

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI SALERNO



Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari

**Dottorato di ricerca in
Testi e Linguaggi nelle Letterature
dell'Europa e delle Americhe**

IX Ciclo

Tesi di dottorato

Wandering through Guilt

***Cain's Archetype in the Twentieth-Century Novel
(1940-1960)***

Dottoranda:

Paola Di Gennaro

Tutor:

**Ch.ma Prof.ssa
Maria Teresa Chialant**

Coordinatore:

**Ch.ma Prof.ssa
Annamaria Laserra**

ANNO ACCADEMICO 2009-2010

WANDERING THROUGH GUILT
CAIN'S ARCHETYPE IN THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY NOVEL
(1940-1960)

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	1
<i>Introduction</i>	4
PART ONE. CAIN'S CHRONOTOPE. GUILT AND WANDERING	11
<i>Chapter 1. Psychology, Myth, Religion: The Analysis of Guilt</i>	
1.1 <i>Guilt and Psychology: Patterns of Stains</i>	12
1.2 <i>Patterns of Guilt: Psyche and Myth</i>	25
1.3 <i>Patterns of Faithful Guilt: Psyche and Religion</i>	33
<i>Chapter 2. Wandering Cains: Patterns of Atonement</i>	
2.1 <i>Patterns of Self-Punishment, Patterns of Atonement</i>	41
2.2 <i>Pilgrimages, Wandering Jews and Other Progresses</i>	50
2.3 <i>Cain's Monomyth in the Twentieth-Century Literature</i>	76
PART TWO. THE ARCHETYPE TRANSFORMED I	
WASTELANDS TO WALK, WASTELANDS TO DRINK	86
<i>Chapter 3. Graham Greene and the Sinner's Glory</i>	
3.1 <i>The Whisky Priest and the Guilt of Sin</i>	87
3.2 <i>The Sinner's Progress</i>	102
3.3 <i>Achieving Sanctity</i>	119
<i>Chapter 4. Hallucinating Guilt. Wandering Myths in Malcolm Lowry's Under the Volcano</i>	
4.1 <i>The Drunkard Consul and the Paralysis of Guilt</i>	135
4.2 <i>Wandering Through Hell: The Mexican Malebolge</i>	160
4.3 <i>Out of Eden: The Guilt of Humanity</i>	174

PART THREE. THE ARCHETYPE TRANSFORMED II	
THE AMBIGUITY OF POSTWAR GUILT	191
<i>Chapter 5. The Paradoxes of Guilt. Wolfgang's Koeppen's Der Tod in Rom</i>	
5.1 <i>Collective Guilt and the Burden of History</i>	192
5.2 <i>To Be or Not to Be (Guilty). Guilt and Its Ambiguities</i>	203
5.3 <i>Wandering in the Underworld of Guilt: The Eternal City</i>	227
<i>Chapter 6. East of Enoch. Guilt and Atonement in Postwar Japanese Literature</i>	
6.1 <i>The Rhetoric of Mea Culpa: Christianity in Twentieth-Century Japan</i>	246
6.2 <i>Japanese Postwar Guilt</i>	248
6.3 <i>Ōoka Shōhei's Nobi: Cannibalizing Guilt</i>	254
<i>Conclusion</i>	271
<i>Bibliography</i>	276

Acknowledgments

As all doctoral dissertations, this study is in the first instance the result of research, and, secondly, the outcome of personal and academic investments. It is for the latter reason that I would like to thank the Università degli Studi di Salerno, without whose precious support this work could not have been accomplished.

I would also like to thank all the people that helped me in infinite ways in the long process of compilation. First of all, I want to thank Professor Maria Teresa Chialant, for the esteem and trust she patiently reposed in me and in my work, and who allowed me the freedom to pursue my ideas and intuitions. I wish to express all my gratitude and affection to Professor Paolo Amalfitano, who has been following my studies for ten years now, for all the vivacious, controverse, and inspiring discussions we have had over the years, some of which have been hastily noted down in my pocketbooks; and to Professor Giorgio Amitrano, whose generous interest and kind encouragement will be never forgotten. I would also like to thank Professor Annamaria Laserra, not only for her coordination with my PhD course, but also for her assistance in my progress toward this achievement. Special thanks go to Dr Stephen Dodd, for his helpful supervision of the Japanese part of this study, and all the professors I had the chance to work with in London at SOAS and UCL: Andrew Gerstle, Karima Laachir, and Florian Mussgnug, who helped me and encouraged me when research, life abroad, and bureaucracy made a friendly and expert voice essential and much appreciated.

Comparative literature implies, however, the encounter and the interchange with many different positions and the most diverse fields. I am grateful to many people who helped me with their academic knowledge or inspired me in friendly conversations: Professor Stefano Manferlotti and his helpful advice, Professor Emeritus Ricardo J. Quinones and his thoughtful suggestions, as well as his kind interest and philanthropic spirit; and many others, academic staff, colleagues, and friends, who gave me insights into that shared aspect of life that is the sense of guilt. A special mention goes to the author of the epigraph to this work, author of something more too. As usual, last but not least, I am grateful to my good friends and

proofreaders Siba Aldabbagh and Laylan Saadaldin, who patiently dedicated their time to read me, asking nothing else than these words.

Lontano da quel suolo ho costruito città,
Sotto tutti i cieli e su vaste arcate
Ho aperto luce e templi circolari.
Chiunque ha potuto incontrarmi, lontano da te.
Da quel sangue ho fatto la pietra di Nod,
Ornamento dei cherubini ad oriente,
Tutti i tuoi impasti a sfondi d'oro
Questa mano li ha generati.
In una prigione di Malta
Ho visto smaltata in rosso la mia vita
A terra decapitata,
Gocce di colpa dal collo,
Da me che giustiziai quel condannato.

E. C., *Caino*

Introduction

Verses 4:1-26 of the Book of Genesis engendered the Western tradition of a figure that would undergo, in the following millennia, the most varied literary interpretations: Cain. Doomed by Yahweh to be “a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth” to atone for the murder of his brother Abel, Cain would become, paradoxically and controversially, the founder of the first city in the history of man. The image we have of him in the Bible – the book considered by Auerbach, together with Homer’s epics, the model of all future literary productions of the West¹ – is ambiguous and polysemic. Cain is the remorseless killer of Abel, who, interrogated by the divinity about the disappearance of his brother, just replies: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Cain is the symbol of the division between the two main agricultural tasks and of unjust discrimination by the father: Abel keeps flocks while Cain tills the earth and, for reasons that are not explained, God prefers Abel’s offering. Cain is also the derelict wanderer in a hostile world, condemned by Yahweh: “now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand”, to which Cain replies: “My punishment is greater than I can bear... from thy face I shall be hidden... whoever finds me shall slay me”; Cain is therefore destined to bear a mark on his forehead, a mark which should protect him but also brands him in the eyes of the world. Finally, Cain is the founder of the “civic” human *consortium*, as he goes on to found the first city, which he calls Enoch after the name of his son.

It is a mysterious and fascinating story, which bears many of our fundamental myths. In the history of literature, Cain is represented each time as the fratricide, the rebel, the wanderer, and the founder of civilization. The poetic potentialities of this character seem to be infinite, and the themes and paradigms associated with his story are portrayed differently according to personal and historical contingencies. A relatively short passage of a book – albeit a powerful book – has originated, mainly through its metaphoric and allusive concision, numerous evocative patterns in the collective memory of many societies. When we move the analysis of these patterns

¹ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953.

out of Western tradition, we can find a common set of *topoi* shared by cultures distant in time and space, even in the literary productions of countries built on a non-Christian tradition. It does not seem too far-fetched, therefore, to advance the notion that the Bible has been just one of the representations of what can be considered an archetype: the story of a wanderer who, stained with guilt – or a sense of guilt – makes a journey of atonement in physical or psychological wastelands, more or less successfully.

It is my intention to discover how this archetypal myth – the pattern of guilt and atonement through wandering that is embodied in the Bible by the figure of Cain – appears also in a non-Western context such as postwar Japan and the literature of that time. Taking into account the critical studies of Northrop Frye on archetypal poetics, I aim to demonstrate how this paradigm originates in postwar Japan not only from a universal myth already present in the public imagination, but also from the influence of Christianity.

The starting point of this study and its prerequisite condition is that the pattern of wandering as an expiation of a guilt must have no functional purpose within the narrative; that is, the wandering of the characters must be practically aimless in relation to the plot. One of the few possible ways to fulfill an analysis that goes beyond the contingency of the plot in order to retrace a transcendental paradigm, all the while taking into account the historical meaning of the work and its socio-cultural background, is to approach the text from a critical framework based on the belief of universal myths and archetypes. This framework has been developed by Northrop Frye.

A comparative approach that goes beyond the borders of countries sharing a common cultural heritage is often seen as hazardous, if not presumptuous. Dealing with contemporary literature allows more freedom in this respect, when we consider the more intense – global, to use a popular word – cultural influences occurring nowadays among most countries; nonetheless, comparative criticism must move cautiously and adopt tools that focus on what can be considered a common sharing of attitudes and motives. It is my opinion that archetypal criticism can offer a good starting point from which to consider how common patterns are represented in different cultures and literary productions. Having its roots in social anthropology

and psychoanalysis, this approach is particularly interesting if we consider the fact that Cain's pattern of wandering implies elements – such as guilt – which are evidently related to these disciplines as well.

In 1957, Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* sanctioned the emergence of archetypal critical theory, based on an idea tackled in the previous article "The Archetypes of Literature" (1951). Frye drew on what had been previously done on ritual by contemporary anthropology and on dreams in psychoanalysis²; specifically, Frye incorporates Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1890-1915), a study on cultural mythologies, and Jung's theories on the collective unconscious. According to Jung, beneath the "personal unconscious" there is a "collective unconscious" that is universal in that it is inherited and not created by individual experience. As a consequence, it is possible to suppose a common sharing of "stories" – the literal meaning of the word *mythos* is, actually, "story", "narrative" – which are shared by distant cultures. Myth becomes, therefore, a psychological model, something intrinsic in our brain structure but which, for this same reason, is also so interspersed in society that the limits between what is "original" and what is culturally constructed become indistinct. Myths are continually rethought, rewritten, revisited. It is from this assumption that Frye moved his theory of archetypes to literature. He considered the archetypes to be centripetal structures of meaning, and in myth he found "the structural principles of literature isolated". Frye's theory is closely associated with the very patterns of literary genres but at the same time transcends them. Myth provides the basis of a typological classification of literature³ which both maintains a mythical frame and reflects the indigenous structures of literature itself. According to Frye, truth and falsehood are concerns of history; the truth of poetry lies in its structure.

The starting point of Frye's assumptions is the idea of myths as both culturally and psychologically inherited and socially adapted:

Man lives, not directly or nakedly in nature like the animals, but within a mythological universe, a body of assumptions and beliefs developed from his existential concerns. Most of this is held unconsciously, which means that our

² Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000 (1957), p. 108.

³ Frye's classification of *mythos* can involve the wider sense of narrative, which he classifies as literal, descriptive, formal, archetypal, and anagogic; or it can be narrowed to the four archetypal narratives: comic, romantic, tragic, and ironic.

imaginings may recognize elements of it, when presented in art or literature, without consciously understanding what it is that we recognize. Practically all that we can see of this body of concern is socially conditioned and culturally inherited. Below the cultural inheritance there must be a common psychological inheritance, otherwise forms of culture and imagination outside our own traditions would not be intelligible to us. But I doubt if we can reach this common inheritance directly, by-passing the distinctive qualities in our specific culture. One of the practical functions of criticism, by which I mean the conscious organizing of a cultural tradition, is, I think, to make us more aware of our mythological conditioning.⁴

The role of literature is to eternalize the patterns and the power of myths in recreating the “metaphorical use of language”. Literature is not seen by Frye as a contamination of myth; on the contrary, it is a vital and unavoidable part of myth’s development⁵. Myths are employed by art in order to express what is “universal in the event”, to give an example of “the kind of thing that is always happening”. A myth is a more significant literary *tropos*, whose meaning is wider and deeper, because it is “designed not to describe a specific situation but to contain it in a way that does not restrict its significance to that one situation”⁶.

Founding the legitimacy of critical analysis on universal but also contingent elements, *Anatomy of Criticism* has set the basis for all future archetypal criticism. Yet Frye was to write another work essential to this study. In 1982, *The Great Code* linked the mythological aspects of the Bible to the production of later literature, analyzing how elements of the book had created an imaginative framework, a “mythological universe”, from which literature has drawn its images as water from a well. The Bible can therefore be considered as a cluster of myths which, originating from a common understanding of the world by men of every country, has been contained in the West within a major, influential book, codified over a thousand years. Literature assimilates these patterns, and creates something that is somehow

⁴ Northrop Frye, *The Great Code. The Bible and Literature*, San Diego - New York - London: Harvest, 1983 (1982), p. xviii.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

more disturbing than the original, in that it has more layers of significance, and less clarity of meaning:

What we usually think of as acceptance or rejection of belief does not in either case involve any disturbance in our habitual mental processes. It seems to me that trying to think within categories of myth, metaphor, and typology – all of them exceedingly “primitive” categories from most points of view – does involve a good deal of such disturbance. The result, however, I hope and have reason to think, is an increased lucidity, an instinct for cutting through a jungle of rationalizing verbiage to the cleared area of insight.⁷

This increased lucidity is what I endeavour to uncover in some novels of the middle of the last century. Frye’s archetypal criticism can give reason to structures which recur in many different literary traditions, and, although this approach has been seen as an outcome of an “obvious romanticism”⁸, in my opinion it is a good framework within which significance can be uncovered. As Righter points out, though, it is not enough just to assume that there exist mythical correspondences, ritual repetitions, and archetypal figures and relationships. We should also move forward and analyze what the existence of the myth beneath the surface tells us, how much more we “understand of a work through seeing the presumed skeleton beneath the skin”, and if mythic tales “underlying a particular fiction have a meaning that the fiction itself does not”⁹. To reduce the underlying meaning of a text to a monomyth, as a fundamental paradigm on which infinite literary variations can be performed, would imply a simplicity that modern works seldom carry. If Cain’s story, just like Ulysses’s and Faust’s, is the key to the understanding of hidden aspects of great novels, it is because it gives them unity in complexity, “divine quality” in historical humdrum.

A connection is established, therefore, between the original myth and the social conflicts under which it has developed into new forms. What I am proposing here is not a close reading – at least not only – because the mythical and social substructures

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xx.

⁸ William Righter, “Myth and Interpretation”, in *New Literary History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Winter 1972, p. 326.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 342-344.

will also be considered in the analysis; nor am I proposing a distant reading, as Moretti suggests¹⁰, even though my approach draws upon his methodology in its purpose of finding a pattern that can acquire a deeper meaning only if interpreted from a wider perspective. I intend to pursue a kind of “middle-distance reading”, which implies no barriers between different methods of analysis, as Frye proposed, but the cooperation of precise examination and reminiscent comparison.

The social conflicts added to these two forms, the structural and the archetypal, are those of the years around the Second World War, from 1940 to 1960. In England, and more generally in Europe, these conflicts tend to be more personal, although mixed with the attempt to universalize guilt. In this sense, guilt becomes existential, and is also used to add intensity and tragedy to individual lives. Germany would have had different conflicts: in fact, in addition to universal guilt, the postwar guilt related to Nazism and war horror made its appearance. In postwar Japan, to all these kinds of guilt there are two further conflicts, particularly important in relation to Cain’s legacy: Christianity and survivor guilt.

This dissertation is divided into three parts. The first part is dedicated to the socio-cultural, religious, mythical, and psychoanalytical survey of the main elements of the pattern I am trying to retrace, guilt and wandering. In the second part the analysis of the texts I analyze is undertaken. They are all texts published between 1940 and 1960, the years from the beginning of the war and the end of the postwar period. Here two English novels are analyzed: *The Power and the Glory* (1940) by Graham Greene and Malcolm Lowry’s *Under the Volcano* (1947). Both novels are characterized by the incarnation of historical but also universal guilt in the characters, both drunk, outcast, burdened by metaphysical and existential guilt, and destined for tragedy. The third and last part, instead, is centred on literary works produced by those countries that perhaps were most “marked” by the war: the German *Der Tod in Rom* (*Death in Rome*, 1954) by Wolfgang Koeppen and *Nobi* (*Fires on the Plain*, 1951) by the Japanese Ōoka Shōhei. In order to make reading more comfortable, I have decided to quote the German and the Japanese novels in the English translation.

The choice of these novels is motivated by the fact that each of them portrays some of the most relevant aspects of the paradigm I aim to analyze as it appeared in

¹⁰ See Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900*, London: Verso, 1998.

the years under examination. I have excluded all the works that in one way or another could fall under the generalizing definition of “Holocaust literature”, “Atomic Bomb literature”, or literature about the Returning Soldier; firstly, because it would have implied a different kind of approach; secondly, and more importantly, because in those cases the theme of wandering follows different patterns and is more concretely related to more specific historical contingencies. The novels we are going to analyze represent history in its universal expressions, its essence, often claiming to grasp it through the reference to mythologies and the use of mythic methods. In these works guilt is taken for granted and amplified by the horror of the Second World War and the uncertainties of the postwar; wandering is one of its consequences, atonements, and perditions.

PART ONE

CAIN'S CHRONOTOPE

GUILT AND WANDERING

CHAPTER 1

PSYCHOLOGY, MYTH, RELIGION: THE ANALYSIS OF GUILT

As for me,
I am a worm, and no man:
a very scorn of men,
and the out-cast of the people.

Psalm 22:6

1.1 Guilt and Psychology: Patterns of Stains

The symbiotic relation between literature and life has always been controversially explored: biography and literary production, socio-historical context and text, geopolitical situation and reception are some of the polyvalent interactions which criticism bravely – sometimes diffidently – pursues in its investigations. As it has already been stated in the introduction to this work, the examination of this relationship is not the main aim of this study; rather, all these elements are the fibres of its plot. However, it is now necessary to give some attention to one of these elements and the role that it bears in this textual analysis. Actually, we are referring here to a specific analysis, the analysis of the mind: psychoanalysis. Although it is not my intention to pursue an exclusively psychoanalytic critical approach – and would also be quite outdated now – nevertheless it is necessary, at this point, to clarify what we are dealing with when we talk about “guilt”, and how it relates with our being human, our social behaviour, and our historical position.

In this chapter the idea of guilt will be examined starting from the more influential psychoanalytical theories which have mostly developed over the last century – Freud’s, Jung’s, Klein’s. This rapid preliminary overview, far from exhausting such a complex and theoretically endless aspect of human behaviour, aims to the definition of the phenomenon of guilt from a psychological perspective,

and also of the cultural implications that defined it while being defined by it. Subsequently, guilt is presented in its relationship with myths and religions, in order to see how mankind has tried to face the inescapable sense of guilt creating placebo structures or self-punishing devices – thanks to which literature has found rich materials for its models. Therefore, in the next chapter of this first part, we will concentrate on the need of mankind to annihilate or at least cope with these guilt feelings, and the means that mankind has developed in order to do it. The next step will be a survey of some of the mythical and literary images which reproduce atoning patterns, wandering in particular, and the figures that embody its essence: pilgrims, scapegoats and the Wandering Jew.

Other important aspects of guilt in relation to our history of the close past will be examined in the following chapters: war guilt, collective guilt, and also survivor guilt will give the background and the setting to the novels we will be dealing with especially in the third part of this study, in which we will be analyzing the literary production of those countries which most were “marked” by war-related traumas. This is one of the main points to consider when facing literature produced during and right after the Second World War, in particular when dealing with works which overtly anatomize the burden of responsibility or historical oppression lurking inside oneself, consciously or not. The attempt is to link psychoanalysis, history and literature, and to uncover the underlying systems of literary works which share and reproduce universal patterns in a particular historical moment.

In the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* edited in the first decades of the last century and published in 1925 by James M. Baldwin, the definition of guilt reads as follows: “Guilt is the state of having committed a crime, or consciously offended against moral law”. It is evident that the more modern meaning of guilt, as it was to be developed later by psychoanalytical studies and as it is often perceived in our time, was completely absent. Guilt is the infraction of a law, the breaking of a rule, something visible and objectively provable. But as it would have been considered later on, this is just one of the possible senses of guilt, the one which is called “objective guilt”. The other, the “subjective guilt”, had already been suggested

though in a draft by Sigmund Freud, in 1895, where it emerges as a “pure sense of guilt without content”¹.

Freud used the term “sense of guilt” (*Schuldgefühl*) for the first time in 1906 in *Psychoanalysis and the Establishment of Facts in Legal Proceedings*, in which, when considering the methods to be used to determine the guilt of the accused, he wrote: “In your investigation you could be led astray by the neurotic, who reacts as if he were guilty, although he is innocent, because a sense of guilt which already existed and lay hidden in him takes over the specific accusation made against him”².

Freud has never dedicated a systematic work to guilt, but often mentioned the topic³. It is in 1907 that the modern concept of guilt finds its first important appearance in his work. In *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practises* he writes about a “sense of guilt about which we know nothing”:

[...] an awareness of guilt which we must define as unconscious, although this is an apparent contradiction in terms. It has its source in certain remote psychic processes, but is constantly revived in the temptation that is renewed at every relevant occasion, and on the other hand gives rise to a lurking, waiting anxiety, an expectation of disaster, connected through the idea of punishment to the internal perception of temptation⁴.

The use of the word “lurking” makes evident that guilt starts to be considered as something hidden, ready to burst, probably caused by a “temptation”, and somehow related to an undisclosed desire to be punished.

In 1913, in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud connected guilt to a primeval family situation, and to the notorious Oedipus complex⁵, the incestuous desire of the band of

¹ Sigmund Freud, Draft K to Fliess, quoted in Roberto Speziale-Bagliacca, *Guilt. Revenge, Remorse and Responsibility after Freud*, with a foreword by Frank Kermode, Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004 (1997), p. 41.

² Sigmund Freud, *Psychoanalysis and the Establishment of Facts in Legal Proceedings* (1906), quoted in Speziale-Bagliacca, *Guilt*, p. 195.

³ For a more detailed account on Freud’s studies on guilt, see Herman Westerink, *A Dark Trace. Sigmund Freud on the Sense of Guilt*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009 (2005).

⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practises* (1907), quoted in Speziale-Bagliacca, *Guilt*, p. 4.

⁵ According to Freud the Oedipus complex takes place at the age of four or five, whereas Melanie Klein thought that this is the apex of a development which has already started during the first year of life: the baby realizes that he or she has caused no harm to the mother with the rage caused by the realization that the breast is an Other, the overcoming of this situation is the triumph over the position

brothers that trigger the murder of the father. A primeval tribe situation related to this complex is at the origin of guilt: a violent and strong male individual, father of the offspring, has banished all adult males, challengers to his monopoly on sexual relations with the horde's females. As a consequence, the young males grow up loving and admiring the ruler, their father, but hating and fearing him as well. Having reached adulthood out of the horde, the offspring consider a shared wish to get rid of their father: they band together, return to their original home, kill him and eat him. After the murder, their love for the man resurfaces, and they start experiencing guilt and remorse, both individually and collectively. It is in expiation of this act that they later establish their father, in the guise of a totem, as a deity and institute prohibitions – the taboos – against killing and incest, in order to avoid the repetition of a similar action. According to Freud, it is from this act that evil entered humanity, together with religion and morality, which is based partly on the needs of society and partly on the expiation that this sense of guilt commands⁶. Guilt becomes an inherited baggage, an experience through which every child has to pass; any fixation during this period leads to a sense of guilt which can become unconscious guilt when repressed.

However, it is at the dawn of World War I that the psychoanalyst draws his first full theory about guilt. In *Mourning and Melancholia* (1915), melancholia – today we would call it depression – is characterized, together with a physical dejection, by the reduction of interest in the outside world, in a loss of the capacity to love and a general apathy, and, finally, by a “feeling of despondency about self which expressed itself in self-reproach and self-berating, culminating in the delusional expectation of punishment”⁷. The depressed person moves against himself or herself the self-reproaches that were once destined to a love object (both Freud and Klein agree that guilt is unavoidable once an individual realizes that the object of love is also object of anger). This theory has been later abandoned in psychoanalysis, but nonetheless it has been very important to its development with regards to guilt, in introducing the idea that guilt feelings originate from an inner conflict.

called by Klein “depressive”. See Melanie Klein, *Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict* (1928), or *The Oedipus Complex in the Light of Early Anxieties* (1945).

⁶ See Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (1913).

⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia* (1915), quoted in Speziale-Bagliacca, *Guilt*, p. 6.

The following stage is the essay *Some Character-Types Met with Psycho-Analytic Work*, published in 1916, in which Freud identified the “criminals from a sense of guilt”, “very respectable” patients who had committed “forbidden actions”. The interesting aspect of these cases is that these patients experience “mental relief” after having suffered from an “oppressive feeling of guilt”, mitigated because this sense of guilt was “at least attached to something”. The paradoxical vicious circle in which sense of guilt originates an even deeper sense of guilt – as it will be evident in the novels we are going to analyze – sees its psychoanalytical ground in this statement.

At one point, Freud’s study on guilt gets closer to literature. In the same 1916 work, he analyses several literary characters, from Shakespeare to Ibsen, as well as real criminals, and tries to demonstrate that guilt feelings arouse from unconscious creations rather than from real actions. He goes so far as to consider crimes as the consequence, and not the cause, of guilt feelings.

Further steps toward Freud’s definition of guilt is *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), in which Freud tries to explain the origins of the sense of guilt by referring it to the death wish – the destructive drive of the psyche to try to reduce tensions completely and to restore all living things to the inorganic state; and later *The Ego and the Id* and *The Economic Problem of Masochism* (1923-1924), where Freud speaks again about an unconscious sense of guilt (*unbewusstes Schuldgefühl*, as opposed to *Schuldbewusstsein*, consciousness of guilt), although he seems to replace it with “need for punishment”, a “‘moral masochism’ complemented by the sadism of the ‘superego’”⁸.

Never abandoning the starting point of the Oedipus complex, the definition of the superego marked an important stage in the description of the sense of guilt. As Kalu Singh rightly affirms, “the resolution of the Oedipus complex is the establishment of the Superego”, that he defines as “the guardian of the line of guilt”⁹. As a matter of fact, in Freud, both the accuser and the accused are internal, as the former is the superego and the latter is the Ego. Therefore, all senses of guilt depend

⁸ Speziale-Bagliacca, *Guilt*, p. 196, and Martin Buber, *Guilt and Guilt Feelings*, in Herbert Morris (ed.), *Guilt and Shame*, Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1971. For complete reference, cf. Sigmund Freud, “The Economic Problem in Masochism”, in *Collected Papers*, London: Hogarth Press, 1948.

⁹ Kalu Singh, *Ideas in Psychoanalysis: Guilt*, Cambridge: Icon Books, 2000, pp. 31 and 36.

on the relationship between these two, the “directors” of our inborn aggressiveness which is taken aback by our inner “controller”, the superego, or, as McKenzie calls it, the “infantile or negative conscience”¹⁰. The origin of guilt feelings depends upon our aggressive instincts; the repression of instinctual trends causes its emergence. The more we renounce our instinct, the more we deny our true nature, the more we feel guilt, the result of our unconscious temptation. Theodor Reik gives a powerful metaphor with this regard:

[...] the Superego is “omniscient as God. Exactly as he, it tortures just those people who are virtuous. Like God, the super-ego is more severe towards those who renounce many instinctual gratifications than towards those who are lenient and allow themselves some satisfaction of this kind”¹¹.

Freud himself explained how “saints” are so right when they call themselves sinners, “considering the temptations to instinctual satisfaction to which they are exposed in a specially high degree – since, as is well known, temptations are merely

¹⁰ Freud had already described how it was necessary for a true sense of guilt-feelings to wait for the growth of the conscience, the moment that sees the experience of a real moral element (see McKenzie, *Guilt. Its Meaning and Significance*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1962, p. 34). The Superego originates when “[m]emory reminds him [the child] that in the past when he had done something ‘naughty’ and he said he was ‘sorry’ mother forgave him. There may now be a conflict between the strong tendency to confess and be at one with his mother, and the fear that she will not forgive. There is objective guilt and there are guilt-feelings, both conscious to the child” (p. 37). Later on the child internalizes the musts and must-nots of the parents, and even introjects the parents themselves, therefore transforming the imperatives from external to internal. The conflict between the child’s individuality and the superimposed moral – the root of unrealistic guilt-feelings – is described by Karin Stephen as follows: “the internal need to conform to an external standard set up by the parents, or parent substitutes, which the child may feel it ought to follow from various motives. It may have to submit against its will, from fear, or it may want to be what they want it to be from love and admiration. In the case of *having* to conform through fear the Super-ego is in conflict with the rest of the child’s self and is generally a harsh tyrant against whom it rebels secretly. Its energy is borrowed from the child’s own aggressive, destructive revengeful impulses, directed back against itself to deprive it of satisfaction. This “bad” Super-ego is the motive force of the Puritanical Conscience for which all pleasure is sinful” (Karin Stephen, in C. H. Waddington, *Science and Ethics*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1942, p. 37, quoted in McKenzie, p. 38). These rebellious impulses coming from the inner world give as a consequence an oppressing sense of guilt. In an adult, therefore, neurotic guilt-feelings are “invariably a sign that the conscience is still in the immature stage of the Super-Ego” (p. 38). McKenzie adds: “When a prohibition or a command is introjected, it is not assimilated; it lies over against the integrated part of the personality without modifying it, like a foreign body” (p. 39). This opinion is shared not only by Freud, but also by Melanie Klein, Joan Riviere and Karin Stephen.

¹¹ Theodor Reik, *Myth and Guilt. The Crime and Punishment of Mankind*, London: Hutchinson & Co., 1958 (1957), pp. 29-30.

increased by constant frustration, whereas an occasional satisfaction of them causes them to diminish, at least for the time being”¹².

This concept would be further developed in what is perhaps the most meaningful work on guilt by Freud: *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). In this study he reaffirms guilt feeling as a reaction to the unconscious appearance of aggressive drives, and the anxiety that results from the temptation of aggressive acts:

The tension between the harsh super-ego and the ego that is subjected to it, is called by us the sense of guilt; it expresses itself as a need for punishment. Civilization, therefore, obtains mastery over the individual’s dangerous desire for aggression by weakening and disarming it and by setting up an agency within him to watch over it, like a garrison in a conquered city¹³.

A person can feel guilty – or sinful if devout – not only when he or she admits to have accomplished something he or she thinks to be “bad”, but even when he or she feels just the intention to do it:

We may reject the existence of an original, as it were natural, capacity to distinguish good from bad. What is bad is often not all what is injurious or dangerous to the ego; on the contrary, it may be something which is desirable and enjoyable to the ego. [...] At the beginning, therefore, what is bad is whatever causes one to be threatened with loss of love [...]. This state of mind is called a “bad conscience”; but actually it does not deserve this name, for at this stage the sense of guilt is clearly only a fear of loss of love, “social” anxiety [...]. A great change takes place only when the authority is internalized through the establishment of a super-ego. The phenomena of conscience then reach a higher stage. Actually, it is not until now that we should speak of conscience or a sense of guilt. At this point, too, the fear of being found out comes to an end; the distinction, moreover, between doing something bad and wishing to do it disappears entirely, since nothing can be hidden from the super-ego, not even thoughts¹⁴.

¹² Sigmund Freud, “Origin of the Sense of Guilt”, from *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1961), in Herbert Morris (ed.), *Guilt and Shame*, p. 56.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

Therefore, there are two origins of the sense of guilt, according to Freud: the one arising from the fear of the authority, and the other, successive, arising from the fear of the superego. Civilization and each individual have been marked by the naissance of these two. In the same work, Freud makes one of the most famous assertions about guilt and the burden that it brought to humanity: he explains how the sense of guilt is the most important problem in the development of civilization, and how the price we pay for progress is the loss of happiness due to its heightening. The twentieth-century civilization knows it far too well. The World Wars, the Holocaust and all the genocides to which we assisted – maybe for the first time as real spectators – and the traumas generated by them, would have been transformed, in the novels we are going to analyze, in an underlying unhappiness which becomes almost cosmic.

When considering the whole of Freud's studies on the topic, therefore, different kinds of guilt emerge, among which we can find the already mentioned guilt of unresolved Oedipus complex, the guilt caused by the impulse of hate, the longing of the melancholic, and also the idea of collective guilt, that we will discuss later. What emerge in all cases are some constant elements which mark, with few exceptions, all men and women, and also their literary counterparts. Firstly, guilt appears as something inescapable, because connected with an ancestral crime and to an "inherited mental force". Furthermore, guilt is not necessarily felt when we are "objectively" guilty. As we have already seen, it is paradoxically experienced more often when we are evidently innocent. On the contrary, real responsibility can be completely detached by any sense of guilt, as it can be easily recognized in those criminals who are unable to prove any remorse, both for personal causes or because the culture in which they grew up exculpates them¹⁵.

Another founder of psychoanalysis and one of Freud's first followers, Wilhelm Stekel, also focuses on guilt in his studies, although differing from the master's ideas. In *Conditions of Anxiety and Their Cure* (1908) neurosis is the disease of a bad

¹⁵ Vernon Coleman distinguishes only two categories of people who are "immune" to guilt: "Only fanatics and psychopaths remain entirely free of guilt for life. Fanatics don't know what guilt is because they are so filled with a feeling of righteous indignation that there is no room for self-doubt. [...] Psychopaths remain free of guilt because they are free of the sort of feelings that the rest of us describe as love and compassion – emotions which lead directly or indirectly to guilt. The psychopath cares nothing for others and little for himself. Without caring it is impossible to feel guilt" (Vernon Coleman, *Guilt. Why it happens and how to overcome it*, London: Sheldon Press, 1982, p. 1).

conscience, and the “internal system of authority” of an individual is regarded as necessary for a human person to be considered as such, but “the price he pays is to be inflicted, by the excessive development of authority, with feelings which are described as guilt, anxiety and despair”¹⁶. Also for Donald Winnicott guilt is an “anxiety with a special quality”, agreeing with Freud that it involves longing for the loved object; he seems to agree with him also as for the conviction that anxiety needs a certain degree of sophistication and self-consciousness to become sense of guilt. As a consequence, in his opinion guilt feelings are not an inculcated thing, but “an aspect of the development of the human individual”¹⁷.

Jung’s psychological approach – defined by Martin Buber a psychological type of solipsism¹⁸ – adds a different perspective to the question of guilt. The centrality of the self and its projections on the external world, which are characteristic of his method, are also evident when considering his idea of the “seat” of evil in an individual, whose process of individualization and realization is indeed brought out by the “integration of evil as the unification of opposites in the psyche”. As a consequence, Buber affirms, as in Freud’s materialism, Jung’s panpsychism implies no ontological sense in guilt, no “reality in the relation between the human person and the world entrusted to him in his life”¹⁹. A quite opposite opinion had been Nietzsche’s, for example, as he wrote in *On the Genealogy of Morals* in 1887. Here he put in evidence how in German the word guilt (*Schuld*) has its origin in a very material concept, *Schulden*, “debts”:

It was in *this* sphere then, the sphere of legal obligations, that the moral conceptual world of “guilt,” “conscience,” “duty,” “sacredness of duty” has its origin; its beginnings were, like the beginnings of everything great on earth, soaked in blood thoroughly and for a long time. And might one not add that, fundamentally, this world has never since lost a certain odor of blood and torture? (Not even in good old Kant; the categorical imperative smells of cruelty). It was here, too, that that uncanny intertwining of the ideas “guilt and

¹⁶ Wilhelm Stekel, *The Ethical Animal*, quoted in McKenzie, *Guilt*, p. 17.

¹⁷ See McKenzie, *Guilt*, p. 20 and 29.

¹⁸ Martin Buber, “Guilt and Guilt Feelings”, from *The Knowledge of Man*, in Herbert Morris (ed.), *Guilt and Shame*, p. 61.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

suffering” was first effected – and by now they may well be inseparable. To ask it again: to what extent can suffering balance debts or guilt?²⁰

Nietzsche wonders if any guilt can be “expiated” by suffering, considered that, in his opinion, everything can be paid for. The solution he finds implies a radical, seemingly paradoxical resolution: the complete abandonment of Christian faith.

The advent of the Christian God, as the maximum god attained so far, was therefore accompanied by the maximum feeling of guilty indebtedness on earth. Presuming we have gradually entered upon the *reverse* course, there is no small probability that with the irresistible decline of faith in the Christian God there is now also a considerable decline of faith in mankind’s feeling of guilt; indeed, the prospect cannot be dismissed that the complete and definitive victory of atheism might free mankind of this whole feeling of guilty indebtedness toward its origin, its *causa prima*. Atheism and a kind of *second innocence* belong together²¹.

We will investigate the relationship between guilt and religion and their interactions more deeply in the following chapters, and we also see how religion can enhance the sense of guilt in the characters of our novels, especially in the Japanese case. Here the “imported” sense of guilt related to an alien faith acts as an even stronger external superego which confounds more than a culturally inherited creed,

²⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, “Guilt, Bad Conscience, and the Like”, from *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in Herbert Morris (ed.), *Guilt and Shame*, p. 101.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122. Nietzsche continues: “The moralization of the concepts guilt and duty, their being pushed back into the *bad* conscience, actually involves an attempt to *reverse* the direction of the development described above, or at least to bring it to a halt: the *aim* now is to preclude pessimistically, once and for all, the prospect of a final discharge; [...] the *aim* now is to turn back the concepts “guilt” and “duty”- back against whom? There can be no doubt: against the “debtor” first of all, in whom from now on the bad conscience is firmly rooted, eating into him and spreading within him like a polyp, until at last the irredeemable penance, the idea that it cannot be discharged (“*eternal* punishment”). Finally, however, they are turned back against the “creditor,” too: whether we think of the *causa prima* of man, the beginning of the human race, its primal ancestor who is from now on burdened with a curse (“Adam,” “original sin,” “unfreedom of the will”), or of nature from whose womb mankind arose and into whom the principle of evil is projected from now on (“the diabolizing of nature”), or of existence in general, which is now considered *worthless as such* (nihilistic withdrawal from it, a desire for nothingness or a desire for its antithesis, for a different mode of being, Buddhism and the like) – suddenly we stand before the paradoxical and horrifying expedient that afforded temporary relief for tormented humanity, that stroke of genius on the part of Christianity: God himself sacrifices himself, God as the only being who can redeem man from what has become unredeemable for man himself – the creditor sacrifices himself for his debtor, out of *love* (can one credit that?), out of love for his debtor!”.

somehow rendering the same development pattern that Freud identified in the growth of a man; that is, the change from social anxiety into internalized guilt.

Also Melanie Klein, maybe the major psychoanalyst who dedicated her attention to guilt after Freud, connects the sense of guilt to aggressiveness, as Freud did: we feel guilty any time we feel a real or alleged aggressiveness inside us (and this idea of the sense of guilt as resulting from the repression of natural aggressiveness is not dissimilar from Leibniz's philosophical tradition according to which the limitation of creatures – the limitation that contradicts human nature itself – is the origin of moral evil²²). The difference between the two is that whereas Freud posits the birth of the superego around the age of five, when the Oedipus complex declines, Klein dates it at an earlier stage²³. In addition, according to Klein, the sense of guilt emerges within the relationship between mother and child, and not in the three-party situation described by Freud.

It is in 1935 that Melanie Klein defines his main idea on guilt: guilt feelings originate from a depressive position; this is why she calls it “depressive guilt”. In her opinion, only a sufficiently integrated personality can experience guilt, because it emerges only if the individual is capable to represent inside him or her a person who suffers for what he/she has done. As a consequence, in this perspective guilt feelings do not arise in a primitive human status, but, on the contrary, they can happen only if the person has reached a certain maturity.

An interesting stage in guilt's onset is explained in *Envy and Gratitude* (1957). In this study Klein asserts that if guilt appears prematurely in a person who is not ready to bear it, it is felt as a persecutory feeling, and the person feels persecuted by the object which has caused guilt. This implicit second kind of guilt is called by Klein “persecutory guilt”; it originates during the early life of an individual, and its effects continue haunting the person or her even in adulthood, as depressive guilt, coexisting with it²⁴. Persecutory guilt can give origin to other symptoms such as insomnia, somatic reactions, and obsessive rituals, or other apparently opposite behaviour patterns like excessive or manic lack of inhibition, or sadism, as an

²² Paul Ricoeur, *Finitudine e colpa*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1970 (*Finitude et culpabilité*, 1960), p. 1.

²³ See Melanie Klein, *The Oedipus complex in the Light of Early Anxieties* (1945).

²⁴ Klein believed that there is a pendular movement between the two positions, the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive, and she, unlike Freud, talks in fact of “positions” and not of “phases”.

attempt to identify with the aggressor; not to consider the sadomasochistic tendency to engage in such relationships. Interestingly enough, as Speziale-Bagliacca suggests, “[w]hen we live in the world of persecutory guilt, we are so to speak victims of guilt, a guilt that can be handed down from father to son, even down to the fifth generation, as the Bible has it”²⁵. The same kind of guilt can be found in Kierkegaard, and in literature; for example, in modern literature Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, while, for Speziale-Bagliacca, the Erinyes could exemplify the persecutory sense of guilt in classical mythology²⁶.

The internalization of guilt – so important in the definition of its deepest feelings – is explicit in some of the behaviour patterns described by Klein, as they were in Freud. In *On Criminality* (1934), Klein describes how disobedient children “would feel compelled to be naughty and to get punished, because the real punishment, however severe, was reassuring in comparison with the murderous attacks which they were continually expecting from fantastically cruel parents”²⁷. As naughty children look for punishment, so do our characters. And as our deepest hatred is directed against the hatred within ourselves – as exposed by Klein in *Guilt and Reparation* (1937)²⁸ – so will our characters direct their need of punishment against themselves, turning into outcasts, wanderers among strangers isolated from the ones they love, or should love.

The relationship between guilt and need of expiation is one of the most interesting aspects related to guilt, especially for this study. Whereas for objective guilt the act of reconciliation with society takes place through the law structure and its penitentiary system, for the subjective guilt the question is more complex. When considering the difference between realistic and unrealistic guilt, McKenzie says that all guilt-feelings are subjective, and that therefore psychoanalysis is necessary for the resulting symptoms of anxiety-feelings, obsessions, phobias, compulsions and depression²⁹. Nonetheless, as we well know, psychoanalysis is not the only means that humanity has developed to fight guilt; on the contrary, it is the last in order of appearance. Subjective guilt does not attain to the sphere of law, but to the one of

²⁵ Speziale-Bagliacca, *Guilt*, p. 30.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²⁷ Quoted in Kalu Singh, *Ideas in Psychoanalysis: Guilt*, p. 40.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²⁹ John McKenzie, *Guilt*, p. 23.

ethics and theology, although the two are obviously connected; morality and religion are strictly linked to the way men try to confront themselves with the sense of guilt.

If we first consider how, from a psychological point of view, people react to guilt, and the consequences of these feelings on one's mind, we can better follow how the major systems created by men – in particular religions – have worked to build structures and substructures to tackle with it. Sense of guilt can be avoided by many different mechanisms, many of which can interact at the same time: it can be displaced from an object to another, for example, although in this case the root of the problem is just moved to something else – probably, even deeply removed. Guilt can otherwise be exploited as a means to get masochistic pleasure in exercising sadistic control over people making them feeling guilty for something. Sometimes we try – together with our characters – to provoke others into accusing us unjustly, in order to defend ourselves properly whereas we failed on the past painful occasion. Complex techniques like these are evident in sadomasochistic relationships, in which we create events in order to render other people guilty, or when we try to share with others the unfortunate acts we only have committed. More often, these mechanisms are not used against other people, but against one's inner world, in order to attack oneself³⁰. This is evident in the characters we will meet later in this study, where masochistic impulses very often dominate the scene. Masochism and self-reproaching are also generated by what one often calls “ill-luck”, that is, according to Freud, external frustration which

so greatly enhances the power of the conscience in the super-ego. As long as things go well with a man, his conscience is lenient and lets the ego do all sorts of things; but when misfortune befalls him, he searches his soul, acknowledges his sinfulness, heightens the demands of his conscience, imposes abstinences on himself and punishes himself with penances. [...] Fate is regarded as a substitute for the parental agency. If a man is unfortunate it means that he is no longer loved by this highest power [...]. This becomes especially clear where fate is looked upon in the strictly religious sense of being nothing else than an expression of the Divine Will. [...] If he has met with misfortune,

³⁰ Speziale-Bagliacca, *Guilt*, p. 16.

he does not throw the blame on himself but on his fetish, which has obviously not done its duty, and he gives it a thrashing instead of punishing himself³¹.

Defined by Speziale-Bagliacca as a common psychological “habit”, the attempt to reduce the pains of self-accusations can also originate a desire to believe in fantasies which make us justified, or at least less culpable³². Needless to say, this mechanism is not always successful in the novels presented here.

Our civilization seems destined to feel guilty, and not to find proper means by which avoiding its sense. Man is the moral climber³³, but on his way he experiences some moments when guilt seems to be heavier than in other moments. The characters we are going to meet are of this species, at one of these historical moments.

1.2 Patterns of Guilt: Psyche and Myth

We have seen how the sense of guilt is installed in our inner self – mind, soul, psyche – intrinsically and unavoidably, forging our relationship with the outer world. The cultural responses to this “presence” within us have been various and have taken many forms in the history of mankind; they are easily recognizable in the extensive occurrence of guilt-related topics in myths, literatures and religions since their first appearance.

From this point of view, psychoanalysis and mythology aim at the same result: to free people from the burden of their guilt, doing it in the most explicit way is possible. It was Theodor Reik who, in *Myth and Guilt* (1957), investigated the ways in which guilt has been always interpolated in myths, traditions, and religions. It was here that he exposed his belief that religious and moral laws have aggravated the consequences of guilt³⁴.

It is interesting, therefore, to see how cultures with different backgrounds have reacted – and how they put it into fiction – to an acquired burden of guilt. Eastern traditions, for example, have had a completely different relationship with guilt

³¹ Sigmund Freud, *Origin of the Sense of Guilt*, pp. 56-57.

³² See Speziale-Bagliacca, *Guilt*, pp. 20-21.

³³ Definition of Theodor Reik, which he uses as the title of the last chapter of his *Myth and Guilt*.

³⁴ Theodor Reik, *Myth and Guilt*.

feelings; we will see how in the following chapters. Guilt, as psychoanalysts affirm, is not related just to a single culture, but to a sort of “universal” common brain structure, as Jung believed. Reik accepts as true the idea of a “World Sense of Guilt”, and considers it the “fatal flaw inherent within our civilization itself”³⁵, as Freud and also many philosophers have acknowledged in their works – Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Kirkegaard, Heidegger – and as many writers have chanted: Shakespeare, Goethe, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Kafka, Sartre, O’Neill, Faulkner, just to mention some of the major novelists. Nonetheless, Reik continues, there is at least another fictional product which portrays this universal feeling, “one kind of collective production that can be compared to those individual fantasies. They contain, distorted and transformed by changes during thousands of years, memories from an early phase of human evolution: I mean the myths”³⁶; myths open windows on the man’s past as “fossils for archaeologists”. To dig into myths is like digging into the fears and conflicts of mankind, their projections into myth, and their fictional outcomes.

To begin with classical culture, Roberto Calasso, in his description of classical myths, makes an interesting consideration about the origin of guilt feelings as associated, in Western culture, with the myth of the original sin: because of its relation with primitive necessities – or perhaps the other way around – guilt is, according to Calasso, unavoidable:

The primordial crime is the action that makes something in existence disappear: the act of eating. Guilt is thus obligatory and inextinguishable. And, given that men cannot survive without eating, guilt is woven into their physiology and forever renews itself [...]. The gods aren’t content to foist guilt on man. That wouldn’t be enough, since guilt is part of life always. What the gods demand is an awareness of guilt. And this can only be achieved through sacrifice³⁷.

Guilt is something the gods, or society, or our psyche, impose to acknowledge. Sacrifice, or self-sacrifice – as we will see in our novels – serve this purpose. As a

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 39 and 45.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

³⁷ Roberto Calasso, *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*, London: Vintage, 1994 (*Le nozze di Cadmio e Armonia*, 1988), pp. 311 and 313.

consequence, when mankind is forced to sacrifice in spite of itself, as in the case of calamities and misfortunes, it tends to associate bad luck with its faults, and to see them as the right punishments for its misdeeds. Greek literature, for example, is full of examples of what Reik calls “unconscious communal sin”: “Primitive civilizations as well as half-civilized peoples share the view that crime is committed by the community and that it has to bear the burden of penalty as long as it is polluted by the misdeeds of one of its members”³⁸. L. R. Farnell, historian, observes that in Greece and Babylon, and perhaps in the entire ancient Mediterranean society, the concept of collective responsibility, the idea that the tribe is one unit of life made of the same flesh, marks an early stage of social moral³⁹.

Another perspective on the concept of guilt in Greek culture is offered again by Roberto Calasso. In *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony* he examines the role of guilt in the depiction of Homeric heroes, for whom, he believes, there was no guilty party, only an immense guilt. There was no distinction between a possible abstract concept of evil in an individual and his deeds:

With an intuition the moderns have jettisoned and have never recovered, the heroes did not distinguish between the evil of the mind and the evil of the deed, murder and death. Guilt for them is like a boulder blocking the road; it is palpable, it looms. Perhaps the guilty part is as much a sufferer as the victim. In confronting guilt, all we can do is make a ruthless computation of the forces involved⁴⁰.

The forces involved obviously change according to variations in society. There are hypothesis that guilt feelings appeared in the life of man at a certain phase of his evolution, five or six hundred years before Christ, among the Greeks, the Hebrews, and other Mediterranean peoples; it was conceived as a reaction to an action or to a conduct that was considered wrong or evil⁴¹.

³⁸ Theodor Reik, *Myth and Guilt*, p. 40.

³⁹ L. R. Farnell, *Greece and Babylon* (1911), quoted in Theodor Reik, *Myth and Guilt*, p. 40. See also the works of Westermarck, Durkheim, Robertson, Smith.

⁴⁰ Roberto Calasso, *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*, p. 94.

⁴¹ Theodor Reik, *Myth and Guilt*, pp. 46-47.

Hybris and Nemesis are two intertwined concepts that reflect Greek cultural attitude towards guilt. Hybris is the immoderate violence of those who cannot contain their actions, violence of those who, in their relationships with others, “freddamente o con ira, varca[no] i limiti di quanto sia retto, sfociando volutamente nell’ingiustizia”, to use a definition by Carlo Del Grande⁴²; against it, there is Nemesis, “impersonale divina vendetta che coglie il malvagio, o ministra di Zeus che punisce materialmente secondo gli ordini del dio”⁴³. Together, these two entities represent guilt and punishment, which, according to Del Grande, from Homer to the classics, would acquire the more and more the character of necessity. Under the influx of religious and heroic currents, characters were “assembled” by the principle that return and the consequent pacific life or, on the contrary, violent death were determined by the gods as a prize or as a punishment, according to merits or faults⁴⁴. However this principle from religion entered literature and established itself, it is a fact that guilt concepts were rationalized, in Western civilization, by the Greeks.

For early psychologists, myths were collective daydreams, whereas new psychologists tend to study them analytically. Josef Campbell, for example, believed that myths have constant characteristics, although they have developed and shaped into different forms when separated from the original source, “as dialects of a single language”⁴⁵. Guilt, and the myths related, can be considered therefore as two equivalent unavoidable features of human civilization: “All men feel responsible, even before the commitment of crimes: maybe the very concept of crime began with it”⁴⁶. The possibility of the existence of a “mother mythology” from which different traditions differentiated on the basis of some traumatic historical event, as proposed by Joseph Feldmann, would explain the similarities in Iranian-Indian sagas, Egyptian and Babylonian myths, and also those of the Israelites⁴⁷.

When considering the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the story of the Fall is without doubt the first important hint at human guilt in the Western world – or, at

⁴² Carlo Del Grande, *Hybris. Colpa e castigo nell’espressione poetica e letteraria degli scrittori della Grecia antica / Da Omero a Cleante*, Napoli: Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1947, p. 1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴⁵ Josef Campbell, foreword to Maya Derens, *Divine Horseman* (1953), quoted in Theodor Reik, *Myth and Guilt*, p. 56.

⁴⁶ Theodor Reik, *Myth and Guilt*, p. 57.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

least, the one which influenced it most. The Jahvistic source is dated from 8000 to 1000 B.C., but the myth of the Fall has been certainly dated back to much older sources, transmitted orally for a long time before its shaping into the biblical text⁴⁸. Interestingly enough, the concept of original sin appears much later, with Sirach (200-175 B.C), where there is an allusion to a primeval sin, or with the Apocalypse of Baruch (A.D. 80-150), in which we can find an allusion to the notion of the Fall bringing upon man the responsibility for future punishment.

Even more interestingly, in the New Testament Jesus makes no reference to the Fall⁴⁹. According to Reik, it was only after mankind was redeemed by Christ that the original sin became a sensation: “It was only after mankind was redeemed from it that that crime, forgotten for ages, became a *cause célèbre*”⁵⁰.

However, before Christianity, with its myths and symbols, prevailed in Western public imagination, a story similar to that of Adam and Eve had already appeared in Greece, Rome, Persia, Syria, and also among the Arabs until the time of Mohammed. Since for the primitive mind evil came from something external to the individual, sin was thought to be caused by the temptation of something or someone supernatural⁵¹: it is God that moves David to sin. Then, of course, there is the figure of Satan, who, according to Reik, is a degraded god just like God is an elevated demon: “As remnant of an earlier phase a god is present twice in many myths: causing the sin of mortals, but also punishing them for it”⁵².

In the beginning, sin is always committed by a god or a demon; as a matter of fact, in rabbinical literature Adam is a perfect man, almost supernatural; in Greece there is Prometheus, but there are examples also in Babylonian, Phoenician, Egyptian myths too. There are often two superhuman powers fighting, one of which is

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 61. There are many different interpretations of the possible contingent situations in the life of man that could have been reinterpreted into the myth of the Fall. Changes in society are common to all the explanations, be they anthropological, religious, psychological. Some focus on the evolution of society into the Neolithic stage, whereas some others on a change of the religious mind, from a deistic perception to a theototomistic one, about 10000 B.C., a change that led to a different psychological possibility of developing psychic pathologies, for the presence of an external moral voice; geopolitical and geomorphic theories have been advanced as well. See also J. A. MacCulloch, “Fall”, in *Encyclopedia of Ethics and Religion...*

⁵¹ Theodor Reik, *Myth and Guilt*, p. 61.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 62.

banished in the end⁵³. In Japan, for instance, one might think of the legend of the first two Shinto deities, Izanami, the goddess of creation and death, and Izanagi, her brother and companion. After having generated a series of deities, Izanami dies in giving birth to the god of fire. Izanagi descends to the Yomi, the land of the dead, to find her and bring her back to him; but it is too late, she has transformed to a rotten, ugly body. Izanagi flees in disgust, and Izanami, angry and shameful, chases after him, but he succeeds in confining her to the Yomi pushing a rock at the entrance of the cavern, and from there she promises to kill 1000 people a day – a promise of vengeance and death that, although mitigated by Izanagi's reply of giving life to 1500 people a day, all the same transforms Izanami into the "evil part", destined to be fought and segregated in a dark zone, a zone of the repressed, just like guilt in our psyche.

As Reik said, "[m]an took only hesitantly and reluctantly the responsibility for his fall"⁵⁴. At that point, the entrance of death and evil into mankind is often ascribed by numerous myths and legends to the breaking of a taboo, often related to a forbidden fruit, or to a mistake of some sort⁵⁵. An Egyptian legend tells that Set, the enemy of all gods, kills his brother Osiris, the son of the Earth and Heaven, marking the end of the Golden Age. As with Cain's crime, with a criminal act of a brother, death found entrance into the world:

After the end of the patriarchal horde came a long phase of a fatherless society, and interregnum. It was filled with wild fights among the sons, who fought with each other, and each of whom tried to occupy the place and to exert the power of the father tyrant. Violent struggles among the brothers often led to fratricide, to a repetition of the primal deed, displaced to the competing brothers. As a matter of fact, the first murders of which the Semitic tradition tells, the primal crimes, are not the killing of a father, but of a brother. The legends of Osiris and Set, of Cain and Abel present prominent cases of such murderous strife within the primeval society. In these and other myths [...] echoes from that phase of brother jealousy and brother hate reach us children of a progressed

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

time in which murders of brothers became rare and are replaced by mass destruction within the brotherhood of mankind⁵⁶.

It will be this mass destruction within the brotherhood of mankind to forge our narratives around the sense of guilt generated from it.

But a long time before that, in Greece there had been a shift in the perception of guilt: from the ineluctable misery of hereditary powers, individual responsibility entered human consciousness, and the “curse that chains generations” was abandoned: the Erinyes became the Eumenides, “the kindly ones”, as Ricoeur points out:

Questo tempo può essere quello della condanna radicale o quello della pietà. Viene quindi istituita tutta una nuova economia temporale: la legge del debito secolare è spezzata; ciascuno paga per le sue colpe; ciascuno può in ogni momento ricominciare, “ritornare all’Eterno”. [...] questa scoperta [ha] più aggravato che risolto la crisi aperta con la dottrina della retribuzione. Giobbe contesterà precisamente che ogni uomo muoia per il suo proprio delitto e un nuovo tragico nascerà da questa scoperta⁵⁷.

If the penal rationalization of guilt was due to the Greeks, the internalization and refinement of the ethical conscience is of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, according to Ricoeur. But contrary to what one might expect, in Jewish culture guilt is very different from the one emanated by Christianity.

In the Torah there is no absolute evil, no ontological connotation of what is bad; the base of moral conduct is personal responsibility. In the Jewish tradition, more than sin, and the consequent sense of guilt, there is transgression. There is never a dichotomic dimension in biblical literature; and there is no original sin. Even the Fall of Adam and Eve could not be considered a fall but just the result of a choice, since everyone is responsible for him/herself. Differently from Greek tragedy, there

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 209. This can be considered a continuation of Freud’s theory as proposed in *Totem and Taboo*. Later on, Reik also adds: “It is very likely that whenever we now feel remorse, that deep, painful regret for having done wrong, the fear of cannibalistic retaliation is unconsciously experienced”. According to Reik, this is still evident in children stories and myths, such as Hänsel and Gretel, the Gingerbread Man, and so on (p. 215).

⁵⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Finitudine e colpa*, p. 360.

is nothing definitive, no immutable destiny in Jewish literature. As a consequence, although the Bible sanctions and menaces a few times the concept of a crime to be punished over many generations⁵⁸, the actual presence of guilt in Jewish life is all practical and only partly transcendental. The biblical concept of guilt arises from the conviction that deeds generate consequences and that sin is a danger to the sinner. We will see shortly how the concept of expiation differs accordingly.

In Christianity, this belief in human free will in choosing good or evil is maintained; every man is guilty not because of Adam, but because of his own nature – a position not too different from the one in Islam, in which Adam and Eve’s mistake has been forgiven by God once man has repented for it. Similarly, for a Christian the belief in Christ only can save from the intrinsic imperfection of man. The concept of an original sin has to be traced back to Augustine, and therefore not before the 4th-5th century; guilt started to be considered hereditary and transmitted from generation to generation through the sexual act. Compared to Catholicism, Protestantism is historically stricter in this regard, as Luther proclaimed the definitive corruption of the soul caused by the original sin: salvation depends on God’s will only, especially according to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. In any case, it is significant to note that it is Christianity, one may say, that has brought in Western culture the idea, or even the cult, of an intrinsic human imperfection; an imperfection that can be related to the conscience of being victim of an inescapable guilt, which was, for this reason, associated with the foundation act of mankind.

In Christianity the “stain” is sometimes referred to as *Felix Culpa* (happy fault), because it generated in God the compassion of the Incarnation, but nonetheless it requires individual guilt as part of the necessary mortal repentance⁵⁹. It is perhaps from this certainty that all ancient deities’ vendettas have arisen: in the Bible, for

⁵⁸ Memorable is Gen. 4:10, where innocent blood cries out for vengeance, and then is rejected by the earth (Isa. 26:21; Ezek. 24:7), and pollutes it (Num. 35:33–34). An instance is the case of bloodguilt, that is, the “liability for punishment for shedding blood”: “Bloodguilt attaches to the slayer and his family (II Sam. 3:28ff.) for generations (II Kings 9:26), and even to his city (Jer. 26:5), nation (Deut. 21:8), and land (Deut. 24:4). The technical term for bearing bloodguilt *damo bo*, or *damo bero’sho*, meant originally “his blood [remains] in him/in his head” (Josh. 2:19; Ezek. 33:5), and the legal formula *mot yumat damav bo* (Lev. 20:9–16) means that in the case of lawful execution, the blood of the guilty victim remains on his own person and does not attach itself to his executioners. The concept of bloodguilt in the Bible pervades all sources, legal, narrative, and cultic, and entails the following system of graded punishments for homicide” (Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik [eds.], *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd edition, Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007).

⁵⁹ Kalu Singh, *Guilt*, p. 6.

example, there are various examples of iniquities “visiting the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation” (*Exodus* 20:5, but also in *Genesis*). Christianity seems to alleviate the strictness of the vengeful divinity with the New Gospel (and this also “justified” anti-Semitism), but guilt has continued in Christian tradition all the same.

This inescapable sense of guilt is acknowledged by both religion and psychology. As a matter of fact, psychologists find themselves in agreement with the basic assumption of religious beliefs, that is, man was born guilty, victim of the original sin; and although they trace it back to the emotional evolution of men rather than on theological motivations, both acknowledge the existence of this constant. Priests and clergymen have proclaimed that we are all sinners, assuming that we have to believe in a universal guilt. Reik himself raises a fundamental question:

Is it conceivable that there is a free-floating guilt feeling in all men beyond the frontiers of races and nations, a collective sense of guilt of mankind that only occasionally reaches the threshold of conscious feeling? Is it possible that beneath the self-assurance, complacency and smugness of our civilization an unconscious sense of guilt is operating, shared by all?⁶⁰

Archetypal criticism is partly based on such assumptions: something is shared by different communities at historical, anthropological, social, or even, as in this case, psychological level. The results can differ, but in many cases some common patterns or features are maintained. Religions are one of the mirrors in which these shared quintessences are reflected.

1.3 Patterns of Faithful Guilt: Psyche and Religion

Religions have always been one of the most powerful among these mirrors. They have absorbed fears, questions, and psychological structures of man, and built around them superb structures feeding themselves on these sources, and also modifying the

⁶⁰ Theodor Reik, *Myth and Guilt*, p. 41.

material itself from which they have derived. Guilt as sin, or sin as guilt, are just two of the binomials interwoven in the plot of religious systems.

Guilt as sin is retraceable in all ancient religions, and can be found in Babylonian hymns, in Egyptian prayers, in the Bible, in Saint Paul, and many others. In this study an important distinction between the two concepts has to be made, even if in our novels the difference is not always evident, or significant. Also, it is important to underline that in neurotics and psychotics the experience of guilt and sin merge.

In order to give just a rapid definition of what is sin, we could say with Speziale-Bagliacca that in most religions sin is a breaking of the moral laws given by the divinity⁶¹; in Christianity, for instance, these laws are the Commandments. Sin is something connected with the sacred and its relation with purity and impurity; a person sins when he or she offends the god in committing an impure act. It is noteworthy the fact that in the *Vulgate*, together with the conscious sin (as appears in Psalm L), there seems to exist also an unconscious sin: “ab occultis meis mundame” (at least this is how Lewes and Short interpreted the sentence in their Latin Dictionary of 1980). This is a hint that religion too can acknowledge the existence of a hidden, gnawing feeling which is not necessarily linked to an actual breaking of rules or moral dictates. But generally speaking, when we talk about guilt we can possibly refer more to a moral judgement, whereas sin is closer to a religious rebuke. Nonetheless, as Speziale-Bagliacca suggests, if we only consider the seven deadly sins, we can see that each one of them corresponds to a psycho-pathological syndrome⁶². Although the distinction between the two concepts seems to be obvious and justly made when considering how different cultures react to guilt feelings, it is significant that, in fact, the two phenomena are not so different; psychiatrists and also philosophers – Paul Ricoeur, for example – can recognize a complete “ontological” scission between being guilty and committing sin, but actually psychoanalysis treats sense of guilt and sense of sin in the same way.

By some means, we can advance the notion that sin and guilt have followed a certain pattern: as Speziale-Bagliacca affirmed, “at the beginnings of society,

⁶¹ According to Speziale-Bagliacca paganism is not based instead on moral rules dictated by a just god (p. 9).

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

wrongdoing was considered according to ‘objective wrongs’ which were established by external social laws. Only in a later period guilt was interiorized, and sin stopped to be conceived as a sort of ‘demonic reality’ for which the individual was not wholly responsible”⁶³. In a way, therefore, sin marks a later stage in the history of guilt feelings, the one which precedes, however, what we can consider its “modern” idea.

Religions have run in parallel in the process of internalization of guilt. For Victor White guilt and religion have such a strong connection to affirm that “without such a sense [of guilt] Christian faith and practice, the whole Gospel and message of Salvation, and the rites of the Church would be completely meaningless”⁶⁴. The eating of the fruit – or whatever it was – of the Tree of Knowledge that was the Fall of Man, essentially symbolizes the moment in which man made acquaintance with the knowledge of good and evil, thus becoming an ethic being. The cost for the knowledge of the essence of things, and ethics, is, to say it with S. R. Nicolas Chamfort, disillusionment that precludes happiness, and leads inevitably to the death of the soul, and to disintegration⁶⁵. The “original sin”, therefore, can be considered the Christian response to the innate guilt feelings that every person must experience in order to be such.

Philosophers, psychologists, and all sort of scholars have associated guilt with religion in many of their theories. In very famous studies such as *Violence and the Sacred*, René Girard based the whole idea of the foundation of human society on the shortcircuit between violence and sacred (*La violence et le sacré*, 1972), explicitly linking the necessity of a sacramental attitude towards existence and acts of force by the first men; whereas in *The Scapegoat* (*Le bouc émissaire*, 1982), but also in *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* (*Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde*, 1978), he examines the nature of those figures which embodies the need for punishing innocence, taking to the fore the Bible too. Kierkegaard based his concept of guilt on a Jewish way of thinking: the possibility itself to sin generates guilt feelings and therefore anxiety. His idea of original sin was connected with the

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁶⁵ S. R. Nicolas Chamfort, *Maximes et pensées*, n. xxiii, (1795), quoted in Speziale-Bagliacca, *Guilt*, p. 75.

sensual and procreative instinct, the leaps necessary to humanity for the abandoning of the state of innocence and the entrance into real history⁶⁶. Each of us repeat Adam's first sin in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and this concept is similarly expressed by Freud himself. Wilfred Trotter, instead, made an interesting connection between another aspect of the development of human society and the development of guilt. In his study on social psychology called *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (1908-1909) he linked morality – and therefore guilt – to the development of language: “Being spoken to can mean not only influence, but also judgement. This is why herd animals (such as people) have a ‘conscience and feelings of guilt and of duty’”⁶⁷.

Paradoxically enough, although guilt might seem such an “intrusive” presence in our lives, we know that it can often be unconscious. As a matter of fact, as we have already seen, Freud too argued that a sense of guilt can emerge also when we are objectively innocent and have committed no crime (whereas when one is “objectively” guilty he preferred to speak of remorse). Just like an event can be a catalyst, a pretext for re-awakening past and removed guilt feelings, so the infraction of religious commandments can be considered a trigger to revive ancient and undisclosed guilt feelings. It is not difficult to agree with Grinberg and Speziale-Bagliacca that “the high spiritual value attributed to religious feelings and beliefs seems to owe much to the fact that ‘it satisfies deep longings of the human psyche and in some way appeases unconscious moral guilt’”⁶⁸. Religion can assume the function of a means used to purge oneself of the hidden and unconscious guilt feelings; this is why, in a cultural environment such as the Japanese one, where local religions do not imply a strong judgement from above, Christianity is taken as a psychological scapegoat for inner guilt feelings, as it happens in Ōoka's *Fires on the Plain*.

Displacement is one of the main elements in any kind of purgatory ritual. It is not by chance that in psychoanalysis religions are often compared to obsessive acts, the “everyday rituals” which we use as a measure to protect us against punishment if

⁶⁶ Speziale-Bagliacca, *Guilt*, p. 13.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Herman Westerink, *A Dark Trace. Sigmund Freud on the Sense of Guilt*, Leuven University Press, 2009 (2005), p. 184.

⁶⁸ León Grinberg, *Culpa y depresión* (1963-1971), quoted in Speziale-Bagliacca, *Guilt*, p. 11.

the ceremony is carried out properly and meticulously⁶⁹. In the sense of guilt, with its expectation anxiety and terror of doom, one tries to exorcise the fear of a much awaited punishment for the inner sense of guilt; religious people speak of divine punishment. Sense of guilt and sin, their interrelation and their ambiguous overlapping, lead to a cause-effect short-circuit, as in neurosis: “this was possibly the result of repression having been successful, yet insufficient. The believer can also backslide into sin and from there develop a need for acts of atonement. This has once again similarities with the character of an obsessive act”⁷⁰. Repression and the subsequent displacement of fears and desires are at the basis of the thesis illustrated by Westerink:

[...] it now appears as if obsessional neurosis is the pathological counterpart of the formation of religion, and religion is simply a universal obsessional neurosis. But with regard to religion, the renunciation of the drives forms the fundament of cultural development. Renunciation of the drive means the “instinctual pleasure” is partly transferred to the deity. Freud cited by way of example from the Bible: “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord”. This is a citation from Paul’s Epistle to the Romans (12:19b). Paul in turn cites freely from “Moses” (Deut. 32:35-36). For Freud the meaning of this citation is illustrative: God may do what men repress, namely express his vicious, socially dangerous urges. He described that as a liberation and I believe he meant that the thought that God may indeed seek revenge can be liberating for those to whom vengeance is not permitted and/or those who do not permit revenge⁷¹.

For Freud, therefore, “the problem is not that religious sublimation is absurd, but rather that existing religious traditions contribute to a culture in which neuroses are more prominent than ever before”⁷². As a matter of fact, in *The Future Prospects of Psychoanalytic Therapy*, Freud affirmed that there was a great increase in neuroses at his time, when religions started to decrease their influence. We will see how this phenomenon would be essential in the psycho-emotional status in which our

⁶⁹ See Freud, *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practises*, and Herman Westerink, *A Dark Trace. Sigmund Freud on the Sense of Guilt*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009 (2005), p. 72.

⁷⁰ Herman Westerink, *A Dark Trace*, p. 73.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

characters play their roles: “culture still demanded repression whereas religion offered no better prospect to satisfy desire”⁷³. The conflict of the characters with religious sense, where it is still present, is complex and tormented; solace is not always obtained, and often it is no longer searched. Guilt and repressions continue to obsess “souls”, but “souls” have ceased to be protected from the above and have become guilty “psyches”, “minds”, or even just “bodies”. The historical context of our novels saw increasing repression, in addition to a continuous oscillatory movement between the desire to “confess” these guilt feelings and the paralysed, apathetic attitude of hiding oneself behind other self-defensive strategies. We will see in the following chapters how these strategies forge the narrative forms.

In *Totem and Taboo* Freud observed that we “are all miserable sinners”. From Freud’s perspective, says Westerink, Jung did not understand these sins:

With Jung it appeared that sins were linked with an unhappy relationship between person and reality, a conflict in which religion or fantasy could offer solace. Jung’s theories of the primal libido repudiated the existence of fundamental, sadistic hostile wishes. Guilt feelings thus played hardly any role to speak of. They were ultimately a secondary phenomenon, one which additionally did not appear to be a burden, but rather to be liberating [...]. Self-criticism, which can arise as an expression of this tension, is subsequently employed in order to develop a new plan in order to reach the goal anyway. Self-criticism is thus useful, just as religion can also be useful when it is able to identify sin and offer forgiveness⁷⁴.

Jung was, therefore, more positive about the possible effects not only of guilt feelings, but also of the “solutions” that religions can offer, at least from a psychological point of view⁷⁵. But what do religions offer in terms of expiation?

Christianity is based on the belief that Christ, personifying the last Adam, atoned for the sins of all mankind, as Paul of Tarsus’s message says: we have been delivered from guilt since Christ laid down His life in expiation for our sin. Reik

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

⁷⁵ For more on the differences between Freud and Jung on religion and guilt, see Michael Palmer, *Freud and Jung on Religion*, London: Routledge, 1997.

recognizes that changes in religion tend to lessen the accumulated temptations, and brings as example Luther's motto: "Pecca fortiter" (Sin bravely!)⁷⁶. A similar pattern is also present in Buddhism: once reached Enlightenment, the enlightened person can decide not to abandon himself into the Nirvana, but to dedicate his life to the others, becoming a Bodhisattva. However, needless to say, guilt has not vanished from earth, and we still feel guilty, notwithstanding religious salvation devices. Religions, one might expect from their main aim, should have resolved and lifted the sense of guilt of their believers, but on the contrary it very often seems the other way around; Winnicott says that "religious and moral teaching do not elicit guilt-feelings. Indeed, such teaching may accentuate real guilt-feelings and arouse unrealistic guilt-feelings"⁷⁷. It is a paradox that Kalu Singh traces back to the Renaissance the paradox that

religion has failed in its promise to alleviate guilt – the guilt it had created in order to demonstrate the faith's power by healing it. The only remaining excuse is the perennial plea of the tension between the perfection of the theology and the culpability of the believers. But from the psychoanalytic point of view, clients arrive at the therapeutic realm variously crippled by guilts which religion has failed to heal, even if it didn't create them. Religion has had two to seven millennia, depending on your religion, to perfect its theology and its technique: psychoanalysis has had one century⁷⁸.

