is impossible. She admits that she is personally repulsed by it as "it seems to produce a particularly gross kind of caddishness in the nicest people" (162). In other words, it is not modern, not suitable to her feminine and delicate notions of politeness. After hunting, nice people become like "Prussians"—"boastful" and "self-opinionated" (162). They return to a primitive state of masculine confidence suitable for the necessities of war and hunting, similar to the grim masculinity of her dead brothers, whom Charles remarks were so different from her in her delicacy. She wants the effects of hunting—health, vigor, and happiness—without a return to the society that necessitated or allowed for masculine culture. It is as if she senses the source of Sebastian's unhappiness, but her controlling, charming, polite attempts to cure it show how irreversible are the changes in society that have produced it. The "delicate irony" that enables her charming self-deprecation, even making fun of her own "faith" in hunting, is the opposite of the straightforward, active masculinity that hunting should

encourage but that she perceives as boastful and crude. Her irony makes her witty and irreproachable in society, as she points out her own weaknesses and therefore avoids any shortcomings in taste, but this extreme self-awareness is a luxury of modernity, of a perfectly controlled public image.

Lady Marchmain also uses language of control and freedom that enhances Waugh's motif of restriction and freedom as they relate to Sebastian. As an aristocratic man, Sebastian would presumably have some measure of freedom, but even the hunting is ironically a way of caging him in. She will not agree to let him stay in London after Christmas because "Mr. Samgrass couldn't hold him there" (163). She emphasizes that "He was *lost*, you know, all through Christmas" (163). Sebastian's getting "*lost*" repeatedly, especially in urban settings, shows how he fulfills aspects of a saint-wanderer and a modernist exile. But his mother cannot allow this freedom, so when she sends him abroad, ironically it is to trap and "hold" him. He must go with a minder and the implication is that he cannot embarrass his English family if he is abroad—in other words, he must leave respectable society, another aspect of the modernist saint figure. Julia wishes Sebastian would conform and "behave like anybody else" or else "go to Kenya or somewhere where it doesn't matter" (162). Charles points out that the real issue, his happiness, would not be addressed by eliminating his bad behavior from sight, but Julia's and Lady Marchmain's main interest seems to be in avoiding embarrassment. Lady Marchmain briefly believes that they can "keep him happy and healthy here for a bit, hunting," showing her misplaced faith in propriety and a misunderstanding of what constitutes happiness and health (163). Her priorities are proper behavior and physical health, which are not the same, for Waugh, as happiness, nor the same as morality and

goodness. In damaging his physical health and his social reputation, he has failed her test; "he can't behave himself here, with us" (163).

Sebastian, Charles says, is in the process of a "flight from his family which [has] brought him to ruin," and this "flight" is also a play on his name (129). Sebastian is a wanderer, as Charles realizes the first time Sebastian gets drunk at his family's home, over Easter, and then leaves before they awake. Charles asks him where he will go, to which he replies "'I don't know. London, I suppose'" (134). This is the first of Sebastian's aimless escapes. Charles rebukes him for "running away" and Sebastian only affirms that this is his goal: "I shall go on running away, as far and as fast as I can" (135). Charles' middle class values demand obligatory politeness and facing fears head on, but for Sebastian his escape is an assertion of freedom that transcends such obligations. At home, he is not free, despite his insistence to Charles that "I drink what I want to in my own house," for a few minutes later his mother tells him to go to his room (132, 134). Charles notes that Sebastian needed "anarchy" as an "escape from reality" because "he found himself increasingly hemmed in, where he once felt himself free" (107).

Despite her Catholic piety, Lady Marchmain represents modern social orthodoxy and an obstacle to her children's vocations and sainthood. She has in a sense restored the Brideshead estate to its Catholic history, but it is impossible for the family to truly return to this legacy while also seeking to fit in to the modern English aristocracy. When her eldest son "nearly became a Jesuit,…it was the last thing she wanted. Think what people would have said—the eldest son" (88). After Bridey gives up his desire to become a Jesuit, he considers a military career, a political career, and marriage, but "doesn't know what he wants" (88). Waugh describes what he does achieve satirically: "it had formed

the subject of a newspaper article entitled PEER'S UNUSUAL HOBBY" which was "to form a collection of matchboxes" (280). Because he has not been allowed to pursue an aristocratic or a religious vocation, he ends up with a parochial and stunted sphere of duty: although he has "few friends," he does hunt "dutifully," visit his aunts, and attend "public dinners held in the Catholic interest" (280). He is the neutered male of the modern aristocracy, and his lack of friends is significant along with his lack of vocation and activity. All is done for a sense of propriety rather than for love or happiness. Lady Marchmain's values are actually those of a socialite, and while Sebastian visits Nanny Hawkins at Brideshead in a symbolic return to the simplicity of childhood and his Catholic upbringing, the rest of the family is "in London, dancing" (35). Anthony Blanche serves as a counterpart to these socialite values, warning of Lady Marchmain's charm, which he calls "the great English blight" that "kills love" (273). Indeed, unlike saints, whom Waugh associates with life-giving acts, Lady Marchmain "kill[s] at a touch" (214). As McCartney explains, she is "compelled to use her charms to seduce…because she needs to conquer people and have them admire her" (127). Even Nanny is repulsed by the idea of Julia becoming a nun, although it is never seriously suggested. She fears that Julia's youth and beauty will be wasted on a religious vocation, preferring a worldly path for her. The problem is that the worldly path can no longer be combined with a sanctified vocation, as is evident in Julia's marriage.

