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# “A dark archway of rusticated stone”: depictions of moral obligation in Greene’s *The Human Factor* and Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*

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“A dark archway of rusticated stone”: Depictions of Moral Obligation in Greene’s

*The Human Factor* and Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*

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Presented to

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts in English Literature and Writing

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By

Thomas J. Carter

Spring 2019

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## MASTER'S THESIS

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## Introduction—

### “Reborn from its own embers”: Conversion as a Gradual Process

The search for moral clarity is a fundamental human endeavor. This thesis will examine issues of morality and moral obligation in Graham Greene’s *The Human Factor* and Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*. I will argue that both novels pose moral frameworks that subvert the flawed twentieth century ethos of materialism and State ideology. Through the use of textual evidence, theory, and my own analytical terminology, I intend to explore the tense moral dynamics which pervade *The Human Factor* and *Brideshead*. The structure of my thesis begins with an introduction, followed by a chapter focusing on theory, a chapter focusing on *The Human Factor*, a chapter focusing on *Brideshead*, and a conclusion. As far the structure of this introduction, I will begin by introducing my key terms. I will then move into an explanation of why I have chosen to work with these particular authors, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene. Finally, I offer a study of conversion theory which will provide a groundwork for my analysis of moral obligation.

The two key terms which I will apply to *The Human Factor* are “the human family” and “gamification.” Gamification is a product of 20th century materialism which threatens to reduce humanity to an amoral game—politics, espionage, and war are viewed as opportunities to win points over a perceived opponent. Any people involved in the game are morphed into expendable pawns. The human family is an alternate perspective which places our moral obligation to other people in familial terms. That is, our moral obligation for people around the world is akin to the obligation we have for our nuclear families. The human family prompts us to consider and help people beyond our close

friends and nuclear family. Though we may not know the people who are suffering in other parts of the world, these people are connected to us. They are not mere pawns to be sacrificed for political gain.

The two key terms which I will apply to *Brideshead* are “love in the present” and “the perfection fallacy.” Love in the present poses that we have a moral obligation to love people not solely for who they once were or for who they might be, but for who they are in the present. This theory applies to love for ourselves as well; fixation on past mistakes or on future travails hinders our ability to love ourselves. If we do not love ourselves in the present, we cannot accept our decisions of the past and the uncertainty of the future. Love in the present subverts a problematic 20th century ideology which I have termed the perfection fallacy. The perfection fallacy is a fallacy because it values and seeks what is impossible. On an individual level, striving to perfect ourselves causes us to amplify our current perceived imperfections. The mistakes of the past become objects to justify our unworthiness of love. Thus self-hatred is engendered by the perfection fallacy. On a societal level, the effort to perfect society has a similar effect, magnifying the perceived imperfections of that society. This magnification results in hatred for certain groups, races, etc., who are perceived as hindering the creation of a social utopia—the creation of a society deserving of love. Society then risks devolving into war and self-destruction, ironically placing it further from its own unrealistic standard. When we abide by love in the present, such an abidance does not prohibit us from working towards the social good. Rather, when we accept that society will never be perfect, we are better able to cope with the inevitable pitfalls involved in any social work, and we are better able to persevere in spite of setbacks. It is not easy to practice love in the present, but such a practice

challenges the mephitic perfection fallacy. The examination of these variform moral tapestries illuminates the ideological strife and search for moral clarity that characterized the 20th century.

Having introduced the moral frameworks which I will apply to *The Human Factor* and *Brideshead*, I would like to turn to a discussion of my paper's overarching term, moral obligation. All of the chapters of my thesis deal with this term. Thus it is imperative that I provide a provisional definition of this concept near the beginning of my paper. To better articulate the focus of my thesis, I will share some of my developing thoughts on the idea of moral obligation: Moral frameworks like the human family and love in the present are not to be thought of as dogma. In his *History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault notes that morality need not be conveyed through a specific moral code. Morals can be "transmitted in a diffuse manner, so that, far from constituting a systematic ensemble, they form a complex interplay of elements that counterbalance and correct one another" (25). The sense of moral obligation to the human family, for example, does not require us to follow a specific set of edicts. Rather, as we think of other people in familial terms, our perception of their humanity and of the interconnected nature of our realities is emphasized. This "interplay of elements" prompts us to include the human family in our moral evaluation of a given action.

In order to better define moral obligation, the notion of morality must be distinguished from other related terms, such as ethics. Though ethics and morals are sometimes used interchangeably, morals are more broadly applicable, whereas ethics refer to a more specific area of action. Thus we have "business ethics" rather than "business morals." Other fields have their own ethical standards—medical ethics,



academic ethics, etc. Issues arise when these fields intersect; a hospital that is run like a business may adhere to ethical business standards, but not necessarily to ethical healthcare standards. Furthermore, morality has a personal aspect; it arises from within and is tied to our personal experiences. It is this subjective and somewhat opaque mode of origination that renders morality a difficult concept to articulate. Ethics is more conducive to codification. However, an ethical code, such as that which a state BAR association requires of its practicing attorneys, leaves less room for individual and exceptional circumstances; a lawyer's ethical code does not come from within, but from without, from powers which have not taken her situation or personal life experiences into consideration. Ethics, then, struggles to apply to all situations. The Ten Commandments might be considered an example of this struggle—"Honor thy father and thy mother" is reasonable advice in some circumstances, but not in all. Ethics attempts a level of objectivity that morality resists. I specify "attempts" because ethics still arises from humans, and thus it is inherently subjective. Ethical codes are valuable in certain professions and disciplines, but such codes cannot replace our sense of morality.

Like ethics, "law" is another term with which morality is sometimes associated. While some people hold that following the law is morally admirable, it is questionable whether following any law is inherently good. That is, abiding by the law *because* it is the law is insufficient justification. To blindly follow any law without considering its moral repercussions, assuring ourselves that because it is the law we are doing the right thing by following it, is severely problematic. Yet, we are encouraged not to question laws because laws are presented to us as authoritative discourse. Mikhail Bakhtin writes that such discourse "binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade

us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it” (78). There is no need for law to persuade us because it is already imbued with authority; our thoughts about the law are irrelevant and therefore internal criticism of law is disincentivized. Unlike morality, there is no option for us to develop our own legal compass; we either obey the law or we break the law. One could object that laws can be changed, but while a law exists it can only be obeyed or broken. Given the law’s presentation as authoritative discourse, people are led to accept that disobedience of law is immoral, thus solidifying the conflation of law and morality.

Yet morality is not law. To continue with Bakhtin’s theory, I argue that morality arises as an internal discourse. Bakhtin describes internally persuasive discourse as the process of our minds taking in and evaluating the discourses of others. As we evaluate these “alien discourses” (79), our sense of self develops. Bakhtin, then, theorizes that internally persuasive discourse shapes our consciousness. For this thesis, I will adjust Bakhtin’s terminology by using the phrase “internal discourse” rather than internally persuasive discourse. My concern with “internally persuasive discourse” is that it suggests that only one side of the conversation has agency, that one side is persuading the other(s). Internal discourse is more suggestive of an egalitarian, evaluative conversation within oneself. A healthy internal discourse should not have the appearance of a single orator using rhetorical techniques to persuade an audience; it should have the appearance of a scholarly conversation among respected colleagues. Such conversations help our consciousness grow.

I would add that our sense of morality is a part of our consciousness. Therefore, internal discourse shapes our sense of morality. Authoritative discourse, as a part of the

overall discursive landscape, has some impact on our sense of morality, but it is the process of internal discourse which shapes the external stimuli into a cogent moral scaffolding. When evaluating whether we are morally obligated to commit a particular act, we are using the process of internal discourse to arrive at a decision.

I offer this initial exploration of morality and moral obligation as an example of the kind of theory I will discuss in chapter one and expand upon in my chapters on *The Human Factor* and *Brideshead*. These novels contain overarching moral dilemmas which the protagonists seek to address. In my thesis I endeavor to (1) identify these dilemmas and (2) identify the alternative moral frameworks which the novels present. In doing so, I will make a small but worthwhile addition to our understanding of moral obligation in the modern world. The moral struggles which characterized the 20th century—issues of family, law, spirituality, loyalty, and State ideology—remain unresolved in the 21st century. We stand before the breaking dawn, an uncertain future on the horizon, looking to glean what insight we can from our lives and the lives that came before us, from the works of art, literature, science, and theory that are our inheritance. Only through continued investigation into the nature of right action can we progress as individuals and as a society.

One of the goals of this introduction is to address why I have chosen to work with these particular writers. While Waugh and Greene are both storied British novelists, this correlation alone is not enough to justify their work as the focus of my thesis. Nor are the many other parallels between their lives—from education at Oxford to their participation in the British military—sufficient justifications in themselves. I propose, rather, that these authors present uniquely complex portrayals of moral obligation in their works, and that

analyzing their works in concert prompts insights into these portrayals that studying them alone cannot. Both Waugh and Greene lived through WWI and WWII. They were acutely aware that the moral ethos of the twentieth century had failed in some respect, or in many respects. In a 1938 letter to *The New Statesman*, Waugh warned against the spread of fascism and the possibility that fascism could rise in England (“5 March 1938”). Though Waugh’s conflation of fascism and socialism in the article is misguided, his concern for English society is genuine. Likewise, Greene said in a 1980 interview that “what is happening in the world at present impairs any serenity I may have acquired. I believe—without being totally convinced—that we’re heading for a Third World War; that at all events we’re going through a very dangerous time” (Allain 183). Greene, like Waugh, recognized that we have become ensconced in a moral opacity which, on the individual level, has fostered depression and anger, hindering the love and sense of purpose which we need to find happiness and meaning in life. And, on the societal level, the faulty compass has engendered war, mass paranoia, dehumanization, and hatred of the Other. Technological advances have improved some aspects of our lives, but technology is not a panacea. The veneer of civilization can easily crumble with the press of a button, the entry of a launch code, an insult given in jest but taken in earnest. To get to the heart of the matter, humans must address the moral strife which pervades the modern world. Both Greene and Waugh recognized this necessity and responded by seeking clarity in the spiritual. The two authors chose to convert to Catholicism in their 20s. Greene converted in February 1926 (Sherry 263-65), and Waugh converted in September 1930 (Patey 35). I will investigate the reasoning behind each author’s conversion separately and then compare them.

One of the popular narratives about Greene's conversion is that he chose to do so in order to marry his Catholic fiancé Vivien Dayrell-Browning. In *The Quest for Graham Greene: A Biography*, W.J. West notes that no rule existed in the Catholic Church that required one's conversion in order to marry a Catholic (4). Thus the conversion-as-a-necessity-for-marriage narrative is dubious. Nor would that narrative answer why Greene remained a Catholic after separating from Vivien in 1947. It is worth looking more deeply into Greene's reasoning. West traces elements of Catholic sympathy to earlier in Greene's life. For example, in a formal debate at Berkhamsted in February 1921, Greene "made an impassioned contribution on the situation in Ireland" (6). That is, Greene supported Ireland in the Irish War of Independence, a controversial stance in England at the time. The Irish War of Independence was viewed not only as a political war but also as a war between Catholics and Protestants; the War was an attempt to fight both political and religious oppression. For Greene, then, Catholicism was intertwined with politics. Greene's dislike of religious oppression later superseded his support for Ireland and IRA, the latter of whom Greene claimed were terrorizing Catholics and Protestants alike (6). Religio-moral concerns took precedence over Greene's loyalty to his State or to any State.

Along with the political, there was also a psycho-spiritual component to Greene's decision to convert. As a youth, Greene suffered from severe bouts of depression. In his autobiography *A Sort of Life*, Greene recalls his suicidal ideations and his obsession with his brother's pistol, which he once put to his temple and fired, knowing there was one bullet somewhere in the chamber. While he refers to this act of Russian roulette as "semisuicidal" (130), the "semi" is questionable, and his act is certainly emblematic of

his deep mental health issues. Poor mental health has been asserted as one of the by-products engendered by modern society. In “Anomie in the Metropolis,” Hans Pols describes modern society as having created a sense of anomie among people (198). Anomie is a feeling of dispossession, a breaking down of the traditional structure and moral standards of a society. Given the disturbing world of Berkhamstead School—which Greene described as “a hundred and four weeks of monotony, humiliation, and mental pain” (*A Sort of Life* 88)—followed by the incongruous mix of freedom and pressure to succeed at Oxford, it is quite likely that some of Greene’s inner conflicts derived from anomie. Through spirituality, Greene found some relief from his psychological struggles. In an interview, Greene credits Catholicism with having positively affected his mental health: “I don’t mean in terms of professional success or in terms of money, but in terms of happiness” (qtd. in Allain 164). While happiness is a difficult feeling to gauge, the fact that Greene perceived some spiritual and psychological solace in his religion indicates a motive for conversion other than marriage.

I should be clear that Greene did not convert from Protestantism to Catholicism; he converted from atheism to Catholicism. In *The Life of Graham Greene: Vol. 1*, Norman Sherry notes that, though Greene had a Protestant upbringing, this religion did not resonate with him (254). By the time he went to Oxford, Greene identified as an atheist. Indeed, he was recognized for his skilled arguments in favor of atheism. Robin Turton, a classmate of Greene’s at Oxford, wrote, “I think in my life I’ve never heard atheism put forward better than by Graham” (qtd. in Sherry 127). It might be tempting to dismiss Greene’s atheism as a youthful phase, but his knowledge of atheist rhetoric indicates that Greene took this ideology seriously. Conversely, Greene’s avidity for

atheism demonstrates a continued interest in matters of religion. He could not have so effectively posed his arguments without possessing a thorough understanding of the opposing, pro-religious arguments. I will suggest that, in debating his colleagues, Greene was also debating himself. The search for meaning and moral clarity in life requires some inner dialogue. Greene chose to convert to Catholicism because, after considerable deliberation, he concluded that from Catholicism he had a greater chance of deriving political, moral, and spiritual meaning. To characterize Greene's conversion as a pragmatic means of marriage facilitation belies earlier evidence of Catholic and spiritual interests.

As with Greene, the popular narratives regarding Waugh's conversion are problematic. Waugh is sometimes characterized as having converted to Catholicism from a state of unthinking hedonism. It is true that Waugh had his youthful revels. In *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, Douglas Patey notes that Waugh's years at Oxford were not particularly productive from an academic standpoint; he spent much of his time in socializing, drinking, and sexual experimentation (9-16). This mode did not change after leaving Oxford. Patey describes Waugh's 20s as "an aimless round of occasional employment, parties in London, weekend trips back to Oxford...afternoons whiled away in the cinema, and, throughout, drunkenness" (16). Many of these epicurean elements are reflected in Waugh's first major novel, *Decline and Fall*, which was published before his conversion. The novel's protagonist, the hapless Paul Pennyfeather, is expelled from Scone College, Oxford due to the debauches of his colleagues. His only recourse is to live as a teacher among incompetent, uncaring faculty at a boys' school. Paul is eventually engaged to the wealthy, widowed mother of one of his students—the

Honorable Mrs. Margot Beste-Chetwynde—not knowing that her wealth comes from South American brothels (*Decline and Fall* 167). *Decline and Fall* is a biting satire of modern British culture. Simon Heffer refers to the novel as “an orgy of bad taste.” Thus, based on his early writing and his early escapades, a common narrative about Waugh is that he had no religious interest prior to his conversion. Yet, Waugh himself was not exactly promoting the irreverence of his times. Rather, his seemingly atheistic work reflects Waugh’s own internal dialogue with spiritual concerns. He was observing that a life such as Paul or Margot’s would not yield satisfaction or moral clarity which he desired. Even Waugh’s revels can be viewed as a means of taking in external information which he would subsequently evaluate. Some of his drinking partners included philosophers and theologians, such as the intellectual John Betjeman (Patey 38). Two years after *Decline and Fall*’s publication, Waugh officially converted to Catholicism (35).

By 1930, Waugh had become a celebrity, and his conversion was widely publicized by newspapers and tabloids, such as the *Daily Express* (35). Waugh himself participated in various articles and interviews, with titles such as “My Conversion to Rome, by Evelyn Waugh, the Young Novelist, A Striking Article, See Page 10 Today” (35). In these interviews, Waugh remained vague and general about conversion, and some of Waugh’s contemporaries suggested that he converted for mere aesthetic attraction, or for youthful contrarianism (37). The publicity-stunt impression of Waugh’s conversion masked the underlying reasons behind his decision. This obfuscation was likely deliberate on Waugh’s part. A man of his time, Waugh would have been uncomfortable showing any true vulnerability. Yet, behind the theatrical facade, Waugh



did have deeper reasons for his conversion. As with Greene, Waugh's conversion was not a spur of the moment decision, but a gradual exploration of spirituality, politics, religion, atheism, and other ideologies. Two of Waugh's colleagues at Oxford, Alastair Graham and Christopher Hollis, were Catholic converts. In a diary entry, Waugh wrote about a night with these two friends in which "We got drunk in the evening and argued about foreigners and absolution" (qtd. in Patey 38). Their drunkenness allowed these upper-class British gentleman some degree of safety to express their views about religion and society. One could argue that alcohol was a necessary facilitator of Waugh's until intellectual and moral growth. During his 20s Waugh was attempting to understand the moral confusion that he observed both in himself and in society. In a 1924 letter to Dudley Carew, Waugh writes "As to Oxford and myself. I cannot yet explain all the things that are about me" (qtd. in Amory 13): Waugh is examining both himself and his society, or at least the slice of society that exists at Oxford. Waugh is examining both his internal discourse and the external discourses which surround him. Though Waugh's internal discourse is still in turbulence, the word "yet" indicates that he is searching and that he intends to continue searching for a viable moral framework by which to live his life.