⁷⁶ Theodor Reik, *Myth and Guilt*, p. 222. With this regard, a famous apocryphal aphorism, although provocative, captures the theoretical difference between Catholicism and Protestantism concerning the concepts of feeling guilt and of sinning: "Catholics have a sense of guilt, but no sense of sin. Protestants have a sense of sin but no sense of guilt. So it is that Catholics enjoy their sinning more than Protestants, who aren't allowed to enjoy anything". It is also worth mentioning that among all the sins sex is the most stigmatized in Western religions, as Kalu Singh observes, and that the story of the fall from Eden – the Ur-story of our guilt – is indeed an ensemble of sex, guilt, and knowledge (Kalu Singh, *Guilt*, p. 15).

⁷⁷ McKenzie, *Guilt*, p. 29. Paul Tournier has a quite linear idea about the role of religion in lifting guilt feelings: "Religion may liberate or suppress; it may increase guilt or remove it. A moralistic religion, a deformation of religion saturated with the idea of taboos and picturing God as a threatening being, awakens fear, and sets in motion the sinister mechanism of obduracy, revolt and wickedness. A religion of grace breaks in to this vicious circle, and leads to repentance and thus to freedom from guilt" (*Grace and Guilt. A Psychological Study*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974 [*Vrai ou Fausse Culpabilité*, 1958], p. 152).

⁷⁸ Kalu Singh, *Guilt*, pp. 4-5.

Provocative challenges to creeds and their efficacy can be shared or not; but it is a matter of fact that in literary works this creates its effects. Twentieth-century society and literary production reflect a change that Ellis Paul Torrance summarizes in the following way:

[...] the anxiety and guilt-feelings connected with mental illness in our day, and which preoccupies the pages of our novelists and poets, is due to the fact that guilt is divorced from the real source, namely, alienation from God, the object of anxious longing. Psychologically the anxiety can be expressed in terms of the thwarting of what Hadfield calls 'The urge to completeness', or as it has otherwise been termed 'The prospective aim of personality'. In theological terms, it is the thwarting of the Image of God, the religious *telos* of personality. The mentally ill person experiences this lack of completeness, the blocking of his personality, he feels that the very aim of personality is lost: 'I have nothing to live for' he repeats endlessly. He has divorced his sense of the urge to completeness and its consequent anxiety from religion and Redemption. In Torrance's language: neither the patient nor the psychiatrist has dealt 'with man's deepest root of the problem which is sin and guilt before God'. The guilt is displaced, and becomes either psychosomatic disease or mental illness⁷⁹.

Guilt has replaced the idea of sin, and perhaps many other things – responsibility, consciousness, lucidity, as our characters want to prove. It is not a coincidence that existentialism has played with the idea that man degrades everything he touches, "a measure of the existential guilt which every man bears vaguely within himself, the Promethean sense of man's curse"⁸⁰. We find ourselves asking: "Is our sense of guilt the mark of our total depravity, or is it the sign that man cannot but seek the loved but lost object, God? Is guilt 'the image of God' seeking its realization, or is it the final proof that the image is totally destroyed?"⁸¹. It seems that wholeness is the prize to be paid for Knowledge. Once again.

⁷⁹ Quoted in McKenzie, *Guilt*, p. 147. According to Jung ("A Psychological View of Conscience", 1958), guilt is the feeling of having lost wholeness and of being alienated from God, or, if seen from a psychological point of view, from the Self, which is the centre which regulates the psyche.

⁸⁰ Paul Tournier, *Grace and Guilt*, p. 177.

⁸¹ McKenzie, *Guilt*, p. 8.

CHAPTER 2

WANDERING CAINS: PATTERNS OF ATONEMENT

In depth we feel guilty,
not of sin but of “dust”.
This is the unconditional “badness”,
ontological, not moral,
of the afflicted ego.

Malcolm France, *The Paradox of Guilt*

2.1 Patterns of Self-Punishment, Patterns of Atonement

As a “social” construct – at least partly – the superego of an individual can have a weaker or stronger power over his/her psyche according to the culture in which it develops. Generally speaking, the more civilized a culture, the more punitive the superego; and, as a consequence, the heaviest becomes guilt, both quantitatively and qualitatively¹. In any case we have seen that, as guilt enters human society, man has developed different “psychological devices” to overcome the sense of guilt, and make atonement for the bites of one’s own conscience. Theories and practices of expiation have made their entrance into the history of man quite soon, and myths and religions have reflected this need for inner purity in creating patterns and laws

¹ Christopher FitzSimons Allison, *Guilt, Anger, and God. The Patterns of Our Discontents*, New York: The Seabury Press, 1972, p. 52. Reik explains: “Not only individuals, but mankind itself has established a superego [...]. But while man consciously prided himself on being virtuous, because he has become the lord of creation, he had somewhere the uncomfortable feeling that he was not the master of his soul. That unpleasant doubt often emerged in the middle of his self-complacency. This doubt had its origin in the dark awareness that something was rotten in the inner state, in the recesses of the cellar areas of his emotional life. We know that his growing discontent is due to that same civilization that has given such a boost to the ego of modern man [...]. The unconscious guilt feeling springing from aggressiveness and going hand in hand with the frustration of other strong desires is one of the main sources of that discontent felt in our civilization” (Theodor Reik, *Myth and Guilt*, pp. 420-421).

through which one can make amends with oneself or with the external divine projection.

Hence, man suffers from a “need for punishment”: a need for being chastised by someone else, possibly more powerful, who could judge him from the outside, thus allowing him to avoid the task of self-judgement – which is perhaps more painful and less definitive:

When we examine the origin of guilt-feelings we shall find that the Super-ego or conscience seems to demand not merely obedience of compliance with its dictates, but demands punishment if these dictates are disobeyed. This is the root of what is called ‘the need for punishment’. It is the psychological root of the idea that ‘guilt must be paid for’; and thus the root of some theories of Atonement as well as of the Sacrament of Penance².

People strongly believe that the guilty must be punished, and although this is not the purpose of curative psychoanalysis, it is extremely evident in literature, where, starting from Richardson’s *Clarissa*, we can find scarlet letters and suicidal bovarists, until we reach the twentieth-century meaningless and causeless torture of Kafkaian processes. Together with this persuasion, there is the belief that a chance for atonement has to be given and that we too must have the opportunity to make amends for our faults, all the while the desire to think that in the end “it is not our fault” persists. The conflict between the need for punishment and the desire of being, or at least thinking of ourselves as being, innocent creates the most interesting outcomes in contemporary novels.

This conflict is even more complex if we consider the fact that, from a psychological point of view, forgiveness cannot be offered by the law or by any other political or governmental entity, even when we are objectively guilty. Unconscious guilt cannot be cleansed by religious confession or legal punishment. Also, we must distinguish between different attitudes towards our guilt feelings: we can have the so-called “mature” guilt-feelings, or those related to objective wrong-doing, controlled by positive conscience; or those controlled by the superego, unmotivated, difficult to govern. An “effective” atonement can happen only when there is a transition from

² McKenzie, *Guilt*, p. 23.

the latter to the former, called by theologians *metanoia*, repentance, but literally meaning a change in mental attitude, a change of mind consisting of contrition for improper behaviour and a desire to keep away from such behaviour in the future. When guilt is acknowledged and there is a positive response to it, typically there is a tendency to make reparation – and this is, we will see shortly, a tendency still present in Judaism. In less well-balanced situations between the self and the sense of guilt, however, the desire to atone is not explicit and consequently not really performed, not properly achieved, and, most importantly, not consciously lived. This is a very important aspect we have to keep in mind when analysing the novels in question. Catholicism, in particular, has created a fascinating short-circuit between the possibility, and then the need, to confess one's sins and the subsequent feeling of desperation at both the sensation of being obliged to confess and the realization that we will never expiate sufficiently. McKenzie effectively summarizes the reasons why atonement seems to us so necessary and desirable:

After all, when we experience guilt-feeling, it is not for what we have done but for what we are. When we pray for forgiveness it is not simply that we think of particular sins we have committed and seek pardon for them: we seek forgiveness as selves [...] forgiveness is not merely a pardon of sins, but a restoration of the interpersonal relationships which our sins disturbed. Our sins cannot be undone; the physical and psychological effects of these sins, it maybe impossible to remove. But the soul maybe restored, the burden of guilt lifted, and an end made to the estrangement and alienation³.

³ John McKenzie, *Guilt. Its Meaning and Significance*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1962, p. 140. A different thing is, however, the pathological neurotic guilt: “[...] the idea that every sin has to be paid for is rooted in the Super-ego and not in the adult conscience. The whole idea makes the relation between God and man a judicial one. It is those people with the idea that our relation to God is judicial who are liable to scruples, or as Miss Petre, the Catholic modernist, called ‘spiritual vermin’. She knows for in her teen-age din had become an obsession and the ‘spiritual vermin’ troubled her badly. Common in those people with the judicial idea of God are the disturbing neurotic character-trends, perfectionism and the restriction of their lives within narrow limits. Motivated by neurotic guilt they are continually finding flaws in themselves, and attaching guilt to perfectly innocent pleasures. One woman was so burdened by these neurotic character trends that she gave up religion, and said the happiest day in her life was the day she dropped her religion altogether. It is these immature ideas of God, and not the mature religious sentiment that is responsible for these obsessions and character-trends” (John McKenzie, *Guilt*, p. 143). H. R. Mackintosh seems to agree: “The psychological fact that in repenting the best Christians ask pardon, not only for what they have done, but even more for what they are, signifies the truth that “sin” is predictable, strictly and in the ultimate sense, of the *self* rather than isolated acts. *We are sinful*” (*The Forgiveness of Sins*, London: Nisbet, p. 62).

Nonetheless, it is without doubt that the concept of religious Atonement “has brought peace to many a guilt-burdened soul”⁴. Some kinds of penance are good for the spirit, as psychoanalysts and theologians say. Even in literature, confession is a primary way to expiate guilt, as the Ancient Mariner and many other characters well know.

It is not a coincidence that all major religions encourage sinners to confess or pay penance. According to Coleman, some religions tend to make confession less painful as possible by separating it from the crime: “The Catholic penitent, for example, is allowed to make his peace directly with God, thereby avoiding the embarrassment of having to make reparation directly to the individual who has been offended or harmed”⁵. This is what happens in Judaism instead. For the Jews atonement means making amends, paying one’s bills, and offering clarification to people towards whom we are in debt. This is the definition of Atonement (Heb. *kippurim*, from the verb כָּפַר), given by the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*:

The English word atonement (“at-one-ment”) significantly conveys the underlying Judaic concept of atonement, i.e., reconciliation with God. Both the Bible and rabbinical theology reflect the belief that as God is holy, man must be pure in order to remain in communion with Him. Sin and defilement damage the relationship between creature and Creator, and the process of atonement – through repentance and reparation – restores this relationship⁶.

Once again the concept of wholeness reappears. Interestingly enough, one of the words used when speaking of atonement in Hebrew is *Teshuva*: it can be used to mean “repentance”, “atoning for sins”, but the literal meaning is “going back”, “return” – to home, to the origins, to God. Redemption is something that can be acknowledged and paid for, and after that it is possible to go back home. In this perspective, Cain’s alienation could mean a simple alienation from a tribe after having committed a crime that broke the moral and social rules of the community. After his separation from the original nucleus, Cain was able to found another city somewhere else, to be reconciled with the divinity, or simply allowed to build a new

⁴ John McKenzie, *Guilt*, p. 8.

⁵ Vernon Coleman, *Guilt. Why it happens and how to overcome it*, London: Sheldon Press, 1982, p. 3.

⁶ Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 2, p. 644.

family in a place far from the one stained by his mistake. One might wonder if founding another city means going home, or if, on the contrary, it means being alienated from home forever. However one wants to interpret it, the Judaic sense of guilt implies that punishment, or just its burden, is not eternal, that it can be overcome if one reunifies oneself with others and God: at-onement. Also, one must consider that in Judaism there is no cosmic expiation, as it has been generated by Christianity; there is no Messianic age, no harmony to be reached. One should do *teshuvah* everyday, but especially on the eve of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (September-October), a day of fasting at the beginning of the new year⁷.

Early Judaism, as well as Christianity and Islam, based atonement on ritual sacrifices. In the Bible, sacrificial rite is the basic meaning of atonement, necessary “to purify man from both sin and uncleanness” (Lev. 5)⁸. Personal purification, however, was necessary in order to accomplish the rite effectively. Fasting and prayer are also considered means of atonement. The destruction of the Temple and the consequent stop to sacrifices saw a significant change, as the words of the rabbis of the time testify: “Prayer, repentance, and charity avert the evil decree” (TJ, Ta’an. 2:1, 65b). This new phase is characterized by new attention to other patterns of atonement: suffering, the destruction of the Temple itself, the Day of Atonement, exile – Cain’s legacy – and even death can be the final atonement for one’s sins: “May my death be an expiation for all my sins” is a formula recited when death is near (Sanh. 6:2). Rabbis tended to deritualize atonement, paying more attention to personal religious life and the individual’s relationship to God – in short, in this respect Judaism has somehow gotten closer to Christianity.

⁷ See Rabbenu Yonah of Gerona, *Gates of Repentance*, one of the main works on Jewish ethics, published in 1505. Here the many ways in which one can atone for one’s sins are listed as follows: acknowledging the sin; forsaking the sin; worrying about the consequences of the sin; acting and speaking with humility; acting in a way opposite to that of the sin; understanding the degree of the sin; refraining from smaller sins in order to safeguard oneself against committing greater sins; confessing the sin; praying for atonement; correcting the sin however possible; pursuing works of truth; remembering the sin for the rest of one’s life; refraining from committing the same; teaching others not to sin. For more on the Day of Atonement and Kippur, see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 12, pp. 180-183. It is interesting, however, to add an interpretation of the Day of Atonement made by Paul Tournier: “This ritual implies the idea of men’s solidarity in guilt. In order to feel at ease and reconciled with God, the individual not only needs to be cleansed from his own personal sins, but to live in a social setting which is purified, where the danger of passive contamination from evil is warded off” (*Grace and Guilt*, p. 177).

⁸ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 2, p. 644.

Apart from the parenthesis of orthodox Calvinism's belief that salvation depends on God's will only – somehow similar to the theory of atonement in Islam – Christianity has developed complex structures and ways of expiation, although, ultimately, the mercy of God continues to play a major role.

Separation is a central point when considering sin. Sin, or guilt, alienates man from truth, from wholeness, from good. Sin also separates man from God; it costs spiritual and physical death – following spiritual and physical alienation. Let us not forget that Cain wanders alone, banned, far from everyone. Although the Bible's Cain is depicted with no explicit sense of guilt, but rather with a heavy sense of having committed a crime⁹, his attitude is a perfect paradigmatic representation of the state of mind of a guilt-ridden individual. Future literature, as we are going to discover, will use his image for infinite distressed characters and paradigmatic atoning journeys.

Guilt feelings “can produce a horrific sense of alienation from one's self, from one's family and from God”¹⁰. If Judaism is the religion of the Father, Christianity is the religion of the Son; and since the Son serves as scapegoat for humanity, reconciliation is possible for the reconstitution of the original familiar harmony. As McKenzie suggests, to ask for forgiveness is not merely to ask for pardon, but also to recompose the “undisturbed relation with the loved object, in this case God. It is to seek change in the governing principle of our personality; it is to seek freedom from our Ego-centricity and to become centred in God”, just as Saint Paul desired¹¹. To be

⁹ The discussion on the different possible interpretations, theological and not, of Cain's attitude about his guilt is endless. Among the studies on the topic are: James George Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament. Studies in Comparative Religion Legend and Law*, 3 vols., London: MacMillan, 1918; Mayer I. Gruber, “The Tragedy of Cain and Abel: A Case of Depression”, in *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, vol. 69, no. 2, October 1978, pp. 89-97; S. H. Hooke, “Cain and Abel”, *Folklore*, vol. 50, no. 1, March 1939, pp. 58-65; G. D. Hornblower, “Cain and Abel: The Choice of Kind of Sacrifice”, in *Man*, vol. 44, March - April 1944, pp. 45-46; Pearl F. Braude, “Cokkel in oure Clene Corn”: Some Implications of Cain's Sacrifice”, in *Gesta*, vol. 7, 1968, pp. 15-28; T. A. Perry, “Cain's Sin in Gen. 4:1-7: Oracular Ambiguity and How to Avoid It”, in *Prooftexts*, no. 25, 2005, pp. 258-275; George M. Shulman, “The Myth of Cain: Fratricide, City Building, and Politics”, in *Political Theory*, vol. 14, no. 2, May 1986, pp. 215-238; Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Changes of Cain: Violence and the Lost Brother in Cain and Abel Literature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991; Ruth Mellinkoff, *The Mark Of Cain*, Berkley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1981; Martin Buber, *Good and Evil; Two Interpretations*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953; Véronique Léonard-Roques, *Cain, figure de la modernité*, Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2003, and *Cain et Abel. Rivalité et responsabilité*, Éditions du Rocher, 2007; S. H. Hooke, “Cain and Abel”, *Folklore*, vol. 50, no. 1, March 1939, pp. 58-65.

¹⁰ John McKenzie, *Guilt*, p. 140.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

saved (in fact all Eastern as well as Western religions offer Salvation from the sense of guilt¹²) is to be freed from the burden of guilt, and to be able to say that your beloved is in your possession, and that your beloved possesses you. In religious terms, according to McKenzie, this is “eternal life”¹³. Actually, together with the anxiety or longing for the lost ideal or the lost loved object, typical of all guilt-feeling, sometimes our characters – the whiskey priest of *The Power and the Glory*, soldier Tamura in *Fires on the Plain* – suffer from religious guilt-feelings: “That ruling principle [of such personalities] involves the turning away from God (unbelief), resistance to His love and will (hubris); it puts the ego where God should be at the centre of one’s life; that concupiscence or distorted libido which exploits others for one’s own pleasure or gain”¹⁴.

Christianity invented the Cross, a new human symbol of sacrifice and atonement. “The need to atone for real or supposed guilt is endemic in human nature: the sacrifice of the Cross, which the Church re-presents daily in the celebration of the Eucharist meets a deep emotional need without which full atonement is impossible”¹⁵. Forgiveness is often linked to this image in Western culture.

Also Jung agreed that the Church had provided symbols like Atonement, Baptism, and the doctrine of the sacrament of Repentance and the Confessional, all reconciling systems thanks to which the guilt-feelings are dissipated¹⁶. In the Christian world forgiveness and judgement are transcendental, and therefore transcendental expiatory systems had to be adopted in order to atone. In other cultures, such as the Buddhist one, guilt is more contingent, and so are punishment and hell. The sense of guilt is related to society; it is not perceived as per se with

¹² Paul Tillich supposes that the word “salvation” derives from “salvus”, healing: “In this sense, healing means reuniting that which is estranged, giving a centre to what is split between man and God, man and his world, man and himself” (*Systematic Theology*, London: Nisbet, 1951-1963, vol. 2, pp. 192).

¹³ John McKenzie, *Guilt*, p. 144.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁵ Victor White, “Guilt: Theological and Psychological”, in Philip Mairet (ed.), *Christian Essays in Psychiatry*, London: S.C.M. Press, 1956, p. 176.

¹⁶ Even Freud differentiated Christian and Jewish perspectives on the respective senses of guilt, saying that Christians believe that they are cleansed for the guilt of having killed God because they admit it, whereas the Jews do not (Martin Buber, “Guilt and Guilt Feelings”, p. 378).

ontological essence. Consequently, forgiveness – if there is one and if it is needed – is of society and not of a metaphysical entity¹⁷.

However, not only Christianity has influenced our behaviour towards guilt and, consequently, our imagination about guilt. Tournier, for example, describes the attempt at atonement made by religions as follows:

I am not only speaking of our traditionally Christian western world. Think of the innumerable multitudes of Hindus who plunge into the waters of the Ganges to be washed from their guilt. Think of the votive offerings and the gold-leaf which covers statues of the Buddha. Think of all the penitents and pilgrims of all religions who impose upon themselves sacrifices, ascetic practices, or arduous journeys. They experience the need to pay, to expiate. In a more secular sphere, less aware of its religious significance, think of all the privations and all the acts of charity which so many people impose upon themselves, in order to be pardoned for the more or less unfair privileges which they enjoy¹⁸.

Islam has its atoning patterns too, although they are more ordinary; almost every basic ritual of Islam is a form of repentance and atonement; the five-times a day prayer (in which it is said that sins accumulated in between prayers are forgiven), or fasting can be a form of repentance or erasing of sins.

Atoning seems, therefore, to be good for the soul and the psyche. In contrast with the desire to atone, the so-called “guilty conscience” is the condition of those who experience a “closed guilt”, the impossibility to make amends and free oneself from the despair of guilt. Before Dostoevsky and Kafka, many myths, as Ricoeur points out, have expressed the “paradoxical coincidence of reiteration and absence of result”¹⁹: Sisyphus, or the Danaides, for example. A guilty conscience feels the guilt of all people on his or her shoulders, isolated in the burden of evil that he or she has decided to bear:

¹⁷ With regards to this topic, see the concept of *amae*, a word coined by Doi Takeo in *The Anatomy of Dependence* (1971). *Amae* refers to the typical Japanese need to have others' favor and consequently to be able to depend on the people around oneself.

¹⁸ Paul Tournier, *Grace and Guilt*, pp. 174-175.

¹⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Finitudine e colpa*, p. 403.

La coscienza colpevole è chiusa ancor più segretamente per un oscuro compiacimento del suo male; perché si fa carnefice di se stessa. In questo senso la coscienza colpevole è schiava, e non è soltanto coscienza di schiavitù; è la coscienza senza “promessa”. Qui s’annuncia ciò che Kierkegaard chiamerà il peccato di disperazione; non la disperazione interna al mondo, che è il rimpianto delle cose perdute, volta all’avvenire, ma la disperazione di essere salvati. È il peccato del peccato: non più trasgressione, ma volontà disperante e disperata di chiudersi nel cerchio del divieto e del desiderio. Proprio in questo senso essa è desiderio di morte. E che questo desiderio di morte coincida con la buona volontà è quanto la coscienza poteva scoprire non seguendo l’ordine progressivo dall’impurità al peccato e dal peccato alla colpevolezza, bensì solo risalendo dalla “giustificazione per mezzo della fede” alla maledizione della legge²⁰.

The psychologies of self-accusation, of narcissism and of masochism are somehow related to these complex concepts. This is why the more serious the punishment, the more we feel relieved, as our characters sometimes express. When we feel that we “deserve” more pain and that we have not paid enough when considering our sense of guilt, than the “cost” becomes morbid self-punishment.

Psychology and religion use their “theories” of atonement in order to heal the patient, each of them with their methods. Both of them are concerned with “making modern man whole”, as we have seen; and integrity cannot be reached without the dissipation of the sense of guilt. The role of religions, both when they “save” souls or when they burden them, is of primary importance when considering the ways in which we as Western men and women are used to make amends for our shortcomings and mistakes. As Cain’s figure showed in the Bible, one of the “classic” ways in which one expects to be punished is banishment. Wandering, in both Western and Eastern imagination, is one of the privileged ways through which man can think of being purified: a way that is inflicted upon oneself, and that is self-inflicted.

All our characters are internally split: salvation could be reached if only this inner separation is solved; sometimes God is the external referent for the attempt at

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 403-404.

reunification with one's balance; sometimes it is the lost father, sometimes the lost self, sometimes the lost homeland. In any case, the eternal life they are looking for is hard to achieve, or not even desired to be achieved, once the world has failed to fulfil its harmonic promises. Just like neurotics overwhelmingly feel the separation from the loved object and start to believe that they have committed the "unforgivable sin", so the protagonists of our novels somehow feel that there is no hope for them, no possibility of reunion, especially when religion has become just an empty involucrum of images and nothing else, as in *Fires on the Plain*; otherwise, when religion is still felt as a positive restoring entity, the illusion of atonement can still be possible, as in *The Power and the Glory*. Hubris and resistance to what can appear as nonsensical powers – both religious and political – fail, and the result seems to be resigned unhappiness.

2.2 Pilgrimages, Wandering Jews and Other Progresses

After all, when we experience guilt-feeling, it is not for what we have done but for what we are. When we pray for forgiveness it is not simply that we think of particular sins we have committed and seek pardon for them: we seek forgiveness as selves [...] forgiveness is not merely a pardon of sins, but a restoration of the interpersonal relationships which our sins disturbed. Our sins cannot be undone; the physical and psychological effects of these sins, it maybe impossible to remove. But the soul maybe restored, the burden of guilt lifted, and an end made to the estrangement and alienation²¹.

Guilt brings estrangement and alienation from God, from the people we love, and, more in general, from the world we inhabit. Hubris, the resistance to God's love and will, can be the counterpart of the anxiety which accompanies the exclusion from human society. We have seen how in the Judaic tradition there is no word for repenting; instead, the word for "return", "going back" is used. In effect, wandering is the result, and the symbol for the banishment from one's affective reality; thus, wandering is what starts from an uncertain affective reality and never arrives

²¹ John McKenzie, *Guilt*, p. 140.

anywhere. Wandering is a purposeless straying away from certainty, love, and goals. In different traditions, wandering can be represented as punishment, or self-punishment, or just as restlessness of the spirit. In any case, wandering is often associated with guilt; however, it brings also the concept of freedom with it. There is a connection between freedom and guilt; freedom makes us feel guilty because it puts before our eyes and our conscience our responsibilities and free will. This is why wandering, implying freedom, is the perfect state of being to wallow under one's own guilt. Ann Gelder explains the fall of man in terms of both punishment, and freedom:

“Wandering” embodies the paradox of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Because Adam and Eve, by eating the forbidden fruit, have wandered from the path God has set out for them, He causes them to wander from Eden into an unknown world. Wandering is a punishment of exile, which shows that one cannot stray too far from the will of one’s creator. It also implies, however, that the man and woman may now choose their own path, either to life (salvation) or to death (eternal punishment, eternal wandering). The Fall gives a new dignity to human beings in this freedom of choice: one may assert one’s will by choosing the forbidden fruit, knowing that this indulgence leads to death; or one may reject the desire for that which one cannot have, and by this sacrifice, survive²².

The Tree of Knowledge is a symbol of man’s free will, and also, perhaps, of his recognition his true nature, his sensitivity and his sensibility. However, the image of the wilderness is from time immemorial the symbol of abandonment and solitude:

To wander in the wilderness has always been an awesome image; yet such exile is basic to the myth of Western man since the Fall, that rupture of an initial bond and harmony which is analogous to a loss of paradise and birth into earth’s difficult separations and struggles. Exile is an archetypal image of the

²² Ann Gelder, “Wandering in Exile: Byron and Pushkin”, in *Comparative Literature*, vol. 42, no. 4, autumn 1990, p. 319.

painful stimulus that forces individuals to seek for return and atonement with the transpersonal²³.

The wilderness can be consciously entered, according to Brinton Perera, by a shaman or a healer: in this case the wilderness would transmit vitality, power and authority, and the healer is used by the community as a courier of enrichment for the collective (this can be the case of the encounter of Satan by Jesus, for example). But when the wilderness is “entered unwillingly as a condemned alien, like Cain or Ishmael, or the scapegoat, the desert is a curse”²⁴.

This fact is extremely important in this study. What is the relationship of our characters with some sort of “wilderness” – be it a Mexican volcanic landscape, or wasted villages, an invaded island in the Pacific or the eternal, but nonetheless alien city? In our novels, as we shall see, the characters respond to different kinds of wastelands and senses of guilt. “Wasteland” is, in fact, very similar to the general idea of wilderness: “The wilderness is similar to the wasteland in its implication of aridity. In the wilderness there can be only a distorted relationship, if any at all, to inner creative flow”²⁵. Our characters are not artists; but the artistic outcome of their experience – the books we are reading – somehow reflects this confused creative act, as though the writer reproduced this confusion when portraying their experiences. The narrative flow is somehow disturbed by an incoherent cohesion that well depicts the alienated status of the characters. As a matter of fact, in different styles the consciences of the characters appear distorted and confused, although masterly regulated in complex forms by their creators.

In any case, exile or self-exile is marked by a growing sense of becoming more conscious of oneself. The exiled is an individual who is eager of knowledge, just like Adam:

Their exile is marked by an intense hunger for connection with both personal and transpersonal Other, even a palpable appetite for the divine. Yet it is also marked by a profound fear of all connection. This keeps the appetite

²³ Sylvia Brinton Perera, *The Scapegoat Complex. Toward a Mythology of Shadow and Guilt*, Toronto: Inner City Books, 1986, p. 26.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

intensely and torturously alive. They are filled with the craving to belong to a stable, predictable, containing reality [...]. Instead, they live with an omnipresent sense of danger and an awareness of the shadow that others around them do not wish to see. They may even long for death as an end to their sense of exile, or have a strong sense they should never have been born²⁶.

These are undeniably all characteristics of the protagonists of the novels we are dealing with in this study: paradoxical love-hate relationships with others; fear of the outer world and of its inhabitants; fear of one's own individuality, of rejection but also of self-rejection – particularly typical of our age –; anxiety about the people they love or should love; desire for death as an end to a purposeless wandering existence. They are shadowy figures in their shadowy reality filled with ghosts created by their sense of guilt. The psychology of self-accusation, of narcissism and of masochism is related to this:

Exile from the original nurturing container, concretized in the family collective, is a commonplace in our age.

Such consciousness can only be served individually. Each person destined to become a conscious individual by virtue of exile from the collective comes to a particular view and relation to this consciousness – one fostered in part through one's own life wounds and particular kind of exile. Those who come to this awareness are builders of a new temple and a new kingdom²⁷.

This is Cain's pattern: consciousness leads to maturity, and therefore to a new beginning. The interlude is wandering through the wilderness or through a wasteland. If the journey is stopped and atonement – or self-consciousness – is not achieved, either the wandering becomes endless, or it leads to death.

We have already seen how the Hebrew tradition associates the concept of going back with that of atonement. However, the Old Testament portrayed another concept that describes another important aspect of human social life, also destined to represent common patterns of social and psychological behaviour: the scapegoat.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 105. Brinton Perera refers here to the work of Edward F. Edinger, *The Creation of Consciousness: Jung's Myth for Modern Man* (1984).

Originally, the scapegoat was a human or animal victim chosen to be sacrificed to the gods in order to soothe the gods' anger and to purify the community. The original scapegoat sacrifice is described in Leviticus 16. It was the central part of the Yom Kippur ritual, and it is interesting to note that the Hebrew word for atonement, *kipper*, is related to *kippurim*, that means "eliminary procedures"; etymological correspondences can be found also in Arabic and Babylonian²⁸. The Mosaic Law says that there must be two scapegoats, one sacrificed to the Lord, the other to be sent away into the wilderness, the place where evil spirits and the devil himself reign. In the original rite the first goat is dedicated to Yahweh in order to atone for the "uncleanness of the sons of Israel, for their transgressions and for all their sins" through the gushing of its blood (Leviticus 16:16). The other one is the "expelled" or "escaped" goat, dedicated to Azazel, the chthonic god who was later considered a fallen angel. This goat is kept alive but sent out into the wilderness: "and the goat will bear all their faults away with it to a desert place" (Leviticus 16:21). It is this latter goat that removes guilt from the community; it bears the sins of all its members and brings them "away from the collective consciousness"²⁹:

Scapegoating, as it is currently practised, means finding the one or ones who can be identified with evil or wrong-doing, blamed for it, and cast out from the community in order to leave the remaining members with a feeling of guiltlessness, atoned (at-one) with the collective standards of behavior. It both allocates blame and serves to "inoculate against future misery and failure" by evicting the presumed cause of misfortune. It gives the illusion that we can be "perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," [Matthew 5:48], if we take the proper prophylactic measures, do the right things³⁰.

Salvation by substitution seems to be a virtually universal practice. People appreciate that someone dies in defence of an innocent, as they do when a parent dies for the children or when soldiers die for their country. It is a process at the end of

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11. In the Babylonian tradition there was a rite on the fifth day of the New Year festival that was called *kuppuru* ("to purge or wipe away"), and involved acts of purification and confession, as well as human sacrifice; in an Arabic derivation instead it means "to cover", perhaps meaning covering guilt by means of reparation.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

which the scapegoater feels relieved and freed from a heavy burden, while the scapegoat feels rejected and guilty. The pattern can be found also in other rituals and legends, for instance in the image of the dying and reborn god, which, according to Brinton Perera, was originally the consort of the loathsome and beautiful Great Goddess present in the Vedic, Middle Eastern, African and European mythologies; the reborn Divine Child, Savior and New King, symbols of prosperity and joy, are opposed to the “dark” figures not only of the Scapegoat but also of the Dying God, the Underworld Twin, the Old Year or Fool’s King³¹. Just as with Cain, the evil part of society is taken outside the “pure” region that aspires to cleanness and order:

The scapegoat phenomenon is a particular expression, along with Cain, Ishmael, Satan, witch-hunting, minority persecution and war, of the general problem of shadow projection. It is, as we know from anthropological data, an almost universal phenomenon. In cultures where conscious connection to the transpersonal source has not been lost, the one identified with the scapegoat serves the community by returning evil to its archetypal source through sacrifice, carrying back to the gods a burden too great for the human collective to bear. In Western culture, those who suffer identification with the archetype share the burden of the central divinity of our eon, for the archetype of the Messiah as Suffering Servant is at the core of the Western psyche. We all feel its power and share its effects to some extent³².

In the novels we are approaching in this study, the sense of guilt is, however, not always so definite. The feeling of being a scapegoat is often evident and heavily felt, but at the same time the difference between who has loaded a guilt on someone else’s shoulders and who has taken it over is elusive and nuanced. It seems that the characters have no control over society and their destiny; far from any definitive axiological division between good and evil, innocence and guilt, they suffer from the consequent absence of any certainty about their psychological situations, and, therefore so does the reader who has no univocal moral identity associated with a character.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 98.

One could advance that in twentieth-century literature characters lean toward self-expulsion from human society in an attempt at self-blaming and self-scapegoating. They expel themselves from society, dealing with the material repressed by the culture in which they have grown. This is what in psychology is called “the scapegoat complex”: “Individuals caught in the scapegoat complex tend to identify with their weakness and inferiority. They fall victim to the collective shadow, to which they offer themselves with Christ-like atonement. Or they identify with the overburdened Suffering Servant”³³. Among the characters of our novels, for example, we will see how this is especially the case of the whiskey priest in Graham Greene’s *The Power and the Glory*. The psychologist Jerome Kagan associates with the West the necessity to believe that “catastrophe can be averted by the appropriate prophylactic action, whether it be baptism or breast feeding”³⁴. Psychology and religion are again intertwined. He justifies this connection with the common belief that there is a worldwide desire to avert catastrophe on the basis of religious and magic rituals. However, as for the scapegoat ritual, the original meaning has been forgotten, and it remains unconscious in layers of recurrent habits and hidden knowledge. Men and characters too may be associated with that original symbol of purification:

To scapegoat-identified individuals, the wilderness is an image expressing their existential experience of profound alienation and exile. It is the world of their own perceived reality that encompasses them, for they feel anomalous, outside the collective borders, beyond acceptance. Without a supportive internal figure, they are cut off from transpersonal and collective sustenance unless they are temporarily identified with an acceptable persona role. The wilderness thus seems an arid and overpoweringly immense wasteland, a place of dazed confusion and misery.

Psychologically for these individuals, the wilderness is analogous to their sense of paralyzed apathy, meaninglessness and abandonment-panic. It mirrors the pain of their never-belonging, of homelessness, of living in hiding. They feel seen when this is interpreted as a sense of living in hell or in the underworld all their life, for they have experienced no internal safety and no

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

³⁴ Jerome Kagan, “The Parental Love Trap”, in *Psychology Today*, August 1978, p. 54.

outer holding. It is paradoxically also the place of their eventual reunion with the hidden individual Self³⁵.

As we will see, Koeppen's *Der Tod in Rom* has a physical underworld, and the main character has a family, but he wants it to be removed. In every novel discussed here, in addition, the reunion with the self, with one's own inner world, is always troublesome. From a Jungian point of view, scapegoating is a way of denying the shadow of both man and God³⁶: what is not considered good enough for the ego's ideal or for God's perfection is repressed or denied and rendered unconscious. Today, the confession of these impulses is not explicit and overtly atoning as it was with the ancient Hebrew ritual; self-confession and recognition of the self become particularly intriguing topics of twentieth-century literature. According to Brinton Perera, in the process of healing the scapegoat complex the descent to the wilderness or underworld – a numbing depression – is necessary, where the “underlying confusion, despair, loneliness, fear and rage are met and suffered”³⁷. We can compare this experience to the wandering parts of our novels, in which the characters are wallowing under their pain and spleen.

Furthermore, the wandering of the characters through the wasteland is always accompanied by a pursuer antagonist: “Omnipresent in the wilderness is the accusing scapegoater”³⁸, explains Brinton Perera. The whisky priest has the lieutenant; the Consul of *Under the Volcano* has his “friends” trying to rescue him; *Der Tod in Rom* has fathers and sons avoiding each other; and in *Fires on the Plain* soldier Tamura has his foreign and local enemies. Also the relation with their inner thoughts is inadequate and conflictual, much like the relation with the external one.

At this point, it might be interesting to find a relation between the general idea of travelling and the characteristic features of guilt and its correlatives. For instance, we could consider an important and traditionally unequivocal trait of the journey: historically and mythically the journey has often been thought of as circular. The Middle English word, *journey*, and the old French *journee*, derive from Latin *diurnus*, “belonging” or “lasting for a day”. Journey, therefore, implied return:

³⁵ Sylvia Brinton Perera, *The Scapegoat Complex*, p. 26.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

Mythologically speaking, the place of dwelling emerges at the end of an arduous journey [...]. The return to dwelling is also seen as a fulfilment of the purpose of the gods. It is not enough for the journeyer to meet the gods or an oracle, or have some transcendent experience in the process of his or her journey. The journeyer must also return with the revelation that he or she has discovered. The ultimate end of journeying is the health of the community. Just as the journey presents the childhood dwelling to the deity, so also, “The homeward journey presents the sacred place and the deity to the city. The entire journey connects the human and the divine realms [...]”³⁹.

For Heidegger and Jager – who analyzed the etymology of the words *building* and *dwelling* – described how historical and mythical traditions informed these words: “The building of a dwelling by the adult dweller points to the embodiment of a world [...]”. Building and dwelling are processes. At the end of his or her journey, “The weary adventurer is transformed into the builder, the defender, the cultivator [...]”⁴⁰. From these things comes the naissance of a new kingdom, with new values, erasing the old collective ones.

What if Cain had to travel in order to grow older enough to be a sojourner again, to be mature enough to be father and founder of the first city, after having wandered through his self? In any case, the protagonists of our novels would not found any city or even another substitutive consortium; this pattern is true of legends and religions, but not of literature – at least, the literature we are treating here.

In these novels, wandering originates not only from the lack of a goal but also of an origin. “A man can complete a fruitful journey only if he can start out from a solid base within the fullness and generosity of those who love him. Without origin the journey falls apart and becomes chaotic wandering. The journey is structured from its origin; every step sends its echoes home”⁴¹. We are going to see in the next chapter how Graham Greene would be the representative, in this study, of a prototype: “The ancient prototype of the journeyer, not only in Western culture but in

³⁹ Thomas Wm. Hill, *Graham Greene's Wanderers: The Search for Dwelling: Journeying and Wandering in the Novels of Graham Greene*, San Francisco-London-Bethesda: International Scholars Publications, 1999, p. 6.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

native American and Asian cultures as well, is one who is sent out as a representative of some community in search of the gods, an oracle, or a transcendent experience”⁴².

Out of the community, the wanderer incarnates the character of the troubled spirit. Psychologists have explicitly associated the act of wandering with a state of depression, in particular the one resulting from a traumatic experience such as the death of a loved one, the experience of some great tragedy, etc. In this case, it can be recognized as an aimless, repetitive locomotion, which, in psychological terminology, is a manifestation of the so-called “psychomotor agitation”. Michael Barré confirms that: “Not only is the behavior in question well documented as a symptom of depression, but it has become a *topos* in the literature of many cultures past and present”⁴³. In his studies, he aims to demonstrate how widespread this pattern is culturally, geographically, and temporally, with special focus on ancient Israel, but also on the Far East of the third century A.D. (in particular the Chinese poet Pan Yue, 247-300 A.D.), and on modern American cinema (the filmic version of a work by the American novelist Carson McCullers, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Boston, 1940), retracing the pattern also in Sumerian Literature, with its city-goddess, and in Akkadian literature with the Epic of Gilgamesh⁴⁴. We must not forget, in addition, the copious presence of the wandering giant in literature⁴⁵.

Cain is obviously the traditional epitome of the pattern of wandering caused by guilt:

Cain is a human being who places himself outside of human and divine laws, who as a result of his wicked deed has become a vagrant and a fugitive.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴³ Michael L. Barré, “‘Wandering about’ as a Topos of Depression in Ancient Near Eastern Literature and in the Bible”, in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 60, no. 3, July 2001, p. 177. He also quotes some definitions given by psychiatric handbooks: the following describes the various behavioral features characteristic of a “major depressive episode”: “Psychomotor changes include agitation (e.g., inability to sit still, pacing...) or retardation (e.g., slowed speed, thinking, and body movements...)” (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th ed. [Washington, 2000], p. 350). The same observation can be found in A. C. Carr, “Grief, Mourning, and Bereavement”, in H. I. Kaplan and B. J. Saddock (eds.), *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*, 6th ed., Baltimore and London, 1995, vol. 2, p. 1288: “[In a state of depression] the person may show [...] either psychomotor retardation or psychomotor agitation” (*ibid.*, n. 3).

⁴⁴ Michael L. Barré, “‘Wandering about’ as a Topos...”, pp. 177-178. For more examples in other biblical texts, see John S. Kselman, “‘Wandering about’ and Depression: More Examples”, in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 61, no. 4, October 2002, p. 275.

⁴⁵ See D. D. R. Owen, *The Wandering Giant in Literature: From Polyphemus to Papageno*, East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2003.

Even Cain is in a certain sense a Buttadeus, who in his brother Abel has struck God himself. Despite all that, Cain also has some positive features: as a farmer and a founder of cities, he is an actual carrier of culture. In the Apocalypse of Moses, he is referred to as *Adiophotos*, “the one without light,” “the dark one,” but at the same time as *Diaphotos*, “the enlightened.” In the apocryphal book *The Life of Adam and Eve*, Cain is referred to as the “son with light”. According to a Midrash, the mark of Cain did not consist of a flaming sign but a horn (midrash Ber. Rabba 22,11). The horned Cain thereby takes on a sunlike quality⁴⁶.

Cain’s wandering is interpreted both as punishment and as expiation, according to different exegesis and interpretations. For Isaac-Edersheim, Cain’s story refers to the archaic taboo of murdering: “in the biblical narrative, morality and the sense of the sacredness of human life determine deed and punishment, we may assume that the theme of Cain’s wandering goes back to the ancient taboo of the murderer. In this context, the mark on Cain’s forehead might have been a warning, a sign that an untouchable was approaching who, according to the very meaning of the world, could not be killed”⁴⁷.

In this sense, Cain’s sign is one for protection and not for punishment, although the question of its meaning is widely debated⁴⁸. The further development of this thought, he continues, is the idea of Cain’s immortality: if no man is allowed to kill Cain, he must, therefore, live forever – the Wandering Jew, Higlander, is “the cursed one, whose restlessness, like Cain’s, is eternal”; he can neither die nor be killed⁴⁹. He continues:

⁴⁶ Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes, *The Wandering Jew. Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986, p. 219.

⁴⁷ E. Isaac-Edersheim, “Ahasver. A Mythic Image of the Jew”, in Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes (eds.), *The Wandering Jew. Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986, p. 201.

⁴⁸ On the different interpretations and the possible characteristics of Cain’s mark, see Ruth Mellinkoff, *The Mark Of Cain*, Berkley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1981. James George Frazer (*Folklore in the Old Testament. Studies in Comparative Religion Legend and Law*, 3 vols., London: MacMillan, 1918) considers: “Thus the mark of Cain may have been a mode of disguising a homicide or of rendering him so repulsive or formidable in appearance that his victim’s ghost would either not know him or at least give him a wide berth”.

⁴⁹ E. Isaac-Edersheim, “Ahasver”, p. 201.

The ostracism, which was once considered as an actual protection, became a moral punishment. There, of course, different psychological motives and factors of development began to merge. It was primarily a different attitude toward murder in general.... Moreover, there was the added problem of death. In the past, as today, everyone faced death with diverging feelings. On the one end, immortality was a desideratum, a reward, as revealed by the story of the Apostle John; on the other hand, it became a curse, as in the case of Cain and Ahasver. [...] It is thus all the more understandable that the reward was transferred to heaven, whereas immortality on earth became a punishment. All things considered, it must be a consolation to be able to project to the outside world thoughts about dying and death, thoughts of murder, whether repressed or not, thoughts about immortality and eternity, and thereby make the attempt to come to terms with them⁵⁰.

Cain's pattern is, as I believe, a universal paradigm, an archetypal motif, present in Sumerian-Babylonian mythology, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In Buddhism, it is Pindola who is sentenced to eternal life because of his disobedience against Buddha and wanders forever because he has been denied the entrance to Nirvana. There is also a Sufi tale which resembles the one of Cain, "the Wayward Princess". It tells the story of a princess who dissents from the idea that the father's will and opinions can determine her destiny and is imprisoned because of her rebellion. At the end, the king, grown impatient by her obstinacy, says: "Your continued defiance [...] will only annoy me further, and seem to weaken my rights, if you stay within my realms. I could kill you; but I am merciful. I therefore banish you into the wilderness adjoining my territory. This is a wilderness, inhabited only by wild beasts and such eccentric outcasts who cannot survive in our rational society. There you will soon discover whether you can have an experience apart from that of your family; and, if you can, whether you prefer it to ours". In the wilderness the princess starts loving the things of nature, a life "whose elements belong together", and eventually meets a lost traveller, who falls in love with her and who takes her back to his own country. Just like Cain, after a while the two decide to return to the wilderness, where they build a prosperous city with their wisdom, resources and faith.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

A similar figure is also mentioned in Islamic texts: it is al-Samiri, the one who leads the people astray⁵¹. According to the twentieth sura of the *Koran*, he is cursed by Moses upon his return from Mount Sinai because, during Moses' absence, he made the golden calf – an act which the Bible assigns to Aaron. Since that time, he wanders lonely and abandoned until the end of his life. Arabic legends also tell about Zerib, a grandson of Elijah, who must wait on God's command until the return of Christ. Another character seems to bear the destiny of eternal wanderer, a servant boy who accompanies Moses in search for Khidr in his his years-long travels, briefly mentioned in the Quran but mostly in *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad): "I will not give up (travelling) until I reach the junction of the two seas or (until) I spend years and years in travelling" (60); "Bring us our morning meal; truly, we have suffered much fatigue in this, our journey" (62). After Moses, he learns that he is not the most knowledgeable man as he had claimed to be. Moses is told that he will find Khidr at the junction of the two seas; when he asks Allah how he will find him, he is told to put a fish in a basket and the place at which they lose the fish is where they will find him – so when he asks his servant boy to bring him the meal, the boy realizes that they lost the fish at some point so they backtrack and find Khidr at the place they lose the fish. Therefore, Moses asks Khidr to impart the knowledge that he does not know and Khidr tells him: "you will not be patient nor will you understand" and Moses promises to not ask questions until things are explained to him; but he disturbs him so much that he has to infringe the oath not to ask questions. In doing so, he brings Moses to his theophany, to the revelation of himself, of his eternal part. It is said that he lives and wanders the earth, having taught each prophet except the Prophet Muhammad.

Ancient Greece had another kind of wandering characters marked by a diverse kind of journey. This journey is exemplified by Odysseus's poignant statement to Eumaeus in the *Odyssey*: "for mortals, nothing is worse than wandering" (15.343). The choice of the middle-passive voice of the words used for wandering emphasizes, according to Silvia Montiglio, the fundamental passivity of the wanderer in Greek thought; taking into account Plato's theory of wandering in the *Timaeus* and other narratives of beginnings, she concludes that the progress of the cosmos from

⁵¹ S. Hurwitz, "Ahasver, The Eternal Wanderer. Psychological Aspects", in Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes (eds.), *The Wandering Jew*, p. 222.

wandering to stability is associated with the progress of the individual⁵². Wandering has been associated with the amorphous beginnings of the cosmos but also with the world of matter. The materialistic Democritus shared a similar notion, and so do myth and historiography:

Wandering, the liminal condition, is systematically removed by growth and progress. Whether it be in biology, history, or geology, progress equals sedentariness, agglomeration, and fixity; whereas wandering defines the physical or social organism when still in the making and/or disjointed. Wandering marks cultural, biological, and geological protohistory⁵³.

Odysseus is the exemplum of the Greek wanderer. After him, Ionian scholars started to consider roaming in every direction in the pursuit of knowledge as a good thing, and consequently the term *planē*, which formerly had only the negative meaning of “being driven astray”, acquires positive connotations that reflect the shift in perception of the act of wandering. Herodotus explicitly elects Odysseus as a role model. The figure was the starting point for a change in philosophical attitude towards wandering. The idea of philosophical journey was later expanded by Plato, moving from a Parmenidean notion: to the concept of journey of knowledge as a straight movement toward the truth is added another meaning, that is, the perception of wandering as the unsettling movement initiating the philosophical adventure. If for Parmenides the philosopher – like himself – travels in a straight line, for Plato any traveler is at the mercy of the wind⁵⁴.

There is an obvious difference between this kind of approach and the Christian one. For Neoplatonist and Cynic ascetics wandering was primarily a manifestation of the human condition, whereas for Christians it is the *peregrinatio*, wandering as a holy step toward the heavenly peace: “to wander means to renounce this world and one’s earthly self in the expectation of the Kingdom of God”⁵⁵. In this sense, wandering starts again to possess transcendental significance, to be part of atonement

⁵² See Silvia Montiglio, *Wandering in Ancient Greek Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

in order to attain forgiveness. The terms “peregrine” and “pilgrimage” derive from the Latin *peregrinus* (*per* and *ager*, fields), and indicated the one who did not reside in town; therefore, it denoted the foreigner impelled to live out of the rich urban area⁵⁶. After the publication of the *Vulgata* (the Latin translation of the Bible from the old Greek and Hebrew versions by St. Girolamus), and on the wake of the authors of the New Testament, the early Church Fathers used the word peregrination as a metaphor for life, for the earthly exile to which man is condemned after the Fall⁵⁷. Man is resident in a foreign land, transitory on earth, on his journey toward the heavenly city of Jerusalem, as described in the Book of Revelation and in many other biblical passages. It was not before the fourth century that pilgrimage assumed the meaning of “physical”, “spatial” journey for religious purposes. These purposes were the voluntary parting from the city, assuming inner and outer risks and efforts, in a journey to a far sacred place to obtain eternal salvation or forgiveness for mortal sins. At the same time, “[m]uch of this early Christian religious travel focused not on a particular holy place, but rather on travel as a practical way of visiting living and dead holy people, and as a means of religious expression of homelessness and temporal exile”⁵⁸.

Journeying was seen as an imitation of Christ’s life: temporarily terrestrial. The concept of perpetual pilgrimage is present in the writings of the Church Fathers (Augustine, Jerome, Bede), who used it to denigrate spiritual terrestrial wandering in order to confirm the true heavenly home. Physical journey was used as a metaphor for the spiritual journey, a journey that reflected the growth of the traveller, in a sort of *Bildungsreise* for the education of the spirit:

⁵⁶ See Maribel Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims. Ascetic Travel in the Mediterranean World, A.D. 300-800*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005, p. 6, notes 17-18. According to Gillian Clark, in *The City of God* by Augustine the word *peregrinus* should not be translated as “pilgrim” but as “stranger”: “Becoming a *peregrinus* is becoming a stranger or foreigner in your land rather than going on an edifying journey” (n. 18, p. 6). Within Roman law, *peregrini* were the foreigners that were either citizens of a foreign community or not citizens anywhere. See p. 27, n. 61.

⁵⁷ “Monastic travel mirrored an interior journey or quest on both an individual level, the journey of the soul toward God and heavenly Jerusalem, and on the level of the church as a whole, as manifested in Augustine’s notion of the City of God’s journey on Earth” (Maribel Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims*, p. 3).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3. On the themes of Christian exile and wandering, see Gerhart B. Ladner, “*Homo Viator*: Mediaeval Ideas on Alienation and Order”, in *Speculum* 42, no. 2, 1967.

The image conjured by the English word “pilgrimage” is powerful and precise: an organized religious journey to a particular holy place, the purpose of which is to be healed or absolved of sins. A pilgrimage is a temporary journey, always with a definite return, sometimes with souvenirs in tow, and pilgrims are viewed as common folk gathering for a voyage with strangers⁵⁹.

In our novels the attitude is certainly different: there is no consortium, no common aim there; the characters are strangers among strangers, and perhaps they are engaged – with the exception of the whisky priest – in the opposite attempt: the destruction of the community.

For its potential subversive nature, in the middle of the sixth century life outside the habitual constraints of society, in the “semi-liminal” state of this kind of pilgrimage-wandering, was condemned by the *Regula Benedictina*. The *Regula* prescribed stability in a monastery, thus establishing Western monasticism and excluding travel as a possible monastic pursuit⁶⁰. In particular female monastic travel was abruptly ended by the ninth century with the emergence of the cloistered monastic experience for woman⁶¹. As a consequence, Europe saw the emergence of the *gyrovague*, or wandering monk, one of the categories of false monks. It is interesting to note that also in Far Eastern Japan pilgrimage has always played an important role. There were both spiritual, religious pilgrimages, and profane-artistic pilgrimages, as Japan has always stimulated journeys to the special places consecrated by classical poetry (*meisho* 名所), the ones cited in the courtly collections, but also in more mundane works like the kabuki plays. This is a classical kind of journey in Japan, almost literary tourism, whereas the former kind is the *junrei* 巡礼, or *bunken* 文献, or *saikō bunken* 参考文献, the typical pilgrimage to holy places, temples or sanctuaries, in both Shinto and Buddhism.

⁵⁹ Maribel Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims*, p. 27. See the anthropological work of Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

⁶⁰ Maribel Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims*, p. 5. Dietz explains the difference “between monastic travel and pilgrimage – that is to say, goal-centered, religious travel for an efficacious purpose”. She continues: “A close examination of late antique spiritual itinerants provides a clearer and more nuanced account of religious travel. It allows us to consider travel as part of a wandering and ascetic life, either on a voluntary basis or as a religious justification for forced migration. Many of what have been considered attacks on pilgrimage in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages might be better understood as attacks on ascetic or monastic travel” (p. 7).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

In Europe, travelling became, in the meanwhile, easier and more common, but at the same time more dangerous: “the stresses that this shift created caused a deep transformation in attitudes toward travel. Rather than being regarded as a desperate condition, wandering and homelessness could now be infused with meaning, including religious meaning”⁶²:

The difficulties and hardships of the road and the experience of meeting holy people and becoming a “stranger” or *peregrinus* enabled travelers to see a spiritual or religious dimension in their journeying”. Roman matrons, wealthy widows, educated men from the provinces, could all render themselves aliens and outsiders by embarking on a religious voyage and becoming “homeless.” Their travel made them physical embodiments of the Christian as a temporary sojourner in the earthly world⁶³.

Furthermore, Judaism and its scriptural injunction for an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem, one of the roots of Christian pilgrimage, implied that pilgrimage was a communal experience rather than an individual one⁶⁴. Consequently, some “irregular” travellers began to appear: according to the *Regula Magistri* of St. Benedict, the gyrovagues were the worst type of monks because they did not live “under a rule and an abbot” but, like sarabaites, according to their own will.

Travelling people have always been seen as something menacing and dangerous because they are under no control; wandering implies no fixed rules and often lack of balance, both from material and spiritual point of views, as it is evident in our novels. Trapped in half-baked attempts at atonement, all these figures try to make amends, to confess – mostly to themselves – their burdens from a sense of guilt, like ancient mariners. They can be representatives of

[a]n archetypal wanderer who suffers inordinately for a seemingly minor offense against God, man, and nature, the Mariner naturally bears varying degrees of likenesses to several others of the type: Cain, Jonah, Falkenberg, the

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 11. For the *Imitatio Christi* in the late antique East, see Daniel Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002.

⁶³ Maribel Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims*, p. 42.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Flying Dutchman, Christian the Mutineer, the mythical wandering Judas and Pilate, Huon, Peter Wilkins, the hero of John Newton's *The Authentic Narrative*, the Wild Huntsman, Philip Quarll, and many other sailors and wanderers, cursed and blessed immortals, in Christian and Pagan legendary and in romance fiction. But none has had so great an impact upon the characterization of the Mariner, the story, and its meaning as the Wandering Jew⁶⁵.

The Wandering Jew is perhaps the most popular figure connected with the concept of wandering in European cultures. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* describes the Wandering Jew in the following way:

figure in Christian legend condemned to wander by Jesus until his second coming for having rebuffed or struck him on his way to the crucifixion. The story has given rise to a variety of folktales and literature still flourishing into the 20th century. Like the image of the Jew in popular conception, the personality of and tales about the Wandering Jew reflect the beliefs and tastes of the age in which he is described. While in the era of Church dominion he inspires religious horror and exhortations to piety, the character is later used as a vehicle for social satire, and even appears as a tragic figure expressing a spirit of revolt against the Church and the established order. He also appears in his old role as a target for modern antisemitism. The name Wandering Jew has been given to a card game, a game of dice, plants, and birds. The legend has obvious affinities with other tales of eternal wanderers, primarily Cain (with whom the Jewish people as a whole is identified by Christian homilists, beginning with Tertullian (150–230)⁶⁶.

There are two main possible origins of the figure in Western culture. One of the two traditions goes back to John XXI: 22-23, where Jesus says to Peter about John: “‘If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?’ Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die [...]”. The other tradition has its source in John XVIII: 22, where it is related that one of the High Priest's officers beat Jesus with the palm of his hand. An early tradition identified this officer

⁶⁵ O. Bryan Fulmer, “The Ancient Mariner and the Wandering Jew”, in *Studies in Philology*, vol. 66, no. 5, October 1969, pp. 798-799.

⁶⁶ Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, p. 615.

with the servant of the High Priest, mentioned in John XVIII: 10.4 and called Malchus.

From these sources, a legend has developed in many different countries till today. According to one of the many variations, he is not a demonic figure like the Wild Huntsman, or The Flying Dutchman, but a penitent – a characteristic of all the versions of the legend. In any case, origins seem to be found in the Christian Orient, and in two different sources Armenia is also mentioned.

The story of the Wandering Jew appears for the first time in a Latin chronicle, in which the unknown author tells about

some pilgrims who in 1223 arrived in Ferraria in southern Italy in the same year when the Emperor Frederic II held a meeting there, and these pilgrims related that in Armenia they saw a certain Jew who had witnessed the sufferings of Jesus and had driven him on with words: “Go on, you seducer, that you may receive what you merit.” Jesus had answered him: “I will go, but you shall wait till I will come again”⁶⁷.

According to this version, the Wandering Jew lives in Armenia rejuvenating himself every hundred years. Anyway, this version was not published before 1888 and was therefore known only by very few scholars. Another version is the one by the monk Roger of Wendover in St. Albans near London, as it appears in his book *Flores historiorum*, a little later revisited by his younger fellow monk in St. Albans, Matthew of Paris. According to this source, Pontius Pilate’s doorkeeper Cartaphilus struck Jesus on the neck when he was on his way from Pilate’s palace to Golgotha, and he said to him: “Go, Jesus, why do you tarry?” – whereupon Jesus said to him: “I will go, but you shall wait until I will come again”. Since then Cartaphilus cannot die. He soon was aware of what he had done and became a repenting Christian, baptized by the same Ananias who had also baptized Paul. He might now be living a peaceful life somewhere in Armenia under the name of Joseph⁶⁸.

In a 1506 version, instead, the Wandering Jew appears among the Arabs to one Fadhilah (the leader of a troop of horsemen), in the form of a venerable old man,

⁶⁷ Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes (eds.), *The Wandering Jew*, pp. 4-5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5. The story was printed, in its *Latin* origin, for the first time in 1571 in London, and again in 1586 in Zurich.

Bassi Hadhret Issa, who recounted the story of how he has been ordered to continue living in the world until the Day of Judgement⁶⁹.

In Europe the Wandering Jew appeared again in 1547, when he is called for the first time Ahasverus, a name that since then will be incontrovertibly associated with his figure. He was represented mainly like the wandering exile that became famous in later traditions. A text published in Hamburg in 1744, *Memoir of Paul von Eitzen*, the Bishop of Schleswig, tells the story of how he had met “a very striking appearance dressed in rags on a bitterly cold day and listening to the sermon with signs of deep emotion and heart-felt sorrow”, a Jew named Ahasverus, and of how many people “some of high degree and title, have seen this same man in England, France, Italy, Hungary, Persia, Spain, Poland, Moscow, Lapland, Sweden, Denmark, Scotland, and other places”⁷⁰. Ahasverus was a cobbler by trade, had been a witness to Christ’s crucifixion and had been doomed to await the Last Judgement:

On further inquiry he amplified the story, telling how he had stood outside his door with one of his children in his arms to watch the passage of Christ to Golgotha, and when Christ paused for a moment to rest, he struck him and told him to hasten. The Lord looked at him and said: “I shall rest, but thou shalt go till the last day.” At that Ahasverus put down the child, and followed to the crucifixion. He never saw wife or children again, and did not return to Jerusalem until it was in ruins. He believed that the purpose of his wanderings was to turn the godless and unrepenting to penitence. All through his wanderings he ate and drank very little, and if he was offered money he took only a few pence which he gave to the poor. He was fluent in the language of every country which he visited⁷¹.

The legend of the Wandering Jew had wide diffusion all through the seventeenth century. One of the characteristics associated with him were healing powers. In England there are accounts in Peck’s *History of Stamford*, in Aubrey’s *Miscellanies*, whereas the Wandering Jew of France “had a more sensational story to

⁶⁹ Katharine M. Briggs, “The Legends of Lilith and of the Wandering Jew in Nineteenth-Century Literature”, in *Folklore*, vol. 92, no. 2, 1981, pp. 137-140.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

tell of his weird experience, of how he had seen Nero watching Rome as it burned, had been a friend of Mahomet's father, and had confuted Mahomet himself by his memory of the crucifixion. It seems to be from this tradition that George Croly borrowed some incidents for his nineteenth-century novel *Salathiel*⁷².

It is interesting to note that the saga is not common in Jewish oral tradition. In fact, it is virtually nonexistent⁷³. Ahasuerus is a Jew by postulate only, not even by name⁷⁴. Perhaps the story comes from that of another figure, the legend of the Roman Cartaphilus, who perhaps became Jew just for his strange name, as often happened at the time⁷⁵: a change in race by assonance.

The Wandering Jew wanders because of a punishment coming straight from Jesus. He is, in a way, a testimony of Jesus' passion and suffering, but remains Jewish eternally, allowed to live peacefully nowhere. Furthermore, he has to embody another important message: "The Jew carries the collective guilt upon his shoulders and consequently also the collective punishment through all ages and all countries"⁷⁶.

The novels presented in this study somehow incorporate the legend of the Wandering Jew together with that of Cain. However, in contrast to the Wandering Jew, these characters do not have as a major characteristic longevity, but rather wandering destined to a tragic end. This is the difference between the two legends and between their literary representations: the Wandering Jew forever expiates his sin, whereas the characters of our novels deal with different materials, more tragic and fuller of a "sense of an ending": they are all destined to die, or to enter madness.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ "In view of the generally negative depiction of the Jew in the legend, cursed by Jesus himself for a slight (typically the Jew's unwillingness to allow a weary cross-bearing Jesus a moment's temporary respite) to wander the earth forever or until the Second Coming, one can understand why this story would have little appeal for Jews" (Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes [eds.], *The Wandering Jew* p. vii). According to Edelmann, however, the Wandering Jew could represent another figure: "the Ba'al-Teshuva, the Galut wanderer as he is known in Judaism throughout the ages, starting with Philon and ending with Agnon's writings" (R. Edelmann, "Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew: Origin and Background", *ibid.*, p. 9).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁵ The Jewish and Christian traditions obviously crossed: "This legend seems to be a popular mixture of Jesus' saying about an eternal life for a much loved disciple on the one hand and the Malchus episode on the other. In the first case eternal life means a gift of mercy and bliss, an idea that can be found in Jewish sources of the time... In the case of Malchus, on the other hand, longevity is meant to be an eternal *punishment*, a punishment not after death, but still in this life. This, now, is a Christian innovation. The offender against Jesus is *punished* by longevity or eternal life; he is denied salvation. And his condemnation was attributed to Jesus himself" (*ibid.*, p. 4).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

The literary and artistic production on the Wandering Jew is practically endless⁷⁷. Other principal sources are Christian (the good immortal John in Italy called, since 1416, “Giovanni Servo di Dio”, the traditional name for the Wandering Jew in early Renaissance literature); the heathen-Germanic, which sees Ahasver as related to Wotan⁷⁸; and the American, reinterpreted in relation to the allsorts of wanderers during the period of the expanding frontier⁷⁹.

The Wandering Jew has been portrayed as always thirsty and a teetotaller (another significant difference with our characters); sometimes he is associated with a particular flora and fauna. Obviously, there have been psychological approaches to the myth, in particular by Grässe, Helbig and Charcot in the nineteenth century and by Isaac-Edersheim in the twentieth. Charcot exposed the story of a man, Klein, a Hungarian Israelite, “a true descendant of Ahasverus or Cartophilus”: “The fact is that, like the compulsive (neurotic) travellers of whom I have already spoken, he is constantly driven by an irresistible need to move on, to travel, without being able to settle down anywhere”⁸⁰.

According to Jung, the archetype was obviously part of the collective unconscious, the “shadow,” which represents the dark side of human psyche. The idea that the Wandering Jew could be related to biblical Cain and other wandering figures in various traditions was suggested by Jung himself in *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido* in 1912; Jung went so far as to offer a solar interpretation of the legend of the Wandering Jew⁸¹, but he also linked him to other images:

Jung also associated him to the figure of Wotan, a restless wanderer who creates restlessness and stirs up strife, now here now there, or works magic. He was soon changed into the devil by Christianity and only lived on in fast flickering-out local tradition as a ghostly hunter who was seen with his retinue on stormy night⁸².

⁷⁷ See Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, pp. 616-617.

⁷⁸ S. Hurwitz, “Ahasver”, p. 200.

⁷⁹ See Rudolf Glanz, *The Wandering Jew in America*, in Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes [eds.], *The Wandering Jew*, pp. 219-220.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes, *The Wandering Jew*, p. 91.

⁸¹ S. Hurwitz, “Ahasver”, p. 211.

⁸² *Ibid.*

Isaac-Edersheim gives, instead, a Freudian interpretation of the legend:

Freud's Oedipal theory is applied to the legend of the Wandering Jew (as part of a three part study on Messiah, the Golem, and Ahasuerus). In essence, the Christian son (Jesus) is opposed to the Jewish father (Ahasuerus). The figure of the Jew thus provides a suitable, guilt-free target for Oedipal wishes. (God is thus the father one can love while the Wandering Jew is the father one can despise and abuse)⁸³.

Antisemitism and the Wandering Jew's legend can have connections, evidently, but the liminal distinction between direct influences and successive reinterpretations are obviously inscrutable. Whatever the origin of the legend, as Isaac-Edersheim suggested, it should be "dependent upon the psyche and, as such, must correspond to those common human wishes from which they initially derived on"⁸⁴, as it is with Cain:

Within the Wandering Jew wanders the father-god rejected by the young generation, the symbol of the intergenerational struggle, who continues to remain alive yet had to be humiliated in the attempt to dominate him, to forget him. Within him further wanders Cain, the eternal murderer and rebel. Within him wanders the murderer of primitive times, pursued by the ghost of his victim, a danger thereby to every member of the tribe, a regression to a primitive stage when murder was automatically punished by taboo, which could strike anyone who came in contact with him, including his murderers⁸⁵.

Interestingly enough, Japanese folklore also has a similar figure, the figure of a Stranger, who wanders into the village from an unknown "outside" world⁸⁶:

The word for a Stranger in Japanese, *ijin* or "different person", has a wide connotation. An *ijin* can be a traveller, for example, whose way of life is

⁸³ E. Isaac-Edersheim, "Ahasver", p. 195.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 205-206.

⁸⁶ See Carmen Blacker, "The Folklore of the Stranger: A Consideration of a Disguised Wandering Saint", in *Folklore*, vol. 101, no. 2, 1990, p. 162.

wandering, in contrast to the static agricultural life of the village. He may be a wandering woodcarver or tinker, a travelling priest or strolling player. An *ijin* can also be a foreigner from another country “outside” Japan, a Dutchman, Portuguese, Chinese or Englishman. And he can also be an avowedly supernatural being, outside the human race. The Wardens of certain pools, for example, who are believed to be snakes, and to be ready to lend lacquer cups and bowls to those who wish to borrow them for a party, are referred to as *ijin*. So are the uncanny *yamabito* or “mountain people”, said to be seven or eight feet tall, to be covered with hair or leaves, to have supernaturally glittering eyes, and to live deep in the mountains beyond human habitation. The word is thus used in a variety of ways to signify people who come into “our” world from an alien space outside a certain invisible barrier. Whether the barrier surrounds the village, the country, or the human race itself, the space beyond resolves into what Edward Said called imaginative geography; a world devoid of myth, meaning and recognisable cohesion, and on which we are therefore free to project whatever images or fantasies our culture may suggest. The person coming amongst us from this outside world, from which the known distinctions of life are obliterated, can never be of us. He is excluded from the network of relationships and hierarchies which comprise our community; he must therefore refract round it, either above or below. Our instant reaction is to see him as a threat, bringing perilous pollutions from his alien land, and to expel him from our midst. But a moment later we perceive that at the same time he possesses strange occult knowledge, magic or medicine, beyond our experience. We therefore refrain from expelling him, with curses and stones, and instead disarm him with hospitality; we treat him with all the ritual of a guest, which will elicit from him blessings rather than harmful enchantments. The Stranger is therefore an ambivalent figure. He is at the same time a saviour and a threat; at the same time superior to us, noble, highborn and possessed of helpful magic power, and below us, base, polluted, magically weakening, to be driven out⁸⁷.

Ambiguity is an intrinsic aspect of those characters who represent the meeting point of centripetal patterns, symbolic characters, and traditional elements. Carmen Blacker continues:

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

In Japanese folklore this ambiguity is often expressed by the symbolic device of disguise. The Stranger is noble, royal or holy, possessed of powerful magic, but he is disguised as a filthy beggar. Be careful therefore how you treat strangers as they pass through your village. Do not be rude to filthy beggars or throw stones at them, because they may be princes or powerful priests in disguise. [...] The Stranger is disguised, and woe betide [sic] the village that treats him with the contempt and rudeness usually meted out to beggars. The legend bears an uncanny resemblance to certain folktales found in Europe. Here too a noble, holy Stranger wanders about the world disguised as a beggar, rewarding kind treatment with blessings and requiting unkindness with curses. These stories too will be considered, and the problem addressed of how such similarities could have come about⁸⁸.

Blacker too wonders if, “underlying all these various names, there might lie an older prototype”:

A travelling god, for example, who is expected to descend into the village from his own world at a fixed season, and who requires the correct ritual of hospitality and offerings if he is to dispense the seasonal blessings that the village needs; a god who will further, if the correct ritual is denied him, blast the offending village with curses. If the cult of such a divinity were forgotten or overlaid, his traces might survive in stories and legends. A myth frequently passes into a legend. Kōbō Daishi therefore becomes a convenient appellation to attach to an otherwise forgotten god⁸⁹.

Wanderers are dreadful but also fascinating, damned but purest – just like our characters. The primal innocence is lost, the “I” separated from the “others”, and this knowledge is in itself terrible and causes spiritual, metaphysical, and existential anxiety: a description of the modern man.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 162-163.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

Pascal Bruckner in his *La tyrannie de la pénitence. Essai sur le masochisme occidental* sees the contemporary as the era in which man has burdened himself of constant guilt and shame⁹⁰. Camus had already affirmed:

Nous sommes dans un temps où les hommes, poussés par de médiocres et de féroces idéologies, s'habituent à avoir honte de tout. Honte d'eux-mêmes, honte d'être heureux, d'aimer et de créer [...]. Il faut donc se sentir coupable. Nous voilà entraînés au confessionnal laïque, le pire de tous⁹¹.

We could call it “lyrical confessional”, as literature is one of the privileged means to express this existential remorse. Bruckner believes that when apocalypse approaches, the first thing that appears in art is a “repentez-vous!”. And, in effect, sense of apocalypse, the sense of an ending, is one of the major characteristics of our era:

Voilà le message que, derrière l'hédonisme proclamé, nous martèle la philosophie occidentale depuis un demi-siècle, elle qui veut être à la fois une parole émancipatrice et la mauvaise conscience de son temps. Ce qu'elle nous inocule, en fait d'athéisme, c'est bien la vieille notion du péché originel, l'ancien poison de la damnation. En terre judéo-chrétienne, il n'est pas de carburant aussi fort que le sentiment de la faute et plus nos philosophes, sociologues se proclament agnostiques, athées, libre-penseurs, plus ils reconduisent la croyance qu'ils récusent. Comme le disait Nietzsche, les idéologies laïques ont, au nom de l'humanité, surchristianisé le christianisme et renchéri sur son message⁹².