Despite her worldliness and the impediments she poses to her children's vocations, Lady Marchmain might still be "God's instrument" (Beaty 161) in that her children do return to the faith she educated them in, showing that, again, it is not human success or failure that bring about sanctification, but divine grace. As Waugh said in a

letter to a friend, "no I am not on [Lady Marchmain's] side; but God is, who suffers fools gladly; and the book is about God" (*Letters* 196). Her shortcomings, like Sebastian's, emphasize the working of providence.[35]

*Naughtiness and Sainthood*

At the crux of the paradox of the unlikely modernist saint figure in *Brideshead Revisited* is the coexistence of what Waugh calls "naughtiness" with saintliness. Sebastian, Charles, Julia, and even Lord Marchmain can be considered sinner-saints, and Waugh takes to emphasize their naughtiness as well as their sanctification. He shows how sin can lead to God, thus revealing the unexpected motions of providence, while not dismissing the orthodox conception of sin, as evidenced by Julia's meditations on her guilt, by Sebastian's constant self-deprecation and pangs of conscience, Charles' honest assessment of his life, and Lord Marchmain's fear of death and need for absolution. However, it is intriguing that Waugh chooses to make these characters sinful and interested in pleasure, and to contrast them with the respectable Bridey, who lacks "zest," and the self-controlled Lady Marchmain, who "kills at a touch." Each of these sinner-saints is seeking happiness, beauty, love, friendship, or freedom, and these are noble pursuits. What sets them apart from more proper characters is their willingness to break away from conformity to polite society and from success according to England. Waugh describes Julia as having a "slight, inherited stain" from the "scandal of her father," but also "her own way of life—waywardness and willfulness, a less disciplined habit than most of her contemporaries'—that unfitted her for the highest honours" (181). This description could apply to Sebastian as well. Interestingly, Waugh includes "her religion" in "the shadow on her" in society; if not for her waywardness and her religion,

her beauty and pedigree would have made her a suitable royal wife (181). Her religion made her fear hell if she betrayed it, while her Protestant contemporaries had the benefit of "happy ignorance" that allowed them to simply "marry eldest sons, [and] live at peace with their world" (181-2). Both her naughtiness and her religion make her an outsider, in other words, when otherwise her personal qualities would bring her to the pinnacle of society—like Sebastian, Lord Marchmain, Waugh's Edmund Campion, and Eliot's Thomas Becket. It seems contradictory that Waugh would connect these two qualities, Catholicism and waywardness, but they both indicate a separation from the world and specifically from the alluringly orderly and proper English society that offers earthly and immediate rewards. Waugh somehow makes sin the mark of a saint without approving of it.

For Sebastian as well, the two coexist and seem congruous. Charles assumes the brother in Morocco is naïve when he describes Sebastian as "happier" and "like one transfigured," but then the brother explains it is because "He has a bottle of cognac in bed with him….He is so naughty," demonstrating an unexpectedly non-judgmental but spiritual perspective that the pious Cordelia also shares and which links his naughtiness and drinking to his happiness and even to transfiguration, a biblically resonant term that hints at the presence of the miraculous, supernatural, and divine (215).

Bridey's wife Beryl, a strict moralist, notes the paradox that the "lapsed" Catholics like Julia are often the "nicest" (29). Additionally, the alternative community formed aboard ship by Charles, Julia, and others who are not sea-sick is presented as an alternative to polite society and as vaguely "disreputable"; Celia rebukes Charles for playing roulette and drinking with strangers and for not "behaving," but Charles is full of

"happiness" over the affair he has just begun with Julia (262). Why Waugh chooses to associate adultery with the "happiness" which is otherwise a spiritual state in the novel is one question, while it is also interesting that community formed outside polite society is necessarily seen as improper. The roulette wheel not only associates them with impropriety, but also with a surrender to fate and a lack of the planning, scheming mentality that characterizes Celia.

Another key scene for this motif is Anthony Blanche's arrival at Charles' gallery show in London. Blanche calls his paintings "imposture" and "t-t-tripe" and takes him to a sordid bar; Charles admits that Blanche's "voice from the past" wakes him up from the spell cast by the "chatter of praise" from the important people at the show (270). Blanche is a kind of prophet throughout the novel, reciting the Tiresias passage of *The Waste Land* through a bullhorn at Oxford and acting as the most articulate critic of the deceptive "charm" of Englishness. He confronts Charles about his insincerity as a successful artist and also about his apparently tame Englishness, calling him proper and feminine, " a dean's daughter in flowered muslin" while others who viewed his art have just been praising his virility (272). Anthony describes the art rather as "creamy English charm, playing tigers," not free, wild, or masculine at all (273). Waugh seems to associate, through Anthony, "barbaric" and "unhealthy" art with an admirable resistance to English charm, which seems innocent but is destructive: "It kills love; it kills art;" and it has killed Charles (272-3). Blanche takes Charles to a "disreputable" part of town, noting it is not Charles' "milieu" but that he feels "*quite* at home" there when he is in England (270). "Home" is a significant word since the characters most associated with Englishness end up feeling and being homeless; Anthony feels at home among social

outcasts and moral deviants like "the dirty old man" who told him of the bar (270). The name of the bar, the Blue Grotto Club, also seems to allude to the saints, to the Virgin Mary in the color blue, and to the practice of praying at or making a hermitage in a grotto. A grotto is a cave "which forms an agreeable retreat"; the idea that the bar is a "retreat" is reminiscent of Blanche calling the club his "home"—a suitable home for one who exists on the margins of society and has no settled home ("Grotto").[36]