The characters in *Decline and Fall* reflect this moral fog. Paul Pennyfeather does take the blame for Margot's human trafficking, but he does not make the decision out of strong moral conviction; he is not a Christ-like figure of sacrifice. Pennyfeather acquiesces out of a vaguely chivalric sentiment, a confused sense of what it means to be an English gentleman (*Decline and Fall* 180-81). Such sentiment neither improves society nor Pennyfeather's own psyche. The novel finishes where it began, with Paul

back at Scone College, having learned nothing and gained nothing (236-39). Waugh himself did not want to live out a life of cyclical meaninglessness. And, like many British people of his time, Waugh anticipated the next world war: in a 1931 letter to Henry Yorke, Waugh wrote of a conversation he had with a priest in which they talked about war—“sometimes the last one and sometimes the next” (qtd. in Amory 55). The next war would mark a continuation of a cyclical struggle which, given that WWI solved little if anything, seemed unlikely to promise any concrete progress. Indeed, the cyclic nature of modern society is less a cycle and more of a downward spiral; humanity cannot survive many more world wars. By converting to Catholicism, Waugh felt he would gain the moral clarity that he lacked as an agnostic; reflecting on his conversion later in life, Waugh wrote that his life had become “unintelligible and unendurable without God” (“Come Inside” 20). The idea that the world was unintelligible to Waugh indicates that he was unable to derive any meaning from the external discourses around him and the internal discourses within him. Without a religious component, society, including the moral landscape of society, was opaque. Waugh’s conversion was an effort to find some moral intelligibility in the world. And he did not want moral intelligibility for himself alone. By advertising his conversion, Waugh hoped to spur others to convert as well, thereby promoting a more morally sustainable society.

The notion of Greene and Waugh’s conversion, and of religious conversion in general, can be further articulated by examining scholarship related to the theory of conversion. Scholarship on religious conversion is multidisciplinary, and includes psychology, philosophy, and religious criticism. I will begin with an evaluation of conversion from a psychological perspective. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*,

William James offers a preliminary definition of conversion:

To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities. (186)

James's understanding of religious conversion is fairly positive. That is, James views conversion as a beneficial experience for an individual's psyche. People who feel deep inner conflicts—feelings of meaninglessness or personal insignificance, nihilism, existential longing, coetaneous desires for incompatible conditions—have the potential to resolve those conflicts through religious conversion. James suggests that, through conversion, individuals become happier. If we assume happiness as a generally good and desirable condition, then religious conversion is a generally good and desirable process. However, James is not necessarily claiming that God or the divine exists. Nor is he claiming that conversion is a direct product of God's influence. Conversion is a psychological process in which an individual perceives or interprets a divine influence. Whether or not God actually exists, the experience of conversion is beneficial to the individual's psyche. James cites several examples of patients who improved their mental health through conversion (186-90), and there is evidence that Greene and Waugh gained some clarity and mental relief from conversion as well: While both authors continued to have psychological struggles throughout their lives, Greene never again attempted suicide, by Russian roulette or otherwise. Likewise, Waugh found the strength to

continue writing despite his alcoholism and other health problems, and he produced sixteen novels and many nonfiction works during his life. In a letter to Edith Sitwell, Waugh once wrote, “I know I am awful. But how much more awful I should be without the Faith” (qtd. in Amory 451). While Waugh is well aware of his flaws, it is evident that he derives psychological support from his religious convictions.

Furthermore, both novelists regarded Catholicism as an artistic muse. A number of scholars, such as Earle Coleman and Ernest Rubinstein, have focused on the parallels between art and religion, without arguing for a causal relationship between one and the other. However, a causal relationship between religious conversion and artistic creativity is not unthinkable. In *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination*, Mark Bosco argues that Catholicism is “an imaginative ground from which Greene's creativity draws inspiration” (4). A similar claim can be made for Waugh's relationship with Catholicism, and for many artists' relationships with religion; religious conversion creates a space of clarity in which the imagination can flourish. Many cultures attribute artistic creativity to the divine. The ancient Greeks imparted different genres of art upon different Muses. An epic poet might proffer an offering to Calliope, a lyric poet to Terpsichore (Hard 48-49). The gods could then inspire creativity within the artist. Whether or not the gods exist outside of the artist's mind, through religious devotion the artist would feel the moral and existential clarity necessary to pursue her endeavors with renewed confidence.

The notion of conversion as a catalyst for artistic productivity relates to James's characterization of conversion as a regenerative process (186). To write a novel is to generate a world with new possibilities and moral landscapes. Writing is a product of internal discourse; the conversations within the writer's mind are rendered in an external

form, on the page. Given that conversion is a form of internal discourse, the generative process of writing can function as an aspect of one's conversion; writing can bring the author closer to the unity to which James refers. Greene and Waugh's initial conversion, then, is a generative force which facilitates future conversions through writing. Such a depiction does not contradict with James's understanding of conversion—James notes that conversion can be a “gradual or sudden” process. While some people do undergo sudden spiritual transformations, the idea of conversion as an ongoing experience accords with Greene and Waugh's ongoing literary endeavors. Many of these endeavors, such as Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* and Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, include the search for spiritual clarity as an important theme.

This gradual mode of conversion is better illuminated by examining Rambo's narrative theory. In “Theories of Conversion: Understanding and Interpreting Religious Change,” Lewis Rambo describes narrative theory as a means of understanding conversion through the inner stories we construct about our lives. Conversion is an integration of spirituality into our psychological narratives. Constructing new narratives gives “new meaning to a person's definition of self, identity, relationships, and God” (265). One cannot convert from atheism to Catholicism without rewriting one's internal biography. Memories which were absent of a spiritual element become imbued with the divine. For example, one's memory of a pleasant hike through a peaceful forest is reframed as a pleasant hike through one of God's beautiful creations. The blooming of a cherry tree in spring, the death of a family member, the moral standing of a given situation, all are rewritten. Writers construct the narratives of their lives, in part, through the works that they produce. I would argue that even the writing of fictional works

constitutes an effort to reimagine or develop our inner narrative. If we accept this premise, and accept the premise that conversion is a form of narrative construction, then the writing of novels can constitute a part of one's conversion experience.

A related theory of conversion which Rambo details is identity theory—defined as the idea that conversion is an identity-forming experience (265). Identity theory takes into consideration the complexity of the modern world, which has promoted the fragmentation of people's identities. The variety of people with whom we must interact, and the variety of contexts in which we must interact with people, necessitates the creation of sub-identities; our sub-identity while speaking with a bank teller is different from our sub-identity while interacting with a grocer, an engineer, a vacuum-cleaner salesman, etc. Likewise, we are also exposed to a surfeit of information. Newspapers, radio, film, photography, and eventually the internet create a daunting mass of data to which our identities are exposed. Urbanization and industrialization foster alien landscapes which imbue the individual with a sense of anonymity, disconnection, and insignificance. The sense of community which was more common in the preindustrial era, common in part due to the necessity of communities for people's survival, becomes difficult to acquire. This lack of community also fragments our identities. Conversion, then, acts as a means of establishing and maintaining a more stable identity in the harsh conditions of the modern world. Identity theory "provides a framework within which to understand people's need for convictions and values that consolidate understandings of the self" (265). Among these values is morality. Conversion subverts the amoral, nihilistic tendencies of modernity by prompting us to think deeply about our place and purpose in

the world, and by facilitating a spiritual connection which links us not only to the divine but to other people and to the planet as a whole. When we feel connected to others, we are more likely to feel a moral obligation toward others. Moral clarity cannot thrive when our identities are fragmented and dis severed from the world. Thus conversion is a catalyst for moral development. James's assertion that conversion creates a "unified" psyche coheres with the notion of identity theory (James 186), as identity theory seeks to explain how conversion can solder the fragments of our psyches into a more unified form.

As I have agreed with James that conversion can be gradual, I would further argue that unification is not a binary with disunity, that there are degrees of unification. Full unification of the psyche cannot be achieved, at least in our human forms. We can, however, work toward identity unification through conversion processes like the construction of narratives. There are also degrees of fragmentation, and new events in our lives can exacerbate psychological dissociations. For example, when we lose a job and become unemployed, a part of our identity is lost. The loss of one part affects the whole psyche; our neural architecture is missing a buttress, destabilizing the entire structure. We may feel especially fragmented when our job is replaced by a machine; modernity creates the sense of human obsolescence. We become machines competing with other machines within a larger mechanical system; our humanity is elided. A machine does not feel a moral obligation towards another machine. In order to compete in a mechanized culture, we may feel the need to stifle our own moral senses. Thus industrialization acts as a centrifugal force, pushing our psyches outward into various unstable compartments. Conversion acts as a centripetal force, providing an inward push toward psychological unification in a world which compels our identities outward into various unstable sub-

identities, including our employment identities. Our psyches are always in flux, moving somewhere along the fragmentation-unification spectrum. But modern life has upset the dynamic, giving the centrifugal forces of fragmentation an advantage. Conversion creates an individual and social counterpoint, promoting mental stability and moral clarity.

Not all theorists have taken as positive a view of conversion as James. In “Religious Conversion, Self-Deception, and Pascal’s Wager,” Ward Jones suggests that some forms of conversion constitute acts of self-deception, including conversion based on Pascal’s Wager (167). Pascal invites people to convert to Christianity through his famous Wager. If God exists and we choose to believe in God, we will go to heaven. If God does not exist and we choose to believe in God, we will not be affected either way. Therefore, belief in God is the only rational choice. Why risk going to Hell by not believing in God? Atheists should convert as conversion cannot possibly harm them and may result in their salvation. On the surface, the Wager seems reasonable, but on closer examination there are flaws in Pascal’s ideology. Jones argues that “the Wager itself *ignores* the epistemic side of belief. The Wager ignores, that is, whether we have any support for the proposition that God exists” (172). In other words, Pascal’s Wager does not justify the value of believing in God by providing sufficient evidence that God exists, or that it is reasonably likely that He exists. If there is insufficient evidence to support the existence of God, then belief in God is pointless; we are not at risk of going to hell, nor is there a possibility of going to heaven. Indeed, belief is more than pointless, it is delusive, and therefore it is harmful to our mental faculties. Pascal’s Wager must assume that there is some evidence that God exists, but an unsupported assumption is at best a guess. A wager is not a wager if there is no chance of winning or losing. If the Wager is a mere



guess, then we are just as likely to go to Heaven by believing in and praying to a large sentient turtle; the turtle may or may not control the fate of our souls, but it is best to believe in the turtle just in case. As this example demonstrates, a Pascalian syllogism is insufficient evidence on which to base one's faith.

Converting due to Pascal's logic will not provide the kind of unifying, regenerative quality to which James refers. While religious conversion based on Pascalian reasoning may constitute a form of self-deception, it is unlikely that such reasoning was an aspect of Greene or Waugh's conversion. I have argued that both authors converted not only to generate personal clarity, but to promote social clarity as well. Pascal's Wager does nothing to help society; it is focused on what happens to our souls after death. We may be comforted by the thought that we have invested in some afterlife insurance policy, but such a policy does not affect our sense of moral obligation. Such a policy will not prevent another world war. In an interview later in his life, Greene was asked if he is afraid of hell. He replied, "No: I don't believe in it. I believe rather in a sort of purgatory" (Allain 21). Unlike hell, purgatory allows for the chance of self-improvement. In purgatory, we can work toward redemption. Waugh's emphasis on purgatory was comparable to Greene's; in a letter to John Betjeman, he wrote "We all have to become saints before we get to heaven. That is what purgatory is for" (qtd. in Amory 339). One of the premises of Pascal's Wager is that, if God exists, we can either believe and go to heaven, or disbelieve and go to hell—the possibility of purgatory, of a productive period where we work toward heaven, is not accounted for. In Catholicism, our authors found a means of personal and social improvement. If we have only to take the Wager and accept that God exists, improvement is unnecessary. We could potentially

commit immoral acts, such as murder—or, on a broader scope, war and genocide—and comfort ourselves that we are going to heaven (or, at least, that we are not going to hell) because we have accepted the Wager. Conversion for Pascalian reasoning will not ameliorate the systemic issues of the modern era; amorality, narcissism, nihilism, dehumanization, etc. Conversion based on more sound reasoning such as the aforementioned identity and narrative theories has the potential to rectify the personal and social pitfalls that we experience in the modern world. I do not intend to portray conversion as a panacea, nor do I think that Waugh or Greene viewed conversion in this way. These authors did believe that conversion could have a positive impact on the internal discourse of the individual and on the moral sustainability of modern society. However, it is not necessary to view all forms of conversion as inherently good, given that certain conversion theories, such as the Wager, are certainly problematic.

The problems associated with acceptance of the Wager do not apply to all forms of conversion, but some scholars have suggested that conversion of any kind entails a loss of individual agency: In “Merton’s ‘True Self’: Moral Autonomy and Religious Conversion,” Walter Conn explores the relationship between “moral autonomy and religious surrender” (513). Conn asks, how can we have moral autonomy if we submit to religious conversion? The notion of conversion as a form of submission is curious. Submission implies a reduction of agency. Yet, in my earlier assessment of conversion, I characterized it as a conscious choice. More so, if the choice to convert is a gradual process, then one is repeatedly making a choice to proceed along the path of conversion. The suggestion that through conversion one is submitting, that one is giving up one’s agency, belies the self-will requisite in most conversion experiences. There are situations

where one might be forced to convert by social pressure or even forced to convert at gunpoint. Furthermore, some people do experience an instantaneous, epiphany-like conversion which seems to require no self-will. Thus I cannot claim that all conversion experiences require self-discipline and individual agency, but the opposing conception of all conversions as a loss of autonomy is definitely suspect.

Conn employs Thomas Merton's writings on conversion to address the issue of conversion as a loss of autonomy. Conn attempts to resolve the moral autonomy/religious surrender dynamic by positing that "genuine religious surrender...denies not...moral autonomy but only the illusion of its absoluteness" (514). In other words, we can have moral autonomy whether we are converted or not, but our sense of morality is never absolute or objective. If no moral framework is completely objective, then all moral viewpoints require some degree of internal evaluation, and therefore moral culpability still lies with the individual. Even if we adopt a particular moral framework, such as Catholicism, we will still have to make subjective moral decisions, and these decisions imply some moral autonomy on the individual level.

Furthermore, the dilemma between moral agency and conversion is not actually a dilemma because moral agency cannot be broken down into a binary in which we are either autonomous or submissive. We can never have complete autonomy in our moral decisions because we live in a society in which various external ideologies are constantly vying for our attention. When we practice internal discourse, we are evaluating data gathered from others, from the external world. Though internal discourse occurs within our minds, there is always an external component, and we will never have full control over the external world. Waugh and Greene adopted a religion that was already present in

the external world, but both authors evaluated aspects of Catholicism and internally altered certain beliefs in order to have an ideology that was more morally suitable to them—Greene’s disbelief in the concept of hell is an example of these internal alterations. Thus, moral autonomy is still possible even in a religion with an extensive external history, such as Catholicism. To adopt a religious ideology entails no more a loss of autonomy than to adopt an atheistic or capitalistic ideology. With any ideology, we can still choose to practice internal discourse.

Indeed, for some individuals, submission to a moral framework garners greater agency, because the framework promotes mental clarity. Psychological and moral clarity necessitates more than an avowal of submission. As with some of our aforementioned theorists, Conn characterizes conversion, or at least the kind of conversion necessary to increase our moral agency, as a gradual process. To exemplify this process, Conn cites the conversion of Thomas Merton: “Merton’s development was slow, and at times extremely painful, but the roots went deep and laid a sound support system...” (515). Over time, through prayer, study, meditation, and internal discourse, Merton gained a more stable psychological state. Merton’s conversion did not yield the discovery of moral absolutes, but it did yield moral agency—the ability to assess given situations and choose morally sound actions in response to those situations. Like our authors, Merton’s conversion also engendered considerable creativity; he published over sixty book-length works in his lifetime, including biographies, autobiographies, works of religious criticism, comparative religion, mysticism, journals, poetry collections, and novels.

In our discussion of conversion theories, it is worth noting that some scholars have studied the idea of conversion from an antipodal angle. Streib and Keller describe

deconversion theory as a relatively new field, marked by a variety of related terms, such as “apostacy, defection, disaffiliation, falling from faith,” etc. (182). Deconversion is prompted by various factors, including moral scruples (183). People who have deconverted cite their concerns about the moral rightness of their former religion. They feel that their religion and their morality have fallen out of alignment. For example, we might learn more about our religion’s dogmas and begin to disagree with those dogmas, eventually to such an extent that we decide to deconvert. Or, our sense of morality may simply develop to a point where it is no longer compatible with the moral teachings of our religion. Yet, dogma is not the only aspect of a religion’s morality. Another person might be so appalled by a scandal within his church—such as the Catholic priest sex abuse scandal—that he feels compelled to leave. Though Catholic dogma has not changed, the moral standing of the Church has been compromised, at least in the eyes of the deconvert. A religion’s moral teachings seem hypocritical if they are not actually practiced.