From Existentialism to deconstructionism, he continues, modern thought is exhausted by the mechanical denouncement by the Western world of its own hypocrisy, violence, and abomination. Duty of penitence becomes a war machine which “censure, il rassure, il distingue”:

⁹⁰ Pascal Bruckner, *La tyrannie de la pénitence. Essai sur le masochisme occidental*, Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2006.

⁹¹ Albert Camus, *Actuelles, Ecrits politiques (Croniques 1944-1948)* (1948), quoted in Pascal Bruckner, *La tyrannie de la pénitence*, p. 9.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

L'audace d'hier se transforme en poncif. Le remords a cessé d'être lié à des circonstances historiques précises, il devient dogme, denrée spirituelle, presque mannaie d'échange [...]. Depuis 1945, en effet, notre continent est habité par les tourments du repentir. Ruminant ses abominations passées, les guerres, les persécutions religieuses, l'esclavage, l'imperialisme, le fascisme, le communisme, il ne voit dans sa longue histoire qu'une continuité de tueries, de pillages qui ont abouti à deux conflits mondiaux, c'est-à-dire un suicide enthousiaste⁹³.

The currency used in twentieth-century sensibility is sense of guilt; and, fortunately, the literature about sense of guilt too.

2.3 Cain's Monomyth in the Twentieth-Century Literature

“La fortune littéraire du couple formé par Caïn et Abel semble prouver que le signe divin a opéré”⁹⁴. It is from this quotation by Cécile Hussherr that I would like to start this short survey of the rewritings of Cain's story in twentieth-century literature, referring the readers to the more extensive sources of eminent scholars in the field⁹⁵. The focus of this survey is the examination of the modes in which a story that in the original text – although we are talking about that Text, the Bible – is just a few lines long, originated not only a tradition, but a real literary myth whose germination in Western literature – and also in many others – is almost infinite.

Before we proceed to the focus of this study – that is, the analysis of Cain's paradigm in its non-explicit fictional expressions, in its secret infiltrations in fictional works – we will see how in fact the figure of Cain has been adapted and rewritten in popular twentieth-century novels. This survey takes into consideration two

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15 and 19.

⁹⁴ Cécile Hussherr, *L'ange et la bête. Caïn et Abel dans la littérature*, Paris: Cerf, 2005, p. 11.

⁹⁵ Cfr. Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Changes of Cain: Violence and the Lost Brother in Cain and Abel Literature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991; Véronique Léonard-Roques, *Caïn, figure de la modernité*, Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2003, and *Caïn et Abel. Rivalité et responsabilité*, Éditions du Rocher, 2007; Cécile Hussherr, *L'ange et la bête. Caïn et Abel dans la littérature*, Paris: Cerf, 2005; Ulrike/ Kirsch Kienzle and Dietrich Winfried/Neuhaus (eds.), *Kain und Abel. Die biblische Geschichte und ihre Gestaltung in bildender und dramatischer Kunst, Literatur und Musik*, Frankfurt am Main: Haag und Harchen, 1998; Honor Matthews, *The Primal Curse. The Myth of Cain and Abel in the Theatre*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1967.

assumptions: the conviction that at the base of our psycho-social structures there is a group of “stories” common to everyone, and that to these stories it is added the power of the biblical text to diffuse *topoi*. This power permits an incorporation of uncountable stratifications of symbols and imagery in those literatures that received their influx over the centuries. In twentieth-century fiction, Cain’s model possibly assumes even more disturbing forms, because it is richer in layers of significance and poorer in clarity⁹⁶.

My survey will be just a quick excursus of the forms that the model assumes in the twentieth century; it will consider the different stylistic modulations and the schemes of signification in which the model develops each time, and also the axiologies and the historical backgrounds behind these modifications. I will try to give an idea, although rapid, of how each novel extrapolates the grounding nucleus of the myth and creates a new story. The twentieth century is, in my opinion, the most fertile territory for this kind of literature, as Quinones confirms:

Through his character [Cain], his thoughts and responses, the author will struggle to assert – and this with evident difficulty – a new moral and ethical code. This is why the Cain-Abel story is such a powerful one in the literatures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is perfectly poised to acknowledge any dissatisfaction experienced with the more traditional religious and moral values (hence the demotion of Abel), and to dramatize the struggle on the part of a character, offended by the conventional moral code, to create a new moral center that has a basis that is violent, dire, and problematic, as paradoxical and contradictory as the character of Cain himself. The Cain-Abel theme provides a perfect locus for the fuller ramifications of this moral ambiguity in the modern world, and those works that treat most fully both aspects of the dialectic – that of liberating possibility as well as the presence of guilt, the role of the ethical and the role of destiny – seem to be the works that receive our respect and are ranked among the great works of the modern epoch⁹⁷.

⁹⁶ “What we usually think of as acceptance or rejection of belief does not in either case involve any disturbance in our habitual mental processes. It seems to me that trying to think within categories of myth, metaphor, and typology – all of them exceedingly “primitive” categories from most points of view – does involve a good deal of such disturbance. The result, however, I hope and have reason to think, is an increased lucidity, an instinct for cutting through a jungle of rationalizing verbiage to the cleared area of insight” (Northrop Frye, *The Great Code*, p. xx).

⁹⁷ Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, pp. 19-20.

The story of Cain and Abel was probably born with the fundamental ambiguity of Genesis in 950 B.C., and has been used in Christian society to represent, like all myths, a superior truth that is always present; in this case, the truth is the inexplicable presence of evil on earth and of fraternal hate⁹⁸. The interpretation of Augustine and his *City of God*, the division of good and evil respectively between Cain and Abel, would dominate until the nineteenth century, when Byron and the Romantics subverted Christian axiology. They reevaluated Cain's figure and his promethean rebellion to the divinity, a rebellion caused this time by egocentrism and jealousy⁹⁹.

By that time, Cain had taken a different way from that of the Church, and started to represent no longer a biblical interpretation but criticism and reflexions on social problems and on the weak points of the world. Frye makes a distinction between a *kosmos* of feudal type, in which the biblical message is the *aim* of the work of art, and a modern *kosmos*, in which it is *subject* of art¹⁰⁰. It is the "mythic" literary epoch, the one that prefers metaphor. Cain is dechristianized beginning with this breaking point and no sooner than the eighteenth century.

Salomon Gessner's *Der Tod Abels*, written in 1758, is a pastoral idyll that would give origin to the Romantic rediscovery of the myth. Blake (*The Ghost of Abel*, 1822), Coleridge (*The Wanderings of Cain*, of which only the second part is written in prose in 1828), Baudelaire (*Abel et Caïn*, from *Les fleurs du mal*, in the section called *Révolte*, 1857), and Hugo ("L'œil était dans la tombe et regardait Caïn" is a famous verse of *La Conscience*, from *La Légende des siècles*, 1859), go beyond the infinite association of Cain with assassins and traitors done so far, as in Dante and Shakespeare (*The Tempest*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Hamlet*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, *King John*, *Henry VI*)¹⁰¹. Byron, as we have already suggested, would mark the

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁰¹ Cécile Husherr reassumes the changes in pre-romantic Cain as follows: "L'ambiguïté, qui incite à créer, et l'interprétation, qui restreint la liberté créatrice, vont donc s'unir pour donner le jour à un mythe littéraire de Caïn et Abel dont les caractéristiques avant le XIXe siècle peuvent s'énumérer comme suit: l'épaisseur littéraire du personnage de Caïn est conforme à son importance dans le scénario génésiaque, il est même, dans les mystères médiévaux, un personnage comique, dont la grossièreté est une manifestation de la chute, tandis qu'Abel annonce la rédemption. Toujours en vertu de cette épaisseur, le Caïn de la Renaissance est un bâtisseur ou un tyran politique dont la présence affirme le lien qui unit la mort et la civilisation. À cet égard, ce siècle est le plus proche du XIXe. Le XVIIe siècle donne cependant jour à une réécriture baroque de Gn 4, dans laquelle Abel torture est le type du Christ: jamais l'interprétation augustinienne ne fut aussi prégnante. Enfin, au XVIIIe siècle, le Caïn de Gessner est essentiel puisqu'il préfigure celui de Byron. Cette hypothèse est d'autant plus

turning point in the myth literary history with his “Mystery” entitled *Cain*, written in 1821, with its “revelation never before communicated to man”, as it was defined by Shelley¹⁰².

Once the umbilical cord with religion was cut – but never completely – Cain faces the twentieth century; and he does so firstly in a particularly fertile habitat, such as the myth revival of modernisms at the beginning of the century, and secondly with the postmodernist intertextuality and disenchantment. In both cases, the crisis of identity and the breaking of the systems of values are essential features, together with the historical contingencies that caused them – I am evidently referring to the world wars. The dispersion of the self, sovereign of himself by then¹⁰³, permits that Cain comes to represent ambiguity, the contradiction of the man who lost his God because of his freedom, be He a punisher or a consoling father, and who wanders in the tensions of history with no goals, nor profits. Cain gets rid of any positive or negative value; Cain is the man who can be both the victim of tragic event and the nocturne of human nature, truer than his good brother, but also, quite often, the personification of great destinies.

It is with the darkness of human nature that Cain appears in his first twentieth-century representation. Joseph Conrad created more than a Cain, men marked with guilts because of which they have been exiled, or self-exiled, from human consortium¹⁰⁴. *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, *Falk*, *The Secret Sharer* and, as the title suggests, *An Outcast of the Island* are just some of these novels. Here the concept of separation from the “human” world is, almost obsessively, the major theme; interestingly, though, this separation implies at the same time a privileged language among his members, even defined as “cryptophasic”¹⁰⁵, as if human solidarity was a special reign and a privilege for chosen people only. Somehow, Conrad’s

recevable que Gessner était très lu en Grande-Bretagne et en France; nous savons que Coleridge, Byron et Blake, pour nommer qu’eux, avaient lu *Der Tod Abels*. C’est un Caïn hérité des Lumières qui va se retourner contre son Créateur. En soupçonnant la bonté d’Abel et la justice de Dieu, les romantiques se retourneront moins contre le sens de Gn 4 que contre son interprétation augustinienne, qu’ils renverseront our faire du fratricide une victime” (Cécile Husserr, *L’ange et la bête*, p. 81).

¹⁰² Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁰³ Léonard-Roques, Véronique, *Caïn, figure de la modernité*, Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2003, p. 18.

¹⁰⁴ See Marina Lops, “‘The brand of Cain’: la figura del reietto in due testi conradiani”, in Chiara Lombardi (ed.), *Il personaggio. Figure della dissolvenza e della permanenza*, Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2008, pp. 133-138.

¹⁰⁵ Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, p. 109.

protagonists are chosen; they have really understood the rules of society, they felt lacking, and for this reason have decided for self-expulsion. They have seen the values of comradeship and of brotherhood, and therefore they bring with them on their isolation a knowledge that others cannot comprehend – in fact Conrad enriches Cain's myth, for the first time perhaps, with a deeper moral and psychological dimension¹⁰⁶.

They are new Cain-like figures, characters anchored to their destinies and to their essential suffering, more deign and heroic than the others for narrators who somehow understand their true essence and make them mythological in multiple ways.

If Conrad depicts characters that are noble in their soul and proud in their dignified sad consciousness, Unamuno creates instead a tormented Cain who suffers the most atrocious pains of the spirit. The envy of the protagonist of *Abel Sanchez* (1917) devours Joaquín's soul, who at first is jealous and then envious of his friend Abel. Envy is imputed by Unamuno also on his country as its primary characteristic. Furthermore, for the first time, Unamuno likens the character of the artist not to a Cain's figure, but to Abel's, as though creative sensitivity no longer attained to the artist – who on the contrary is sweet and naïf – but to the doctor and his science, who, with depth and sensibility usurped from the genius, analyzes the human soul and its obsessions as a technician; a genius that he knows, however, he will never become.

Doctor of himself, but without being capable of curing his own spirit, Joaquín himself makes his diagnosis:

[...] I began to hate Abel with all my soul, and, at the same time, to plan the concealment of this loathing, which I would cultivate and tend deep down in my soul's entrails. Loathing, did I say? I did not yet want to give it a name. Nor did I care to understand that I had been born predestined to bear the weight of hatred upon me and its seed within me. That night I was born into my life's hell¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Miguel de Unamuno, *Abel Sanchez and Other Stories*, Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1996, p. 24.

The full consciousness of being victim of himself and even of choosing to condemn himself to a personal hell, in nurturing evil in his inner world, is a new characteristic of the story that enters the myth with the new century. As a matter of fact, wallowing under one's own pain and on one's spiritual wandering is one of the most typical characteristics of the twentieth-century Cain pattern.

Cain appears in many other poets and novelists of the first decades of the century: the giants T. S. Eliot, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, ambiguously mention the character in their works. It is Hermann Hesse that, in 1919, writes a novel that once again modifies the myth, adding further layers of meaning.

Emil Sinclair, the protagonist of *Demian*, introduces Nietzsche and Jung in the novel of Cain, who this time becomes the discoverer of his self, in a mystic and terrible way, almost reaching universal knowledge¹⁰⁸. In this novel Cain's guilt has a beneficial power: it enlightens reality, and the character, with a new understanding. Demian, the character who, together with his mother, brings awareness to Emile, explicitly explains to him what is their mission as chosen beings:

It was our function to represent an island in the world, a kind of prototype perhaps, to proclaim in our lives new potentialities by our way of living. I, who had been a solitary so long, learned about the companionship which is possible between human beings who have tasted utter and complete loneliness. I no longer hankered after the tables of the fortunate nor the feasts of the blessed. I was no longer affected by envy or nostalgia when I watched the community life of others. And slowly I was initiated into the secret of those who bear the 'sign' on their brow.

We who bore the 'sign' might rightly be considered odd by the world, even mad and dangerous. We were 'awake' or 'awakening' and our striving was directed at an ever-increasing wakefulness, whereas the striving and quest for happiness of the rest was aimed at identifying their thoughts, ideals, duties, their lives and fortunes more and more closely with that of the herd. [...] That is why

¹⁰⁸ Interesting is this observation by Quinones: "[...] although secularized these stories must keep on bringing some mystery of the necessary unfolding of events of the Christian program of salvation" (Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, pp. 122-123).

we are branded – as Cain was – to rouse fear and hatred and drive men out of their unimaginative idyll into more dangerous ways¹⁰⁹.

In the twentieth century, Cain's guilt is necessary to obtain the knowledge of oneself, of the modern man. As Quinones explained, "[t]he king is dead, God himself is dethroned, and the structure of authority is badly shaken: into this vacuum of authority Cain enters as one who is not only searching for values but who is actively seeking to create new values"¹¹⁰.

Demian opens Emile's eyes toward a new interpretation of the biblical story of Cain; Cain becomes the protagonist of an esoteric and heterodox *Bildungsroman*, at the end of which, after much nocturnal wandering, the new Cain is, once again, a special being fated to accomplish the destiny for which he was consequently marked. In this case the mark does not follow a fault, but, as an important part of his character, precedes Cain himself¹¹¹.

The last novel before the point of no return of the First World War that I will analyze is *East of Eden*, by John Steinbeck. Although written in 1952, it is around the great war that the vicissitudes of this familiar saga take place – that is, a couple of generations of Cain and Abel pairs, who in the time-frame of the novel move first vertically and then horizontally through the country, from East to West. In this novel, wandering is that of seasonal workers, of the searchers of land, of those who enlist in the army and die for reasons they will never really understand. It is a forced wandering, to which Steinbeck adds an almost epic style with a mythical taste. In this novel Cain is the eponym of a country and of a precise historical moment, as it is in many other novels, poems and films in the America of the Fifties; a period in which, according to somebody, Cain's myth takes over the Adamitical myth: it is the short-circuit of World War II, a moment in which fratricide war seems to be

¹⁰⁹ Hermann Hesse, *Demian*, London and Chester Springs: Peter Owen, 2009, pp. 160 and 163.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹¹¹ "Addressing the mark of Cain, Demian argues that it is not so much a physical sign as a kind of presence, an aura that the authentic personality possesses. He turns around completely the order of the mark in Genesis. The mark does not follow the crime, rather the mark, as integral part of his personality, precedes Cain." (Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, pp. 128-129).

necessary for the species conservation¹¹². At this point the guilt of humanity is lulled by statute:

No story has power, nor will it last, unless we feel in ourselves that it is true and true of us. What a great burden of guilt men have! [...] We gather our arms full of guilt as though it were precious stuff. It must be that we want it that way¹¹³.

And later on:

I think this is the best-known story in the world because it is everybody's story. I think it is the symbol story of the human soul¹¹⁴.

For Steinbeck the Salinas Valley was undoubtedly the East of Eden. For him the myth of Cain was one of the stories which most characterizes man; without this story, or rather, without the "sense" of this story, psychiatrists would have nothing to do, he says, because it is at the basis of all neurosis, together with the story of the Fall¹¹⁵.

In *East of Eden* Adam's fall and Cain's curse are combined and work together. This is another important trait of the twentieth-century myth: the single story stops being exemplar in itself but merges with other patterns in order to increase the mythical resonance of what is narrated.

Archetypal criticisms helps us as we approach the Second World War period. It helps us because at that time a few novels that saw the light would not explicitly mention Cain nor Abel, but their story, which is often melted in a mixture of myths, sometimes even from different traditions, reversing on the original story the tragedy of historical contingencies and the sense of guilt derived by them in the attempt to render them more and more universal. This will be the topic of the coming sections

¹¹² "The Cain myth must have seemed to a non-theological age to be more closely related to history than the Adamic myth" (Ely Stock, MLA session of 1977 entitled "Chaos, the Self and the Cain Myth: John Hay and Henry Adams", co-chaired by Quinones and Edith Potter MLA, "The Cain and Abel Theme in Literature", quoted in Quinones, p. 267, n. 1).

¹¹³ John Steinbeck, *East of Eden*, London: Penguin Books, 2002, p. 269.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, p. 136.

of this study, in which *maladie*, tragedy, fall from Eden, drunkenness, *imitatio Christi*, underworld, and cannibalism are recurrent themes.

Many other novelists will make of Cain, or of his story, or his metaphorical power, the protagonist of their works: Michel Butor (*L'Emploi du temps*, 1956); Michel Tournier (*Le Roi des Aulnes*, 1970, *Les Météores*, 1975), who considers myth the feature that distinguishes men from animals; its diffusion is intrinsic to the mission he wants to fulfil; Alexander Trocchi, with the textual wandering of his *Cain's Book*; Osaragi Jirō e Arishima Takeo in Japan; and obviously Bruce Chatwin, who more than others perhaps repropounded Cain's story in the postmodernist way, especially in *The Songlines*, in inserting the myth in novels that are a mixture of autobiography, anthropology treatise, miscellany, and travel diary. Nomadism and sedentarity, travelling and collectionism are the themes that Chatwin intertwines among intertextual references, mythologies, and anecdotes. Finally, the very recent José Saramago, whose polemic *Caim* represents man's dialogue with God, a dialogue continuing even today, after having accomplished a dislocated journey through space but also through time, wandering through the most popular and dramatic events of the Old Testament, as witness to history and to what is unrighteous in divine judgement.

If we exclude the tens of thrillers or other popular genres that, since the Eighties, pack librarians' shelves with titles that include the word Cain, we can say that in the twentieth century Cain's figure is always a character who represents a deep consciousness of his own absurd destiny as a man, and almost always he is its victim. In 1860 the fate of the Western man had already been marked with words:

Western man has irrevocably been cast out – has cast himself out – of a childlike world of enchantment and undividedness. Since the days of his exile (or was it withdrawal?) he has been wandering the world. Wherever he goes he is recognized since he bears a burden for everyone to see – the burden of selfhood. The ego is at once his sign of Cain and his crown of glory¹¹⁶.

¹¹⁶ Benjamin Nelson and Charles Trinkaus, introduction to Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), quoted in Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, p. 87.

Also Quinones describes the post-Byronic Cains as those “whose intelligence is probing, who seems to be a character of consciousness as well as conscience”¹¹⁷. The ambiguity – a moral, social, human ambiguity – that was the favourite subject of last century’s literature, finds in Cain’s archetype a mirror in which it is possible to reflect universal but also extremely contingent themes. Every time the story of Cain and Abel implies the encounter with history – “oppressive, inevitable history, or history transcended and transformed, but never ignored”¹¹⁸. History and consciousness are the two important elements that appear in the twentieth-century myth: anthropology and psychoanalysis played their parts in the process. Consciousness is the burden, the original sin of contemporary man, and the key characteristic of Cain in twentieth-century literature¹¹⁹. As if the sense of guilt becomes the very destiny of man, or rather, his prize.

¹¹⁷ Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, p. 87.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

PART TWO

THE ARCHETYPE TRANSFORMED I

WASTELANDS TO WALK, WASTELANDS TO DRINK

CHAPTER 3

GRAHAM GREENE AND THE SINNER'S GLORY

I thought you were great in all things,
in guilt and in glory.
You're but a puny. Home!

James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*

3.1 The Whisky Priest and the Guilt of Sin

Some novels do not end well. Sometimes the structure, which inexorably leads to a tragic conclusion, is marked by a few symbols, or patterns, which simultaneously build the plot and enrich the overall meaning it carries. Drinking, guilt, and journey are haunting elements in a few literary works where the characters walk through abandoned wastelands in a meaningless, circular movement towards a tragic ending. Although apparently moved by specific contingent reasons, the protagonists of these novels are actually pushed by inner losses and despair, by guilty consciences transmitting their restlessness to the outer world. Wine or other alcoholic “poisons” accompany the journeys of these “drunkard heroes” through their self-inflicted martyrdom. This is the case of Graham Greene’s *The Power and the Glory* (1940) and of Malcolm Lowry’s *Under the Volcano* (1947), two English novels of the 1940s in which these recurring themes – wasteland, drunkenness, and guilt – mark the tragic journeys of a Priest and a Consul. In both cases, as we are going to see, isolation and self-punishment lead to endings which can appear similar in facts, but which differ as far as the imaginative legacy of their closures is concerned.

Both the guilty wanderers of these novels have confined themselves in a decadent Mexico where they struggle to survive their own self-probing and troubled

minds. *The Power and the Glory* is the narrative of a priest escaping the Red Shirts in the 1930s when the Catholic Church was banned and priests who refused to marry were executed. The nameless “whisky priest” of the story is hunted by a police lieutenant, another idealist figure who considers his capture as a kind of personal challenge. Taken between the desire to preserve his life but also to meet his holy obligations, the priest is torn by the inner fight with his Catholic conscience and his human fears, elements that mark the escape he passively attempts travelling throughout the country. He desperately tries to do what he thinks is right: he hears confessions, holds services, and baptizes children, always doubting his actions and especially his thoughts.

A little hollow man full of conflicts, nameless, walking an abandoned world on his own, he is outlined quickly, and described as the “stranger”, or the “whisky priest”, as he himself recognizes. He appears for the first time in a dry, sunny Mexican port town, as he disembarks from a river boat, standing stiffly in the shade: “A small man dressed in a shabby dark city suit, carrying a small attaché case. [...] He had protuberant eyes; he gave an impression of unstable hilarity, as if perhaps he had been celebrating a birthday, alone”¹. Is it a common image for a sad priest far from his flock, or is it rather the image of a frustrated clerk going to a home he does not recognize? His journey through his guilt would depict him as a simple character carrying an extremely complex set of doubts and responsibilities. A few lines later, his dark suit and sloping shoulders will remind Mr Tench, the expatriate dentist, of a coffin, and he will also think that “death was in his carious mouth already”².

So far, the elements denoting the priest are smallness, darkness, unstable hilarity, loneliness, and death. Quite soon another fundamental element of the character would be hinted at: “He sat there like a black question mark, ready to go, ready to stay, poised on his chair. He looked disreputable in his grey three-days’ beard, and weak: somebody you could command to do anything”³. The whisky priest is passively on the wave of wandering. He could stay – and die, but try to pay his salvation – or go, and live, but as a deserter at the eyes of his God. On his way, many quick encounters all associated with lucubration on his sense of guilt. First there is

¹ Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*, London: Vintage, 2004 (1940), p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Mr Tench, the first person he meets once he comes off the boat; then Coral, the little mature girl (who becomes a woman during the narrative), daughter of an agent of a company dealing bananas, caring and curious, who feeds him and helps him to hide himself; her parents, Captain Fellowes and his wife, miserable and afraid of death; Maria, his greatest sin, object of his only act of fornication; and the fruit of this sin, his daughter Brigitta, malice in person; the villagers, who beg for sacraments; a *mestizo*, the Judas who will betray him in the end; Mr Lehr and his sister, German-Americans; James Calver, an American assassin, the one whose death he attends when he crosses again the border after his only real attempt at physical salvation; and then the lieutenant, his pursuer, his laic alter ego, Marxist, resolute, determined to destroy the Church and the bad memories of his youth too. A picture hangs from his office's wall: our protagonist, the whisky priest, burdened by guilt.

Throughout the whole book, vocabulary relating to guilt, attempts at confession, and self-accusations govern the narrative. His fall from grace is caused by both venial and mortal sins – not necessarily the latter are heavier than the former; sex and drinking are evidently the major causes – he has fathered a girl aided by alcohol, habit to which he is still much addicted. However, as in any individual suffering from guilt, not only objective guilt represents a psychological sickness; in the end, the priest will consider his existence completely useless, and vain. In this novel, the sense of guilt is sin, guilt incarnated in dogma.

The burden of guilt is too intense to leave him alone, and let him stop his absurd journey, cross the border and find a safer place. From a psychoanalytical perspective, as we have seen, the sense of guilt has been traced by Freud back to an archetypal, primeval status, according to which guilt is a sort of original sin, a divine curse that goes from father to son and to which few people seem to be immune – especially Catholics. Guilt is a lurking feeling hidden in our unconscious, felt even when we are innocent, just like the original sin. As a pretext to awaken this old sense of guilt, committing a forbidden act can bring psychic relief, because in this way guilt is directed to a particular, identifiable object. In the attempt to control internal accusations, a person can adopt many different tactics, like breaking a taboo in order to provoke a reaction in others – “narcissistic omnipotence” – or a punishment, to soothe the pain of our hidden feelings; or guilt can be exploited to obtain masochistic

pleasure, directed towards one's own inner world in order to attack oneself. Twentieth-century literature, because of the influence of psychoanalytic studies, has been perhaps the one which represented more than others the complex phenomena of human guilty minds. Greene's works, both his entertainments and his more serious novels⁴, use not only psychological qualities, as it had already been done by many other writers, but also elements of the thriller, the genre of espionage and pursuits, governed by a general atmosphere of doubt, flight, and fear of the world as it has become:

When felony, by becoming political, becomes impersonal; when the *acte gratuit* elicits not only secret but public approval, its dramatist faces the desperate task of restoring to his readers their lost instinct of values, the sense of human worth. It is not enough that the thriller become psychic: Freudian behaviour patterns have become as much an open commodity and stock property as spy rings and torture chambers were fifty years ago. It must become moral as well⁵.

Morality is, in *The Power and the Glory*, religious morality. The language adopted by the priest and the events described in the novel are significantly imbued with all these elements. According to Wilhelm Hortmann, Greene is a realist writer who "endows his characters with a complicated and neurotic modern psyche, who revels in the seedy aspects of life"⁶. The relationship between guilt and religion is obviously the main theme of the novel; and both of them are linked to the historical moment in which it was written. Religion and the confrontation with God represent a complex net to disentangle, just like the world of thrillers⁷.

⁴ The distinction between "novels" and "entertainments" first appeared in 1936 in the preliminary matter to *A Gun for Sale*, while it disappeared in the following editions. Greene defined the entertainments as melodramatic, and with no message ("horrible word", he added). See Martin Shuttleworth and Simon Raven, "The Art of Fiction: Graham Greene", Interview, in Samuel Hynes (ed.), *Graham Greene: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973, p. 160.

⁵ Morton Dauwen Zabel, "The Best and the Worst" (1957), in Samuel Hynes (ed.), *Graham Greene*, pp. 32-33.

⁶ Wilhelm Hortmann, "Graham Greene: The Burnt-Out Catholic", in *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 10, no. 2, July 1964, p. 71.

⁷ "In each instance, Greene's use of Catholicism extends the psychological and moral crisis of characters beyond their own deception and treachery, and places it in confrontation with God. Indeed, Greene illustrates that one's faith and belief in God is as treacherous a place as the world of politics and espionage" (Mark Bosco, "From *The Power And The Glory* To *The Honorary Consul*: The

It is sensible to believe that tranquil religiosity does not impose on the individual suffered confessions, strict acts of devotion, pilgrimages, and meticulous zeal, but that on the contrary these are signs of a troubled conscience of faith. This is what happens to the priest. He rejects many opportunities to escape because he feels obliged to fulfil his priestly duties, but also because, in a way, he thinks he deserves this continuous fleeing from place to place, in self-punishing labyrinthine ways⁸.

The priest feels guilt for many reasons. Firstly, because he is a *whisky* priest. Along his peregrinations people know what to give him in order to show their gratitude, or to push him to go and leave them to their safe, godless land. Anytime he meets somebody, a bottle of brandy slips in his hands, or is shared furtively and desperately among enemies. Soon enough in the story, when the priest meets Mr Tench, he is the object of a concise, dense portrait:

He held a small spot of brandy in his glass warily – as if it was an animal to which he gave shelter, but not trust. He had the air, in his hollowness and neglect, of somebody of no account who had been beaten up incidentally, by ill-health or restlessness. He sat on the very edge of the rocking-chair, with his small attaché case balanced on his knee and the brandy staved off with guilty affection⁹.

Passive and desolate, the priest is guilty of affection to a bottle, beaten by restlessness. Greene's stylistic trait of associating concrete elements to abstract ones is particularly brilliant in the following scene:

He drank the brandy down like damnation: men like the half-caste could be saved, salvation could strike like lightning at the evil heart, but the habit of piety excluded everything but the evening prayer and the Guild meeting and the feel of humble lips on your gloved hand¹⁰.

Development of Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination", in *Religion & Literature*, vol. 36, no. 2, summer 2004, p. 52).

⁸ *Labyrinthine ways* was the title firstly used for the American version of the novel, since the title *The Power and the Glory* had already been used for a previous book (selling few copies).

⁹ Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*, p. 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 166. Bernard Bergonzi believes that Greene imitated Auden in such "yokings of the concrete and the abstract" (*A Study in Greene: Graham Greene and the Art of the Novel*, Oxford:

Here and in many other scenes, the priest is critical not only about his acts, but also about the reasons why he has accomplished those acts. He admits that as a boy he was scared of poverty, which he feared as a crime: “he had believed that when he was a priest he would be rich and proud – that was called having a vocation”¹¹. This kind of irony is always used, and always where intensity is higher.

The fall of the priest from God’s Grace is reconstructed by the priest himself. He started to neglect his purificatory acts – the days of abstinence, the feast days, the fast days –, then he unburdened himself of all his instruments of faith, leaving behind first the breviary, and then the altar stone, in a sort of lightening progress towards a new kind of faith – involuntarily less orthodox but more spiritual, more controversial but perhaps truer. He started to realize that what he needs is just wine:

What he wanted now was wine. Without it he was useless; he might as well escape north into the mountains and the safe state beyond, where the worst that could happen to him was a fine and a few days in prison because he couldn’t pay. Be he wasn’t ready yet for the final surrender – every small surrender had to be paid for in a further endurance, and now he felt the need of somehow ransoming his child¹².

His child is his other greatest sin, another cause for his purposeless cerebral wandering. And, to add other burdens on his soul, he soon discovers that the fruit of his sin is malicious, unreligious, cynical, and mature in a horrifying way. When he reaches the village where he committed his “crime”, he catches sight of his daughter, without recognizing her. For him, this omission makes his sin even more stupid, as if the sin itself, such a mortal fault, had lost importance if not acknowledged. Brigitta – this is her name – between a sardonic laugh and another, says to his father: “You are the matter”¹³; the matter for the jokes she receives, the matter for all the fuss and fear around the village. As it appears in a phrase of *The Lawless Road*, the travel account that Greene wrote after his journey in Mexico in 1938 and that inspired *The Power*

Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 116). On the allegory in Greene see also Richard Hoggart, “The Force of Caricature”, in Samuel Hynes (ed.), *Graham Greene*, 1973.

¹¹ Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*, p. 64.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

and the Glory, the girl has no choice because she is born in sin, without God, with “no bank of sanctity to draw on”.

The priest wants to atone for having fathered a child, and looks for God’s forgiveness in trying to love her at least, praying God to save her, and let him die of any kind of death, in a state of mortal sin too, without contrivance. One could even imagine that he is trying to buy his salvation through altruistic renunciation. When he faces the godlessness of his child – while he accepts another bottle – he feels “nothing but a regret; it was difficult even to feel shame where no one blamed him”¹⁴. Shame and guilt are characterized by different elements; a fundamental characteristic of shame is that it requires someone to observe us while we do something we consider wrong. The priest does not feel shameful because thanks to his position – but we could also say *because* of his position – nobody seems to criticize him. As a consequence, his sense of guilt is even deeper, and has not a target to which be directed. His guilt does not even seem heavy to the others, not even to the woman with whom he committed it:

[...] to her it was just an incident, a scratch which heals completely in the healthy flesh: she was even proud of having been the priest’s woman. He alone carried a wound, as though a whole world had died¹⁵.

Later in the novel, when he is betrayed by a *mestizo* and caught by the police, in another attempt at self-confession, he realizes that fear is not enough to contrive; and also, that “the sin itself was so old that like an ancient picture the deformity had faded and left a kind of grace”¹⁶. This same woman, “his woman”, pushes him to go away and leave all them alone, with no other useless complication that might be caused by his presence. She angrily accuses him of becoming a mock martyr if he dies: “Suppose you die. You’ll be a martyr, won’t you? What kind of a martyr do you think you’ll be? It’s enough to make people mock”. His answer is passively ironic: “It’s difficult, it’s very difficult. I’ll think about it. I wouldn’t want the Church

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 116

to be mocked...¹⁷. Even worse, the priest has to face the fact that Catholicism has become not much more than an uncomfortable superstition in Mexico, something that people still keep in their minds as a nuisance, an inconvenient traditional background in which they no longer really believe: “the Mass would soon mean no more to anyone than a black cat crossing the path. He was risking all their lives for the sake of split salt or a crossed finger”¹⁸. His village would finally impose him another flight, because “[h]e was a sickness now”¹⁹. The priest himself is aware of what really counts to the eyes of God, and continuously doubts about his essential evil nature:

A virtuous man can almost cease to believe in Hell, but he carried Hell about with him. Sometimes at night he dreamed of it. Domine, *non sum dignus... domine, non sum dignus...* Evil ran like malaria in his veins²⁰.

When he enters the village he can perceive a sense of closeness to his ex-fellows, but soon he feels also that the relationship between he and other human beings is more complicated, that his sin has brought about godless progeny, that his very presence can cause death right now. He is well aware of his guilt (“The whole world was blanketed with his own sin”²¹), and is afraid of the consequences of his mistakes:

Five years ago he had given away to despair – the unforgivable sin – and he was going back now to the scene of his despair with a curious lightening of the heart. For he had got over despair too. He was a bad priest, he knew it. They had a word for his kind: a whisky priest, but every failure dropped out of sight and mind: somewhere they accumulated in secret – the rubble of his failures. One day they would choke up, he supposed, altogether the source of grace. Until then he carried on, with spells of fear, weariness, with a shamefaced lightness of heart²².

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

As he walks, he feels the intolerance of the villagers (“It was as if he had descended by means of his sin into the human struggle to learn other things besides despair and love, that a man can be unwelcome even in his own home”²³), but also the closeness that sin can bring among sinful human beings: “he came among them like a beggar. [...] It was as if he had returned to them in their vicious prison as one of themselves – en émigré who comes back to his native place enriched”²⁴.

A Ulysses exiled by his guilt, he has all the time he needs to ruminate on his failures. In one of his last confessions, the one in front of his Pontius Pilatus, the lieutenant, he reassumes his guilts in a pregnant, concise way:

And then I thought I was so grand I could make my own rules. I gave up fasting, daily Mass. I neglected my prayers – and one day because I was drunk and lonely – well, you know how it was, I got a child. It was all pride. Just pride because I stayed. I wasn’t any use, but I stayed²⁵.

Pride. This deadly sin, the sin of Lucifer, is one of the priest’s greatest obsessions. He even feels that his attempts at escape are half-hearted because of his pride:

Even his attempts at escape had been half-hearted because of his pride – this sin by which the angels fell. When he was the only priest left in the state his pride had been all the greater; he thought of himself the devil of a fellow carrying God around at the risk of his life: one day there would be a reward... He prayed in the half-light: ‘O God, forgive me – I am a proud, lustful, greedy man. I have loved authority too much. There people are martyrs – protecting me with their own lives. [...]’ As usual, his self-confession dwindled away into the practical problem – what am I to do?²⁶

Religious depth is always present, and always hypostatized in a silently ironic doubt. To admit that his fleeing from place to place and its wandering are useless,

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

means to admit that his sense of guilt is useless, therefore his attempt at atonement and his attempts at ameliorating the others through his suffering, his *Imitatio Christi*.

When he is caught by the police, he explains his reasons for staying to the curious lieutenant, telling an almost arrogant summary of his story; he mentions time slipping by, pride in remaining when a priest who disapproved him went away, as a schoolboy who gets free of the bully of whom he is scared. Pride is causing him the incapacity to repent himself, the true Christian capacity to feel sinful, and not guilty: “He said, ‘I don’t know how to repent.’ That was true: he had lost the faculty”:

There was a time when he had approached the Canon of the Mass with actual physical dread – the first time he had consumed the body and blood of God in a state of mortal sin. But then life bred its excuses – it hadn’t after a while seemed to matter very much, whether he was damned or not, so long as these others...²⁷

Anytime he feels damned, he tries to forward his sacrifice of morality to the salvation of others. “Forty years of the priesthood had branded him”²⁸, the narrator says. Branded like Cain, he has become cynical because of sinning. Most importantly, his anguish is related to the feeling that he is losing something, the grace of God himself. Sometimes he is scared even more of the physical pain of death – he repeats that death is the worst thing in life – than of God’s judgement afterwards. One of the heaviest burdens to bear for the priest is, as a matter of fact, the very sense of his useless inadequacy of his vocation, his duties, and the symbol he represents.

Pride is the cause, alcohol and loneliness – together – the additives. The result is sin. And sin after sin, the priest feels impelled to keep on wandering, trying to atone, and sharing his thoughts with the reader. Sinning adds more sinning: in one of the most unforgettable sentences of the book, one of Greene’s associations between concreteness and abstractness, the priest’s sense of guilt appears in a crude, palpable way:

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Sin was a constriction which prevented their escape; he could feel his prayers weigh him down like undigested food²⁹.

There is a consciousness here of how religion can be heavier than spiritual freedom on a guilty spirit. In opposition to Geoffrey Firmin, the Consul of *Under the Volcano*, who has already lost everything, the priest can still lose his dearest thing: the possibility of salvation. Nonetheless, at the same time, the possibility itself gives him hope, a desire to reach something, whereas Firmin is lost in his despair. In the final monologue of the priest, when he makes his private confession in prison before his execution, there is an acknowledgement of guilt and responsibility. This is part of his confession:

‘I have committed fornication.’ The formal phrase meant nothing at all: it was like a sentence in a newspaper: you couldn’t feel repentance over a thing like that. He started again, ‘I have lain with a woman, [...] I have been drunk – I don’t know how many times; there isn’t a duty I haven’t neglected; I have been guilty of pride, lack of charity...’ The words were becoming formal again, meaning nothing. He had no confessor to turn his mind away from the formula to the fact³⁰.

Only when he is finally arrested, when he is in the small world of a prison made of sinners like him, can he finally feel peace, although not completely: his wanderings are over, and he has got closer to human society; but, after having been caught many times in the atmosphere of flight and after having postponed death again and again, still we find the priest afraid of death, of pain, of the distance he feels between him and his dogma. He thinks that he is lacking something, that something he really cares about: “He felt like someone who has missed happiness by seconds at an appointed place”³¹.

Nevertheless, before the epilogue, guilt is the predominant theme of the novel. The other characters too concur to the general atmosphere of hopelessness and abandonment: Mr Tench, the dentist, helping the “stranger” with brandy, talking

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

about his incurable illness caused by that “bloody land”; (Father) José, an ex-priest who have abjured in order to survive, and married a despotic lady, feeling like a buffoon, an old mocked impotent man, who broods over the “gift he had been given which nobody could take away”, and that “made him worthy of damnation – the power he still had of turning the wafer into the flesh and blood of God”³². He thinks of himself as a coward, he is in need of solitude when he feels guilty, when for example he refuses to consecrate the coffin of a young boy: “He knew he was in the grip of the unforgivable sin, despair”³³.

The Lawless Road has an epigraph from John Newman’s *Apologia* which describes man’s hopelessness: “the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity”. If there is a God, man is rejected and cannot rejoice of His presence. Greene makes of these people the characters of his books. According to Mark Bosco, this “aboriginal calamity” is the world of Greenland:

[...] a landscape filled with lonely, pathetic, and sometimes malevolent characters. Incidents of pursuit, acts of violence, and voluntary and involuntary betrayal populate a world set against a background of misery and squalor. Greene’s characters live as exiles or on the extreme edges of society, conscious of their failure and their betrayals of one another and, often, of their faith in God. Throughout his texts the eschatological certainties of both Christianity and Marxist ideology are always thwarted by the inevitability of failure. Greenland is thus an uncomfortable place for both bourgeois religious piety - Catholic and Protestant – as well as Marxist ideology, precisely because of the optimistic assumptions about human nature and the eschatological Utopias that pervade both these positions³⁴.

Catholicism is, as matter of fact, no utopia for Greene. He liked to think of himself as a Catholic agnostic: “I say my prayers. I go to mass. I never believed in hell. There’s a big question mark over heaven. I’m not an atheist, which is a form of

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³⁴ Mark Bosco, “From *The Power And The Glory To The Honorary Consul*”, p. 57. He also writes: “There is thus always a dialectical strain in Greene’s religious imagination, a critical response to what Greene considered the major flaw of his Protestant heritage: the denial of this aboriginal calamity that compromises all of the noblest of human aspirations” (Mark Bosco, *Graham Greene’s Catholic Imagination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 26).

dogma and I'm against dogma. I'm agnostic"³⁵; "I would describe myself as a Catholic agnostic, not an atheist, and I feel a link with Catholicism. I feel no link with Anglicanism at all. When I became a Catholic and had to take another name, I took Thomas, after the doubter"³⁶. He always had a vibrant relationship with his new creed, to which he converted to marry his first wife. In a letter to her he confessed:

I've suddenly realized that I *do* believe the Catholic faith. Rationally I've believed for some time, but only this evening imaginatively³⁷.

Catholicism attracted him firstly intellectually, as he found it nearer to truth than other religions. Only after his journeys to Mexico and after he had seen the faith of the peasants during the persecutions he found himself emotionally attracted to Catholicism³⁸.

Always oscillating between emotional push and rational desire of truth, his relationship with Catholicism marks also the controversial relationships of his characters with their creed. In an experimental story published in a limited edition of 285 copies, *The Bear Fell Free*, guilt and suicide are "in the maternity ward, guilt and suicide in the trenches, in Jane's flat guilt and suicide". Greene's characters are burdened by their obsessive sense of guilt or ineptitude; in *The Man Within* and *The Quiet American* it is cowardice, in *Stamboul Train* it is failure; in *It's a Battlefield* it is awkwardness and guilt. Greene did not like to be called a Catholic novelist, but preferred the definition of Christian humanist. The Catholic genre found popularity in England in the 1930s and 1940s, a trend of which Greene, Evelyn Waugh and François Mauriac were perhaps the main exponents³⁹. However, Greene himself in one of his critical essays contrasted Catholic versus post-Catholic novels of the 1950s. What Greene found interesting were the contradictions in human

³⁵ Graham Greene, in the *Sunday Telegraph Magazine*, 28 August 1988. Greene also defended himself against the "accusations" of being a Jansenist: "I'm exactly the opposite of Jansenist. I believe in 'between the stirrup and the ground'" (Maria Couto, *Graham Greene: On the Frontier*, Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1988, p. 212).

³⁶ Maria Couto, *Graham Greene*, p. 212

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31, from a letter to Vivien Dayrell-Browning of 1925.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

³⁹ See David Tenenbaum, *Issues of Shame and Guilt in the Modern Novel: Conrad, Ford, Greene, Kafka, Camus, Wilde, Proust, and Mann*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009, and Mark Bosco, *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination*, pp. 7-18 in particular.

psychology⁴⁰, whereas the dogmas did not interest him if not for the possibility of conflict they generate:

The Church seems to me to be an attempt that was needed, perhaps, long ago, to explain a mystery. Once you try to explain a mystery you get things tabulated. But I certainly believe there is good and evil in the world⁴¹.

He did not feel guilty, for example, for not going to Mass; and instead he made the protagonist of one of his short stories, *A Visit to Morin* (1957), the representative of the paradoxes of faith that man can create, paradoxes to prove that “their belief is proved by their disbelief”⁴². Faith can nourish scepticism in Greene’s novels; loss of belief can be a proof of faith.

It seems that, as John Atkins said, Greene’s novels depict a wisdom that modernists have forgotten and that can still be found in the Church⁴³. Also the author used to think again and again about the kind of religiosity to which he was closer, that could vary according to the topic:

I don’t like the term ‘sin’: it’s redolent of a child’s catechism. The term has always stuck in my throat, because of the Catholic distinction between ‘mortal’ and ‘venial’ sin. [...] The word ‘mortal’ presupposes a fear of hell, which I find meaningless. That being the case, I fear that I’m a Protestant in the bosom of the Church⁴⁴.

Guilt and sins even seemed to him false words sometimes, in the sense that he did not reduce them to fixed dogma. In conclusion, he was a critical believer, and a critical writer, when he used the uncertainties and the theoretical and theological questions as subject for his characters full of humanity – and of detective attitude. Greene lamented, in an essay on Mauriac, the loss of religious sense in the English novel: “It was as if the world of fiction had lost a dimension: the characters of such

⁴⁰ John Atkins, *Graham Greene*, London: Calder and Boyars, 1966 (1957), p. 68.

⁴¹ Maria Couto, *Graham Greene*, p. 212.

⁴² Cedric Watts, *A Preface to Greene*, London and New York: Longman, 1996, p. 106.

⁴³ John Atkins, *Graham Greene*, p. 122.

⁴⁴ Marie Françoise Allain, *The Other Man. Conversation with Graham Greene*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983, p. 158.

distinguished writers as Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster wandered like cardboard symbols through a world that was paper-thin”⁴⁵. The wandering of his characters had to be different: the world had to be real and crude, the characters thick and heavy, with incommensurate inner obsessions. Even guilt had to have an important function, and although it represents a psychological and moral burden for the characters, it also adds layers of significance to their actions and thoughts. A sort of Joycean epiphany in Greene’s novels is the *felix culpa*⁴⁶, the positive aspect of the guilt of man in its being the cause of the atoning existence of Christ on earth. Guilt and sin are never linear in his work, and they are not so at all in *The Power and the Glory*. Although Greene said that the novel was like a seventeenth-century play full of “a virtue, a vice, pride, pity, etc.”⁴⁷, and that the protagonist never changed throughout the narrative (notwithstanding his frequent nostalgic memories about his pure past), I think that the demarcation is not so neat, and that good and evil intertwine in an individual fight between obvious guilt and not so obvious holiness. The priest embodies the paradox of the holy sinner, as it appears also in the epigraph of Charles Péguy to *The Heart of the Matter*: “Le pécheur est au coeur meme de chrétienté... Nul n’est aussi competent que le pécheur en matière de Chrétienté. Nul, si ce n’est le saint”. The last mute speech in his thoughts is of grief and hope at the same time: he is afraid that he has to go to God empty-ended, while it would have been quite easy to be a saint, with just a little more courage and self-restraint: “He knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted – to be a saint”⁴⁸; but at the end of the last chapter the word “saint”, with its presence, gives the reader a kind of sardonic knowledge that perhaps, somehow, he has been a kind of saint, guilty of fictional ambiguity.

⁴⁵ François Mauriac, in *Collected essays*, in Samuel Hynes (ed.), *Graham Greene*, p. 7.

⁴⁶ Mark Bosco, *Graham Greene’s Catholic Imagination*, p. 26.

⁴⁷ Greene admitted to Marie-Françoise Allain that the priest was an allegorical figure, standing for total dedication to a mission, and that he created also Judas-like figures (quoted in Miyano Shoko, *Innocence in Graham Greene’s Novels*, New York: Peter Lang, 2006, p. 71).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

3.2 *The Sinner's Progress*

In the progress towards his end, the priest – be he a saint or a mock martyr – moves across a land which is hostile and lost. Abandonment is, in *The Power and the Glory*, the essential characteristic added to the common base of all “Greeneland”, the seedy setting of Greene’s stories, a constantly sordid “evil land”⁴⁹.

If in Lowry’s novel space is invested with infinite mythical resonances, here it is a different kind of value added: morality. The spatial connotations of Mexico imply a banality and a worthlessness of the world which are symptoms of the abandonment of God⁵⁰, of the spiritual emptiness of a country that has been forced to renegade not only religious beliefs, but also the social life and the warmth related to them. As soon as the novel begins, Mexico is described as a bloody land that infects people with an incurable disease. Less mythical and less passionate than Lowry’s volcanoes, Greene’s landscapes are an important part of the legend of the desperate priest who fights against his guilt to save humanity. As Miller has argued,

two worlds are constantly either resonating or colliding with each other at various points in the narrative flow. One world is outer; it is the geographical place. The other is inner; it is the human heart. What grips Greene’s readers in this manifold and complex series of conflicts and resonances is their concern for both worlds, for the fate of a society or a culture on the one hand, and for human beings on the other⁵¹.

Individual and humankind are connected in the destiny of a single country, epitome of an archetypal story – the *Imitatio Christi* – and of a historical moment –

⁴⁹ The word “Greeneland” was coined by A. C. Marshall, in *Horizon* (May 1940). Later on, *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary I* of 1972 included the word: “A term used to describe the world of depressed seediness reputedly typical of the setting and characters of the novels of Graham Greene”.

⁵⁰ Anonymous, “Graham Greene: The Man Within”, in Samuel Hynes (ed.), *Graham Greene*, p. 13. Douglas W. Veitch divides the novel in different scenes according to the landscape: “The following treatment of landscape divides the novel into seven sections entitled respectively: The Huge Abandonment; The Inclosure Narrows; The Turning Screw; A Dark Night; Deliverance into temptation; The Lotus Land; Deliverance from Evil” (*The Fictional Landscape of Mexico: Readings in D. H. Lawrence, Graham Greene, and Malcolm Lowry*, Dissertation, Université de Montreal, 1974).

⁵¹ Robert Henry Miller, *Understanding Graham Greene*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990, p. 1.

the war period. Priest-and-land is an entity⁵² which parallels the theme of the journey through a land with which the narrator always associates evocative phrases like “a landscape of terror and lust”, or “a burning and abandoned ship”. As a matter of fact, in the first pages of the novel the narrator uses several times words referring to the semantic area of abandonment, in order to impress in the reader’s mind, as in the priest’s, the image and the atmosphere of a wasteland⁵³. In his *erlebte Rede*, the priest considers that “a little additional pain was hardly noticeable in the huge abandonment”⁵⁴, and when he realizes that he is destined to stay where he is (Tabasco, although it is not explicitly mentioned), he sadly admits: “He hears the sound of the *General Obregon*’s siren. He knew what it meant: the ship had kept to timetable: he was abandoned”⁵⁵. The priest is abandoned, the other villagers are abandoned, the land is abandoned: “A radio was playing somewhere: music from Mexico City, or perhaps even from London or New York, filtered into this obscure neglected state”⁵⁶. All the characters contribute to increase this general impression. Padre José, the married former priest, extends his desolation from his home – where he is mocked by his bossy wife and pestered by the street boys – to the whole planet:

Their little shameless voices filled the patio, and he smiled humbly and sketched small gestures for silence, and there was no respect anywhere left for him in his home, in the town, in the whole abandoned star⁵⁷.

Furthermore, another character shares this view, although he is less burdened by remorse and only perhaps by memories. It is the father of the family where the story of Juan, the martyr of a figure book, is being read to a young orthodox girl and a young cynical boy – the same boy that in the end will open the door to a new priest arriving in the village. When the boy, scolded by his mother for his doubtfulness, goes to his father, the father defends religion, but mostly for the atmosphere of joy it brought, rather than for its real meaning (“If we had a theatre, anything at all instead,

⁵² Richard Hoggart, “The Force of Caricature”, in Samuel Hynes (ed.), *Graham Greene*, p. 79.

⁵³ Abandonment is extremely present in the whole novel according to Cedric Watt as well (Cedric Watts, *A Preface to Greene*, p. 185).

⁵⁴ Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*, p. 13.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

we shouldn't feel so – left"⁵⁸), and says to the boy that he is not angry at him: "It's not your fault. We have been deserted"⁵⁹.

The land crossed by the priest during his wandering keeps its characteristics throughout the entire novel; every walk and every stop is marked by connotations and descriptions which reflect the negative axiology associated with the space of the story. The following metaphor, for example, is particularly intense:

The beetles had disappeared; the rain had apparently washed them away: it came perpendicularly down, with a sort of measured intensity, as if it were driving nails into a coffin lid⁶⁰.

In addition, in accord with the oscillation of the priest's sense of guilt, with his movements in and out of the state, in and out of a house, or hat, or barn, the character talks of grace or desolation, peace and hell; this is why the narrator can say phrases like: "He was back in the atmosphere of desertion"⁶¹, and also why he can use images that symbolize the atmosphere sharply, as when a snake appears on the way of his mule, and the narrator just says: "The mule went on"⁶². The priest may have a million doubts about his role in that country, about the choice of persisting in his journey; but in fact the narration knows where it is going, and nothing seems to stop the sinner's progress. On the contrary, the serpent, according to a critic, could be a symbol of the tests on his journey⁶³. The serpent is not the only symbolic images of the novel: Judas figures and Judas kisses, and cock crowing – rigorously three times – also abound. As Sheryl Pearson says, Greene "builds this picture through the repeated association of revolutionary philosophy with notions of desertedness, vacancy, emptiness, abandonment, nothingness, and damnation"⁶⁴. Obviously, revolutionary religion plays an extremely important role as well. All these elements formulate a system of symbols which is not new, but which represents, using old stereotypes and traditional imagery, a variation to that "medieval play" described by

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁶³ Thomas Wm. Hill, *Graham Greene's Wanderers*, p. 176.

⁶⁴ Sheryl S. Pearson, "'Is There Anybody There?': Graham Greene in Mexico", in *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 9, no. 2, May 1982, p. 278.

Greene; this variation is a novel written in the years just before World War II, in which also traditional Catholic morality is shaking in its same fundamentals, and in which the background is sordid desolation and the foreground is fear, faith, and restlessness. As Cedric Watts affirms, “[o]ne of the distinctive features of Greene’s life was his readiness to seek and find the ominous and the dangerous, sometimes the hellish amid the ordinary, the horrific within the mundane”⁶⁵. Greene shared with one of several inspiring masters, Joseph Conrad, the attitude to portray a complex inner world set on a plain but intense scenario, and playing with few significant objects or tools. Mexico-wasteland reflects the hopelessness of the characters; its sceneries are impressionistic paintings put together by “a moving, hand-held camera”⁶⁶ that films a picaresque adventure marked by reflections and encounters – the one originate the others. “The Power and the Glory, with its worried, reflective wanderings and its series of crucial encounters, moves brilliantly to a Jamesian rhythm”⁶⁷, says Lewis, who also defines the priest’s wanderings as “rhythmic peregrinations through anarchy”⁶⁸.

This anarchy is political, of course. It is important to remember that the novel is set in the state of Tabasco during the 1930s, when the Mexican government, actually controlled by Plutarco Elías Calles, was called by Pope Pius XI the Terrible Triangle because of the attempt to suppress the Catholic Church. In Tabasco, above all, the governor Tomás Garrido Canabal, particularly anti-clerical, encouraged the development of a fascist paramilitary group, the so-called “Red-Shirts”, whose purpose was to close all the churches on the territory and force all the priests to marry (Padre José is the epitome in the novel). However, in our story anarchy is somehow also moral, at least apparently, because all the doubts of the characters are used throughout the novel to describe ethical pathos, but at the same time they are restricted in that moral codification that Greene described as a morality play. Rigidity and wandering are twined in a way that constrict and open at the same time.

⁶⁵ Cedric Watts, *A Preface to Greene*, p. 9.

⁶⁶ Greene declared that he felt himself as belonging to the age of cinema, and that his descriptions wanted to be cinematic. See Maria Couto, *Graham Greene*, p. 216.

⁶⁷ R. W. B. Lewis, “The Fiction of Graham Greene: Between the Horror and the Glory”, in *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 19, no. 1, winter 1957, p. 66.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

The journey of the priest has been associated with many different patterns. One of these is the journey of the *picaro*, retraced especially by R. W. B. Lewis. For the critic, *The Power and the Glory* is picaresque because the priest, having lost the Church's guide, is "like a *picaro* who has to live by his wits in the predicament"⁶⁹:

He is a rogue, a *picaro*, in several kind of ways; his contradictory character includes much of the comical unpredictability of the traditional *picaro*; and the narrative Greene has written about him is perhaps the most patently picaresque of any we are considering – the lively story of the rogue on his travels, or better, his undignified flights from and toward the forces of destruction⁷⁰. Also, based on the encounter, as in the picaresque, an "outlaw wandering or hastening through an anarchic and hostile world"⁷¹.

If Lewis considers the priest's character a *picaro*, he also affirms that, paradoxically, he is a saint⁷², underlining the spiritual complexity and depth of thought that underlie a non-picaresque character. The priest is everyman – and in effect he bears no name, and he is not even called a priest until Part II – but he is also the pilgrim who is trying to atone and becoming worthy of the divinity. Frederick R. Karl finds in *The Power and the Glory* a procedure opposite to that of the Pilgrim's Progress⁷³: here it is a sinning man who is visiting hell and not the Heavenly City of God, looking not for virtue but for another kind of spiritual peace, I would say.

More obviously, the priest represents the hunted, the prize, the object of the hunter's desire. Nonetheless, the priest is actually fleeing not only from the police but also from his own self⁷⁴. In his life Graham Greene too was victim of restlessness, but in his case it was, at least on the surface, fear of boredom. He travelled in the most dangerous places at his time, to Tabasco during religious persecution – where he himself felt like a pariah, but lived a closer experience of God –, to a *léproserie* in Congo, to the Kikuyu reserve during the Mau-Mau insurrection, to Malaya and to

⁶⁹ Miyano Shoko, *Innocence in Graham Greene's Novels*, p. 72.

⁷⁰ R. W. B. Lewis, "The 'Trilogy'", in Samuel Hynes (ed.), *Graham Greene*, p. 59.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁷³ Frederick R. Karl, "Graham Greene's Demonical Heroes", in Harold Bloom (ed.), *Graham Greene*, New York – Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987, p. 52.

⁷⁴ See J. P. Kulshrestha, *Graham Greene: The Novelist*, Madras: Macmillan, 1977, p. 77.

Vietnam during the war, to Liberia; he was involved in espionage; and this was still nothing when compared to the Russian roulettes he played at Oxford, as he himself confessed in his autobiographical book *A Sort of Life*.

The priest is moved by completely different reasons. The significance of his journey in *The Power and the Glory* plays around the dichotomy stay/go. In the first pages of the book, when we see him through the eyes of Mr Tench, he is just called “the stranger”, looking “like a black question mark, ready to go, ready to stay”⁷⁵, as we have seen. “Stay” means to try to save as many souls as possible, but also to keep on wandering, with the risk of being caught anyway; “go” means stopping saving others, but saving oneself – therefore renouncing sainthood. This dichotomy is made even more complicated by the fact that staying paradoxically implies wandering – both physically and spiritually, necessary for survival.

The whole book is like a pendulum between his wandering and his wondering about the more or less righteousness of living or dying:

‘Let me be caught soon... Let me be caught.’ He had tried to escape, but he was like the King of a West African Tribe, the slave of his people, who may not even lie down in case the winds should fail⁷⁶.

He thinks of himself as victim of his role, of his people, the people he loves, or at least he should love, but for whom he believes it is his duty to sacrifice himself anyway. He would rather be caught, says the priest sometimes. But his fear compels his mind to create convoluted reasons and moral algorithms to persuade him to do so:

He had answers as plain and understandable as her questions. He said, ‘There’s the pain. To choose pain like that – it’s not possible. And it’s my duty not to be caught. You see, my bishop is no longer here.’ Curious pedantries moved him.’ This is my parish.’ He found a tortilla and began to eat ravenously⁷⁷.

⁷⁵ Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*, p. 9.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

The pain seems to be one of the priest's obsessions: "There's the pain. To choose pain like that – it's not possible. And it's my duty not to be caught"⁷⁸, he quickly adds, as he were destined to keep on wandering until Somebody would stop him. Later in the book, when the police fail to catch him again, he repeats aloud the same sense of responsibility: "I did my best. [...] It's *your* job – to give me up. What do you expect me to do? It's my job not to be caught"⁷⁹.

This idea is reinforced in him also by the depressing thought that his life is the worst example he could give to the young and to the other people that would have only him as image of priesthood. His death would free himself and the others; but his wandering would free just the others:

He thought: if I go, I shall meet other priests: I shall go to confession: I shall feel contrition and be forgiven: eternal life will begin for me all over again. The Church taught that it was every man's first duty to save his own soul. The simple ideas of hell and heaven moved in his brain; life without books, without contact with educated men, had peeled away from his memory everything but the simplest outline of the mystery. [...] If he left them, they would be safe, and they would be free from his example. [...] When he was gone it would be as if God in all this space between the sea and the mountains ceased to exist. Wasn't it his duty to stay, even if they despised him, even if they were murdered for his sake? even if they were corrupted by his example? He was shaken with the enormity of the problem. He lay with his hands over his eyes: nowhere, in all the wide flat marshy land, was there a single person he could consult. He raised the brandy to his mouth⁸⁰.

In a later scene, when the police come to the village where he is hiding and are very close to catching him, he is tempted to surrender to the lieutenant, shouting that he is the one he wants, with a sense of delusive peace; but then he realizes: "Death was not the end of pain – to believe in peace was a kind of heresy"⁸¹. His respect of his religion is so deep that he prefers to believe he is destined to hell rather than put

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

in crises his religion's dogma – as it is for one of the characters of the short story *A Visit to Morin*. He possesses a disquieting consciousness of his obsessively haunting sins. Even one of the most emotional scenes, when for the first time in six years he consecrates the Host, his emotions are strong but nonetheless he feels guilty for his wandering: “you went round making God knew what martyrs – in Concepción or elsewhere – when you yourself were without grace enough to die”⁸². Furthermore, his anxiety is increased by the invitation to go by the others as well; Maria, his ex and probably only woman, pushes him brutally:

‘Now perhaps you’ll go – go away altogether. You’re no good any more to anyone,’ she said fiercely. ‘Don’t you understand, father? We don’t want you any more.’ An acerbic verbal fight full of accusations follows, and also the discussion about his supposed martyrdom that we mentioned earlier. The woman concludes: ‘For God’s sake take this brandy and go’⁸³.

Again brandy is the antidote for his own thoughts, and for those of “his” people. Betrayed – comprehensibly at his eyes – by the community, he experiences a moment of depression:

He walked across the plaza with his shoulders hunched; he felt that there wasn't a soul in the place who wasn't watching him with satisfaction – the trouble-maker who for obscure and superstitious reasons they preferred not to betray to the police. He felt envious of the unknown gringo whom they wouldn't hesitate to trap – he at any rate had no burden of gratitude to carry round with him⁸⁴.

He feels guilt for gratitude too, because unworthy. Yet, when he is caught – and before his release –, close in a cell, he is calmed by his own voice, the simple sense of communicating with another human being⁸⁵. He realizes that it is the end, but that in a dirty place stinking “to heaven” it is possible to find peace. Once the

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

pattern of eternal return – his personal one, at least – is stopped, he understands that peace is possible, the same peace he had thought to be a blasphemy⁸⁶:

Again he was touched by an extraordinary affection. He was just a criminal among a herd of criminals... He had a sense of companionship which he had never experienced in the old days when pious people came kissing his black cotton glove⁸⁷.

When he has no longer moral and status responsibilities, when he has unburdened himself of all the recriminations related to them, when in short he has become free from religious sense of sin he finds peace. The religious superego is being detached.

But again, the wandering is not yet to stop:

It was, of course, the end, but at the same time you had to be prepared for everything, even escape. If God intended him to escape He could snatch him away from in front of a firing-squad. But God was merciful. There was only one reason, surely, which could make Him refuse His peace – if there was any peace – that he could still be of use in saving a soul, his own or another's⁸⁸.

He understands, deeply inside, that his wanderings could give him salvation, atone for his sins. He continues:

It was impossible to say what souls might not be lost simply because he was obstinate and proud and wouldn't admit defeat. He couldn't even say Mass any longer – he had no wine. It had gone down the dry gullet of the Chief of Police. It was appallingly complicated. He was still afraid of death, he would be more afraid of death yet when the morning came, but it was beginning to attract him by its simplicity⁸⁹.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Everything is terribly complicated, especially in his soul. To go, not to go, to desire to go, not to desire to go: the pendulum is moving throughout the whole narrative. The following quotation sardonically defines this oscillatory moral attitude of the protagonist:

He didn't sleep again: he was striking yet another bargain with God. This time, if he escaped from the prison, he could escape altogether. He would go north, over the border⁹⁰.

In the end, again through a dense free indirect speech, there is a shift in the carrier responsibility: now it is God who has the power of decision, an external superior and more deign entity who can see what is wrong and what is right: "It seemed as if God were deciding... finally"⁹¹; and again: "God had decided. He had to go on with life, go on and making decisions, acting on his own advice, making plans..."⁹². The lieutenant is exasperated when he hears the same confidence in God's will from the mouth of his so-longed priest:

'Where are you going?'

'God knows.'

'You are all alike, you people. You never learn the truth – that God know nothing'⁹³.

In the atmosphere of flight, again and again, the priest takes the semblances of a rogue; the lieutenant is somehow even deluded that the symbol of what he most hates looks like such a plain and dull human being: "This was just a tramp's face. Pain had exposed the nerves and given the face a kind of spurious intelligence"⁹⁴. The priest is a fake: a fake great personality, a fake hero, a mock martyr, a mock idol.

From the lieutenant's point of view, the priest believes in nothing actually; his faith is invalidated by the fact itself that it is an empty object:

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

There are mystics who are said to have experienced God directly. He was a mystic, too, and what he had experienced was vacancy – a complete certainty in the existence of a dying, cooling world, of human beings who had evolved from animals for no purpose at all. He knew⁹⁵.

There is a difference between the priest and the lieutenant that changes completely their attitude, and that, as a consequence, modifies the narrative structure as well. The priest is sure about his creed, but he is not sure at all about dogma, the destiny of the sinner, and the limit between good and bad. Therefore, he wanders with no certainty in a hellish land, without even knowing why. On the contrary, the lieutenant is sure in his atheism, in his Marxist perception of the world, of what is legal and illegal, and he tries with all his strength and power to force the world into this structure, to make it fit into his consciousness of void. His only purpose, therefore, is to accomplish his duty, and catch the maker of chaos, the black sheep – justified also by the fact that the hunted is considered as such also by his community. In two different ways, both the priest and the lieutenant represent aspects of the historical period they represent: true moral anxiety and false political convictions.

From the height of his professional and ideological fervour, the lieutenant can accuse the priest, playing with his own biblical language: “You had better know everything. You’ve been tried and found guilty”⁹⁶. From his point of view, the priest not only believes in nothing, but he also understands nothing: he should have learnt to distinguish between what is real and what is not, what counts and what does not count in this world, before travelling all around it, on *his* soil. Yet, when the pursuit is over, the lieutenant feels drained, and, perhaps as the priest before him, useless; nonetheless, if he can be sure that he has achieved what he wanted, the priest will never be able to know if his choices were right or wrong – at least, not in his life, whereas the reader is probably left with more knowledge.

Nevertheless, the priest possesses a sort of ironic knowledge of the things of the world. As we have seen, he feels that sinning has made him closer to real people, closer to the truth of things. One of the gloomiest emotions of the novel, experienced again and again in reading, is loneliness. It is isolation that the priest fears during his

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

journey, an isolation that, paradoxically, would eventually also become part of his glory. He is rejected by people – he feels abandoned even because he is not recognized by the police when arrested – by whom *he* is not betrayed (except when he is finally caught), but always sent away. He is a sickness now, removed like an infection, and he feels like “a man without a passport who is turned away from every harbour”⁹⁷. He wanders alone, on mule or on foot, through cities, villages, forests, meadows, in a province where the institution which had supported him no longer exists – he has been really abandoned, not like some other protagonists of the novels we will be examining, who have caused their pain themselves, and have isolated themselves. Kulshrestha points out how the hero’s sense of exile, social as well as cosmic, makes him feel like “an outlaw and a sinner, who feels rejected both by the human beings and the saints”⁹⁸.

As Cain, the whisky priest is left alone, in time – because between an encounter and another he is on his own reflecting on his guilt burden – and in space, as he makes a journey, as we have seen, in an abandoned land. The priest can feel his destiny as something “determined”: “just as if all human life were receding before him, as if Somebody had determined that from now on he was to be left alone – altogether alone”⁹⁹. Like Cain, he is – or better, he *feels* – that he has been abandoned to himself by the essence of good, as it was the land: “as if man in all this state had been left to man”¹⁰⁰:

It was nearly like peace, but not quite. For peace you needed human company – his aloneness was like a threat of things to come¹⁰¹.

Branded by loneliness, he feels that this is a presage of his future difficulties, or even damnation. However, he is not alone, as he says, and this is a cause of fear, because the human beings who are interested in him are only enemies, creatures with evasive faces, as if they came out of the Stone Age¹⁰², or even worse, the lieutenant.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 100.

⁹⁸ J. P. Kulshrestha, *Graham Greene*, p. 78.

⁹⁹ Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*, p. 146.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 147.

His flock is the only (fictional) meaning of the priest's journey: betrayal in the human consortium is, as it was for Cain, cause of banishment, even though the banishment the priest experiences is, most of all, in his inner guilty conscience. The narrator hints at the true values that he wanted to depict as moral truth in the novel: when the priest is asked to go and see a dying "yankee", the dying man is called "a good Catholic": he only robbed and killed, and did nothing worse, as on the contrary the priest and Mr Lehr did – that is, betraying their friends¹⁰³. Stinging the priest's conscience, this moral *rappelle à l'ordre* is extremely direct and difficult to digest for the character's psyche. However, as we have already seen, a kind of atonement is the acknowledgement that peace can arise from pain. The priest is isolated by his vocation, and his vocation seems to desert him in turn. Nevertheless, it seems like he has learnt a lesson from his sinning. As a true saint must experience, he needs to be more human to ascend to sanctity. His sufferings, together with the sacrifice of his social life, seem to bring him, as a fictional atonement, the power necessary to get the glory.

Thomas Hill offers an interesting interpretation of the priest's status of traveller, in association with his being alienated from his original background: "almost all of Greene's characters are locked up in their rootless conditions"¹⁰⁴. According to Bernd Jager, the psychologist on whose studies Hill draws his inspiration, every journeyer comes from a context, leaves it, and constructs a new dwelling "not merely from the new understanding or knowledge but from what one began with". Consequently, the journeyer becomes, in several ways, "grounded"; otherwise, says Jager, he becomes "a wanderer, without ground, goal, purpose, or affiliation", characters with no family background, no sense of community, "thus forcing them to look for connections with other people without any models in their lives other than other wanderers to show them how to live among and communicate with others. As a result, they remain not journeyers but wanderers disconnected and cut off from any community and dwelling"¹⁰⁵. In Jager's terms, "to journey" is to

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

¹⁰⁴ Kazumi Yamagata, foreword to Thomas Wm. Hill, *Graham Greene's Wanderers*. The study is based on the ideas of Heidegger, on "The Hero with a Thousand faces" by Joseph Campbell, who dealt with the pattern of separation-initiation-return, and on Bernd Jager, psychologist. Hill has based his notion of wandering not on myth or epic but on normal human experience.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

travel as a representative of a community, whereas “to wander” is to travel aimlessly without a community ahead or behind the wanderer: “Greene’s novels tell of the suffering that the protagonist must go through as a result of this disconnectedness”¹⁰⁶:

The wanderer, on the other hand, is identified with the dwelling only through association, not through representation. Without a grounding, our protagonist in Greene’s novels is merely a wanderer. Most of Greene’s characters are wanderers, lacking connections with parents or any institution with the authority to give them identity. In various ways, therefore, they are left to search for their identities in a fragmented world without hope of ever finding identity or dwelling. *The Honorary Consul* and *Travels with My Aunt* are both important novels because they directly confront the difficulty of trying to live without parental backing.