*Providence and the Reluctant Saint*

The naughtiness and waywardness of unlikely saints serves to emphasize the action of providence, a motif throughout the novel. Julia speculates that encountering Charles and beginning their affair may be "part of a plan," strangely combining her orthodox sense of providence with their adulterous relationship.[37] This short phrase is significant in light of another contrast between the saint figure and the modern conformist: the saint has no plans and is a wanderer, while Celia and Lady Marchmain are always described as scheming and plotting (263-4). When Julia first looks for a husband as a young woman, Waugh describes her using the language of battle and strategy, another indictment of modern marriage and the conditions in which she married Rex. Later, when she insists on making "plans" for divorce and remarriage, there is a sense of futility to them that even she suspects (279). Waugh's emphasis on providence seems to contradict his concurrent assertion of free will when Charles indignantly resists the idea that Sebastian's alcoholism is the result of "chemical" causes, what he dismisses as a new scientific form of determinism. Waugh's characters' free will is evident in their waywardness, and their longing for freedom, even from religion, makes them very modern in their expression of free will. However, the sovereign action of providence also

challenges the modern trust in the will and assumption that unfettered autonomy is the key to happiness and the foundation of freedom, love, identity, art, thought, and pleasure. Rather, there is a sense that characters are compelled: by love, compassion, sadness, guilt, desire for freedom, and belief in divine judgment. They are compelled by seemingly irresistible forces, but not forced, and their resistance to the pressures of polite society and conformity to moralistic demands shows they are not the types to be coerced or controlled. One of the most explicit statements of this theme is Waugh's allusion to the "twitch upon the thread," from a G. K. Chesterton Father Brown story: as Cordelia explains it, God has "an invisible line which is long enough to let him wander to the ends of the world and still to bring him back with a twitch upon the thread" (220). The image of the thread contributes to the motif that the saint is a wanderer, an exile, and that any plans he has are not autonomous but ultimately under the purview of providence. Charles refers to a "thread" he feels "hanging over Julia and me" after she admits her guilt in their relationship; the compunction of guilt is part of the action of providence (327). Charles is at his most resistant to religion during the conflict about whether Lord Marchmain should see a priest before his death, precisely because he can feel spiritual developments occurring, which he describes as impending storms or avalanches—they bring destruction to his relationship with Julia, but he cannot escape the sense of their inevitability, just as Lord Marchmain cannot escape the sense of coming death and doom (325-6). Charles' resistance to religion, like Sebastian's and Julia's inability to be good, illustrates the activity of providence. His reluctance to allow a priest into Lord Marchmain's room is quickly overcome when he himself unexpectedly kneels, prays, and longs for Lord Marchmain to give some indication that he has received forgiveness before he dies:

moved perhaps by compassion for Lord Marchmain and, he says, for "the woman I loved," Charles prays "'O God, if there is a God, forgive him his sins, if there is such a thing as sin'" (338). A moment later, he feels that "the veil of the temple [has been] rent," signifying an epiphany or change in perspective (339). His "love" for Julia, although doomed by the inescapable reality of sin, does then lead him to God, showing that her prediction that it is all "part of a plan" is true. The modernist saint figures—Charles, Julia, Sebastian, and Lord Marchmain—all feel this twitch upon the thread, their reluctance overcome by a gentle spiritual compulsion that takes the form not of propriety or of conformity but of spontaneous subjective experiences of conscience, love, and compassion.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Conclusion:* The Paradoxes of the Modernist Saint

G. K. Chesterton, like his fellow proto-modernist Oscar Wilde, was famously paradoxical, yet he was also famously orthodox. His combination of paradox and orthodoxy emphasizes the playful, multi-faceted potential of language and of literary forms and shows that such unexpectedness, irony, and even chaos are not mutually exclusive with orthodox belief and tradition. In other words, tradition can and should be constantly renewed. To participate in such renewal is especially important in an age that rejected convention, embraced innovation, and faced the question of whether progress was possible or whether civilization was in decline. To provide the anchor of tradition in such an age is also important to avoid the modern error of what C. S. Lewis called "chronological snobbery" (207), which precludes learning from what is passed down and may lead, as we have seen, to empty tabernacles and rituals, and to what Evelyn Waugh depicted as partial human beings, unaware of their souls and therefore too consumed with passing fashion and the "counterfeit" identity of image.

The modernist approach to orthodoxy explored the mysterious aspects of tradition, emphasizing that not everything in the universe is known and not everything can be apprehended or articulated in a mode that seems logical or even socially acceptable, and that which is articulated is often borne out of the fleeting experience of a moment, mediated through subjective experience, and thus endlessly creative, unique, and even fantastic. This exploration of what T. S. Eliot called "the easy commerce of the old and the new" promotes real open-mindedness to the past, present, and future, to the

rational and the apparently non-rational, to community as well as to individual experience, to the dark side of existence as well as to themes of hope, love, and restoration ("Little Gidding" 144). As Chesterton writes in the Father Brown story "The Blue Cross," "the most incredible thing about miracles is that they happen," for "there is in life an element of elfin coincidence which people reckoning on the prosaic may perpetually miss" (6). The openness to the miraculous and the poetic, to spiritual as well as aesthetic experience, and even to orthodox religious belief, serves to expand perspective beyond the limitations of rationalism, materialism, and solipsism. An emphasis on providence counters over-confidence in human knowledge and the human will. Literary works that explore tradition in an innovative way challenge not only stale conventions (the old) but also the clichés of modern thinking (the new), which threaten to become conventions in and of themselves.