Strain and Keller also cite “intellectual doubt” as a reason for deconversion (183). People begin to consider or reconsider the veracity of their religious beliefs. In those individuals who seek to gather information and evaluate it intellectually, internal discourse can prompt religious skepticism. After all, there are possible objections that can be made to any religion or moral philosophy. Still, intellectual doubt does not necessarily engender deconversion. St. Augustine experienced considerable doubts during his conversion experience: “I should have knocked and proposed the doubt, how it was to be believed, not insultingly opposed it, as if believed. Doubt, then, what to hold for certain, the more sharply gnawed my heart...So I was confounded, and converted” (Augustine

86). The juxtaposition of the states of being confounded and converted is curious. That Augustine is confounded demonstrates that he still has doubts to work through, even after his conversion. One might even argue that the intensity of Augustine's doubts spurred his conversion; he felt compelled to engage in an inner dialogue, an internal discourse between skepticism and religious conviction. Augustine was educated in philosophy and theology, and his doubts had intellectual roots in skeptic philosophers like Cicero and Pyrrho (Watson 48). In "I Doubt, Therefore I Am": St. Augustine and Skepticism," Gerard Watson suggests that "Augustine saw life as a journey on a stormy sea: he obviously wished at times for the enviable complacency of Pyrrho's pig which ate steadily through the storm" (48). Pyrrho asked his followers to envision a pig who continues placidly eating while aboard a ship in a stormy sea (Watson 44). It is on this pig that Pyrrho thought humans should model their lives. On one hand, the pig is admirable because he does not worry about the things which are outside of his control. On the other hand, the pig is not admirable because he does not have the spirit of inquiry which drives us to seek meaning in the storm. Pyrrho misjudges the intelligence of pigs, but for the sake of Pyrrho's argument we can imagine a particularly dull, uninquisitive pig. Augustine, as with most people, could never be like the pig; he could never be entirely doubtless, entirely unshaken by the storm of discourses around him and within his own mind. Yet, from the time of his initial conversion at the age of 31, Augustine retained his belief in Christianity. He still experienced doubts, but he did not deconvert; the very storm from which arises skepticism is the same storm from which arises faith.

Greene's intellectual doubt, somewhat paradoxically, seemed to strengthen his faith. Greene chose St. Thomas the Apostle, also known as St. Thomas the Doubter, as

the saint under which he converted (Sherry 254). When Jesus was resurrected after three days in his tomb, Thomas was nonplussed—a reasonable reaction given the circumstances. Resurrection defies the laws of nature, and Thomas was not able to accept that Jesus had risen from the dead without further evidence. Jesus invited Thomas to touch his hands and look at the holes where the nails had been (*The Bible*, John 20.24-29). Thomas's doubt spurred him to further investigation, as I think Greene's doubt did for him. The tactile and visual evidence proved sufficient to alleviate Thomas's intellectual scruples, but such evidence is not available to modern converts. Though in 1926 Greene was ready to convert, he could not relinquish his intellectual doubt. Greene felt an affinity for St. Thomas, an apostle who was misunderstood and even vilified by Christians for his lack of faith. The story of St. Thomas demonstrated to Greene that doubt could act as a catalyst for intellectual and spiritual inquiry, deepening our appreciation for religion without giving up our skeptic's lens.

Waugh, too, experienced doubts about the Church. In *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography*, Christopher Sykes notes that Waugh lamented the Catholic Church's movements of reform during the 1950s; such changes included allowing the Easter celebration to take place on Saturday night in addition to Sunday morning (381-82). While this shift may seem inconsequential, Waugh felt that the symbolism of Easter as a renewal was diminished. The reforms culminated with the changes of Vatican II in 1962. In a letter to Diana Mosley, Waugh wrote, "The Vatican Council has knocked the guts out of me" (qtd. in Amory 638). While Waugh experienced doubts about the Church and specifically about the infallibility of the pope, he remained a devout Catholic. Indeed, Waugh's writing about the Church became more prolific during this time, publishing

articles such as “The Same Again, Please” in *The Spectator*. Waugh chose to use his doubts as a catalyst for further investigation of his faith. It may seem intuitive to consider doubt as a detrimental quality to religious faith, but doubt is a necessary component of some people’s religious faith.

Religious conversion is gradual, but it is not necessarily a linear process. Our study of deconversion theory demonstrates that a developing moral sense can just as readily challenge our faith as reinforce it. While neither Greene nor Waugh ever deconverted from their Catholic affiliation once they officially converted, it is evident that both experienced periods of moral concern and intellectual doubt. Deconversion, then, need not be considered the binary opposite of conversion. Rather, both terms exist on a spectrum in which internal discourse takes place and moral values are formed and reformed.

Although the depiction of doubt as a quality coexisting with faith is sensible, it is nonetheless a problematic definition because some religions and religious figures view doubt as sinful or transgressive. For example, Cardinal John Henry Newman characterized doubt as a product of people’s inadequacies: In his lecture “Faith in the Catholic Church,” he extolls, “I tell you, that it is no difficult thing for a Catholic to believe; and unless he grievously mismanages himself, the difficult thing is for him to doubt” (Newman 268). According to Newman, doubt, of any degree, is unnatural. It is easy to have faith, and therefore someone who struggles with faith must have some personal inadequacy. Compounding matters, doubt is not a product of external forces but a self-inflicted condition, as is indicated by the phrasing, “he grievously mismanages himself.” Cardinal Newman views doubt as a willful, and sinful, act. One could argue



that any sin requires some self-will and therefore Newman must portray doubt as willful in order to simultaneously portray doubt as a sin. At any rate, Newman is engendering self-blame and even self-loathing in Catholics who experience doubt. Perhaps inducing self-loathing will goad some doubters to doubtlessness. Others, however, will feel ostracized and pushed toward deconversion. I suggest that Newman, and other figures who argue that doubt is sinful, cling to the immediate (and permanent) conception of conversion and do not regard a gradual conversion as possible or morally permissible.

Though the immediate conception of conversion may work for some converts, to elide or condemn the possibility of a gradual mode severely limits the scope of conversion as a concept. One of Friedrich Nietzsche's major criticisms of Christianity was that it portrayed doubt as a sin: "One is supposed to be cast into belief without reason, by a miracle, and from then swim in it as in the brightest and least ambiguous of elements: even a glance towards land, even the thought that one perhaps exists for something else as well as swimming, even the slightest impulse of our amphibious nature—is sin!" (Nietzsche 89). Nietzsche's aquatic animal metaphor emphasizes the impracticability of blind faith, of belief "without reason." Even a fish will occasionally gaze toward land, how much more so a human? Humans are meant to have doubts, our brains have the capacity for internal and it would be inhuman to stifle our internal investigations. Like Newman, Nietzsche is focusing on the immediate concept of conversion, without granting the possibility any extended dynamic of doubt and internal discourse. Nietzsche is critical of the idea that conversion can occur as an instantaneous, miracle-like event—a miracle which does not have any prior logic leading up to it. I suspect that such conversions make up only a small portion of the conversive landscape.

For Greene and Waugh, internal discourse was an integral aspect of their conversion experiences. Like Saint Thomas the Doubter, like Augustine, like many people, these authors could not be the unquestioning believer, they could not be Pyrrho's pig. But they were still Catholics.

Having assessed various scholars' conceptions of conversion, it is reasonable to conclude that conversion is a variform term. There is no one accepted idea of conversion. However, when considering the conversions of Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh, a gradual notion of conversion is most applicable. Though there was an exact point where Greene and Waugh "officially" converted—February 1926 and September 1930, respectively—both were thinking about issues of religion and spirituality long before that point. Indeed, the spiritual and moral compasses of these authors continued to evolve throughout their lives. I do not think that either author ever reached a point where he was fully converted because neither author ever stopped practicing internal discourse. Morality, like conversion, cannot be reduced to a simple act of acceptance. Nor is there a universal morality, an absolute morality. The reason that I have chosen to study the work of Greene and Waugh in one thesis is that both authors deeply explored issues of morality in their lives and works. Furthermore, Greene's *The Human Factor* and Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, when studied in concert, reveal aspects of moral obligation that would not be apparent if studied alone. Our exploration of conversion theories sets an important groundwork for this essay's continued study of moral obligation. The following chapter will explicate the key terms and theories which I will employ to argue my thesis.

## Chapter 1—

## The Morality Spectrum: Defining and Interrogating Moral Theories

While I have given some provisional definitions of my key terms in the introduction, it is now time to delve deeper into the major theoretical concepts of this paper. Specifically, I intend to elaborate on the concepts of moral obligation, the human family, gamification, love in the present, and the perfection fallacy. Throughout, I will use Bakhtin’s concept of internal discourse to place the above terms into an overarching theoretical lens. We will continue to reexamine these terms in chapters two and three as I apply them to *The Human Factor* and *Brideshead Revisited*, but chapter one will provide the groundwork from which future analysis will be based. The first term on which I will elaborate is moral obligation.

In the introduction, I identified some important characteristics of morality—that (1) morality has both a personal and social component, that (2) morality is resistant to codification, that (3) we can never have absolute moral autonomy, and that (4) our sense of moral obligation is developed through internal discourse. I also distinguished morality from other related terms, including ethics and law. However, I have not yet distinguished morality from immorality. An exploration of this dynamic is a good place to start. What does it mean to be immoral or to commit an immoral act? Basic definitions of immoral tend to either be tautological—e.g., “not moral”—or they are overly vague—e.g., “conflicting with generally or traditionally held moral principles” (“Immoral”). While the second definition attributes a social element to immorality, it does not include a personal element. Furthermore, the notion that immorality transgresses moral principles which are “generally or traditionally held,” ignores the possibility that the majority’s view of

morality is itself immoral. An example of a traditionally and once widely held moral principle is that white people are superior to other groups; therefore, white people are morally obligated to colonize and civilize these other groups. Consider Rudyard Kipling's influential poem, "The White Man's Burden." Kipling makes a moral argument, calling upon the U.S. to tame the native communities in their newly acquired territories. The U.S. must civilize their "new-caught, sullen peoples/ Half-devil and half-child." The description of the invaded people as devil-like adds to Kipling's moral argument; it would be immoral to let the devil have these people. Likewise, Kipling's description of the invaded people as child-like evokes a moral necessity; it would be immoral to leave these children alone in the woods to fend for themselves. Though this poem was published in 1899, the ideology of colonialism as a morally justified practice existed as early as the 1500s. In the 16th century, a politician who argued against colonialism was likely to be vilified as immoral and un-Christian. Yet, our hypothetical politician does not necessarily seem immoral to the modern reader. Given the changeability and subjectivity of generally held beliefs, the transgression of a traditional or generally held moral principle is not an adequate definition of immorality.

The notion of traditionally held moral principles also recalls Bakhtin's concept of authoritative discourse rather than internal discourse. A traditional moral principle exists prior to our birth, prior to the development of our consciousness. The authority of the principle derives not from the principle's moral soundness but from the traditional acceptance of the principle as authoritative discourse. Authoritative discourse discourages its adherents to think critically or to recognize that critical evaluation of the discourse is even possible. While for Bakhtin all discourses are dialogic, authoritative discourse

presents itself as monologic. Bakhtin adds that authoritative discourse “permits no play with its framing context” (*The Dialogic Imagination* 424). We must either accept or reject the discourse, and anyone who rejects it, such as our 1600s politician, is labelled immoral.

I propose a definition of immorality that focuses on internal discourse rather than a majority-rule or authoritative definition: An immoral act is an act which, when subjected to internal discourse, cannot be sufficiently justified. Immorality occupies the lower end of a spectrum, with morality occupying the other end. Internal discourse will reveal the relative merits or demerits of the act being considered, and internal discourse will reveal the degree to which the actor has succeeded or failed to meet the actor’s moral obligation. The internal discourse can occur either in the actor’s or another’s mind, as long as this discourse is thorough and the evaluator has enough information about the act to arrive at a reasonable judgment. One could counter that the general population may still be biased against the actor due to the actor’s lack of authority in comparison to the society’s traditional moral discourses. This objection is valid. However, I suggest that if an individual from that society is genuinely encouraged to think deeply about the act and about the moral principles which may or not apply to the act, the individual is likely to come to a more nuanced judgment. The very notion of evaluating a moral principle is itself a subversion of that principle’s authority. Authoritative discourse is a problematic means of determining an act’s place on the morality spectrum because authoritative discourse tends to depict morality and immorality as opposing binaries; authoritative discourse prefers binary depictions of morality because such depictions require less critical thought. A spectrum requires more nuance and therefore more critical thought in

the individual. Our own definition of immorality is by no means perfect, but it will serve as a solid base from which to view contemporary research on immorality.

One idea which will deepen our understanding of immorality is “Teflon immorality,” discussed by Saul Smilansky in the article “Why Moral Paradoxes Matter? ‘Teflon Immorality’ and the Perversity of Life.” Smilansky argues that there is a continued and pernicious presence of Teflon immorality in the modern world. Teflon immorality “is immorality that goes on unchecked—the wrongdoing is not stopped and its perpetrators, beyond the reach of punishment or other sanction, often persist in their immoral ways” (229). Teflon is a substance often used on cooking pans because nothing sticks to it. In the case of Teflon immorality, an act may be perceived by people as immoral, but the immoral act does not result in a view of the actor as immoral. The actor, as if he is coated in Teflon, can continue to commit immoral acts without being accused of immorality himself. For example, a political figure may commit an immoral act, such as voter suppression, evidence of the suppression is produced, and the suppression is condemned. Yet, the reputation of the actor, the politician who suppressed votes, is not tarnished. The politician may himself decry voter suppression as immoral; the residue of immoral action, or hypocritical action, is not left on the actor. How is the residue so easily washed away? One possibility is that the politician may actually thrive on bad press (231). The criticism allows him to criticize the critics, placing him in a morally favorable position; he becomes a victim, an underdog, a hero. Voter suppression remains an immoral act, but suppression’s association with the politician is lost amid the more positive narratives. And, ironically, these positive narratives—hero, victim, etc.—are the result of the initial negative association with suppression.

Another possible means of generating the Teflon effect is “saturation” (232). Saturation refers to the idea that someone can have so many immoral acts attributed to him that further immoral acts cannot possibly decrease his moral standing. For example, individuals may become tired of hearing about the politician’s new immoral acts. These acts no longer elicit an analytical response; internal discourse is stifled by sheer surfeit of transgressions. Additional moral transgressions may even garner disbelief; an information-saturated society loses the ability to determine whether or not that information is valid. Individuals may even resent the media for pointlessly raising further issues about the politician; attribution of immorality is subtly shifted from the politician to the media. When saturation occurs, the number of immoral acts committed by the politician may impress some individuals positively; it takes skill and intellect to be that immoral and to get away with it. Each new immoral act from that point onward conversely increases the politician’s moral standing. Even those people who recognize the politician’s immorality may begin to see him as a beloved anti-hero. Smilansky notes that Teflon immorality is not a specifically modern phenomenon; it has existed throughout human history (229). However, I would contend that certain aspects of modern society are particularly conducive to Teflon immorality. Saturation is more likely to occur in a society with access to many forms of media and large amounts of information.

By the time Greene and Waugh were in their 20s, the radio and cinema had joined newspapers as major media platforms. Reliable information was interspersed with misleading commercials and tabloid gossip. As the 20th century progressed, television and the internet would join the information onslaught. Excess of information, both in

general and specifically applied to immoral actions, may inhibit internal discourse. Individuals may feel that they have no time to think deeply about the information they absorb because they might not be able to keep up with the new information that is constantly being generated. Ironically, the will to stay informed makes people less informed about their own moral views on the information to which they are exposed. Thus, a politician's prior immoral acts are usurped by his newest immoral act, or the politician's transgressions are entirely usurped by an unrelated but more interesting news story. The latest news story may prove to be trivial, but by then the prior story has been forgotten. There is not enough time to evaluate or even remember each transgression, and individuals are left with little more than a vague sense that the politician is not quite morally irreproachable.

However, I contend that we can resist the effects of saturation and that we have a moral obligation to resist. As I have suggested earlier in the introduction, the practice of internal discourse requires a conscious choice on the part of the individual. It is not an easy choice, because internal discourse can involve considerable mental effort. Yet, individuals must practice internal discourse in order to have a morally sustainable society, in order to counter the proliferation of Teflon immorality. Our earlier definition of the morality spectrum includes internal discourse as an essential component. Authoritative discourse alone cannot effectively counter Teflon immorality; a binary view of morality is meaningless when designating an act as immoral no longer implicates the actor as culpable. Furthermore, we would struggle to apply the language of traditional beliefs, religious dogma, and secular law to the opaque amalgam of data to which we are daily exposed. A saturated society that relies only on the latest external information for



its opinions is more susceptible to manipulation. A well-timed news story, whether or not it is truthful, can disrupt the social narrative, pulling attention away from those whose interests are at stake. And thus the immoral act slips away from the actor, much to the actor's benefit, and much to society's detriment. A person who practices internal discourse reasons that an act must have an actor, and that some culpability lies with the actor for the act he has committed. Internal discourse solidifies the association of the actor with the act, ensuring that the act sticks. Theories like Teflon immorality help establish the necessity of internal discourse as an evaluative process.

When examining the morality spectrum, some potential paradoxes may arise. In "Morally Admirable Immorality," Troy Jollimore argues that some behavior can be both immoral and morally admirable (159). One would think that these conditions are mutually exclusive. Jollimore specifies the term *morally* admirable; while immoral actions can be admirable for non-moral reasons, it is a more difficult prospect to argue that an action is immoral and morally admirable. Moral admiration refers to the admiration of an actor's sound moral judgment—and, I would add, admiration for the actor's use of internal discourse to arrive at her moral judgment. Jollimore employs the example of a woman, Jenna, who breaks a sworn promise, but does so based on sound moral reasoning (162-63). After considering the situation and her potential options, Jenna determines that the likely result of keeping the secret is more problematic than the likely result of divulging the secret. Her reasoning is morally admirable, even if her act is immoral. Had Jenna "decided to play it safe by doing what the moral code recommended—indeed, *required*—it would have been quite impossible to criticize her on moral grounds, despite the fact that by doing so she was, in her own judgment, giving up

an opportunity to bring about a significant amount of moral good” (163). Certain objections can be made to this concept of morally admirable immorality. I question whether the Jenna was actually committing an immoral act by breaking the promise. She employed internal discourse to carefully decide on the most morally sound action. Breaking a promise is not ideal; we would prefer not to break promises. Yet, the broken promise must be weighed within the overall circumstance, including the likely results of her possible actions in the circumstance. The notion that Jenna has committed an immoral act because she has transgressed a moral code—the code which asserts that we should not break promises—evokes authoritative discourse. While she certainly transgressed a traditional moral principle, she did not act immorally.