[...] Greene’s characters are for the most part wanderers without God, parental backing, or community support. Most have turned their backs on their childhood dwellings and are in a state of rejection, exile, or flight. Nevertheless, Greene’s characters are always in search of some kind of dwelling, often alternate dwellings. [...] In the Christian tradition, only Christ was the perfect journeyer, heaven is the only perfect dwelling, and Satan the ultimate wanderer. The reason that Greene’s novels are so intriguing to us is that we are all on journeys or building dwellings to some degree¹⁰⁷.

Faith in the gods constitutes one of the primary grounds beneath the journeyer¹⁰⁸. In Greene’s case, Community is primarily the Church, and the protagonist is motivated by his grounding¹⁰⁹. This is why the Church compels the priest to fulfil his duties, at the cost of his life; and if he is troubled by his conscience

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 7 and 9.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 2 and 4-5.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 201, n. 3. Hill continues: “Like Jonas running off to Tharsis (Jonas 1:3), the nameless priest ... is fleeing from his recognized dwelling when we meet him... Yet the dwelling that is calling him is the strongest by far of those of Pinkie, Scobie, or Maurice in Greene’s other so called Catholic novels because his dwelling is the Roman Church, a dwelling in the world but not of the world. He is called to be the representative of this Church community while on his journey. It is from this community that he receives his identity. And it is the priest’s redeveloping faith in this religious community and the form and structure that it carries along with it that must carry him forward – in terms of the journey – into the forest of experience (p. 155).

and uncertain about his actions, it is just because of the complications added by psychology and by the twentieth-century moral crisis – and also because of Greene’s passion for pursuits and ambiguities (the theme of the pursuit is clear since the epigraph by Dryden: “Th’ inclosure narrow’d; the sagacious power / Of hounds and death drew nearer every hour”).

Hill focuses his analysis of the priest’s movements on his drive to find a new dwelling:

For Greene, individual humility grows out of the pain and suffering experienced by members of a community. To separate one’s self from one’s community is death and failure. Once the priest pours himself out spiritually in front of his community and confesses his love for his daughter, he is never fully separated from them or her again. To have remained across the border would have destroyed this unity. It would have been to abandon them as Luis’s father had felt abandoned. And it would have been to turn his journey into a pointless wandering¹¹⁰.

However, I do believe this is exactly what the essence of the novel is: the journey of the priest wants to seem pointless, although with a sort of happy, hoping ending, as we will see shortly. His being out of the Church psychologically forces him to be engaged in a never-ending fight with his conscience. Walking assumes a positive aspect only when it occurs in a community: brief moments of solace happens when he first walks in the village, and when he is closed in a stinky and sinful prison cell: these are perhaps the only moments of peace – and the priest is quite sure that there will be no peace for him even in the afterlife. The aimlessness of his wandering is increased by the knowledge that he has already been damned, and thus there is a deeper sense of uselessness added to the narrative.

His journey, according to Hill, can never be accomplished alone: “There must always be a Sancho or a Dr. Colin. As a number of scholars have noted, in Greene’s earlier novels, the characters were simply split in two”¹¹¹. The priest has another man within, as the title of another of his novels, *The Man Within*, says; the title is taken

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

from Thomas Browne's line "There's another man within me that's angry with me", and is extremely significant when we consider the major role of psychoanalysis and sense of guilt in Greene's novels:

[...] it is this duality in man's nature with which Greene is primarily concerned. For him the pursuit is always on: it is both down the arches of the years as well as down the labyrinthine ways of each man's mind¹¹².

The Man Within depicts a character that moodily dips into his Bible and goes for long lonely walks because he has sinned, and is aware of it. His peace comes only when he discovers that the Bible justifies his sin; and the interesting thing is that from that moment on he stops not only Bible-reading, but also his walks¹¹³.

Wandering is evidently representing a troubled state of mind, not only in *The Power and the Glory* but also in other Greene's novels. In a very intense moment of the story, the priest even feels that he is roaming in a sort of religious non-space:

It was an odd thing that ever since that hot and crowded night in the cell he had passed into a region of abandonment – almost as if he had died there with the old man's head on his shoulder and now wandered in a kind of limbo, because he wasn't good or bad enough. Life didn't exist anymore¹¹⁴.

Dialogues – between the priest and others and between the priest and himself – are a narratological expedient for intensifying the theme of wandering and loneliness, as they are the apex of the priest's glory. Talks are even quoted as moments retarding action, scenes more than dialogues, peace before wandering:

It would soon be clear enough to start the long journey back. He felt a desire to go on talking, to delay even by a few minutes the decision to start¹¹⁵.

¹¹² Neville Braybrooke, "Graham Greene: A Pioneer Novelist" in *College English*, vol. 12, no. 1, October 1950, p. 1.

¹¹³ See John Atkins, *Graham Greene*, p. 18.

¹¹⁴ Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*, p. 146.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

Although he considers his flight consecrated by his mission, the “labyrinthine ways” he treads are fictional devices to represent his labyrinthine thoughts, and they are not always welcome to the protagonist. Even his accomplished flee over the border – another nameless place – fails, just because he is not sure that it is what he really wants – and what the others want, since the narrator informs us that: “He knew that the *jefe* wasn’t pleased that he had brought the priest in – an escape would have been better from his point of view”¹¹⁶. If he ever transformed from stranger to prodigal when he goes back to the village¹¹⁷ and if he has ever been tempted by dwelling, nonetheless wandering and spiritual restlessness related to it can never – both thematically and fictionally – end.

Not only the priest, but also other characters in the same novel are exiled, both physically and spiritually, and resigned to their fate: in particular, Mr Tench and Padre José, the other expatriates encountered on the way. Mr Tench is a healer as the priest is, a dentist doctor; both have failed, both are ended in a wasteland. However, the priest is on the move, whereas Mr Tench only desires an escape, up in the north, but the menacing landscape itself seems to push him to stay; nevertheless, after the encounter with the priest, we see him finally writing a letter – we will see how letters are meaningful in *Under the Volcano* as well – in an attempt at reconciliation with his family. Meanwhile, Padre José is regularly wandering in his marital imprisonment: he is obliged to be sedentary, and frustrated, but this causes him restlessness and pushes him to walk to the only place available, the cemetery. His spatial movement is even more restricted than the priest’s; his inner depth is less explored, and his character is less complicated since he does not oscillate between peace and anxiety, and his wanderings are motivated by moral despair only. When his wife does not allow him to go and confess the priest before his execution he is described as follows:

He tried to giggle, but no sound could have been more miserable than the half-hearted attempt. His head drooped between his knees; he looked as if he had abandoned everything, and been abandoned¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

¹¹⁷ Thomas Wm. Hill, *Graham Greene’s Wanderers*, p. 170.

¹¹⁸ Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*, p. 204.

The priest, on the contrary, still hopes, tries to bribe God, commutes his liberty with the death of others, and tries to love and consecrate in order to atone. When he knows that Padre José has refused him confession, he even pities him, and exclaims: “Poor man”. There is a sort of attachment to life and truth which renders the protagonist a missionary, or even a prophet.

Haunted by the guilt of his own sins and hunted by the police, administering communion and hearing confessions when and where he can, the priest’s attitude also reminds, according to someone, of another biblical figure: “one of anger and frustration like Ezechiel who goes and does what God calls him to do but ‘in bitterness in the indignation’ of his spirit (Ezechiel 3:14)”¹¹⁹. However, rather than anger, I think that his character is one of acceptance and serene passivity, although anxious and troubled. It is as if Greene had limited anxiety as a fictional device to the psychological causes for wandering, but had put it in a man whose personality, in the end, is resigned and perhaps even reconciled with the world and his God. As we will see in the other novels we are going to analyze later in this study, the main characteristic of Cain’s figure in the period we are covering is perhaps mature or disenchanted acknowledgement of one’s own inescapable guilt, and of the eschatological void that surrounds it.

3.3 Achieving Sanctity

The priest never gives up his journey, urged by his strong – because troubled and guilty – conscience. He simply cannot give it up. Trying to preserve his loyalty to the most important matter in his life, his creed, he flees through forests and mountains, “with all mankind, as it seems to him, arrayed against him, and no rest for the sole of his foot”¹²⁰. The pursuit takes on an almost dream-like intensity, just like the Consul’s wandering around the town in *Under the Volcano*, because of the mental and spiritual tribulations of the character. He is compelled to flee, scared that he could cause people’s deaths in unforgivable sin, his thought always directed to salvation; he thinks that God refuses to give him His peace (“if there was any peace”)

¹¹⁹ Thomas Wm. Hill, *Graham Greene’s Wanderers*, p. 164.

¹²⁰ *The Saturday Review*, 30 March 1968, quoted in J. P. Kulshrestha, *Graham Greene*, p. 77.

because he might still be of some use to save even a single soul. The sudden choice visible in the following few lines expresses perfectly this sense of despair, but also the firmness of his decision not to put an end to his Pilgrim's Progress:

‘Better go north, father’ [...]. One mustn't have human affections – or rather one must love every soul as if it were one's own child. The passion to protect must extend itself over a world – but he felt it tethered and aching like a hobbled animal to the tree trunk. He turned his mule south¹²¹.

His journey – which bears also the ancient connotation of the word, “travail” (work, labour) – is simultaneously a flight from and toward the forces of destruction¹²². Throughout the novel, the greatest loss is the loss of God. He confesses to God, to the lieutenant, and to himself, but he is not absolved, from both a religious and a psychological point of view. Nonetheless, the fact that he is aware of this, that what he would have needed was sainthood, gives hope to him, and to the reader too.

Firstly, let us see how the *The Power and the Glory* approaches its ending. The priest brings with him, throughout the whole novel, an atmosphere of serenity which subtly transpires through the physical dereliction, the drunkenness, and his spiritual crippling. Even more interesting is the fact that the *erlebte Rede* used in the narrative often manifests the same atmosphere in all the characters. It is almost a self-conscious narrator travestied into the vests of his characters. Different characters say melancholically: “I will pray for you”. It might seem a typical phrase to hear pronounced in a “Catholic” novel; but I think it actually adds – together with simple characterization – a rhythm and a circularity which makes the theme resound throughout the novel. This intensity is always counterbalanced by the priest's sardonic giggles and irony. For example, the priest believes that a pendulum always swings in life between exhilaration and pain, as to say that the worse cannot be that bad¹²³ – when in fact he is at war with himself, and perhaps also with his God. He also laughs, one of his frequent giggles, when a woman in the cell calls him a martyr,

¹²¹ Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*, p. 80.

¹²² R. W. B. Lewis, “The ‘trilogy’”, in Samuel Hynes (ed.), *Graham Greene*, p. 59.

¹²³ Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*, p. 56.

and he remembers Maria's words about bringing mockery to the Church: "It is wrong to think that just because one dies... no"¹²⁴. He laughs at himself, and this adds comedy and tragedy simultaneously.

The continuous laughing and giggles symbolize the serenity, in the end, of the priest's soul, of the grin against the destiny of mankind and, perhaps, the importance of what his presence on earth has been¹²⁵. Moreover, even when he finds a kind of tranquillity in his resignation to the status of sinfulness, he cynically analyses the sinful aspect of this serenity:

Now that he no longer despaired it didn't mean, of course, that he wasn't damned – it was simply that after a time the mystery became too great, a damned man putting God into the mouths of men: an odd sort of servant, that, for the devil¹²⁶.

Sometimes seriousness and irony intertwine with a disquieting effect. Mark Bosco identifies some central ironies and pairs in the novel, moving around the ideological conflict between the Catholic priest and the atheist lieutenant: "loyalty and betrayal, hope and despair, success and failure, the desire for peace and the necessity for subversive activity"¹²⁷. One of the greatest achievements of Graham Greene is, in my opinion, the certainty that there is no certainty, however plain and linear a narrative may seem. One may say, for example, that sin represents a univocal perspective in the novel, and that it offers an identifiable axiology – however complex the fictional dynamics may appear by means of the characters' doubts. Yet, the author himself blinks at the hidden meaning of his stories, when compared to Mauriac's: "Mauriac's sinners sin against God, whereas mine, however hard they try, can never quite manage to..."¹²⁸. Another critic explicitly describes Greene's representation of theology in the novel as "cheating":

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

¹²⁵ See R. W. B. Lewis, "The 'Trilogy'", in Samuel Hynes (ed.), *Graham Greene*, p. 67.

¹²⁶ Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*, p. 57.

¹²⁷ Mark Bosco, "From *The Power And The Glory* To *The Honorary Consul*", p. 61.

¹²⁸ Martin Shuttleworth and Simon Raven, "The Art of Fiction: Graham Greene", p. 161.

There is no better example of theological cheating than in *The Power and the Glory*, as Mr Martin has noted. The policeman and his arguments are a parody of what they are in life, and the priest gets his strength not through his arguments but through his experiences¹²⁹.

Therefore, atheism and religion too have no constricted and constricting borders: both are governed by similar rules, and both, most importantly, fight for the truth – another major theme in the novel. Both characters try to impose their truth, one aggressively through politics, and the other more politely through a popular creed. The border between altruism and egotism is extremely uncertain in both cases. In the end, both truths are right, and both have a part in the complicated feelings produced in the reader at the end of the book.

The plot itself seems to move around the pursuit not only of the priest, but also of the truth he really believes in, as it is for the other main characters; a characteristic that grows in intensity towards the end of the novel. When among “his people” in a prison cell, the priest is very much estimated by a woman, with whom he has one topical dialogue. When the woman is disgusted by people having sex in the cell, the priest shows the wisdom that comes from experience:

‘Don’t believe that. It’s dangerous. Because suddenly we discover that our sins have so much beauty. [...] Saints talk about the beauty of suffering. Well, we are not saint, you and I. Suffering to us is just ugly. Stench and crowding and pain. *That* is beautiful in that corner – to them. It needs a lot of learning to see things with a saint’s eye: a saint gets subtle taste for beauty and can look down on poor ignorant palates like theirs. But we can’t afford to.’

‘It’s mortal sin.’

‘We don’t know. It may be. But I’m a bad priest, you see. I know – from experience – how much beauty Satan carried down with him when he fell’¹³⁰.

The pathos is just a little lowered by a sentence that appears a few lines after: “I want drink at this moment more than anything, more than God. That’s a sin too”¹³¹.

¹²⁹ Graham Martin, “Novelists of Three Decades: Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, C. P. Snow”, quoted in John Atkins, *Graham Greene*, p. xi.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

Everything is sin, that is to say, we are allowed to sin because it is natural, unavoidable, and even beautiful. The priest is conscious that his ideas can sound disturbing to the less sophisticated ears of an innocent criminal; and soon his sense of guilt directs itself to this new idea, and tries to find new solutions:

The woman was silent now: he wondered whether after all he had been too harsh with her. If it helped her faith to believe that he was a martyr... But he rejected the idea: one was pledged to truth¹³².

He is never sure if it is right to keep on glorifying his religion. He is just sure that repenting for him has become difficult, if not impossible. On the contrary, the lieutenant is sure of what he wants, although, perhaps, less conscious of the motives. He is so obstinate to fulfil his aim and violent that he lacks the reasoned and pondered justifications of the priest:

He would eliminate from their childhood everything which had made him miserable, all that was poor, superstitious, and corrupt. They deserved the truth – a vacant universe and a cooling world, the right to be happy in any way they chose. He was quite prepared to make a massacre for their sakes – first the Church and then the foreigner and then the politician – even his own chief would one day have to go. He wanted to begin the world again with them, in a desert¹³³.

It is pretty sure from this paragraph that he had some trauma in his youth: he wants to start over the world, disgusted by educated or acculturated people. He would like to have a new world, with simple men and women to inform with his Marxist and atheistic ideas, with no superstructures. On an occasion the lieutenant regretfully says to his chief of police that he only wishes he had the *power*. There is a complex irony also about authority in this story. Who has the power in *The Power and the Glory*? (The title comes from the Lord's Prayer: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, now and forever"). One might expect that there is a

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 126

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

scission between the two, and that the power is for the lieutenant, whereas the glory for the priest; but even if it is so – and of course the matter is far more complicated – the characters are depicted in such a way that their thoughts and acts are always, ironically, opposite to what they should represent.

So it is for the priest: almost pathetically, at the end of the novel, when he is preparing himself to die, he believes he is going to face God unworthy, with nothing good done; whereas it is quite obvious that he has changed people's lives for the better. This bitter sensation is described concisely by this metaphor altogether pragmatic – perhaps more Protestant than Catholic: “He woke up with the sense of complete despair that a man might feel finding the only money he possessed was counterfeit”¹³⁴.

Both the two important conversations that mark the end of the presence of the priest in the novel show the persevering humility of the priest: the first is between the lieutenant and the priest, the second is a dialogue between the priest and himself and his God, his confession. During the first one, again he reaffirms the fact that he is not a martyr, as Maria's teaching told him:

‘[...] It's a mistake one's makes – to think just because a thing is difficult or dangerous ...’ [...]

The lieutenant said in a tone of fury, ‘Well, you're going to be a martyr – you've got that satisfaction.’

‘Oh no. Martyrs are not like me. They don't think all the time – if I had drunk more brandy I shouldn't be so afraid.’¹³⁵

Alcohol is again the symbol of imperfection and unworthiness. The priest continues saying “If I hadn't been so useless, useless”¹³⁶. His final confession, pathetically modulated between a sip of brandy and another, sees his attempt at a final refusal of pride in name of altruistic renunciation of salvation. Nonetheless, even in the last words referred to the protagonist, pride silently emerges. The terrific “odd” silence that the priest perceives in prison the night before the execution sounds as if the entire world had stopped to watch him die. This intensifier of atmosphere is,

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

in my opinion, voluntarily used to represent, at least in part, the almost megalomaniac sensations of the character. The narrator describes his last moments in the following dramatic way:

He caught sight of his own shadow on the cell wall; it had a look of surprise and grotesque unimportance. What a fool he had been to think that he was strong enough to stay when others fled. What an impossible fellow I am, he thought, and how useless. I have done nothing for anybody. I might just as well have never lived. [...] perhaps after all he was not at the moment afraid of damnation – even the fear of pain was in the background. He felt only an immense disappointment because he had to go to God empty-handed, with nothing done at all. It seemed to him, at that moment, that it would have been quite easy to have been a saint. It would only have needed a little self-restraint and a little courage. He felt like someone who has missed happiness by seconds at an appointed place. He knew now that at the end there was only one thing that counted – to be a saint¹³⁷.

This last sentence is a sort of question mark posed in the mind of the reader. It shows the pride of the priest, together with his doubts; and it opens the possibility that he lost sainthood, but also, paradoxically, that he gained it.

The death of the priest is eclipsed, and metonymically represented by the death of another martyr, read by a fervent believer for the ears of more sceptic ears but ready to change. The story told in different chapters by a mother to her children is destined to mark the last scene of the novel too. The boy, as we have seen, has been sceptical during the whole reading, and has had a dialogue with his father about his disenchanted attitude towards religion. However, in this last section, something is to change:

Even the boy showed interest, standing by the window, looking out into the dark curfew-emptied street – this was the last chapter, and in the last chapter things always happened violently. Perhaps all life was like that – dull and then a heroic flurry at the end¹³⁸.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

This is a conscious, filmic device of Greene's, who leaves hints the more and more intense and explicit as the narrative is close to conclusion. The implausibility of a similar thought in a boy, suddenly interested in the most powerful aspects of the story that had bored him so far, appears as a sudden, miraculous movement toward grace. Heroism seems to be necessary to appeal to a young reader, a young believer. Perhaps it is melodrama that appeals to Catholics in the novel, perhaps this is the message that Greene – in part at least – wanted to communicate; perhaps Greene is trying to say that literature must portray human tragedy in name of the human need for pathos.

Melodrama has its apex in the epiphany concluding the novel. Somebody is knocking at the family's door. The boy opens the door. As soon as the boy sees a priest, half incredulous and half enchanted, without even listening to his name while he is introducing himself, the boy kisses his hand, in a kind of eternal return. However, if it is a return of truth or just of adoration, this is one of the questions that the novel leaves unsolved.

The "original" priest is dead, but a substitute has come, unexpectedly, in a *coup de theatre*. Was the priest's choice to wander useful, or are the two events not related? The final idea that lingers in the reader's memory is, anyway, that the priest has not been defeated, that he was not at all useless, but instead miraculously blessed. The new wandering priest has entered the community, and from there another journey will possibly start, or end.

The priest has, in fact, found his heaven on earth, even though after his death. For Cedric Watts, the tragic story of the priest may be part of a new divine comedy, whose journey heavenwards is helped by Coral, the priest's Beatrix¹³⁹. Coral is the bravest character of the novel: she is ready even to take the responsibilities of vengeance if anybody kills the priest. "It was her life", says the narrator. She is the only one who seems to possess a whole, undivided personality. In her case, sin would not become guilt; and guilt would not become a psychiatric obsession.

Francis Kunkel has found a paradox in Greene's characters:

¹³⁹ Cedric Watts, *A Preface to Greene*, p. 183.

Not only are the Catholic characters greater sinners, but they are frequently less happy in the state of grace than they are in the state of sin. [...] Pascal describes the wretchedness of man without God; Greene describes the wretchedness of man with God¹⁴⁰.

Greene creates monocular characters, but fictionally empowered with sense of guilt, which in this case is much entangled with the sense of sin. Greene is possibly the only author among the ones examined here to have invented characters wandering in a wasteland in which the mercy of God appears, although it is said overtly that, on the contrary, it has been abandoned by grace. Catholicism is critically exposed in the novel – and Greene was criticised, in effect, for his heterodoxy – but it re-emerges controversially purified. The journey theme allows a play with the quite rigid – at least traditionally – religion; wandering accompanies the lucubration of the protagonist, and its tortuous paths are an objective correlative for abstract, imponderable thoughts.

Mark Bosco beautifully explains the relationship between Catholicism and the theme of pursuit:

Greene's most famous novel re-enacts an archetypal story of pursuit and betrayal, specifically drawn in Catholic terms by making the chase motif operate on two levels. The first is the fugitive priest attempting to escape from the pursuing forces of a political state in which Catholicism is treasonable and priesthood is punishable by death, the second the discovery that the priest is even more intensely pursued by the power of God's grace. From the opening scene when the nameless whiskey priest arrives at the port from which he might have made an escape, the narrative follows the priest's journey in which his own purgation and self-knowledge grows in direct proportion to his ability to minister to those Catholics in need of the sacrament¹⁴¹.

More than ability, I would say *inability*. In the search for himself the priest finds some disquieting abnormalities in his believing, and also truths about his soul: one is that his sense of guilt is unavoidable, that failure is his destiny, and that the

¹⁴⁰ Francis L. Kunkel, "The Theme of Sin and Grace", quoted in John Atkins, *Graham Greene*, p. xii.

¹⁴¹ Mark Bosco, "From *The Power And The Glory* To *The Honorary Consul*", pp. 60-61.

power and the glory do not necessarily go together. The priest discovers something more about himself, but also something more about the truth of his faith. He discovers his incapacity to be perfect, his *necessity* to be incapable, because this is the modern man's essence, the modern *Catholic* man's essence:

The Power and the Glory thus reverses the traditional detective novel sequence whereby a puzzle precipitates a search; here, it is the search for the priest, who is temporarily at large, that calls attention to the more mysterious gap between man and God – the puzzle itself¹⁴².

Religion is an important aspect of Cain's re-writing in twentieth-century novels. I have chosen *The Power and the Glory* because it considers the sense of guilt in relation to new perspectives on modern religious spirit. Greene has the peculiarity of having dealt with some great disturbing questions of his era, particularly pressing in the years of the Second World War, and he often does it by means of espionage themes and the pattern of pursuit, "in pursuit of the source of criminal activity, but often of something more intangible and profoundly mysterious – self awareness, human connection, the divine absence"¹⁴³. In depicting outcasts from society, Greene depicts also the alienation, moral alienation too in this case, of the contemporary man, and his attempts to find a reason for the horrors of the century, of the spiritual desolation of his generation. According to Miyano, "the last description of the whisky priest indicates the eager but absurd efforts of human beings on earth"¹⁴⁴; an effort that had already been compared to the myth of Sisyphus by the Existentialists. Failure is the most human aspect about human essence¹⁴⁵; the irrational universe decides for us, as Kierkegaard explained: man must act without the traditional moral guide. Greene said that "[i]n contrast with what happens with Kafka and Camus, my characters do not have their guilts increased by authority"¹⁴⁶; in fact, his characters experience sense of guilt because of the discovery of their true

¹⁴² Elliott Malamet, *The World Remade: Graham Greene and the Art of Detection*, New York: Peter Lang, 1998, p. 32.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁴⁴ Miyano Shoko, *Innocence in Graham Greene's Novels*, p. 83.

¹⁴⁵ Terry Eagleton, "Reluctant Heroes: The Novels of Graham Greene", in Frederick R. Karl, "Graham Greene's Demonic Heroes", in Harold Bloom (ed.), *Graham Greene*, p. 114.

¹⁴⁶ David Tenenbaum, *Issues of Shame and Guilt in the Modern Novel: Conrad, Ford, Greene, Kafka, Camus, Wilde, Proust, and Mann*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009, p. 120.

essence, also horrific essence, capable of undesired, repressed things, and of venial and mortal sins. The external moral codes have already showed their breach; his characters try to overcome that breach adapting traditional reassuring axiology to the new pre- and postwar world, but at the expense of inner security. Internalized self-doubt is one of the most important aspects of our Cains:

Surprisingly, after World War I organized religion had regained some cultural prestige, a fashionable alternative for many British intellectuals looking for a cultural edifice that could stand up against the chaos, violence, and meaninglessness around them. Thus in the early part of the twentieth century, Christianity, along with its rivals Marxism and psychoanalysis, found a place at the cultural table of intellectual debate¹⁴⁷.

Greene had direct experience of psychoanalysis (he had undergone psychoanalysis at 16 with Kenneth Richmond, Jungian and spiritualist); he experienced espionage and international conspiracy; and he experienced war, although with a kind of pleasure of horror, a snobbish desire for spectacularity: “Graham Greene loved the blitz because it suddenly and continually turned the familiar markers of a routinized bourgeois existence into so many macabre heralds of an urgent existential confrontation”¹⁴⁸. His passion for pathos and his fear of boredom, together with his historical anxiety and moral existentialism, led to the mixture of thriller, dullness, terror and unease which distinguish his work. Morton Dauwen Zabel defined Greene “the Auden of the modern thriller” because of his evocation of “the familiar spectre of our age – years of fear and mounting premonition in the 1930s, war and its disasters in the forties, its aftermath of treachery and anarchy still around us in the fifties”¹⁴⁹.

As other writers of his years, Greene’s intent and result was to “‘shore up the fragments’ of religious thought against ‘the ruin’ of modernity”¹⁵⁰. Religion reappears in those years with a new consciousness and new responsibilities – and

¹⁴⁷ Mark Bosco, *Graham Greene’s Catholic Imagination*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁸ Cates Baldrige, *Graham Greene’s Fictions: The Virtues of Extremity*, Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2000, p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ Morton Dauwen Zabel, “The Best and the Worst” (1957), in Samuel Hynes (ed.), *Graham Greene*, pp. 30-31.

¹⁵⁰ Mark Bosco, *Graham Greene’s Catholic Imagination*, p. 6.

indeed many scholars tried to study religion from a new perspective in that period or soon after, scholars such as Northrop Frye, Kierkegaard, Paul Tillich, and David Friedrich Strauss. “If religion is to find a home in contemporary literature”, explains Bosco, “the logic goes it can no longer be understood in terms of orthodox systems of belief, religious markers, or theological nomenclature; rather, religion must be reframed in existential or psychological terms, so that literature has religious value because, at its heart, it expresses ultimate concern, mystery, or the infinite in human like”¹⁵¹. The beginning of the century had started the process, and the two great wars made the dilemmas of the century about belief and unbelief conflagrate. Greene caught that general atmosphere, and decided that it was what he wanted to portray in his book:

I think *The Power and the Glory* is the only novel I have written to a thesis [...] I had always, even when I was a schoolboy, listened with impatience to the scandalous stories of tourists concerning they had encountered in remote Latin villages (this priest had a mistress, another was constantly drunk), for I had been adequately taught in my Protestant history books what Catholic believed; I could distinguish even then between the man and the office¹⁵².

In an essay of 1941 on Eric Gill, he also affirmed provocatively that Conservatism and Catholicism are impossible bedfellows, thus affirming his desire to see and live faith on the basis of less orthodox beliefs. John Atkins offers an interesting idea on the characterization of characters in Greene’s novels, in considering his relationship with Kafka and his existentialist void, and Auden’s view of love:

I have already compared Greenland with Kafkaland. [...] But Greene has accepted the contemporary world in its entirety, and eliminated the allegorical element. Yet he cannot avoid distortion because his characters have no powers of self-creation. They are merely the products of their environment, something important is left out. The result is, to quote Mr Symons again, ‘a

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁵² Graham Greene, quoted in John Updike, Introduction to *The Power and the Glory* (1990), London: Vintage, 2004, p. vii.

world without faith, where men exist simply as the hunter, strengthened by hardness and emptiness, and the hunted, tragically weakened by a disturbing sense of guilt, where sexual relations are unsatisfactory because they are exclusively carnal (something like Auden's view of love as "wrong") and women exist merely as corollaries to men, helping or hindering some vital masculine action, the whole a compound of violence, terror and a bewildered search for some form of faith.' When Greene attempts to fill the emptiness he has recourse to dogma¹⁵³.

From this perspective, dogmatic aspects of Catholicism would be just a filling for the emptiness of real faith in the characters, or rather, of something real in general. Greene himself explained what he wanted to represent on paper:

I write about situations that are common, universal might be more correct, in which my characters are involved and from which only faith can redeem them, though often the actual manner of the redemption is not immediately clear. They sin, but there is no limit to God's mercy and because this is important, there is a difference between not confessing in fact and the complacent and the pious may not realize it¹⁵⁴.

When asked if some of his characters (Scobie, Rose, the girl in *The Living Room*, Pinkie, the boy in *Brighton Rock*, and the priest) were all redeemed, Greene answered: "Yes, though redemption is not the exact word. We must be careful of our language. They have all understood in the end. This is perhaps the religious sense". It is clear that he found his attitude toward faith the one that is closer to truth. The same truth that he wanted as object of the pursuits and progresses of his characters, even though passing first through excitement or "entertainment" for the readers. Greene expresses Catholic faith in a paradoxical way, and it is not more comforting of the "discomforting realities of modernity. Rather, Catholicism serves to raise the standards, heighten the awareness of the fallen sense of the world, and challenge characters to respond to extreme situations in full knowledge of what is at stake"¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵³ John Atkins, *Graham Greene*, pp. 78-79.

¹⁵⁴ Martin Shuttleworth and Simon Raven, "The Art of Fiction: Graham Greene", p. 159.

¹⁵⁵ Mark Bosco, *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination*, p. 4.

It has been discovered a “sense of history” in modern Catholic writers: an evasion of drama and its apologia, as part of the climate of fear and guilt of the era in which personal tragedy is “in the womb of the general one”, and where “it is hard for a man of good-will, lacking good actions, to see straight or to speak plain”¹⁵⁶. The priest’s thoughts are not plain at all; yet, in their confusion and in his wandering, truth can look a little closer than before. Guilt is human, eternal, and inescapable: this is a truth of contemporary man and contemporary characters, whose guilt is not caused by specific dramatic actions, as it was in the literature of the previous centuries, but by a more effusive incompatibility with old axiologies:

The fustian stage-sets of Oppenheim, Bram Stoker, and Edgar Wallace are gone with their earlier innocent day. We are in a world whose fabulous realities have materialized appallingly out of contemporary legend and prophecy [...]. Its synthetic thrills and anarchic savagery are ruses of melodrama no longer. Guilt pervades all life. All of us are trying to discover how we entered the nightmare, by what treachery we are betrayed to the storm of history. [...] Every age has its aesthetic of crime and terror, its attempt to give form to its special psychic or neurotic climate. No age has imposed greater handicaps on the effort than ours. [...] A criminal takes his dignity from his defiance of the intelligence or merit that surrounds him, from the test his act imposes on the human community. He becomes trivial when that measure is denied him¹⁵⁷.

Brutality and primeval violence clash with the opinion that man has of his modernity, and therefore cause more doubts about his true nature, as it never happened before. “For the moment the thriller was an obvious and logical imaginative medium [...]. His novels between 1930 and 1945 record the crisis and confusions of those years with an effect of atmosphere and moral desperation perfectly appropriate to the time”¹⁵⁸.

¹⁵⁶ Donat O’Donnell, *Maria Cross: Imaginative Patterns in a Group of Modern Catholic Writers*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1952, pp. 88-90.

¹⁵⁷ Morton Dauwen Zabel, “The Best and the Worst”, pp. 31-32.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

Awareness of the fallen sense of the world is the common ground of the novels treated in this study. Greene posits it in a “sanctified sinner”, a figure that makes his appearance from Baudelaire and Rimbaud. The priest is the scapegoat who takes upon his shoulders all the sins of the world – and of the Church –, but he is also representative of the concept that, as it is comically expressed by George Orwell, there is “something rather distinguee in being damned; Hell is a sort of high-class night club, entry to which is reserved for Catholics only, since the others, the non-Catholics, are too ignorant to be held guilty, like the beasts that perish”¹⁵⁹.

The Power and the Glory is a fictional demonstration of how a sinner can become a martyr, but it also makes one feel that “there is a definite pride in wallowing in sin, especially the sinfulness of sin, which is its intellectual aspect”¹⁶⁰. Greene’s hero is fallacious, carrier of new instable profundity, although also trivially pure. Compared with the Greek hero, his fall is different, as it is caused by man’s demonical descent from grace in a seemingly godless universe; his attempts at reconciliation – especially with himself – are the measure of his heroism¹⁶¹:

Greene’s novels at their best, and his earlier books to a lesser extent, are not catalogues of fear, chronicles of men in flight; they are accounts of men in pursuit – physically and spiritually – but pursuit which leads to a profounder understanding of themselves, because it drives them to look into themselves and see in whose image they are made. Their pursuit is their salvation. [...] It is as if the dialogue was infused with a natural theology of its own, so that, although Greene’s landscape is stark, sordid, and seedy, his picture of man is not a pessimistic one. Time and again one finds the hint projected through his characters that despair is not the final ending¹⁶².

Twentieth-century Cain represents the fallen nature of humanity, a new fall, a fall from existential ingenuity. Greene’s sinful characters represent metaphorically

¹⁵⁹ George Orwell, “The Sanctified Sinner”, in Samuel Hynes (ed.), *Graham Greene*, p. 107.

¹⁶⁰ John Atkins, *Graham Greene*, p. xii.

¹⁶¹ See Frederick R. Karl, “Graham Greene’s Demonical Heroes”, in Harold Bloom (ed.), *Graham Greene*, p. 49: “In attempting to recover the ‘hero’ for a democratic age, Graham Greene has taken the ‘fallen democrat’ peculiar to our time and tried to raise him through suffering and pain to more heroic stature” (p. 48).

¹⁶² Braybrooke, Neville, “Graham Greene: A Pioneer Novelist” in *College English*, vol. 12, no. 1, October 1950, pp. 8-9.

the contemporary world, anxious and alienated from a “spiritual dwelling”. Emptiness and ugliness are reflected in the choice of the setting; the self-destructiveness of the human heart in the choice of the characters; the sense of guilt of the historical moment – the years just before World War II – in their psychological obsessions:

It is only by the experience of suffering, guilt, weakness, and so of compassion, that the pharisaic egoism of respectable religion, hygienic innocence and the ethic of success can be avoided¹⁶³.

Greene’s reluctant heroes, to quote the title of Eagleton’s essay, are wiser because they have acknowledged the historical and more universal human condition of sinfulness. In the *Quiet American* (1955), an unusual prayer is raised: “God preserve us from all innocence. At least the guilty know what they’re about”. Perhaps, this is the truer sense of *The Power and the Glory*.

The final resurrection, or transmigration, or rather, the symbolic reincarnation of the priest into a new priest pursuing the same destiny, is evidently the closest to a happy ending among the novels of this study. Compared to the other characters I am going to analyze, in *The Power and the Glory* there is not a real tragedy, but even a kind of hope. This contemporary hagiography, even though parodied, can give sense of the senseless wandering of a man guilty of his own modern religious conscience. Redemption is the admission of guilt; perhaps confession is, at least in this case, the recognition of one’s own humanity. If the priest finds salvation, it is through his wandering, as it allows him the experience, the self-discovery, the recognition of his true identity – guilty, paradoxical, and fallen. Flawed sainthood is perhaps the most bourgeois feature of a character; but it is one of the ways in which Cain reappears in the twentieth century. Through a distorted faith, atonement can be found in understanding.

¹⁶³ Terry Eagleton, “Reluctant Heroes: The Novels of Graham Greene”, in Harold Bloom (ed.), *Graham Greene*, p. 114.

CHAPTER 4

HALLUCINATING GUILT

WANDERING MYTHS IN MALCOLM LOWRY'S *UNDER THE VOLCANO*

Caïn n'est pas mort,
qui trouve son pays de Nod
en littérature.

Cécile Hussherr, *L'ange et la bête*

4.1 The Drunkard Consul and the Paralysis of Guilt

Tragic guilt and weak wills abound in another drunken, archetypal character: a less religious ex-British consul, Geoffrey Firmin, the protagonist of Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*. After the breaking-up with his wife Yvonne, he spends his life as a voluntary expatriate in Mexico moving from tavern to tavern in search of a drink. He wanders in Quauhnhuac – this is the name of the town “under the volcano” – surviving by himself with memories and a sense of guilt for the failed relationship, as well as for his inertia, his inability to act – a typical characteristic of the clinically depressed and melancholic. Like Joyce's *Ulysses*, the narration covers the spatiality of a single city and the temporality of a single day, the twelve hours of the Day of the Dead of 1938 (except the first chapter that occurs exactly a year later). It is a “drunken divine comedy”, but also “a prophecy, a political warning, a cryptogram, a crazy film, an absurdity, a writing on the wall”¹; *Under the Volcano*, together with Greene's *The Power and the Glory*, portrays a symbolic and allegoric pattern in which myth, religion, and literary tradition create inextricable paths of significance that continuously overlap throughout the text.

¹ Malcolm Lowry, *Preface to a Novel*, in George Woodcock (ed.), *Malcolm Lowry: The Man and His Work*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1971, pp. 5, 8. This preface was written by Lowry for the French edition of *Under the Volcano*, published in 1949 and translated by Woodcock for his volume.

If *The Power and the Glory* is a fictional demonstration of how a sinner can become a martyr, *Under the Volcano* is the story of a self-inflicted *maladie* which leaves no hope or sainthood to the hero. The sense of abandonment in a fallen world is even deeper here, since there is no *lost* hope in the Consul: there is no hope at all. As Douglas Day explains, the work deals with the inner powers which make man fear himself, with the “guilt of man, with his remorse, with his ceaseless struggling toward the light under the weight of the past, and with his doom”². A perdition that, as the epigraphs of Sophocles, Bunyan, and Goethe make evident, can be avoided only by one’s own desire for salvation, a desire that the Consul no longer possesses. Firmin is clogged with his guilty past, turned into a useless drunkard unable to make any decision. An important moment in the book appears in its first pages, when, in the Elizabethan theatre book he had borrowed from the Consul, Laruelle (a French film producer and friend of the Consul, with whom Yvonne had an affair) finds a letter written to Yvonne but never sent. In this letter, marked by meaningful handwriting features (“the t’s like lonely wayside crosses save where they crucified an entire word”), Geoffrey introduces at once the overall mood of the story to the readers:

For myself I like to take my sorrow into the shadow of old monasteries, my guilt into cloisters and under tapestries, and into the misericordes of unimaginable cantinas where sad-faced potters and legless beggars drink at dawn, whose cold jonquil beauty one rediscovers in death. [...] And this is how I sometimes think of myself, as a great explorer who has discovered some extraordinary land from which he can never return to give his knowledge to the world: but the name of this land is hell³.

Firmin admits his faults: his mistakes in the relationship with his wife, his inability to act, as well as what is perhaps an even more serious guilt, although not verified, committed when he was a naval officer in World War I, and for which he was court-martialled but finally acquitted: the incineration, years before, of some

² Douglas Day, *Malcolm Lowry: A Biography*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 320.

³ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, New York: HarperCollins, 2007, p. 37.

German prisoners captured from a submarine by the steamer *Samaritan*⁴, on which he was captain. Remembering the fact, Laruelle compares his friend to another literary Cain exiled voluntarily in one of the most remote areas of the world at his time, Lord Jim⁵:

Someone must take the blame. So the Consul had not received his decoration without first being court-martialed. He was acquitted. It was not all clear to M. Laruelle why he and no one else should have been tried. Yet it was easy to think of the Consul as a kind of more lachrymose pseudo “Lord Jim” living in a self-imposed exile, brooding, despite his award, over his lost honour, his secret, and imagining that a stigma would cling to him because of it throughout his whole life⁶.

The event, and its recollection, is just an excuse for the Consul, according to Laruelle, for buying another bottle of *mescal*. However, if Lord Jim was won by his excessive romanticism and idealism and died by shadowy ideals, as Markson said, Firmin is destroyed by a void of ideals, or perhaps a too convolute cluster of ideals. “Grown rather careless of his honour”, Firmin seems to Laruelle to have turned his life into a “quixotic oral fiction”; however, “yet the content is too awful for laughter. The effect is seriocomic complexity”⁷. The letter, as well as the whole novel, is full

⁴ “The ship’s name (grimly incongruous, considering its mission) brings to mind the parable of the good Samaritan [...] and anticipates the dying Indian of Ch. 8, the Consul’s guilt about his involvement or lack thereof being an important psychological force driving him to his destruction. We can never know (early age for a commander of a gunboat, exaggeration of guilt etc), but the natural curiosity aroused by the desire to find out gives the incident great emotional intensity and ensures the reader’s engagement with the Consul’s guilt from the outset” (Chris Ackerley and Lawrence J. Clipper, *A Companion to Under the Volcano*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984, pp. 55-56).

⁵ David Markson observes that what characterizes Lord Jim is “isolation, but even more vividly atonement, since Jim goes to a deliberate death in expiation of his overriding guilt. Too, Conrad’s final judgement on the character is that he has been ‘excessively romantic’, succumbing to a ‘shadowy ideal of conduct’” (*Malcolm Lowry’s Volcano: Myth, Symbol, Meaning*, New York: Times Books, 1978, p. 91). Also the *Companion* to the novel quotes: “Although the Consul denies that any stigma is attached to him over the Samaritan affair, his sense of guilt is remarkably like Jim’s; the mystery at the beginning of each novel is similar (what did the *Patna* hit, what really happened to the German officers?), deliberately enigmatic, and a source of brooding concern for both characters; and the manner of their deaths, by an almost willed shooting, suggests that Lowry had Conrad’s novel in mind at many points of his own” (Chris Ackerley, and Lawrence J. Clipper, *A Companion to Under the Volcano*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984, p. 58).

⁶ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 34.

⁷ Jonathan Arac, “The Form of Carnival in *Under the Volcano*”, in *PMLA*, vol. 92, no. 3, May 1977, pp. 482-483.

of constant references to falls, gardens, and films on murdering and blood-stained hands worthy of Lady Macbeth⁸, a deign beginning for a novel in which Lowry portrays the symbolic *hamartia* of the Consul.

The plot is marked by a few significant events and several minor episodes. Most of the facts happen in the characters' mind and are made of their recollection of events and guilty actions. Robert Heilman individuated the pregnant points of the novel's plot:

The action takes place in November, on the Day of the Dead; Geoffrey feels his "soul dying"; a funeral takes place; burial customs, the shipping of a corpse are discussed; an earlier child of Yvonne's is dead; Geoffrey thinks he is seeing a dead man; a cantina is called La Sepultura; Geoffrey's recalls Dr. Faustus's death; a dead dog is seen in a ravine; a dying Indian is found by the roadside. Always there are vultures, pariah dogs, the noise of target practice. There are a decaying hotel, a reference to the House of Usher, the ruins of the palace of Maximilian and Carlotta. Geoffrey's soul appears to him a "town ravaged and stricken"; an imaginary "little town by the sea" burns up. Frustrations and failures are everywhere – engagements are missed, the light fails in a cinema. Always we are reminded of the barranca, or ravine, near the town – a horrendous abyss. Once it is called "Malebolge"; there are various allusions to Dante's *Inferno*; Geoffrey feels he is in hell, quoted Donne on sin, looks at Cocteau's *La Machine Infernale*, takes a ride in a Maquina Infernal; calls ironically-defiantly, "I love hell"; at the end he is in a bar "under the volcano." "It is not for nothing the ancients had placed Tartarus under Mt. Aetna..."⁹

All the major themes are here. In addition, there are references to Marlowe's *Faustus*, whose inability to pray for grace is shared by George Firmin; but especially the Eden theme, almost a refrain throughout the story, resounding with the phrase

⁸ *Las Manos de Orlac*, a film described by Hugh, Firmin's half-brother, as "all about a pianist who has a sense of guilt because he thinks his hands are a murderer's or something and keeps washing the blood off them. Perhaps they really are a murderer's I forget".

⁹ Robert B. Heilman, review in *Sewanee Review*, no. LV, July-September 1947, pp. 489-490.

“¿Le gusta este jardín? ¿Que es suyo? ¡Evite que sus hijos lo destruyan!”¹⁰, significantly misinterpreted by the Consul (he understands instead that they “evirate” those who spoil the garden). The phrase also terminates the book with its epigrammatic force, like a sign – a sign premonitory of the risks that the world was going to undertake.

The desertion of Geoffrey Firmin, of Mexico in the '30s, and of the entire world during the war is extraordinarily evoked by many intertextual references to great works of the past and to myths of the Western tradition: here again the Bible and, in addition, Dante's *Comedy*, Faust's tragedy, Shakespeare. Anthony Burgess compares the Consul with the Promethean Rebel, and David Markson with tens of other literary or mythical figures:

The guilt of the protagonist of *Under the Volcano* is that of Adam after expulsion, his agony that of Christ at Golgotha, his frailty Don Quixote's. Through degrees of highly specific analogy Lowry's hero so to speak “becomes” Faust, Dante, Prometheus, Heracles, Buddha, Oedipus. He is Aeneas, Hamlet, Noah, Judas, Prospero, Narcissus, Trotsky, Macbeth, Shelley, Scrooge, Quetzalcoatl, Bix Beiderbecke, Candide, Moses, and Gogol's Tchitchikov – if not to add Peter Rabbit and the Fisher King, among many more¹¹.

The reason why I have chosen *Under the Volcano* for this study is exactly because among all these parallels the one with the biblical Cain is not mentioned.

¹⁰ Lowry was quite obsessed by motives to repeat throughout his whole work. “Frere Jacques” was another recurrent phrase that appeared in many of his works. The author once explained how he and his wife planned the “Frère Jacques motive” in the screenplay they were writing: “We feel a note is necessary here on the use of Frère Jacques, since the idea may have proved rather puzzling. [...] It is established as a symbol of nostalgia, the use of which [...] reminds us that Dick is thinking of Nicole and the children. But since at the very opening it was used as the rhythm of the universe, so to speak, it binds the whole picture to eternity [...]. And since it is a canon, or roundelay, with everyone taking up his part, dropping out, new voices joining in, and dropping out, without beginning or ending and capable of infinite variations, it relates us to humanity. [...] It should be pointed out that we have discovered and put to the test the fact that this canon could not be mechanically a more exact arrangement, not only of the rhythm of a ship's engine, but of its polyphony, its reverberating and continually recaught echoes and reechoes [...]. However for the total effect which we suggest might be obtained from this minor invention, we are perhaps relying on something more profound that life consists of mere variations on one and the same theme, and that the same fundamental bass tone sounds through it all” (quoted in *The Cinema of Malcolm Lowry: A Scholarly Edition of Tender is the Night*, ed. by Miguel Mota and Paul Tiessen, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990, p. 173). The editors comment: “The round, the ‘queer tune’ of *Ultramarine*, which came into *Lunar Caustic* and *Under the Volcano* as the ‘Frere Jacques’ canon, has now assumed full significance”.

¹¹ David Markson, *Malcolm Lowry's Volcano*, p. 6.

Guilt and wandering have been considered in almost every essay on Malcolm Lowry, but they have never been put together to retrace Cain's paradigm. Nonetheless, although not explicitly referred to, in my opinion Cain's pattern is the one best representing the Consul's existential *angoisse*, characterized by self-punishment, self-imposed stasis, and self-reclusion in a limited space; all imbued and caused by sense of guilt that in turn causes other sense of guilt. Just like in Joyce's *Ulysses*, in chapter VII of *Under the Volcano* guilt is explicitly referred to its theoretical aspect as *agenbite of inwit*. In this chapter the Consul uses the same phrase, perhaps a real reference to Joyce¹²: "Consider the word remorse. Remord. Mordeo, mordere. La Mordida! Agenbite too.... And why rongeur? Why all this biting, all those rodents, in the ethimology?"¹³

Guilt appears and leaves its mark from the outset. Laruelle is the first character encountered, and embodies perhaps many of the guilt represented in the rest of the novel. The first chapter, the only one not included in the main narrative of twenty-four hours, sees Jacques Laruelle (also the lover of Yvonne) who, a year after Geoffrey's death, wanders restlessly around the town on his departure's eve. His thoughts are continuously addressed to his late friend and to Yvonne, to their tragic story, and also to his sense of guilt for having betrayed them, for not having succeeded, or even not having tried hard enough, in freeing the Consul from his alcoholic addiction. Laruelle summarizes his friends' lives as follows:

how they must have loved this land, these two lonely empurpled exiles, human beings finally, lovers out of their element – their Eden, without either knowing quite why, beginning to turn under their noses into a prison and smell like a brewery, their only majesty at last of tragedy. Ghosts¹⁴.

Paralyzed desire and drunken non-existence are the most powerful themes of the novel. Geoffrey imagines to conquest a new Eden in Canada with Yvonne,

¹² Lowry said that Joyce was one of his major sources of inspiration, but he probably had just "the basic" knowledge of *Ulysses* transmitted to him by Aiken.

¹³ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 228.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

between hope and self-destruction, salvation and perdition, Eros e Thanatos¹⁵. As with Joycian characters, the Consul is in search of love, or rather, of ideal love – so ideal to be impossible to achieve. In the episode in which Dr. Vigil, a friend, accompanies the Consul and the others to the Church “for those who have nobody”¹⁶, the Consul indulges in this prayer:

“Please let me make her [Yvonne] happy, deliver me from this dreadful tyranny of self. I have sunk low. Let me sink lower still, that I may know the truth. Teach me to love again, to love life.” That wouldn’t do either... “Where is love? Let me truly suffer. Give me back my purity, the knowledge of the Mysteries, that I have betrayed and lost. – Let me be truly lonely, that I may honestly pray. Let us be happy again somewhere, if it’s only together, if it’s only out of this terrible world. Destroy the world!”¹⁷

Universal but so dramatically personal – and expressed by a magnificent drunken stream of consciousness – guilt urges him to pray; but his prayer is very different from the one of the priest in *The Power and the Glory*: if he prayed in the secret of his heart, in a prison cell or during the celebration of sacraments, Geoffrey preaches almost by chance, among his other thousands of thoughts when visits by chance a church for lonely people. His laments are dedicated to love, to his incapacity to really feel it, to really feel life and religion, which might bring him the solace and the truth he cannot find. Obliteration and nihilistic non-existence are the only way to destroy his pain together with the “terrible” reality; nihilism is his only possibility of existence.

Geoffrey imagines a new life with Yvonne, but he will never take actual initiative; his life is governed by stasis and paralysis. As a matter of fact, even the letter he wrote to her has never been sent. His perdition, his conviction of having no choice, the awareness of being already “damned” even give him some euphoric

¹⁵ Richard K. Cross, *Malcolm Lowry. A Preface to His Fiction*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 33.

¹⁶ Lowry proposes the same scene of Greene’s *The Lawless Roads* when he visits a church in Oaxaca. There is also an apparent reference to Graham Greene’s *The Lawless Roads*, when Greene evokes the Virgin of La Soledad: “Spanish of the Spanish, a Velasquez Virgin – and the loneliness she solaced, one imagines, was a Spanish loneliness of men heartsick for Castile” (*A Companion*, p. 98).

¹⁷ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 300.

moments, the “gaiety of despair”. He is victim of the “gaiety of despair” because he is sure of being incapable and unworthy, his ego not allowing him to flee from his sense of guilt. In order to avoid any sense of responsibility, he begins to believe that he has been damned by fate and to think of desiring it: “I wonder if it is because tonight my soul has really died that I feel at the moment something like peace”¹⁸. His subconscious does not leave him alone, as it does not with the priest. But even in these moments, when he thinks he has achieved peace for the complete death of his soul, he starts thinking of a new life, as Blake described, which could bring him again up in the light:

Propelled by his fatalism, the Consul cycles through repeated rounds of guilt-resentment-withdrawal-guilt as he approaches catastrophe.

The reasons for Firmin’s guilt over his treatment of Yvonne are obvious. What is less evident, but crucial, is the way a free-floating sense of guilt – a pure guilt, prior to any culpability – cripples the actions before he can take them. In its clearest manifestations, this abstract guilt is secreted whenever an impending performance overwhelms the Consul with a premature sense of failure¹⁹.

The powerful psychological pattern which makes its appearance here could also be the “narcissistic omnipotence”, the attempt to dominate our indomitable unconscious, leading to a decline in self-esteem or even in a sense of disintegration. Only abandonment to real guilty actions can bring relief. The Consul indulges in his addiction and his cruel passivity because he desires to control his destiny and to inflict to himself the punishment he believes is appropriate to his faults. In this way, he can also feel powerful and resolute. A subtle irony, running underneath the many levels of significance of the novel, commences from one of the epigraphs from Goethe’s *Faust*: “Whosoever unceasingly strives upward... him can we save”. On the contrary, the Consul is victim of a chronic tendency to go downward, and of the habit of staying where he is, drinking as much as possible. Lowry’s biographer Douglas Day explains:

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁹ Stephen Tiff, “Tragedy as a Meditation on Itself: Reflexiveness in *Under the Volcano*”, in Anne Smith (ed.), *The Art of Malcolm Lowry*, London: Vision Press, 1978, p. 49.

He is guilty (of what, no matter: he *feels* guilty) and, good Protestant that he is, therefore must be ineligible for salvation. Rather than risk an encounter with the wrathful Old Man, he forces his damnation²⁰.

As we said, the most important characteristic of twentieth-century novels about guilt is that it is *sense* of guilt, not objective fault but rather inner, unavoidable, inexplicable sense of failure and lacking. The two crosses commonly recognized as the ones that the Consul has to bear are alcoholism and the inability to love, one causing the other. Another refrain of the novel is “No se puede vivir sin amar”, no one can live without loving, a motto appearing for the first time on the wall of Jacques Laruelle’s home, and the last time at the end of the book, on the lips of the Consul’s friends as he imagines them, shortly before his death, repeating it out loud. No character in the novel seems to be able, though, to fulfil what in a publishing postmodern way is stamped on their lives²¹. Furthermore, in the letter Geoffrey never mailed to Yvonne he had written: “Love is the only thing which gives meaning to our poor ways on earth”. He wished he could forgive her for her betrayal, but somehow her unfaithfulness seems just a scapegoat for the general depressive resignation of the Consul towards existence – or rather, towards a happy existence. According to Day, without *agape*, the love of one’s fellow man, hell is the end of man closed in his self²². Geoffrey’s alcoholism has caused Yvonne’s infidelity; however, when she leaves him, he feels abandoned. She writes begging him to try reconciliation, but he is unable to dedicate himself to her, and cannot even be strong-willed enough to send her the passionate letter he has written. Yvonne returns to him, even though he has remained silent and drunk long enough. The meeting between the two is paradigmatic: she arrives by taxi, at seven o’clock in the morning of the Day of the Dead, outside the Bella Vista bar, and finds him heavily drunk – a cinematic scene worthy of Greene’s. The Consul is “acutely aware that he has been given a second chance, that all he has to do is respond to her love. He cannot. Nor can he forgive

²⁰ Douglas Day, *Malcolm Lowry*, p. 349.

²¹ Lowry had, together with an infallible memory, a penchant for inscriptions and advertisements, that he could memorize very quickly, as his brother says (see Russell Lowry, “Preface: Malcolm – A Closer Look”, in Anne Smith [ed.], *The Art of Malcolm Lowry*, p. 20).

²² Douglas Day, *Malcolm Lowry*, pp. 348-350.

her”²³. According to Stephen Tifft, the Consul is aware and convinced that his destiny must be tragic:

He endures throughout a postlapsarian state of continuous suffering, like Prometheus. A single tragic purpose propels the Consul’s multiple tragedy.

That purpose, the essence of the tragic definition of *Under the Volcano*, is as follows: the Consul dedicates himself to the tragic destiny which – he is convinced – is his.

It will be immediately evident that this tragic purpose is purely reflexive – tragedy proceeds from the conviction that it must proceed. This is an elegant refinement of the tragic mode: tragedy as a meditation on itself. The Consul’s purpose may sound tautological, but it is not. Firmin’s fidelity to his doom does not amount to the same thing as the catastrophe itself; only within the given world of the novel, the Consul’s reflexive preoccupation with tragedy is characterized by a curiously inverted form of hubris: his powerful, obsessed mind does not soar, but plummets; it sets him apart from normal society nonetheless.²⁴

Tragedy as a meditation in itself: again, self-consciousness is the cause and the purpose of a man’s suffering. Firmin is excluded from “normal” society by his own personality, his own perverse self-punishment. As a consequence, all the actions of the four main characters do not change the status quo, but rather plunge the Consul and the general atmosphere into a deeper darkness. Actually, he tries harder to accomplish his destiny making himself guiltier and guiltier:

The reader may feel that objectively the Consul’s guilt tends always to lead him to ensure the accuracy of his misgivings, transforming the subjective into the objective. If his fornication with María makes him feel so guilty that the thought of reconciliation intolerable, then the act is final: “But now too at least this much was clear. He couldn’t go back to Yvonne if he wanted to”²⁵.

²³ Barbara Lakin, “Greene’s *The Honorary Consul* and Lowry’s *Under the Volcano*: A Study in Influence”, in *South Central Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, spring 1986, p. 75.

²⁴ Stephen Tifft, “Tragedy as a Meditation on Itself”, p. 47.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

As in *Ulysses*, it is the fear of being incapable to love to grip the characters, fear that is also related to sex and to impotence, even caused by fear of venereal diseases as it is typical of the sense of guilt linked to sexuality.

George Firmin does not desire help from others. The narrative leads straight to the tragic end, and all the characters are constructed as thoughtful inapt puppets that just have to accompany the Consul to his destiny. They are not designed as real saviours, working in concert from various positions to help the protagonist out of his hell. Hugh, his half-brother, and Yvonne are aware of the fascist group menacing Geoffrey:

They have known all day that he is heading for the Farolito, a cantina in Parian, which they have been told harbors the fascist terrorists. When Geoffrey runs off from them and into a forest through which he can eventually come to Parian, they try to follow him, but their efforts are about as serious as those of the Anglo-Argentinean Club. They come to a crossroads and consciously choose the path they know will not lead them as quickly to Parian but will, instead, go past at least two more cantinas. They are to be forgiven for their choice given Geoffrey's predilection for cantinas, but they fall into the very trap that destroys him. They stop for awhile at one cantina to free an eagle that is caged outside. Then they come across the Hotel and Restaurant El Popo and stop for beer and mescal. Before they leave-now as drunk as Geoffrey – they buy a guitar from someone Hugh meets inside the restaurant while Yvonne is outside on the porch experimenting with mescal [...]. Once back in the forest, which is now dark and in the throes of a storm, they lose sight of one another²⁶.

This is the first step to the tragedy. Suddenly, Yvonne is killed meaninglessly and inexplicably, almost silently, trampled to death by a horse turned crazy by the lightning, which Geoffrey himself had turned loose only a short time before. In the meanwhile, a drunken Hugh wanders in circles, “singing brave songs of the Spanish Republicans and calling for Yvonne”. In the end, a guilt he has not committed will be the cause of Geoffrey's death: attacked by right-wing extremists, after having already been inquisitorially interrogated during a drink and found owning Hugh's card – by

²⁶ Barbara Lakin, “Greene's *The Honorary Consul* and Lowry's *Under the Volcano*”, p. 71.

chance in the pocket of his jacket –, he is accused of being a “spider”, a spy, beaten and shot to death. In a surrealist pre-mortem delirium, he imagines ascending the Popocatepetl together with his friends, being succoured by an ambulance while hearing their voices; he has the hope of reconciliation with Hugh and Yvonne, the hope of having reached the peak of the volcano. However, he would find nothing up there, and on the contrary his world seems to burst; his cry would announce the sad truth – and the end of the book:

Somebody threw a dead dog after him down the ravine²⁷.

The dog, which had accompanied him in his wandering during the day and in his dreams, and the ravine which dominates by contrast the whole narrative with the volcano mark the “dingy” end of the Consul (“Christ,” he remarked, puzzled, “this is a dingy way to die”²⁸). Without too much attention, he puts himself in the hands of his assassins, staying inert; as Stephen Dedalus, he does not succeed in awaking from (his) history: “The harsh justice of the psyche thus demands that Geoffrey deliver himself into the hands of the authorities for punishment. And indeed the Unión Militar chiefs await him with their verdict”²⁹. Such a miserable conclusion fully marks the paradoxical as well as tragic wandering of the Consul. There is no atonement for him, despite his efforts. Roaming and fugitive in his lost garden, he will not be purified, rather, he will add more errors, affirming himself almost as a sacrificial victim for the faults of the world, like the priest.

The dog, symbol of a sort of pariah affection, also appears in the second epigraph to the novel, from Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding for the Chief of Sinners*:

Now I blessed the condition of the dog and toad, yea, gladly would I have been in the condition of the dog or horse, for I knew they had no soul to perish under the everlasting weight of Hell or Sin, as mine was like to do. Nay, and though I saw this, felt this, and was broken to pieces with it, yet that which added to my sorrow was, that I could not find with all my soul that I did desire deliverance.

²⁷ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 391.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 389.

²⁹ Richard K. Cross, *Malcolm Lowry*, p. 62.

Firmin cannot find the desire of deliverance inside him, just like the priest; in addition, as Greene did, Lowry wants to identify the sinners with those who are really blessed – at least in the epigraphic intentions of the book. However, according to Tiff, if Greene depicts a “Catholic” sense of destiny, however imperfect, Lowry’s can be considered Calvinist: repentance is useless, predestination is responsible for all our actions, and the sense of guilt is anchored to no real personal misdeeds. The Consul tries to understand his faults, the causes, every single act that led him to his spiritual situation: “his constant preoccupation with the possible signs of his sinful state mires him deeper in hopelessness”³⁰. Firmin, more or less consciously, does not accept any help, and rejects Yvonne, the only one who could possibly save him. She could be the bearer of “rebirth” through love, but she has paradoxically – but on purpose – a too limited sensibility, although she is associated with transcendence and heavens³¹. She cannot understand the “mysteries, hopes, disappointments and disasters” consuming Geoffrey³². Or perhaps we can say that she cannot understand his Felix Culpa, his fictional addiction to sin as a way to redemption.

In addition to the incapacity to love, or rather, the persistence in destructive rejection of love, the Consul is pushed to alienation from the divinity as well:

The consul, in the guise of Adam, expresses his sense of sin by rejecting the salvation God offers, just as he had rejected Yvonne and her help. Again the Consul’s consciousness of his own ingratitude makes him feel guilty. Guilt in general is the Consul’s Pavlovian response to any thought of God. [...] The garden is the prime locale for the Consul’s guilty certainty of God’s surveillance. But like his guilt toward Yvonne, the Consul’s guilt before God is general – disproportionate to and often quite detached from any of his actions. In this respect guilt is like original sin, a fact of the Consul’s being independent of his actual behaviour. Where there is no cause for guilt, he will invent one – like the *Samaritan* accident³³.

³⁰ Stephen Tiff, “Tragedy as a Meditation on Itself”, p. 53.

³¹ Yvonne is identified with the Pleiades at the moment of her death. See Barbara Lakin, “Greene’s *The Honorary Consul* and Lowry’s *Under the Volcano*”, p. 72.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 72.

³³ Stephen Tiff, “Tragedy as a Meditation on Itself”, p. 54.

Firmin is victim of an archetypal sense of guilt, unrooted and incomprehensible, the original sin of the twentieth-century man. From this point of view, guilt is, again, the consequence of guilt and not the consequence. One of these causes-consequences is the separation from God. Firmin projects himself as an ungrateful Adam, who, sympathetic with the ancestral one, questions himself if, in fact, he hated paradise and felt guilty for this reason:

And of course the real reason for that punishment – his being forced to go on living in the garden, I mean, might well have been that the poor fellow, who knows, secretly loathed the place! Simply hated it, and had done so all along. *And that the Old Man found this out* –³⁴.

He cannot stand the eye of the “Old Man”, he is ashamed of his existence at the eye of a divinity in whom he believes in a controversial, polemical, Promethean way. He cannot stand confrontation with God, in an even worse way than the priest, and “he prefers, like the lost souls of Canto II of Dante’s *Inferno*, to rush eagerly toward Hell. His sin, like that of Marlowe’s *Faustus*, is the sin against the Holy Ghost – ‘pride and despair, inextricably linked’³⁵. He is ashamed even to pray to God: “Christ [...] would help you if you asked him: you cannot ask him”. “God has little patience with remorse!” echoes Bunyan in the novel. Avatar of Adam, the Consul assumes “a surrogate sin – the ingratitude of hating the Garden”³⁶. The garden – Eden but also his personal destructed garden, Mexico, and the world – becomes symbol of the resolute and unchangeable choice of self-destruction by sloth.

“The Consul would prefer to flee all contact – hence his vicarious loathing of Paradise. Thus the fatalism of guilt can be seen as the cause, as well as the result, of Firmin/Adam’s ingratitude”³⁷, says Tiff. In truth, the Consul himself wonders whether Adam’s punishment was not the banishment from Eden, but the obligation to keep on living in it, alone:

³⁴ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 140.

³⁵ Stephen Tiff, “Tragedy as a Meditation on Itself”, p. 55.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

I've often wondered whether there isn't more in the legend of the Garden of Eden, and so on, that meets the eye. What if Adam wasn't really banished at all? [...] what if his punishment really consisted [...] in his having to *go on living there*, alone, of course – suffering, unseen, cut off from God... [...] don't you think so, Quincey? – that the original sin was to be an owner of property...³⁸

A punishment to stay in a confined space that also Bruce Chatwin will associate with the fall of man³⁹. The act of hating the garden makes Firmin guiltier: “The Consul ruins his garden by the ‘sin’ of hating it; he hates it because his guilt makes him perceive it as ruined. [...] By constructing this hatred as punishment, the Consul manages to find in it fresh evidence of his guilt, thereby perpetuating and intensifying the whole cycle”⁴⁰. Like Rimbaud, he is in hell because he believes he is there⁴¹.

As Judas, Firmin has no real responsibility; he is destined to commit his betrayal. On another possible side, a “Christ parallel would also enable him to rationalize his suffering as self-willed, borne for the sake of mankind”⁴². The Consul is both Christ, sacrificing himself for humanity – as the priest imagined, or as the reader imagined – and Judas, or even the antichrist, figures to which he could feel even closer, in an ironic short-circuit (during the hallucinatory trip on the “Máquina infernal”, the attraction at the amusement park in which he is trapped and whose cabins he had sarcastically called “confession boxes”, Firmin reads the upside-down world as 999).

According to Dorosz, the Consul's alcoholic sickness symbolizes humanity's first sin, the fall of man itself: it “symbolizes his unlawful attempt to become god-like as well as destruction and death following the loss of paradise”⁴³. Firmin has committed a double betrayal: against the divinity and against man. However, the very sense of salvation and damnation are equivocally twined and overlapping:

³⁸ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, pp. 139-140.

³⁹ See for example *The Songlines*, an almost fictional encyclopaedia of restlessness.

⁴⁰ Stephen Tiff, “Tragedy as a Meditation on Itself”, p. 55.

⁴¹ “Je me crois en enfer, donc j'y suis”, from *Une saison en enfer*. See Tiff, p. 57.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴³ See Kristofer Dorosz, *Malcolm Lowry's Infernal Paradise*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Anglistica Upsaliensia, no. 27, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1976, p. 152.

In contradiction to Faust, the Consul does not confuse salvation with damnation, but rather sees them both as inseparable aspects of the one destiny. This approach of the Consul prevents him from engaging in a Faustian confrontation with his destiny. On the contrary, his attitude is one of fatalistic acquiescence rather than struggle. The fundamental Faustian motif, the quest for salvation, is so weak in Lowry's protagonist because it is perpetually eclipsed by the forces of despair. It is upon carnivalesque despair rather than Faustian salvation that he bestows his deepest commitment⁴⁴.

The Consul overcomes even the Faustian myth he pushes through the narration. Harty's use of the concept of carnivalesque to express the ebriety of Firmin's paradoxical attitude towards existence and sufferance can be appropriate enough, although from certain points of view the concept would imply a state of momentary distance from the Consul's "normal" experience of life, not a consistent feature of his characterization – at least if we use Bakhtin's definition of carnivalesque.

If Firmin is seen as looking for salvation, he can be considered a mystic trying to fight for his soul, with white or black magic⁴⁵; however, he has also been seen sometimes as the man who has chosen between heaven and hell, or both. One of Lowry's phrases, taken from the piece "Conversations with Goethe", is particularly appropriate in this respect: "I have two selves and one lives free in hell, the other down a well in Paradise"⁴⁶. Dorosz considers this ambiguity as, in fact, close to a choice between not too different things:

In a sense the Consul chooses not between heaven and hell but between two paradises: one sober, implying a reunion with Yvonne, love and life; the

⁴⁴ John Francis Harty, *Oscillation in Literary Modernism*, Frankfurt am Mein: Peter Lang, 2009, p. 131.

⁴⁵ For Kristofer Dorosz salvation is bound with the Consul's esoteric pursuits: "In as far as he is a mystic, in as far as he finds himself in search of eternity and transcendence, he is seeking salvation. [...] But salvation also implies rescue and deliverance; in the Judaeo-Christian tradition deliverance from man's fallen estate, and in *Under the Volcano* from the Consul's fall into drunkenness" (*Malcolm Lowry's Infernal Paradise*, p. 124-125). Another testimony says: "According to Margerie Lowry, Malcolm 'jolted up' from his work on the book one day in the spring of 1942 and declared to her that his Consul was a black magician, or a white magician who had lost control and so was doomed by his own powers, which had turned against him" (Perle Epstein, *The Private Labyrinth of Malcolm Lowry: Under the Volcano and the Cabbala*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969, p. 13).

⁴⁶ Epigraph to Kristofer Dorosz, *Malcolm Lowry's Infernal Paradise*.

other alcoholic, full of “palpitating loneliness” [...], haunted by hate and death. Paradoxical though it may seem, most often it is the first alternative that fills Geoffrey with fear and loathing, while the second promises unlimited bliss⁴⁷.

In a way, Yvonne represents an obstacle to his alcoholic paradise, and the Consul can feel the distance between his pleasure and the wife’s failed recognition of his enjoyed vice. However, as Harty also believes, he has not confused heaven with hell perhaps, as Dorosz claims, “but rather recognized that the cantina represents both his heaven and hell... The cantina appears less of confusion than the deliberate choice of the Consul’s mode of disintegration”⁴⁸.

In effect, his “infernal paradise”⁴⁹ is created for a big part by his drunkenness, his alcoholic road to perdition – which allows him to play God with style as well. The semantic polyphony of the novel is justified and confirmed by the characters’ stream of consciousness, especially the Consul’s, as he is the one who indulges more in feverish representations of men and world. “Malcolm Lowry’s entire oeuvre is dominated by two metaphors: the sea and drink, by which, of course, alcohol is meant”, says Greg Bond⁵⁰. Alcohol opens the doors to knowledge and formal virtuosity; it can save and damn at the same time: “His drinking exemplifies the inversion of salvation and punishment; once a means of attaining spiritual enlightenment, drinking now blackens his soul at an increasing pace”⁵¹. The Consul is victim of a different kind of “religious monomania”: he sees drinking as the “eternal sacrament”⁵². Addiction needs rituality to link sin, the power of magical alcoholic potions, and self-destruction. Lowry himself has created an appropriate title for his work: “drunken divine comedy”⁵³. In an ecstatic eulogy to his creative balsam for his destiny, the Consul says straight:

⁴⁷ Kristofer Dorosz, *Malcolm Lowry’s Infernal Paradise*, p. 130.

⁴⁸ John Francis Harty, *Oscillation in Literary Modernism*, p. 128.

⁴⁹ “More specifically, the alcoholic addiction depicted in *Under the Volcano*, because it creates a confusion of heaven and hell, is the correlative of the quality of ‘infernal paradise’” (Kristofer Dorosz, *Malcolm Lowry’s Infernal Paradise*, pp. 16-17).

⁵⁰ Greg Bond, “Boundlessness beyond Boundlessness: The Sea, Drink, and Form in Malcolm Lowry’s Fiction”, in *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 94, no. 3, July 1999, p. 626.

⁵¹ Stephen Tiff, “Tragedy as a Meditation on Itself”, p. 56.

⁵² Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 42.