An example of the earthy saint as well as the modernist renewal of orthodoxy and ritual is found in David Jones' epic poem *In Parenthesis* (1937). Based upon his service in World War I, Jones creates roguish saints in his very ordinary fellow soldiers, even sanctifying their cursing as a form of liturgy. He describes an officer who "glossed his technical discourses with every lewdness, whose heroism and humanity reached toward sanctity" (13). The humanity of the man speaking the words sanctifies even the profane and the technical. Jones also sees beauty and rest as sanctifying, describing the pleasure of a "night's parading," a relief from the "accumulated tedium" of military service, which he characterizes as a "whole unlovely order this night would transubstantiate, lend some grace to" (27). Jones also describes the mundane language of everyday life in the army as liturgical: "ritual words made newly real" by "the newness, the pressure of sudden,

modifying circumstance," which gives "used formulae … a primitive creativeness, an apostolic actuality, a correspondence with the object, a flexibility" (28). Conventions of language become alive and new in the spontaneous and real experience of a moment.

It is in this spirit that modernist authors grappled with the lives of the saints, often people with whom they would disagree profoundly and who had distinctly non-modern beliefs, practices, and circumstances. Resisting both the medieval tendency to spiritual idealization and the Victorian tendency to prosaic realism, they present saints as earthy, flawed, and weak, but as vessels of the miraculous or the unexpected nevertheless.

One explanation for why modernists were interested in the saints lies in the saints' independent subjectivity and their trust in their own perceptions, which often led to persecution by institutions. A commonality of the three works examined in this study is a pointed mistrust of institutions. Although Eliot is more critical of the state, Shaw of the courts, and Waugh of the church, all take aim at various dead institutions. Despite the medieval settings of Eliot's and Shaw's plays, it is clear they are thinking of modern institutions from Shaw's preface and from Eliot's prophetic passages; Waugh of course is more explicitly critical of modern institutions because of the contemporary setting of his novel. The problem with these institutions is their reliance on what Bakhtin called the reified or authoritative word, at the exclusion of the inspired and innovative expression borne of personal experience. The phenomenon of the individual's persecution by the state or another institution surely had its parallels in modern life, as Shaw points out at length and as Eliot predicts in his warnings that the unanchored chaos of democracy can quickly give way to the imposition of fascistic order. Despite their obvious differences,

all three of these works question coercive ideas of order, whether imposed by the state, by churchmen, or by socialites.

The persecutor figures all are associated in the authors' minds with sophistication, education, and progress. In other words, they are marked by characteristics that ensure their success, that make them modern, and that give them power. They are good at survival, which in an evolutionary value-system is all-important, while the saint is weak, acquainted with suffering, and often cut off both from life and reproduction. The modernist saint figure challenges evolutionary theory by meeting its optimism about progress with disillusionment, by showing that civilization has actually devolved into a wasteland, and that the principle of survival-of-the-fittest may govern nature but that humane and spiritual systems often work on the opposite principle, in which the weakest are deserving of the most veneration and achieve the most resilience.

This tension between the individual and the institution, like the tension between paradox and orthodoxy, speaks of the age-old tension, particularly evident in modernist literature, between freedom and control, chaos and order, Dionysian experience and Apollonian wisdom. As many critics have noted, the spirit of modernity is one of mastery over nature, of calculation and control, of analysis and systematization, and of coercion in the name of absolute rational truth. Middle class respectability is one expression of this need for order and was particularly prominent in the Victorian period, explaining Waugh's extended challenge to the coercive propriety of polite society, exposing it as empty and creating characters that seek pagan freedom from its dead dictates and meaningless pursuits. Unexpectedly, religion can be part of this challenge to

order, with an understanding of religion that affirms free will and the goodness of seeking beauty, love, and happiness, even when the pursuit seems improper.

On the other hand, Christianity rightly understood can also provide the meaningful order that forms and restores individual wholeness and real community, both human-human and human-divine. As R. W. B. Lewis argues, friendship and communion are primary characteristics of the "picaresque" modern rogue character, and "authentic" friendship is portrayed in modernist literature as an alternative to both coercive institutions and to social alienation.

Related to the importance of friendship is the experience of compassion, for the saint always suffers and his or her friends join in that suffering. The feminine saint or feminine acolyte is particularly well-suited for such compassion, being equipped with an ability to know and face realities deemed improper by the polite and denied by the comfortable. Modernist saints know they can control neither fate nor suffering and have a sense of their own smallness, following "the little way," as St. Therese of Lisieux called it.

The restoration of the divine presence, or at least a sense of supernatural reality, is also essential in modernist saint narratives, their use of wasteland imagery revealing the pervasiveness and barrenness of winter and death and a longing for spring and life with the return of the lost spirit. This hope, a belief in the unseen and unexpected outcome, gives meaning to the suffering and violence the early twentieth century was well-acquainted with, and explains a renewed interest in the purpose of martyrdom and other forms of physical suffering such as asceticism and illness.