I should note that even after using internal discourse to determine the most sound action we can still choose a less-sound action; we can still choose to act immorally. There are many reasons why we might choose what we know to be the morally weaker option. One of these reasons is hypocrisy. Choosing an easier but less moral action over a morally sound action, often while persuading ourselves that it is the most moral option, is hypocritical. In “On Hypocrisy,” Eva Kittay argues that hypocrisy is a form of “self-referential deception” (278). That is, a hypocrite is both the deceiver and the deceived. To deceive ourselves is a deliberate action. Therefore hypocrisy, like internal discourse, requires some individual agency. Actively choosing to be a hypocrite, on some level the hypocrite knows that he is a hypocrite. Thus I would argue that the degree of self-deception entailed by hypocrisy is not absolute. Hypocrisy is an intentional means of shirking our moral obligations, of denying the better judgment of our internal discourses, and therefore hypocrisy is immoral. That is, in most cases hypocrisy resides on the

immoral side of the spectrum. When analyzing instances of failed adherence to moral obligation, we must examine hypocrisy as a potential factor.

Consider the following example of hypocrisy: John is an art critic who claims to dislike modern art. He dislikes modern art so much that the only kind of art he reviews is modern art. Of course, all of John's reviews are negative. Yet, it is curious that John no longer reviews other types of art. Even in conversation, John only talks about modern art, describing different works in detail and pointing out the aspects of the works he does not like. John's friends and readers notice that John has become fixated on modern art. When his friends try to talk about other kinds of art, John is not interested and immediately diverts the conversation to modern art. While John has convinced himself that he dislikes modern art, he is a hypocrite. Part of John's internal discourse knows that he is fascinated by modern art and that he appreciates the power of the genre. Rather than remain a hypocrite, John decides to engage in internal discourse. Eventually, John recognizes that, as a critic, he has a moral obligation to be honest to his readers about his opinions on modern art. He overcomes his hypocrisy, and he tells his readers that his views on modern art have changed. Given this example, we should add to Kittay's initial definition of hypocrisy as self-referential deception that the state of self-deception is not necessarily permanent or irreversible. For some of us hypocrisy is difficult to maintain due to the conflict between the desire to act according to our moral obligations and the desire to act otherwise and convince ourselves that acting otherwise is morally sound.

The above study of immorality, the morality spectrum, and hypocrisy has expanded our understanding of morality as it pertains to this paper: we have a moral obligation to (1) use internal discourse to evaluate given situations and (2) to act

according to the most morally sound option upon which we have determined. As we have observed, many situations are quite complex and can involve moral paradoxes. Therefore, the use of moral frameworks can be helpful, as long as those frameworks do not devolve into authoritative discourse. Before moving into a discussion of our key moral frameworks—the human family, gamification, love in the present, and the perfection fallacy—I would like to elaborate on Bakhtin’s concept of internal discourse. An internal discourse, like any discourse, is dialogic. That is, internal discourse entails a struggle between our own and another’s word. Dialogism is most frequently pictured as the experience of trying to convey meaning to another through conversation, where the actual meaning of our speech exists somewhere between our intention and the listener’s interpretation. Thus the meaning of the dialogue is never entirely our own; it is partly our own and partly that of the other. This notion applies to our internal dialogues as well. Internal discourse cannot take place without first taking in external information and external dialogues. The words of others always pervade our internal dialogues. Bakhtin adds that, within our speech and thoughts, “a significant number of words can be identified that are implicitly or explicitly admitted as someone else’s” (*The Dialogic Imagination* 354). A portion of the language that composes our internal and external dialogues existed prior to our birth. We did not invent every word that we use. Each day we take in the language of others and part of that language is incorporated into our own lexicon. Embedded in the language of others are the ideas of others. However, these externally appropriated languages and ideologies are not devoid of our own imprint. When we learn new things, when we gather words and information, that information partly belongs to us; we become part of the discursive arena. We evaluate and organize

the information in our minds, developing opinions and ideas which are partly, but never entirely, our own. The process by which this inner consciousness-shaping occurs is internal discourse. Therefore, we might add to our initial two moral obligations, enumerated at the beginning of this paragraph, that we have a moral obligation to gather sufficient external data, to possess enough material for internal discourse to work with. When evaluating the moral standing of a particular circumstance, we must have enough information about the circumstance to make an adequate judgment. Thus we have a moral obligation to stay informed and educate ourselves about moral issues. At the same time, we should not submit to saturation—taking in a surfeit of information without subjecting it to evaluation.

Part of the process of internal discourse includes the development of moral frameworks. Moral frameworks are not to be thought of as strict codes, but as guides to help us contextualize and assess a situation. These guides contain values that we have previously considered and accepted. For example, utilitarianism is a moral framework which poses that we should act in a way that will produce the highest amount of good. Utilitarianism is problematic as a strict code due to a variety of objections—for example, producing a large amount of good may involve producing a nearly as large amount of bad. Dropping a hydrogen bomb to win a war may result in a net increase of good, but dropping the bomb may nonetheless constitute an immoral act. Thus utilitarianism is not a code to which we should strictly adhere. However, utilitarianism, when applied as a loose moral framework, can add clarity to our assessments; speculating on the overall good and bad results of an action is not an unreasonable metric to include in our internal discourse. Moral frameworks are especially helpful when the actor has limited time to

decide upon an action. Evaluating a complex situation can require considerable mental effort. When time is at a premium, we must direct our effort as efficiently as possible. Overreliance on moral frameworks may not be ideal, but it is often necessary. In some situations, it is immoral to spend a long time deciding what action to take. A soldier on a battlefield must decide whether to give first-aid to his comrade or to seek out the sniper who may shoot more comrades if the soldier takes the time to administer first-aid. It is a difficult choice. However, if the soldier spends more than a few seconds deciding, neither option will be available. His wounded comrade will die and more comrades will die from the sniper. Thus the soldier will have committed an immoral act by not acting. Even when we have only a few seconds, it is possible to engage in some internal discourse by applying a moral framework that we have developed through prior thought, through prior internal discourse that occurred during less pressing occasions. The human family is one such framework. While the human family can take time to develop in our internal discourse, once developed, it can be applied to evaluate pressing decisions.

The human family is a moral framework which posits that it is good to view other people as if they are members of our own nuclear family. That is, we have a moral obligation to view people not as faceless masses but as individuals, and as people who are fundamentally connected to us, like family. When we picture people whom we have never met, in places far away from our own locale, we imagine them with faces, with faces for which we feel empathy and familiarity. Having made a human connection with these distant relatives, our internal discourse is better able to evaluate situations in which people we have never met are being affected. We are more likely to interpret that we have a moral obligation to act in a way which is beneficial or at least not harmful to other

humans, to our human family. The human family is a framework which is especially necessary in the modern world. Economic globalization means that the decisions we make on a daily basis impact other people around the globe. For example, we may choose to purchase fair-trade, sustainably grown coffee over coffee from a company that exploits its workers and the environment. The former coffee is slightly more expensive, but if we can reasonably afford this expense then purchasing the fair-trade coffee is the most morally sound choice. However, if we do not think of the coffee growers as conscious, individual people, we will likely purchase the cheaper, exploitative coffee. Being aware that humans far away are daily taken advantage of by wealthy corporations is not enough. There are eight billion people on the planet, and to some of us those eight billion consist of a single opaque mass. We may reason that the coffee growers comprise only a small section of the mass, and that it is questionable whether or not we have any moral obligation to the faceless mass. Our nuclear families are not a faceless mass; the people in our families, including close friends, seem more real, more like individuals with thoughts and feelings, individuals whom we care about. In order to act in the most morally sound fashion, we must see the coffee growers, we must see all people, as actual living individuals with hopes and dreams not unlike our own. We must give the coffee growers faces. In our internal dialogues, we can picture the coffee growers, their names, their appearance, their history, etc. The coffee growers begin to seem more like members of our family, and we desire to purchase the coffee brand which benefits them or at least does not harm them.

This simple purchasing of a bag of coffee may seem inconsequential, but I contend that making morally sound decisions is always consequential. Our actions make

a difference, though we may not always perceive it. The scope of the modern world has a tendency to make all of our actions seem inconsequential. Urban landscapes encompass us and skyscrapers look down upon us like indifferent gods. Even in rural areas we see jets passing by at seemingly unattainable heights, and inside our homes we are greeted by the internet's daunting, protean vastness. Ensnared in the industrial, globalized world, we feel small. Thus our actions begin to seem futile. Morally sound actions often take more effort than morally suspect actions; if we feel that our efforts are futile, why not choose the easier option? If our morally sound actions seem inconsequential, our morally suspect actions seem equally inconsequential. Indeed, it is questionable whether an action can be morally sound if its result produces no consequence either way. Such an action seems, at best, morally neutral. We do not feel it is possible to affect a giant mass, no matter how many bags of fair-trade coffee we buy. The human family challenges this sense of futility. The coffee growers are not a statistic, a demographic, a number, a vague portion of a vague mass. They are people with faces, people with consciousnesses, people with their own internal discourses and moral decisions to make. They are people we should care about. Our actions affect them, and their actions affect us. We are interconnected; we share one planet.

In order to better understand the human family's philosophical position, it will be helpful to contrast this framework with other related moral frameworks. One such framework is "ethical altruism." Ethical altruism is the belief that we should act in a way which benefits others, rather than in a way which benefits ourselves. In "Too Much (And Not Enough) of a Good Thing: How Agent Neutral Principles Fail in Prisoner's Dilemmas," Michael Almeida defines ethical altruism as a framework which "requires



each agent to rank the outcomes of her alternative actions, best to worst, by appeal to the interests of others, or to the maximization of the utility of others. In its purest form, it demands that we give no weight to our own interests, but only to the interests of others” (309). While the idea of choosing actions that will most benefit others sounds morally admirable, I question whether it is always appropriate to favor others over our own self-interest. We are not morally obliged to completely sacrifice ourselves to others because our own lives have value too. Each of us is part of the human family. Therefore, when evaluating our potential actions in a given situation, it is morally permissible to include our own potential loss or benefit from those actions. In our coffee example, I specified that we should purchase the coffee if we can reasonably afford the expense—i.e., if we will not significantly harm ourselves by spending an extra two dollars on fair-trade coffee. If we are barely making ends meet and are only purchasing the coffee to survive another night shift, it is morally justifiable to purchase the cheaper coffee. We should not expect or encourage a member of our family to bankrupt herself for our benefit. However, we could reasonably expect a more financially stable member to make a small contribution to a struggling relative’s livelihood.

Ideally, a given action will result in both the benefit of the actor and the benefit of other people. Often, however, the situation is not ideal. Consider an example in which a doctor must deliver medicine to a hospital. If the medicine is not delivered, hundreds of people may die. In order to deliver the medicine, the doctor will have to cross through dangerous territory. She could be captured by militant forces or caught in the crossfire. The doctor is aware of the danger which she would face if she decides to deliver the medicine. In evaluating the situation, the doctor includes her personal risk along with the

possible benefit to others. She is not an ethical altruist. For the ethical altruist, the doctor's choice is obvious; she must risk her life for others. But the doctor values her own life and, ideally, would like to preserve that life. The situation is not ideal, yet there is still a chance that the doctor will survive the action unscathed. After using internal discourse, the doctor decides that she will deliver the medicine. The potential benefit to others outweighs her personal risk. Though she has never met the people she might save, she knows that they are part of the human family, and that she has a moral obligation to help them. In this case, and in others, it is permissible to bring some harm to ourselves in order to bring considerable benefit to other people. However, if we are abiding by the human family, we should always include our own potential benefit or detriment in our moral evaluations.

As we are contrasting the human family with other moral frameworks, it is sensible to contrast the human family with another of this essay's key terms: gamification. Gamification is a moral framework in which we view the world and the people in the world as components of an amoral game. A game is amoral because the goal of the game is to win as many points as possible, generally at the opponent's expense. The opponent's feelings or humanity are not factored into the game and are not considered by players of the game. Gamification reduces humans to pawns, to be expended at will, for the maximum benefit of the player or the State for which the player plays. To explain, gamification does not necessarily require the agent to choose the action which most benefits herself. Rather, gamification requires the agent to choose the action which will gain the most socio-political clout—the most points— for her or for her State. An agent may actually harm her chances of survival in the name of advancing her State.

Imagine a spy who puts herself in danger in order to kill an opposing spy. Killing the spy does not benefit her directly, but the act does benefit her team. Any moral qualms about killing the spy are irrelevant; all that matters is the game.

Gamification is a product of modern society. The globe-spanning political games of the twentieth century feature wars, espionage, propaganda, and much posturing. The twentieth century saw the rise of fascist states as well as super-states like the U.S. and the Soviet Union. A risk taken by a politician, a roll of the dice, could decide the fates of millions of people. If the politician's goal is to advance herself and her State, it is easier—or even necessary—to view the people in other countries as inhuman pawns controlled by the other side. A decision which kills many of these people can be dismissed as unfortunate but necessary “collateral damage”; if the decision advances the power of our State, then the decision is justified. When a politician uses the phrase “the greater good,” it often signifies “for the greater good of our State,” for the good of those in power who claim to represent the State. Thus the U.S. can incite a war in a South American country in order to install a dictator who, however many atrocities he commits, gains the U.S. standing in the global game. The human cost is irrelevant because the people in the crossfire do not seem human; they seem like plastic pieces on a map. Their suffering is justified by the advancement of our place in the standings.

As I discussed in the introduction, the complexity of modern life also has a tendency to stifle internal discourse, making it easier to dehumanize people. We are constantly subjected to information, often without the time to think critically about that information. In the consciousness of citizens, political ideologies become simplified. In the U.S., political commentators talk about blue states and red states. Whole populations

are reduced to a color and a simple phrase; we lose our individuality and become pieces in a game. We are either a blue piece or a red piece. Statisticians are hired to precisely calculate the number of red pawns and the number of blue pawns. Strategists are hired to maximize the number of blue pawns and minimize the number of red pawns, or vice versa. While one may object that this process is simply how democracy functions, democracy cannot function if citizens are swayed by misinformation or are unable to acquire adequate information to evaluate the political situation. Nor can democracy function if the people in power view their constituents as game pieces. Internal discourse is more effective at determining the most morally sound action if the individual has gathered sufficient external data and discourses. Under gamification, illegal or immoral means may be used to win more pawns to our side. Such means could include voter suppression, intimidation, misleading propaganda, collusion, etc. The morality of these tactics is not a factor, only the possible outcomes in terms of political points.

In order to deepen our understanding of gamification, it will be helpful to examine a related moral framework: ethical egoism. According to *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “ethical egoism” is a moral framework which contends that we should choose whatever action most benefits our own self-interest, regardless of the effects our action may have on others (“Ethical Egoism”). An action can still benefit others as long as that action benefits oneself first and foremost. For example, a homeowner could plant a tree in her yard that other people can see and appreciate as they walk by on the sidewalk. Such an act complies with ethical egoism because the homeowner did not plant the tree for the passers-by. She planted the tree for her own aesthetic enjoyment. An ethical egoist, however, is also justified in committing an action that benefits no one but herself.

Such an action might include taking a long nap. The actor's self-interest at this moment is rest, and the action satisfies that interest. Assuming the actor is not neglecting some other obligation by taking the nap, the nap does not harm others. Nor does the nap help anyone other than the actor. Finally, an ethical egoist is justified in committing an action that hurts many people, as long as the action benefits herself. Such an action might include a CEO giving herself a raise while reducing the salaries of her employees. The CEO can spend her greater salary on a variety of pleasures, while her employees must take out loans just to pay for their basic needs. She should not feel bad or guilty about the fates of her employees because, as an ethical egoist, she has chosen the most appropriate available action. "Ethical egoism" is, in a sense, an oxymoronic term; to be an egoist is to defy most ethical principles. However, the term highlights the idea that the egoist views herself as acting in an ethical manner. Thus, the greedy CEO feels no remorse.

Ethical egoism conflicts with gamification because an ethical egoist could not rank the benefit of his State above his own personal benefit. Nor could an ethical egoist rank the gaining of political points above his own health, pleasure, security, etc. Someone who has succumbed to gamification is more concerned about points than about his own well-being. Whether the political points are for himself or for his State (or for both), the actor may suffer in the name of political gain. Sometimes the gaining of political points and the improvement of our well-being are achieved with the same act, but not always. For example, an aging politician may be so focused on winning the next move that he becomes stressed and his blood pressure rises. He does not get enough sleep and his health declines. He no longer enjoys his work. Nonetheless, if he gains political standing for himself and/or his party then he is acting in a justifiable manner. Even the politician's

death from a heart attack can be used to gain political standing. The State may brand him as a martyr, or the State may make him a scapegoat for a scandal or poor policy decision. Under gamification, the politician is both a pawn and a player. Under ethical egoism, the politician's gradual self-destruction would not be permissible, especially if the politician is not even gaining any pleasure from the self-destructive acts.