⁵³ Malcolm Lowry, *Preface to a Novel*, p. 5. Lowry was working on his *The Voyage that Never Ends* plan: it should have been a series of six or seven novels to form a kind of contemporary Dantean *Comedy* (and perhaps also a Proustian *Recherche*), which would deal with “a sort of battle between

How many bottles since then? In how many glasses, how many bottles had he hidden himself, since then alone? Suddenly he saw them, the bottles of aguardiente, of anis, ofjerez, of Highland Queen, the glasses, a babel of glasses - towering, like the smoke from the train that day- built to the sky, then falling, the glasses toppling and crashing, falling downhill from the Generalife Gardens, the bottles breaking, bottles of Oporto, tinto, blanco, bottles of Pernod, Oxygenee, absinthe, bottles smashing, bottles cast aside, falling with a thud on the ground in parks, under benches, beds, cinema seats, hidden in drawers at Consulates, bottles of Calvados dropped and broken, or bursting into smithereens, tossed into garbage heaps, flung into the sea, the Mediterranean, the Caspian, the Caribbean, bottles floating in the ocean, dead Scotchmen on the Atlantic highlands -and now he saw them, smelt them, all, from the very beginning- bottles, bottles, bottles, and glasses, glasses, glasses, of bitter, of Dubonnet, of Falstaff, Rye, Johnny Walker, Vieux Whiskey blanc Canadien, the aperitifs, the digestifs, the demis, the doubles, the noch ein Herr Obers, the et glas Araks, the tusen taks, the bottles, the bottles, the beautiful bottles of tequila, and the gourds, gourds, gourds, the millions of gourds of beautiful mescal [...]. How indeed could he hope to find himself, to begin again when, somewhere, perhaps, in one of those lost or broken bottles, in one of those glasses, lay, forever, the solitary clue to his identity? How could he go back and look now, scabble among the broken glass, under the eternal bars, under the oceans?⁵⁴

Sea and drink again denote hope and its impossibility and, furthermore, his identity, “solitary clues” to the Consul’s fate. Hauer Costa defined Lowry “a possessed man writing about a possessed man”⁵⁵. Lowry himself had always had serious problems with alcoholism, and his is one of those cases in which biography and work are extremely overlapping.

life and delirium, in which life [...] is fighting to give that delirium a form, a meaning” (“Work in Progress”, p. 74, a text by which Lowry wanted to explain his concept to his publishers, quoted in Greg Bond, “Boundlessness beyond Boundlessness”, pp. 632-634). *The Voyage that Never Ends* was his most universalistic project, and remained for the most part imaginary and unfinished. The *Volcano* should have been the *Inferno*, *Lunar Caustic* the *Purgatorio*, and *In Ballast to the White Sea* the *Paradiso*.

⁵⁴ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, pp. 303-304.

⁵⁵ Richard Hauer Costa, “*Under the Volcano* – The Way it Was: A Thirty-Year Perspective”, in Anne Smith (ed.), *The Art of Malcolm Lowry*, p. 41.

Following the innumerable “Tooloose Lowrytrecks” – using a phrase that the editor of Lowry’s collection of letters brilliantly coined – made of erudite allusions, ironic undertones, and comic (often self-mocking) anecdotes, one could perceive the notion that there was “an art of creation involving the whole man”⁵⁶. An exemplary summary of Lowry’s life and idiosyncrasies is given by Barry Wood:

a moderately wealthy but repressive family that gave him a privileged education, leading to intellectual excellence combined with guilt and early rebellion; an early sea voyage to the Far East, followed by a lifelong odyssey that took him back and forth between Europe, the United States, Mexico, and Canada (*Under the Volcano* was begun in Mexico, continued in California and British Columbia, completed in Ontario, and submitted for publication from Vancouver; Lowry received his acceptance in Mexico, read galleys in British Columbia and page proofs in New Orleans, and wrote a preface – never used – on a boat to Haiti); a violent, sometimes childish, always guilt-ridden personality that ruined one marriage and repeatedly shook a second; a remarkable ability to absorb and remember, making it possible for him to assimilate diverse experiences and use them in his fiction; a heroic struggle to write, first with complex manuscripts through repeated revisions, later with agents and publishers and reviewers, complicated by the apparently inevitable disasters of lost and burned manuscripts; and all of this punctuated by legal tangles – with his father’s lawyers and representatives, American immigration officials, Mexican police, and civic authorities in Canada. Lowry was a wandering risk: consumed by dipsomania and able to drink in abnormal quantities; prone to disappearing, getting lost, falling in ditches; embroiling himself ever deeper in disaster. He was hospitalized for a broken back, admitted to Bellevue for psychiatric treatment; and toward the end of his life his alcoholism and unpredictable violence almost led to corrective surgery. Even

⁵⁶ Sherrill E. Grace (ed.), *Sursum Corda! The Collective Letters of Malcolm Lowry*, 2 vols., London: Jonathan Cape, 1995, p. xi. About the necessity to write for Lowry, Barry Wood says: “The splintering of identity created by inner frames in the central stories reveals that metafiction functions for Lowry as a formal expression of his own fears, obsessions, and guilt” (“Malcolm Lowry’s Metafiction: The Biography of a Genre”, in *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 19, no. 1, winter 1978, p. 23).

his “death by misadventure” – consuming too many pills while impossibly drunk – was consistent with his style⁵⁷.

It took four different versions to assume the form in which *Under the Volcano* was published in 1947; the first version was a lost Mexican manuscript of 1936-1938. It was finished no sooner than 1944 but it was refused by publishers again and again, obliging the author to explain and justify his choices in letters and articles⁵⁸. The whole troublesome process was a “ten-year palimpsestic orgy which, given Lowry’s method of composition, rivals the layers of history at Pompeii”⁵⁹. In the novel many episodes drew on incidents of some of the author’s friends, but many others were taken from the life of the author himself. Lowry was cheated by his first wife Jan – an affair with one of their neighbours – and was abandoned in 1937. Immediately after that event, he made a journey alone to Oaxaca, a place that he later called “a city of dreadful night”. His letters to John Davenport, Conrad Aiken and James Stern testify weeks of isolation, darkness, hallucinations, suspicions: “an absolutely fantastic tragedy”. The twenty months in Mexico (Cuernavaca was renamed Quauhnahuac) put the basis for the plan of *Under the Volcano*, whose second draft was completed about a year later in Los Angeles. In Paris in 1948 he was asked, “why do you write?”, and his answer was: “Out of despair. I am always despairing, then I always try to write, I write always except when I am too despairing. If I should write again, I would write Under, Under, Under the Volcano”⁶⁰.

Voyage was a part of a self-imposed exile in Lowry’s life too⁶¹: his addiction to cross-references in his work found an expression not only in recurrent themes and phrases, but also in the characters’ typology: his obsession with writing and alcoholism – we do not know which one was the major complication – led him to create Sigbørn Wilderness, the writer-protagonist of *The Voyage that Never Ends*, *In Ballast to the White Sea*, *Dark as the Grave Wherein my Friend is Laid*, *Through the Panama*, and of a number of other stories. His metafictional short-circuit

⁵⁷ Barry Wood, “Malcolm Lowry’s Metafiction”, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁸ For the complex history of the making of the novel, see Frederick Asals, *The Making of Malcolm Lowry’s Under the Volcano*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997.

⁵⁹ Richard Hauer Costa, “*Under the Volcano* – The Way it Was”, p. 43.

⁶⁰ Douglas Day, *Malcolm Lowry*, p. 400.

⁶¹ See Bryan Biggs and Helen Tookey (eds.), *Malcolm Lowry. From the Mersey to the World*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press and the Bluecoat, 2009.

incorporated portraits of the artist into the life of the artist, and especially in that “tale of loss, failure, and miscommunication” that is *Under the Volcano*⁶².

As a matter of fact, the projection of failure that Lowry wanted to associate with the Consul is present not only in the protagonist but more generally in all the other characters. Guilt rules all the personalities at stake with the Consul’s tragedy, and somehow they are *all* destined to tragedy.

As guilty as Geoffrey Firmin is Hugh Firmin, Geoffrey’s half brother, ex-lover of Yvonne, the only character who seems to react a little, emotionally at least, to the paralysis surrounding his group of friends and siblings, in maintaining aims and in keeping on dreaming to change the world – differently, for example, from Laruelle, who has stopped desiring to become a director and improve the world with his art⁶³. Nonetheless, Hugh has his guilts too: firstly, the betrayal of brotherhood (“by some contrariety we have been allowed for one hour a glimpse of what never was at all, of what never can be since brotherhood was betrayed, the image of our happiness”⁶⁴), just like the biblical Cain; in addition, he bears on his shoulders the burden of a disappointed will to go and fight as a volunteer in Spain together with his comrades. He feels guilty of his “irresponsible fashion”, and perhaps differently from the other characters he tries to remove his guilt:

Ahhh! Hugh, as if to rid himself of these thoughts, turned the radio dial back and forth, trying to get San Antonio (“I am none of these things really.” “I have done nothing to warrant all this guilt.” “I am no worse than anybody else...”); but it was no good. All his resolutions of this morning were to no avail. It seemed useless to struggle any further with these thoughts, better to let them have their way. At least they would take his mind from Yvonne for a time, if they only led back to her in the end⁶⁵.

Hugh is, so to speak, the only one who makes an effort to repress his sense of guilt, finding justifications for his faults or at least avoiding the obsessive thought.

⁶² Sherrill E. Grace (ed.), *Sursum Corda!*, p. xv.

⁶³ Laruelle had wished to make a film of a modern Faust, perhaps Trotsky. Noteworthy is the fact that the Consul is not only considered a modern Faust but he is even taken for Trotsky in the Farolito because of his beard.

⁶⁴ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 111.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

Hugh's own thoughts try to pursue a sort of atonement, although spotted by a kind of Judas instinct; it is not for nothing that he is called "the future-corruptive serpent": "Judas had forgotten; nay, Judas had been, somehow, redeemed". It is not meaningless that this chapter, the fourth, begins with: "*Nel mezzo del bloody cammin di nostra vita mi ritrovai in...* Hugh flung himself down on the porch daybed". For Markson, Hugh would be Geoffrey's alter ego⁶⁶; and in effect at the end of the novel we leave Hugh drunk, wandering in the forest at night – the same night of Geoffrey and Yvonne's tragedies. In a way, he can be considered the Judas to whom a betrayal has been commissioned; a betrayal necessary to the Consul's perdition and, most importantly, to the *histoire* of the novel. He is the man who, although strictly tied to him by an affective relationship, becomes an important part of the structure that will lead Geoffrey to his massacre.

As it is perceivable by his internal monologues, Hugh is ridden by political guilt and affective "sin", almost a religious one. For Chris Ackerley and Lawrence Clipper, the phrase "on the Ebro they were retreating" that echoes in Hugh's mind throughout the novel is "a sign of the guilt he feels about dallying with Yvonne; his 'betrayal' of the Republicans thus acting as a correlative for his betrayal of Geoffrey"⁶⁷.

He cannot enjoy life any longer, always troubled by his reflections: "The serpent of guilt always rears itself when Hugh seems to be enjoying himself"⁶⁸. A journalist, we meet Hugh for the first time through his telegraphic dispatch (which plays a crucial role in the plot, since Hugh's anarchist card will be the proof, once in Geoffrey's pocket, of his being a spy). Hugh interprets the world of the novel through the events of the "outer" world, the historical events of 1938. Geoffrey's drunken snore is compared to the "muted voice of England long asleep"; everybody's inability to act when a Pelado robs an Indian dying by the roadside is compared to Italy attack on Abyssinia despite the League of Nations; the loss of the Ebro by Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War is painfully paralleled to his loss of

⁶⁶ David Markson, *Malcolm Lowry's Volcano*, p. 87.

⁶⁷ Chris Ackerley and Lawrence J. Clipper, *A Companion to Under the Volcano*, p. 145.

⁶⁸ Dana Grove, *A Rhetorical Analysis of Under the Volcano. Malcolm Lowry's Design Governing Postures*, Lewiston-Lampeter-Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989, p. 140.

Yvonne; and he compares his frustrations with those of “another frustrated artist, Adolf Hitler”.

Frustrated *but* artist – he is even guilty of having published two songs he claims to have composed – Hugh still possesses self-esteem and enough rationality to desire possible things and, most of all, to realize what he desires. Yet, he is an “uncommitted, unloving, and ineffectual man”: “Hugh’s ‘commitment’ to the Spanish Republican cause boils down to no more than long hours of self-flagellation because he has been putting off joining their last offensive, the hopeless battle of the Ebro delta”⁶⁹. Furthermore, he cannot love because he knows that his love is wrong-directed, manifesting “a crippling ambivalence about love” that makes it impossible to him to commit himself to “a woman, to life, or to God”⁷⁰.

However, although personally ridden by guilt, Hugh is lifted of his guilt by Geoffrey, who rather shifts it to his wife. As a matter of fact, the guilty tension between the Consul and Yvonne is higher than that between the two brothers. Yvonne – who was his daughter until the fourth and last draft – is the one who helps the Consul’s voyage to death, following or even anticipating him in his destiny. She is guilty of treachery and of not enough strength in bringing back his husband to a sober life; this stigma is signalled throughout the novel by references to the film *Las Manos de Orlac* and also by external signs, like the advertisement of the *cafeaspirina*. Significantly, Yvonne herself is conscious of the fact that her reproachful attitude toward Geoffrey is a sort of panacea for his pushing sense of guilt and destruction. While wandering alone in a deserted street, she thinks:

And here Geoffrey indeed was, not only not alone, not only no wanting her help, but living in the midst of her blame, a blame by which, to all appearances, he was curiously sustained⁷¹.

The last of the main characters is Laruelle, who is guilty too. Hugh depicts him as follows:

⁶⁹ Barbara Lakin, “Greene’s *The Honorary Consul* and Lowry’s *Under the Volcano*”, p. 73.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

⁷¹ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 66.

as though the whole of this man, by some curious fiction, reached up to the crown of his perpendicularly raised Panama hat, for the gap below seemed... still occupied by something, a sort of halo or spiritual property of his body, or the essence of some guilty secret perhaps that he kept under the hat but which was now momentarily exposed, fluttering and embarrassed⁷².

Almost a caricature of his own sensitivity, Laruelle has to stand and share the Consul's guilt, his secret, and his voyeurism, when he sees the Consul and Yvonne embracing in the ruins of Maximilian's villa. In addition, as the first character appearing in the novel, Laruelle brings with him the sense of tragedy and the sense of guilt that will follow⁷³. Laruelle, as all the main characters of the novel, succumbs to a sense of failure:

Hugh (a musician), the Consul's half-brother, no longer plays his guitar; Yvonne (an actress), the Consul's ex-wife, no longer acts; and Laruelle, his ex-friend, no longer makes films. Each case has its own cause: Hugh's music is politically irrelevant (he thinks), Yvonne is unable to find the right director, and Laruelle refuses to go on making Hollywood formula pictures⁷⁴.

However, the Consul has sunk in his personal hell much more than the other characters. "There is no doubt that the Consul's self-deception is much more profound than that of the others. Yvonne, Hugh, and Laruelle are still far from his consummate confusion of salvation with damnation"⁷⁵. Alcohol can be an aggravation, or rather a fictional expedient to represent the Consul's multifaceted, Sternian opinions about the absurdity and the pain of human existence. Taken between conscious and unconscious,

⁷² *Ibid.*, p...

⁷³ "If the opening chapter denies the suspense of *impending* catastrophe, Lowry provides something equally dramatic and more consonant with the mood of the book: a sense of dread at what has *already* occurred, a thing so shattering that it has left the survivors no peace during the intervening years" (Richard Hauer Costa, "*Under the Volcano* – The Way it Was", p. 31).

⁷⁴ Charles Baxter, "The Escape from Irony: *Under the Volcano* and the Aesthetics of Arson", in *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 10, no. 2, Tenth Anniversary Issue: II, winter 1977, pp. 116.

⁷⁵ Kristofer Dorosz, *Malcolm Lowry's Infernal Paradise*, p. 124.

[t]he failed Consul, this erratic and faintly ludicrous drunk, is nothing less than a modern-day type of the Faustian-Promethean rebel, a man who turns his back on Grace, and who seeks by doing so to acquire diabolical wisdom and power. He knows, like Rimbaud, Baudelaire, and the rest of the *poètes maudits*, that the way down and the way up are one and the same; and he, like them, prefers the way down⁷⁶.

As Heilman suggests, the ex-naval officer in World War I Geoffrey Firmin is “a kind of sinning Ancient Mariner, caught in Life-in-Death, loathing his slimy creatures, born of the d.t.’s, whom he cannot expiatorily bless but must keep trying to drink away”⁷⁷. The melodrama depicted by this going down, regardless of helpers, confessions, and love, is the drama of surviving to his memories, his guilt, and his sloth, an incapacity to act shared with Leopold Bloom. However, if Bloom was a well-made mock-heroic individual, satisfied with his mediocrity, Firmin is victim of his ruined garden, imprisoned by his delirium in the wasteland he is persistently creating.

Consequently, there is no room for any sort not only of happy ending, but also of atonement for the Consul, neither psychological, nor emotional, nor fictional. “Unfortunately the sacrifice of Geoffrey Firmin, the guilt-laden *cabrón*, is without expiatory power. Rather it increases the burden of sin, for if the deed turns his final hour into a perverse *imitatio Christi*”⁷⁸. There is a difference, perhaps, between redemption – which can appear more evidently in the eyes of the others, and of the divinity – and expiation – a more intrinsic process that could be accomplished in one’s personal experience of existence and could not necessarily imply any tragic act. The Consul’s story is without doubt extremely tragic; but what makes the story even more tragic is the fact that the reader is left with the sensation that there is no hint of deliverance obtained from his sacrifice in solitude.

⁷⁶ Douglas Day, *Malcolm Lowry*, p. 345.

⁷⁷ Robert B. Heilman, “The Possessed Artist and the Ailing Soul”, in George Woodcock (ed.), *Malcolm Lowry*, p. 16.

⁷⁸ Richard K. Cross, *Malcolm Lowry*, p. 61.

4.2 *Wandering Through Hell: The Mexican Malebolge*

The novel can be read simply as a story which you can skip if you want. It can be read as a story which you will get more out of if you don't skip. It can be regarded as a kind of symphony, or in another way as a kind of opera-or even a horse opera. It is hot music, a poem, a song, a tragedy, a comedy, a farce, and so forth. It is superficial, profound, entertaining and boring, according to taste. It is a prophecy, a political warning, a cryptogram, a preposterous movie, and a writing on the wall⁷⁹.

This complex symbolic apparatus revolves around the theme of the journey: a Faustian fall downward to Dantean Malebolge – and an attempt at salvation through the love of a woman –, a katabasis which also reminds of Adam's loss of the Garden, but also a helpless circular Quixotic adventure. Symptomatically, as we have already seen, the sixth chapter opens with the words: “Nel mezzo del bloody cammin di nostra vita mi ritrovai in...”⁸⁰. All the main characters – Yvonne, Geoffrey's half-brother Hugh, Laruelle – accomplish eccentric orbits around the city and try to face their guilty consciences through their random thoughts in streams of consciousness, in “the Babel of their thoughts”: in one way or another, all of them seem to want to make atonement for their guilt, or repress their sense of guilt convincing themselves that, after all, they were not guilty at all. On the contrary, Geoffrey's drunken walking along the streets or his erratic bus trip with his friends are marked by meaningless actions in a nightmarish sense of void. Geoffrey walks to forget faults and guilts, and at the same time he broods over them through a style characterized by rapid associations, metonymies, metaphors without referent; this style allows him an escape into an oneiric ebriety that frees him – torturing him at the same time – from the crude reality, the real world, the impassivity of history.

The same pattern of wandering and guilt is present in other stories by Lowry, planned and written between 1948 and 1949 in Italy and at his house on the beach at Dollarton, near Vancouver. In *Elephant and Colosseum* the protagonist is obsessed with guilt over his mother's death before he could reach her side, and wanders alone

⁷⁹ Malcolm Lowry, *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry* (ed. by Harvey Breit and Margerie Bonner Lowry, 1965), New York: Capricorn, 1969, p. 66.

⁸⁰ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 157.

through Rome among the crowd (we will see shortly how this image appears also in *Der Tod in Rom*), discovering an inferno of buses and motor-scooters. *The Forest Path to the Spring* will have, significantly, other endless walking through paths surrounded by images of wheels; there is also a symbolic recurring Enochville (that is Vancouver; Enoch is the city founded by Cain); in *The Forest Path to the Spring*, the tragedy of human isolation is associated with this city, across the water from Eridanus. *Present State of Pompeii* has a wandering character as well, Roderick. In one of his reflections he says: “I was thinking [...] that I have read little about the malaise of travelers, even the sense of tragedy that must come over them sometimes at their lack of relation to their environment”⁸¹.

Under the Volcano opens with the physical description, in a cinematic narrowing of framing, of the mountains surrounding Quauhnahuac, the walls of the town, the Hotel Casino. A page later, a time co-ordinate is set: November 2nd, 1939, the Day of the Dead, sunset. The time choice presages the already consumed tragedy. All the remaining aspects of the novel will appear soon after. Two men in white flannels are sitting on the main terrace of the Casino drinking anis. One is Dr. Vigil, the doctor of the group; the other, is M. Laruelle, the first wanderer of the book. His wandering is marked by thoughts of the last hours they lived together a year before, moment after moment and place after place. As his friends, he feels like a stranger, an exiled, a ghost perhaps, in a lost Eden:

A sense of fear had possessed him again, a sense of being, after all these years, and on his last day here, still a stranger. Four years, almost five, and he still felt like a wanderer on another planet⁸².

He tries to be part of a community, but realizes that he is not. As all the other characters, he is taken captive in himself and in an external wasteland as well. These wastelands are always hostile, as it is typical of all the novels in which there is wandering for a sense of guilt, just because of the fictional attempt to create estrangement, both physical and spiritual, in the outsiders of these stories, “stranger

⁸¹ Malcolm Lowry, “Present Estate of Pompeii”, in *Hear us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place & Lunar Caustic* (1961 and 1968), London: Pan Books, 1991, p. 177.

⁸² Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 10.

among strangers”, as Cain was. Laruelle wants to feel the rain, to “walk on and on through this wild country”⁸³ that he had called before “Earthly Paradise”, the Eden, which is, according to Douglas Day and Lowry himself, the allegorical basis of the entire novel; an allegory that represents the world, whose drunkenness, universal but also historical, is embodied in the Consul’s. The garden, personal or ancestral, but always wasted and lost, is the physical or metaphorical setting of the story, as it was in *The Power and the Glory*. It represents, especially in *Under the Volcano*, the happiness gone forever, the despair of a man as well as of mankind. The words pronounced by Yvonne when she walks in what once was their beautiful garden are: “My God, this used to be a beautiful garden. It was like Paradise”⁸⁴; but she, Eve, has gone away, and has left Adam alone in his garden now reduced to a wild putrescence, but also alone in that bigger, abandoned park that is Mexico. It is through the voice of another wandering character, Laruelle, that we hear words that although referred to other historical figures are evidently also associated with Geoffrey and Yvonne:

And yet, how they must have loved this land, these two lonely empurpled exiles, human beings finally, lovers out of their element – their Eden, without even knowing quite why, beginning to turn under their noses into a prison and smell like a brewery, their only majesty at last that of tragedy⁸⁵.

Pronounced in the first pages of the book, in the aimless walk of another character, these words immediately put together the elements that will obsess the whole narrative: Eden, always mentioned *in absentia*, exile, prison, brewery, and tragedy, as the only possible ending with the ingredients at stake. According to Lowry, Laruelle’s initial point of view “establishes a kind of survey of the terrain, just as he expresses the slow, melancholy and tragic rhythm of Mexico itself. [...] It is the ideal setting for the struggle of a human being against the powers of darkness and light”⁸⁶. Armed with a tennis racket, Laruelle is compared to a wandering knight (he “dreamed a moment of battles the soul survived to wander there”⁸⁷), marked by

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁸⁶ Malcolm Lowry, *Preface to a Novel*, p. 5.

⁸⁷ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 12.

“weight”, “burden”, “sorrow” in a wandering felt as endless: “at this rate he could go on travelling in an eccentric orbit round his house forever”⁸⁸.

The sense of endlessness, of Kafkian absurd impotence at the circularity and repetition of horrific wandering through memory and despair, is the burden that afflicts the characters of *Under the Volcano*. Everlasting pain, or even existential insecurity, is explicit in both inner and outer experience:

The constant interplay of human fantasy and of the fantasy of the external world, mind and matter perpetually reflecting each other, and manifested in such phenomena as coincidence and the near-coincidences Jung called synchronicity, always fascinated Lowry⁸⁹.

The characters walk, and their mind wanders and wonders, establishing associations, recollecting memories, deciphering reality with acute drunken eyes, inebriated by guilt, melting all these elements together; and the reality they interpret and contaminate with their guilt and their depressive melancholy melts with these thoughts. The external hell reflects the inner one, and vice versa, creating a unity of landscape and mindscape, as Hauer Costa wrote⁹⁰.

This kind of scenery is constructed around clusters of significance identified by Lowry himself in the letter to Jonathan Cape of 2 January 1946, in which he explains the choice of Mexico as the setting of the story:

We can see it as the world itself, or the Garden of Eden, or both at once. Or we can see it as a kind of timeless symbol of the world on which we can place the Garden of Eden, the Tower of Babel and indeed anything else we please. It is paradisaical; it is unquestionably infernal⁹¹.

Christian imagery is evidently an important part of the mythical apparatus of the novel; most of the times, the great Christian themes are, however, ironically

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁸⁹ Sherrill E. Grace, “Malcolm Lowry and the Expressionist Vision”, in Anne Smith (ed.), *The Art of Malcolm Lowry*, pp. 118-119.

⁹⁰ See Richard Hauer Costa, “*Under the Volcano – The Way it Was*”, p. 41.

⁹¹ Quoted in Sherrill E. Grace, “Malcolm Lowry and the Expressionist Vision”, p. 119.

adopted⁹²: not only the scene has Christian echoes, but so do acts and thoughts and fantasies. Beside references to the Philosopher's Stone, Sisyphus, the Cyclops, Aztec sacrifices, the Abyss, and Saturn, the allegories of the original sin and of the crucifixion are set on this destroyed Eden, this disturbing Babel, this mirror of one's own demons and longed saviour angels. As in *The Power and the Glory*, Mexico has cocks crowing and serpents creeping around the characters. There are continuous allusions to movements upwards and movements downwards; there is a volcano and a ravine; both imply fatalism, and threat: "The landscape seems to project as well as conspiring in destiny"⁹³. The volcano, or rather the two volcanoes mentioned, the Popocatepetl and the Ixtaccihuatl, rise "clear and magnificent" and symbolize, in the end, the imagined ascension of the Consul before his death; whereas the barranca marks the pitiful end of the protagonist ("the ubiquitous ravine symbolizing a kind of cloacal hell into which the Consul's body is finally hurled"⁹⁴); there is a "subterranean collapse" that hints "physically or literally at the barranca and metaphysically or morally at the Consul's spiritual condition"⁹⁵. However, even before the final act, he will always walk on the borders – as he does in the garden – "into which he almost stumbles while embroiled within the peregrinations of vertiginous speculations"⁹⁶. Yvonne's letter warns Geoffrey that he is "walking on the edge of an abyss": the tendency to go down is always stronger than the tendency to go up. Even the end of husband and wife depicts a distinction between high and low:

Such concerns in the world of Menippean Satire, as on the Elizabethan stage or in Dante's *Commedia*, which Lowry so often invokes, exist not only on an earthly plane but with a heaven above and a hell below. The physical setting of *Under the Volcano*, stretching from the bottom of the barranca to the top of the mountains, clearly follows this principle and concretely gives significance to the pervasive moral language of falling and rising. The dying moments both of Yvonne and of the Consul make clear this doubleness that extends beyond earth.

⁹² Richard Hauer Costa, "*Under the Volcano* – The Way it Was", p. 42.

⁹³ Sherrill E. Grace, "Malcolm Lowry and the Expressionist Vision", p. 121.

⁹⁴ Thomas B. Gilmore, "The Place of Hallucinations in *Under the Volcano*", in *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 23, no. 3, summer 1982, p. 291.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ John Francis Harty, *Oscillation in Literary Modernism*, p. 304.

Yvonne is “gathered upwards and borne towards the stars” [...], while Geoffrey feels himself “falling into the volcano”⁹⁷.

Pathos is rooted in the scenery as well. A sense of “tragic rhythm”, but also the strong visual quality of the scenes, accompany all the descriptions of places, which unavoidably bring a sense of desolation and abandonment, like images of gardens with a snake, lands with a desert. Even the names of the bars bear the same damnation, like the Cantina El Bosque, or another one called Boskage, reminding of another spiritual dark place, Dante’s wood. The settings reflect the states of mind of the characters, and therefore must be as deranged and desperate as they are. Ronald Binns individuates three physical symbols in the novel:

There are three major spiritual symbols in the novel – the ruined garden, the hellish abyss, and the faraway celestial mountain. The Consul is at the centre of this triangle of possibilities, gazing back at the garden he has made into waste Land. As his name (an anagram of ‘infirm’) implies, he is the modern Fisher King. His sacrifice is necessary in order that the arid land can be made fertile once again. The Consul also possesses some of the attributes of the Magician, the Fool and the Hanged Man in the Tarot pack. He is trapped in a demonic universe in which satanic agents – dogs, scorpions, a malevolent sunflower – are tangibly and terrifyingly present. Lowry’s use of numerology reinforces this sense of a meshed, imprisoning world. Quauhnahuac is situated on the nineteenth parallel and the Consul is doomed to die at nineteen hundred hours⁹⁸.

All these symbols form, as we can see, an extremely complicated plot of relations. Mysticism is twined with landscape, myth and literature with decisions and events. Jonathan Arac analyses the recurrence of the forest-wood symbol in the novel: firstly, *Under the Volcano* begins in a town where the “fine American-style highway [...] is lost in its narrow streets”; the town name, Quauhnahuac, means “near the wood”, as Yvonne explains, and the first scene of the novel is set in the Casino de la Selva; the Consul is in the Cantina El Bosque; we have already seen

⁹⁷ Jonathan Arac, “The Form of Carnival in *Under the Volcano*”, p. 485.

⁹⁸ Ronald Binns, *Malcolm Lowry*, London and New York: Methuen, 1984, p. 53.

how chapter VI begins with the Dantean incipit, and in chapter VII it will also be said: “Mi ritrovai per una bosca oscura – or selva”: “Dante’s underworld is transposed into the bars of Mexico, and the dark wood of his allegory is travestied in their names before it finally becomes literal in the wanderings of Hugh and Yvonne in search of Geoffrey”⁹⁹.

We have here what Bakhtin called the “underworld naturalism”, created with the life of markets, brothels, dens of thieves, and taverns¹⁰⁰. On the surface – but with some incursions to the underneath – the other characters move around the limited space of Quauhnahuac, alienated from their possible lives, their possible careers. “The impression of initial convergence”, says Harty, “all characters found together under the volcano from India, Hawaii etc – is instead of divergence in the novel (already divorced, neither of them fully integrated into the Mexican culture, always remaining foreigners)”¹⁰¹. The confluence is spatial, whereas the divergence is moral, spiritual, psychological, or social. All the characters, though, “share a nomadic existence as dislodged hybrid Europeans, incapable of integrating the forces of despair and the carnivalesque which is the achievement of Mexican culture, yet Mexico provides the stage on which their nomadic destinies are performed”¹⁰². In Mexico they are all exiled, even the historical Maximilian and Carlotta, to whom Geoffrey and Yvonne are compared: “those two lonely empurpled exiles [...] lovers out of their element”. Our lovers have lost their Eden, or perhaps are obliged to keep on trying to love each other in a devastated paradise.

Laruelle, as we have seen, is the first nomad of the book, still alienated from the place where he has been living for a while. According to Harty, Laruelle’s epilogue is the reader’s prologue to the novel: “His peregrinations, his circuitous routes through alternative and oscillating landscapes, also represent a narrative requiem for the Consul”¹⁰³. His “melancholic peregrinations wend their way towards an end as he encounters two further architectural symbols of the Consul’s destiny,

⁹⁹ Jonathan Arac, “The Form of Carnival in *Under the Volcano*”, p. 484.

¹⁰⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

¹⁰¹ John Francis Harty, *Oscillation in Literary Modernism*, pp. 248-249.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

the cinema and the cantina”¹⁰⁴. The *Companion to Under the Volcano* describes Laruelle’s “eccentric orbit” as follows:

[it] imitates that of various wanderers of ancient legends who journey over the earth, the moon, and the universe. The most celebrated of these is the Wandering Jew, Ahasuerus, “Striker of Jesus” (*October Ferry*, p. 133), condemned for this to wander the universe without rest until Judgement day. Laruelle was described in an early draft (UBC 7-2, p. 11) as desolately “wandering between two worlds,” and the barrenness of the stony landscape testifies to the change in his world that has taken place since the Consul’s death. Lowry also intends a reference to Julian Green’s *Le Voyageur sur la terre* (1926)¹⁰⁵.

In addition, Laruelle’s flashlight is ironically likened to the bag or wallet of a medieval pilgrim, and he is compared also to a knight¹⁰⁶.

Yvonne has come to Mexico to rescue her husband, after she had been deluded by him and after she had deluded him. We have already seen how and where she finds him as soon as she gets off her taxi. She is left with nothing else than this image about their deserted love: a love “wandering over some desolate cactus plain”. She can only acknowledge the fact that their paradise is only a wasteland, a wild putrescence: “My God, this used to be a beautiful garden. It was like Paradise”. Punishment, as we have seen, continues living there. Sin and punishment are the same thing.

This is the wasteland where Yvonne has left her Adam, in solitude – the greatest punishment – making him a Cain just because of his guilt, wandering in his ruined garden, the symbol of his failure, as it is powerfully exemplified by his misreading of the sign on it: instead of “¿Le gusta este jardín? ¿Que es suyo? ¡Evite que sus hijos lo destruyan!” he reads that “somebody” will punish with eviration those who spoil the garden. Castration rules, together with sense of existential failure and existential guilt.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

¹⁰⁵ Chris Ackerley and Lawrence J. Clipper, *A Companion to Under the Volcano*, pp. 15-16.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Yvonne could represent a Beatrix, trying to push Firmin upwards to Heaven. On the contrary, his journey is a journey to damnation. The attempt at salvation through the love of a woman fails, and the woman herself will follow the same destiny – with the slight difference that the narrator associates her with the firmament, and not with a ravine. Nonetheless, meaningless deaths mark the end of both characters.

The assimilation of the Consul's character with the landscape appears since the beginning of the novel. As to the priest "forty years of the priesthood had branded him"¹⁰⁷, the Consul too feels himself marked by a guilt which causes him to wander as the biblical Cain. Both the heroes are isolated in their worlds of blind alleys – and, in a way, so is every other character, creating unity by a common sense of desertion¹⁰⁸. Furthermore, the whisky priest too is convinced that his punishment is the obligation to stay in Tabasco¹⁰⁹.

The Consul is marked not by his creed, but, paradoxically, by his (false) political creed and his position – both social and physical: he is a consul in a country where consuls are thought to be spies¹¹⁰. His choice of staying in Mexico when his government has broken diplomatic relations is the beginning of his tragedy, worsened by a sad love story, alcohol, and betrayal. He is alone, condemned by his fallen condition to loneliness and isolation, spiritual if not physical; in fact, he is always pursued, "hunted" as the priest was, but this time the protagonist is searched by friends, people who have the only fault of not sharing – at least not with the same intensity – his psychological damnation. He has been separated from his original beautiful paradise and from his paternal Owner, and the only thing he can do is going downhill, just like the bus on which they travel in chapter V.

The Consul is perfectly conscious that he is making a journey through his sense of guilt, in solitude, incomprehensible to the others; a journey into the Parián wilderness, towards his fatal end. He is aware that alcohol and existential suffering have made him more sensitive and have opened the door to a deeper understanding,

¹⁰⁷ Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*, p. 23.

¹⁰⁸ Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris, *The Art of Graham Greene*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1953, p. 175.

¹⁰⁹ Chris Ackerley and Lawrence J. Clipper, *A Companion to Under the Volcano*, p. 196.

¹¹⁰ Stephen Tiff, "Tragedy as a Meditation on Itself", p. 63.

just like a magician using the cabbala, or a Dante wandering through the three states of human soul:

This is sometimes how I think of myself, as a great explorer who has discovered some extraordinary land from which he can never return to give his knowledge to the world: but the name of this land is hell¹¹¹.

Isolation is the punishment for this deeper comprehension and, obviously, for his guilt. His wandering has to be pointless, leading to nowhere. A spectral companion, outsider and pariah as himself, is the dog, perhaps the only being with whom he feels associated and with whom he would share the destiny: “Behind them walked the only living thing that shared their pilgrimage, the dog”¹¹², as he pronounces when, waking up after a state of drunkenness, he tells the story of his dream. The day, part of which had been spent on the bus of his “erratic journey”, will end tragically, before he could have completed his expiation, or rather, just because of this.

Between a pun and another, rigorously with mythical suggestions (particularly funny those about Quincey’s cat, that he calls “my-little-Oedipuss-pusspuss”, “little priapusspuss”, and the jokes on a “katabasis to cat abysses”¹¹³), the Consul travels between dark places of the consciousness and more superficial, more external levels of reality on which he oscillates in his wandering:

Lowry makes the hallucination perhaps his chief vehicle for moral implication and for the prophecy or discovery of truth. Here again, perceiving an analogy with Don Quixote may be helpful: both works suggest that imagination, insanity, or hallucination offers surer roads to more important truths than does reason or sanity¹¹⁴.

Hallucinations are as incumbent as the physical land: “Mexico, a land which Lowry renders as a kind of Alice-in-Wonderland world, irrational, hallucinatory, a

¹¹¹ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 37.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹¹³ David Markson, *Malcolm Lowry’s Volcano*, p. 79.

¹¹⁴ Thomas B. Gilmore, “The Place of Hallucinations in *Under the Volcano*”, p. 300.

domain of dreams and nightmares”¹¹⁵. Lowry himself seemed to prefer his inner landscape more than Paris and nature¹¹⁶. The two realities mix into a unique magma of thought and walking:

Mexico, drink, coincidences, runic prophecies, guilt, fire, fear of eviction, a kind of travelling that – like the machine in Kafka’s “Penal Colony” – inscribed the traveller¹¹⁷.

The Consul, like the whisky priest, could go away; but he does not. The day ends tragically, leaving the protagonist without even having expiated his guilt; or rather, because of his failure to do so. The Consul too feels himself marked by a guilt which causes him to wander “stranger among strangers”. In *Under the Volcano*, Firmin – as well as the other characters – feels the weight of solitude. He is forced to live with anxiety, guilt, and fear¹¹⁸.

The sum of these feelings, shared with the reader in a drunken delirium, gives an impression of stasis, “that results from this temporal discontinuity”, and that “mirrors the *acedia* of Geoffrey’s soul”¹¹⁹. Interestingly enough, it is an *acedia* that is reflected not only in the verbose monologues – or also hallucinatory descriptions – of the Consul, but in the space drifting around the characters too:

A moment in the Consul’s consciousness makes clear the spatializing effect of the novel’s topographic specificity. As he looks from the Farolito down into the barranca, the Consul “traced mentally the barranca’s circuitous abysmal path back through the country... to his own garden, then saw himself standing again this morning with Yvonne beside the printer’s shop, gazing at the picture of that other rock, La Despedida, the glacial rock crumbling among the wedding invitations in the shop window, the spinning wheel behind” [...].

¹¹⁵ Ronald Binns, *Malcolm Lowry*, p. 30. For more on hallucinations in *Under the Volcano*, see Thomas B. Gilmore, “The Place of Hallucinations in *Under the Volcano*”, pp. 285-305.

¹¹⁶ See George Woodcock, “The Own Place of the Mind: An Essay in Lowrian Topography”, in Anne Smith (ed.), *The Art of Malcolm Lowry*.

¹¹⁷ Michael Hofmann, Introduction to Malcolm Lowry, *The Voyage that Never Ends. Fictions, Poems, Fragments, Letters* (ed. by Michael Hofmann), New York: New York Review Books, 2007, p. x.

¹¹⁸ Marilyn French in *The Book as World: James Joyce’s Ulysses* (New York: Paragon House, 1993 [1976], p. 65), said the same thing about Joyce’s characters: “A character is not vanquished by fear of beheading, but is forced to live with that vaguer form of fear, anxiety, and with guilt”.

¹¹⁹ Sherrill E. Grace, “Malcolm Lowry and the Expressionist Vision”, p. 99.

We could literally map out the characters' courses during the day. The book, indeed, would be much easier to comprehend if we could see it as here and here and here, rather than read it as then and then and then¹²⁰.

The visionary eyes of the Consul depict the surrounding set. He goes around in that seedy Mexican town, quoting Dante and Marlowe and many more, reading advertisements, accusing the world. Symbols are everywhere, deciphered or invented by his mind. The image of the wheel, for example, is one of the most meaningful of the book. In one of his letter the author explains its possible meanings:

This wheel is of course the Ferris wheel in the square, but it is, if you like, also many other things: it is Buddha's wheel of the law... it is eternity, it is the instrument of eternal recurrence, the eternal return, and it is the form of the book; or superficially it can be seen simply in an obvious movie sense as the wheel of time whirling backwards¹²¹.

The wheel indicates circularity, of the characters' lives as well as of parts of the text: a story that begins a year after the events narrated in the rest of the book and that resumes with a similar scene: a man wandering through a town. The fact that the man is not the same it is of no importance; the four main characters were conceived to represent an only one. Circularity, broken for the Consul, continues for the others: Laruelle wanders with grief over the memory of the people he loved, with the entire world reminding them; Hugh, in a forest with his ghosts; and Yvonne, the "eternal feminine", is left to look at the Pleiades in a convoluted agonizing hallucination that precedes her death: "The ending appears to have the finality of tragedy, even if only a diminished elevation. Yet for Lowry himself the book's movement was not toward an end, but toward a continuation"¹²².

The last sentence of Chapter I is the following: "Over the town, in the dark tempestuous night, backwards revolved the luminous wheel". Lowry explained that "in an obvious movie sense" it is "the wheel of time whirling backwards until we have reached the year before and Chapter II [...] we can look at the rest of the book

¹²⁰ Jonathan Arac, "The Form of Carnival in *Under the Volcano*", 1945, p. 488.

¹²¹ Malcolm Lowry, *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry*, pp. 71-72.

¹²² Jonathan Arac, "The Form of Carnival in *Under the Volcano*", p. 487.

through Laruelle's eyes, as if it were his creation". In addition, the wheel is "the instrument of eternal recurrence", and "the form of the book" itself¹²³. Later, in chapter IX, when Geoffrey, Hugh, and Yvonne leave the bullring for the Salon Ofelia, "[t]heir shadows crawled before them in the dust, slid down white thirsty walls of houses, were caught violently for a moment in an elliptical shade, the turning wrenched wheel of a boy's bicycle"¹²⁴. Finally, in chapter XI, when Yvonne begins to seek Geoffrey in the woods, the "wheel" of the orbits of the stars seems to promise eternity; but, as she dies, the celestial objects become confused in her mind with the "cars at the fair that were whirling around her" and with the Ferris wheel.

Lowry appreciated Bergson's idea "that the sense of time is merely an inhibition to prevent everything happening at once"¹²⁵. However, according to Arac, Lowry's idea of spatial construction was simultaneity of images: "Lowry's architectural metaphor for *Under the Volcano* suggests that he did want everything in it to be happening at once, for in a cathedral all the pictured parts of holy story are happening at once"¹²⁶. In another letter, Lowry said of one of his chapters: "This chapter [XII] is the easterly tower, Chapter I being the westerly, at each end of my churrigueresque Mexican cathedral, and all the gargoyles of the latter are repeated with interest in this"¹²⁷.

In short, Lowry played also, among many other things, with the very concept of time and space, mixing mythical circularity with filmic simultaneity, thus creating a new space between modernism and post-modernism; he winks at road signs while quoting Dante and indulging in melancholic existentialism using expressionism, all in an almost solipsistic attitude. *Under the Volcano* is an encyclopaedic novel, polyphonic, but without Bakhtinian carnivalesque happiness; drinking has no Rabelian convivial merriment, and it only functions as biographical and also fictional increaser of stylistic complexity and dramatic intensity. Sense of guilt appears more pregnantly in the broken grammar of hallucinated drunken characters.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹²⁴ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 290.

¹²⁵ Malcolm Lowry, *Letters*, p. 200.

¹²⁶ Jonathan Arac, "The Form of Carnival in *Under the Volcano*", p. 488.

¹²⁷ Malcolm Lowry, *Letters*, p. 85.

Geoffrey Firmin embodies “a deterritorialized and nomadic self: a self to which all boundaries appear both permeable and contingent”¹²⁸. For Miller, Lowry anticipates some postcolonial writing in doing so; but we must say that if he does – and he does, in my opinion, in a more limited sense –, he always intertwines postcolonial aspects with more traditional patterns and symbols: Cain, of course, but, as we have seen, also Faust, the Wandering Jew¹²⁹, Everyman, and Don Quixote¹³⁰.

The way in which the figure of Don Quixote appears in the novel and is paralleled to the Consul is particularly subtle and fascinating, almost metonymic:

“Sorry, it isn’t any good I’m afraid.” The Consul shut the door behind him and a small rain of plaster showered on his head. A Don Quixote fell from the wall. He picked up the sad straw knight...¹³¹.

Apart from the filmic quality of the scene, the fact that the Consul goes away and the image of his possible alter ego falls from the wall is particularly suggestive. Although Quixotic, the Consul’s journey – at least the physical one – is limited to a restricted geographical milieu; a limited space which, paradoxically, hosts the “conflict between rebellion bordering on the dissolution of the self and the perception of the self’s place within an ordered universe”¹³².

Under the Volcano begins and ends as a novel of wandering; wandering that originates, according to Gianfranco Rubino, from “an impossibility to evasion, of which it is the reverse, or also the surrogate”¹³³. Being unable to flee or to change the status quo, the characters of Lowry’s masterpiece keep on wandering in a limited

¹²⁸ Andrew John Miller, “Under the Nation-State: Modernist Deterritorialization in Malcolm Lowry’s *Under the Volcano*”, in *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 50, no. 1, spring 2004, p. 1.

¹²⁹ Markson adds the figure of the Wandering Jew to many other the Consul would represent: “it is noteworthy that unlike Leopold Bloom, whose nonmythic background Joyce restricts mainly to Dublin, both the Consul and Hugh have spent much of their lives in travel, meaning that Lowry has long since established a *biographical* point of departure for the analogy. For that matter since the heart of the motif is ‘journey’ – the *odyssey* – all of Lowry’s characters can be read as veritable Wandering Jews, the Consul whom Hugh recalls ‘was always in Rabat or Timbuctoo,’ Yvonne with her multi-labeled luggage, etc” (pp. 137-138).

¹³⁰ See Thomas B. Gilmore, “The Place of Hallucinations in *Under the Volcano*”.

¹³¹ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 95.

¹³² Greg Bond, “Boundlessness beyond Boundlessness”, p. 627. For Bond, this is a theme that Lowry had already anticipated in *Ultramarine*.

¹³³ Gianfranco Rubino (ed.), *Figure dell’erranza. Immaginario del percorso nel romanzo francese contemporaneo*, Roma: Bulzoni, 1991, p. 17 (the translation from Italian is mine).

space; otherwise, they are destined to die. Their thoughts, in which the reader often enters thanks to their narrative “transparent minds”, are a sea of memory, of guilt and of quixotic attempt at elaboration or displacement.

4.3 Out of Eden: The Guilt of Humanity

¿LE GUSTA ESTE JARDÍN?
¿QUE ES SUYO?
¡EVITE QUE SUS HIJOS LO DESTRUYAN!

This is how *Under the Volcano* ends. The sign on the garden is chosen as the last image left to the reader after four hundred pages of myths, puns, delirium, and tragedy. The *Companion to Under the Volcano* explains that the “sign gives a last and terrible warning of Eden, the garden from which the Consul, drunk on guilt and terrified of the forces within him, has wilfully evicted himself”¹³⁴. Firmin’s self-destruction is caused, in fact, by the fear of his own inner self. Again, the most terrifying discovery of the novel is the understanding of personal destructive power, of the capacity of thinking and practicing evil, and of the horror that inner and external reality can create together.

There is dialectic between individual experience and collective guilt, as in all the novels we are analysing in this study. Several critics have recorded this relationship, and Lowry himself explained what the Consul’s story could represent:

[The novel] has for its subject the forces that dwell within a man and lead him to look upon himself with terror. Its subject is also the fall of man, his remorse, his incessant struggle towards the light under the weight of the past, which is his destiny. The allegory is the Garden of Eden, the garden representing the world from which we are now even a little more under threat of ejection than at the moment when I wrote this book¹³⁵.

¹³⁴ Chris Ackerley and Lawrence J. Clipper, *A Companion to Under the Volcano*, p. 446.

¹³⁵ Malcolm Lowry, “Preface to a Novel”, in George Woodcock (ed.), *Malcolm Lowry*, p. 7.

Inner forces, terror, fall of man, remorse, struggle for light, weight of the past, destiny, Eden, threat of ejection: the contents at stake tend, evidently, to be universal.

Douglas Day identified five levels of interpretations in the novel: the chthonic or earthbound, the human, the political, the magical, and the religious. The chthonic has dynamic images, and is “composed of natural elements either on or beneath the earth and [...] man-made elements”; the human level is formed by the “extras” appearing in the novel, who “intensify the fever, but occasionally they distract us from it”; then, the political level, still mimetically oriented, represents the political allegory of the book: “Now Mexico becomes the earthly paradise first as ruined by exploiting *conquistadores*, and then as jeopardized by left-versus-right revolutionary activity in the late Thirties of this century”, a country in which personal failure have universal implications; next there is the magical level, linked to the third, in which drunkenness is also mysticism: “If we choose to take this level seriously (as Lowry pretended to do, but I suspect did not – quite), then we can say that, because every element, every symbol in *Under the Volcano* is an integral part of that infernal machine, then even the most insignificant details have their share in affecting the downfall of Geoffrey Firmin. Everything, moreover, is related to everything else: Geoffrey’s world is a world of occult and total correspondence”; finally, the religious level: love is the only possible meaning to our lives; however, the Consul’s is a failure not only at *eros* and *agape* (the love of one’s fellow man), but also at the experience of love in the sense of *logos*, that is, the Divine Word¹³⁶.

Incapable of love at all levels, Geoffrey represents the emotional *acedia* and sense of loss characteristic of the historical period we are dealing with, from the late Thirties to the Fifties. Sherrill Grace sees a physical element like the volcano as part of the correlative of the era’s fear: “Fully in keeping with an Expressionist aesthetic, this autonomous image embodies the dialectics of the ‘I’ and the universal forces of destruction loose in a pre-World War II world”¹³⁷. Such expressionist images, powerful and sublimely disquieting, connote the Consul’s experience with more layers of significance; nature is feared – with its volcanoes, and with what is beneath them, the Tartarus, the barranca – as well as human nature, and its destiny.

¹³⁶ See Douglas Day, *Malcolm Lowry*, pp. 326-350.

¹³⁷ Sherrill E. Grace, “Malcolm Lowry and the Expressionist Vision”, p. 101.

As a matter of fact, this is what Lowry himself implies in his 1946 letter to the publisher Jonathan Cape (the letter he sent pleading Cape to give his book a second chance): “what profundity and final meaning there is in [the Consul’s] fate should be seen also in its universal relationship to the ultimate fate of mankind”¹³⁸. For Hauer Costa, “*Under the Volcano* made the Mexican Day of the Dead an archetypal holiday standing for Humanity’s last grasp”¹³⁹. The sense of an impending end – and let us remember Kermode’s study on the sense of ending¹⁴⁰ – is perceivable not only in the Consul’s personal tragedy, but also in the overall atmosphere of the book, which gives the reader a continuous sensation of precariousness, uncertainty about one’s own individual fate, and, considered the crucial historical moment, also of humanity itself.

The references to the “outer” reality external to the personal events of the characters are suggested by the characters themselves, in a more evocative way than if the narrator did it – we should remember that, in fact, also the narrator is often a phantasmal presence, as he conveys the characters’ voices mostly by free indirect speech, if not by stream of consciousness. Hugh, for example, referring to his drunken friend Geoffrey, once exclaims: “Just sobering him up for a day or two’s not going to help. Good God, if our civilization were to sober up for a couple of days it’d die of remorse on the third”. It is evident that Lowry considers his world on the verge of collapse and, most importantly, burdened by irremediable guilt.

More important, however, is the tendency of this hallucination, like many other passages in the novel, to invest the Consul’s fate and soul with a universal importance. In a novel in which the Spanish Civil War hovers in the near background because of Hugh’s presence, in a world poised on the brink of global warfare (as Lowry well knew, writing and rewriting his novel during the war), the hallucination’s imagery of a destroyed town, lost communication, and bombs can stand for any of thousands of pictures of razed towns or cities in World War II or perhaps, more specifically, for the infamous and also symbolic instance of Guernica. In any event, Lowry can be extremely skilful, as he is in

¹³⁸ Malcolm Lowry, *Selected Letters*, p. 85.

¹³⁹ Richard Hauer Costa, “*Under the Volcano – The Way it Was*”, p. 34.

¹⁴⁰ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.

using this hallucination, at bringing us to see the Consul not as an isolated individual but as a community, or an Everyman, suffering the fate of Everyman in the late 1930s and world conflict. Essentially the same imagery reappears intensified, the Consul at its center, in the final hallucination of the novel: "... the world itself was bursting, bursting into black spouts of villages catapulted into space, with himself falling through it all, through the inconceivable pandemonium of a million tanks, through the blazing of ten million burning bodies..."¹⁴¹.

War is the direct reference. Pandemonium is the perfect word for a novel with guilt-ridden protagonists, playing with memory and alcohol at the eve of a world war, on a base of cabalistic pleasure. Hallucination is an adequate and very common device to represent war and postwar disorientation and fear, as we shall see in *Nobi*, and as it is also evident in other Japanese literature, for instance, in *H: A Hiroshima Novel* by Oda Makoto. According to Miller, this characteristic can reflect also existentialist thought of the World War II period:

In many respects, Lowry's Consul thus embodies those fantasies of free-floating authenticity and autonomy that inform much of the existentialist thought in the post-World War II period in which *Under the Volcano* initially appeared; the novel can be read as a textualized battle between the belittling demands of contingency and a desire to avoid the inauthenticity of bad faith¹⁴².

Another battle is often mentioned in the book, the Battle of the Ebro in the Spanish Civil War and the following loss, a frequent debate between Geoffrey and Hugh. Both recognize the futility of involvement and admit, as a consequence, the uselessness of interference: as to say, whatever we do, or think, or believe, we are guilty:

And yet, in these old women it was as if, though the various tragedies of Mexican history, pity, the impulse to approach, and terror, the impulse to escape

¹⁴¹ Thomas B. Gilmore, "The Place of Hallucinations in *Under the Volcano*", p. 302.

¹⁴² Andrew John Miller, "Under the Nation-State: Modernist Deterritorialization in Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*", in *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 50, no. 1, spring 2004, p. 1.

(as one had learned at college), having replaced it, had finally been reconciled by prudence, the conviction it is better to stay where you are...

And the truth was, it was perhaps one of those occasions when nothing *would* have done any good. Which only made it worse than ever¹⁴³.

One should decipher the world's meaninglessness through the drunken state of the Consul's troubled mind: "The public violence of World War II tacitly frames Lowry's often solipsistic narrative of love, drunkenness, and self-destruction"¹⁴⁴. The Mexican police represent just an embodiment of the violence ruling the world at that time¹⁴⁵. Besides, in the novel the Indians play the role of victims, and consequently they are a metonym for universal guilt, as it is symbolized by the wounded peon dying by the side of the road to Tomalín and not helped by the people around – paralyzed as the whole world. Lowry explained that the "Indian is, obviously, mankind himself, mankind dying – then, in the Battle of the Ebro, or now, in Europe, while we do nothing, or if we would, have put ourselves in a position where we *can* do nothing, but talk, while he goes on dying"¹⁴⁶. The author himself originally made a more explicit analogy between the Consul and the conquistadores, and attributed much of his guilt to the conviction that he too was egoistically exploiting the Indians. However, in the later version, "Lowry seems to have downplayed this background to increase the mystery about the Consul's reasons for staying on and to relate his guilt more specifically to his feelings for Yvonne"¹⁴⁷. Staying and guilt are evidently associated.

Also Laruelle, the static wanderer, and "an astonishingly complacent and egocentric individual", shares the feeling that action is pointless in that historical setting:

¹⁴³ Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 88.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁴⁵ "In the localized Mexican milieu that Lowry depicts, the corrupt agents of the police serve as the most visible embodiment of the broader violence that was then being actively manifested, on a global scale, by the military instrumentalities of the nation-state. In the closing chapter of the novel, there can no longer be any doubt that the Mexican police are being employed as the key element in a geopolitical allegory" (*ibid.*).

¹⁴⁶ Malcolm Lowry, *Selected Letters*, p. 79.

¹⁴⁷ Chris Ackerley and Lawrence J. Clipper, *A Companion to Under the Volcano*, p. 118.

His attitude to the outbreak of the Second World War is bland and extreme: “He had few emotions about the war, save that it was bad. One side or the other would win. And in either case life would be hard. Though if the Allies lost it would be harder. And in either case one’s own battle would go on”... He regards the fascist Unión Militar merely as “tiresome”... He considers making a version of the Faustus story with someone like Trotsky for its protagonist¹⁴⁸.

Passivity is a refuge for the sense of guilt, but at the same time it makes the characters incur in heavier and deeper sense of guilt. This paradox is the base of our novels, at the base of the sense of guilt in the decades around the Second World War. Resignation to fate and to one’s own guilt are the common factors of fictionalized guilt in these novels. The Consul is the linchpin of all human insecurities, both archetypal and historically contingent:

Geoffrey is Christ, Faust, Prometheus, Western man. The superimposition of inner reality upon the outer reality of tourist folder, railway schedule, indeed of the entire day, expresses his agony and forces the reader to perceive his personal horror *and* the universal implications of his vision. To what extent is there truth in this madness?¹⁴⁹

The truth in the madness of the Consul can be summarized perhaps by the first epigraph to the book, from Sophocles’ *Antigone*: “yea, he hath resource for all; without resource he meets nothing that must come; only against Death shall he call for aid in vain; but from baffling maladies he hath devised escapes”. The Consul escapes into alcohol, restless wandering, and isolation; however, these remedies would rather bring him to final destruction, an unavoidable death, against which no friend, nor love – if not metaphysical – can save him.

Otherwise, he could be the bearer of another truth, as it is expressed by what is, in my opinion, the most crucial sentence of the novel. In chapter VI, a headline that the Consul has imagined in a newspaper reads: “Firmin innocent, but bears guilt of world on shoulders”. This sentence condenses the deepest sense of the story:

¹⁴⁸ Ronald Binns, *Malcolm Lowry*, p. 46.

¹⁴⁹ Sherrill E. Grace, “Malcolm Lowry and the Expressionist Vision”, p. 102.

mankind is guilty although guiltless, although nothing wrong has been personally done. Mankind is, in fact, victim of the original sin, structurally faulty, and objectively burdened in the war period by silence and incapacity to stop the horror. In a manuscript variant later deleted, the Consul reflects that there can be no peace, “but must pay full toll to hell. For even were the stone of my own guilt rolled away there would still remain the guilt of the human race”¹⁵⁰. Nazism is obviously the closest reference:

he [Lowry] applies to Mexico the related theme of the Consul’s self-victimization. [...] he extends the theme to global relevance through the Mexican fascists, whose connection with Nazi Germany is made clear at numerous points. [...] The Consul serves as a link between the personal and the global: Hugh refers to his snore as “the muted voice of England long asleep”¹⁵¹.

One of the many references to Nazism is a sentence pronounced by Laruelle, who sees the film *Las Manos de Orlac* as “the hieroglyphic of the times. For really it was Germany itself”¹⁵². According to Barbara Lakin, who makes an interesting comparison between the Consul and the protagonist of Greene’s *The Honorary Consul*, Geoffrey Firmin is hardly less “honorary” than Greene’s consul, and “worthless”; in addition, both are not “significant” in the political games surrounding them:

Lowry’s consul is hardly less “honorary.” Though at one time he was a respectable civil servant, Firmin’s lengthy drunken dissipation has already earned him a demotion to a mere Consulship in Quauhahuac. When England and Mexico break diplomatic ties, Firmin remains behind as a pathetic patron of the cantinas and manages to arouse the suspicions of the omnipresent, sunglassed fascists. These minions trail him to a cantina/whorehouse. Though drunk almost to incoherence, he is subjected to a mock trial and condemned as a spy when he jokingly gives them the wrong name. Neither man, in the authors’ terms, is significant in the political struggles that he inadvertently joins. And

¹⁵⁰ Chris Ackerley and Lawrence J Clipper, *A Companion to Under the Volcano*, p. 360.

¹⁵¹ Stephen Tiffit, “Tragedy as a Meditation on Itself”, p. 65.

¹⁵² Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, p. 26.

both authors emphasize their protagonists' "worthlessness" by making their captors and rescuers equally inept¹⁵³.

The Consul is the emblem of human incapacity to really and actively face the capacity of man to act evil. Shakespearean characteristics could represent these ancestral features: for Tiffit, the Consul, like Macbeth, "soon loses the ability of determine whether the origin of his vision is within or without"¹⁵⁴; and he also compares him to Hamlet:

Both Hamlet and the Consul see the world as a ruined garden. For them the disease of their respective times infects the family, the state, and even the soul of mankind; and they see it in its largest aspect – as a fall from paradise¹⁵⁵.

The fall from paradise and the original sin are, as we have seen, possibly representations of psychological, ancestral patterns. Religion and psychoanalysis together construct the major paradigms of signification in all literatures, and this is particularly evident in those novels in which myth and guilt are personified in a multifaceted character as it happens in *Under the Volcano*. It is probably for this reason that it has been considered the greatest religious novel of this century, and for this reason that Heilman can say:

Lowry's whole complex of image and symbol is such as to direct a dissolving order, in search of a creative affirmation, toward that union of the personal and the universal which is the religious¹⁵⁶.

¹⁵³ Barbara Lakin, "Greene's *The Honorary Consul* and Lowry's *Under the Volcano*: A Study in Influence", in *South Central Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, spring 1986, p. 70. She writes: "To begin with the most obvious, the "political" similarities, we have two alcoholic, cuckolded, and largely ineffective British consuls. Both are mistaken by terrorists as being of some political significance: Lowry's Geoffrey Firmin is taken for a spy and Greene's Charlie Fortnum for an American ambassador. *Under the Volcano* depicts the now somewhat primitive brand of terrorism practiced by the rightist-fascists who sought to undermine Mexico's agrarian reform government in the late 1930s; *the Honorary Consul* faces the new, more confused breed of terrorists of the 1970s [...]. In each instance, these groups of terrorists provide the menace and mayhem that lend high drama to the developing plots. They are the final arbiters of the protagonists' destinies. In both books they assume and fulfill not only the sense of doom but of absurdity each author projects" (pp. 69-70).

¹⁵⁴ Stephen Tiffit, "Tragedy as a Meditation on Itself", p. 61.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁵⁶ Robert B. Heilman, a review in *Sewanee Review*, no. LV, July-September 1947, pp. 489-490.

Lowry adds timeless myth to historical contingency, tension between self and world that, according to Richard Cross, gives to the novel much of its force¹⁵⁷. Mythical structure is another means by which it is possible to go beyond history; Lowry uses the same method used by Joyce, the mythical method¹⁵⁸. However, Stephen Spender, in his introduction to *Under the Volcano*, has pointed out an interesting difference:

Joyce and Eliot use particular instances of modern people in order to move towards, enter into, the greater universality of a tradition of which modern life is only a fragmentary part. They use myths and symbols to get outside “the times” into the past of tradition. Lowry uses them to exemplify “the times,” to describe the Consul as illustration almost. Symbol and myth are used in *Ulysses* in order to absorb the characters at certain moments into a kind of cosmic consciousness. Lowry uses them with opposite effect in order to create the interior world of the Consul. Stephen Dedalus and Bloom tend to disappear into the cosmos. We finish *Under the Volcano* feeling that the Consul with all his defects is the cosmos – and that he is also Malcolm Lowry¹⁵⁹.

According to Lowry, his method of characterization is one of heteroplasty, in which the four main characters are “aspects of the same man, or the human spirit”: “*Under the Volcano* is the analysis of the individual consciousness, of many characters – intended as one [...]. It is an autobiography of the spirit, humanly subjective, as the sense of guilt, localized in space and time but also universal, a conradian archetype”¹⁶⁰. His characters are polymorphic, or rather, polyvalent, although plurality is magnificently absorbed into an “everyman status”.

Even though he started writing the *Volcano* at the end of the Thirties, Lowry still adopts the high modernist fusion of symbolism and mimesis¹⁶¹; one validates the other:

¹⁵⁷ Richard K. Cross, *Malcolm Lowry*, p. xi.

¹⁵⁸ David Markson, *Malcolm Lowry's Volcano*, p. x.

¹⁵⁹ Stephen Spender, Introduction to *Under the Volcano*, Harper Perennial Modern Classics, New York 2007 (1965), p. xii. Spender writes that the difference between Joyce and Lowry is that Lowry's novel is not mythical, as he uses myth as metaphor to describe the “inner world” of the Consul” (pp. xiv-xxii).

¹⁶⁰ Malcolm Lowry, letter to Cape, *Selected Letters*, p. 79.

¹⁶¹ Richard K. Cross, *Malcolm Lowry*, p. ix.

Writing in an age uncertain of its spiritual whereabouts and no doubt affected by its atmosphere, he may have found suggestion and allusion more congenial than simplicity and directness of speech. To break through the spiritual vacuum of his times his mythopoeic mind must have endlessly searched in the world of myth and symbol. But myths and symbols have no force except through the faith man has in them, and search alone does not imply commitment to the faith which nourishes and stimulates the powers of creative imagination¹⁶².

As a matter of fact, one wonders what meaning Lowry gave to the mythical apparatus – religion included – that he chose to insert into his works. Was his cabalistic fascination, for example, just a means to represent historical sense of guilt – or the other way round? Was the Consul's resignation to alcohol just a means to include in the novel cultivated references and tragic intensity – or the other way round? Firmin's story might seem, in all cases, the "casual connection between the tragic reflexiveness and the political tragedy"¹⁶³. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the effect of casualty is itself a fictional strategy.

The novel moves on two levels: on the one hand, it plays with mythologies, symbolic apparatus, and canons of entire civilizations; on the other hand, it takes in its structure, in its paradigms, in its axiologies, a system of imagery and constructs; they refer to archetypal qualities, with which it shares the archaic power. It contains both myth and mythicity, according to the definitions of Claudia Corti: in the first case, myth is the object of the narration and is in relation with the narrative; in the second, myth "is deified in the utterance, becomes subject of the discourse, informs the linguistic structures, fills the empty interstices of the logic of the expression, turns on indicators of signification"¹⁶⁴.

In his analysis of language in *Under the Volcano*, Brian O'Kill traces a relationship between language and universality in content:

¹⁶² Kristofer Dorosz, *Malcolm Lowry's Infernal Paradise*, p. 154.

¹⁶³ Stephen Tiff, "Tragedy as a Meditation on Itself", p. 62.

¹⁶⁴ Claudia Corti, "Ulysses e la reductio ad absurdum del mito", in AA.VV., *Intorno a Joyce. Cinquant'anni dopo*, Bologna: Cosmopoli, 1995, p. 34 (the translation from Italian is mine).

Quauhnhuac symbolizes all the world, universal humanity, history and consciousness. If the characters of the novel are presented as symptomatic of universal processes, it is also true that universality exists within them, and one of the tactics used by Lowry to fuse specific and universal references is syntactical digression and expansion¹⁶⁵.

Style could be, therefore, the bond between particular and mythical resonance. As we have suggested before, drunkenness plays a major role in this bond. The themes of sacrifice/victimization, choice/free will¹⁶⁶, the terror of man for his own self, and for the fate of all mankind, are epitomized by the protagonist's drunkenness:

Although drunkenness is the main theme of Lowry's book, "the drunkenness of Geoffrey Firmin", as a critic puts it, "is the correlative of the drunkenness of the world as seen by both Dostoevsky and Hesse, a world of reeling down the corridors filled with the sins of both commission and, particularly, omission, a world which had apparently condemned itself to impotence in the dark night presided over by palpable evil¹⁶⁷."

The Consul's good, positive and active feelings are exploited for a single purpose: "all the love is directed toward the cantina, passivity incapacity, universal resignation: despair and carnivalesque"¹⁶⁸. Gilmore affirms that no one "has fully appreciated Lowry's almost breathtaking audacity in forging a modern Everyman or Dantesque figure from a man with a gargantuan craving for alcohol"¹⁶⁹. He defines the Consul's craving for alcohol exaggerated and almost paroxysmal but, also, symbol of universal numbness: "the consciousness that drink engenders is universal, and no longer individual, but that the individual is safely contained within the greater meaning"¹⁷⁰, writes Greg Bond. As a false attempt at atonement, his motto is "to drink or not to drink", whereas existence has already been painfully accepted:

¹⁶⁵ Brian O'Kill, "Aspects of Language in *Under the Volcano*", in Anne Smith (ed.), *The Art of Malcolm Lowry*, pp. 74-75.

¹⁶⁶ Sherrill E. Grace, "Malcolm Lowry and the Expressionist Vision", p. 122.

¹⁶⁷ Daniel B. Dodson, *Malcolm Lowry*, New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970, p. 46.

¹⁶⁸ John Francis Harty, *Oscillation in Literary Modernism*, p. 130.

¹⁶⁹ Thomas B. Gilmore, "The Place of Hallucinations in *Under the Volcano*", p. 286.

¹⁷⁰ Greg Bond, "Boundlessness beyond Boundlessness", p. 629.

The Consul, in fact, may be the first character in fiction to reflect fully the *noblesse oblige* of the addict, the kind of pride that must be asserted to seek in drink a means of transcending the agony of consciousness. He is the supreme exemplar in modern fiction of self-knowledge that makes action an affront to self¹⁷¹.

Drinking is a refuge, but drinking is also the key to real comprehension, the Tree of Knowledge out of the garden.

If the Consul's snoring is English, his drunkenness is universal, a metaphor for the world's crazed self-destructiveness on the eve of World War II. Hugh suggests that the world, like the Consul, is chiefly concerned with evading its sense of guilt¹⁷².

In a world that is trying to repress its sense of guilt, the Consul is lost in its relentless stream. The final drunken confession of the Consul is, according to Cross, quixotic but meaningful: "The Consul's outburst is, to say the least, quixotic, but if there is anything at all redemptive in his agony it is this declaration of solidarity with the world's afflicted"¹⁷³. In this sense, his sacrifice is not vain: and in effect, Lowry himself considered the death of his character not at all negative:

I don't think the chapter's final effect should be depressing: I feel you should most definitely get your katharsis, while there is even a hint of redemption of the poor Consul at the end, who realises that he is after all part of humanity; and indeed, as I have said before, what profundity and final meaning there is in his fate should be seen also in its universal relationship to the ultimate fate of mankind¹⁷⁴.

Interestingly enough, this sense of communion with human fate seems, in my opinion, not redemptive at all, as the ultimate fate of mankind is all but rosy and

¹⁷¹ Richard Hauer Costa, "Under the Volcano – The Way it Was", p. 32.

¹⁷² Stephen Tiff, "Tragedy as a Meditation on Itself", p. 65.

¹⁷³ Richard K. Cross, *Malcolm Lowry*, p. 63.

¹⁷⁴ Chris Ackerley and Lawrence J. Clipper, *A Companion to Under the Volcano*, p. 443-444.

deliverance seems hardly obtained¹⁷⁵. Such a miserable, “dingy” conclusion, as the Consul himself admits, fully marks his paradoxical as well as tragic wandering. There is no atonement for him, despite his efforts. Roaming and fugitive in his lost garden, he will not be purified, rather, he will add more errors affirming himself almost as a sacrificial victim for the faults of the world, like the whisky priest. Cross makes a comparison between the two “drunkard wanderers”:

There are obvious similarities between Geoffrey and the alcoholic priest in *The Power and the Glory*, whose vocation seems, through much of the book, more a caricature than an imitation of Christ. In both cases the protagonists’ drinking reflects a frustrated longing for religious communion. Greene’s novel is, however, traditional in form, and its ultimate thrust is markedly different from that of the *Volcano*. *The Power and the Glory* expresses a piety that is, at bottom, orthodox and nowhere more so than its rendering of the priest’s martyrdom¹⁷⁶.

The preoccupation of our characters with the question of where to get another drink originates in their need to find an objective correlative, a mock purpose for the restlessness which forces them to flee from themselves – but not as far as to break free from the vicious circle they walk. The whisky priest and the Consul are evidently victims of themselves: both are seized with a sense of guilt, each for different reasons.

Ridden with undefined and seemingly hallucinatory guilt¹⁷⁷, these characters use, as often happens, alcohol as an escape from their responsibilities; but if drinking has for the priest also a positive aspect, a holy virtue, for the Consul it is just a bearer of further perdition. This dissimilar value added to wine, this ray of goodness related to the special drink that, for Catholics, can represent the blood of

¹⁷⁵ Hauer Costa individuates an interesting possibility for deliverance: “Lowry avoids the ‘clinical’ fallacy by treating Geoffrey’s alcoholism as a kind of tragic game with overtones of high comedy. He achieves in his portrayal of the Consul’s mescal-soaked consciousness a deftly patterned – wild but never improbable – medley of memories, free fancies, conversational snatches, absurdities, improvisations. Lowry maintains a maelstrom harmony between the physical world of the Consul – the demonic – and the fantasy-harbour where deliverance might lie” (Richard Hauer Costa, “*Under the Volcano – The Way it Was*”, p. 32).