To play off of Marx's famously derisive metaphor for religion,[1] the masses may need an opiate to deal with the reality of life on earth, and literary modernists, in questioning optimistic notions of the inevitable progress of civilization, seem to affirm this need, connecting intoxication with religion in characters such as Waugh's Sebastian, Shaw's English soldier, and Graham Greene's whisky priest and dentist in *The Power and the Glory*. Notably, all of these characters are also exiles or outcasts, resisting the bonds of nationalism and propriety. Marx implies that the use of religion—or literal intoxicants—as a means of escape from reality—as Waugh described drinking, "not a bad way to get through one's life"—induces complacency, thus deceiving suffering individuals and lulling them into acceptance of injustice, but in these saint narratives it is the most honest and knowing characters who seem to turn to the release of intoxication. Waugh's association of drinking with freedom, and of sensual "languor" with the "Beatific vision," for example, seems to imply that the religious promise of heavenly reward will be akin to the freedom of intoxication. In any case, Waugh seems to take the approach of Psalm 104.15, which describes "wine that maketh glad the heart of man" as a gift of God. The image of intoxication in modernist literature, then, represents a Dionysian escape both from the imposed order of society and from sorrow over the uncontrollable circumstances of fate and death. The major difference between Marx's view of suffering and the modernist saint's is that Marx assumed suffering could be prevented or eradicated, while the modernist saint acknowledges and accepts it as necessary and even as potentially redemptive.

Freud noted that the fear of death was one thing modern man could not conquer with the explanations of logic and science, and also that modern people do not feel

comfortable talking or thinking about death. Two vivid examples of this in the works I examine are the fearful Priests in *Murder in the Cathedral* and the heart-rending deathbed fears of Lord Marchmain in *Brideshead Revisited*. The "return" of this awareness during the modernist period, then, parallels the unearthing or revelation of other dark and hidden parts of human experience, from the decadent interest in the "bizarre," to grotesque images of urban ugliness in T. S. Eliot's poetry, to the sickening violence of Wilfred Owen's war poetry, and the pervasive sense of disillusionment and loss in much modernist literature. All of these trends speak of the insufficiency of the human will, of self-control, and of reason to impose complete order on experience. Modernist saint narratives acknowledge and explore that reality, but in so doing, offer the paradox of "uncynical disillusion" as not the cure to these ills but as the only response that unites honesty about suffering with a sense of meaning, hope, and transcendent purpose.

# Notes

## Chapter One

[1] From Ezra Pound's famous dictate in the title of his 1934 book. Pound's phrase is often appropriated as summing up the modernist spirit of complete innovation, a break with the past. However, as Louis Menand notes in *The New Yorker,* "The 'It' in 'Make It New' is the Old—what is valuable in the culture of the past. A great deal of Pound's poetry therefore takes the form of translation, imitation, allusion, and quotation. He is trying to breathe life into a line of artistic and intellectual accomplishment, but it is a line of his own invention." The approach of making the old new means even this prototypical credo of modernism is in line with my own focus on how modernists used old material in a new way.

[2] R. J. Schork's book *Joyce and Hagiography: Saints Above!* catalogues Joyce's "humorous" use of hagiographical references and his irreverent and ironic treatment of Catholic culture.

## Chapter Two

[1]It could perhaps be considered a more feminine nationalism, in line with the "little way" I identify as an aspect of feminine sainthood, in its acceptance of physical limitation and humble anonymity rather than promoting an abstract concept of national identity or an imperialist notion of national superiority.

[2] Shaw's abstract concept of religion and lack of attachment to religious particulars can perhaps be attributed to the fact that "Irish Protestantism was for him not a religion at all, but a social convention" in which God was a "a Protestant and perfect gentleman, keeping Heaven select for the gentry" (Smith 337). His rejection of religion was a rejection of class and social conventions. Whereas Evelyn Waugh had the opposite reaction to a merely social religion, seeking to recover a literal understanding of sacraments and dogma, Shaw chose to rebel against the institution and the religion itself. Both seem to be reacting to a modern Protestantism that did not take the claims of religion seriously and replaced them with social conventions.

[3]Similarly, in *Brideshead Revisited,* Charles Ryder's pursuit of leisure seems to lead him to contemplative experience of prayer that then reinvigorates his work as a military officer. Leisure is necessary for spirituality but also for activity, but according to Pieper's argument—and as depicted by Shaw and Waugh—it is often neglected or even considered immoral in modernity.

[4] Both Eliot and Shaw were interested in fertility myths and Frazer's *Golden Bough,* and Shaw obviously connected fertility motifs with the idea of spiritual resurrection: "God is in the seed, and that God is immortal"; when killed, he will "rise again" (qtd. in Berst 120).

[5]Wordsworth goes on to say that this depiction of ordinary men and language will be given a "certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way" (1497-8). Shaw also adheres to this part of Wordsworth's philosophy in his rejection of pure realism in the play and his openness to fantastic and supernatural events and unusual characters.

## Chapter Three

[1] Marchesi emphasizes the importance of evil in the play—the fact that the voices of evil are rhetorically persuasive and even beautiful shows a tension between opposites, a preeminence of paradox, that is particularly modernist (xii, xvii). Such paradox does not make evil good, but it shows the attractions of evil in a compelling way that is quite different from the type of hagiography that suppresses any evidence of temptation or struggle in a saint's life.

[2] In this passage, Eliot also makes it clear that "conservatism" is not the alternative because it tends to hold on to the past for its own sake, even when it should embrace change. This concession to liberalism is reminiscent of Shaw's insistence that ancient institutions like the church must embrace change or face disappearance, and Shaw, like Eliot, also points out the instability brought about by constant change. However, on the whole Shaw advocates change and forward-thinking while Eliot emphasizes what is lost with tradition.

[3] Shaw also found it more important to express his characters' inner feelings and to articulate the greater significance of their roles in history than to adhere to strict realism in dialogue. This similarity indicates a modernist tendency to move beyond the perceived limitations of realism.

[4] Evelyn Waugh also references St. Sebastian in *Brideshead Revisited,* connecting the aesthetic quest for beauty and pleasure with a willingness to endure pain.