As the above example demonstrates, gamification is not necessarily conducive to the individual's health or pleasure. Nor is gamification conducive to other important human provisions, such as love. "Love in the present" is the next key term I will define. Love in the present is a moral framework which poses that we have a moral obligation to love ourselves and others in the present. That is, we should love ourselves and others for what we are now, not solely for what we once were or for what we might become. I will begin with an assessment of love in the present's obligation to self-love: Fixating on memories of our past, we are more likely to lose our self-love in the present. We need self-love in the present in order to have a more balanced view of our lives and to effectively evaluate future actions using internal discourse. If a person fixates on her prospects for the future—a future in which she can finally love herself, a future in which she believes herself to be worthy of love—she will not be able to love who she is in the present. She will consider her present self to be an inferior prototype, a thing that only exists in order to eventually produce the superior future model. Under love in the present, we can still reminisce about good memories from the past; our consciousness includes and is developed from memories of past experiences and the internal discourses which these experiences generated. Likewise, we can still prepare for the future and work towards self-improvement. Internal discourse is a progressive, consciousness-building

process, and one who loves oneself in the present will desire to continue practicing internal discourse. If we do not love our own minds, the prospect of self-improvement appears bleak. Thus love for our past and our future is still possible and indeed desirable under love in the present. However, when these past and future selves overshadow the our present selves, our present selves begin to seem unworthy of love. Love in the present seeks to address this possibility; it seeks to foster self-love in the present, so that our minds are more capable of making morally sound decisions. Our memories of the past will seem richer if they are not tainted by a belief that our present self is no longer worthy of love, is no longer worthy of the self-love we once had during those past experiences. Our hopes and plans for the future will seem more attainable if we love the person who seeks to attain them.

Some scholars have argued that self-love actually enhances our self-knowledge. In “Self-Knowledge and Self-Love,” Jan Bransen argues that we cannot gain knowledge of ourselves—that, in other words, we cannot develop as a conscious beings—without practicing love for ourselves (309). While Bransen does not specify that this self-love is centered on the present, her argument implies that it is: She claims that “self-knowledge is the product of an existential and affective relation between a loving self and the self she loves to be” (309), suggesting that self-knowledge is dialogic. Bransen’s use of the term “relation” suggests that self-knowledge is portrayed as the product of an interplay between oneself and one’s love of oneself. I argue that this relationship is dialogic because we must also account for the counteracting tension of other forces such as self-loathing or self-hatred. Self-love is not a given, and therefore self-knowledge is not a given. Nor is self-love to be considered an absolute. The possibility of self-loathing is

never fully extinguished, and thus self-love is an ongoing practice. Bransen contends that intellectual growth is stifled by self-hatred because if a person hates herself, she is “unable to inspect the limits of her agential space” (320). That is, she is unable to accurately determine her degree of agency in a given situation; she does not know what she is capable of. Because of her self-hatred, her internal discourse may tell her that she is not good enough to perform a particular action, or that even if she performs the action, the result of that action will not be as good as it would for other people because of her bad luck. Therefore, any attempt she makes to discern the most morally sound action will fail. In order to make a more accurate assessment of her agential space, she must have self-love.

I should specify that, when our self-love is centered on the present, our self-love is ongoing. The present is not static. Unlike a memory of the past, the present does not exist as a particular slice of time. The present cannot be measured or quantified—thus it is absurd to ask “how long will the present last?” The present endures, and therefore love in the present love implies love that endures. Love in the present is not an achievement to be attained once, it is not a goal to be reached before moving on to another goal, it is an ongoing practice.

While I have focused the above section on self-love, love in the present also applies to love for others. That is, we have a moral obligation to love others not solely for what they once were or for what they might become, but for who they are in the present as well. A memory of who a friend once was, or a vision of who she might become, should not usurp our love for her in the present. Likewise, love in the present applies to our society. That is, we ought to love our societies not only for what they once were or



for what they might become, but for what they are in the present as well. When we only reflect on nostalgia for what society was in the past, or on our idealized notions of what society was in the past, the present will seem inferior, devolved, a corrupt version of its former self. Such a perspective renders us more susceptible to outlandish goals for the future—we can make our country great again. In a society focused on the past and the future, groups of people are vilified, they are depicted as unwanted or parasitic, as people who are holding society back. In order for society to be cleansed and the future utopia made possible, these groups must be exterminated. Such logic engenders immoral acts—racial profiling, terrorism, genocide, etc. These are acts of hatred. When we love our society in the present, we are less likely to blame society's faults on a scapegoated group. We can recognize that the society of the past, however ideal it may or may not have been, cannot act as a metric by which to justify hatred of the present. We recognize that oppression is not an effective means of improving our society; oppression is based on hatred, not love. Those who practice love for the present society are better able to evaluate future decisions. Through internal discourse, we can determine the most sustainable and morally sound option for improving our society. Practicing love for the present, we will not despair over the inevitable pitfalls that we face when attempting any social or personal improvement. We do not feel that a minor setback has denied our utopia.

Utopia is an illusion. But for people who lose their love of the present, creating a utopia seems not only viable but the only reasonable option. The utopian ideal is reinforced by a moral framework called the perfection fallacy—the false belief that perfection is not only desirable but attainable as well. Under this fallacy, we have a moral

obligation to choose whatever action is most likely to bring us closer to perfection, regardless of how that action might affect others. The perfection fallacy also applies on the social level; a State has a moral obligation to act in a way which brings the State closer to perfection. Striving to improve ourselves and striving to achieve perfection are two different ideologies. We can work toward self-improvement while realistically accepting that we will never become perfect. Setting ourselves an unattainable goal destines us to disappointment and self-loathing.

The very idea of perfection is problematic. For example, if we define perfection as a state in which something has no flaws, we have only created a tautology: a flaw is a factor which renders something imperfect. Something that is imperfect has flaws, and therefore something that is perfect has no flaws; perfection creates a circular dynamic in which its only justification is its opposite (imperfection), while its opposite's only justification is perfection. Both the idea of perfection and the idea of a flaw are subjective. Even the most highly educated philosophers will disagree on what conditions constitute a perfect society. Likewise, they will disagree on what conditions constitute individual perfection. Thus, striving for perfection will inevitably lead to conflict, as our subjective views on perfection do not align with others. Within own minds, our idea of perfection can change: a scholar might tell herself that as soon as she becomes fluent in French she will be perfect. However, once she becomes fluent, she finds other perceived flaws in herself. The scholar should be proud of her achievement in learning French, but instead she is only dissatisfied. This dissatisfaction may lead to self-loathing; she feels that she is unworthy of love. In order to counter perfection fallacy, we must practice love in the present.

The perfection fallacy, while present to some degree in many societies, became inflated in the twentieth century in part because of the rise of States. Wimmer and Feinstein note that States arose not only due to industrialization and technological advancements, but also due to mass literacy, which facilitated the creation of national narratives: “The emerging reading public...imagined itself as a national community of common origin and future political destiny” (768). A State creates a narrative which portrays the State as the means by which society can achieve perfection. Perfection is, in some sense, a better selling-point than mere promises of improvement, and States employ this selling point with the following logic: Prior governments attempted to make improvements, but they failed. These governments set their sights too low, and they were not even capable of reaching the minor stop-gap measures they had set as goals. They were weak and incompetent, and they offered no real or permanent (or final) solutions. We cannot heal an infection with just a band-aid. We must find the source of the infection and destroy it before healing can even begin, before society can become great again. A weak government cannot treat the wound which has impeded social utopia. Only a totalitarian government with total control can achieve total perfection. In the twentieth century, various States—such as Nazi Germany, Francoist Spain, and Stalinist Russia—used this logic to maintain and increase their power. After setting up the initial narrative, a cause of infection is then identified. If the supposed cause is within the State—a religious group, a dissenting political party, a racial minority—then oppression and genocide are the proposed solution. If the supposed cause is coming from another State, war is the only reasonable option. These means are unlikely to result in long-term social

improvement, let alone perfection. As efforts to perfect ourselves ironically result in self-harm, so efforts to perfect our society ironically result in social detriment.

I have defined the perfection fallacy as the moral obligation to choose whatever action is most likely to achieve personal or social perfection, perfection being an illusory, subjective, and unattainable concept. Other scholars have also examined the idea of perfection. In “Three Arguments for Perfectionism,” Dale Dorsey describes social perfectionism as a form of hard paternalism. That is, the State assumes that its citizens do not know what is good for them—which actions will lead to the State’s idea of a perfect society. Therefore the State must impose its authority, creating and enforcing laws designed to generate social perfection. Dorsey notes that “Perfectionism makes a strong assumption about the state’s knowledge of the good” (134). For the State, what constitutes “the good” is whatever leads to a more perfect society. Yet, as Dorsey suggests, for perfectionism to be a viable construct we must *assume* that the State knows how to best achieve perfection and that the State’s idea of perfection is, well, perfect—i.e., the State’s idea of perfection is objective, universally applicable, and irrefutable. Such an assumption is not justified. As we have discussed above, the concept of perfection itself is suspect. Yet, there are arguments in favor of perfectionism. Dorsey highlights the human essence argument (64-67). This argument poses that perfection can be brought about by unlocking people’s essences; it poses that humans have a core essence which is essentially good, and that it is possible for any person to live by their essence. There are methods of enabling this essence. The State claims to know these methods and how to best encourage them in its citizens. Because we all have a human essence, we can all attain perfection. Therefore, accede to the State’s authority and every

citizen will benefit. The logic of the human essence argument is dubious. It is questionable whether humans are essentially good, and it is questionable whether all humans have an essence which can be harnessed to bring about this essential goodness, this perfection. I would add that the human essence argument has been employed in a somewhat different way by certain States. A State might argue that only a particular group possesses this essence—for example, descendants of Aryans, Romans, the Norse, etc. Only a select group is capable of perfection, and therefore this group is the most naturally fit to rule. Indeed, inferior groups have a moral obligation to obey the master race. In turn, the master race has a moral obligation to rule. This logic facilitates the belief in faulty ideologies such as phrenology, eugenics, slavery, and colonialism—as in our earlier critique of Kipling’s “The White Man’s Burden.” A burden is an obligation. A State which frames its power as a moral obligation further justifies its possession of that power. Dorsey’s study of perfectionism and the human essence argument helps reveal that the perfection fallacy has various manifestations, with various accompanying ideologies.

The key terms elucidated in this chapter—moral obligation, morality, internal discourse, the human family, gamification, love in the present, and the perfection fallacy—will continue to arise in the following chapters as we explore how they apply to and enhance our understanding of Greene’s *The Human Factor* and Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*. Inevitably, our analysis will reveal further complications and subtleties within these moral frameworks. From the groundwork of theory provided in this chapter, we can build our architecture of literary criticism.

## Chapter 2—

“You have to look for motives”: The Human Family and Gamification  
in Greene’s *The Human Factor*

In this chapter, I will examine how the human family and gamification apply to and enhance our understanding of Graham Greene’s *The Human Factor*. The primary question which these frameworks will help to address is that of Maurice Castle’s motivation for committing a particular action. In the novel’s climactic scenes, Castle chooses to deliver classified information to the KGB, knowing that this act has the potential to harm himself and his nuclear family. He also knows that this act may help prevent suffering to black South Africans, most of whom Castle has never met. They are people who are far away from Castle’s home in England, far away from his nuclear family. I argue that Castle’s primary motivation is the human family, and that Castle uses internal discourse to arrive at his decision to abide by the human family.

Difficult decisions often involve the weighing of a multitude of conflicting motives and possible outcomes. Castle is tempted to submit to gamification, as many of his colleagues have done. The pressure to play the game comes not only from his colleagues but from the global political atmosphere as well. Yet, despite the counterpressure, Castle chooses the human family. He recognizes and acts upon his moral obligation to help the people in South Africa. To situate this thesis, I will begin with a literature review, analyzing some of the existing criticism related to *The Human Factor*. I will then examine relevant textual evidence, demonstrating how this evidence reveals the presence of the human family and gamification in the novel. I will explain how these two moral frameworks interact in Castle’s internal discourse, ultimately concluding that the

underlying motivation for Castle's actions is the human family.

The most recently published article that focuses on *The Human Factor* is Robert Snyder's 2008 study, "'He Who Forms a Tie Is Lost': Loyalty, Betrayal, and Deception in *The Human Factor*." Snyder, like myself, seeks to identify Castle's primary motives regarding Castle's climactic decision. Snyder identifies several elements which drive Castle's conduct. The first element is a "misguided" and overly fastidious sense of conscience (26). Noting one of Greene's earlier working titles for the novel, "The Human Fault," Snyder claims that Castle is pulled by his conscience to act in ways which go against his better judgment. This division of conscience and judgment is curious. The suggestion is that Castle has judged that he should not deliver the information to the KGB, yet his conscience, his empathy for the black South Africans, leads him astray. Snyder implies that conscience is not logical; conscience only throws off our internal reasoning, our judgment. Castle's conscience, then, is his fault. I would counter that conscience is a part of any judgment. Conscience is a moral component within our internal discourse. I define conscience as both the awareness of morality and the awareness of our moral obligation to make morally sound decisions. Thus conscience is an aspect of our cognitive processes, of our internal discourses. If conscience is an aspect of internal discourse, then conscience is not without an element of logic. Conscience is not an unreasoning instinct. Castle's judgment is not distorted by his conscience. Rather, his judgment is enhanced by his conscience. Through internal discourse, Castle comes to the reasonable determination that he has a moral responsibility to help, or at least try to help, the black South Africans who are being oppressed. His conscience is not a fault. Though Castle's actions result in separating him from his family and forcing him to live

out the remainder of his life in Moscow, he has possibly prevented a nuclear genocide. Castle's moral scruples are perceived as a fault because Castle lives in a world in which gamification has usurped more sustainable moral frameworks such as the human family.

Snyder speculates that the purpose of Greene's change from "Fault" to "Factor" is to remove "any implication of authorial censure" (26). The change from Fault to Factor does indeed shift the tone of the title from accusatory to ambiguous. Still, it is likely that the term Fault was never intended to imply authorial censure—it is an ironic term, meant to highlight the idea that modern society views qualities like empathy and altruism as flaws or weaknesses, sentimentalities that can only hinder our success in the gamified world of business and politics. However, such faults, given a different, perhaps more enlightened society, might be viewed as virtues. The fact that Greene ultimately chose the equivocal Factor highlights the idea that binary moral distinctions often bely the complexity of moral evaluations. Morality is a spectrum; it is a factor which must be considered. The immediate designation of some action or quality as a fault is dismissive. The binary labelling hinders further external discussion and internal discourse. To characterize Castle's sense of conscience as a fault—however faulty it may seem to his MI6 superiors—discounts the possible benefits of the actions which his conscience has prompted.

Like Snyder, Laura Tracy examines the role of Castle's conscience as an influence on his actions. In "Passport to Greenland," Tracy seeks to establish a distinction between two drives—"individual conscience" and "individual necessity" (46). She claims that Castle's motivation is not entirely one of conscience; it is also one of individual necessity. Individual necessity is unconscious (49). While I argue that the



underlying catalyst for Castle's actions is the human family, I do not deny the presence of other, possibly less admirable or less agential influences. Nonetheless, the claim that Castle acts partially out of necessity must be interrogated. Any claim of unconscious compulsion entails a mitigation of Castle's agency. The weight of Castle's decision to abide by the human family and deliver the information to the KGB is negated if Castle has no choice or limited choice in the matter. Tracy supports her assertion by citing *The Human Factor*'s scenes which flash back to Castle's childhood. Like many among the tenuous, modern British middle class, Castle has had a rather lonely childhood, immersing himself in daydreams, imaginary friends, and solitary adventures. At the age of ten, he pities a seven-year-old girl who seems similarly lonely and shy (*The Human Factor* 146-47). For Tracy, this childhood sense of pity for the oppressed compels Castle to feel empathy for the black South Africans: "Naturally, then, he would be drawn to the extreme anguish endured by the blacks in South Africa" (51). The term "naturally" suggests that Castle's feelings are an unconscious drive, a necessity over which he has no control. Castle's pity for the young girl does indicate that, even as a youth, Castle has a heightened sense of empathy for people who are suffering. However, having a heightened sense of empathy does not imply that Castle is compelled to investigate that empathy using internal discourse or that he is compelled to act in a way which complies with his perceived moral obligation. These choices require agency on the part of the actor.

Tracy limits Castle's psychological agency by half, contending that Castle is "equally a pawn of his own unconscious needs, which he has mistaken for the promptings of his conscience" (51). According to this logic, conscience is entirely conscious, but the unconscious is capable of masquerading as conscience. Castle, then, is deluded. He

believes that he is making a reasoned, conscious decision when in reality he is only acquiescing to an unconscious drive. While we are all subtly influenced by the promptings of our unconscious, to slice Castle's agency in half and give one half to the unconscious seems an excessive portion for the unconscious. It is an especially excessive portion for one who uses internal discourse to consciously evaluate the moral content of situations. Even after allocating half of Castle's psychological agency to the unconscious, we would still have to account for outside limitations on Castle's agency as well, such as pressure from his superiors to conform to gamification. Unconscious necessity is a difficult component to measure. Nonetheless, I would argue that, while humans are susceptible to some unconscious influence, the consistent practice of internal discourse can counter that influence, resulting in greater agency for the individual.

Like Tracy and Snyder, Henry Shapiro examines issues of agency and motivation in *The Human Factor*. However, Shapiro focuses on ambivalence as his key theme. In "Morality and Ambivalence in *The Human Factor*," Shapiro argues that *The Human Factor* is about "moral/emotional/religious clutters or confusions, the confounding of victory and void" (100). While this quotation seems to be describing ambiguity more than ambivalence, the ambiguity of these clutters is what causes ambivalence to arise for the reader or critic; we are unable to decide whether Castle's character is morally admirable or morally objectionable. One of the ideas which Shapiro employs to illustrate this claim is Castle's name. He describes Castle as a reference to Franz Kafka's *The Castle*: "Franz Kafka's great *Castle* sets the tone for much of *The Human Factor*, in particular for the many scenes in which an impenetrably hazy Moscow dominates the world of Maurice Castle" (101). The haziness of Moscow is increased for Castle by the fact that he does not

speak Russian. His ability to take in external discourses is limited, and therefore his internal discourse has less information with which to work. While Castle seeks a reliable moral compass, finding his way is difficult in both the figurative haze of the Cold War and the literally hazy snowscape of Moscow. I must agree with Shapiro that there are notes of the Kafkaesque in *The Human Factor*; the labyrinthine bureaucracy of MI6, within which Castle works, might also be compared to another Kafka work, *The Trial*.