¹⁷⁶ Richard K. Cross, *Malcolm Lowry*, p. 130, n. 56.

¹⁷⁷ David Markson, *Malcolm Lowry’s Volcano*, p. 13.

Christ, will give a different meaning to the underlying theme of drunkenness, and to the chasing of alcohol. Wine and its surrogates can be considered as metaphors for different things in the two novels: in *The Power and the Glory* despair and destruction are somehow related to good, perhaps in a perverted way, but still noticeable throughout the novel, whereas in *Under the Volcano* there is only uselessness and hopelessness in the action of drinking, as there is in the wandering around Quauhnahuac. Drinking and wandering have caused the expulsion of the heroes from the human consortium, depriving them of solidarity and respect.

In both novels, religious dogmas, myths, and some typical objective correlatives for guilt, such as alcohol and clandestine affairs, are used to add a melodramatic effect and to approach guilt according to well known patterns; but these patterns develop in a different way according to the characters' relationship with their sense of guilt, their spiritual life, and their wandering patterns. Written in the same dreadful historical time, and set in the same decadent and malevolent space, both works see no grand finale, but a different sense of tragedy: *The Power and the Glory* ends with the death of the priest, but with a silent and honoured entrance of another servant of God; the text leaves a glimmer of the circularity that is abruptly stopped in *Under the Volcano*, in which no time is left for atonement. In one case circularity is retraceable in the overall structure of the book, but not in the dark, wretched end of the hero; whereas in the other, the whole novel seems to be governed by more linear and dogmatic rules which will finally, instead, leave a more open ending. In both cases, tragedy seems to be the only way to put an end to the desperate wandering in selfhood. The consolation of a happy ending seems to be too big a luxury for those novels that have to bear the burden of mythical resonances and great destinies.

At the same time, however, tragedy implies also – as required by twentieth-century desecrating self-consciousness – ironic distance. The assimilation of the Consul with many mythical figures creates, in fact, a “sense of ironic dissimilarity” rather than identification¹⁷⁸. Jonathan Arac has found a brilliant metaphor to explain the intertwining of serious and comical in *Under the Volcano*:

¹⁷⁸ See Anthony R. Kilgallin, “Faust and *Under the Volcano*”, in George Woodcock (ed.), *Malcolm Lowry*, pp. 26-37.

Laughter is constantly described as part of the scene, part even of the Consul's response to the events in which he is caught up-to our horror. In Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and even Goethe's Faust, in Cervantes' Don Quixote, there is much that we can directly laugh at mixed in among more intellectually or emotionally compelling material, but in *Under the Volcano* the laughable and the serious are not segregated like streaks of fat and meat in bacon but are inseparably intermarbled¹⁷⁹.

The very death of the Consul is tragicomic: "The pathos of his actual situation and the atonement of which he still dreams merge in surrealistic humor"¹⁸⁰; and so are his free associations, his dreams, his streams of consciousness. Nevertheless, the overall sensation is of impending tragedy since the outset of the narrative, when the narrator introduces us to these main tragic events from a retrospective, giving the story an aura of menacing catastrophe.

The Consul's tragedy is a metaphor for the tragedy of Mexico and of the entire world, for which all the characters seem to have little hope, as the individual and the universal seem to share the same destiny. Mexico is a "disorientating no-man's-land": "for Geoffrey Firmin there are simply no fixed coordinates [...] instead he finds himself surrounded by a hopeless infinity of possible paths, indeed a quixotic if fearful sense of ontological insecurity"¹⁸¹. In fact, the "modern wilderness to which he escapes is hidden within himself"¹⁸².

The setting and the protagonist are inseparable in both *Under the Volcano* and *The Power and the Glory*; one influences the other. In both cases, the land has been abandoned to man's self-destruction, but if in one case it represents a wasteland with no human love, in the other it is a wasteland with no divine love. This difference implies many consequences in the structure and the meaning of the novel: lost with no external hope, the protagonist of *Under the Volcano* shuts himself in an almost suicidal circular journey around a delimited area, whereas the whiskey priest moves

¹⁷⁹ Jonathan Arac, "The Form of Carnival in *Under the Volcano*", p. 482.

¹⁸⁰ Richard K. Cross, *Malcolm Lowry*, p. 63.

¹⁸¹ Andrew Gibson, *Towards a Postmodern Theory of Narrative*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996, p. 97.

¹⁸² Stephen Tiff, "Tragedy as a Meditation on Itself", p. 63.

along a longer, linear – though sometimes convoluted – pattern which, in the end, will give him in a way the only thing he was struggling for: sanctity.

Under the Volcano and *The Power and the Glory* are both stories of broken lives; both marked by a fall, redemptive or not; both blessed by holy wine, or by mescal, drunk in a cantina with a whore. In both cases, characters have to take decisions that they never manage to make, flee to places that they never manage to reach, closed in a circularity that, if stopped, can lead only to death. The priest leaves the reader with an illusion of social and religious redemption, whereas the Consul has no salvation, and leaves the reader with *his* illusion, his pre-mortem hallucination. The Consul has no hope at all, not only because he has no faith in a benevolent, powerful entity out there, but also because he does not really feel guilt and, most importantly, he does not internalize it. He has no doubts; he does not assume the matter of salvation itself. He is lost in his circular, restricted experience of life, with no space for love, or for other people, or for faith.

The modernist structure and style imposes a mythical pattern on the story of *Under the Volcano*, an eternal sense of guilt and sin altogether, reflecting the malaise of a personal failure as well as of the horror of the modern world. Wandering is associated with sense of loss and void; characters wander to forget mistakes and guilts, and at the same time they contemplate on them, recollect them trying to forget, they analyse them or just brood over them. The style always tends to rapid associations, metaphors and metonyms sometimes without referent, allowing the protagonist a flight into ebriety, an escape into fantasy that frees him from the world imprisoning him, from memory, from history.

In *Under the Volcano* wandering ends with tragedy, there is no metabolization of guilt and, at least apparently, no universal wisdom is acquired. The characters see no balance of tranquillity-restlessness, as it appears, for instance, in Joyce's *Ulysses*. The Consul's character remains a split personality, unconcluded, destined to ruin. His frailty and his drunkenness have to be validated by myth, in form and content, in order to represent universal depth and not just personal failure. For this reason, there must be a continuous ennoblement of reality, in a metonymic process thanks to which a character or an event has always several mythical echoes.

Leopold Bloom stopped in houses, churches, and pubs on his way back home; the Consul has to do all these stops under the shadows of volcanoes and ravines, on the point of no-return. Yet, tragedy involves a more disquieting protean truth:

Not that the truth is “bad” or “good”: it simply is, is incomprehensible... being perpetually protean. Hence a final need probably for an acceptance of one’s limitations, and of the absurd in oneself¹⁸³.

In the years around World War II, in Britain – a sort of periphery in the postwar imagery of guilt – the pattern of guilt and wandering represents universal guilt, the archetypal inescapable consciousness of selfhood, of its limits, and of humanly fallacy. The truth is bitterly evident, and expressible in the paradigmatic short-circuit between activity and passivity, wandering and stasis. The border between life and death itself is difficult to perceive; circularity is the only way of escape from self-destruction and from the recognition, the painful admission, of the absurdity of one’s existence.

¹⁸³ Malcolm Lowry, “Ghostkeeper”, in *American Review*, no. 17, May 1973, p. 30.

PART THREE

THE ARCHETYPE TRANSFORMED II

THE AMBIGUITY OF POSTWAR GUILT

CHAPTER 5

THE PARADOXES OF GUILT

WOLFGANG KOEPPEN'S *DER TOD IN ROM*

The abomination of desolation,
standing in the holy place.

Malcolm Lowry, *Through the Panama*

5.1 Collective Guilt and the Burden of History

Confession and its discrete counterpart, silence, embrace the years after the Second World War. Together with “reparation” they form the triplet pervading the postwar atmosphere¹. This third part will deal with the literary response to postwar questions in the two countries that were probably most marked and imaginatively stained by the war: Germany and Japan. My aim is to see how the pattern of guilt and wandering is expressed by authors and for readers who belonged to those social and cultural realities, and who had to face guilt not only in their personal conscience, but also in that hardly controllable magma of collective consciousness.

These complex themes have been extensively debated². Postwar collective guilt was seen – and still is – as one of the most controversial but most urgent matters about history. The Holocaust has understandably originated new debates about the concepts of “collective guilt” (or “guilt-by-association”) and of “survivor guilt” –

¹ “Reparation” is a term used by Klein that came to currency during the years of World War II.

² The literature on these themes is endless. On the necessity of confession see for example Theodor Reik's *The compulsion to confess* (1925-1959); on postwar guilt, see Susanne Veas-Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt. Literature of Wartime Bombing in Germany*, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003; on collective guilt, see Margaret Gilbert, “Collective Guilt and Collective Guilt Feelings”, in *The Journal of Ethics*, vol. 6, no. 2, *Collective Responsibility*, 2002, pp. 115-143, and also Nyla R. Branscombe, and Doosje, Bertjan (eds.), *Collective Guilt. International Perspectives*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

described by Kalu Singh as “rarer” –, that affect criminals and victims respectively³. The latter will be examined in the next chapter, as survivor guilt is perhaps more specific to Japan than Germany, the country that survived the shocking, new horror of humanity: the atomic bomb. The “mark” is, in this case, the consciousness that one has failed, as a human being, to rescue those who died, and that there is no reason for one’s survival and the death of the others. Collective guilt is, instead, somehow more common, as it concerns more generally the societies that witnessed some terrible persecution or unjust deeds on the soil of their countries. The figure of the “bystander” is a controversial epitome of this process: the bystander is he who did nothing to avoid the disaster. One feels guilty if the solidarity among men as human beings has been broken, if one is co-responsible for every injustice in the world, especially for those committed in his or her presence or knowledge. The horror of the war becomes almost epic and mythical in the twentieth-century imagery and in literature too:

one realizes that the moral ambiguities informing the actions of so many participants in World War II, on every side and in every country, resemble in their multifaceted complexity the great moral literary fables, works like the Book of Job, Goethe’s *Faust* and Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*. Each of these moral allegories, as well as many others, preserves the finally unfathomable mystery of the human heart and of actions undertaken in ethically difficult circumstances⁴.

War becomes a mirror in which the human soul can be analyzed and perhaps understood a little better; again, the discovery is unsettling and distressing. The reaction has been institutional guilt – and its economical engagement – and, more intimately, the desire to confess one’s sense of guilt over the atrocities perpetrated by the nation; or rather, silent self-commiseration, a discreet self-imposed speechlessness: “Nos crimes passés nous intiment de garder bouche close. Notre seul droit est le silence. Il offre ensuite aux repentis le confort di retrait. Rserve,

³ Kalu Singh, *Guilt*, p. 8.

⁴ Michael Palencia-Roth, Introduction (1999) to Hiroko Harada, *Aspects of Post-War German and Japanese Drama (1945-1970). Reflections on War, Guilt, and Responsibility*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000, p. iii.

neutralité seront notre rédemption”⁵. This kind of redemption can be seen, at least externally, as an institutionalized reply to the burden of the Western past:

Depuis 1945, en effet, notre continent est habité par les tourments di repentir. Ruminant ses abominations passées, les guerres, les persecutions religieuses, l’esclavage, l’imperieralisme, le fascisme, le communisme, il ne voit dans sa longue histoire qu’une continuité de tueries, de pillages qui ont abouti à deux conflits mondiaux, c’est-à-dire un suicide enthousiaste⁶.

This “enthusiast suicide” is what the characters of our novels tend to reproduce in their individual stories. World War II provoked a sense of total disorientation; the desire to reconstruct and impose freedom again went together with the sense of having been impotent and guilty, as it happened in Germany:

More important than voluntary self-accusations and confessions of individuals was the silent but eloquent expression of the sense of guilt pervading the German nation. The acknowledgement of common guilt, professed by the President and the representatives of the nation, their declaration of willingness to make amends – as far as amends can be made – is only an official manifestation of the emotional crisis that started long before, even before the defeat of the army and before the Götterdämmerung, the breakdown of the false idols⁷.

German and Japanese societies reacted in different ways that were nonetheless similar in many others. Their literatures have had many different modulations of these common aspects of postwar sensitivity; they have implanted new patterns of expiation, new patterns of pain on the previous formal structures developed by their traditions.

The first comparative study on the cultural and social reactions in postwar Japan and Germany was *Legacies and Ambiguities: Postwar Fiction and Culture in*

⁵ Pascal Bruckner, *La tyrannie de la pénitence. Essai sur le masochisme occidental*, Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2006, p. 15.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁷ Theodor Reik, *Myth and Guilt*, pp. 40-41.

West Germany and Japan (1991), a book which followed an international conference held in Washington in 1988. On this occasion scholars of both countries examined different aspects of the postwar political and intellectual debate, uncovering both contrasts and similarities. One of the elements emerging from the analysis is, for instance, the “relative silence” in the German literary scene if compared to the “lively debates” in Japan. More importantly, the general attitude towards activity and passivity, fate and responsibility seems to have had different tones:

Germany’s political division entailed an ideological division and deprived writers of an essential ferment for debate. [...] although Japan had suffered severe shortages and deprivations during the war and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of the war, it never had to tolerate war on its own soil. As a result, the civilian population had little first-hand knowledge of war crimes committed in far-away places. The end of the war meant an end to the hardship of war and a concentrated turn to the many, and often painful, changes accompanying democratization. The Japanese novels of these years document an intensive search into individuals’ roles and options during and after the war. They can be read as explosions and as efforts to track the shattering of value systems. Perhaps motivated by the defeat, they saw the sufferings of the world as meaningless; induced by the dissolution of traditional bonds of allegiance and power structure, and perhaps also the unequal justice of the Tokyo war crimes trials, they saw the survival of the individual as a matter of arbitrariness; fatalism and passivity, often couched in ironic terms, were the ingrained and powerfully reactivated response to circumstances beyond control⁸.

Germany and Japan first shared aggression and later total defeat and unconditional surrender. Both nations were reconstructed under enemy occupation, which, especially in Japan, was destined to influence all aspects of everyday life incredibly, not to mention literature. Germany, on the other hand,

⁸ Introduction by Ernestine Schlant in Ernestine Schlant and J. Thomas Rimer (eds.), *Legacies and Ambiguities: Postwar Fiction and Culture in West Germany and Japan*, Washington D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991, p. 7.

had undergone a “total” war which had decimated many cities [...]. The end of the war also, and finally, opened the gates of the concentration camps. When they opened, Germans were confronted with crimes committed on their own soil and of an enormity that defied comprehension. Denial, avoidance, silence became part of an arsenal of defense mechanism that did not break open until the 1960s⁹.

In *Legacies and Ambiguities* other perspectives also emerge. All contributors seem to convene that the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (overcoming the past) is a complex, painful process. The defeated had to come to terms not only with the victors, but also with those who they victimized: “Germany was quicker to issue apologies and to offer economic reparations, while Japanese writers tended to focus upon the horrors experienced at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. (Ironically, the mayors of these two cities have recently helped to raise public awareness of Japan’s wartime role as victimizer as well as victim.)”¹⁰. With regards to literature, Van C. Gessel notes the absence in Japan of “grappling with the larger questions of national guilt”, except among leftists¹¹. Irmela Hijiya-Kirschner affirms that most established authors “resumed their writing and publishing activities seemingly undisturbed by any sense of obligation to ‘explain’ to themselves and others what had happened”¹². She also believes that the Tokyo war crimes trials and the Vietnam War encouraged new documentary novels, and that this exonerated Japan from postwar guilt. The nationalistic *Nihonjinron* (literally “theories or discussions about the Japanese”, a popular current after World War II), she continues, is a symptom of a new material prosperity, and she concludes that for this reason Japanese intellectuals were less likely than their German counterparts to face the question of war guilt, although there were some honourable exceptions. From certain points of view, the postwar German experience was quite different. The myth of postwar German amnesia is widely recognized; nevertheless many authors debated German guilt and the role of

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰ Doris G. Bargen, review of Ernestine Schlant, and J. Thomas Rimer, (eds.), *Legacies and Ambiguities*, in *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 47, no. 2, summer 1992, pp. 284-286.

¹¹ Ernestine Schlant, and J. Thomas Rimer, (eds.), *Legacies and Ambiguities*, p. 209.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 101.

intellectuals in postwar society, authors such as Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, Theodor W. Adorno, and Karl Jaspers.

In *The Question of German Guilt*, published in 1947, Jaspers observed that legal processes did not absolve German men and women from their sense of guilt: “For crimes the criminal is punished. The restriction of the Nuremberg trial to criminals serves to exonerate the German people. Not, however, so as to free them of all guilt – on the contrary. The nature of our real guilt only appears the more clearly”¹³. Jaspers thus takes into consideration the questions of individual awareness of collective guilt and of political liability and looks at them as a matter of life and death for German soul and dignity, in what we may call metaphysics of victimology:

And probably every German capable of understanding will transform his approach to the world and himself in the metaphysical experiences of such a disaster. How that happens none can prescribe, and none anticipate. It is a matter of individual solitude. What comes out of it has to create the essential basis of what will in the future be the German soul¹⁴.

Solitude, as a matter of fact, is the recurrent theme of twentieth-century awareness of the self, as it was with Cain at biblical times. The contemporary era has been enriched, because of the war, with more disquieting topics. Preceded by Dostoevsky’s interpretation of guilt (as it appears in *The Possessed*, for instance), and epitomized by Kafka’s *The Trial*, the twentieth century greeted new paradoxical burdens:

We must not fail to recognize that it has become more difficult for the man of our age than any earlier one to venture self-illumination with awake and unafraid spirit, although he imagines that he knows more about himself than did the man of any earlier time¹⁵.

¹³ Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, quoted in Herbert Morris (ed.), *Guilt and Shame*, p. 40.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

¹⁵ Martin Buber, from *The Knowledge of Man* (1965), in Herbert Morris (ed.), *Guilt and Shame*, pp. 72-73.

Jasper himself had recognized the fact that modern man has to come to terms, by means of collective guilt feelings, with a terrible void:

But our feeling of collective guilt we feel the entire task of renewing human existence from its origin – the task which is given to all men on earth but which appears more urgently, more perceptibly, as decisively as all existence, when its own guilt brings a people face to face with nothingness¹⁶.

Obviously, the idea of collective guilt did not originate from World War II. It was common to primitive societies where community held all things together; a violation of tribal customs and rules was considered a crime against the tribe and cause of the wrath of gods upon the whole community. The Scripture is full of these examples: collective responsibility is at the basis of Israel's relation with God. The Fall itself can be considered a collective punishment for a common guilt, destined to change man's destiny. St Paul wrote that in Adam all sinned: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans v)¹⁷.

However, the Second World War, the Holocaust and the atomic bomb have amplified the resonance of a collective sense of guilt, and at the same time they strengthened the power of a personal sense of guilt. What in the previous centuries seemed more or less under control, or rather, controlled by an omnipotent transcendental force, is now in the hands of man; and power, just like freedom, can be more frightening than being controlled and limited in one's actions. Speziale-Bagliacca highlighted how contemporary tragic events, 11 September 2001 included, ignited an always present structural guilt and:

have all highlighted how pervasive the logic of guilt is, and how it tends, at moments of extreme collective anxiety, to spread and gain the upper hand,

¹⁶ Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, p. 52.

¹⁷ Robinson affirms, however, that: "So far as religion is concerned it is very doubtful if anyone has felt repentant for Adam's sin. Certainly the 'conviction of sin' which leads to repentance and conversion is not related in the mind of the individual with anything that occurred in the Garden of Eden! It is our own Sin and sins for which we are responsible. If we are in bondage to sin, it is not Adam's sin to which we are in bondage, but our own Ego-centricity from which all our sins stem" (N. H. G. Robinson, *Christ and Conscience*, in John McKenzie, *Guilt*, p. 190).

appearing as the only approach capable of mobilising a crusade (or anti-crusade) to cope with crisis and dangers. The logic of guilt looks for the culprit, not the causes. It is on the side of separation and war; and it does not seek understanding – whether in historical, sociological, scientific or simply therapeutic terms. Or to put it another way: the logic of guilt does find causes, but they are not the *real* causes and certainly not the only ones, as it would have us believe¹⁸.

Paul Tillich, theologian and existentialist philosopher, thus commented on the relationship between guilt and the destiny of a society:

The individual is not guilty of crimes performed by members of his group if he himself did not commit them. The citizens of a city are not guilty of the crimes committed in their city; but they are guilty as participants in the destiny of man as a whole, and in the destiny of their city in particular; for their acts in which freedom was united with destiny have contributed to the destiny in which they participate. They are guilty, not of committing crimes of which their group is accused but of contributing to the destiny in which these crimes were committed¹⁹.

The failure of not being a good citizen – citizen of the human consortium and of its rules – makes people feel that they share the guilt of others' horrors; this is the trigger of the feeling that the nation as an entity *can* be guilty. Both Germany and Japan shared this feeling, and the preoccupations originating from it are evident in the literary production of the postwar years. However, this preoccupation followed different phases:

The German prosecution of the war, especially because of the Final Solution, contributed to the perception of Germans as war criminals. The Japanese prosecution of the war and the atrocities perpetrated on civilian populations, such as the “Rape of Nanking,” received much less attention in the west in the immediate post-war era. This inattention was due in part to the

¹⁸ Speziale Bagliacca, *Guilt*, pp. xii-xiii.

¹⁹ Paul Tillich, from *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, in John McKenzie, *Guilt*, pp. 188-189.

distance in culture and in space between the west and Japan, but it was also due to the bombing of Japan, which fostered the perception of the Japanese as victims. Post-war literature in both Germany and Japan reflected these perceptions to a certain extent. Certainly the question of guilt, collective or individual, became a more pressing concern in the literatures of German-speaking countries than it did in Japanese literature, with its long tradition of detached aestheticism²⁰.

Japanese common people were pushed to feel that they were victims, more than Germans, as if the war had to be silently relegated to those shadowy aspects of life to be disliked or rather forgotten. The absence of an equivalent to the Jewish Holocaust, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the exculpation of Emperor Hirohito and his portrayal as a victim manipulated by military leaders contributed to this general conviction. Also, Shinto and Confucianism played their role, as Doris Bergen explains: “The value placed upon hierarchy and harmony has discouraged a critical approach to history. Reverence for the imperial system has hindered an objective presentation of the war in the schools. And ancestor veneration has required respect for one’s own, and by extension, the nation’s dead”²¹. On the contrary, “Germans are not bound by a strong specifically religious sense in their attitude toward the dead. Its moral equivalent, the Wilhelminian indoctrination of obedience to authority, cast into serious doubt by the demonic Führer, was nearly eradicated by the 1960s”²². The Japanese have been victims of victimization for a long time. Sense of guilt made its appearance all the same, perhaps in a more controversial way because of its mix with the stirring memory of the bomb. Ian Buruma believes that Japan is not unique in its war responsibility, but that there are similarities with Germany: instead of an overwhelming sense of guilt among the Germans and a complete lack of it among the Japanese, he acknowledges a similar taking, or shirking, of responsibility²³. In the early 1970s many Japanese intellectuals were deeply involved in discussions over war responsibility and on the possible ways

²⁰ Hiroko Harada, *Aspects of Post-War German and Japanese Drama*, p. i.

²¹ Introduction by Ernestine Schlant in Ernestine Schlant and J. Thomas Rimer (eds.), *Legacies and Ambiguities*, p. 285.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 284-286.

²³ See Ian Buruma, *Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, London: Vintage, 1995 (1994).

of historicizing the war: among the others, Takeuchi Yoshimi, Hashikawa Bunzō, Arai Shinichi, Yasumaru Yoshio, Yoshida Mitsuru, Yoshimoto Ryiimei, Kinoshita Jun, Kuno Osamu, Odagiri Hideo, Nakano Yoshio, Etō Jun, and Oda Makoto. In Germany, Heinrich Boll, Günter Grass and Wolfgang Koeppen himself, but also Theodor Plievier, Dagmar Nick, Ernst Wiechert, and Elisabeth Langgasser. Today, as Barger concludes in her review of *Legacies and Ambiguities*, “[a]mnnesia and anamnesis thus seem to be both out of phase and taking turns in Germany and Japan”²⁴.

Nevertheless, the similarities between Germany and Japan are striking. Both countries developed an idea of a “renaissance” starting from scratch: the *Stunde Null* (hour zero) in Germany, and in Japan, “noon, 15 August 1945”, the “founding myth” of a new modern beginning. Both silence and drive for confession emerged in intellectuals’ debates and artistic outcomes. The war, according to Ernestine Schlant, “still constitutes one of the most vibrantly sensitive areas of contemporary intellectual life and, at the same time, seems to facilitate comparisons since it emphasizes a similar nadir in each country’s history”²⁵.

In Germany, the *Trümmerliterature* (literature of the rubble) was completely destined to depict the hardships of life among the ruins; its early appearance demonstrates the fact that Germany too responded quickly to the problems of coming to terms with the past; also, the *Gruppe 47* was engaged in establishing a literature that wants to be anti-fascist, humanist, socially engaged, and respectful of German tradition, having also a role in the making of a new nation. Demetz, however, points out that German literature was more concentrated on formal problems, in a sort of inward turning.

Wolfgang Koeppen started his career in postwar Germany, in 1934, with *Eine unglückliche Liebe* (An Unhappy Love), published while he was in the Netherlands. His last novel, *Der Tod in Rom*, appeared in 1954; after that, he wrote just minor works and a few pieces of travel literature. The reaction to his novels was not enthusiastic; not many readers read him and critics found in his works a series of contrasting lacks and failures: Koeppen was criticized for being too political or not

²⁴ Doris G. Barger, review of Ernestine Schlant, and J. Thomas Rimer, (eds.), *Legacies and Ambiguities*, pp. 284-286.

²⁵ Ernestine Schlant and J. Thomas Rimer (eds.), *Legacies and Ambiguities*, p. 1.

political enough, too much related to the historical and social background (Heissenbüttel for example) or not enough, or else, too pessimistic and gloomy (Döhl)²⁶. Koeppen decided to fall artistically silent: “He has ceased to exist. It is a great scandal”²⁷:

Precedence was given to the returning exiles – to Thomas Mann in the West, Brecht in the East – and to the work of new writers like the *Gruppe 47*. The preferred form for literature was a clean slate, with only the distinguished markings of a very few on it – the ones with cast-iron alibis. It was a very German solution – *Schwamm drüber!* – unjust and evasive and superficial, an extension of collective amnesia.

Koeppen’s position was exacerbated by the nature of the books he wrote and published in the early 50s. Far from underwriting a fresh start, they connected stylistically with the 20s and politically with the 30s²⁸.

For David Ward Koeppen was, in the early 1950s, “virtually the only literary writer to insist on describing the kinds of self-deception he had observed and on posing questions about the continuing impact of the recent past upon the present”²⁹. At the time the past was an uncomfortable companion to be with. Artistic excellence and stylistic passion should not have been destined to a work dealing about Nazis and evil assassins. “This is part of Koeppen’s point”, says Hofmann: “Church and state. Music and the camps. You can’t have one of them without the others. In the 50s when Germany wanted severance and disavowal of the past, Koeppen showed it bonds of steel and blood instead”³⁰. Only with *Death in Rome* his books were no longer considered, in Koeppen’s words, “from the moon”, and critics started to recognize and appreciate his formal and thematic innovations. Its form was a

²⁶ For an overview on criticism of Koeppen’s works, see the introduction in Carole Hanbidge, *The Transformation of Failure. A Critical Analysis of Character Presentation in the Novels of Wolfgang Koeppen*, New York: Peter Lang, 1983, pp. 5-18.

²⁷ Michael Hofmann, Introduction to *Death in Rome*, London: Granta, 2004, p. viii.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

²⁹ David Ward, Introduction to *Pigeons on the Grass*, New York-London: Holmes & Meier, 1991 (1988), p. ix.

³⁰ Michael Hofmann, Introduction to *Death in Rome*, p. ix.

modernist, polyphonic and multi-angled prose; its theme, the persistence of the past in the present³¹:

Typically, Koeppen makes his point – that the present moment is but a temporary, fragile respite from the omnipresent threat of war – by way of a metaphor that links present technology with ancient rites and rituals. he will go on to draw images and associations from the Bible and Christian lore, both Greek and Germanic myths, fairy tales, Persian poets, a Sanskrit epic, Italian Renaissance painting, folk and classical music, the jingles of popular songs and advertisement, baseball, vintage jazz, nuclear physics, and the works of an astonishing array of modern European and American authors. Koeppen is not just showing off: he is inviting his German readers, whose cultural heritage was so badly shaken by the twelve years of fascism, to explore all facets of past and present culture critically – to see what each can contribute to an understanding of the present³².

Siegfried, one of the main characters in *Der Tod in Rom*, appears to his readers as a character who refuses sin, but for a passive renunciation of life, or rather, for a natural, panic desire to be lonely, to enjoy the solitude of his sensitivity, to hate the past of his family and of the whole world. He is scared of copulation, disgusted by the capacity of sex to cause procreation, more life, and more disgust with life, disgust with power itself. It is not at all a comfortable character; neither are the other characters of the novel.

5.2 To Be or Not to Be (Guilty). Guilt and Its Ambiguities

From a novel that presents itself with the epigraph “Il mal seme d’Adamo”, taken from Dante’s *Inferno*, the reader can expect nothing else than a story of original sin and hereditary guilt, as well as epic wandering through human perdition. Conversely, the second epigraph announces another aspect of the novel, more punctual and factual: after having blinked at the reader from the explicit reference of the title, it is

³¹ David Ward, Introduction to *Pigeons on the Grass*, p. xvii.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. xix-xx.

Thomas Mann who, with *Death in Venice*, tells us: “And before nightfall a shocked and respectful world received the news of his decease”. Incumbent death into a “respectful” world appears at guilt’s side in the reader’s imagination as soon as he or she opens the book.

Der Tod in Rom appears as a story in which past and present seem to be heavily and irreparably linked. The presence of the past in the present – in this case the term “postwar” itself might be particularly significant, as it represents this relationship in the signifier itself – is one of the main themes of the novel, perhaps the most important one³³.

A newspaper in the story announces “the latest data on the condition of the world, material and spiritual”³⁴: the world, in *Der Tod in Rom*, is sick and should be cured, but the sickness itself has destroyed any will to change its “material and spiritual” condition. The world is left to its nonsensical destiny. Perhaps here more than in the other novels examined in this study, a universal malaise is explicitly amplified in each and every character.

The reviewer of an English translation of the novel perfectly summarizes the tone of the book in these few words:

Death in Rome is the most devastating novel about the Germans that I have ever read, and one of the most arresting on the subject. It takes a German family – not a real German family, not even a caricature German family, but a prototypical German family that George Grosz would have had the bile but not the wit to invent, and Musil or Mann the wit but not the bile – and brings them to Rome, a city having an association with Germans that goes back hundreds of years, there to enact their conflicts. It is a history book, a family book, a book about the battle over who gets to represent the authentic face of Germany³⁵.

The book represents Germany, it is true: the Germany whose past was to be shamefully faced; but I would say that *Der Tod in Rom* depicts more widespread

³³ Richard Gunn agrees with this opinion. Cfr. Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen's Postwar Trilogy*, New York: Peter Lang, 1983, p. 118.

³⁴ Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, London: Granta, 2004, p. 98.

³⁵ Michael Hofmann, Introduction to *Death in Rome*, p. viii.

feelings and fears of those years. The past is not forgotten by Koeppen; on the contrary,

[w]hile most lyric poets of the immediate postwar era were retreating to fields and gardens [...], many novelists returned to the battlefields of World War II. The poets tried to reconstruct a “heile Welt,” while the novelists codified its deconstruction. Koeppen chose neither course, but worked in a continuum, seeking casual relationships between the past and the present and sounding a warning that the collective mentality that led to Nazism and was still a clear danger in West Germany in the 1950s³⁶.

In fact, the danger is portrayed in the novel as already influencing the present. The guilt of the fathers has, as in the Bible, fallen on the sons, and this terrible curse is rendered by Koeppen in an interesting, controversial nuance. It is my opinion that this is the strength of the novel and not a weak point, as Richard Gunn also believes:

Der Tod in Rom does not present a conflict of generations in which the young battle against the old, but rather it shows the sins of the fathers to be of such an incalculable magnitude that the sons are damned [...] the older generation is pronounced guilty and the younger generation, because of the parents' guilt, can neither overcome the past nor come to terms with the present. It is precisely this point that many critics see as a fundamental flaw in the novel³⁷.

In a sort of distorted saga, *Death in Rome* tells the story of four main characters, components of two related families and of other peripheral characters, all sharing with the others their position in time and space: Rome, 1950s. It is a story divided in two parts, each covering a day. In a more innovative way, it reproduces the mythical structure of *Ulysses* and *Under the Volcano*, as if the mythical method was the only technique to represent universal patterns and concentrate universal themes in a denser, nuclear act. Moreover, the adoption of this method in the novel is manifested in the choice of mythical resonances and references whose comprehension is not

³⁶ Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen's Postwar Trilogy*, pp. 118-119.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

always easy for the reader, especially for a non-German one. However, this fact is evidently of no importance; the general mythological effect is what matters:

References, too many, but also a German reader would not probably be able to explain half of them. “It isn’t necessary. You take the principle of historical labelling and cross-referencing, feel the (foreign) texture of the word, take from the context whether it’s a building or a political movement or a personality that’s being referred to, and pass on. It can be read pedantically – by all means, consult an encyclopaedia – but it wasn’t written in such spirit, and the original didn’t come with notes either. *Death in Rome* works as myth much better than an agglomeration of allusions³⁸.

Koeppen wanted to depict characters with the typical mentality of the period³⁹. All characters represent different aspects of the postwar epoch, almost as if they were made to represent types – and in fact some criticism was moved with this regard to Koeppen – but with much more complexity and personality.

There are two characters in the novel, representing two different polarities, which appear as the main characters thanks to the treatment of the narrator: Siegfried Pfaffrath and Gottlieb Judejahn, uncle and nephew. As a matter of fact, the narrator plays a major role in the narrative, which oscillates between a first-person and a third person narration, moving from one to another often and abruptly, sometimes through what can be considered an “epische Enjambement”⁴⁰. Episodes are linked by continuous shifts in perspective, a character’s point of view changing for that of another character only by means of a blank line, the new paragraph often starting with no capital letter: “the syntactical boundaries are blurred by the omission of capital letters and full-stops in a way which mirror the planned circumnavigation of the usual psychological barriers between the narrator and protagonist”⁴¹. Sometimes, the following paragraph describes the story of the same character of the previous paragraph, and in that case just the narrative instance changes. According to these

³⁸ Michael Hofmann, Introduction to *Death in Rome*, p. xi.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁴⁰ Ursula Love, “Wolfgang Koeppens Nachkriegstrilogie: Struktur und Erzähltechnik”, Dissertation, Brown University, 1974, p. 193.

⁴¹ Carole Hanbidge, *The Transformation of Failure. A Critical Analysis of Character Presentation in the Novels of Wolfgang Koeppen*, New York: Peter Lang, 1983, p. 226.

shifts in perspective, characters appear differently, as we read their inner monologues or the narrator's descriptions – which, in any case, are often imbued with *Erlebte Rede*. The frequent switches from *ich* to *er* and vice versa, without early mention of the name of the character whose voice tells us the story, make the narrative instance not consistent, but the transition “does not herald a more private area of inner activity”⁴². In fact, there is no authorial narrator; rather than an unreliable narrator, it is possible to define it as an “equivocating narrator”⁴³, whose point of view is mimetic and sometimes difficult to recognize, “deeply and sympathetically involved with his characters”⁴⁴. In particular, the narrator is especially close to Siegfried's point of view, and the reader is induced to feel that he is the protagonist, or else that the author wants the values of the novel to be embodied in this character. Actually, it often seems that the “two narratorial *personae* are virtually interchangeable”⁴⁵. According to Hanbidge, more than in other characters, “[i]t is noticeable, in fact that transition from ‘er’ to ‘ich’ in the Siegfried sections are always sequential – that is, a linear development of the text – whereas swift changes of perspective elsewhere are often used to achieve an effect of simultaneity”, “things happening at different places at the same time”⁴⁶.

Siegfried presents himself as follows:

My name is Siegfried Pfaffrath. An absurd name, I know. But then again, no more absurd than many others. Why do I despise it so? I never chose it. I like to talk shamelessly, but then I feel shamed: I behave rudely, and I long to be able to show respect. I'm a composer of serious music. My profession matches my name for absurdity⁴⁷.

This presentation appears after a few pages of descriptions of Rome, the city in which he is working, firstly made by the narrator and then by the character himself. He soon appears as an uncertain character, dissatisfied with his attitude with others,

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁴³ Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen's Postwar Trilogy*, p. 158.

⁴⁴ Carole Hanbidge, *The Transformation of Failure*, p. 17.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 227, n. 2.

⁴⁷ Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 13.

oxymoronically engaged in a profession he considers absurd, perhaps because it is seriously useless.

Siegfried is a German ex-prisoner-of-war in an English camp who in 1944 called Kürenberg, the composer he is working with at the time of the story, asking him for samples of his music. Siegfried seemed to Kürenberg “a message from a Europe that had collapsed into barbarism, the dove that signalled that the floodwaters were receding”⁴⁸. He was therefore the symbol of renewal, of artistic salvation at the end of a world war. However, “[t]he best Siegfried can offer is to refuse to forgive and forget the sins of his parents and their generation”⁴⁹. The shame and the sense of guilt originated by his Nazi family – because Nazi they were, as we will soon discover – would be too heavy to be overcome.

Siegfried is walking through the eternal city, aimlessly. He sees an elegant black car, and not before long after the beginning of the novel, he quickly gives us hints, although still obscure, of his uncle’s nature: “It looked like a diplomatic conveyance – maybe the ambassador from Pluto was nestling on the plump of upholstery, or a delegate from Hell”⁵⁰. Siegfried is ashamed of his family, and also scared, as he will confess later:

Was this Odysseus on a visit to the gods? No, it was not Odysseus, not the wily king of Ithaca; this man was a butcher. He came from the Underworld, carrion smells wafted round him, he himself was Death, a brutal, mean, crude and unquestioning Death. Siegfried hadn’t seen his Uncle Judejahn, who had terrorized him as a child, for thirteen years⁵¹.

This character inherited his family and his country’s guilt; he cannot react to the power of the dark side of humanity, he does not have the strength to change the status quo – as all the other characters of our novels – and he does not want to have power. “His weakness, passivity and irresponsibility is his curse”⁵²: Siegfried Pfaffrath has resigned, history has won him:

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁹ Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen’s Postwar Trilogy*, p. 130.

⁵⁰ Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, pp. 13-14.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵² Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen’s Postwar Trilogy*, p. 155.

Siegfried represents a generation of sceptics; he is sceptical in all temporal directions [...]. His scepticism forms a protective covering of cynicism which enables him to maintain his outsider position; he is able to avoid becoming involved with anyone⁵³.

Sin itself, from his perspective, has no sense and no meaning: “What was sin anyway? I just wanted to live my selfish life, I wanted to be there just for myself alone”⁵⁴. Solitude, in fact, is the only alternative to his passive acceptance of life. Only rarely needs he human contacts. Siegfried is sinless, just because sin as well has no sense for him. After having talked to his cousin Adolf – a deacon studying for priesthood and a paradoxical and deign counterpart of the other characters of the novel – Siegfried affirms: “I wasn’t his confessor, and I couldn’t give him absolution. I saw no sins. I saw only life, and life wasn’t a sin”⁵⁵. He is echoing Adolf’s words, his distinction between sin and normal activity, but with a cynical tone that characterizes him. His existence is marked by “[n]othing but resignation and disgust for life”⁵⁶. Even his homosexuality, or rather pederasty, discovered during the narrative, is caused by this perception: he is disgusted by the view of an unmade bed, by the thought of procreation itself. As a matter of fact, when he enters a hotel room, a sense of irreparable disgust overcomes him:

It didn’t shock him, but it did abash Siegfried to see the broad unmade bed, which drew his eye though he tried in vain to avert it, the broad bed, the marriage bed standing four-square in the spacious room, it was shameless and undeniable, without sensuality and without shame, cold, clean linen laid bare, and it bore witness coldly and cleanly to functions that no one wanted to disavow, to embraces of which no one was ashamed, to deep and healthy sleep
and all at one I realized that the Kürenbergs were ahead of me, they were the people I wanted to be, they were without sin, they were old-fashioned and new, they were antique and avant-garde, pre-Christian and post-Christian, Graeco-roman citizens and airline passengers in bodies that were well-explored and -maintained: they were excursionists who had made themselves at home in

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁵⁴ Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 84.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁵⁶ Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen’s Postwar Trilogy*, p. 133.

a possibly inhospitable planet, and who took pleasure in the world as they found it.

Kürenberg was attuned to nomadism⁵⁷.

Shame, cleanness, and coldness are the words studding the first paragraph; the second paragraph, switched to a first-person narration, puts together sin, art, religion, ancient and modern mythical images, and touristic attitude to survival in the world; the outset of the third paragraph sanctions instead the wandering nature – positive in this case – of some of the characters in the novel.

Yet, Siegfried is not sinless. Even though burdened mostly by historical and familiar guilt – or perhaps for this reason – he becomes tainted of sexual corruption, in the filth of the Roman “underworld”, wet of the Tiber’s waters:

The boy was beautiful. The two fellows had poor blotchy complexions; their faces were vulgar and nasty: I knew their sort. They were disgusting to me. They were prostitutes and blackmailers, they were base, murderous and cruel. But I was alone. I wanted to be alone. Only sometimes I yearned for contact, for warmth, for the smell of the herd and the stall, for a world of shared physicality, which I had lost, from which I had cut myself off, a compulsion I thought I was clear of, the boys’ world of the Teutonic castle, the smell of the dormitories, the naked bodies of boys in that Spartan regime, cross-country running in the early-morning mist in the woods⁵⁸.

His homosexuality is associated by him with those years, with the disgust of human contact, with the disgust of procreation. He is not sure of what he wants to do: repelled but attracted, he continues:

I had said goodbye to all that, I was alone, I wanted to be alone, and Kürenberg had commented the solitude of the creative person to me, but I was criminally drawn to these fellows by my background and upbringing, and they were manifestations of a guilt from which I still had to free myself. So when one of the fellows looked up and saw me up on the embankment, he grabbed the

⁵⁷ Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 45.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

point of his triangular trunks and obscenely beckoned me down the stairs to the bank and the bathing-ship.⁵⁹ This so is particularly meaningful.

Zeus-Jupiter was dead, and Ganymede probably was too, I cursed myself, and I climbed down to the Underworld⁶⁰.

God and the gods were dead in that moment; alone, he faces his guilt, past and present, and enters the underworld, physical and metaphysical. Siegfried has an innocent, almost mythical experience of guilt, but at the same time it is imbued with the Christian sense of it and disgust. His attitude can be felt as panic, embracing myths and feelings of all epochs, of all traditions: “In a semi-mystical spirit, Siegfried aims at the universal all-embracing consciousness”⁶¹, says Hanbidge.

At first he feels better, reinvigorated by that panic adventure: “The brown water of the ancient god-beholden river which I had now after all bathed in, the clammy embrace of the mythical element, had refreshed me and made me euphoric”⁶²; but soon after, this panic experience of sex would also repulse him:

I loathed him. He was naked, and I abominated him. I hated myself. My boy slipped out of the door. I hated myself. The monster was alone in the cell with me. I hated myself and pressed my body against his corrupt body, put my arm round his damp neck, pressed my mouth against his mean venal mouth. I felt lust and past time, remembrance and pain, and I hated myself⁶³.

A similar disgust for himself reappears later, after his aggressive discussion with Adolf, when he socratically tries to prove his faith:

I was ugly, as ugly as Caliban. [...] Why did I torment him? Why did I discourage him? Because I'm discouraged myself, or because my own discouragement makes it easier for me to be an outsider, the Pan pipes for the swamp-dweller? Am I actually looking for a fatherland, or am I just appealing to humanity, like a kind of fog onto which I can disappear? I love Rome

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁶¹ Carole Hanbidge, *The Transformation of Failure*, p. 247.

⁶² Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 128.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.

because I'm a foreigner in Rome and perhaps I always want to remain an outsider, an agitated observer⁶⁴.

He is an outsider and likes to be one, but he wonders if it is right or wrong, if he, in truth, does not desire a “fatherland”, if he is trying to love his loneliness by means of his affection to loneliness, by means of belief in solitude as a force for his music. He is a foreigner, a “bystander” at the edges of man’s cruelty, but “agitated”, because he is restless with his powerlessness. Siegfried sees powerlessness as freedom; with freedom no one is obliged to be guilty, whereas if powerful, one has the potential to commit evil. Furthermore, every “good” human activity is seen as powerless:

[Koeppen] shows power to be a force independent of human control. Those who covet power, Judejahn and Pfaffrath, are shown, in the final analysis, to be just as personally powerless as Adolf and Siegfried, who are powerless by choice⁶⁵.

Siegfried has lost even the pleasures of his senses: at dinner with the Krünembergs “nothing had a taste – or rather, it tasted of ashes, dead ashes blowing on the wind”⁶⁶. Siegfried is innocent to history’s eyes; nevertheless, he is obsessed with images of death, more than all the other characters. Even Rome, the beloved Rome, is infested with it: “Death casts his invisible net over the city”. And it is worth mentioning that the first work Siegfried composed was called *Variationen über den Tod und die Farbe des Oleanders* (Variations over death and colors of Oleanders). Siegfried’s sickness has only one origin; an origin that even his panic sensitivity, his passion for music, his cynical disenchantment, and his passive resistance to horror cannot succeed in obliterating: the guilt of the world.

This guilt is embodied in the other main character of the story: Gottlieb Judejahn, “the unreconstructed and unkillable old SS man”. We have two portraits of Judejahn: one made by himself and one made by the narrator⁶⁷: a banal Judejahn,

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁶⁵ Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen's Postwar Trilogy*, p. 127.

⁶⁶ Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 49.

⁶⁷ Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen's Postwar Trilogy*, p. 145.

useless and suffering from inferiority complex, and a terrible Judejahn, ready to raise again German Nazism against the world. For him, Nazism was a possibility to avenge his father's beating when he was a child; even his killing of a young lady, at the end of the book, in his imagination comes under his duties and is a way of carrying out orders⁶⁸. In the end, the two portraits overlap, as his conscience starts to crumble subtly, although he will never admit his true nature.

Just like Siegfried, Judejahn does not like his name. "Jude" means Jew; and Gottlieb means God's love: it sounds to him like "priestly slime left on him by the schoolmaster his father, and he didn't want to love God"⁶⁹. In the novel no one likes his name, which also bears an ironic meaning: according to their names, Gottlieb should be the pious, Adolf and Siegfried dictators, rebels and expatriates⁷⁰. On the contrary, "Judejahn is the personification of death. [...] Judejahn is evil incarnate in league with the satanic forces of the past"⁷¹. In *Der Tod in Rom*, those who are guilty feel no sense of guilt – or do, but for the wrong reason – and those who are innocent bear an indissoluble burden of sin and guilt in themselves.

Judejahn's internal monologues are marked by justifications and glorifications of his actions – and those of Germany too: "They kept the wild man out of sight. The Germans had recovered themselves. Were respectable people once more. Would they be able to tell where he had been? Once knee-deep in blood, and now, in the final frame, the desert sand?"⁷². In fact, Judejahn fled from his country when Nazism had to be cancelled, and is now in Rome to meet his brother in law who is trying to find a way to let him go back to Germany. However, even this "altruistic" attempt is not seen positively by Judejahn: "Fix what? His return, his decriminalization, his pardon, and then a little job at the end of it? That man was a windbag. Did Judejahn even want to go home?"⁷³. If Judejahn feels guilty for something, it is for his resignation to both personal and national, and also ideological, defeat. In his exaggerated mind, he is momentarily hiding from a fallen stupid world, coveting new majestic plans of

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁶⁹ Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 29.

⁷⁰ Michael Hofmann, Introduction to *Death in Rome*, p. xii.

⁷¹ Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen's Postwar Trilogy*, p. 131.

⁷² Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 21.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

racial and nationalistic revenge. He is a fugitive, or rather, “the supposed fugitive”, but for a good purpose, and he does not want anybody to take him under his wing:

That was probably how he'd sketched it out, he wanted to hold the vagabond in his arms, with all his past misdeeds and evasions forgiven him [...] dead or presumed dead, the bombed-out Berliner, the man who went missing in the cleaning-up operation, condemned at Nuremberg *in contumaciam*. But the High Court that passed judgements on fate, human destiny and the blind actions of history, was itself reeling about in a maze of its own [...]. The High Court had no evidence as to whether Judejahn was alive or dead, and so the High Judge had carefully donned the black cap and condemned to death Judejahn, accused before all the world as a monster, *in absentia* [...] ⁷⁴.

Judejahn is fascinated by the idea of the desert. In the desert he could really be himself, he could receive and give orders, train new soldiers for a new powerful nation. It is a true, megalomaniacal fascination with the wilderness, with the military atmosphere of conquest and possession and of exotic, erotic emptiness. It is one of the most recurring images in Judejahn thoughts: “He liked the view of the desert. It wasn't its endlessness that drew him, more its barrenness. For Judejahn the desert was a great exercise ground, a front, a continual challenge that kept him in trim” ⁷⁵.

There are perhaps two climaxes of Judejahn's inhumanity in the novel. The first is an emblematic scene set in the Roman ruins. Judejahn is wandering through the city, ruminating with hunger over his desert; he would like to hide there, but instead he has to choose the baths, for which he has ironically to pay an entrance fee. Here another character, Adolf, is accomplishing his wandering of expiation. At the same time as Siegfried is having a sexual encounter with the young boy, Judejahn and his son Adolf are at the same place:

through the slit in the wall, Adolf saw Judejahn step into the lowest dungeon. He saw who it was. He recognized his father. He started, and wanted to rush up to him, and then he was paralyzed, frozen, able to watch but no more

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Judejahn had wandered through the Angels' Castle [...]. He felt confirmed in his calling, and he strolled casually, like someone returning to his house after a long absence, down into the dungeons. [...] There had always been wars and prisons, captivity and death, Peter had died on the cross, and his successors had done their enemies to death in the torture chamber, and so it would continue, and lo, it was good. It was human. Who said it was inhuman? Judejahn listened for a while, and hearing no noise, no footfall, he answered the call and relieved himself into the hole for the poorest prisoner.

Adolf saw his father's nakedness, as Ham had seen Noah's, but, like Shem and Japhet, he covered his face with his hands

Eva his mother covered her face with her hands, she didn't want to see sparkling blue sky nor the shining Roman sun. She stood in black, the ghost from the foggy northland fetched up in Rome, the vengeful Fury, her thoughts on dreadful retribution, the true preserver of the myth of the twentieth century, the Führer's mourner, the true believer in the Third Reich and in its resurrection⁷⁶.

This is a chain of horror and inhumanity among the most intense in contemporary literature. The father is rude, crude, and arrogant, pondering about good and evil, human and inhuman, with a childish logical argumentation; subsequently, as a challenge done to civilization, he becomes natural and animally superior to pity and history; the son is religiously ashamed of his father and uses biblical myths to portray his speechless experience; the mother, significantly called Eva, hates life, and prays for the Führer, "the myth of the twentieth century".

Judejahn is diabolical, ironically, both in a sophisticated and in a childish way: "Judehan is set against the backcloth of world-history and world-horror which Rome embodies. In this setting he loses individual coloration and stature, and takes his place in the eternal process of man's remorseless cruelty"⁷⁷. He seems to have no remorse, to act like a beast, marking the territory like a dog⁷⁸. However, he is also the

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-127.

⁷⁷ Carole Hanbidge, *The Transformation of Failure*, pp. 212-213.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

“kleiner Gottlieb”, as he calls himself angrily when his complex of inferiority emerges from his self-confidence. “Kliener Gottlieb” (little Gottlieb) occurs more than thirty-five times in the novel, according to Gunn. Judejahn is portrayed as such by means of a narrative device, as Koeppen uses the narrator mimetically, conveying his characteristics in the choice of language. Gottlieb’s language is simple and repetitive like that of a child, whereas the opposite happens with Siegfried’s language, which is richer in adjectives, less limited in vocabulary, very descriptive and acute: “the mobility of his mind and his own meticulous monitoring of his responses”⁷⁹. Hanbidge observes:

the conceptual deficiencies of a mind which childishly clings to its nouns because it cannot cope easily and automatically with the simple linguistic substitution that pronouns involve. The momentous note given to the trivial and the mundane here, however, adds a dimension of narratorial vocabulary and linguistic limitations for satirical purposes⁸⁰.

Judejahn is a boy grown with the wrong ideals and the wrong values. He is linguistically isolated from the land hosting him and morally so from the readers’ values, as the narrator does not allow him to communicate by direct speech⁸¹. He is convinced of what he does and thinks; at least he tries to convince himself of the superiority of his person in the bourgeois world in which he lives. Nevertheless, there are some cracks in his confidence. As when one feels ashamed, he feels observed, not by spies but by priests; he thinks of himself the worst things because he fancies a Jewess bar woman – again, he feels guilty for the wrong reasons. The Oedipal complex he bears with respect of his son Adolf appears when he is ashamed of being cheated on his fornication by this “weakling in the womanish dress of a priest”⁸².

The other climax of inhumanity in Judejahn’s characterization is the killing of Laura, the Italian girl: “The Jewess had to be liquidated. The Führer had been betrayed. Not enough people had been liquidated”⁸³. Laura had appeared, in the

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁸² Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 178.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

meanwhile, as a sort of light in the darkness of the city – once again the name is significant, a reminiscence of Petrarch’s muse:

Her smile was a beacon in the night, it filled the night and it filled Rome,
Laura smiled for the city and the world, *urbi et orbi*, and Rome and the night
and the world were transfigured⁸⁴.

Killing her, Judejahn feels that he has contributed to the final solution: “He had fulfilled the Führer’s orders. That was good”⁸⁵, he exclaims in the usual childish style. Adolf, who afraid of sin had just refused a woman, sees him wandering in the city, before his collapse. The ending of the book is a direct reference to *Death in Venice*: “The same evening, Judejahn’s death was reported in the press; its circumstances had made it world news, though the fact of it can have shocked no one”⁸⁶.

Truth and appearance are faintly distinguished, as if they were actually undistinguishable, or rather, as if it were pointless to make a distinction between the two. In this novel as well there is a sort of existential void; but this time it is caused by a specific event in history, a specific terror and its consequent abyss, the Holocaust. Judejahn’s character oscillates throughout the whole novel between the personification of evil and the terrible consequence of it. The narrative suggests that he does not feel any guilt or remorse for being a Nazi: “He slept. His sleep was tranquil, peaceful, dreamless. Every night he dropped into it like a stone into a deep well. No nightmares plagued him, no remorse, no skeletons”⁸⁷. How can remorse be advisable in such a good sleeper? He does not even feel guilty because he has been an assassin; on the contrary, he has regrets for not having killed enough: “that was his fault, but the fuss that had been made afterwards about his bit of killing, that did preoccupy him, flattered and bothered him, as a scandalous reputation is flattering and bothersome”⁸⁸. However, once liberated the character from linguistic limitations, the narrator allows him such a confession, while he regrets that he has not cleaned enough, regretting the desert and its anaesthetic effect:

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

but now he felt sick, he felt fever and pain, felt the cuts that had pruned his life to stump, felt the cuts that severed this stump from the wide flourishing of his power. What was he? A shadow of his former self. Should he rise from the dead, or remain a spook in the desert, a ghost in the Fatherland's colour magazines. [...] He was afraid of living. He feared the absence of commands in which he was expected to live. [...] He had tasted power, but in order to enjoy it, he required it to be limited, he required the Führer as an embodiment and visible god of power, the commander who was his excuse before the Creator, man and the Devil: I only did what I was told, I only obeyed orders. Did he have a conscience then? No, he was just afraid. He was afraid it might be discovered that he was little Gottlieb going around in boots too big for him. Judejahn heard a voice, not the voice of God nor the voice of conscience, it was the thin, hungry, self-improving voice of his father, the primary schoolteacher, whispering to him⁸⁹.

He even wonders if, in the end, he did not possess a conscience, like the others. In a way, then, this can be considered the only fault of his characterization: his only moment of lucidity breaks the horrific naiveté of the character, in an attempt at establishing doubts also in the most insensitive character of the novel. He is scared of the father, he appears psychologically compromised by the Oedipus complex and the childhood traumas. Destruction seems, from this perspective, only the political outcome of certain common sad experiences. He needs orders, just like his son, Adolf.

Adolf is the other rebel son of the story. He is studying to become a priest, and therefore he is among the worst traitors of Nazi ideology. Even his parents doubt that he can be forgiven. Adolf is looking for stability, an alternative to his original community⁹⁰. Gunn tells the story of his vocation as follows:

As the war became a lost cause for Germany, he and his classmates were simply abandoned by their overseers at a Nazi training school. Adolf was taken in, quite by chance, by a priest. When he saw American soldiers in church, he

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁹⁰ Carole Hanbidge, *The Transformation of Failure*, p. 245. See also Dietrich Erlach, *Wolfgang Koeppen als zeitkritischer Erzähler*, Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1973, and Jean-Paul Mauranges, *Wolfgang Koeppen – Littérature sans frontière*, Berne: Peter Lang, 1978.

realized that they were not the monsters he had been told about in the Nazi school, whereupon Adolf decided that since he could not believe people he would serve God [...]. There is reason to believe, however, that in making this conversion Adolf committed what Eliot called the highest treason – doing the right thing for the wrong reason⁹¹.

Even the most pious character is obsessed with doubts, and this would become, together with the guilt of his family, another burden for him: “For Adolf the church is a means of both escaping and denying the past; escape is, however, at best fleeting. Adolf’s experience as a youth in Nazi Germany accompanies and haunts him constantly”⁹². Another critic believes that Adolf is looking not for a faith but for a master⁹³; just like his fathers, he is waiting for orders, or perhaps for *order* in a chaotic universal conscience. If an affective background is necessary for a man to leave his home and wander through the world with a solid personality, than the sons of this novel are left in purposeless wandering because they feel coldness towards their fathers and because origins leave indifference. Even the thought of life and death, and of pain, is suspended when referred to their German background. All emotions are blurred, and they become ambiguous when the past looms over the present.

In one of his moments of fragility – especially after a strong discussion with the disenchanted Siegfried – Adolf cries for mankind: “If he was crying, he was crying for himself, or maybe not even for himself, he didn’t know why he was crying, perhaps he was crying for the whole world”⁹⁴.

When the other priests of the hostel in which he is staying go on a touristic visit of the city, Adolf prefers to be alone with his thoughts, wandering as he wishes:

Did salvation lie in renunciation, in flight, in solitude, was the hermit the only prototype of survival? But the solitary man always seemed a figure of

⁹¹ Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen’s Postwar Trilogy*, pp. 150-151.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 152.

⁹³ C. F. Bance, “*Der Tod in Rom* and *Die Rote*: Two Italian Episodes”, in *Forum for Modern Languages*, no. 3, 1967, p. 131.

⁹⁴ Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 76.

weakness to Adolf, because Adolf needed support, because he was afraid of himself; he required community, even though he doubted its worth⁹⁵.

Loneliness is again a means to expiate, or at least munch over one's spiritual troubles. In *Death in Rome* the shortcomings of Christianity are also put in evidence, especially through the dialogic conversations between the two cousins, as if even the most "certain" institutions of mankind had lost their positive power; however, in my opinion, religion seems to be just another nonsensical failure in human life among all the others. Religion is powerless like all the other values, like all the characters:

Here, in front of the rightly praised *Pietà*, Adolf prayed, he prayed for the power to love; that was the only prayer he said in the principal church of Christianity, and then, gaunt, skinny and miserable, a little deacon defeated by too much splendour, he left St Peter's, whose air and aspect he couldn't take⁹⁶.

Just like the whisky priest and the Consul, Adolf, the most religious of the characters in the novel, prays for the capacity to love; a simple, basic ability that contemporary man accepts with difficulty.

There are many biblical references in the novel, as in the other works we are analyzing; lambs, slaughters of flocks, "a beautiful, dirty Noah's ark". They serve for the overall atmosphere of mythical resonance, and perhaps to make them sound, as all the other things, empty words, empty cultural heritage – heritage which is too often too heavy to bear. Paradoxically, even priestly images make a different impression:

To either side were confessionals, stout wooden fortresses, and confessors sat in these hallowed shrines like bank-clerks – the believer could confess his sins in any language. Even the confessionals seemed cold and draughty to Adolf; as cold as the marble tops of the money-changers⁹⁷.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 117

Religion itself seems a trade, priests seem clerks, and confession an efficient service at the disposal of international tourists. In the most important place of religion in the world, this is how Adolf, the future priest, feels:

Adolf felt alone in the huge, lofty splendour that didn't seem lofty to him except in the literal sense, he felt deserted by God and by his faith in Him, he felt assailed by doubt, perhaps tempted by the Devil, who perhaps wasn't a devil, because how could a devil have made his way into the House of God, into St Peter's castle, into this hallowed and blessed shrine?⁹⁸

Siegfried is one of the causes of his uncertainties; according to him, Adolf is “afraid of his father, an analyst would say he hid from the face of God the Father, the Old Testament god of vengeance, he isn't free”⁹⁹; he would like to baptize him in the Tiber, in a pagan way, baptizing him “in joy”, but instead offers him an ice-cream, as one does with unhappy children. On his part, Adolf finds in Siegfried a desperation that he is trying to spread around like a plague: “He was right”, says Siegfried: “it was out of fear, out of desperation, because of the apparitions and terrible dreams, that I wrote music”¹⁰⁰. Adolf has a religious community, whereas Siegfried “preserves a vigorous sense of the interaction of the two spheres, a sense which may be expected to be more fruitful spiritually than the sterile isolation of the Church. [...] This spiritual exchange seems to be the essence of Siegfried's music”¹⁰¹.

Adolf seems to be able to diagnose the spiritual sickness of their relatives, as any priest is instructed to do: he has some interpretations even for his mother Eva. He would like to free her from her devil, he wants to exorcise the evil that torments her body and soul, the devil she possesses inside her, as he cannot believe in the “canonical” Devil: “she contained an inferno within her”¹⁰², he says. Hell and his concrete correlatives are perhaps the only things to scare him:

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹⁰¹ Carole Hanbidge, *The Transformation of Failure*, p. 246.

¹⁰² Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 143.

even the Underworld had been friendly, only Hell was something else. They had no knowledge of Hell. Was it right to threaten, to terrorize, in order to rescue the soul, and was the soul lost if one responded to beauty? Adolf sat down in the garden among the stone witnesses of antiquity. He was excluded from their society, his vows excluded him, his faith excluded him, for ever. He wept¹⁰³.

Adolf sees terror also in religion. This is perhaps one of the last stages of despair in these novels. Siegfried and Adolf, as sons of an older generation, should represent renewal; on the contrary, the sons are destroyed by the Nazism of the fathers, at least in will. The fathers want power greedily, whereas the sons avoid it¹⁰⁴; the fathers want to give Germany a second chance, whereas the sons create no resistance ideology¹⁰⁵:

In this scathing indictment of recrudescing fascism and middle-class opportunism, Koeppen depicts German sons trying to put together the pieces of their ruined lives while their unrepentant parents negotiate and then celebrate the completion of their return to the positions of power they enjoyed in the Third Reich¹⁰⁶.

The other father of the story is the fourth main character. Siegfried's father and Judejahn's brother-in-law, Friedrich Wilhelm Pfaffrath, held office under the Nazis; he is now a democratically elected Oberbürgermeister and has become a "respected German citizen". Also his name is ironic: *Pfaffe* is a disrespectful term for priest, and *rath* means council: this is another case of fathers named before the sons¹⁰⁷. He is trying to rescue Judejahn from his exile, or better, from his flight abroad among strangers, among traitors. If Judejahn is the identifiable evil, Pfaffrath is instead the very danger for the postwar world¹⁰⁸: the evil who manages to mould according to social changes in order to get closer to the fulcrum of decisions. Pfaffrath sees

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

¹⁰⁴ Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen's Postwar Trilogy*, p. 124.

¹⁰⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁶ David Ward, Introduction to *Pigeons on the Grass*, New York-London: Holmes & Meier, 1991 (1988), pp. xvi-xvii.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Hofmann, Introduction to *Death in Rome*, p.

¹⁰⁸ Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen's Postwar Trilogy*, p. 122.

himself as foxier than Siegfried and less fanatic: the real threats are the bureaucrats in this novel¹⁰⁹:

Soon they would be able to see a little further, prospects weren't bad, and Pfaffrath had the right kind of track record; but as far as the sons were concerned, their lack of common sense, their neuroses, the way they followed their so-called consciences, that was just a sign of the times, a sickness of the times, and in time it would be cured like an overlong puberty¹¹⁰.

However, a hint of sense of guilt is present also in the superficial, zealous Pfaffrath. When he wanders by a military cemetery he thinks:

The dead didn't laugh, they were dead; or they had no time and didn't care who among the living came to see them, they were changing phases, they climbed out of life dirty and guilty, perhaps not even personally guilty, into the wheel of births to a new repentance, a new guilt, a new pointless incarnation¹¹¹.

And later on:

But for man the reproachful voice of the night passes with the nocturnal trembling of trees, and after a refreshing night's sleep Pfaffrath will once more feel without stain, an upright German man and an Oberbürgermeister, free from guilt, guiltless towards his ancestors, guiltless towards his children, guiltless towards his own soul. But now, in the transfiguring hour of the night, he asked himself whether Siegfried and his symphony hadn't sought the better home, and whether the notes jarring in Pfaffrath's ear hadn't held a dialogue with his own youthful soul¹¹².

Each with different manifestations of guilt, proper or improper, these characters represent a possible multifaceted modulation of postwar guilt – often

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

¹¹⁰ Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 32.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 183.

confused with sin, with struggle for survival, with ideology, with obliged, historical collective guilt.

This group of four assembles many different themes of that period and of all times: religious doubts, homosexuality, abandonment of ideals, exile, artistic creation¹¹³, generation gap, bourgeois mediocrity, psychological complexes, and racial identities. According to Hofmann, the four main characters represent four main aspects of German culture:

These four represent the four principal areas of German achievement: murder, bureaucracy, theology and music. It is like having Frederick the Great, Bismarck, Luther and Beethoven in one family. Their movements, their meeting and remeetings in the alien city of Rome – which, interestingly, offers each of them what they want, so each of them sees it in a different version – are, as the novelist and critic Alfred Andersch pointed out, choreographed like a ballet: a macabre ballet of outrageous contrivance, viewed by the reader with growing horror, alarm and incredulity¹¹⁴.

The resulting effect is, in fact, one of stupor at the complexity itself of the questions that the postwar impelled to face.

There are some other male minor figures: an arm dealer in business with Judejahn, Kürenberg, and Dietrich, the conformist brother of Siegfried. It is interesting now to examine quickly the two other main female characters of the story together with Laura, the Jewish victim. There is Ilse Kürenberg, who “saw through the convention of pretending death didn’t exist”¹¹⁵, and who believes that collective guilt is an infective contamination: “Have I been infected, have I been contaminated by this meanness, by the simple-mindedness of thinking in groups, infected by the mutual enmity of groups, by the vicious idea of collective guilt, am I against Siegfried and his music, just because he belongs to that family?”¹¹⁶. And then there is Adolf’s mother, Eva.

¹¹³ *Der Tod in Rom* is, according to Manfred Koch, also a *Künstlerroman*: cfr. Wolfgang Koeppen. *Literatur zwischen Nonkonformismus und Resignation*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973, p. 104.

¹¹⁴ Michael Hofmann, Introduction to *Death in Rome*, p. ix.

¹¹⁵ Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 52.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

Eva Judejahn is the faithful wife who is more faithful to pride and Nazism than to her husband. She does not betray him, but wishes he was really dead so that she did not have to bear the shame of a fugitive husband. She is weeping for the Reich, for the Grossdeutschland, for the Führer, not for the loss of respect, possessions, nor for her husband, who would become a hero for her if he sacrificed himself for the nation:

She wasn't at fault in what happened and what couldn't now be mended, but they both inevitably shared the guilt of every survivor. Eva had borne this guilt, not guilt for building the road that had led to ruin, but guilt at having outlived her salvation, that never left her, and she feared that Judejahn would now have to pick up the burden of mere existence and share it with her, and she didn't want that, she still saw him as blameless, a hero in Valhalla, but a portion of the guilt was given to each living person, and the letter from Judejahn, the news of his survival, had shocked rather than delighted her¹¹⁷.

She is even ashamed of her son: "It wasn't only a wound that hurt her to the quick, a brand in her heart, it was accusation and self-reproach. Where had the bad seed come from?"¹¹⁸. Hereditariness seems to be the cause of all problems in the novel, and this was for sure, together with its racial implications, a very hot topic at the time.

The characters of *Der Tod in Rom* bear more than they can stand; when they do not bear guilt, they pretend that it does not attain to them, or else, as in the case of Siegfried, abandon themselves to spiritual non-existence and abandonment of any will. Nonetheless, they seem to possess "an unusually extended or finely-tuned sensibility"¹¹⁹:

Often profound integrity is based upon a kind of fastidiousness, or hyper-refinement, which may be moral, linguistic, emotional or aesthetic in its mode of expression. However, in a sense, such hyper-refinement of sensibility may verge upon a disability. Consequently, these characters have a further feature in common: they are vulnerable, precisely because they are acutely sensitive to the

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹¹⁹ Carole Hanbidge, *The Transformation of Failure*, p. 11.

world and its demands, whilst the world may not be receptive to their own mutual spiritual demands. All are subject, therefore, to an extreme form of pressure, which has a dual causality, being compounded of the inner predisposition of the protagonist and the outward circumstances of his life¹²⁰.

This sensitivity is obtained thanks to the narrator, of course:

Koeppen seems to sit on the shoulders of his four main protagonists and parrot their thoughts and impressions: the brutal, rueful Judejahn (rueful for not having killed more); the discriminations – hivering but also frank in their way – of Siegfried; pat Adolf and fearful Pfaffrath. In the modernist manner, they take up prismatically different attitudes to the same things: sex, dress, food, and gods and God, myth, Rome. Judejahn has his desert, and Siegfried the Africa for his black symphony. The spooky arms-dealer Austerlitz has his warmed milk, Siegfried and Adolf their ice-cream. Everywhere there is congruence and difference. The events and perspectives of the book are related in a wonderful, highly wrought and rhythmic prose [...] short, spat-out sentences, and long, sweeping, comma'd-off periods, protocols of consciousness that are actually less difficult to follow than they seem¹²¹.

There is also a hint to the miraculous power of art creation. Characters are affected by Siegfried's music: "Acts of creation may be seen as the counter-balance to acts of destruction: art cannot redeem Nazi horrors, but perhaps it can assimilate these horrors as Siegfried does"¹²². It is Siegfried's music to push "conscious" thoughts and memories of his "pure" youth into Pfaffrath's mind.

Although the novel is entitled to Judejahn's tragic end – he dies of natural death after having killed Laura – it is Siegfried who "heals" the reader of the ambiguity of guilt: "Courage? I don't lack courage. Courage isn't what I need, anyway. Maybe I need belief. I do believe, but what I believe in is the futility of everything"¹²³. This seems to be the ultimate "message", or creative enchantment, of the novel – perhaps the unique solution for postwar artists who did not want to

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

¹²¹ Michael Hofmann, Introduction to *Death in Rome*, pp. xi-xii.

¹²² Carole Hanbidge, *The Transformation of Failure*, p. 255.

¹²³ Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 112.

engage ideologically, as if disgusted by the possible development of any ideology. His reaction at the knowledge that his family is in Rome is symptomatical:

There was a Pfaffrath-Judejahn family reunion here, and I felt I was seeing gorgons. I was ashamed. I was ashamed of my family, and I felt like a dog when the dog-catchers have got him cornered with their nets. My liberty was threatened. My father and mother congratulated me, and they threatened my liberty¹²⁴.

The past threatens liberty. Congratulations threaten liberty. Siegfried, the man looking for God in dead ends, sees clearly the destiny of his country, and of the world:

But even as I was thinking that, it already seemed to me that Germany was past changing, that one could only change oneself, and everyone had to do that for him or herself, and I wished I was shot of Adolf¹²⁵.

Adolf, in representing the religious consciousness torturing souls that are burdened by inextinguishable historical faults, can only be put aside. As Siegfried would say, “the tragedy had happened, next up was the satyr play”¹²⁶.

5.3 Wandering in the Underworld of Guilt: The Eternal City

Der Tod in Rom is, almost exemplarily, the novelistic representation of guilt as applied to wandering through the labyrinthine paths of a city. Wandering has multiple aspects in this novel: guilty restlessness, exile, *flânerie*. All of them, however, are linked to a sense of purposelessness which pervades the entire narrative and which is present in characters, ideals, and actions:

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹²⁶ “Da die Tragödie geschehen war, musste das Satyrspiel folgen” (*ibid.*, p. 150).

Each novel has the positive figures representing a sort of socio-political atheism. These isolated intellectuals attempt to identify with no cause, no institution, no ideology. Even when such an attempt is made [...] self-doubt and resignation win over ideology. It is a climate of extreme pessimism in which Koeppen shows the believers to be fascists and non-fascists unable to believe in anything¹²⁷.