[5] "Ecstasy" comes from the Greek *ekstasis,* "standing outside oneself" ("Ecstasy"). It is notable that in this play, ecstasy is achieved through the loss of self rather than through inspired and sublime feelings of greatness, a major shift from Romanticism. The sexual connotations of ecstasy are also relevant, for example, in the notion of orgasm as a "little death," a pleasurable loss of the self achieved through submission to and unity with another.

[6] Eliot's belief represents a marked contrast with Shaw's belief that religious ideas can and should be abstracted from the details and beliefs of particular religions.

[7] In his conviction of his own guilt, he parallels Waugh's Sebastian and Julia and many of Graham Greene's characters such as Pinky in *Brighton Rock,* Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter,* and both priests in *The Power and the Glory.* To use John Updike's phrase from his introduction to *The Power and the Glory,* their "tortured literalism" is very "un-English" and very un-modern (v). It demonstrates both their nonconformity with modernity in both its strict orthodoxy and acceptance of personal weakness, thus emphasizing the action of providence.

[8] Even an aesthetic saint like Joyce's Stephen Dedalus surrenders his own will to that of fate in his willingness to be damned for his devotion to originality and innovation. This contention may seem questionable since Stephen seems to embrace pride and individualism as virtues, but he also submits his will to the vicissitudes of artistic inspiration that seems to come from outside of him. He too attempts and fails at an ascetic life of self-control, finally giving up and visiting prostitutes, but this experience may have led to his loss of trust in his will that eventually enables him to accept martyrdom for art.

[9] Wilde also praised verse drama of the past for using "a language different from that of actual use, a language full of resonant music and sweet rhythm, made stately by solemn cadence, or made delicate by fanciful rhyme, jeweled with wonderful words, and enriched with lofty diction" (485). Writing in 1889, Wilde seems to anticipate Yeats's and Eliot's revival of verse drama.

[10] Shaw's Joan is also accused of pride for her independent convictions. The accusation of pride against the modern saint indicates that he or she is reliant on subjective experience rather than institutional wisdom, that he or she is seen as sinful by the proper—i.e. those who submit to a wrong authority and an empty code—and that he or she is willing to be misinterpreted and maligned. In *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* Joyce also seems to reverse the connotation of pride, almost asserting it as a virtue. In *Murder in the Cathedral,* the accusation brings to mind Thomas's secular past and reminds us that he has not always been an ascetic but that he was quite worldly. Ironically, the priests see the worldliness as more proper and his current state as sinful.

[11] Here is where Eliot differs from Shaw, for whom "Law" is a byword for emptiness and inhumanity in *Saint Joan,* and for whom it represents a desiccated institution devoid of spiritual inspiration. Eliot sees a real authority inherent in the church, represented by Rome, a distant place, to emphasize that it is separate, higher, and not based in England or its hierarchy. He also calls himself Rome's "most unworthy son" and the knights "petty politicians" (206). A similar emphasis on personal weakness and divine

sovereignty expressed through the church as *The Power and the Glory*'s presentation of both the weak priest who nevertheless displays divine glory and the seemingly strong but ultimately powerless government officials.

[12] This situation parallels Graham Greene's whisky priest refusing to leave Mexico.

## Chapter Four

[1] Waugh is not especially shy about creating homosexual characters, which seems to indicate that he could have made Sebastian more explicitly homosexual if he had wished to; the evidence for this claim is the openly bisexual character of Anthony Blanche. The fact that Waugh underplays Sebastian's sexuality seems to indicate either that he is not sexually active and lives a celibate life, or perhaps that Waugh did not want to make it a major feature of Sebastian's character (in which case, his motive could be to avoid offending audiences or to avoid making moral pronouncements on the issue; perhaps in this sense he was bowing to propriety or attempting to idealize Sebastian's character as in a traditional hagiography).

[2] Waugh called *Alice in Wonderland* "an excellent book" (*Early Years* 70), indicating that he probably agrees with Lady Marchmain on this point. In other parts of *Brideshead,* he emphasizes the prosaic nature of religion; Bridey's character can be said to represent a completely prosaic view of religion, which is repellent to Charles the artist. On the whole, both the poetic and prosaic aspects of religion are necessary to understand it in the novel, yet another of Waugh's nuanced paradoxes.

[3] Waugh connects leprosy to the decline of the aristocracy and civilization in another instance, when Anthony Blanche describes the "decay" and "leprous facades" of old buildings just before describing Lord Boy Mulcaster as a "real degenerate" whose "face all falls to pieces in an idiot gape" when you look closely at him, despite his "old-fashioned" veneer (48). These images of decay and infection highlight the sense of what Lord Marchmain—and Sebastian—attempt to escape, and their own physical and moral decay—and social exile—make them symptom-bearers for English civilization.

[4] Charles Hutton-Brown identifies several interesting connections between Sebastian and St. Aloysius Gonzaga, a nobleman-turned-Jesuit and therefore a parallel to Edmund Campion as well, but Hutton-Brown does not explain why Sebastian's manner of suffering and martyrdom is distinctly non-ascetic, and why he rejects his devout mother, two major differences between him and one of his hagiographical inspirations.

[5] Bakhtin, in "Epic and Novel," discusses the novel's unique tendency to parody other genres, which causes older genres to "become more free and flexible, [and] their language renews itself by incorporating extraliterary heteroglossia and the 'novelistic' layers of literary language"; in other words, "they become dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, humor, elements of self-parody and finally…the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the openended present)" (6-7). The novel is modern in that it "best of all reflects the tendencies of a new world still in the making" and "sparks the renovation of all other genres" (7).