However, connecting Maurice Castle to Kafka's *Castle* is not the only possible interpretation of this surname. Robert Snyder describes the surname Castle as an ironic play on the notion of a home as a man's castle (Snyder 29). Castle, the king in this metaphor, attempts to keep his subjects—his nuclear family—safe behind the walls of his domicile. There is some validity to this view as well. However, I would add a third interpretation—that the name is an allusion to the colloquial term for the rook in chess. Therefore the surname Castle reflects the theme of gamification in *The Human Factor*. Castle is enmeshed in a world which seeks to mold him into a piece on a board. A castle/rook is a piece that cannot move obliquely; it can only move in straight lines. Castle's stealing of the plans for Uncle Remus is neither subtle nor indirect, but it is effective. Thus the agency of the rook reflects Castle's own agency. Furthermore, to "castle" is a defensive move in chess; it is a desperate move, but sometimes it is necessary. Castle's own move is likewise desperate, but it is necessary in order to defend the black South Africans from genocide. A castle/rook is a relatively valuable piece, a testament to the power which Castle has to make a potentially world-altering or game-altering decision. Yet, when the game gets rough, the piece can still be expended as a means to an end, as a means to winning the game. If necessary, Castle, like his colleague

Davis, could be poisoned to death, or extinguished in some equally unceremonious way. Castle's name reflects the way his superiors like Dr. Percival view him—as a valuable yet ultimately expendable piece in a game.

In order to explain how Castle's underlying motivation is the human family, it will be helpful to elucidate the outside forces which attempt to dissuade Castle from the human family—the forces of gamification. While I defined gamification in chapter one, I have not yet thoroughly detailed how gamification applies to *The Human Factor*. Gamification is most clearly exemplified in *The Human Factor*'s portrayal of espionage. It is not the intent of the spy to engage in honest communication with members of the opposing State; nor is it the spy's role to foster better relations and de-escalate tensions. Spies gather information for their State, and they disrupt or distort the information flowing to the opposing State. In the system of espionage, humans are reduced to carriers of information, storage facilities where potentially compromising or potentially beneficial data resides. Humans are potentialities of political points to be gained or lost. If a spy assassinates someone in order to eradicate the possibly dangerous information which the person knows, the spy's action is justified. Assassination is not murder, it is a redaction. A successful redaction is a point in the spy's favor and a point for the spy's State. Empathy and morality do not earn any points in spy games, except in the sense of a spy exploiting these feelings in others. Therefore empathy and morality are burdens to the spy. Indeed, any ideology, like Catholicism or Communism, is a distraction from the game. Gamification demands ideological loyalty in its adherents. Dr. Percival, a seasoned spy for MI6, remarks to a colleague, "Beware of people who believe. They aren't reliable players" (*The Human Factor* 163). The best players believe in nothing but the game of

espionage. For Percival, the only moral obligation is to win as many points as possible. A chess player who takes into consideration his opponent's humanity is crippled; the best chess player is a computer. An effective player, like an effective State, is one who values risk-calculation and point-efficiency. The UK is willing to collude with the white South Africans on Uncle Remus because the genocide of black South Africans is inconsequential compared to the possibility of winning political points against the Soviets—regardless of the human cost, the UK needs South Africa for its gold, diamonds, and, most importantly, its uranium (55). Percival chooses to kill Davis without sufficient evidence that Davis is a double-agent (83). While this decision may seem like a miscalculation given that Davis proves not to be the mole, Percival's sense of risk-calculation is precise: Davis is a pawn. He is easily replaceable. Even if Davis is not the mole, his death will not cost Percival any points. Indeed, if the leaks continue after Davis's death, then Davis's death has helpfully narrowed down the list of possible double-agents. Why not kill Davis? For Percival, moral concerns are irrelevant. Percival's obligation is to the game.

When it becomes clear that Davis was indeed innocent of perfidy, Daintry accuses Percival of killing the wrong man. Percival is dismissive of this accusation, replying that he only made "an error in the prescription" (214). Murder is a moral construct which has no place in the game. When a player kills an opponent's pawn in chess, we do not accuse him of murdering the pawn. Instead, we evaluate whether or not the move has improved the player's position on the board. If the move has improved the player's position, it is a good, justified move. If the move has weakened the player's position, then the player has made a mistake, a miscalculation. A player in chess does not feel moral revulsion when

he makes a mistake. He notes his mistake and reevaluates his position on the board, determining not to make a similar error in the future. The mistake, however regrettable, cannot be dwelled upon. Any remorse the player may feel will distract him from his future calculations. Gamification disconnects us from others by removing empathy; gamification then disconnects us from ourselves by severing all senses that do not serve the game.

Percival attempts to indoctrinate Daintry by using the analogy of boxes. This analogy appears throughout *The Human Factor*. Boxes are symbolic of gamification. We are meant to stay in our small segment of reality and not think about how our actions might affect others outside of that segment. The potentially far-reaching consequences of our actions are irrelevant. We have no obligation, moral or otherwise, to whatever occurs outside of our box. Boxes mitigate culpability and promote gamification. What happens in a chess match has no affect on the matches taking place nearby or in the matches taking place in other parts of the world. Percival tells Daintry, “You haven’t been a long time with us, have you, or you’d know how we all live in boxes” (38). Daintry, a new recruit, has not yet been fully initiated into the gamified culture of espionage. When Daintry seems not to understand the analogy, Percival directs him to a modernist painting by Ben Nicholson made up of various squares of different shape and color: “Percival pointed at a yellow square. ‘There’s your Section 6. That’s your square from now on. You don’t need to worry about the blue and the red... You’ve no responsibility for what happens in the blue or red squares. In fact not even in the yellow. You just report. No bad conscience. No guilt’” (38). Daintry is working in a small section of a large organization, MI6. Yet, there is no doubt that Daintry’s decisions could have far-reaching

consequences. It is not unreasonable, then, that Daintry has concerns. Nonetheless, Percival tells him that it is not Daintry's role to feel concerns. Even within Daintry's own box, Percival instructs him to feel no conscience or guilt for what happens. Daintry is not to engage in any internal discourse. In a sense, Percival is grooming Daintry into being a pawn. Daintry's job is to follow orders and to think as little as possible about matters beyond his ken—"You just report." A pawn is most useful when the player can count on it to obey. And Percival is not wrong; it *will* be easier for Daintry to do his job if he does not allow himself to ponder the morality of his actions, to practice internal discourse. But when people sever their conscience, they dehumanize their realities. Life becomes a game. Thus the box image is apt because a box is both protective and limiting. We can protect ourselves through willful ignorance and willful suppression of internal discourse, but such suppression limits our realities. A myopic vision cannot see that gamification threatens humanity and the planet as a whole. Nuclear war is justifiable when viewed as a means of gaining political points. Under the ideology of gamification, the thousands dead from radiation poisoning can be written off as a slight "error in the prescription."

Like Daintry, Castle too has the culture of gamification impressed upon him. As a double-agent, Castle's KGB contact Boris assures him "...you know how it is in your own outfit. It's the same in ours. We live in boxes and it's they who choose the box.' How often he [Castle] had heard that comparison in his own office. Each side shares the same clichés" (117). The culture of espionage does not differ significantly based on the country or organization. One cannot play the game effectively if one does not know the game's conventions. A chess match in Russia is indistinguishable from a chess match in the UK. Castle has had to conform to the conventions of espionage, and he has

conformed relatively well. Appearing to be well-contained and contented within his box, none of Castle's superiors initially suspect that he is the source of the leak. Yet, Castle's heightened sense of morality, his sense of connection and moral obligation to others, prevents him from fully acquiescing to gamification. He can only be a "half believer" (107), because to fully, uncritically believe in any ideology is to reject internal discourse and therefore moral analysis. When our reality is contained within a small box, when we do not think about whatever occurs outside of our immediate perception, we cannot take in discourses outside of that box and thus our internal discourse is stifled by a lack of external discourses with which to evaluate. Castle recognizes that the box is delusive. The ideological barriers we create—the iron curtain, apartheid, Jim Crow—are delusional and unsustainable. Humans are connected.

I would like to raise an idea from Terry Eagleton that will shed light on Castle's use of internal discourse. In "Reluctant Heroes: The Novels of Graham Greene," Eagleton highlights a peculiar version of heroism which he refers to as the reluctant hero (97). In order to articulate the concept of the reluctant hero, Eagleton distinguishes between skeptical detachment and liberal humanism (98). For Eagleton, a "liberal humanist" is one who believes that humans are essentially good. The liberal humanist's faith in the underlying good of humanity is a weakness; it blinds them to the darker side of humanity. However well-intentioned, liberal humanists are more susceptible to fixation on whatever cause most attracts their enthusiasm. This fixation results in a neglect of other, possibly superior discourses. They become blinded to alternative possibilities.

Those individuals who are more skeptical about the goodness of human nature,



and who choose to act for the good of humanity in spite of their skepticism, are better able to have a positive impact on society than their liberal humanist counterparts. The skeptic, then, becomes a “reluctant hero.” Eagleton contends that many of Greene’s protagonists display the characteristics of the reluctant hero (98). Eagleton’s understanding of heroism is especially applicable to *The Human Factor* because Castle at times displays skepticism about the essential goodness of humanity. Castle refers to people like Muller as having “made a hell in heaven’s despite” (*The Human Factor* 98-99). Actually, Castle is quoting a William Blake poem, “The Clod and the Pebble” (Blake). In the poem, Blake’s first speaker, the “little Clod of Clay,” poses love as the antidote for the hell-on-Earth which humans have created. However, the Clay’s counterpart, the Pebble, responds that love leads only to selfishness and joy at the pain of others—creating Hell out of the possible heaven which Earth provides. While the Earth has the potential to be heaven-like, humans are just as likely to create a hell-like planet as a heaven-like one. Thus, humans are not essentially good. Castle’s reference to the Blake poem indicates his skepticism about the inherent good of humanity. Castle is particularly skeptical as to the goodness of the ideologies which humanity has created: Referring to Christianity, communism, capitalism, and religio-political ideologies in general, Castle reflects, “Perhaps I was born to be a half believer” (*The Human Factor* 107). Castle is a “half believer” because part of him wants to believe in an ideology, to believe unequivocally and uncritically, but he is skeptical that any of the available ideologies are conducive to moral goodness. I would argue that skepticism is an aspect of internal discourse. When we approach an issue with skepticism, we subject the issue to a more extensive internal deliberation. Given the complexities of the modern world, it is

reasonable to approach any external discourse—political speeches, advertisements, religious proselytization, etc.—with some degree of dubiety. With skepticism we are less susceptible to the influence of harmful ideologies such as gamification. We are also less likely to commit to an action without evaluating the action's potential consequences. With the best of intentions, the liberal humanist rushes into the fray, unaware of the possibly negative consequences of her actions. Through internal discourse, the skeptic can develop an action which is more likely to produce a positive result. Thus skepticism, rather than hindering right action, actually facilitates right action.

I am hesitant to apply the term “hero,” reluctant or otherwise, to Castle. I do not want to suggest that Castle is anything other than a human being, with his own flaws and anxieties. Nor do I want to suggest that only the heroic can use the human family as a moral framework. Not every person will have the agency or courage to commit as explicitly subversive an act as Castle. However, anyone who is capable of internal discourse can recognize the human family. Though Castle is not a hero, he is a skeptic. The intellectual process of skepticism, because it is an aspect of internal discourse, is compatible with the human family. Indeed, skepticism has a causal relationship to the recognition of the human family as a moral obligation. In order to recognize the human family, we must practice skepticism for the State's ideologies and resist the pressure to conform to gamification. Castle knows that playing the game is the best way to survive, but he is not willing to relinquish his skeptic's lens.

The pressure to conform to gamification does not solely arise from the culture of espionage. Castle is also pressured by British citizens who have been made into pawns by their State. Pawns do not typically realize they are pawns, as their internal discourse is

stifled. An effective pawn is willing to harm herself out of loyalty to her State. As I discussed in chapter one, under gamification, an individual is justified in harming herself in order to weaken an opponent. Maurice Castle's mother, Mrs. Castle, provides a curious example of self-harming gamification in *The Human Factor*. Upon learning that her son has defected to the USSR, Mrs. Castle immediately disowns him, referring to Maurice as "a traitor to his country" (263). Maurice is Mrs. Castle's only child. Yet, Mrs. Castle cannot countenance a blow to her State. Sarah offers to explain Maurice's reasoning, but Mrs. Castle will not listen; a loss of points is a loss of points, no matter the excuses. One may counter that Mrs. Castle's harsh reaction is due to a jolt of emotion from the shock of Maurice's defection. But Mrs. Castle has made her calculation: "Mrs. Castle opened her eyes. Sarah had expected to see them wet with tears, but they were dry, dry and merciless" (262). Mrs. Castle's eyes are dry because a pawn does not feel pity for another pawn. Mrs. Castle does not care about Maurice's motives; she does not care about the people he was trying to save. Her State has lost face. Maurice, a disobedient and therefore undesirable pawn, must be disowned and, if possible, eliminated. Mrs. Castle, an aging widow, has irrevocably severed herself from her son. She has alienated her daughter-in-law and her grandson. She has isolated herself from her nuclear family and the human family. She will die alone, but her State will not be there to hold her hand as she takes her closing breaths. Mrs. Castle is not an irrational person; she is capable of reason, but she is not receptive to external discourses aside from those of her State. Her internal discourse is only made up of the State's gamified ideology, and therefore her ability to evaluate the moral character of a particular situation is compromised. She could have listened to Sarah and at least had the comfort of knowing her son attempted to make a morally sound

decision. She could have remained close to Sarah and Sam during their confinement in the UK, taking solace in their shared loss of Maurice. Instead, Mrs. Castle chooses gamification. She has acted in the interest of her State at the expense of her own interests. Her reaction will be viewed as an act of patriotic loyalty, and she will be used as a pawn to promote the UK's State ideology. The UK will gain political points from Mrs. Castle's compliance, but Mrs. Castle will gain nothing for herself—nothing, that is, which could ever replace her immense loss of family and humanity.

To further expand on my thesis, I would like to contrast my argument with that of Robert Snyder. Early in this chapter, we examined Snyder's argument that Castle's weakness, his fault, is his conscience. Snyder proposes three more components which influence Castle's actions—a hatred of Muller (32), a desire to protect his wife and son (28), and a sense of debt to Carson (28). I agree that all of these elements are present in Castle's internal discourse, yet I argue that Castle's underlying motive for his action is the human family. Let us begin with the assertion that Castle is driven by hatred of Muller. Muller is a deplorably racist character—averring that he has never loved and could never love even “a single black” (*The Human Factor* 194)—and Castle does hate Muller. Recalling an earlier meeting with him, Castle muses that “hate is an automatic response to fear, for fear humiliates” (96). The characterization of hate as an “automatic response” indicates that hate cannot be trusted as a reliable means of moral evaluation; internal discourse requires more than an automatic response, it requires a conscious effort. Castle makes a choice to practice internal discourse, and therefore his hatred is tempered. Castle's internal discourse has determined that hatred is not the most effective response to his situation; an overriding hatred will not allow Castle to commit the most

morally sound action. Though Castle is listening to the abhorrent Muller explain his plans for operation Uncle Remus, a nuclear genocide of black South Africans, Castle's mind is not overwhelmed by hatred; he does not picture himself physically harming Muller or damaging Muller's reputation. Rather Castle's mind shifts toward empathy for the black South Africans, toward the human family. Castle's motivation is revealed by the path of his internal discourse, by the scenes he imagines. Castle imagines a nuclear wasteland in South Africa, littered with bodies. Castle pictures his own black son as one of the irradiated masses: "He remembered Sam, as he remembered him when he looked at the newspaper photograph of the drought – the spread-eagled body and the vulture, but the vulture would be dead too of radiation" (156-57). At this point in the narrative, Sam is safe in England. He attends an English school and enjoys a comfortable English middle-class childhood. Sam is also an English citizen, having been born in the UK (263); he is not at risk for being deported to South Africa and therefore there is no chance that Sam will be directly harmed by Muller's genocide. Nonetheless, Castle pictures his own son, a member of his nuclear family, among the victims. Muller is driven by gamification, he views the black South Africans as faceless, insignificant pawns. His genocide will garner more political points for himself and for the State he represents. Therefore, Muller believes his actions are justified. Castle, however, does not imagine pawns, he imagines humans—not only humans, but family members, people with faces he recognizes and cares about. People to which he is connected. Thus, Castle's sense of moral obligation to the black South Africans is familial. Castle suppresses his hatred for Muller. Instead, he reacts in a way that is comparable to the way one would react if one's own nuclear family were threatened—with the desire to prevent their harm. Castle begins thinking of how to

help the black South Africans: To physically attack Muller would only play into Muller's game. Attacking Muller would prematurely reveal that Castle is the leak in MI6. If that revelation occurred, Castle could no longer help the people threatened with genocide. He would be arrested and he could not deliver the information on Uncle Remus to the KGB. For Snyder, compassion is at most an ancillary influence: "Even the repugnance Maurice feels upon revelation of the South African government's 'Final Solution' arises less from horror at the genocidal pogrom than from abiding hatred of Muller" (32). I must disagree. Hatred is not absent from Castle's internal discourse, but what Castle imagines reveals the true motivation for his actions.