We have seen how all the characters are marked by a sense of guilt, all with different modulations: “a group of characters all of whom attempt to order their lives in a chaotic present against the background of common past experiences”¹²⁸. Their wandering through the city of Rome is never just walking, but also a flight, a pilgrimage, an act of purification, or, on the contrary, a downfall to the abyss, to the underworld. The characters of *Der Tod in Rom* are, in different ways and for different reasons, exiled from home, with social and political implications¹²⁹. They are all outsiders; some are happy to be so, others yearn to return home or to their country, or just to their old ideologies.

Metropolitan wandering is, however, the most important aspect of this alienated restlessness. Gianfranco Rubino makes an interesting consideration about this kind of wandering: “L’erranza metropolitana equivale per molti versi a un movimento delimitato entro spazi non esterni e aperti ma interni e chiusi: se è euforica, adombra un’immensa dimora, se è tetra e smarrita una prigione di stampo piranesiano”¹³⁰. Many poets have made of the city a particular poetic experience; in these cases the city becomes a privileged territory in which sensitivity can explore all the nuances of modern life. The city has been compared to labyrinths (see Baudelaire and Benjamin for instance), to seas, forests, women, hells, monsters, and so on¹³¹. Certainly, the city has become another archetypal and mythical image. Pierre Loubier examined the relationships between city and wandering, with interesting results for

¹²⁷ Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen's Postwar Trilogy*, p. 182.

¹²⁸ David Basker, *Chaos, Control, and Consistency: The Narrative Vision of Wolfgang Koeppen*, Berne: Peter Lang, 1993, p. 238.

¹²⁹ See Simon Ward, “Border Negotiations in the Works of Wolfgang Koeppen”, in *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 95, no. 3, July 2000.

¹³⁰ Gianfranco Rubino (ed.), *Figure dell’erranza*, p. 18.

¹³¹ See Pierre Loubier, *Le Poète au labyrinthe. Ville, errance, écriture*, Fontenay-Saint-Cloud: Ens Éditions, 1998.

this study. He links, for example, the myth of the labyrinth and the myth of the Wandering Jew:

les deux mythes ont en commun un certain nombre de traits: parcours force et sans fin, quête et châtement divin, alternance du repos et du mouvement, dédoublement de l'Errant en multiples avatars, figure de l'éternel retour du meme. La mythologie grecque, quant à elle, conçoit également l'errance tantôt comme une quête du lieu (Cadmos suivant la vache pour fonder Thèbes), tantôt comme une punition (Œdipe, les Proétides transformées en vaches errantes, etc.). L'expérience de la ville labyrinthe et des traumatismes qui affectent le sujet lyrique n'est sans doute pas étrangère à un tel réveil du mythe: tout comme le Juif errant, être passif et marginal, incarne ceux qui subissent l'Histoire et non ceux qui la font, le poète urbain incarne tous les déclassés, les exclus de la ville, "les éclopés de la vie", ceux qui subissent la machine urbaine. La figure du poète maudit trouve en Ahasvérus une sorte de frère allégorique. Mais la première des malédictions qui viennent frapper la figure lyrique est sans doute celle de l'espace (et du temps, qui lui est liée): la marche est alors conçue comme une fatalité, une prison mobile [...]. La marche se trouve associée au chaos, ou au cahot. Bien que doué de vue, le marcheur ne cesse de trébucher, et ces trébuchements répétés sont comme des symptômes de reünification de la pensée et du corps. C'est en quoi la marche n'en apparaît que plus punitive: marcher fatigue, mais s'arrêter, c'est mourir. Ainsi le destin tragique du piéton n'est-il pas la mort immédiate mais le rebondissement douloureux de l'infirme, du mannequin désarticulé et ridicule¹³².

Although he refers to the French *poètes maudits* in particular, it is evident that his comparisons are definitely relevant also for the characters of our novels, especially for Siegfried Pfaffrath, who is, we must remember, a musician. For Loubier the endless wandering and the impossibility to end it could symbolize the suffering of endless thought: "le poète est condamné à penser. Ainsi l'errance, d'Œdipe par exemple, est-elle plus que celle d'un drame de l'inceste, mais bien, selon Lévi-Strauss, celle d'un drame de la vérité. C'est l'être tout entier qui trébuche

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 308-309.

avec le corps du marcheur”¹³³. Integrity and truth are the things to be discovered in wandering: “The alienated artist, one might say, is engaged on an eternal search for this lost “Ganzheit”¹³⁴.

The city is a well – and a hell too – from which the artist can draw material for experience. The *Kunstlerroman* in this case is a *Bildungsroman* of an artist who has to wander in order to create and to forgive his past – with no success; or rather, to munch over his past in order to create. In this novel the short-circuit between sense of guilt and creation is particularly complex.

In addition, not all the characters are artists: they wander for different reasons, but all of them out of doubt, dissatisfaction, spiritual agitation, lust for something or somebody to bring release from pain. The curse is not death, but rather the everlasting wandering caused by the death of the past. As a matter of fact, as we have seen, “Koeppen is interested in establishing continuity and pattern”¹³⁵: the history of Germany is often related to that of Rome, in a spatial and temporal continuum, with frequent hints especially to the Nazi period. And this is valid not only for the city and its history, but also for people: “[i]n their various ways – destroyer, ruler, penitent, tourist, warrior – these are all antecedents for the various Judejahns and Pfaffraths who have descended in the city now”¹³⁶. The perception of time is both synchronic and diachronic in *Death in Rome* – usually, synchronicity implies the paradox of coincidence, diachronicity the paradox of heredity.

If time is fluid, so is space; however, in the case of space, fluidity implies extension into a wider range of resonance, and the city becomes a symbol of more universal aspects:

Ce monde clos est, sans aucun doute, la réduction d’un espace géographique et historique plus vaste (l’Allemagne d’après-guerre, la Civilisation occidentale au lendemain de la guerre) et, inversement, le grossissement d’un univers strictement individualisé et incommunicable (l’individu perdu dans la “jungle” de cette Allemagne, qui ne sait où retrouver

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

¹³⁴ Stanley Craven, *Wolfgang Koeppen. A Study in Modernist Alienation*, Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1982, p. 4.

¹³⁵ Michael Hofmann, Introduction to *Death in Rome*, p. x.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

les valeurs traditionnelles). Mais il est, incontestablement, aussi donné pour lui-même, pour sa valeur – toujours analogiquement – de symbole éternellement vrai, et non plus déterminé par une cause historique précise. La ville n'est pas seulement Munich, Bonn ou Rome des années 50, ou même la réduction caractéristique de l'Allemagne ou de l'Italie de ce temps. Elle n'est pas non plus exclusivement le lieu des errances de l'homme déraciné, victime d'un type nouveau de société où il n'a pas accès, ni en se soumettant, ni en s'opposant. La ville est éternellement ce monde du chacun pour soi, des fausses rencontres, également le lieu où l'individu, opposé à la masse des indifférents, a l'occasion de se révéler à lui-même. Elle est d'autant plus irréaliste qu'elle est l'expression vivante de notre univers des apparences: son chaos n'est pas que momentané, il est à l'image de l'éternelle condition humaine, reflétant l'éternelle instabilité et fragilité de notre vie. En ce sens, la ville est un modèle non plus caractéristique mais typique, applicable, mutatis mutandis, à toute situation de même nature. C'est dire aussi que son image est susceptible d'évoluer, selon les circonstances. [...]; tandis que celle vue par Siegfried dans *La mort à Rome* est plus ouverte, plus accueillante, à la fois théâtre de l'agonie d'un monde de terreur, (Judejahn), scène des retrouvailles authentiques (les Kürenberg et Siegfried), et promesse, au besoin confuse, de rénovation et de restauration. Mais qu'on ne s'y trompe pas, la ville n'est pas vue vraiment dans ses métamorphoses historiques, mais plutôt dans son caractère typique et éternel, ce qui inclut même la notion même de métamorphose; si bien qu'il n'y a pas au fond de contradiction entre la vision de Philippe, où la ville lui apparaît comme la tête décapitée de la Méduse [...] et la vision qu'a Siegfried des anges sur le pont du Tibre.

Cette idée d'éternité, et de l'éternité de la métamorphose, du passage, de la hachure du temps, conduit naturellement à rechercher, sous la discontinuité du style de Koeppen, la permanence d'une vision globale. Il se trouve que, paradoxalement, la technique associative, parataxique et de montage de Koeppen aboutit à donner une impression d'épopée¹³⁷.

If the novel has also been considered an epic work, or a baroque rewriting of epic¹³⁸, it is, in my opinion, also because of the representation of a hero – tragicomic, in this case – who perpetrates the memory of his nation, although against his will.

¹³⁷ Jean-Paul Mauranges, *Wolfgang Koeppen*, pp. 91-92.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

Like Leopold Bloom, Siegfried has to be limited in a city, has to uncover the secrets of this city in order to portray paralysis; here paralysis is, however, caused by history *and* by history's guilt; and the return home is not contemplated, simply because it would have no meaning, as anything else.

Rome is, according to Mauranges, the turntable of the drama¹³⁹, as it was with the previous novels by Koeppen: Munich in *Tauben im Grass* and Bonn in *Das Treibhaus*. The city is a jungle, often incomprehensible¹⁴⁰, made of dark passages, symbolic tunnels, and physical, psychological, and social borders¹⁴¹.

The story begins with the typical incipit of the fable: "Es war einmal...":

Once upon a time, this city was a home to gods, now there's only Raphael in the Pantheon, a demigod, a darling of Apollo's, but the corpses that joined him later are a sorry bunch, a cardinal of dubious merit, a couple of monarchs and their purblind generals, high-flying civil servants, scholars that made it into the reference books, artists of academic distinction¹⁴².

Rome was a great city, a city of gods, but now it has become a city of a sorry bunch of corpses. As soon as the book opens, history has already compromised the beauty of the present, and corrupted it with mediocrity. At the same time, and throughout the entire novel, Rome remains a majestic city, if not only for the secrets it hides, its "underworld". In this majestic city integration is improbable for the characters: the city has to maintain an aura of mystery, and decadent physical and spiritual ruin, in order to be an adequate set for this story. The mixture of this sense of decay and of unfortunate modern efficiency, touristic and religious, is a main characteristic of the text.

Time and space are confluent, as the lives of the characters. Rome and Germany have been constructed by historical circumstances that led to the present

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁴⁰ According to Koch the theme of the jungle would be a proof of the resignation of Koeppen. See Manfred Koch, *Wolfgang Koeppen*.

¹⁴¹ Mauranges believes that *Der Tod in Rom* is a representation of the degeneration of history and of the Western world (*Wolfgang Koeppen*, p. 51), but also of the sons. There should be a variation on the theme of the father: fatherland, father and God scare the children, who had a trauma caused by them, psychological block, and impotence: one is almost a priest, one is a homosexual masochist, and one, Dietrich, dedicates himself to onanism (p. 49).

¹⁴² Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 5.

state; religion, sex, and art merged their preoccupations into limited converging time and space which manifest the tensions of the past. Death is the corollary.

Characters walk fatefully past each other in this novel during their city wandering. They often go to the same place – hotel rooms, homosexual bars, ruins – but at different times, or otherwise bump into each other on the most salient occasions.

For Mauranges, characters have an obsession for travelling and the salvation, real or imaginary, that can derive from it¹⁴³. All the characters accomplish some kind of journey, as tourists in exile:

Ce sont des êtres sans foyer, des déracinés, qui, le plus souvent, déguisent leur fuite sous des aspects de vagabondage ou de bohème, ou, au contraire, de retour triomphant dans un lieu dont ils ont gardé la nostalgie. Dans le deux cas, le “voyage” ne paraît pas être l’expression d’une réelle volonté de leur part, mais un abandon à des forces qui les dépassent [...]; c’est encore vrai pour Judejahn, dont le mauvais instinct le pousse irrésistiblement à revenir à Rome. Qui plus est, la fuite de ces personnages paraît illimitée, mais en même temps marquée par une immobilité fondamentale: le personnage se déplace pour ainsi dire sans bouger et ne fait, au mieux, que transférer ses illusions ou ses obsessions en d’autres lieux ou sur d’autres personnes¹⁴⁴.

Their wandering is static, stagnant, as in all the other works treated here. They abandoned themselves to external uncontrollable forces they do not want to fight back. Ilse Kürenberg always travels with her husband, in a voluntary exile; Pfaffrath walks joyfully in the city, serene on his guiltless political conscience; Eva Judejahn is shut in a hotel room in despair for her family of renegades, otherwise she walks “black-clad”, keeping her mourning all through the years¹⁴⁵; all the other characters are victims of restlessness.

Adolf wanders in the Holy City in search “non d’un Salut ou d’une Foi, mais d’une vaine stabilité”¹⁴⁶. His journey to Rome led him to the most important places

¹⁴³ Jean-Paul Mauranges, *Wolfgang Koeppen*, p. 37.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁴⁵ Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 29.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

of his faith and put him in contact with the most important people of his affection. However, both the encounters would bring him on the verge of spiritual collapse and of endless doubt:

And Adolf [...], Adolf found the sleeping city quiet and giving peace to the restless soul. His way home was like a walk through a great graveyard, with imposing tombs, ivy-grown crosses and old chapels, and Adolf was glad to find the city as quiet as the grave, perhaps he too was dead, that made him glad, perhaps he was a dead man walking through the dead city, a dead man looking for the lane with the hostel for visiting clergyman, they also dead, lying dead in their dead beds in the dead hostel – it couldn't be far. And there was its light, the light everlasting¹⁴⁷.

Irony for sacred and prosaic: the everlasting synthetic light might be a negative metaphor for the light of religion. We have already seen how the vision of the naked father is ironically described by the use of biblical imagery; the Roman ruins are “used as a place link to illustrate the contrast between Judejahn’s aggression with Adolf’s passivity”¹⁴⁸.

Siegfried’s wandering is more fascinating: “The narrator comments on present-day Rome, while Siegfried’s effort is a finely balance [sic] affirmation of opposites, old and new, sublime and absurd, subject and object”¹⁴⁹. We have seen how his encounter with the boy takes place by the Tiber’s waters, reached almost by chance. The city is a desired but also detached milieu for his consciousness. He is not a real exile and he is not really free, although Rome has been his freedom after the imprisonment in a British camp; he is “pris dans le ghetto de sa musique paradoxale qu’il voudrait libératrice [...], don’t il reçoit le prix ambigu, à partager avec un autre candidat au concours; il serait prêt pour le Bonheur à Rome, ville qu’il aime parce qu’il s’y sait étranger”¹⁵⁰. However, also for his music, Rome seems not to be enough: he dreams of Africa, just like his uncle; yet, he desires it not for losing himself in the desert, but only for his music, for that panic universal accord he would

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁴⁸ Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen’s Postwar Trilogy*, p. 158.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

¹⁵⁰ Jean-Paul Mauranges, *Wolfgang Koeppen*, p. 42.

need in order to be free from contingent historicity. He is an “intellectual déraciné et solitaire [...] Il se perd aussi bien réellement dans les catacombes que sprirituellement dans sa musique qui n’arrive pas à lui tenir lieu de foi [...]. Il partira de nouveau [...], avec ses creature mi-avortées [...], mi-géniales”¹⁵¹.

Siegfried is absorbed by his isolation, like his cousin. He feels a sense of rejection also for his metonymic music: “he’d come to Rome expecting to be rejected, telling himself he didn’t care”¹⁵². We also understand that he prefers people when they speak another language, when he cannot understand them, implying that understanding among people is too complicated and possibly painful, “thereby relieving himself of the unbearable burden of trying to communicate while knowing it is impossible”¹⁵³. After a conversation with Adolf about the nature of sin, the reader is left with the knowledge that Siegfried loves priests, or rather that he likes them from a distance, when he cannot comprehend them, when they speak in Latin.

As a matter of fact, another main theme of the novel is the impossibility for the characters to become close, to really communicate¹⁵⁴ – except, perhaps, the sons, who converse but in an intellectual, aggressive way. The fathers, from this point of view as well, look at their best like bourgeois, mediocre parents with whom it is pointless to talk as no value is shared: “what Koeppen describes here is the human condition; the inability to communicate is a twentieth century problem, not a peculiarly German problem”¹⁵⁵. In this sense, and in many others, Siegfried represents most, among the other characters, Koeppen himself, who desired an outsider pose since his youth.

Siegfried’s colleague Kürenberg notices his attitude towards isolation and gives him advice about art and loneliness:

“Disappoint the season-ticket holder. But disappoint him with humility, not with arrogance. I’m not advising you to climb the ivory tower. For heaven’s sake, don’t live for your art! Go out on the street. Listen. Remain alone. You’re

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, London: Granta, 2004, p. 9.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen’s Postwar Trilogy*, p. 136.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

lucky to be lonely. When you're on the street, stay as lonely as you might be in the isolation of a lab"¹⁵⁶.

Siegfried seems to follow this suggestion instinctively. He walks aimlessly in the streets of Rome, in a syndrome of pleasing captivity. Like the Consul, he feels himself as confined in a garden, or rather, he is the gardener of such a complex, wasted place, and sees himself as "all weeds and wilderness" gardener-musician¹⁵⁷. He is critical about the loved-hated city: he observes it with the acute eyes that both the first-person and the third-person narrator reproduce. He is critical about the confusion in the convoluted streets, about the lazy people loving and chatting in the piazzas; also, he complains about the wandering street cats, "foolish creatures", "starving and homeless, randy, pregnant, cannibalistic"¹⁵⁸: all characteristics of the postwar atmosphere. A tom, in particular, has mange, scars, is missing part of an ear, and the "adoring children call him 'Benito'"¹⁵⁹.

His wandering is mimed by the oscillations of the narrator too. For example, a paragraph ends with the sentence: "He walks through the porch. Alone"¹⁶⁰, followed by an enjambment, no punctuation, as it happens with Judejahn's speech. The narrator keeps on reporting his walk, alone or in company: "After hours of walking, town-walking, night-, garden- and wall-walking, after blind alleys of conversation in blind alleys, melancholic and futile attempts to close in on the invisible, Siegfried had taken Adolf to the bar"¹⁶¹. After that, he starts a disquisition on his pederasty, his preference for acrid beauty, its invulnerability, the joyful descents into hell, "a crazed attempt to touch the untouchable, the hubris of grabbing the young god in the dirt, for which Siegfried was rewarded by a brief, fleeting euphoria"¹⁶²; and finally, his disgust with the organs of motherhood: "Physical procreation seemed positively criminal to Siegfried"¹⁶³.

¹⁵⁶ Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 54.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

The escape from the burden of family and history is difficult to achieve for Siegfried, and the reader is left doubtful about his success. We do not know if he will leave for Africa or not, but we know for sure that he will have understood the heart of darkness of his world:

I know Europe is blacker really. But I want to go to Africa, I want to see the desert. My father won't understand the idea of travelling to Africa to see the desert, and to hear music from the desert. My father has no idea that I'm the devout composer of the Roman angels¹⁶⁴.

The fathers have no idea of the pain of the sons. This is quite obvious commonsense, but it is more than ever true of the two generations in this story of death in Rome:

Enfin, *La mort à Rome* reprend aussi cette idée du retour, mais comme tragique contrefaçon du "Heimkehrroman", du retour du soldat, qu'ont illustré Anouilh [...], Böll, Borchert. Ici, la parodie du héros est poussée jusqu'à l'extrême: le type même de l'anti-héros, le "petit Gottlieb" Judejahn, est devenu le redoutable Général SS Judejahn, toujours aussi pusillanime mais doublé d'un tortionnaire impitoyable; nous assistons à son retour odieux et sinistre puisqu'il revient en Italie sur le théâtre de ses crimes, toujours dévoré par son ambition de jouer les premiers rôles, et à n'importe quel prix. En contrepoint, et comme réglés pour une "chorégraphie de ballet" [...], se profilent les lignes de fuite d'autres "voyageurs" qui, toutes, ont leur épicerie à Rome¹⁶⁵.

Judejahn wanders through Rome disguised as a tourist but, in reality, for buying weapons. He explicitly affirms his need of walking on foot:

Back then – how stiffly they had stood, his guard of honour! Two lines of black uniforms, Twenty outriders, a car in front of him, another behind him. But he wanted to walk. He probably hadn't walked through a city for thirty years. When Berlin was a glowing inferno, when the whole world was on Judejahn's

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

¹⁶⁵ Jean-Paul Mauranges, *Wolfgang Koeppen*, pp. 38-39.

heels, he had walked a little, had crawled through debris, climbed over bodies, tomped through ruins and then he'd be rescued¹⁶⁶.

His last wandering had been one of glory, one of survival, one of power. Now, he is in a foreign city, with hostile mediocre people chatting around, with prostitutes – Jewish in his eyes, of course – who nonetheless attract him as the dirty boy had attracted his nephew. Judejahn starts his “touristic” tour of Rome as if challenging the city itself and all the things it represents:

But Judejahn had a car at his disposal also, it wasn't that he had to walk, no, but he wanted to, he wanted to make the pilgrimage to bourgeois life on foot, that was appropriate here, appropriate in this city and this situation, he wanted to gain time, and Rome, they said, Rome where the bishops had settled and the streets crawled with surplices, Rome, they said, was a beautiful city, and now Judejahn was going to see it for himself¹⁶⁷.

Later on, he compares his exploration of the city to that of a battlefield: “He quickly got his bearings, as he had learned to do: in forest, swamp and desert, he was incapable of getting lost. Nor would he get lost now in the jungle of the city”¹⁶⁸. He starts his Bloomian walking among the laziness of Roman steps, the sanctity of religious places, squeezing in front of shop windows, desiring that those people make him way, surprised at their indifference, hoping in a world without Goethe and where men are not all brothers, calling nuns prostitutes and St Peter's the old enemy. Yet, he realizes that he is still dreaming of the desert; that Rome, as any other city in Germany, is perhaps just a substitute for his real mission: “Was it worth going home? The desert was still open to him. The net of the German bourgeoisie had not yet been thrown over the old warrior”¹⁶⁹. He is a warrior whose “fate had rescued Judejahn and led him to the Promised Land, not the land of Israel, but that of some other dusky tribe. And there Judejahn hadn't been on foot either, only on the exercise ground,

¹⁶⁶ Wolfgang Koeppen, *Death in Rome*, p. 34.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

taking a few steps in the desert”¹⁷⁰; “Rome sleeping was sabotage, or that hadn’t properly begun yet, Judejahn’s war. If he could, Judejahn would have roused the city, those trumpets that made walls collapse, the last trump [...]. In the desert he had lived in a dream”¹⁷¹. At the same time, he recognizes that someone paid to make his wandering possible: “He had gone further than the burghers in the hall, but it was they who had made it possible for him to go so far. They had underwritten his wanderings with their lives”¹⁷². He wants to recruit people in the desert for Death, “the desert from which he would reconquer Germany”¹⁷³, and all his physical wandering assumes, in his mind, the image of a heroic mission. However, in fact, just like for the other characters, his wandering is caused by restlessness – in this case, for the guilt of not having been cruel enough:

He was stupid, a dim little Gottlieb, worshipping punishment, little Gottlieb afraid of beating and desiring to beat, powerless little Gottlieb, who had gone on a pilgrimage to power, and when he had reached it and had seen it face to face, what had he seen? Death. Power was death. Death was the true Almighty. Judejahn had accepted it, he wasn’t frightened, even little Gottlieb had guessed that there was only this one power, the power of death, and only one exercise of power, which was killing. There is no resurrection. Judejahn had served Death. He had felt plentiful Death. That set him apart from the burghers, the Italian holiday-makers, the battlefield tourists; they had nothing, they had nothing except that nothing, they sat fatly in the midst of nothing, they got ahead in nothing, until finally they perished in nothing and became part of it, as they always had been. But he, Judejahn, he had his Death and he clung to it, only the priest might try to steal it from him. But Judejahn wasn’t about to be robbed. Priests might be murdered¹⁷⁴.

This sense of “guilt” for his absence in the desert of his dreams is made more explicit in the following paragraphs:

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

it took another half-litre of Chianti to cleanse Judejahn and make him human again. Or so he thought.

The human reached the Piazza San Silvestro through a maze of alleys¹⁷⁵.

He is now on his way to “conquer” Rome from its bowels. The Corso is for him “a long intestine stuffed with pedestrians and vehicles. Like microbes, like worms, like digestion and metabolism, they proceeded down the intestinal canal of the city. He pushed ahead, backwards, he had lost all sense of time and direction, the present became the past”¹⁷⁶. It is a city that for Judejahn is dead: “it seemed to him a dead city, ready for the chop, the Duce had been desecrated, history had turned its back on Rome, and so had ennobling Death. Now people lived here, they dared simply to live here, they lived for business or for pleasure – what could be worse. Judejahn looked at the city. It seemed to him to be absolutely dead”¹⁷⁷. And later on, also Joycian paralysis makes its appearance: “There was paralysis in the ancient air of the city, paralysis and catastrophe. [...] He went down, Pilsener beer, he descended into the Underworld, Czech rats, barrels of Pilsener [...]”¹⁷⁸. Judejahn too descends to the underworld, through the “gates of Hades”:

The tunnel was long and lined with cool tiles, it was a sewer for traffic where buses roared and neon lights painted the Underworld in spectral colours. [...] He walked down the narrow pavement by the tunnel wall. It felt like walking through his grave. It was an elongated grave, a hygienic grave, it was a mixture of kitchen, refrigerator and *pissoir*¹⁷⁹.

His journey through the tunnel continues:

Judejahn had no use for umbrellas. Little Gottlieb wanted to be a man; he wanted to defy God the Father and his own schoolteacher father. Men braved all weathers, they mocked at the raging heavens: men walked into the hail of bullets with heads held up, men walked through the fire-storm – that was how

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

little Gottlieb saw it, and justice for Judejahn! The automobile headlights were like the eyes of great rodents in the tunnel. The rodents left Judejahn alone. They were off in pursuit of other booty. The hounds of hell didn't bite Judejahn. They hunted other prey. Judejahn came to the end of the tunnel. The Underworld unhandled him. He reached the end. The grave released him. Hades spat him out

he stood at the end of the Via del Lavatore, which was silent and deserted. It was a mild night. From the far end of the dead street came the sound of singing¹⁸⁰

This incredible passage is explicitly depicting Judejahn has a false hero, who plays with his imagination in “scary” situations as it might be the crossing of a dark tunnel in a foreign city. The car lights become eyes of rodents; he is scared, he imagines scenes of war heroes, in a kind of Hollywood-like style. Just like a child, he fantasizes on his heroism, despises the use of lady-like things such as umbrellas, and sees the end of the tunnel as the exit from a hellish incredible place full of creatures hunting him. The following paragraph mimes his relief at the end of the infernal journey: the night is mild, deserted, peaceful, and singing is heard in the distance.

The physical journey twines with the inner one, modifying each other. Style marks movement too, with paragraphs broken in enjambements, as in this case:

Then he drank a quarter-litre of wine, this too, standing up, and then he was able to go on

no more than a few paces, and there was the German hotel where his in-laws were staying¹⁸¹.

Judejahn associates wandering, greediness and restlessness with the Americans – tourists, mostly. Yet, he is one of the best epitomes of that kind of wandering we want to retrace in this study, a pattern that seems to be particularly pervasive in the entire novel:

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Which way were they going? The direction didn't matter. The movement was all that mattered. [...] Judejahn could become a legend like the Flying Dutchman, and Eva would be proud of him. [...] Judejahn sensed that they weren't going to the station at all, that their progress was rambling, they were driving around in circles, searching no doubt for dead ends and quiet alleys, or alternatively for the roar and confusion of traffic where a gunshot might go unnoticed¹⁸².

Wandering in circles has the appeal of murdering to him; labyrinthine ways expose him to the perverse fantasy of perpetrating the horror. When he finally commits this horror, he feels really alive; nevertheless, at the summit of his power in action, the narrator has to admit: "and who other than a bar girl was still attainable for Judejahn's hatred? He was deposed. He was powerless"¹⁸³. He is powerless because he cannot even feel guilty, he cannot "enjoy" wandering because he cannot admit the possibility of being innocent, just like his brother-in-law Pfaffrath, who is powerless too. They like to feel like Wandering Jews, exploiting the myth but emptied of "the sense of the sense of guilt".

They are all lonely, although among relatives, although they are walking in a crowded city. This is how they look to Siegfried, who sees them from backstage when they listen to his music: "they were lonely, and maybe my concert was meant for lonely people"¹⁸⁴. Ilse Küremberg comments on his music in the following way: "There was too much death in those sounds, and a death without the merry dance of death present on antique sarcophagi"¹⁸⁵. Adolf, similarly, observes: "There was also the memory of time before guilt in these sounds, of a paradisaal peace and beauty, of sadness at the entry of death into the world, there was much clamour for amity in the notes, no hymn to joy, no panegyric, but still a longing for joy and praise of creation"¹⁸⁶.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

Siegfried's attitude towards life is of pessimistic nihilism: he represents the fragmentation and disintegration of the modern man and artist in general, but especially in the ontological and moral crisis of the postwar period:

it is the world of Rilke's *Malte Laurids Brigge* and Kafka's characters, where the accord between man and Nature, man and society, not to mention man and the Creator of his universe, has been lost, where man is "unbehaust", to use Holthusen's word, where Rilke's "wir sind gar nicht mehr su Hause in dieser Welt" is echoed by one of Koeppen's many aimless characters¹⁸⁷.

At the same time, the novel is imbued with satirical optimism, a tragic, burlesque adaptation of postwar disorientation. It is a "modernist alienation", according to Craven, a moral and cultural schizophrenia. Rome at the same time is the locus of grotesque and sublime history, in which ancient culture is the object of the "positive" characters' reverence and interest, in which all ideologies are taken under scrutiny, good and evil are indistinguishable, in which sexuality evidences the fragmentation of human beings and of the world, in which one realizes the futility of art and its incapability to change man or influence history, the "lie" of beauty, and in which musical dissonance is a response to tyranny¹⁸⁸. Brotherhood has been

¹⁸⁷ Stanley Craven, *Wolfgang Koeppen*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* Craven summarizes the main points of the book, and of this modernist alienation, with the following themes: "Nazism a self-perpetuating evil – meaninglessness of history, repetition of error and folly – pluralistic moralities, Judejahn and his predecessors (Inquisition) – influence of the weight of history – investigation of past for understanding of tragedy – bitterness at loss of human potential, at cultural and material devastation accomplished by own country – spectres of the past alienate and engender author's 'Angsträume – Märchen elements, phantom-characters act out a destiny, embody mythologies, ideological puppets pronounce 'Phrasen'- psychology of slogans and rhetoric – Adolf meets 'Gespenst', Jewish boy, joins Catholic Church out of disgust with man – Rome locus of grotesque and sublime history – contrasting contributions of Christian and Greco-Roman culture – decline in quality of inmates and visitors to Pantheon – reverence of Siegfried and Kurenbergs for ancient Gods, beauty, 'das Mass', consonant life-style of Kurenbergs, "vorchristlich und nachchristlich" – Adolf's disbelief in Church, his 'refuge' – Roman Church's historical alliance with established power and tyranny – why destroy old Gods? – commercialism of religion, impersonality of Church's grandeur – Church embodiment of both good and evil (indistinguishable), Curial libraries adjoin dungeons, moral and cultural schizophrenia – power of Church defeats individual – masses sheep-like – decline in quality of sheep and shepherds – Greek myths celebrate beauty, totality of man, Adolf's religion excludes him – modern sexuality evidence of fragmentation in human being – Art and its relation to the nature of modern reality – traditional 'lie' of art unmasked – relation of cognitive faculties and the 'word' (Wittgenstein) to reality, fragmented universe difficult to convey in art – futility of art to change man or influence history – the 'lie' of beauty – twelve-tone music (and analogous interior monologue) in conflict with political tyranny, musical dissonance a response to tyranny – a Heimat acceptable to the artist – belief in brotherhood destroyed by Fascist experience –

destroyed by the Fascist experience, man has to face the idea of “modern” death; the consequence is nostalgia, lack of interest in aestheticism – which becomes very close to barbarism. As Craven exposes, Nazism is self-perpetrating evil; as a consequence, history is meaningless; evidently the same errors are endlessly repeated¹⁸⁹:

Telle est la vraie leçon des derniers romans, en particulier de *La mort à Rome*, un optimisme tragique, fondé sur un passé douloureux, ancré dans un présent qui vise à reculer indéfiniment les frontières de l'égoïsme, des ideologies et des nationalismes, qui se définit au mieux comme une perpétuelle contradiction mouvante, don't il faut être le témoin et la maîtresse, une “éternelle métamorphose” qu'il s'agit de vivre, une vie don't il serait vain de changer le cours, mais don't on peut et doit constamment “contredire la nature”¹⁹⁰.

The characters are unstable, irresolute, disoriented, inept. Resignation is the main theme, together with defeat and renouncement; the “negative” characters keep on believing that they have not resigned to powerlessness; the “positive” accept their powerlessness and use it as a weapon against history – one with cynicism and panic art, the other with religion. However, their passivity is almost engaged: in their hypersensitivity, frustration, egocentricity, immobility and febricity, in their tendency to dream, they still retain a symbolic achievement: “avec leur faillite s'achève la valeur et la portée de leur engagement, que leur profession de foi ne mérite pas le nom de combat, pour la seule raison qu'ils sont des vaincus”¹⁹¹. This sublimation of failure is the best representation of an epoch, an evocation of, “sur fond de ruines, la difficile régénération par l'Art d'une génération meurtrie”¹⁹².

The most dangerous solution is, in the end, “la fuite immobile”: “Elle est le lot, au fond, de tous ces personnages qui fuient, s'exilent ou simplement voyagent. Le

Jewess's reaction to 'Neutöner' – Siegfried's music not arid intellectualism, concern with “modern” death, nostalgia for a 'Gegenwelt', the music of 'ein Ringernder' – Pfaffraths' reaction to the symphony, 'culture' versus humanism, aestheticism linked to barbarism (aspects of fragmented culture), further cultural and moral schizophrenia – crippling effect of early education, Ordens-schule, perversity of sexual outlooks – Siegfried and physical procreation, a nihilist's view of eschatological inventions” (p. 244).

¹⁸⁹ Interestingly enough, this terror for the meaninglessness and impotence of human life is an extremely frequent theme also in contemporary popular culture and films, such as, for example, the Wachowskis' *Matrix* trilogy.

¹⁹⁰ Jean-Paul Mauranges, *Wolfgang Koeppen*, p. 56.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 65.

voyage se réduit le plus souvent à une agitation stérile sur place ou à l'abandon passif à une mobilité estérielle au sujet"¹⁹³:

il semble bien en définitive qu'il n'y ait pour Koeppen que deux façons – à chaque fois doubles – d'être témoin, de son temps. Il y a, d'un côté, l'agitation stérile du touriste pressé ou du "pèlerin" impudent, correspondant à la précipitation dans l'Histoire ou l'adoration hypocrite de sa petite histoire; de l'autre, la longue marche vers l'authentique témoignage, lequel est fondé sur l'alternance du réalisme et du sentiment¹⁹⁴.

This authentic testimony of the time manifests itself at its best through wandering. The angst of the postwar period, made of sense of guilt, sense of absurd, and sense of powerlessness, is the main reason for the characters' static wandering; as with the other novels, movement is always limited, closed in a repetitive roaming. In *The Power and the Glory* it was a small Mexican region; in *Under the Volcano* it was an area not much bigger of a small town; in *Death in Rome* it is the eternal city, an ancient cluster of culture and crowd; we are going to see in the next chapter how our wandering pattern figures on the Pacific island of *Fires on the Plain*.

¹⁹³ Jean-Paul Mauranges, *Wolfgang Koeppen*, p. 53. He continues: "Comme prévue enfin que les personnages, en dépit de leur éternelle fuite [...], ne sont que des points fixes, des pivots autour desquels tournent le temps et l'espace, Koeppen retrouve le procédé cher à Rilke de l'inversion de l'image du mouvement, ou encore celui de l'impression visuelle utilisée par le cinéma: l'auteur fait défiler paysage et objets devant l'observateur en situation paradoxale d'immobilité et de mobilité [...], fait virevolter les personnes les unes autour des autres comme dans un "ballet", tourbillonner le papier, partitions musicales, tracts, journaux, qui ont le symbole de l'acte de création, et du courage de la parole publique dans le soufflé d'un vent étonnant venu "des quatre saisons" [...], compare le monde à un gigantesque carrousel oublié par le Dieux après leur fête et qu'un âne muni d'oeillères fait tourner sans fin" (p. 54).

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

CHAPTER 6

EAST OF ENOCH

GUILT AND ATONEMENT IN POSTWAR JAPANESE LITERATURE

I fain would be alone a little while.
Abel, I'm sick at heart; but it will pass;
Precede me, brother – I will follow shortly.

Lord Byron, *Cain*

6.1 The Rhetoric of Mea Culpa. Christianity in Twentieth-Century Japan

The paradigm of Cain has been moulded by a double legacy in postwar Japan: in addition to the common mythical heritage discussed by Frye, here the influence of Christianity made a big impact on literary imagination, which used, abused and distorted ancient myths in the attempt to depict the horror of the war and its burdens.

After Japan's defeat, a new period of Christian missions followed in the country. Once again, Japan declined to be a Christian nation, "despite MacArthur's gifts of free Bibles and other steadfast efforts toward this spiritual end"¹. Endō Shūsaku, the major exponent of the group called *Daisan no shinjin*, the "New Third Generation", and who is perhaps considered the Japanese Christian writer par excellence, regarded the fact that the Japanese had to absorb Christianity without the support of a Christian tradition as the "peculiar cross the God has given to the Japanese"². Nevertheless, Christianity turned out to have a considerable impact on Japanese literature. In an article bearing a noteworthy title, "Voices in the

¹ Carol Gluck, "The 'Long Postwar': Japan and Germany in Common and in Contrast", in Ernestine Schlant and J. Thomas Rimer (eds.), *Legacies and Ambiguities: Postwar Fiction and Culture in West Germany and Japan*, Washington D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore - London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991, p. 68.

² Quoted in William Johnston, Preface to Endō Shūsaku, *Silence*, London - Melbourne - New York: Quartet Books, 1978, p. 14.

Wilderness”³, Gessel describes the Christian writer as a relative newcomer to the Japanese literary scene. Some authors turned away from Christian beliefs; but for many of them, as for Shiga Naoya, Christianity was destined to have a deep influence both spiritually and literarily⁴. However, Gessel continues, for many others it simply played the function of “mirror” of the self, a frail mirror that could be easily broken:

[...] once that mirror stopped offering them mute images of their own individuality upon which to rhapsodize, and began spewing back ‘thou shalt nots’ as if to mock the independence of the reflected self, the Meiji intellectuals either turned their backs to that mirror or smashed it to pieces [...]. In many ways the postwar Christian phenomenon is the direct opposite of the Meiji case. The writers who have turned to Christianity have generally been individuals searching for guidelines and anchors in their lives during a period of widespread uneasiness⁵.

The so-called *senchū-ha*, the immediate postwar writers, were to face big questions and often found the answers in higher truths. As in the militaristic '30s and '40s, where there had been a general attitude toward the reuse of ancient spiritual heritage like the mythology of *Kojiki*, after the war many pacifists became acquainted with Christianity at some point in their lives. To face the postwar wasteland in the frame of abandonment and betrayal of a national defeat and often personal loss, Japanese writers often took refuge in a reassuring foreign religion: reassuring not only for its message but also for its origin. In a world of influential Western ideas, Christianity could also have appeared as the spiritual strength of the winner, the answer to the question: Where did we go wrong? But at the same time, it remained alien, a set of too exclusivist and organized dogma, to be taken at a distance, lived as a diversion for schoolgirls to give up in adulthood⁶.

³ Van C. Gessel, “Voices in the Wilderness: Japanese Christian Authors”, in *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 37, No. 4, Winter 1982, pp. 456-457.

⁴ Cf. Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, Durham, NC. - London: Duke University Press, 1993.

⁵ Van C. Gessel, “Voices in the Wilderness”, pp. 456-457.

⁶ Van C. Gessel, *The Sting of Life. Four Contemporary Japanese Novelists*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989, p. 233.

Nevertheless, according to Gessel, “the phenomenon of writers who are Christians has reached epic – some might say ‘epidemic’ – proportions in the postwar period”⁷. The diffusion of Christianity among intellectuals of postwar Japan can also be related to the sense of a total lack of power and the feeling that the suffering of the war has been meaningless, a feeling that made the war generation abandon itself to an exotic yet reassuring pacific belief. The delicate psychological position of survivors was filled by the sensation that everything, even life and death, was left to chance: “they saw the survival of the individual as a matter of arbitrariness; fatalism and passivity, often couched in ironic terms, were the ingrained and powerfully reactivated response to circumstances beyond control”⁸.

Yet chance was not solely responsible for spiritual pain; passivity was paradoxically intertwined with a sense of responsibility for the atrocities of the war, both at national and personal levels. This intertwining will be vividly portrayed in *Fires on the Plain*, as we will see shortly. Here the protagonist will show Cain’s resignation to a fate he cannot understand, but at the same time he will have to face the burden of the guilt for which he himself is responsible. The brand of Cain seems to literarily mark postwar generations, and Japan, just like Germany, is evidently a striking example.

6.2 Japanese Postwar Guilt

The issue of guilt in Japan has been widely discussed⁹, and here I can do no more than touch on some of the main questions related to the topic, those which are advanced by the narratives with which we are dealing. On one side, the mainstream postwar attitude towards the war was that the Japanese were really the victims of the war. Self-victimization became a means of coming to terms with the past, and provided the counterpart for the other pervasive feeling of guilt:

⁷ Van C. Gessel, “Voices in the Wilderness”, p. 437.

⁸ Ernestine Schlant, Introduction to Ernestine Schlant and J. Thomas Rimer (eds.), *Legacies and Ambiguities*, p. 7.

⁹ See for example Ian Buruma, *Wages of Guilt*, and the above mentioned *Legacies and Ambiguities*.

Apart from the initial decade of intense self-criticism and soul-searching by left-wing intellectuals, postwar Japan settled down to the comfortable middle-of-the-road solution based on the half-baked myth that all Japanese were victims of pre-war and wartime militarists. This myth allowed some Japanese to re-invent themselves as pacifists, as the keepers of the memory of the atomic bombs¹⁰.

August 15th, 1945 became the date of the “founding myth”, a clear but imaginary demarcation between pre- and post-1945, in an attempt to “separate the ‘polluted’ past from the new present and as a springboard to construct a new narrative of postwar Japan”¹¹; the bomb became the symbol of victimization.

On the other hand, guilt for the atrocities committed in war, both toward America and to the “closer” Asian countries, began to take root in the mind of the Japanese and was soon expressed in literary works. Such a controversial concept has been analyzed from different points of view and has obviously been discussed in terms of its more or less explicit connections with the Christian belief. The idea of Japanese culture as a “shame culture” and that the Japanese have a weak awareness of sin has been quite influential¹², both in Japan and abroad, mostly because of the reception of Ruth Benedict’s *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) and its particular stress on Japanese groupism:

It is evident that in her view shame and guilt are both present in all cultures, but that some rely mainly on one and some mainly on the other to control behaviour. Guilt is associated with an absolute standard of morality, an inner sense of sin and the efficacy of confession. Shame, on the other hand, is an external sanction, and is associated with a situational morality. Confession does not help relieve the feeling. [...] On the other hand, she also clearly associates shame with an excessive dependence on the opinion of others and reliance on a rigid social code. Whatever her intention, it is clear that most Japanese have taken her description of Japan as a shame culture as an implicit

¹⁰ Shimazu Naoko, “Popular Representations of the Past: The Case of Postwar Japan”, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 38, No. 1, *Redesigning the Past*, January 2003, p. 115.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹² For a brief survey see Adrian Pinnington, “Yoshimitsu, Benedict, Endō: Guilt, Shame and the Post-war Idea of Japan”, in *Japan Forum*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2001, pp. 91–105.

value judgement. Again, I think that the chief reason for this is that they have read into it their own sense of the failure of Japan, as against Europe and America, to develop a strong and independent self capable of resisting the group¹³.

In Japan, the concept of *giri* (duty) is related to social obligation, but the infraction is also the cause of self-condemnation¹⁴. The pre-war ethnologist Yanagita Kunio argued that ordinary people in Japan do have a strong sense of guilt, derived from Buddhist karma, while the shame culture which Ruth Benedict describes is a traditional feature of *bushi* (samurai) culture alone¹⁵; and earlier Christian theologians in Japan, such as Yoshimitsu Yoshihiko (1904–1945), had often seen traditional Japanese culture as closer to Christianity than modern European culture. It seems, therefore, that the postwar period functioned as a catalyst for guilt, which was in fact already present under certain forms in Japanese consciences but that was intensified by the relatively new belief: a sense of guilt related to a lack of something, to a mistake for which one has paid dearly, seems to emerge after horrible events, though in a less dogmatic form.

The postwar discussions of the failings of Japanese society and the guilt related to it, therefore, have had close connections with the relationship between Japanese culture and Christianity. How this relationship appears in literary works is what interests us in this study. In literature these issues are represented both explicitly and implicitly, alluding to themes such as guilt and atonement, but adopting mythological structures which deepen the overall symbolism of the text. This is more so the case in fictional works; these themes are obviously present in autobiographical narratives as well, but the play with symbols, and especially the mythical structure and allusiveness of the images, are much more complicated in fiction than in diaries and historical narratives. It is worth mentioning that Christianity has been, according to some critics, a driving element for the emergence of the *shishōsetsu*, the so-called “I-novel”. Karatani Kōjin has seen Christianity as one of the points of departure of many Meiji writers, linked to the rise of the *shishōsetsu* and its “practise of

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹⁴ Robert Jay Lifton, quoted in David C. Stahl, *The Burdens of Survival: Ōoka Shōhei's Writings on the Pacific War*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003, p. 341, n. 41.

¹⁵ Yanagita Kunio, quoted in Adrian Pinnington, “Yoshimitsu, Benedict, Endō”, p. 98.

confession”¹⁶. Edward Fowler, in *The Rhetoric of Confession* (1988), discusses how Christianity has been an impulse on the representation of individual inner life in literature and describes the consequent reflections this had on the construction of novels, in which the “I” of the narrator became closer and closer to the “I” of the novelist. Nonetheless, if the assumption of a link between Christianity and a strong or independent self able to assert itself against social pressure became very pervasive, it is also true that the religion’s sensibility brought other sets of values, and, paradoxically, uncertainties. If a creed is somehow imposed or half-assimilated and consequently felt as an alien – no matter how appealing – belief, then religion becomes not a purifying source, but a veil embroidered with self-recriminations¹⁷.

Christianity became a way to channel the heavy guilt of the postwar period into a series of settled concepts and rules, a door to reflection on personal responsibility and the burden related to it. Christian imagery was extensively employed in order to represent troubled state of minds by the postwar writers, and the two elements which interest us, guilt and wandering, are extremely numerous in novels written after the war. Narrators are often wanderers who have witnessed destruction directly or indirectly and use evocative language and powerful images to depict an internal or external wasteland. Some of them are searching for a home, like the protagonist of Yasuoka Shōtarō’s short story *Homework* (1952), wandering in the streets of a city “like a troupe of a circus”¹⁸; Shimao Toshio’s novels also have wanderers as characters, whereas Abe Kōbō’s can be considered urban flâneurs. Ibuse Masuji revives the *yōryūki*, or the “castaway accounts”, paradigmatic stories of solitude and conflict with natural and political forces that cannot be controlled; Takeyama Michio, in *Harp of Burma* (1964), tells the story of a Japanese soldier who decides to become a wandering monk in Burma: his duty is to bury the corpses of all the dead soldiers he finds along his way in a sort of expiation of his war mistakes. This is a version of the archetypal theme of the purifying journey that in Japan can be also found in the old tradition of the *yamabushi*, and that has taken various narrative forms in different countries, one example of which is Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Cain’s wandering

¹⁶ Cf. Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*.

¹⁷ I have advanced this idea in the paper entitled: “I fuochi dell’espiazione. Senso di colpa e simbologia cristiana in *Nobi* di Ōoka Shōhei”, presented at the XXXIV AISTUGIA conference, Napoli, September 2010.

¹⁸ Van C. Gessel, *The Sting of Life*, p. 84.

for atonement can indeed be considered a variation of this ancestral myth, occurring when a tradition has had the necessity of telling the story of punishment for moral infraction, or the tale of outcasts from society, or of monstrosity.

Homecoming (1948) by Osaragi Jirō is a remarkable rewriting of Cain's story. The hero is an alienated man, a self-appointed scapegoat victim of his self-inflicted punishment: "I've been punished like the Wandering Jew", he says at the beginning of the novel; and at the end: "To be sure, wherever I go, I shall be alone again, living alone among people who have no interest in me"¹⁹. Kimball has pointed out how, although the underlying problem of these characters – lack of self-acceptance – is disturbingly common, perhaps universal, it is in the mid-twentieth century that this mood of self-indulgence is extremely popular, and the setting in postwar Japan merely intensifies the problem²⁰. Moriya, Osaragi's protagonist, "has rationalized and romanticized his failure to accept himself in any role but that of a kind of mythological martyr-hero". He is unable "to forgive himself, and consequently unable to find a satisfying role in rebuilding postwar Japan"²¹. He admits to his daughter:

I confess I'm an egoist and a wanderer. I've trained myself to live without feeling too much sadness or loneliness... What's more, living in this world is not a matter of trying to iron out your relationships with others; to the end it is a matter of struggling with yourself. I'm a man who has calmly deserted his wife and child; a heartless egotist; an old man who's already become indifferent to human emotions²².

This is an almost archetypal representation of a Cain-like character: alone, segregated or self-segregated from social life, and indifferent to human passions. In the old tradition of wandering outcasts – the Wandering Jew is just one example – postwar Japanese literature seems to offer many interesting specimens. In the first decades of 1900, the allegorical novels of Arishima Takeo had already paved the

¹⁹ Osaragi Jirō, quoted in Arthur G. Kimball, *Crisis in Identity and Contemporary Japanese Novels*, Vermont & Tōkyō: Tuttle, 1973, p. 61.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

way to the tradition in twentieth-century Japan. *Kain no matsuei* (Cain's Descendants, 1917) bears in the title an explicit reference to the biblical figure and his mythical essence, who is portrayed here as "a solitary self wandering freely beyond society in Hokkaidō"²³. His guilt, according to Anderer, is just a kind of "creatural knowledge of the way this world is made"²⁴: he knows more, discovers the rules of the world, and is punished for that, just like the protagonist of another novel by Arishima, *Labyrinth*, who is a wanderer for sin or "simply for thinking strange thoughts too deeply"²⁵. This is actually a characteristic of many post-Byron Cains, as we have seen: in Byron, Cain becomes a hero, the rebel, the man who fights against the unjust society, "the heroic quester, the dissatisfied sojourner", the only one "whose intelligence is probing, who seems to be a character of consciousness as well as of conscience"²⁶. Consciousness is a burden that many modern literary characters carry, and like other mythical characters Cain-like figures are moulded according to this modern perception. This is a sensitivity which will be maturely expressed by the protagonist of *Fires on the Plain* at the end of the novel.

Consciousness of the self, of one's own sinfulness, but also of the absurdity of the outer world, is the *leit motiv* of the characters of these novels. Guilt and Christianity are interlinked in a complex circle which is represented in Ōoka Shōhei's novel as a physical wandering through death-ridden surroundings leading to nowhere, at the end of which the "bewildered protagonist" will finally go mad. Just like his character, the author faces the meaninglessness of reality and of his human mind: "Artists, in pursuing the quest, sometimes find disturbing answers"²⁷. Ōoka and his Cain have to face the most difficult of all punishments: the discovery of one's own absurd essence.

²³ Paul Anderer, *Other World. Arishima Takeo and the Bounds of Modern Japanese Fiction*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984, p. 30.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²⁵ Paul Anderer, Foreword to Arishima Takeo, *Labyrinth*, Lanham, Md.-London: Madison Books, 1992, p. x.

²⁶ Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, p. 87.

²⁷ Arthur G. Kimball, *Crisis in Identity*, p. 24.

6.3 Ōoka Shōhei's *Nobi*: Cannibalizing Guilt

In his Nobel Prize speech of 1995, Ōe Kenzaburō stated that Ōoka was to the postwar period what Natsume Sōseki was to the early modern²⁸. In 1966 he had said that Ōoka's works possessed a universality achieved "by an understanding and an aesthetic intuition that transcends the so-called 'postwar' and a subjectivity 'permeated by the postwar'"²⁹. Ōe was implying that Ōoka was representing themes and moods of Japan's struggle with modernity, the relationship of the individual with his or her responsibility and egoism; the same egoism Ōoka had found in some modern Japanese novels, such as *Kokoro* by Sōseki himself, which shattered his faith. Egoism is what Ōoka and his literary alter ego will find on the battlefield, in others and in themselves; guilt and wandering can be retraceable in both the author's life and in the meaningless journey of the protagonist of his masterpiece.

Fires on the Plain is a creative retelling of the author's burdened past in the form of the battlefield memoir of Private First-Class Tamura, reworking his personal experience as a wanderer in the mountains of the Philippines for twenty-four hours during the battle of Leyte Island³⁰. In one of his memoirs, *Furyoki (A POW's Memoir, 1952)*, Ōoka tells his personal story: it is January 24th, 1945, and he has been on Mindoro in the Philippines for six months; his company has been attacked by U.S. forces. Ōoka has been suffering from a bad case of malaria and separates himself from the retreat. He wanders alone into the jungle sure that he is going to die. He spends about twenty-four hours in a feverish delirium, and when he regains consciousness he has to face a decisive moment in his life: a young American soldier is before him; he should shoot him, but chooses not to kill. Unaware of the danger, the soldier goes away. Ōoka tries twice to commit suicide, but fails and faints. He is discovered by an American patrol, sent to a hospital in Tacloban and then to a POW camp on Leyte where he spends ten months before being repatriated.

In "My intentions in *Fires on the Plain*" (*Nobi no ito*, 1953), a kind of paratext to *Nobi*, the author explains the close connections between his frontline experience

²⁸ Ōe Kenzaburō, "On Modern and Contemporary Japanese Literature", in *Japan, the Ambiguous and Myself: The Nobel Prize Speech and Other Lectures*, Tōkyō: Kodansha International, 1995, pp. 44-47.

²⁹ John Whittier Treat, "Atomic Bomb Literature and the Documentary Fallacy", in *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1, Winter 1988, p. 41.

³⁰ Ōoka Shōhei, "The Nervous Person", in *Literary Review*, September 22, 2002, p. 94.

and the novel; most importantly, in his various memoirs he describes what pushed him to write about his experience: *kokuhakushitai omoi*, “thoughts I want to confess”.

Ōoka started writing *Fires on the Plain* in May 1946³¹, pushed by his friend, an editor of a magazine, to write about his experience on the front and as a prisoner. David Stahl’s *The Burdens of Survival* (2003), the most extensive study on Ōoka’s life and works in Western languages, gives a comprehensive analysis of both author and character in relation to the “burden” of survivor (in Japanese *ikinokori* or *seikansha*) and the guilt suffered after the atrocities of a war. It tells the story of Ōoka’s “long, convoluted journey of formulation that began in naked, guilt-ridden survival and ended with the fruitful completion of survivor mission”³². Stahl draws principally on Lifton’s studies on survivor psychology³³, whose main aspects are the stress on survivorship more than the traumatic experience itself, the effects of death immersion, the feelings of death guilt, self-recrimination, loss, and also guilt for the egoism on the front. Essentially, both Lifton and Stahl consider the postwar personal guilt as a burden for various reasons, but especially for survival itself. Survivors suffer from two types of guilt: one kind of death guilt concerns the failure to behave or respond as one later feels one should. The other, the most fundamental, has to do with “survival priority”:

The survivor can never, inwardly, simply conclude that it was logical and right for him, and not others, to survive. Rather he is bound by an unconscious perception of organic balance which makes him feel that his survival was made possible by others’ deaths: if they had not died, he would have had to; if he had not survived, someone else would have³⁴.

The consequence of this kind of thought is that survivors continually feel the need to justify themselves and their continued existence. This “mourning of life”, as we may call it, is characterized by different phases, called by Lifton the basic

³¹ The novel was first serialized in *Buntai* between December 1948 and July 1949. The publication was suspended when the journal folded. A complete version of the novel appeared then in *Tembō* between January and August 1951, and first appeared as a book in February 1952.

³² David C. Stahl, *The Burdens of Survival*, p. I

³³ In particular, Lifton’s *The Broken Connection: On Death and the Continuity of Life* (1979) and *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (1968).

³⁴ Quoted in David C. Stahl, *The Burdens of Survival*, p. 10.

“survivor themes”³⁵: death imprints, psychic numbing, death guilt, bearing witness, impaired mourning, and formulation. The “permanent encounter with death”, a continuous proximity with a sense of an ending, causes advanced psychic disintegration and psychic numbing, and the survival instinct comes to be at odds with consciousness³⁶.

It is in the twenty-four-hour period between separation from his company and capture that the soldier Tamura is forced to radically reconsider the very nature of the self. Since he can no longer sit and passively wait for death, his whole body decides to struggle for self-perpetuation, even if the mind does not always agree. Tamura must face his animal instincts, his essential nature; again, the result is destined to be disturbing.

Ōoka accounts for survival – both his and his character’s – in terms of luck (*un*) and chance (*gūzen*), thus avoiding any responsibilities as emotional sufferance. The dead haunting his memory have died simply because their luck ran out. The ambivalence over survival – the joy for having preserved one’s own life but also the feeling that it is somehow morally wrong – brings to the page inner struggles of survival egotism and false impulses – half stopped, half indulged – interspersed with reproachful self-justification, fake rationalization, and unconscious scapegoating. Death guilt (*zaiakukan* or *ushirometasa* or *tsumi no ishiki* in Japanese) is one of the most recurring themes in *Fires on the Plain*. It leads to “numbed guilt”, characterized by “psychological tactics employed to ward off feelings of guilt and self-recrimination”³⁷; this feeling takes the formal shape of an unreliable narrator. The attempt to conceal personal failings is never fulfilled, as the same term used by Ōoka to define his brief memoirs suggests: in fact he often refers to them as *kokuhaku*, “confessions”, a word used by the “I-novelists” which in Western tradition can also have a religious meaning of admission of moral transgressions³⁸. In this case, these transgressions are also related to the above mentioned *giri*, as when he feels ashamed for not fulfilling his military duties when he abandons his weapon during the retreat and fails to engage the enemy. These are all events that will be fictionalized in *Fires*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

on the Plain, connoted with mythical associations and intensified in psychological drama. More importantly, these elements will all be rendered archetypal, universal, and consequently more powerful but less personally painful.

The several incidents that weighed on his conscience – either because they were acted in first person or simply witnessed – pushed the author to work the traumatic battlefield through literature³⁹. As a matter of fact, part of the survivor’s recovery – and also part of the “anxiety of responsibility” that Lifton associates with the “survivor mission” taken up for recovery and renewal – is a working-through of guilt, the re-experience of repressed feelings which can be lived in a less painful way through re-telling. In the postwar period from 1945 to 1958, autobiographical writings were motivated by catharsis. In one of his memoirs Ōoka would write:

I simply must understand by writing. If I don’t, chances are my war experience will continue to haunt me like a nightmare, and my present life will amount to little more than sleepwalking⁴⁰.

Sleepwalking is a good alternative word for wandering. A purposeless and meaningless journey is the toll that Tamura has to pay to atone for his guilt, or better, his sense of guilt. As a matter of fact, a characteristic of twentieth-century literary representations of Cain that we have already found in the other works analyzed is that these characters are not banished because they are judged by a higher divinity; rather, the moral imperatives and recriminations come from the inside, from the inner self, and that is the reason why the wounds are more profound and painful and the conflicts more difficult to resolve.

Ōoka’s literary alter ego, Tamura, will both sleepwalk and wander. Ill with tuberculosis and bereft of either friend or food, he is expelled from his unit like a useless burden to the others who are also dying from illnesses and starvation. This is the point where the novel begins. The end of the story will be set on the outskirts of a Tōkyō mental hospital where we will find Tamura, narrator of the story, as a deeply disturbed veteran munching his metaliterary lucubrations.

³⁹ Many Japanese critics have analyzed Ōoka’s war-related writings adopting this approach; among them, Kanno Akimasa, Nakano Kōji, and Ikeda Jun’ichi.

⁴⁰ Quoted in David C. Stahl, *The Burdens of Survival*, p. 20.

The novel is virtually divided into two main sections. The first is the longest and sees Tamura's recollected account of his battlefield experience on Leyte Island, from the moment he leaves his company until he suffers a ten-day memory loss before capture. The second is subdivided in three brief parts, and sees a narrative shift in time and space, as the narration moves to the room of the mental hospital in 1951 Japan in which Tamura, forced by his doctor, recollects his painful memories and comments not only on his war experience but also on his psychological condition. As the biblical Cain, Tamura ends his wandering in a city, where a new beginning awaits the rest of the world, but not him.

The narrative of Tamura's experience on Leyte Island presents numerous references to the semantic area of walking and to the archetypal myths and classic stories related to it: a few examples are Dante's *Comedy*, Ulysses's journey, and of course the biblical pattern of Cain's wandering. The same "mythical pastiche" can be found in the West in novels of the same period such as *Under the Volcano*, as we have seen, another story of perdition set in the mid-twentieth century. The intensification of drama ignited by these elements in *Fires on the Plain* is immense. Tamura starts his wandering from his base camp to the hospital, where he will be dismissed. But on his way, he finds himself at one of the most famous crossroads of literature – a dark wood:

At the entrance to the forest the road divided into two. [...] The path over the hills was, of course, far shorter, but having already taken it three times in the past twenty-four hours, I decided on the spur of the moment to try the unfamiliar circuitous route. It was dark within the forest. On either side of the narrow path towered huge oaklike trees; the space between them was densely filled with unfamiliar brushwood and shrubs that stretched out the tentacles of their vines and creepers⁴¹.

Circuitous, dark, narrow, unfamiliar, tentacles: all words explicitly connoting the situation as something troublesome, unpleasant, difficult, and nonetheless unconsciously chosen. It is at this moment that the first of his existential lucubrations appears:

⁴¹ Ōoka Shōhei, *Fires on the Plain* (*Nobi*, 1952), Tōkyō: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1984, p. 15.

A thought struck me then with great force: *I was walking along this path for the first time in my life, and yet I would never walk along it again.* I stopped and looked about. A deathlike hush hovered. [...] there was nothing strange in this thought, nor in the thought that I would never again walk through this unknown Philippine forest. What was strange was the complete contradiction existing in my mind between the knowledge that I was passing here for the first time and the certainty that I would never pass here in the future⁴².

The mystery and the strangeness of setting and situation – simultaneously associated in his thought to familiar but exotic mythical traditions – make Tamura feel his premonitions of death. Alone in an unknown world, like Cain, Tamura has to face not only the “strangers” inhabiting foreign lands, but also the stranger that lies in himself, his troubled mind. He sees himself impersonally and the scenes as “strange” many times during his narration:

Again, was it not this same presentiment of death that made it seem so strange to me now that I should never again walk along this path in the Philippine forest? In our own country, even in the most distant or inaccessible province we are never assailed by this feeling of strangeness because subconsciously we know that there is always a possibility of our returning there in the future. Does not our entire life-feeling depend upon this inherent assumption that we can repeat indefinitely what we are doing at the moment?⁴³

Thus the strangeness of setting appears in both space *and* time. This new time dimension is an interesting touch added by Ōoka. Whereas the time of the original Cain was vague and nebulous, “biblical” by definition, the “objective” temporal setting of *Fires on the Plain* is more historically definite, and yet Tamura’s metaphysical thoughts and dreamy recollections make it more mythological and ambiguous. Such thoughts are interspersed throughout the wandering of the character. “Without knowing it”, he begins “to walk once more along the forest path”: his feet move almost unconsciously, doomed to wander automatically to the rhythm of his

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 16. Tamura thinks about the meaning of “false recollections” and the relation between the present and the feeling of a non-future later again in the novel, pp. 90-93.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

reflections. However, as he is deceived by a Filipino he meets on his way, he confesses that the encounter has robbed him of all sense of security, and he is “no longer in the mood for abstract meditation”⁴⁴. Reaching a plain, he sees for the first time the fires of the title, which can either be bonfires for waste husks burnt by the Filipinos, the only evidence of their continued existence, or signal fires lit by guerrillas. He keeps on going towards the hospital but, as the title of the chapter clearly says, he will be one of the “rejects”. He meets some other soldiers, among them Yasuda who will reappear again later in the story. Tamura keeps on wandering, conscious of his destiny as an outcast in foreign lands:

A strange force drove me on. I knew full well that only calamity and extinction awaited me at the end of my journey; yet a murky curiosity impelled me to continue plumbing the depths of my own loneliness and despair until the moment when I was to find death in the corner of some unknown tropical field⁴⁵.

The day after, he wanders “aimlessly through the hills” and hears the crowing of a cock twice (we can suppose references to the episode of Saint Peter in the New Testament here, and wonder why Ōoka did not make the cock crow a third time). He is on the verge of collapse when he discovers an abandoned plantation of potatoes, his “Interlude in Paradise”: “here in my new paradise I found something unconvincing in the idea of having enemies”⁴⁶. At this point, the first Christian reference reveals itself. However, as it will often be, Christianity makes its appearance in the novel by negation, *in absentia*:

Had I been Robinson Crusoe, I should at this moment have thrown myself on my knees and offered up thanks to God. Even from an Oriental infidel like myself, the occasion seemed to demand thanksgiving. But I did not know to whom I might give my thanks⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

According to Lofgren, the diminished role of Christianity underlies a significant change⁴⁸. It is from an abandoned farm upon a hillside that Tamura descends to the village where one of the most dramatic episodes of the novel takes place: “The juxtaposition is important in the narrative for it contrasts ‘Paradise’ [...] with the hell of the war. Yet Tamura chooses to leave Paradise and, like Adam, he is unable to return once he has knowledge of sin”. Tamura is a fallen Adam, and has lost his paradise, but like Cain he makes a journey to the “East of Eden” in order to expiate. In fact, at this point, Tamura could have just stopped and tried to survive until rescued or killed. Instead, once he gains the provisions and his life is guaranteed, the need for human companionship – and restlessness – drives him down to a Filipino village where he ends up, mechanically and unintentionally, murdering a young woman who is with her lover by chance in the wrong place at the wrong time. After the episode, Tamura’s mind alternates between grief, remorse, and defensive rationalization: he finally ends up blaming the war and chance, calls the whole tragedy simply *jiko*, accident, and puts the blame of it on his rifle. Yet the memory of the noncombatant village woman will never abandon him and will reappear at the end of the novel when he will finally meet the ghosts of his past, being incapable of purging the image of the dead from his conscience.

Restlessness and the need for companionship are not the only reasons why he decides to descend from his paradise; he is also pushed by curiosity for a glittering object close to the sea, a “Symbol”, as the chapter’s title states. Just like Stephen Dedalus in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Tamura is attracted by a cross on a coast:

Suddenly I recognized the shape. It was a cross. I shuddered with fear. Prolonged loneliness had by now made me easily frightened of anything new, and the sudden appearance of this religious symbol gave me an almost physical shock⁴⁹.

What is the reason behind this shock? Is the cross a reminder of his sins? Or a nostalgic memory of the existence of other human beings? Or a kind of awe of a

⁴⁸ Erik R. Lofgren, “Christianity Excised: Ichikawa Kon’s *Fires on the Plain*”, in *Japanese Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3, December 2003, p. 272.

⁴⁹ Ōoka Shōhei, *Fires on the Plain*, p. 79.

powerful symbol, as the title of the chapter suggests? Whatever the reason may be, he soon continues:

Yet I could not take my eyes from the cross. [...] I spent that night thinking about the cross. In my present state of physical satiety and mental emptiness, in which I passed almost all my time eating in order to ward off an ineluctably approaching death, my heart accepted with eagerness this powerful human image. The cross was to me a familiar thing. In my childhood this symbol of a foreign religion had penetrated even the smallest Japanese hamlet. At first I had approached it out of curiosity; then I had become fascinated with the romantic creed that it represented. But, later, an agnostic education had separated me from what I then came to regard as childish delusions, and I had begun to evolve a “system” that combined conformity to social demands and conventions, on the one hand, with a type of personal hedonism, on the other. This system was far from ideal, I well realized, yet it had served me well enough in my day-to-day life.

Now, in the loneliness of defeat, my “system” had inevitably begun to break down. My renewed fascination with the symbol of the cross was ample evidence of this⁵⁰.

Walking towards a cross was an experience that Ōoka himself had had many times in his life. He has recalled how he had felt an extreme sentimentality towards this “symbol of a foreign god”. Just like Tamura, he associated Christianity to his youth, and its rediscovery to the period of war⁵¹. The cross makes Tamura recall his innocence, his adolescent belief in God, and now raises doubts about the choice of abandoning the faith in the name of hedonism and conventions. The day after the first “encounter” with the cross, he feels different; he does not look at the chickens with hunger, and the cross itself will look like a bird about to plunge into flight. He is even more curious than the day before, and is tempted to get closer, although this

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

⁵¹ “At present, I have no religion. But as a young soldier at the front, I was conscious of my feelings reverting to my childhood. During my period as an ailing prisoner of war, I relied to some extent on the Bible. [...] it is a fact that even now my heart is moved by this absurd belief. As an extension of the things that happened in my heart at the front, however absurd they may be, all of which I have come to regard as true, I don’t want to deny these feelings. But where to place those feelings inside myself is a problem”, Ōoka Shōhei, “The Nervous Person”, p. 97.

would mean to walk straight toward death; but he cynically admits: “Surely that symbol from my youth was not worth risking my own life, limited though that life might be!”⁵² He continuously struggles between religious feelings and practical rationality, sins and guilt, throughout the whole novel. Nevertheless, at the end of the chapter, the cross will “gleam more brightly”, and its “unmistakable geometrical form became more and more prominent”. As the narrator seems to suggest, though diminished, Christian symbolism and fascination cannot be erased, in spite of all rational intensions.

The same night he has a dream. He descends to the coastal village and enters the church where a funeral service is in progress. He discovers his name on the casket close to the altar. He looks at himself, hands joined over his breast in the “pious attitude of prayer”, looking like a martyr. He feels uneasy, like an impostor; and he also finds out that he is feigning death, as his mouth pronounces the words “*De profundis [...] De profundis clamavi*” (from the lines of a psalm: “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, oh Lord”). Once again, Christian references come to his mind. Tamura explicitly analyzes the dream: “This was proof that I was still in depths, that I was indeed no saint”⁵³. In what should be a comforting moment, his sense of guilt appears also in his dreams. Suddenly, in a sort of mystic illumination, he has a revelation:

Now I understood. It was foolish of me to linger here in depths by myself until I died. I must go down into the church, even if it meant being killed, and resolve the religious doubt that had visited me at the end of my life. Perhaps this nightmare would prove to have been a revelation; perhaps, after all, I had a religious mission. If so, I would throw myself on my knees in that cool church and pray⁵⁴.

Possessed by a “half-baked” messiah complex⁵⁵, he keeps on walking through “The Downhill Path” leading to the church, but with a joy raised within him. This

⁵² Ōoka Shōhei, *Fires on the Plain*, p. 83.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

⁵⁵ In a passage removed by Ivan Morris in his translation there is an interesting conversation between Tamura and his doctor that sounds more like a brilliant dialogue between Oscar Wilde and Noel Coward. The doctor explains how Tamura’s record is just like a novel: when the author thinks to say

part of the story can be considered the beginning of his atonement. Nonetheless, on Leyte Island atonement seems to be quite far from him. All the symbols – Christian symbols – usually associated with forgiveness and peace appear to him indifferent and meaningless, if not unpleasant. As often happens to Christians, a guilty conscience causes a deeper sinking into guilt.

At a closer look, “[t]he cross shone there above the village with a sort of barren, indifferent coolness”. The oxymoron created by the words “shone” and “coolness” is striking and perfectly represents the ambivalent feelings of guilt and the will of innocence within the character. In the village there is something “radically wrong”: everything and everybody is dead, putrescent, apart from the dogs, which seem to be another recurrent theme in the “novels of falls”. The cross “failed to awaken the expected excitement”, “it was dirty” and “the gilt was peeling”, the façade was stained and the steps broken, covered in corpses and their deceiving “grotesque transfigurations of putrescence”. The words “*De profundis*” now appear as the title of a chapter, the chapter in which all religious images seems to bear no spiritual meaning. The narrator simply makes comments on the poor quality of the painting of the Passion and on a profusion of blood reminding of barbarism, and when Tamura sees a wax statue of Christ he just advances cold reflections on the laws of physics and the pull of gravity on the body of Christ on the cross:

What had happened to me? Here I stood facing the image that million worshipped as the symbol of their faith, the image that had, indeed, been the object of my own infatuation – and all that I could see was a gory carcass being forced down by gravity. What dismal change had occurred within me?