[6] Christ Church college was a center of the Reformation, a fact that was surely not lost on Waugh. Cardinal Wolsey razed the medieval monastery of St. Frideswide and the college that were formerly on the site, rebuilding a new college that was successively called Cardinal's College and King Henry VIII's College before it was finally named Christ Church ("A Brief History of Christ Church"). Sebastian is living in the post-Reformation college and society and is well-suited for success in both, until he returns to his Catholic roots, like Edmund Campion during the time of Elizabeth; both make sacrifices to do so.

[7] In Charles' final transformation at the end of the novel, it seems clear that he would reverse his judgment that Sebastian, Julia, and Cordelia have wasted their beauty on service. Their aging indicates

maturity and self-sacrifice, and the spiritual element of their magnetism, like that of the flame in the art-nouveau tabernacle, is ultimately the most enduring. However, it seems clear that their natural attractions were part of the providential plan that Charles would develop a love for beauty in "forerunner" Sebastian, then Julia, and then God.

[8] This allusion to *Lear* is reinforced by the scene in which Charles and Julia both feel like "Lear on the heath" when subjected to the vapid conversation of polite society, and in Charles' final assessment of life as "the human drama" and of human beings as "tragedians" (351).

[9] Kurt is perhaps a martyr to the secular state, like Eliot's Thomas. Kurt's fate demonstrates the very real danger posed by secularization, not just to spiritual wholeness and happiness, but also to freedom and life itself.

[10] In *The Gambler,* Dostoevsky similarly differentiates England and Germany from the rest of Europe, implying that there is something stifling about English and German capitalism, industriousness, and concern for respectability.

[11] Charles connects wine with agelessness and everything good in human history and culture when he has dinner with Rex. An example of how sobriety is an important aspect of Victorian sobriety can be found in Robert Louis Stevenson' *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* in which Jekyll is first drawn into his secret double life by feelings of intoxication—his transformation "braced and delighted…like wine" producing "freshness of…sensations," "heady recklessness," and "freedom of the soul" from the "bonds of obligation"—while at respectable parties everyone consumes the proper, expected amount and type of alcohol (2202).

[12] The reference to the Samaritan, besides its obvious connotations of generosity, is even more resonant considering that Samaritans were outsiders in Israel, like Sebastian and Kurt are in their homelands, yet the Samaritan of the parable practices hospitality, creating a new definition of being a "neighbor" to another outcast, just as Sebastian seems to create a new community for himself in which he cares for an injured outcast and is cared for himself by the local monks rather than by his natural family or English society.

[13] The paradoxical image of Lord Marchmain's gorgeous bed and restless spirit paralells that of Charles when he tries to sleep in the luxurious bed aboard the trans-Atlantic ocean liner.

[14] The image of vinegar for comfort is significant in the scheme of the novel, in which fine wine represents what is good in civilization: the richness of culture and the goodness of friendship (only a thief has kind words; there are no friends around in Julia's vision). Christ's, and the saint's, experience of exile, is a deprivation of these good things. Charles describes wine as his "stay in many barren years," a consolation for the desolate wasteland experience, and Waugh would probably identify with this description (83). Therefore, drinking is connected to the saint's experience, for without the time of deprivation, the consolation would be unnecessary. Love and food are other comforts; Blanche describes a romance that "intoxicated" him, and Charles connects the two in describing Sebastian as a "fine piece of cookery" he "voraciously" devoured (33). Other descriptions of enjoying literal food imply the same sense of not only the pleasure, but also the comfort, derived from it. The need for comfort is a spiritual need that is on some level filled by civilized pleasures, but the saint is often deprived of such comforts. Waugh's characters are caught between the comforts civilization and the wasteland of saintly deprivation.

[15] Similarly, Shaw's Saint Joan does not follow fashions and is scorned for it by Duchess La Tremouille. Her androgyny, like Sebastian's and Julia's, is perhaps related to this, as none of these characters ultimately conform to the definitions of femininity and masculinity put forth in their times, making them ageless and remote.

[16] Waugh's advocacy of the universal here should not be confused with the universal absolute or abstraction Stephen Toulmin warns against in *Cosmopolis.* The difference is that Waugh believes in the specific form of words, but believes they can be learned and expressed anew in various languages and

accents, not shed altogether, which is what Shaw would probably recommend in his rejection of the particulars of specific religions (Smith 338). Waugh and Shaw seem to agree, though, about the arbitrary nature of certain modern conventions, especially in how they both address fashion.

[17] Julia's suffering also reveals an element of Julia's sainthood, the often feminine saintly capacity for *compassion*, in the literal and obsolete sense to "participate in suffering," to join in suffering almost to a physical extent ("Compassion").

[18] St. Helena's vocation, recovering pieces of the true cross, has often been mocked, so it is noteworthy that Waugh chose her as the subject of a novel and of short hagiographical pieces. Waugh's Helena is another example of a modernist saint who seems ridiculous to the sophisticated modern arbiters of intellectual and religious propriety.

[19] Pericles Lewis identifies conversion, not necessarily religious conversion, as one of the primary types of spiritual experience addressed in modernist literature, while James Joyce famously appropriated the religious term *epiphany,* a revelation of God, as a literary term describing a moment of realization.

[20] Similarly, Eliot makes the point that both the state and God require submission, piercing the illusion that to be modern is to be completely free and unencumbered by submission to any institution or being. The important thing is to identify the correct object of submission; submission alone, in a vacuum, is not a virtue.