In Castle's imagination, the image of Sam is juxtaposed not only with the bodies of other black South Africans, but also with the image of a vulture (156-57), which is curious, as vultures are symbolic and literal harbingers of death. In this case, however, the vulture itself is also dead; the vulture cannot feed upon the bodies. The vulture, having succumbed to radiation next to the human corpses, suggests that even those who prey on the dead and dying will perish too. Muller, in his zeal for racial domination, for winning the game, would unwittingly destroy himself and his State with nuclear warfare. Indeed, the entire planet risks destruction—not only through nuclear radiation, but through the racist ideologies which people like Muller cling to. The ideology of predator and prey, of player and pawn, belies the interdependence of their fates. The image of the dead vulture arises in Castle's mind to exemplify the fact that Muller is, in effect, plotting to kill himself, along with all white South Africans. The vulture, then, evokes a note of pity for Muller, an otherwise intelligent man who willingly bends his intelligence to his own and others' destruction. Muller, like other tyrants before him, is a pathetic figure.

That people would turn the world, would turn humanity, into an amoral game, is pathetic. While Castle has some hatred for Muller, to act purely out of hatred for such a pathetic man is to beat a dead vulture. Castle looks beyond this redundancy to the lives he still might save.

The second argument that must be addressed is that Castle is motivated primarily by an obsessive desire to protect his wife and child. Snyder argues that Castle is stricken by the “tragically corruptive force” that is his love for Sarah and Sam (Snyder 28). I do not wholly discount Castle’s desire to protect his family as a motivational influence. It is true that Castle cares deeply for his wife and child and that he wants to protect them; he wants them to be “secure” (*The Human Factor* 19). As I have noted, Castle’s nuclear family is not in any immediate danger from Muller. Sarah and Sam are safe in England, and if Castle obeys his superiors at MI6, Castle and his family will presumably remain safe. Castle is tasked by MI6 with facilitating collusion between apartheid South Africa and the UK. Castle’s superiors give him this assignment because of his experience in South Africa and in dealing with Muller (54). It is a disagreeable and morally fraught assignment, but Castle is capable of completing the task. If Castle is truly obsessed with protecting his family, he would be willing to forgo the objections of his better judgment, of the human family.

It would seem more plausible that Castle’s decision is the product of a misguided desire to protect his family if Castle is unaware of the risks his action poses—if, say, he is under the mistaken assumption that delivering the information to the KGB will make Sarah and Sam safer. Snyder asserts Castle’s “blindness” to the consequences of his actions (28). However, there is evidence that Castle is well aware of the possible risks his

actions pose to himself and his nuclear family. After the meeting with Muller at which Castle learns of the plans for nuclear genocide, Castle returns home to his wife and son. Putting Sam to bed, he reflects that he “knew that the time had almost come when he would lose the child for ever” (*The Human Factor* 172). Though this loss is ostensibly a reference to Sam’s growing up and the inevitable distance that arises between father and teenage son, there is a secondary meaning to Castle’s thoughts. Namely, Castle is cognizant of the action he is to take just after putting Sam to bed—he is going to make a copy of Muller’s documents to give to the KGB. One could argue that Castle is not yet aware of what he is going to do, that he makes the copies on an impulse. But consider that Castle has already made the decision to take the documents home with him rather than lock them in the safe at his office, as is MI6 policy (201). Much has already been made in the novel regarding the importance of not taking files out of the office—Davis’s penchant for reading files at the pub during his lunch break is what initially draws suspicion from his superiors (80-82). Castle knows that, at this point, he has already taken a major risk which will in turn draw suspicion upon him. Knowing that Davis was killed on less-than-damning evidence—Davis was completely innocent—Castle can hold little doubt that even an innocuous breach of protocol, if detected, will result in his own extermination. Castle is not an arrogant man, the importance of caution was reinforced in him while working in South Africa: “Castle had lost both audacity and innocence for ever in South Africa while he was waiting for the blow to fall” (20). Now, seven years after leaving South Africa, gazing down at his still-young son, with the stolen documents in his possession, Castle’s thought that “the time had almost come when he would lose the child for ever,” takes on the added significance of both his very dangerous preceding actions—



taking the documents home—and his irrevocable impending actions—copying and delivering the documents to the KGB. Whether these actions result in his assassination, his imprisonment, or (as later occurs) his forced exile, in all likelihood Sam will not see his father again. The suggestion that Castle is unaware of these possibilities, that Castle is blind to the danger he poses to others, is unwarranted.

Though Castle is aware of the possibilities his actions may incur, one might still argue that he is driven to take action by a misguided motive. The final motivation which Snyder posits is that Castle acts out of “an exaggerated conviction of indebtedness to Carson for facilitating Sarah’s escape from South Africa” (28). Carson is Castle’s former colleague, who saves Sarah and (the then in utero) Sam by helping them escape South Africa. Castle continues to remember Carson, framing Carson as a person of strong moral character (*The Human Factor* 105-07). Indeed, Castle recalls Carson’s words as one recalls a wise aphorism: “He [Castle] thought of what his Communist friend Carson had so often said to him – ‘Our worst enemies here are not the ignorant and the simple, however cruel, our worst enemies are the intelligent and the corrupt’” (99). Carson recognizes that, in the political game, the best players are calculating and amoral. An unintelligent, brutal person often makes an excellent pawn. Nonetheless, we do not blame a pawn for a particular move in chess. We must look to the player who has set the piece in motion. Carson, as a devoted Communist agent, is committed to the game. Castle is more skeptical about political ideologies, but I would argue that Carson’s words help Castle to recognize the gamified culture in which he is enmeshed. Thus Carson provides an important external discourse which Castle integrates into his own internal discourse.

Castle’s enduring memory of Carson prompts Snyder’s assertion that Castle’s

own actions are an attempt to repay Carson. It is also true that Castle's initial decision to work with the Soviets was at the request of Carson (186). However, the idea that Castle has been goaded into Uncle Remus by an inflated feeling of obligation to Carson belies the fact that Castle cuts ties with the KGB earlier in the novel. Upon cutting ties, Castle feels "relief because he had repaid as far as he could his debt of gratitude to Carson" (143). Castle is satisfied that he has done all he can for Carson. Perhaps Castle would have liked to do a little more, but sending any further information to the KGB would put his life at risk; Castle is not at all willing to compromise his own and his family's safety to pay back the now-deceased Carson. Castle will later renew his ties with the KGB in order to deliver the Uncle Remus dossier, but he does not do so for Carson. When listening to Muller explain his plans for Uncle Remus, Castle does not think of Carson, but of the human family and of what will become of the black South Africans should Uncle Remus be allowed to commence. Carson was able to save Sarah and Sam. But Carson was not able to save all of the people being oppressed in South Africa. Indeed, Castle is willing to put the very people Carson worked so hard to save—Sarah and Sam—at risk. One could argue that Castle is inspired by Carson's courage; this claim is certainly valid. While copying Uncle Remus, Castle reflects, "Carson at this point would have taken the ultimate risk" (174). Still, there is a difference between being inspired by a person's courage and being compelled by a perceived debt to that person. Castle thinks of Carson only after he takes the documents home and begins copying them. He thinks of Carson to gain courage. Castle's belief in the human family has prompted his action, but one cannot blame Castle for wanting to bolster his courage by thinking of an inspirational friend. The notion that Castle acts primarily out of a feeling of indebtedness to Carson

renders Castle a Quixotic figure, obsessed with settling a debt of honor. The human family is not a debt of honor; it is a moral obligation.

The process of analyzing a character's motivation for committing a particular action is complex. One is rarely motivated by a single element. Yet, the attempt to discern a character's motives is not futile. By examining textual evidence and employing a germane critical framework, we can gain insights into a character's rationale. We can also gain insights into the outside forces which are influencing a character. I have used two moral frameworks in this analysis, the human family and gamification, in order to critique the character of Maurice Castle in *The Human Factor*. Scaffolding these frameworks is Bakhtin's concept of internal discourse. Castle's internal discourse—the image of his dead son next to other corpses and next to a dead vulture—during the moments prior to his taking the documents indicates the primary motivation for his action, the human family. The gravity of Castle's choice, and the degree of agency necessary to make that choice, is revealed by the opposing ideology, gamification. Castle is enmeshed in an increasingly gamified world of State politics. The culture of espionage most notably exemplifies the forces of gamification. Spies play games with human lives for political points. Castle is pressured from his superiors at MI6, such as Percival, and from other citizens of his State, including his own mother. These forces seek to inhibit Castle's internal discourse, and they are not easy to overcome. Through the threat of repercussions such as loss of career, loss of family, and loss of life, Castle is discouraged from transgressing the rules of the game. Thus the gravity of Castle's choice to subvert those forces is considerable. He relies on his moral agency to prioritize the human family. Once in Moscow, Castle is used by the Soviets as a pawn to gain political points, and

soon the news of Castle's defection and the plans for Uncle Remus are broadcast in England and worldwide (262). Broadcasting Castle and the Muller documents is the best way to humiliate the UK, but the press conference will also bring Uncle Remus under international scrutiny. Therefore it is quite likely that Castle's actions have prevented a genocide. But the culture of gamification persists. Castle has challenged this ideology, but his actions alone cannot break down the game. Like a painting by Ben Nicholson, the boxes remain on the walls of our consciousness. The physical and ideological walls created in the twentieth century, the opposing sides, are not easily dismantled. Castle cannot fully leave the game; he defects from the UK only to find himself in Moscow, on the other side of the board. Yet, Castle demonstrates that some subversion of the game is possible. *The Human Factor* concludes on a note of tempered hope. Castle is finally able to speak with Sarah over the phone, and Sarah asks him to "please go on hoping" (265). The phone connection is cut off, and we do not know if Castle hears these words, but the possibility is there. If more people begin to recognize the human family, we can pose a greater challenge to the hegemonic ideology of gamification. Thus, as individuals we have a moral obligation to educate ourselves, to practice internal discourse, and to recognize our connection to people around the world. Someday, we may ensure that threats like nuclear genocide are no longer a real possibility.

## Chapter 3—

“To see a friend”: Love in the Present and the Perfection Fallacy

in Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*

A classic work of 20th century literature, Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited* remains an enigmatic novel, with many questions still to be explored. The research question I will seek to answer is the following: what motivates Charles Ryder’s conversion? I argue that the primary influence of Ryder’s conversion is his recognition of love in the present, a moral framework which I outlined in chapter one. In order to acknowledge love in the present, Ryder must overcome an opposing moral framework—the perfection fallacy. I will specify from what and to what Ryder converts. For much of the novel, Ryder identifies as an atheist (*Brideshead* 85). However, his atheism intensifies during the later stages of the novel, as Lord Marchmain begins to decline and prepare for death. Ryder becomes more outspoken and critical of the Flytes, especially Julia (335). By the time Lord Marchmain is on his deathbed, Ryder is not only an atheist but an intolerant atheist. During Lord Marchmain’s deathbed scene, Ryder has a conversion experience. However, I do not argue that Ryder completely converts from intolerant atheism to Catholicism. Rather, Ryder converts from intolerant atheism to a form of Catholicism which I will term “agnostic Catholicism.” Though Ryder’s conversion is a gradual process, occurring throughout the novel, the moment of Lord Marchmain’s death, and Marchmain’s own preceding conversion, are key points in which Ryder becomes willing to use internal discourse to examine religion and religious arguments; Ryder accepts his interest in religious and specifically Catholic discourses, an interest he has tried to suppress. His ostensible disdain for any religious faith or dogma is

tempered by his recognition of love in the present. Ryder becomes open to new ideas, including the possibility that Catholicism has moral validity. He gains openness to external discourses relating to spiritual and religious matters. However, given that Ryder's conversion process is both gradual and nonlinear, the deathbed scene does not mark his final conversion. Ryder has another important conversion experience in the epilogue, in which his agnostic Catholicism is revived by love in the present. I will begin this chapter with a literature review examining relevant scholarship on *Brideshead*. I will then give a more thorough definition of intolerant atheism and agnostic Catholicism. After defining these terms, I will explore how love in the present and the perfection fallacy are manifested in *Brideshead*. I will explain how these moral frameworks enhance our understanding of Ryder's conversions, concluding that love in the present is the underlying motive for Ryder's conversion to agnostic Catholicism.

Among scholars, one of the ongoing conversations about *Brideshead* concerns the nature of Ryder's conversions in the novel. The first article I will examine pertains to this conversation. In "The Triple Conversions of *Brideshead Revisited*," Laura Mooneyham explains that much of the criticism about *Brideshead* relates to dissatisfaction with Ryder's ostensible conversion (226), specifically with his conversion at Lord Marchmain's deathbed. Marchmain himself converts just before his death, which seems to prompt Ryder's own conversion. Yet, Mooneyham notes that the idea that Ryder has converted to Catholicism does not accord with the novel's prologue and epilogue: "The presumably converted Charles seems disassociated from his moment of grace" (226). This criticism is valid, as the Ryder of the prologue and epilogue, now 39, appears to be in an apathetic and jaded state. He feels "stiff and weary in the evenings and reluctant to

go out of camp” (*Brideshead* 5). Ryder is in charge of some military operations in rural England. He struggles with the incompetence of his soldiers and with his own indifference. In short, Ryder does not seem particularly spiritually enlightened. Thus critics—including Edmund Wilson and Kingsley Amis—have claimed that the power of the earlier conversion is negated by the prologue and epilogue (Mooneyham 225).

Mooneyham attempts to address this issue by posing a different strategy for viewing Charles’s conversion. She argues that Ryder’s conversion is actually two-fold, an initial conversion during Lord Marchmain’s death scene and a second conversion in the epilogue, during which Ryder visits Brideshead chapel. Mooneyham refers to this second conversion as a reconversion: “Charles the participant in the action is prepared for the overwhelming emotion of his first conversion, while on another level Charles the narrator is prepared for the reconversion in Brideshead chapel which concludes the frame story” (226). According to Mooneyham, Ryder’s initial conversion did not last. Over time, Ryder descended into the depressed state in which he appears during the prologue and epilogue (227). Only after visiting Brideshead chapel is Ryder able to reconvert to Catholicism. Mooneyham asserts that this reconversion will be more lasting than the initial conversion because the new conversion does not contain the overwhelming, rending emotion of the initial (226). Rather, Ryder leaves the chapel with a slight smile on his face, just enough to be noticed by a colleague. The final line of the novel is the colleague’s comment, “‘You’re looking unusually cheerful to-day,’ said the second-in-command” (*Brideshead* 351). Given Ryder’s prior depressed state, even a slight smile would constitute a noticeable change. Ryder has not been overcome with emotion, but he does gain solace from a renewed faith. I agree with Mooneyham that Ryder’s conversion

during Lord Marchmain's dying scene is not the only conversion event which Ryder experiences during *Brideshead*. However, I disagree with the idea that Ryder's experience in Brideshead chapel is a reconversion. Rather, I argue that both conversions are part of a gradual conversive process. Neither conversion is a finite experience with a clear beginning and ending; it is misleading to characterize Ryder's conversion as two-fold. Thus I also question the notion that Ryder fully and permanently converts to Catholicism in the epilogue scene. There are other moments in *Brideshead* which can be understood as conversion experiences for Ryder, including his artistic "conversion to the baroque" (82), and Ryder's process of conversion will continue even after he leaves Brideshead chapel in the epilogue.

Another scholar who focuses on the issue of Ryder's conversion is Dustin Faulstick. In "A Pilgrimage to Passion: Charles Ryder's Emotional Conversion in *Brideshead Revisited*," Faulstick, like Mooneyham, describes Ryder's conversion at Lord Marchmain's deathbed as primarily emotional. However, Faulstick focuses on Ryder's emotional suppression after Sebastian tells him there is nothing more Ryder can do to help him: "Charles's emotional response to people has been discouraged by his failed relationship with Sebastian" (179).

It is true that at times Ryder displays an uncanny lack of emotion. For example, immediately after being told by Sebastian that Ryder cannot help him, he goes to say goodbye to Lady Marchmain (*Brideshead* 168). When Ryder admits that he was the one who gave Sebastian the money on which Sebastian got drunk, Lady Marchmain brutally admonishes Ryder. Yet Ryder's reaction is emotionless. He recalls, "I was unmoved;



there was no part of me remotely touched by her distress” (167). Ryder, frustrated at what he perceives as the Flytes’ treating Sebastian like a naughty child, gives Sebastian money in the hopes that this freedom would restore some of Sebastian’s self-control. Ryder does not try to explain his reasoning to Lady Marchmain. He is numbed from the emotional stress of having failed to help Sebastian. Given Ryder’s evident emotional suppression, Faulstick’s suggestion that Ryder’s conversion acts as a cathartic, emotional release is reasonable (Faulstick 176). However, I argue that the emotional release could not have come about without an ongoing internal discourse regarding religion. In the hours succeeding Lord Marchmain’s death, Ryder speaks alone with Julia. They both know that their relationship must end, but where Julia claims that she only realized it that day, Ryder admits that he has known their relationship must end “all this year” (*Brideshead* 340). Ryder has been grappling with the discord between Julia’s and his own religious views for some time. His knowledge that his relationship with Julia is untenable reflects Ryder’s understanding that his own religious views are untenable, that his intolerant atheism is a willed suppression of religious interest that cannot be maintained. Prior to the deathbed scene, images in Ryder’s internal discourse indicate that he is aware of an impending conversion: “And another image came to me...the last blizzard of winter raging and the snow piling up against the door. Quite silently a great weight forming against the timber; the bolt straining in its socket” (310). While Faulstick describes this image as an example of emotional suppression (Faulstick 174), it indicates a suppression of intellectual internal discourse. Ryder struggles to accept the part of his internal discourse which is interested in religion, but this interest presses like snow against the door of a cabin. Certainly, emotion is a part of the frozen mass, but intellectual

fascination is the major element. Ryder's conversion at Lord Marchmain's deathbed is characterized by his acceptance of a previously suppressed internal discourse with religion—specifically a discourse with Catholicism.