I lay down in the dust of the floor and wept. Why, when after all these years I had again been stirred by religious feelings and even been drawn by them to this village, should I have been forced to see only the mangled corpses of my fellow soldiers and the tortured body of Jesus painted by some unskillful

the truth, in that very moment he is concealing it. “This psychology, too, is common to novelists”, says the doctor, and Tamura replies: “Recollection is inevitably accompanied by reordering and rationalization.” “How self-conscious we are. You, however, are making things up. [...] Look, what we’re most interested in is your image of God. Your complex – we usually refer to it as a messiah complex – usually develops in compensation for guilty feelings. Do you still believe you’re an [avenging] angel?”, “No, I’m not sure. You know, you may be right. I probably came up with that and worked it in as I was writing. For a messiah complex, my concept of God is pretty half-baked”, quoted in David C. Stahl, *The Burdens of Survival*, p. 101.

artist? Was it fate that had contrived this cruel jest, or did the fault lie within myself?⁵⁶

The struggle between sense of guilt – a radically Catholic characteristic – and the absurdity of a fate in a period of war are the elements intertwined in such moments of the novel. Like Cain, he is spiritually demotivated, slothful, and restless; but, since he is a “modern” Cain, his restlessness is not only physical, and his mind follows the tortuous route of his feet. Tamura’s wanderings have brought him closer to his spiritual consciousness, in an attempt to face and fight his guilt, but illumination seems far, and, above all, insignificant. The repetition of “*De profundis*”, heard suddenly and inexplicably in the church, is just a dramatic expedient to repeat the same mood, and prepare the way to the admission of the narrator that this had been the moment in which his insanity started, and in which “bond that linked my inner consciousness with the outer world had once for all been severed. [...] Such was the fate to which I must abandon myself”⁵⁷. In other words, he gives in to guilt, and resigns himself to be an outcast. Alone as Cain in a world of strangers, Tamura is nonetheless not expelled from human society because of an external judgement, but because of his own self-reproach. He feels lonely in the moments in which he confronts himself with his guilt, but at the same time his isolation comes from his deep-seated feelings of guilt.

The rest of the novel sees Tamura keeping on his solitary wandering, until when he meets some soldiers whose companionship will make the cross lose “any impression on him” and his survival instinct more aggressive. He recognizes that he has condemned himself to an existence based on compulsion, “the compulsion of moving ineluctably toward my death”⁵⁸. The skirmishes among them will lead Tamura to come and go from their companionship until, when starving and already tempted to bite a soldier’s corpse as soon as he dies, he will be fed – at first unawares and then half-consciously – with human flesh by one of his fellow soldiers. As the story moves toward the act of cannibalism, the images also follow the theme: we can find praises of physical transfigurations, skies compared to the body of God wounded

⁵⁶ Ōoka Shōhei, *Fires on the Plain*, p. 109.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

by planes, memories of the crucifix, self-punishing sacrifices such as allowing himself to be consumed by flies in a sort of law of retaliation, and obvious references to the drinking of the blood and eating of the body, as in Christian Communion. As Washburn says:

The use of Christian imagery in the novel highlights the extreme nature of the search for survival and meaning. Christian symbols provide a tentative language to express the instinctive desire for life and order, even though they actually intensify the narrator's awareness of his isolation. Tamura longs for the divine state of true detachment and complete autonomy and self-knowledge; but the impenetrable alienness of the Christian God reveals that the absolute is beyond his reach. The tension between the desire for union with God and the critical self-awareness that blocks the leap of faith needed to make that union possible comes to a crisis near the end of the wartime narrative, when Tamura tries to provide a justification for his murder of Nagamatsu⁵⁹.

In the end, Tamura will be guilty of killing a noncombatant, of fratricide, and of cannibalism. His guilty conscience will adopt all the psychological defensive strategies in order to conceal his faults. These defensive embellishments and omissions are reflected in the structure of the novel, told by an unreliable narrator representing an insane but disenchanting and ironic psychotic man. The end of the first part sees a memory breakdown. In the following part, we find Tamura in the hospital, recovering and recording his memories from the period of amnesia, going from "A Madman's Diary" through "Once More to the Fires on the Plain" to "A Dead Man's Writings", the final part, which

[...] moves to overcome the limits of knowledge exposed by sceptical self-awareness through the device of assuming the perspective of a dead man. This final shift in perspective places Tamura in a transcendent realm of myth. His transcendence is of course an illusion of language⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ Dennis Washburn, "Toward a View from Nowhere: Perspective and Ethical Judgment in *Fires on the Plain*", in *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1, Winter 1997, p. 125.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

Ōoka has subverted the power of the omniscient narrator, creating an ironic, almost cynical, and resigned narrator whose confusion and uncertainties better succeed in depicting truth. The reader empathises with this insane character and his attempt at catharsis, and wants to discover the most horrific parts of the human mind and soul through his unreliability, his “unstable combination of confession, dissembling, omission, and concealment”. As Ōoka confessed, “It was a means of presenting confusion directly, just as I experienced it”⁶¹.

The last scene of the book sees again Tamura walking to nowhere, for no recognized reason:

Yes, I must have seen the smoke and thereupon started to walk toward it.

But to what purpose? This I cannot remember. Again my mind becomes a blank sheet. Yet from my deduction that I walked, a new image rises to the surface of my mind.

It is once more the image of myself walking between the hills and the plains with a rifle on my shoulder. [...] I, a haughty human driven by somber passions, walk through this eternal space. [...] Where am I going?

I am on my way to the prairie fires, to the place where the Filipinos live. I am on my way to chastise all those humans as they crawl sideways over the globe that faces God vertically – those humans who give pain to God⁶².

Tamura’s instability creates a surrealistic story ending in a surrealistic land of the dead with the people he has killed, laughing because he decided not to eat them, as if inspired by God. A power beyond his control – God, fate – has made him a vengeful angel, with a message to deliver:

Albeit that they are voiceless, dead people continue to live. There is no such thing as individual death. Death is a universal event. Even after we die, we are constrained to be permanently awake and day after day to continue making decisions. I should let all mankind know of this; but it is too late... On the

⁶¹ David C. Stahl, *The Burdens of Survival*, pp. 96-97.

⁶² Ōoka Shōhei, *Fires on the Plain*, pp. 241-242.

deserted plain the grass continues to sway round about me with that same eternal motion I saw when I was alive⁶³.

Desert and eternity are the setting of Tamura's last dreamlike death, or deathlike dream. Both free will (*nin'i*) and inevitability (*hitsuzen*) move his psyche – and religious soul – through a physical and spiritual wandering in search for atonement. Nevertheless, the atonement will never be fulfilled on Leyte Island; if it is ever been fulfilled, it is in the cathartic process of recollection, re-experience and telling – like the Ancient Mariner.

The wandering of Tamura is a journey which never ends, even when he is dead. He is searching for salvation, both physically and spiritually⁶⁴. Tamura's guilt – both as a survivor and as murderer and cannibal – forces him to accept the absurdity of life in order to find some meaning in the randomness of his crimes and also of war in general. Deceiving himself, he believes to find the meaning in the concept of inevitability that pervades the whole narrative. He tries to give reason for his guilty feelings, and a coherent view of what has happened, in the attempt to impart a sense of continuity and duration to a traumatizing experience⁶⁵. In fact, he is always at a loss and his recollection is fragmented and incomplete; paradoxically, the final picture of the troubled mind is more effective as it is portrayed by a mimetic voice such as the delirium of a madman. Irony and grotesque are the elements that Ōoka has added to the traditional "I novel"⁶⁶, consequently adding a cynical and disenchanting taste to an otherwise dramatically overwhelming story.

Simultaneously, a mythological depth and tragic intensity is given by Christian imagery, almost obsessively recurring in the novel. It is interesting to note how these images have been traced back both to Christian and indigenous tradition by Dennis Washburn, who sees the figurative state of death at the end of *Fires on the Plain* as

a rhetorical move toward an imagined state of reintegration, a mythic memory that is a curious amalgam of images from ancient imperial mythology

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁶⁴ Erik R. Lofgren, "Christianity Excised", p. 270.

⁶⁵ Dennis Washburn, "Toward a View from Nowhere", p. 119.

⁶⁶ Cf. Van C. Gessel in Ernestine Schlant and J. Thomas Rimer (eds.), *Legacies and Ambiguities*, for the role of irony in postwar Japanese literature, especially pp. 27, 207-223.

and Christianity. The image of the dark sun in the land of the dead, the image of the fires on the plain, and the mention of celestial laughter echo incidents in the first book of Kojiki (Records of ancient matters, compiled 712), a key textual source for State Shinto and modern imperial mythology⁶⁷.

Myths taken from different traditions create a melange of symbolism which enhances ironic depth – and dramatic tones – to the narrative. God’s purifying fires of judgement are the symbol not of shame but of guilt, quite atypically for a Japanese writer, explicable when considering the Christian influence on Ōoka and more generally on postwar Japanese writers. In a period of sufferance, anger, shame and guilt, in the vacuum of authority and certainties, Cain-like figures search for values in ancient traditions but also seek to create new values. Tamura transforms himself into an avenging angel; from punished he becomes punisher and creator of a new order. In reality, he never really expiates his guilt, and keeps on wandering, in the land of the dead in his mind.

In the impossibility of acquiring a complete knowledge of the self, Tamura nonetheless gets closer to the truth, like many modern Cains: “The characteristic of Cain in much modern literature is consciousness”⁶⁸. Isolated by this same consciousness, Tamura pursues his metaphysical quest and makes his journey in the dark wood, “into his own heart of darkness”⁶⁹. Cursed by community but especially by himself, outcast on a foreign island, his search for salvation ends in his cathartic retelling, but not completely. What he has gained in the end of the novel is not atonement but consciousness of life; most importantly, of its absurdity. Schopenhauer said that “Cain, who acquired a knowledge of guilt, and through guilt acquired a knowledge of virtue by repentance, and so came to understand the meaning of life, is a tragical figure more significant, and almost more respectable, than all the innocent fools in the world put together”⁷⁰. Sentences like: “I don’t care. Just as all men are cannibals, all women are whores” that Tamura pronounces when he discovers his wife is cheating on him with his doctor; or his smile with satisfaction, when he realizes that at least he does not have to undertake to kill

⁶⁷ Dennis Washburn, “Toward a View from Nowhere”, p. 128.

⁶⁸ Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, p. 128.

⁶⁹ Arthur G. Kimball, *Crisis in Identity*, p. 30.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, p. 116.

myself if he no longer belongs to the world, make him a anti-heroic Cain, more modern, more human, more comically tragic. The archetype has been moulded again.

“The ego is at once his sign of Cain and his crown of glory”⁷¹. The burden of survival is another battle with the burden of selfhood; in order to win, modern Cains just need to give a grin.

⁷¹ Benjamin Nelson and Charles Trinkaus, quoted in Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*, p. 87.

Conclusion

This study has been an attempt to decipher a universal pattern of behaviour and literary representation and, at the same time, the expression of the will to give a critical framework valid for comparative approaches that cross the boundaries of Western cultures.

Many are the ideas that form the basis of this work. Archetypal criticism was the starting point; from there, ramifications into psychology, anthropology, mythology, religion, and history created the texture whose grains are the literary works that, in my opinion, well represent in fiction this complex topic. Far from being exhaustive, the choice of the novels has followed the decision to select those stories in which particular elements add interesting cues to the theme of wandering caused by guilt, as it appeared around the Second World War period and soon afterwards.

In the literature of the past, guilt was often moulded in such ways to seem justified; Hebrew and Greek literature, but also Puritan novels, are examples of this. And yet, if necessity frees man from guilt, it does not in the twentieth-century imagination. When novels started to portray existentialist, inexplicable and suffocating guilt – Kafka is the epitome –, guilt was replaced by its descendant, the sense of guilt. However, this is not true of the war period, when “objective” guilt survived in a more pervasive way in the conscience of humanity. The generalization and universalization of the theme is formally given by its suffusion throughout the plots, by rarefying guilt over the events and the thoughts of the characters. The protagonists of the novels analyzed in this study are semi-heroic characters, whose guilt is half-evident, and whose atonement is half-baked. Rhetorical and thematic effects tend to be more universal and transhistorical, distant from a more realistic level. The form can vary in each work, but the sense of panicked amplification of personal responsibility is a constant feature.

The question of religion has been, evidently, extremely important in this discussion. The choice of novels in which Christianity is an important presence, in a way or another, has been partly intentional, but, actually, it happened almost by

chance, the research moving towards the final direction almost on its own; the process has been inductive more than deductive. The discovery that in these novels religion plays a major role from many intriguing perspectives – although the authors almost denied it – has uncovered new aspects of the relationship between guilt and “canonic” religions. As a matter of fact, although this relationship could be easily guessed when considering the impact of religions on morality and on the guilty consciences they have created, the fact that religion is always controversial in these novels of universal guilt has been a fascinating source of inspiration. The case of Japan, in particular, can be considered controversial, as it has to do not just with the idea of religion, but with the idea of an *acquired* religion; a detail that gives other interesting suggestions that I would like to develop further in my future research. For now, it is interesting to note, as it is perhaps evident, that Catholicism seems to give origin to more appealing developments in this kind of literature, as guilt is not sublimated by work, neither by social commitment nor collective repentance, as it happens with other faiths, Christian or not; therefore, atonement is not addressed to anything in particular, confession makes guilt a matter of the inner self – and consequently, when religion is lived in non-dogmatic ways and confession as a sacrament is refused, as in our novels, guilt stagnates in anxious souls.

If (Christian) doubts and spiritual pains are the leitmotifs of the novels studied here, we can believe that wandering is one of their consequences – and one of their most typical formal and thematic aspects. Religious uncertainties make one wander, both physically and spiritually. Characters that have to represent a historical and archetypal sense of guilt are destined to wander. Cainic guilt is, in twentieth-century novels, controversially subjective, or rather, so collective to be universal; Cain was and is the symbol of a new fall of man.

In our narratives the aim of wandering is not knowledge – as it is for Ulysses or, more recently, with post-modern Chatwinian journeys – nor going home – although by the longest route, as in the case of Leopold Bloom. Even the option that the characters wander to escape from guilt might be not entirely true, as they willingly bring it within themselves – wandering far from one’s guilt without bringing it with oneself would inspire an adventure novel or travel book. In truth, the protagonists of these novels cannot positively expiate their guilt because, in their wandering, they do

not stay in a place taking on them fully the responsibility for their misdeeds, neither do they flee to another place in the attempt to build a new life, or city as Cain did, giving origin to the human consortium. The paradox of this kind of wandering is that in the end these characters always go back to the same place and always take refuge in the same memories.

The settings have been epitomical. The English novels considered in the second part of this dissertation, *The Power and the Glory* and *Under the Volcano*, put their characters in Mexican villages, where the echo of the war is distant and, therefore, their stories seem to be more resonant in their individuality, more archetypal in their peculiarity. *Der Tod in Rom*, on the contrary, is set in a more mythical location, Rome, the eternal city; here war is more perceptible, as is the cultural heritage of mankind, together with its burden of historical guilt. On the small island of the Philippines in *Nobi* again spatiality is more compressed and guilt is more specific but nonetheless linked to the general disgust with war and, more universally, with human behaviour.

The lost/abandoned garden, the wasteland with no religion, the classical and religiously-corrupted city, the tropical, cannibalistic island at war are the scenarios of the four novels I have tried to interpret. There should also be another kind of wasteland emerging from postwar literature: the post atomic wasteland, a new type of desert in which characters walk around out of despair and a sense of void; but this could be, again, the topic for another study. Interestingly enough, in the Bible Cain's curse arrives by means of the earth and not directly from the divinity; God does not say: "I curse you", but "now you are cursed from the ground". Cain's destiny seems to be linked to his existence in the world.

Guilt and wandering have been the conceptual frames I have tried to establish in the first part of this work, frames that are necessary for the analysis undertaken in the following two parts, that is, the study of the "manifestation" of those concepts in literature. In the analytical parts more than in the theoretical one the paradoxical destiny of man is particularly clear: "Fate is evidently the sense of guilt, the self-torture or self-punishment that burdens us"¹. The inner bite, the paradoxical inner relationship between morality and instinct, love and hate, does not attach itself to a

¹ Herman Westerink, *A Dark Trace. Sigmund Freud on the Sense of Guilt*, Leuven University Press, 2009 (2005), p. 251.

particular tradition but survive, just like – to use a powerful image by Kalu Singh – the picture of Dorian Gray². It is personal, inner, unplaceable guilt that is the most painful and the most difficult to eradicate – and, as a consequence, the one that myths and literature have celebrated most. Tournier even considered guilt a positive, methodical element of our lives (“Now a guilty conscience is the seasoning of our daily life. All upbringing is a cultivation of the sense of guilt on an intensive scale”³). Since the Bible’s Cain represents the civilized man – the man of the soil and the man of the sedentary city, the man “who, by his labour, forces nature to yield him greater malaise of civilized man”⁴ – than we can presume that, at least in the stories we write, modern man must be guilty – it does not matter of what.

The twentieth century is an age persecuted by the idea of guilt, either imposed or self-imposed. But is it, as Nietzsche observed, an “illness” like pregnancy, “a condition that can give birth to a man truly worthy of wonder and admiration, a man that can replace the withered creature produced by subservience to guilt?”⁵ Knowledge is a conquest, as Cain’s father demonstrated.

Our characters are never “at-oned”: if there are any, the binary oppositions of a Manichean type can be found only around the characters, but never in the characters themselves, who are instead both good and evil. In the frequently quoted definition of the anti-hero presented by Ihab Hassan, among the categories of victims there are included also some regarding our type: “the fool, the clown, the hipster, the criminal, the poor sod, the freak, the outsider, the scapegoat, the scrubby opportunist, the rebel without a cause”⁶. Actually, our characters include all of them – and they are loved by the reader for that reason. The word “value” has lost its linear appeal some time before.

Aimlessness of existence in an indifferent universe was an already known path of thought – a road dug by the Existentialists; but the World Wars amplified the entire system. The last part of this study has been dedicated to Germany and Japan, the countries in which not only these historical conflicts and existential problems, but

² Kalu Singh, *Guilt*, p. 4.

³ Paul Tournier, *Grace and Guilt*, p. 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁵ John Rawls, “The Sense of Justice”, in *The Philosophical Review*, LXXII 1963 281-305, in Reik? pp. 1-2.

⁶ Quoted in Murray Roston, *Graham Greene’s Narrative Strategies: A Study on the Major Novels*, Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p. 15.

also their literary echo, reverberated most. It was in those years in particular that nomadism and itinerant groups were persecuted systematically, against the push of nationalisms. In literature, wandering might have assumed, more than ever, a short-circuit of significance.

The picture of abandonment, isolation, and anxiety surfacing from this critical analysis is obviously not complete. As all archetypal paradigms, the pattern of guilt and wandering pervades all literatures – and their dark sides as well. My aim has been to uncover its presence in some of those novels in which it appeared particularly and mythically captivating. Neither homelessness nor journeying is the issue in these novels. Rather, the main theme is a desperate or useless movement through guilt toward self-consciousness, or towards self-destruction – which, at least in literature, is often not so different.

After the Second World War much was left silenced rather than unsaid. Most of the works about WWII were published after 1945. Some of them had been omitted, some had not even been created. Literature was questioned about its adequacy to depict the horror – Conrad's Kurtz had already shouted his at mankind – but now the compulsion to confess was by some means hammered by the power of silence. Sometimes, when the impasse was finally overcome, these forces found an escape in semi-mythical, cryptic but somehow instinctively perceived universal models, which gave an a-historical resonance and intense actuality to the characters' stories.

This study has tried to retrace those silences, those shouts over history through the power of myths – structural, thematic, and spiritual marks. Together with other models, Cain's figure has enriched literature with denser symbols, in explicit retelling or in more silent ways. When this silence filters through plots and narrative functions, and makes art a mirror for the condition of mankind – as one of its main purposes establishes – the effect it has is more resounding and more disquieting. Self-conscious reasoning finds its most triumphant satisfaction in the recognition of those silences and of the links with those structures that inform not only literature, but ourselves as well.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GRAHAM GREENE

Primary Sources

The Man Within (1929), London: Vintage, 2001.

Stamboul Train (1932, republished as *Orient Express* 1933), London: Vintage, 2004.

England Made Me (1935, republished as *The Shipwrecked*, 1953), London: Vintage, 2001.

Journey Without Maps (1936), London: Vintage, 2010.

Brighton Rock (1938), London: Vintage, 2004.

The Lawless Roads (1939), London: Vintage, 202.

The Power and the Glory (1940, published simultaneously as *The Labyrinthine Ways*), London: Vintage, 2004.

The Heart of the Matter (1948), London: Vintage, 2004.

The Third Man and The Fallen Idol (1950, republished as *The Third Man*), London: Vintage, 2005.

The End of the Affair (1951), London: Vintage, 2004.

The Quiet American (1955), London: Vintage, 2004.

Our Man in Havana: (1958), London: Vintage, 2006.

A Burnt-out Case (1960), London: Vintage, 2004.

Travels With My Aunt: A Novel (1969), London: Vintage, 2006.

A Sort of Life (1971), London: Vintage, 1999.

The Honorary Consul (1973), London: Vintage, 2004.

The Human Factor (1978), London: Vintage, 2005.

Ways of Escape (1980), London: Vintage, 1999.

Monsignor Quixote (1982), London: Vintage, 2006.

No Man's Land (1993), London: Hesperus Press, 2005.

Collected Essays (1969), London: Vintage, 1999.

Complete Short Stories, London: Penguin Books, 2005.

A Life in Letters (ed. by Richard Greene, 2007), London: Abacus, 2008.

Secondary Sources

- Adamson, Judith, *Graham Greene: The Dangerous Edge. Where Art and Politics Meet*, Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1990.
- Allain, Marie Françoise, *The Other Man. Conversation with Graham Greene*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983.
- Allott, Kenneth, and Farris, Miriam, *The Art of Graham Greene*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1953.
- Atkins, John, *Graham Greene*, London: Calder and Boyars, 1966 (1957).
- Baldrige, Cates, *Graham Greene's Fictions: The Virtues of Extremity*, Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2000.
- Benz, Stephen, "Taking Sides: Graham Greene and Latin America", in *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 26, no. 2, Virginia Woolf and Others, winter 2003, pp. 113-128.
- Bergonzi, Bernard, *A Study in Greene: Graham Greene and the Art of the Novel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Blanton, Casey, "The Modern Psychological Journey: Graham Greene", in Blanton, Casey, *Travel Writing. The Self and the World*, London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 59-70.
- Bloom, Harold (ed.), *Graham Greene*, New York – Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.
- Bosco, Mark, "From *The Power And The Glory* To *The Honorary Consul*: The Development of Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination", in *Religion & Literature*, vol. 36, no. 2, summer 2004, pp. 51-74.
- , *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

- Braybrooke, Neville, "Graham Greene: A Pioneer Novelist" in *College English*, vol. 12, no. 1, October 1950, pp. 1-9.
- Burgess, Anthony, "Politics in the Novels of Graham Greene" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 2, no. 2, Literature and Society, April 1967, pp. 93-99.
- Christenbury, Leila, "Recommended: Graham Greene", in *The English Journal*, vol. 71, no. 2, February 1982, pp. 77-78.
- Couto, Maria, *Graham Greene: On the Frontier*, Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1988.
- Creese, Richard, "Objects in Novels and the Fringe of Culture: Graham Greene and Alain Robbe-Grillet", in *Comparative Literature*, vol. 39, no. 1, winter 1987, pp. 58-73.
- Desmond, John F., "The Heart of (the) Matter: The Mystery of the Real in *Monsignor Quixote*", in *Religion & Literature*, vol. 22, no. 1, spring 1990, pp. 59-78.
- Devereux, James A., "Catholic Matters in the Correspondence of Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene", in *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 14, no. 1, summer 1987, pp. 111-126.
- Diemert, Brian, "Ida Arnold and the Detective Story: Reading *Brighton Rock*", in *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 38, No. 4, winter 1992, pp. 386-403.
- Gale, Robert L., *Characters and Plots in the Fiction of Graham Greene*, Jefferson and London: McFarland & Company, 2006.
- Gordon, Haim, *Fighting Evil: Unsung Heroes in the Novels of Graham Greene*, Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1997.
- Greene, Barbara, *Too Late to Turn Back. Barbara and Graham Greene in Liberia* (first published as *Land Benighted*, 1938), introduction by Paul Theroux, London: Settle and Bendall, 1981.
- Hauer Costa, Richard, "Graham Greene: A Checklist", in *College Literature*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1985, pp. 85-94.
- Hill, William Thomas, *Graham Greene's Wanderers: The Search for Dwelling: Journeying and Wandering in the Novels of Graham Greene*, San Francisco-London-Bethesda: International Scholars Publications, 1999.
- (ed.), *Lonely Without God: Graham Greene's Quixotic Journey of Faith*, Bethesda-Dublin-Palo Alto: Academia Press, 2008.

- Hortmann, Wilhelm, "Graham Greene: The Burnt-Out Catholic", in *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 10, no. 2, July 1964, pp. 64-76.
- Hoskins, Robert, *Graham Greene. An approach to the Novels*, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1999.
- Hynes, Samuel (ed.), *Graham Greene: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973.
- Kelly, Richard, "Greene's Consuming Fiction", in *College Literature*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1985, pp. 53-59.
- Kulshrestha, J. P., *Graham Greene: The Novelist*, Madras: Macmillan, 1977.
- Lewis, R. W. B., "The Fiction of Graham Greene: Between the Horror and the Glory", in *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 19, no. 1, winter 1957, pp. 56-75.
- Loewenstein, Andrea Freud, "Escaping the Inner Void: The Early Novels of Graham Greene", in *Loathsome Jews and Engulfing Women. Metaphors of Projection in the Works of Wyndham Lewis, Charles Williams, and Graham Greene*, New York and London: New York University Press, 1993, pp. 241-311.
- Malamet, Elliott, *The World Remade: Graham Greene and the Art of Detection*, New York: Peter Lang, 1998.
- Meyers, Jeffrey (ed.), *Graham Greene: A Revaluation. New essays*, Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1990.
- Miller, Robert Henry, *Understanding Graham Greene*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990.
- Miyano, Shoko, *Innocence in Graham Greene's Novels*, New York: Peter Lang, 2006.
- Mudford, Peter, *Graham Greene*, Plymouth: Northcote House, 1996.
- Nehring, Neil, "Revolt into Style: Graham Greene Meets the Sex Pistols", in *PMLA*, vol. 106, no. 2, March 1991, pp. 222-237.
- O'Donnell, Donat, *Maria Cross: Imaginative Patterns in a Group of Modern Catholic Writers*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1952, pp. 88-90.
- Pearson, Sheryl S., "'Is There Anybody There?': Graham Greene in Mexico", in *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 9, no. 2, May 1982, pp. 277-290.
- Pendleton, Robert, *Graham Greene's Conradian Masterplot. The Arabesque of Influence*, Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1996.

- Pryce-Jones, David, *Graham Greene*, Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1963.
- Radell, Karen Marguerite, *Affirmation in a Moral Wasteland: A Comparison of Ford Madox Ford and Graham Greene*, New York: Peter Lang, 1987.
- Reynolds, Jerry D., "Oral Readings in Greene's Fiction", in *College Literature*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1985, pp. 18-25.
- Roston, Murray, *Graham Greene's Narrative Strategies: A Study on the Major Novels*, Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Salvatore, Anne, "Socratic Midwifery: Greene and Kierkegaard", in *College Literature*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1985, pp. 26-32.
- Sharrock, Roger, *Saints, Sinners and Comedians: The Novels of Graham Greene*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame *The Life of Graham Greene* Press, 1984.
- Shelden, Michael, *Graham Greene. The Man Within*, London: Heinemann, 1994.
- Sherry, Norman, *The Life of Graham Greene*, 3 vols., London: Jonathan Cape, 1989 and 1994.
- Silverstein, Marc, "After the Fall: The World of Graham Greene's Thrillers", in *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 22, no. 1, autumn 1988, pp. 24-44.
- Smith, Grahame, *The Achievement of Graham Greene*, Sussex: The Harvester Press, New Jersey: Barnes & Noble Books, 1986.
- Spurling, John, *Graham Greene*, London and New York, Methuen, 1983.
- Steiner, George, "God's Spies" (1978), in *George Steiner at the New Yorker*, New York: A New Direction's Book, 2009.
- Stratford, Philip, "The Uncomplacent Dramatist: Some Aspects of Graham Greene's Theatre", in *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, vol. 2, no. 3, autumn 1961, pp. 5-19.
- , "Unlocking the Potting Shed", in *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 24, no. 1, winter 1962, pp. 129-143.
- Tenenbaum, David, *Issues of Shame and Guilt in the Modern Novel: Conrad, Ford, Greene, Kafka, Camus, Wilde, Proust, and Mann*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009.

- Veitch, Douglas W., *The Fictional Landscape of Mexico: Readings in D. H. Lawrence, Graham Greene, and Malcolm Lowry*, Dissertation, Université de Montreal, 1974.
- Wassmer, T. A., "Faith and Reason in Graham Greene", in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, vol. 48, no. 190, summer 1959, pp. 163-167.
- Watts, Cedric, *A Preface to Greene*, London and New York: Longman, 1996.
- Whitehouse, J. C., "Catholic Writing: Some Basic Notions, Some Criticisms, and a Tentative Reply", in *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 73, no. 2, April 1978, pp. 241-249.
- Wichert, Robert A., "The Quality of Graham Greene's Mercy", in *College English*, vol. 25, no. 2, November 1963, pp. 99-103.
- Wobbe, R. A., "Tyranny's Triangle: Patterns in Greene's Juvenalia and Major Works", in *College Literature*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1985, pp. 1-10.
- Young, Vernon, "Hell on Earth: Six Versions", in *The Hudson Review*, vol. 2, no. 2, summer 1949, pp. 311-318.
- Young, Vernon, "The Friends of Graham Greene", in *The Hudson Review*, vol. 27, no. 2, summer 1974, pp. 245-251.

MALCOLM LOWRY

Primary Sources

- Ultramarine* (1933), Woodstock & New York: The Overlook Press, 2005.
- Under the Volcano* (1947), New York: HarperCollins, 2007.
- Hear us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place & Lunar Caustic* (1961 and 1968), London: Pan Books, 1991.
- "Ghostkeeper", in *American Review*, no. 17, May 1973.
- Dark as the Grave wherein my Friend is Laid* (1968), Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975.
- The Cinema of Malcolm Lowry. A Scholarly Edition of Lowry's Tender is the Night* (ed. by Miguel Mota and Paul Tiessen), Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990.

The Collected Poems of Malcolm Lowry, (ed. by Kathleen Scherf), Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992.

Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry (ed. by Harvey Breit and Margerie Bonner Lowry, 1965), New York: Capricorn, 1969.

Sursum Corda! The Collective Letters of Malcolm Lowry (ed. by Sherrill E. Grace), 2 vols., London: Jonathan Cape, 1995.

The Voyage that Never Ends. Fictions, Poems, Fragments, Letters (ed. by Michael Hofmann), New York: New York Review Books, 2007.

Secondary Sources

Ackerley Chris, and Clipper, Lawrence J., *A Companion to Under the Volcano*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984.

Arac, Jonathan, "The Form of Carnival in *Under the Volcano*", in *PMLA*, vol. 92, no. 3, May 1977, pp. 481-489.

Asals, Frederick, *The Making of Malcolm Lowry's Under the Volcano*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997.

Asals, Frederick, and Tiessen, Paul (eds.), *A Darkness That Murmured: essays on Malcolm Lowry and the Twentieth Century*, Toronto-Buffalo-London: University of Toronto Press, 2000.

Baxter, Charles, "The Escape from Irony: *Under the Volcano* and the Aesthetics of Arson", in *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 10, no. 2, Tenth Anniversary Issue: II, winter 1977, pp. 114-126.

Biggs, Bryan, and Tookey, Helen (eds.), *Malcolm Lowry. From the Mersey to the World*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press and the Bluecoat, 2009.

Binns, Ronald, *Malcolm Lowry*, London and New York: Methuen, 1984.

Bond, Greg, "Boundlessness beyond Boundlessness: The Sea, Drink, and Form in Malcolm Lowry's Fiction", in *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 94, no. 3, July 1999, pp. 626-636.

Bowker, Gordon, *Malcolm Lowry Remembered*, London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1985.

-----, *Pursued by Furies: A Life of Malcolm Lowry*, London: HarperCollins, 1993.

- Corrigan, Matthew, *Malcolm Lowry: The Phenomenology of Failure*, in *Boundary 2*, vol. 3, no. 2, winter 1975, pp. 407-442.
- Corti, Claudia, “*Ulysses e la reductio ad absurdum del mito*”, in AA.VV., *Intorno a Joyce. Cinquant’anni dopo*, Bologna: Cosmopoli, 1995.
- Cross, Richard K., *Malcolm Lowry: A Preface to His Fiction*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- Day, Douglas, *Malcolm Lowry: A Biography*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Dodson, Daniel B., *Malcolm Lowry*, New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970.
- Domenichelli, Mario, *Il mito di Issione. Lowry, Joyce e l’ironia modernista*, Pisa: ETS, 1982.
- Dorosz, Kristofer, *Malcolm Lowry’s Infernal Paradise*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Anglistica Upsaliensia, no. 27, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1976.
- Doyen, Victor, “Elements towards a Spatial Reading of Malcolm Lowry’s *Under the Volcano*”, in *English Studies*, no. 50, 1969, pp. 65-74.
- Epstein, Perle, *The Private Labyrinth of Malcolm Lowry: Under the Volcano and the Cabbala*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.
- Falk, David, “Self and Shadow: The Brothers Firmin in *Under the Volcano*”, in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, no. 27, summer 1985, pp. 224-232.
- Gibson, Andrew, *Towards a Postmodern Theory of Narrative*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996.
- Gilmore, Thomas B., “The Place of Hallucinations in *Under the Volcano*”, in *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 23, no. 3, summer 1982, pp. 285-305.
- Grace, Sherrill (ed.), *Swinging the Maelstrom: New Perspectives on Malcolm Lowry*, Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992.
- Grove, Dana, *A Rhetorical Analysis of Under the Volcano. Malcolm Lowry’s Design Governing Postures*, Lewiston-Lampeter-Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989.
- Harty, John Francis, *Oscillation in Literary Modernism*, Frankfurt am Mein: Peter Lang, 2009.

- Lakin, Barbara, "Greene's *The Honorary Consul* and Lowry's *Under the Volcano*: A Study in Influence", in *South Central Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, spring 1986, pp. 68-77.
- Smith, Anne (ed.), *The Art of Malcolm Lowry*, London: Vision Press, 1978.
- Spender, Stephen, Introduction to Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*, New York: Harper, 2007.
- Markson, David, *Malcolm Lowry's Volcano: Myth, Symbol, Meaning*, New York: Times Books, 1978.
- McCarthy, Patrick A., and Tiessen, Paul (eds.), *Joyce/Lowry. Critical Perspectives*, Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997.
- Miller, Andrew John, "Under the Nation-State: Modernist Deterritorialization in Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*", in *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 50, no. 1, spring 2004, pp. 1-17.
- Miller, David, *Malcolm Lowry and the Voyage that Never Ends*, London: Enitharmon Press, 1976.
- Wood, Barry, "Malcolm Lowry's Metafiction: The Biography of a Genre", in *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 19, no. 1, winter 1978, pp. 1-25.
- Woodcock, George (ed.), *Malcolm Lowry: The Man and His Work*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1971.

WOLFGANG KOEPPEN

Primary Sources

- A Sad Affair (Eine unglückliche Liebe, 1934)*, London: Granta, 2004.
- Il muro vacilla (Die Mauer schwankt, 1935)*, Milano: Mondadori, 1989.
- La Tana di Fango (Jacob Littners Aufzeichnungen aus einem Erdloch, 1948)*, Firenze: Giuntina, 2002.
- Pigeons on the Grass (Tauben im Gras, 1951)*, New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1991.
- The Hothouse (Das Treibhaus, 1953)*, London: Granta, 2004.

Death in Rome (Der Tod in Rom [1954], Stuttgart: Suhrkamp, 2007), London: Granta, 2004.

Secondary Sources

AA.VV., *Wolfgang Koeppen*, Text + Kritik no. 34, München: Richard Boorberg Verlag, 1972.

Bance, C. F., “*Der Tod in Rom and Die Rote: Two Italian Episodes*”, in *Forum for Modern Languages*, no. 3, 1967, pp. 126-134.

Bargen, Doris G., review of Schlant, Ernestine, and Rimer, J. Thomas (eds.), *Legacies and Ambiguities: Postwar Fiction and Culture in West Germany and Japan*, Washington D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore - London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991, in *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 47, no. 2, summer 1992, pp. 284-286.

Basker, David, *Chaos, Control, and Consistency: The Narrative Vision of Wolfgang Koeppen*, Berne: Peter Lang, 1993.

Bodemann, Y. Michal, “Eclipse of Memory: German Representations of Auschwitz in the Early Postwar Period”, in *New German Critique*, no. 75, autumn 1998, pp. 57-89.

Craven, Stanley, *Wolfgang Koeppen. A Study in Modernist Alienation*, Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1982.

Demetz, Peter, *After the Fires. Recent Writings in the Germanies, Austria, and Switzerland*, San Diego-New York-London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986.

Erhart, Walter (ed.), *Wolfgang Koeppen & Alfred Döblin. Topographien der literarischen Moderne*, München: Iudicium, 2005.

Erlach, Dietrich, *Wolfgang Koeppen als zeitkritischer Erzähler*, Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1973.

Gunn, Richard L., *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen's Postwar Trilogy*, New York: Peter Lang, 1983.

Hanbidge, Carole, *The Transformation of Failure. A Critical Analysis of Character Presentation in the Novels of Wolfgang Koeppen*, New York: Peter Lang, 1983.

Hofmann, Michael, Introduction to *Death in Rome*, London: Granta, 2004.

- Koch, Manfred, *Wolfgang Koeppen. Literature zwischen Nonkonformismus und Resignation*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973.
- Love, Ursula, "Wolfgang Koeppens Nachkriegstrilogie: Struktur und Erzähltechnik", Dissertation, Brown University, 1974.
- Mauranges, Jean-Paul, *Wolfgang Koeppen – Littérature sans frontière*, Berne: Peter Lang, 1978.
- Peters, Jürgen (ed.), *German Writings Before and After 1945*, New York and London: Continuum, 2002.
- Scherpe, Klaus R., and Cohen, Mitch, "Modern and Postmodern Transformations of the Metropolitan Narrative", in *New German Critique*, no. 55, winter 1992, pp. 71-85.
- Schlant, Ernestine, and Rimer, J. Thomas (eds.), *Legacies and Ambiguities: Postwar Fiction and Culture in West Germany and Japan*, Washington D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore - London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.
- Voss, Dietmar, and Schütze, Jochen C., "Postmodernism in Context: Perspectives of a Structural Change in Society, Literature, and Literary Criticism", in *New German Critique*, no. 47, spring-summer 1989, pp. 119-142.
- Ward, David, Introduction to *Pigeons on the Grass*, New York-London: Holmes & Meier, 1991 (1988).
- Ward, Simon, "Border Negotiations in the Works of Wolfgang Koeppen", in *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 95, no. 3, July 2000, pp. 764-778.
- , *Negotiating Positions. Literature, Identity and Social Critique in the Works of Wolfgang Koeppen*, Amsterdam – New York: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2001.
- , "The Passenger as *Flâneur*? Railway Networks in German-Language Fiction Since 1945", in *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 100, no. 2, April 2005, pp. 412-428.
- Zipes, Jack, "Contested Jews: The Image of Jewishness in Contemporary German Literature", in *South Central Review*, vol. 16, no. 2/3, German Studies Today, summer-autumn 1999, pp. 3-15.

ŌOKA SHŌHEI AND JAPANESE LITERATURE

Primary Sources

- Agawa, Hiroyuki, *Devil's Heritage (Ma no isan)*, 1957), Tōkyō: The Hokuseido Press, 1957.
- Endō, Shūsaku, *The Sea and the Poison (Umi to dokuyaku)*, 1958), London: Reter Owen, 1972.
- , *Stained Glass Elegies*, New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1985.
- , and Johnston, William, “Endō and Johnston Talk of Buddhism and Christianity”, in *America*, November 1994, pp. 18-20.
- , *Five by Endō*, New York: New Directions Bibelot, 2000.
- Nakagami, Kenji, *The Cape and Other Stories from the Japanese Ghetto*, Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1999.
- Oda, Makoto, *H: A Hiroshima Novel*, Tōkyō: Kōdansha International, 1995 (1984).
- Ōe, Kenzaburō, *Hiroshima Notes*, New York and London: Marion Boyars, 1997 (1965).
- Ōe, Kenzaburō, *The Catch and Other War Stories*, Tōkyō - New York: Kodansha International, 1981.
- Ōoka, Shohei, *Taken Captive: A Japanese POW's Story (Furyoki)*, 1948), New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 1996.
- , *A Wife in Musashino (Musashino fujin)*, 1950), Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan Press, 2004.
- , *Fires on the Plain (Nobi)*, 1952), Tōkyō: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1984.
- , *The Shade of Blossoms (Kaei)*, 1961), Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan Press, 1998.
- , “The Nervous Person”, in *Literary Review*, September 22, 2002.
- Takeyama, Michio, *Harp of Burma (Buruma no tategoto)*, 1964), Tōkyō: Charles E. Tuttle & Co., 1966.

Secondary Sources

- AA.VV., *Introduction to Contemporary Japanese Literature. Synopses of Major Works 1956-1970*, Tōkyō: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, 1972.
- Anderer, Paul, *Other World. Arishima Takeo and the Bounds of Modern Japanese Fiction*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- , Foreword to Arishima Takeo, *Labyrinth*, Lanham, Md.-London: Madison Books, 1992.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973.
- Bamba, Nobuya, and Howes, John F. (eds.), *Pacifism in Japan. The Christian and Socialist Tradition*, Kyōto: Minerva Press, 1978.
- Benedict, Ruth, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005 (1946).
- Blacker, Carmen, *The Catalpa Bow. A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975.
- Carroll, John, *The Role of Guilt in the Formation of Modern Society: England 1350-1800*, La Trobe Working Papers in Sociology, n. 54, Bundoora, Victoria: La Trobe University, 1980.
- Claremont, Yasuko, *The Novels of Ōe Kenzaburō*, London - New York: Routledge, 2009.
- De Vos, George A., and Wetherall, William O., *Japan's Minorities. Burakumin, Koreans, Ainu, Okinawans*, updated by Kaye Stearman, Minority Rights Group, Report No. 3, new edition 1993.
- Dodd, Stephen, *Writing Home. Representations of the Native Place in Modern Japanese Literature*, Cambridge, Mass. - London: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Fowler, Edward, *The Rhetoric of Confession*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
- Fowler, Edward, "The *Buraku* in Modern Japanese Literature: Texts and Contexts, in *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Winter, 2000), pp. 1-39.
- Gabriel, Philip, *Spirit Matters. The Transcendent in Modern Japanese Literature*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006.

- Gerstle, C. Andrew, *Circles of Fantasy. Convention in the Plays of Chikamatsu*, Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 1986.
- Gessel, Van C., "Voices in the Wilderness: Japanese Christian Authors", in *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 37, No. 4, Winter 1982, pp. 437-457.
- , *The Sting of Life. Four Contemporary Japanese Novelists*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.
- Heine, Steven, "Tragedy and Salvation in the Floating World: Chikamatsu's Double Suicide Drama as Millenarian Discourse", in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (May, 1994), pp. 367-393.
- Hoekema, Alle G., "The 'Christology' of Shūsaku Endō", in *Exchange*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 2000, pp. 230-248.
- Howell, David L., "Ethnicity and Culture in Contemporary Japan", in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (January, 1996), pp. 171-190.
- Hutchinson, Rachael, and Williams, Mark (eds.), *Representing the Other in Modern Japanese Literature. A Critical Approach*, London - New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Johnston, William, Preface to Endō Shūsaku, *Silence*, London-Melbourne-New York: Quartet Books, 1978.
- Kamata, Suzanne, Review to Nakagami Kenji, *The Cape and Other Stories from the Japanese Ghetto*, in *Manoa*, Vol. 13, No. 2, *Secret Places: New Writing from Nepal* (Winter, 2001), pp. 200- 201.
- Karatani, Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, Durham, NC.; London: Duke University Press, 1993.
- Keene, Donald, "Japanese Literature and Politics in the 1930s", in *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Summer 1976, pp. 225-248.
- , "The Barren Years. Japanese War Literature", in *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 33, No. 1, Spring 1978, pp. 67-112.
- Kimball, Arthur G., *Crisis in Identity and Contemporary Japanese Novels*, Vermont & Tōkyō: Tuttle, 1973.
- Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, *Synopses of Contemporary Japanese Literature II 1936-1955*, Tōkyō: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, 1970.
- Linner, Rachelle, *City of Silence: Listening to Hiroshima*, New York: Maryknoll, 1995.

- Lofgren, Erik R., "Christianity Excised: Ichikawa Kon's *Fires on the Plain*", in *Japanese Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3, December 2003.
- , "Ideological Transformation: Reading Cannibalism in *Fires on the Plain*", in *Japan Forum*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2004, pp. 401-421.
- Mase-Hasegawa, Emi, *Christ in Japanese Culture: Theological Themes in Shūsaku Endō's Literary Works*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008.
- McDonald, Keiko, "Ōoka's Examination of the Self in A POW's Memoirs", in *The Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese*, Vol. 21, No. 1, April 1987, pp. 15-36.
- McKnight, Anne, "Imperial Syntax: Nakagami Kenji's 'Monogatari' and Modern Japanese Literature as Ethnography", in *Discourse*, Vol. 28.1 (Winter 2006), pp. 142-165.
- Mihashi, Osamu, "The Symbolism of Social Discrimination: A Decoding of Discriminatory Language", in *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Supplement: *An Anthropological Profile of Japan* (August-October, 1987), pp. S19-S29.
- Miner, Earl, *Naming properties. Nominal reference in travel writings by Bashō, Johnson and Boswell*, The University of Michigan Press, 1996.
- Mouchard, Claude, "Vivant ou mort?", Introduction to Ōoka Shōhei, *Journal d'un prisonnier de guerre*, Paris: Belin, 2006, pp. 5-19.
- Nakamura, Mitsuo, *Contemporary Japanese Fiction 1926-1968*, Tōkyō: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, 1969.
- Newell, William H., "The Comparative Study of Caste in India and Japan", in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 1, No. 10 (December, 1961), pp. 3-10.
- Ōe, Kenzaburō, "Japan's Dual Identity: A Writer's Dilemma", in *World Literature Today*, Vol. 62, No. 3, Contemporary Japanese Literature, Summer 1988, pp. 359-369.
- , *Japan, the Ambiguous and Myself: The Nobel Prize Speech and Other Lectures*, Tōkyō: Kodansha International, 1995.
- Orr, James J., *The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001.
- Passin, Herbert, "Untouchability in the Far East", in *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (October, 1955), pp. 247-267.
- Pigeot, Jacqueline, *Michiyuki-bun*, Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1982.

- Pinnington, Adrian, "Yoshimitsu, Benedict, Endō: Guilt, Shame and the Post-war Idea of Japan", in *Japan Forum*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2001, pp. 91–105.
- Reid, David, *New Wine. The Cultural Shaping of Japanese Christianity*, Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1991.
- Rimer, J. Thomas, *Pilgrimages. Aspects of Japanese Literature and Culture*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1988.
- Rosenbaum, Roman, "Defamiliarising the Postwar: The Enigma of Oda Makoto", in *Japanese Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2, September 2005, pp. 141-158.
- , "The 'Generation of the Burnt-out Ruins'", in *Japanese Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3, December 2007.
- Schlant, Ernestine, and Rimer, J. Thomas (eds.), *Legacies and Ambiguities: Postwar Fiction and Culture in West Germany and Japan*, Washington D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore - London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.
- Schwenger, Peter, and Whittier Treat, John, "America's Hiroshima, Hiroshima's America", in *Boundary 2*, Vol. 21, No. 1, Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production, Spring 1994, pp. 233-253.
- Shimazu, Naoko, "Popular Representations of the Past: The Case of Postwar Japan", in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 38, No. 1, *Redesigning the Past*, January 2003, pp. 101-116.
- Snyder, Stephen, and Gabriel, Peter (eds.), *Ōe and Beyond. Fiction in Contemporary Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999.
- Stahl, David C., *The Burdens of Survival: Ōoka Shōhei's Writings on the Pacific War*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003.
- Suggate, Alan, *Japanese Christians and Society*, Berne: Peter Lang, 1996.
- Suttmeier, Bruce, "Ethnography as Consumption: Travel and National Identity in Oda Makoto's *Nan de mo mite yarō*", in *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1, Winter 2009, pp. 61-86.
- Tansman, Alan, "History, Repetition, and Freedom in the Narratives of Nakagami Kenji", in *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Summer, 1998), pp. 257-288.
- Toshikazu, Shinno, and Nenzi, Laura, "Journeys, Pilgrimages, Excursions: Religious Travels in the Early Modern Period", in *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (Winter, 2002), pp. 447-471.

- Ueda, Makoto (ed.), *The Mother of Dreams and Other Short Stories: Portrayals of Women in Modern Japanese Fiction*, Tōkyō - New York: Kodansha International, 1986.
- Washburn, Dennis, "Toward a View from Nowhere: Perspective and Ethical Judgment in *Fires on the Plain*", in *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1, Winter 1997, pp. 105-131.
- Whittier Treat, John, "Atomic Bomb Literature and the Documentary Fallacy", in *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1, Winter 1988, pp. 27-57.
- , *Pools of Water, Pillars of Fire. The Literature of Ibuse Masuji*, Seattle - London: University of Washington Press, 1988.
- , *Writing Ground Zero*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Williams, Mark B., *Endō Shūsaku. A Literature of Reconciliation*, London - New York, Routledge, 1999.
- Shimazu, Naoko, "Popular Representations of the Past: The Case of Postwar Japan", in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 38, No. 1, *Redesigning the Past* (January 2003), pp. 101-116.
- Zimmerman, Eve, *Out of the Alley. Nakagami Kenji and the Poetics of Outcaste Fiction*, Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007.

OTHER SELECTED WORKS

- Butor, Michel, *La modificazione (La modification, 1957)*, Roma: Fandango, 2006.
- Byron, George Gordon, *Cain, A Mystery* (1830), original text and Italian translation, Milano: Mursia, 2003.
- Chatwin, Bruce, *In Patagonia*, London: Vintage, 1998 (1977).
- , *The Viceroy of Ouidah* (1980), London: Vintage, 1998.
- , *On the Black Hill* (1982), London: Vintage, 1998.
- , *The Songlines* (1987), London: Vintage, 1998.
- , *Utz* (1988), London: Vintage, 1998.
- , *What Am I Doing Here*, London: Vintage, 1989.

- Chatwin, Bruce, *Anatomy of Restlessness: Selected Writings 1969-1989* (ed. by Jan Borm and Matthew Graves, 1996), London: Penguin Books, 1997.
- Conrad, Joseph, *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- , *Heart of Darkness* (1899), New York & London: Norton, 2006.
- , *Lord Jim* (1900), London: Penguin, 2007.
- , *Falk: A Reminiscence* (1901), original text and Italian translation, Venezia: Marsilio, 1994.
- , *The Secret Sharer* (1909), London: Penguin, 1995.
- Hesse, Hermann, *Demian* (1919), London and Chester Springs: Peter Owen, 2009.
- Hugo, Victor, *La Légende des siècles, La Fin de Satan, Dieu*, Paris: Gallimard, 1950.
- Joyce, James, *Ulysses* (1922), London: Penguin, 2000.
- , *Finnegan's Wake* (1939), London: Penguin, 2000.
- Melville, Herman, *Billy Budd, Sailor, and Selected Tales* (1962 and 1987), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Saramago, José, *Caim* (2009), Italian translation *Caino*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 2010.
- Steinbeck, John, *Of Mice and Men* (1937), London: Penguin, 2000.
- , *East of Eden* (1952), London: Penguin, 2000.
- Trocchi, Alexander, *Cain's Book* (1960), London: Calder, 1992.
- Unamuno, Miguel de, *Abel Sanchez and Other Stories* (*Abel Sánchez*, 1917), Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1996.

CRITICAL LITERATURE AND OTHER STUDIES

- AA.VV., *Errance et Marginalité dans la Littérature, Recherches sur l'imaginaire*, Cahier XXXII, Presses de l'Université d'Angers, 2007.
- AA.VV., *Per Bruce Chatwin. Omaggio a un irrequieto*, Imola: Editrice La Mandragora, 1999.
- Adams, G. Percy, *Travel literature and the evolution of the novel*, Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1983.
- Allison, Christopher FitzSimons, *Guilt, Anger, and God. The Patterns of Our Discontents*, New York: The Seabury Press, 1972.
- Amalfitano, Paolo (ed.), *Le configurazioni dello spazio nel romanzo del '900*, Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 1998.
- Amiran, Eyal, *Wandering and Home. Beckett's Metaphysical Narrative*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993.
- Anderson, Linda R., *Bennett, Wells and Conrad: Narrative in Transition*, London: Macmillan, 1988.
- Auerbach, Erich, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991 (1968).
- Bachelard, Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1994 (1958).
- Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Rabelais and His World*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993 (1941, 1965).
- , *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Baioni, Giuliano, *Kafka, Romanzo e Parabola*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1962.
- , *Kafka. Letteratura ed ebraismo*, Torino: Einaudi, 1984.
- Ballanche, Pierre-Simon, *La Ville des expiations et autres textes*, Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1981.
- Barré, Michael L., "'Wandering about' as a *Topos* of Depression in Ancient Near Eastern Literature and in the Bible", in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 60, no. 3, July 2001, pp. 177-187.
- Barthes, Roland, *Miti d'oggi*, Torino: Einaudi, 1994.

- Bartkowski, Frances, *Travelers, immigrants, inmates. Essays in Estrangement*, Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995.
- Bell, Michael, and Poellner, Peter (eds.), *Myth and the Making of Modernity. The Problem of Grounding in Early Twentieth-century Literature*, Amsterdam – Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998.
- Belpoliti, Marco, *Doppio zero. Una mappa portatile della contemporaneità*, Torino: Einaudi, 2003.
- Berenbaum, Michael, and Skolnik Fred (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd edition, Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007.
- Berthoud, Jacques, *Joseph Conrad: The Major Prose*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 (1978).
- Beth, Sarah, “Hindi Dalit Autobiography: an Exploration of Identity”, in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2006), pp. 1-30.
- Bienati, Luisa (ed.), *Letteratura giapponese*, 2 vols., Torino: Einaudi, 2005.
- Birch, David, “Strategy and Contingency”, in Verdonk, Peter, and Weber, Jean-Jacques (eds.), *Twentieth Century Fiction. From Text to Context*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, pp. 220-230.
- Blacker, Carmen, “The Folklore of the Stranger: A Consideration of a Disguised Wandering Saint”, in *Folklore*, vol. 101, no. 2, 1990, pp. 162-168.
- Blanton, Casey, *Travel Writing. The Self and the World*, London: Routledge, 2002.
- Bloom, Harold (ed.), *Mary Shelley*, Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985.
- (ed.), *Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness*, New York and Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.
- Bocconi, Andrea, *Viaggiare e non partire*, Parma: Guanda Editore, 2002.
- Boitani, Piero, *L'ombra di Ulisse. Figure di un mito*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992.
- , *Ri-Scritture*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997.
- Bonadei, Rossana, *I sensi del viaggio*, Milano: Franco Angeli, 2007.
- Braude, Pearl F., ““Cokkel in oure Clene Corn”: Some Implications of Cain's Sacrifice”, in *Gesta*, vol. 7, 1968, pp. 15-28.
- Bresler, Laurence, *The origins of popular travel and travel literature in Japan*, University Microfilms International, Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1975.

- Briggs, Katharine M., "The Legends of Lilith and of the Wandering Jew in Nineteenth-Century Literature", in *Folklore*, vol. 92, no. 2, 1981, pp. 132-140.
- Brieger, Auguste, *Kain und Abel in der deutschen Dichtung*, in *Stoff- und Motivgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & co., 1934.
- Brinton Perera, Sylvia, *The Scapegoat Complex. Toward a Mythology of Shadow and Guilt*, Toronto: Inner City Books, 1986.
- Brodie, Thomas L., *Genesis as Dialogue. A Literary, Historical, & Theological Commentary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Brooks, Peter, *Reading the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, New York: Vintage, 1985.
- Brothers, Barbara, and Gergits, Julia M. (eds.), *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vols. 195 and 204, *British Travel Writers*, Detroit: A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book, Gale Research, 1998-1999.
- Brown, Dale W., "'To Be a Saint': Frederick Buechner's *The Final Beast* and Rewriting Graham Greene", in *Religion & Literature*, vol. 24, no. 2, summer 1992, pp. 51-65.
- Bruckner, Pascal, *La tyrannie de la pénitence. Essai sur le masochisme occidental*, Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2006.
- Brunel, Pierre (ed.), *Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes*, London and New York: Routledge, 1992 (1988).
- Buber, Martin, *Good and Evil; Two Interpretations*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953.
- Buzard James, *The Beaten Track. European Tourism, Literature, and the ways to culture, 1800-1918*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
- Calasso, Roberto, *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*, London: Vintage, 1994 (*Le nozze di Cadmo e Armonia*, 1988).
- , *La follia che viene dalle Ninfe*, Milano: Adelphi, 2005.
- Carroll, John, *The Role of Guilt in the Formation of Ancient Judaism*, Melbourne: La Trobe University Sociology Papers, 1984.
- Caner, Daniel, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002.

- Chambers, Iain, *Paesaggi migratori. Cultura e identità nell'epoca postcoloniale*, Roma: Meltemi, 2003 (*Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, 1994).
- Chialant, Maria Teresa (ed.), *Viaggio e letteratura*, Venezia: Marsilio, 2006.
- (ed.), *Erranze, transiti testuali, storie di emigrazione e di esilio*, Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2001.
- , and Rao, Eleonora (eds.), *Per una topografia dell'altrove. Spazi altri nell'immaginario letterario e culturale di lingua inglese*, Napoli: Liguori Editore, 1995.
- Clapp, Susannah, *Con Chatwin*, Milano: Adelphi, 1998.
- Cocker, Mark, *Loneliness and Time. The Story of British Travel Writing*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1992.
- Coleman, Vernon, *Guilt. Why it happens and how to overcome it*, London: Sheldon Press, 1982.
- Conger, Syndy M., Frank, Frederick S., and O' Dea, Gregory (eds.), *Iconoclastic Departures: Mary Shelley after Frankenstein*, Canbury, London and Mississauga: Associated University Presses, 1997.
- Cornyetz, Nina, *Dangerous Women, Deadly Words. Phallic Fantasy and Modernity in Three Japanese Writers*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Coroneos, Con, *Space, Conrad, and Modernity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Cosgrove, Denis, and Daniels, Stephen, *The Iconography of Landscape. Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992 (1988).
- Daleski, H. M., *Joseph Conrad: The Way to Dispossession*, London: Faber and Faber, 1977.
- Davidson, Arnold E., *Conrad's Endings: A Study of the Five Major Novels*, Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 2003 (1984).
- Del Grande, Carlo, *Hybris. Colpa e castigo nell'espressione poetica e letteraria degli scrittori della Grecia antica / Da Omero a Cleante*, Napoli: Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1947.
- Demetz, Peter, *Postwar German Literature. A Critical Introduction*, New York: Pegasus, 1970.

- Demetz, Peter, *After the Fires. Recent Writings in the Germanies, Austria, and Switzerland*, San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986.
- Dietz, Maribel, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims. Ascetic Travel in the Mediterranean World, A.D. 300-800*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005.
- Eagleton, Terry, *Exiles and Émigrés. Studies in Modern Literature*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1970.
- Fiorentino, Francesco (ed.), *Raccontare e descrivere*, Roma: Bulzoni, 1997.
- Fortunati, Vita, *Intertestualità e citazione fra Modernismo e Postmodernismo*, in: "Leitmotiv", 2/2002, www.ledonline.it/leitmotiv.
- Foucault, Michel, "Des espaces autres" (conférence au Cercle d'études architecturales, 14 mars 1967), in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, no. 5, October 1984, pp. 46-49.
- Franklin, H. Bruce, "Strange Scenarios: Science Fiction, the Theory of Alienation, and the Nuclear Gods", in *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2, *Nuclear War and Science Fiction*, July 1986, pp. 117-128.
- Frazer, James George, *Folklore in the Old Testament. Studies in Comparative Religion Legend and Law*, 3 vols., London: MacMillan, 1918.
- Frediani, Federica, *Uscire. La scrittura di viaggio al femminile: dai paradigmi mitici alle immagini orientaliste*, Reggio Emilia: Diabasis, 2007.
- French, Marilyn, *The Book as World. James Joyce's Ulysses*, New York: Paragon House, 1993 (1976).
- Freud, Sigmund, *Totem and Taboo*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1942 (1913).
- , *Civilization and Its Discontents* [1930] / "Civilized" *Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness*, London: Penguin, 2002.
- , *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), London: Hogarth Press, 1939.
- Frye, Northrop, *Anatomy of Criticism* (foreword by Harold Bloom), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000 (1957).
- , *The Great Code. The Bible and Literature*, San Diego-New York-London: Harvest, 1983 (1982).
- Fulmer, O. Bryan, "The Ancient Mariner and the Wandering Jew", in *Studies in Philology*, vol. 66, no. 5, October 1969, pp. 797-815.

- Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes, *The Wandering Jew. essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Gelder, Ann, "Wandering in Exile: Byron and Pushkin", in *Comparative Literature*, vol. 42, no. 4, autumn 1990, pp. 319-334.
- Genese, Cecil, *Nazi Germany and British Guilt*, Bournemouth: Purbeck Publications, 1995.
- Genette, Gérard, *Figure III. Discorso del racconto*, Torino: Einaudi, 1976.
- Gibson, Andrew, *Towards a Postmodern Theory of Narrative*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996.
- Gilbert, Margaret, "Collective Guilt and Collective Guilt Feelings", in *The Journal of Ethics*, vol. 6, no. 2, *Collective Responsibility*, 2002, pp. 115-143.
- Gill, Glen Robert, *Northrop Frye and the Phenomenology of Myth*, Toronto-Buffalo-London: University of Toronto Press, 2006.
- Gillon, Adam, *The Eternal Solitary: A Study of Joseph Conrad*, New York: Bookman Associates, 1966 (1960).
- Girard, René, *La violenza e il sacro (La violence et le sacré)* (1972), Milano: Adelphi, 2008.
- , *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World (Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde)*, (1978), Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987.
- , *Il capro espiatorio (Le bouc émissaire)*, (1982), Milano: Adelphi, 1999.
- Gnoli, Antonio, *La nostalgia dello spazio*, Milano: Bompiani, 2000.
- Goodman, Paul, *Cain and Abel*, in *Five Young American Poets*, second series 1941, Norfolk: New Directions, 1941, pp. 1-25.
- Goonetilleke, D. C. R. A., *Joseph Conrad: Beyond Culture and Background*, London: Macmillan, 1990.
- Griffith, John W., *Joseph Conrad and the Anthropological Dilemma: Bewildered Traveller*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- Gruber, Mayer I., "The Tragedy of Cain and Abel: A Case of Depression", in *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, vol. 69, no. 2, October 1978, pp. 89-97.

- Hampson, Robert, *Joseph Conrad: Betrayal and Identity*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.
- Harada, Hiroko, *Aspects of Post-War German and Japanese Drama (1945-1970). Reflections on War, Guilt, and Responsibility*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000.
- Hasan-Rokem, Galit, and Dundes, Alan, *The Wandering Jew. essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Hirst, Wolf Z., "Byron's Lapse into Orthodoxy: An Unorthodox Reading of Cain", in *Keats-Shelley Journal*, vol. 29, 1980, pp. 151-172.
- Hooke, S. H., "Cain and Abel", in *Folklore*, vol. 50, no. 1, March 1939, pp. 58-65.
- Horne, Alistair (ed.), *Telling Lives. From W. B. Yeats to Bruce Chatwin*, London: Macmillan, 2000.
- Hornblower, G. D., "Cain and Abel: The Choice of Kind of Sacrifice", in *Man*, vol. 44, March - April 1944, pp. 45-46.
- Hughes, Judith M., *Guilt and its Vicissitudes: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Morality*, London and New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Hussherr, Cécile, *L'ange et la bête. Caïn et Abel dans la littérature*, Paris: Cerf, 2005.
- Ignatieff, Michael, "An Interview with Bruce Chatwin", in *Granta: The Story-teller*, no. 21, Cambridge: Granta Publications, spring 1987, pp. 23-37.
- Iser, Wolfgang, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.
- Jarvis, Robin, *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel*, London: MacMillan Press, 1997.
- Jasper, David, and Prickett, Stephen, with Hass, Andrew (eds.), *The Bible and Literature. A Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.
- Jaspers, Karl, *The Question of German Guilt*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2000 (1947).
- Jeffrey, David Lyle (ed.), *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992.
- Jung, Carl Gustav, *Psychology and Western Religion*, London and New York: Ark, 1998.

- Jung, Carl Gustav, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Second Edition, Hove: Routledge, 2010.
- Kagan, Jerome, "The Parental Love Trap", in *Psychology Today*, August 1978.
- Kaminsky, Joel S., *Yet I Loved Jacob. Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007.
- Kaplan, Caren, *Questions of Travel – Postmodern Discourse of Displacement*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996.
- Kearney, Richard, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters. Interpreting Otherness*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Kermode, Frank, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Kienzle, Ulrike, Kirsch, Winfried, and Neuhaus, Dietrich (eds.), *Kain und Abel. Die biblische Geschichte und ihre Gestaltung in bildender und dramatischer Kunst, Literatur und Musik*, Frankfurt am Mein: Haag und Harchen, 1998.
- Kishida, Shu, *A Place for Apology. War, Guilt and US-Japan Relations*, Lanham: Hamilton Books, 2004.
- Knight, Diane, *Barthes and Utopia. Space, Travel, Writing*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1997.
- Korte, Barbara, *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations*, London: MacMillan Press, 2000.
- Kowalewski, Michael (ed.), *Temperamental Journeys – Essays on the modern literature of travel*, Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1992.
- Krajka, Wieslaw, *Isolation and Ethos: A Study of Joseph Conrad*, Boulder: East European Monographs, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.
- Krist, Gary, "Ironic Journeys: Travel Writing in the Age of Tourism", in *The Hudson Review*, vol. 45, no. 4, winter 1993, pp. 593-601.
- Kselman, John S., "'Wandering about' and Depression: More Examples", in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 61, no. 4. October 2002, pp. 275-277.
- Ladner, Gerhart B., "*Homo Viator*: Mediaeval Ideas on Alienation and Order", in *Speculum* 42, no. 2, 1967.
- Leed, Eric J., *The Mind of the Traveller from Gilgamesh to Global Tourism*, New York: Basic Books, 1991.

- Léonard-Roques, Véronique, *Cain, figure de la modernité*, Paris: Champion, 2003.
- , *Cain et Abel. Rivalité et responsabilité*, Paris: Éditions du Rocher, 2007.
- Lombardi, Chiara (ed.), *Il personaggio. Figure della dissolvenza e della permanenza*, Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2008.
- Lord, Ursula, *Solitude versus Solidarity in the Novels of Joseph Conrad. Political and Epistemological Implications of Narrative Innovation*, Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998.
- Loubier, Pierre, *Le Poète au labyrinthe. Ville, errance, écriture*, Fontenay-Saint-Cloud: Ens Éditions, 1998.
- Lyotard, Jean-François, *La condizione postmoderna*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1985.
- Mairet, Philip (ed.), *Christian Essays in Psychiatry*, London: S.C.M. Press, 1956.
- Manacorda, Mario Alighiero, *Lettura laica della Bibbia*, Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1996 (1989).
- Martin, Timothy P., "Joyce, Wagner, and the Wandering Jew", in *Comparative Literature*, vol. 42, no. 1, winter 1990, pp. 49-72.
- Matthews, Honor, *The Primal Curse. The Myth of Cain and Abel in the Theatre*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1967.
- McCarthy, Patrick A., *Forests of Symbols: World, Text & Self in Malcolm Lowry's Fiction*, Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1994.
- McCarthy, Patrick A., and Tiessen, Paul (eds.), *Joyce/Lowry. Critical Perspectives*, Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997.
- MacKay, Marina, *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of World War II*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- McKenzie, John, *Guilt. Its Meaning and Significance*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1962.
- Meanor, Patrick, *Bruce Chatwin*, Twayne's English Author Series, no. 542, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997.
- Melani, Sandro, *Lontani altrove. Configurazioni del mondo in Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Kazuo Ishiguro e Bruce Chatwin*, Viterbo: Sette città, 2002.
- Mellor, Anne K., *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, New York & London: 1988.

- Mellinkoff, Ruth, *The Mark Of Cain*, Berkley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1981.
- Metzger, Bruce M., and Coogan, Michael D. (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Montiglio, Silvia, *Wandering in Ancient Greek Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Morpurgo, Salomone, *L'ebreo errante in Italia*, Firenze: Alla libreria Dante in Firenze, 1891.
- Moretti, Franco, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900*, London: Verso, 1998.
- , *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*, London: Verso, 2005.
- Morris, Herbert (ed.), *Guilt and Shame*, Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1971.
- Morris, Pam (ed.), *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov*, London: Edward Arnold, 1994.
- Murray, Nicholas, *Bruce Chatwin*, Mid Glamorgan: Seren Books, 1993.
- Orlando, Francesco, *Gli oggetti desueti nelle immagini della letteratura*, Torino: Einaudi, 1994.
- Owen, D. D. R., *The Wandering Giant in Literature: From Polyphemus to Papageno*, East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2003.
- Palmer, Michael, *Freud and Jung on Religion*, London: Routledge, 1997.
- Parrinder, Patrick, "From Mary Shelley to The War of the Worlds: The Thames Valley Catastrophe", in *Anticipations: Essays on Early Science Fiction and its Precursors* (ed. by David Seed), Liverpool: Syracuse University Press, 1995.
- Quinones, Ricardo J., *The Changes of Cain: Violence and the Lost Brother in Cain and Abel Literature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- Perry, T. A., "Cain's Sin in Gen. 4:1-7: Oracular Ambiguity and How to Avoid It", in *Prooftexts*, no. 25, 2005, pp. 258-275.
- Potts, Rolf, *Vagabonding. L'arte di girare il mondo*, Ponte alle Grazie, Milano 2004.
- Reik, Theodor, *Myth and Guilt. The Crime and Punishment of Mankind*, London: Hutchinson & Co., 1958 (1957).

- Ricoeur, Paul, *Finitude et culpabilité*, Paris: Aubier, 1960 (Italian translation *Finitudine e colpa*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1970).
- , *Time and Narrative*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Righter, William, "Myth and Interpretation", in *New Literary History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, *On Interpretation: I*, winter 1972, pp. 319-344.
- Rubino, Gianfranco (ed.), *Figure dell'erranza. Immaginario del percorso nel romanzo francese contemporaneo*, Roma: Bulzoni, 1991.
- Russell, Alison, *Crossing Boundaries. Postmodern Travel Literature*, New York: Palgrave, 2000.
- Russell, Ford, *Northrop Frye on Myth*, New York and London: Routledge, 2000 (1998).
- Rushdie, Salman, *Imaginary Homelands. Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*, London: Granta Books, 1991, pp. 232-240.
- Said, Edward W., *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Sanvitale, Francesca, *Camera ottica. Pagine di letteratura e realtà*, Torino: Einaudi, 1999.
- Shakespeare, Nicholas, *Bruce Chatwin*, Milano: Baldini & Castoldi, 1999.
- Shulman, George M., "The Myth of Cain: Fratricide, City Building, and Politics", in *Political Theory*, vol. 14, no. 2, May 1986, pp. 215-238.
- Singh, Kalu, *Ideas in Psychoanalysis: Guilt*, Cambridge: Icon Books, 2000.
- Solnit, Rebecca, *Wanderlust. A History of Walking*, Penguin Books, New York 2000.
- Soja, Edward W., *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, London: Verso, 1990.
- Spender, Stephen, "Movements and Influences in English Literature, 1927-1952", in *Books Abroad*, vol. 27, no. 1, winter 1953, pp. 4-32.
- Speziale-Bagliacca, Roberto, *Guilt. Revenge, Remorse and Responsibility after Freud*, with a foreword by Frank Kermode, Hove and New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004 (1997).
- Sussman, Charlotte, "'Islanded in the World': Cultural Memory and Human Mobility in *The Last Man*", in *PMLA*, vol. 118, no. 2, March 2003, pp. 286-301.

- Tillich, Paul, *Systematic Theology*, London: Nisbet, 1951-1963.
- Turner, Victor and Edith, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.
- Vees-Gulani, Susanne, *Trauma and Guilt. Literature of Wartime Bombing in Germany*, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003.
- Verley, Claudine (ed.), *Bruce Chatwin*, "Les Cahiers Forell", no. 4, Poitiers: Université de Poitiers, november 1994.
- Watt, Ian, *The Country and the City*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1985 (1973).
- , *Myths of Modern Individualism. Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Westerink, Herman, *A Dark Trace. Sigmund Freud on the Sense of Guilt*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009 (2005).
- White, Victor, "Guilt: Theological and Psychological", in Mairet, Philip (ed.), *Christian Essays in Psychiatry*, London: S.C.M. Press, 1956.
- Wright, Terry R., *The Genesis of Fiction. Modern Novelists as Biblical Interpreters*, Aldershot/ Burlington: Ashgate, 2007.
- Ziolkowski, Theodore, *The Sin of Knowledge. Ancient Themes and Modern Variations*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Zweig, Paul, *The Adventurer*, New York: Basic Books, 1974.