[21] Lady Marchmain's book could be considered an instance of hagiography in the novel, in the sense of an overly idealized biography. Waugh's depiction of men, specifically soldiers, is obviously not idealized. The difference between Waugh's approach and Lady Marchmain's could indicate a shift in how biographies were written, from a Victorian to a modernist mode, or it could indicate that Waugh locates the decline in masculinity and masculine vocations as beginning in World War I.

[22] Waugh wrote in 1937 that the tendency of human nature is to "reduce the diverse to the identical," and "irrational multiplicity to rational and comprehensible unity," but that this is "the reverse of the truth" and the opposite of what we observe with our "senses"; people are "only types—economic, psychological, what you will—until one knows them," and "the whole of thought and taste consists in distinguishing between similars" (*The Early Years* 454).

[23] In his novel *Scoop,* he focuses his satire on the press, and in *The Loved One,* on Hollywood, but he parodies both the press and the movies in *Brideshead* as well. *A Handful of Dust, Decline and Fall,* and many of his other novels satirize polite or high society.

[24] In his treatment of the proper approach to past, present, and future, Waugh echoes Eliot's themes: acknowledging the reality that the past is gone and the future holds doom, but choosing to live in the newness of the present moment and encounter the enlivening, actual presence of God in that moment.

[25] Charles also redefines his notions of beauty by preferring Julia's sorrowful, mature, aged beauty to her youth, a departure from his reverence for Sebastian's youth, and by finally realizing that Cordelia "had a beauty of her own," even with a bad hairstyle and a job that wears her down physically (302).

[26] Reading Waugh's fascination with alcohol as a challenge to Apollonian individuality seems reinforced by the novel's affirmation of friendship and its critique of false friendship. As Bridey mentions, the purpose of drinking should be the creation of good will and fellowship. The fact that Bridey does not drink or experience friendship differentiates him from Waugh, Charles, and Sebastian, making him a representative of order and reason who at first repels Charles because of his insistence on logic and orthodoxy, but eventually is somewhat vindicated.

[27] In the combination of pleasure and pain, the definition of the Dionysian spirit is akin to decadence and to the image of St. Sebastian pierced with arrows, which Anthony Blanche alludes to and which many consider an image of the pain and pleasure of sexuality, especially homosexuality.

[28] In "Discourse and the Novel," Bakhtin identifies types of "dialogic oppositions" between a "fool" character who represents "stupidity (incomprehension)" and an authority figure—"poet," "scholar-pedant," "moralist," "priest," "holy man," "politician," or "representative of the law"—who represents "intelligence (a lofty pseudo intelligence)" (403). The rogue and the fool seem analogous to Dionysus in Nietzsche's theory, while Bakhtin's authority figures seem analogous to Apollo.

[29] However, a sense of fate and doom does loom over the story; Charles remarks that the death of Lady Marchmain's brothers seemed inevitable, as does the eventual destruction of her family. Sebastian's assertion of freedom and of free will is perhaps his way of reacting to this sense of doom; he acknowledges and accepts the inevitability and reality of societal doom and personal suffering by becoming an exile (like Eliot's Thomas) but also actively strives for happiness by refusing to succumb to the soul-killing elements of English society (also like Thomas, he is both passive and active, representing a paradoxical perfecting of his will).

[30] The saint always experiences physical danger and is characterized by weakness. Rex, who represents the modern world and its obsessions with money and science, is fixated on health and strength, assuming money and science will allow him to control these things. Waugh clearly satirizes his attempts to cure Sebastian through the doctor he knows in Zurich, and Sebastian resists these attempts, too, even though his drinking weakens and ages him. Rex also wants Lady Marchmain to get treated for her fatal illness: he knows "just the man for her in Vienna" but he suspects "her crack-brain religion" tells her "not to take care of the body" (174). The Marchmains are in both physical and financial decline, and Rex is confused that they take little action to prevent either development. In discussing how to deal with Sebastian's alcoholism, Bridey challenges the modern notion that ill health is to be avoided at all costs: "'There's nothing *wrong* in being a physical wreck" and nothing particularly right about "liv[ing] to walk ten miles at eighty" (164). Throughout the novel, Waugh counters the modern, scientific definition of happiness, especially through Sebastian's early physical decline and possible early death, which paradoxically enhance the sense of his beatification.

[31] Donat O'Donnell accused Waugh of having a pagan "private religion" in his imaginative "interior life" of "cream and dappled unicorns" (262). He is sympathetic, speculating that the pressures of English society forced him into a need for imaginative escape, but says Waugh's Catholic faith is merely "superimposed," "much as newly-converted pagans are said to superimpose a Christian nomenclature on their ancient cults of trees and thunder" (262).

[32] Waugh's skewering of hunting in *Brideshead* is reminiscent of the importance of hunting for another of his pitiful aristocrats, Tony Last in *A Handful of Dust,* whose son and heir dies in a hunting accident while his socialite wife cheats on him in London.

[33] Julia and Charles also joke about Bridey, in a "fantasy" that he is secretly "naughty" (280).

[34] Beaty points out the irony of Celia's comment, after Julia and Charles begin their affair, that "I expect you were a godsend to her"—Celia of course thinks they were innocently getting to know each other to pass the time, which is one level of irony; because the reader is unsympathetic to Celia, the irony almost seems cruel to her and to signify some approval of the affair (150). Another level of irony becomes clear later: Julia ends their relationship, realizing it is "sin," but it still seems to be part of a providential plan, a "godsend" or *felix culpa,* at least for Charles.

## Chapter Five

[1] From "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction," written in 1843 and published in 1844 in Marx's *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher.*

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