Like me, RoseMary Johnson objects to Faulstick's overemphasis on the emotional component of Ryder's conversion (Johnson 163). In "Human Tragedy, Divine Comedy: The Painfulness of Conversion in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*," Johnson argues that Ryder's conversion is better understood when viewed as a product of two narrative modes—the comic-romantic and the tragic-ironic modes (163). I agree that *Brideshead* does have both comedic and tragic elements. While *Brideshead* is not as overtly satirical as some of Waugh's early works, such as *Decline and Fall*, the novel is not a pure tragedy. The early scenes of Oxford and the undergraduate antics of Ryder, Sebastian, and Anthony Blanche are particularly humorous. However, Johnson's argument that "The tension between comic romance and tragic irony in *BR* is strongest when Waugh addresses the theme of conversion" warrants further interrogation (165). Johnson provides an example of tragic irony in the fact that Ryder's deathbed conversion experience immediately results in the end of his relationship with Julia (167); it is ironic because the apparent source of tension in their relationship, Ryder's intolerance of Catholicism, is resolved, and yet this resolution only spurs their relationship's end. Though one might view this breakup as an instance of tragic irony, there is also something morally admirable in the notion of two people realizing that they are not right for each other and deciding together to end their relationship, rather than allow it to fruitlessly drag on. The breakup is ironic, but not necessarily tragic. Johnson argues that the tragic-ironic element of Ryder's conversion is in tension with the comedic element.

The comic-romantic element of Ryder's conversion is most exemplified in the epilogue, during which Ryder has a moment of renewed faith (Johnson 170); Ryder, in a sense, gets a happy ending. I agree that there is an interplay between comedic-romantic and tragic-ironic elements in *Brideshead*. Yet, I question Johnson's portrayal of Ryder's failed relationships with Sebastian and Julia as means to end, as means to conversion. Johnson concludes that "the God who reveals himself to Charles in the Epilogue is a tremendous lover of whom Sebastian and Julia were only forerunners" (170). That is, conversion—the comedic ending—is a result of tragedy—the loss of Julia and Sebastian. As I noted above, Ryder's breakup with Julia need not be viewed as purely tragic, as a tragic counter-element which facilitates Ryder's conversion in the epilogue. Julia and Ryder mutually decide to continue their journeys alone, and they part without any harsh words or accusations. Furthermore, Julia and Ryder's breakup does not necessarily indicate that they no longer love each other. A breakup, just as much as a marriage, can be an act of love. Ryder's relationships with Julia and Sebastian are not means to an end, but important experiences in themselves. These relationships form a critical part of Ryder's internal discourse. They are not mere precursors of Ryder's conversions: they are integral aspects of Ryder's ongoing conversive process.

In order to articulate the nature of Ryder's conversion, I will expand on two of this essay's key terms—intolerant atheism and agnostic Catholicism. These terms will help us understand from what and to what Ryder converts. Let us begin with intolerant atheism. The term "atheism" can be defined as the view that God or any gods do not exist. In this definition, there is no provision stating that atheism entails intolerance of those who hold beliefs other than atheism. One can identify as an atheist, and hold that

atheism is the most reasonable moral framework, without admonishing people who hold other views. In other words, one can be a tolerant atheist. Conversely, one can also be an intolerant atheist: one who maintains that atheism is the only viable moral framework and that anyone who holds a different view must be admonished and, if possible, converted to atheism. It is an intolerant atheist's moral obligation to chastise and proselytize non-atheists. Intolerant atheism can be compared to other extreme religious sects despite atheism's anti-religious ethos. Intolerance, and therefore intolerant atheism, is a product of the perfection fallacy. When we seek to perfect ourselves, we are more likely to be uncritically drawn to a particular ideology, whether that ideology is atheism, Catholicism, fascism, etc. That is, in the desperate quest for perfection, an ideology may initially seem so conducive to achieving perfection that we fail to practice internal discourse, choosing rather to fully adopt the ideology. Consequently, we become critical of those people who have not accepted the ideology, as such people are perceived as holding an inferior ideology.

The State takes advantage of our intolerance and promotes it through propaganda and political rhetoric: the State depicts the inferior ideology as the cause of social imperfection. Often an ideology will be attached to a particular group in order to more easily identify the cause of social imperfection. In *Brideshead*, Rex Mottram and his political colleagues underestimate the Nazi ideology by portraying the Germans as impotent and syphilitic (*Brideshead* 294); the Nazis wouldn't dare start a war with the British because the British are a superior race with a superior State. Meanwhile, the Nazi State is depicting the Jewish people as the cause of social imperfection. If someone or

some group is considered a barrier to our personal or societal perfection, we are more inclined to practice intolerance.

In *Brideshead*, Ryder's intolerant atheism is engendered by the perfection fallacy: Ryder is not willing to accept the religious aspect of his internal discourse because he views religion as "nonsense"—as a cognitive shortcoming (86, 164, 335). Ryder is not always an intolerant atheist; early in the novel, he claims that he has "no religion" (85), but he does not try to convert the Flytes during his early interactions with them. Ryder is perplexed, and secretly intrigued, by the Flytes' Catholicism. Nonetheless, Ryder is tolerant of the Flytes' non-atheist views. However, after Lord Marchmain moves back to Brideshead and his health begins to decline, Ryder becomes more intolerant of the Flytes' belief in Catholicism. For instance, as Lord Marchmain is dying, Julia decides to summon the local Catholic priest, Father Mackay, from the nearby rectory (335). Ryder is incensed by Julia's decision; Ryder knows that Lord Marchmain is an atheist like himself, and he cannot countenance the thought of a Catholic priest being present during Lord Marchmain's death. It is Julia who should be converting to atheism, not trying to convert Lord Marchmain back to Catholicism. In attempt to hinder Julia's efforts, Ryder turns to Lord Marchmain's doctor: "We must stop this nonsense" (335). Ryder's use of the word "must" indicates the degree of his perceived obligation to prevent the spread of any ideology other than atheism. The immediate and intense response from Ryder suggests that he has not evaluated the situation using internal discourse. People who are not intolerant atheists are likely to view Ryder's intensity as uncalled-for, given the situation. Considering that Lord Marchmain is clearly on the verge of death, it is unlikely that the presence of a priest can do him much harm. And the presence of Father Mackay

may provide much comfort to Julia and Cara. Thus Ryder's urgent appeal is met by a nonplussed doctor. The doctor replies, "My business is with the body. It's not my business to argue whether people are better alive or dead, or what happens to them after death. I only try to keep them alive" (335). Though the doctor admits there is a possibility that the shock of seeing a priest could kill Lord Marchmain, Lord Marchmain's death is imminent regardless of whether or not a priest is present. Furthermore, Ryder is not concerned about Lord Marchmain's health; Ryder is aware, like everyone else, that Lord Marchmain is not long for the world. Ryder is concerned about Lord Marchmain's dignity. That is, Ryder believes that the Flytes are taking advantage of Lord Marchmain's weakened state in order to reconvert him. Ryder has a moral obligation to prevent this reconversion. It is only by remaining an atheist, and by dying as an atheist, that Lord Marchmain can retain the dignified moral framework by which he lived.

While Ryder directs his external discourse of intolerant atheism toward the Flytes, Ryder's internal discourse has also become intolerant; he has become intolerant of his own suppressed interest in religious matters. He cannot love himself in the present because he refuses to accept an important aspect of his internal discourse. Ryder is fascinated by religion and particularly by Catholicism. During Ryder's early visits to Brideshead, he is intrigued by Sebastian's Catholicism (86-87). He begins by asking Sebastian how he can believe all the "nonsense" (86). Yet, rather than shifting the conversation to a more sensible topic, Ryder continues to press Sebastian with questions about Catholicism. It is finally Sebastian who puts an end to the topic, to which Ryder replies, "You started the subject. I was just getting interested" (87). Ryder, despite his incredulous opinion of religion, desires to know more, to gather further external religious

discourses. Ryder's use of the term "nonsense" is the same term he uses in the quotation with the doctor. It is a term which indicates Ryder's view that Catholicism, and all religion, is illogical. There is insufficient evidence to justify the belief in religion. An ideology such as Catholicism, with its rituals and mystic elements, may seem particularly illogical to Ryder. He perceives illogic as imperfection: an example of this perception is in Ryder's argument with Brideshead, Sebastian's older brother, about the best way of treating Sebastian's alcoholism. Ryder is in denial about Sebastian's alcoholism; he believes that he can moderate Sebastian's consumption if given approval by the Flytes, and thereby that he can rectify Sebastian's imperfection. When debating Brideshead, Ryder uses the term nonsense: "D'you know, Bridey, if I ever felt for a moment like becoming a Catholic, I should only have to talk to you for five minutes to be cured. You manage to reduce what seem quite sensible propositions to stark nonsense" (164).

Ryder's view of Catholicism is becoming more intolerant. Though he is still relatively cordial with Brideshead, there is a tone of exasperation in his riposte; Ryder wants to save Sebastian, while Brideshead is willing to accept him in his imperfect state. Such a willingness to remain flawed and allow others to remain so seems illogical, nonsensical, to Ryder. Ryder's use "nonsense," combined with his exasperated and eventually antagonistic response to issues of religion, reflect an internal struggle. In the deathbed scene, Ryder appears desperate to suppress Catholicism in Lord Marchmain because he is desperate to suppress his own internal discourse regarding religion. Ryder cannot love others, such as Julia and Sebastian, in the present because of their imperfections. In turn, Ryder cannot love himself because of the imperfections he perceives in his own internal

discourse. He attempts to stifle any internal discourse concerning his interest in religion, and thus he becomes an intolerant atheist.

Ryder is an intolerant atheist by the time Lord Marchmain is on his deathbed. I argue that he converts from intolerant atheism to “agnostic Catholicism,” a term I will now define. Though “agnostic” is often defined as having neither belief nor disbelief in a god or gods, in its broader form, an agnostic is one who is not wholly committed to any ideology. The idea of not being committed to any ideology recalls my account of skepticism in chapter two. I argued that skepticism is a necessary component of a healthy internal discourse. A skeptic is no less likely to immediately disregard an ideology as she is to immediately accept an ideology; exposure to an ideology will result in critical analysis by the skeptic—the skeptic will practice internal discourse. An agnostic is not willing to commit to any particular ideology: therefore, an agnostic can be a skeptic. I note that the agnostic “can be” a skeptic because it is also possible that an agnostic immediately and uncritically rejects any ideology to which she is exposed. An agnostic might also have complete indifference toward all ideologies. Such an agnostic would not qualify as a skeptic. In *Brideshead*, Ryder converts to the skeptical variety of agnostic Catholicism in the deathbed scene, but he slowly descends into an indifferent form of agnostic Catholicism, into the form we see in the prologue and epilogue. In the final scene of the epilogue Ryder renews his fascination with Catholicism, converting from the indifferent version of agnostic Catholicism to the skeptical version. What distinguishes agnostic Catholicism from general agnosticism is the importance of Catholic discourse within the agnostic Catholic’s cognitive architecture. Even when Ryder becomes



indifferent to Catholicism, Catholic discourse is not vacant from his psyche; indifference does not imply absence.

In the prologue and epilogue, Ryder's agnostic Catholicism is apathetic and uncritical. Ryder still identifies as a Catholic, and his soldiers recognize him as such. Hooper, after noticing that Brideshead has a chapel, tells Ryder "I looked in and there was a kind of service going on—just a padre and one old man, I felt very awkward. More in your line than mine" (16-17). Ryder, having been to Brideshead many times before, is well aware of the chapel, but he is uninterested in it. Hooper, seeing the look of indifference on Ryder's face, shifts gears, mentioning the large fountain "in a final effort to excite my interest" (17). Hooper's effort is a failure. Ryder has lost the moral curiosity, the skepticism, necessary for a healthy internal discourse. Without moral curiosity, there is vacancy. Ryder still attempts to do his duty as an officer, managing the tedious logistics of breaking down and setting up camps, but his heart is not in the tasks. He knows that, as a superior officer, one of his duties should be to inspire his troops, to keep their morale up. But this duty is one he is unable to execute; referring to his demoralized soldiers, he laments, "And I, who by every precept should have put heart into them—how could I help them, who could so little help myself?" (5). Ryder cannot inspire his troops because he is unable to inspire himself. Without his skeptic's curiosity, Ryder's internal discourse suffers. It is understandably difficult to display a positive, inspiring external discourse when our internal discourse is suffering. Such a display is more than Ryder can manage.

Ryder's internal discourse has become depressed because he has lost his ability to love himself in the present. Referring to his experience at a military encampment, Ryder

avers, “Here my last love died” (5). Ryder’s last love is ostensibly his love for the British military. He states the above while detailing the incompetence of his superior and inferior officers. However, the fact that Ryder refers to this love as his “last” indicates that he has no love remaining at all. Though not actively in combat, Ryder has been confronted with the travails of a world war. It is difficult to love oneself or others in an atmosphere of such global upheaval. Even in a rural landscape as yet untouched by bombs, the images of nature in the prologue are damaged: “ivy still supported part of what had once been the walls of a fruit garden; half an acre of mutilated old trees behind the wash-houses survived of an orchard” (3). The image of ivy holding onto ruined walls suggests futility. The ivy, like Ryder’s ostensible Catholicism, conceals a more tenuous structure. Ryder is still an agnostic Catholic, but his façade hides a crumbled, apathetic internal discourse. The trees are described as “mutilated.” One would not typically describe the trees in an overgrown orchard as mutilated, only left unattended and returning to a more natural state. Mutilated is a term which suggests personification: the trees evoke an image of bodies on a battlefield. Ryder is thinking about the devastation of the war. The war taints what would otherwise be a charming rustic scene. Ryder can find no charm, let alone love, in his present environs.

Inhibiting Ryder’s love for the present is his concern about the future. At night in camp he lies awake “fretting” (9). The outcome of WWII is as yet undecided. Yet, the domestic military responsibilities with which Ryder has been charged have proven banal and pointless. Moving from camp to camp, Ryder thinks critically of his superiors, who can give him no clear answer as to whether his soldiers will be sent abroad. Ryder notes the new colonel of his camp, a petty individual who forces Hooper to get a haircut in the

dining hall (8). One would hope that, as a colonel, he is focusing on larger concerns, but “Hooper seemed to obsess the colonel that evening” (8). A fresh haircut is a superficial expression of a perfectionist ideal. Though Hooper’s hair requires only “a few snips,” its lack of perfection is abhorrent to the colonel. The colonel is not making Hooper get a haircut in order to benefit the regiment or to contribute to the winning of the war, he is doing so to gain power through the propagation of the perfection fallacy. That people in power, people like the colonel, should be practicing such a moral framework does not bode well for the future of England. Ryder is distraught by the scene and leaves as soon as the haircut begins; despite his indifference toward religion, Ryder is not indifferent to everything. He is worried about the future of the war. These concerns for the future inhibit Ryder’s internal discourse. It is difficult to have a balanced, evaluative discourse when one sees mutilated bodies when in a bucolic orchard.

Compounding his anxiety about the future of the war, Ryder is concerned about the future generations of British society. Emblematic of the next generation is one of Ryder’s officers, Hooper. Ryder notes that “In the weeks that we were together Hooper became a symbol to me of Young England” (9). Hooper’s view of the world is direct and superficial. He has no interest in art or in intellectual discourse. He is uninterested in moral evaluation. Though Hooper has no religious proclivities, he is not an atheist. Religion and morality are not substantial enough to warrant examination. While he has an “overmastering regard for efficiency,” Hooper is incompetent (9); Ryder describes him as “a man to whom one could not confidently entrust the simplest duty” (9). Hooper appreciates efficiency because it is calculable and observable. However, he does not believe that he has a moral obligation to be efficient. Thus he is perfectly content to be

inept, much to Ryder's chagrin. Hooper's moral compass is stifled by his lack of internal discourse. Hooper cannot empathize with others; he can only judge another's degree of efficiency. It troubles Ryder to think that the younger generation is made up of Hoopers. Ryder's study of Hooper's character indicates that Ryder is still capable of empathy. To examine another person's character thoroughly, judging that person's likely thought processes, requires considerable internal discourse. Ryder invests his mental energy in a study of Hooper because Ryder is concerned about the future generation of England, of whom Hooper is an archetypal representative.

To understand why Ryder considers Hooper to be emblematic of the new generation, we must examine the social conditions which shaped Hooper and his kin. Hooper is a product of a British ethos which seeks social perfection. Education in poetry or painting has no place in the modern vision of a perfect society; efficiency is perfection. The aspects of culture which Ryder values have no interest to Hooper: instead of education in literature and great historical battles like Thermopylae, Hooper has been inculcated with "a profusion of detail about humane legislation and recent industrial change" (9). The modern British education system has created a narrative in which the State is constantly moving toward social perfection. The State has been heroized. That is, the State has heroized itself by indoctrinating its citizens. Hooper has not been taught about the less admirable aspects of British history and society. His education focused on the UK's progressive policies, its "humane legislation." Ironically, it is inhumane to elide the humanities from education. Without great external discourses to draw upon, such as the elegiac speech of Marc Antony in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (Shakespeare 3.2.73-107)—Hooper's internal discourse is stifled. The Hooper generation's internal discourse

is stifled. *Julius Caesar*, a play involving collusion and political betrayal, has no place in the socio-political perfectionism which the modern State seeks to propagate. Ryder avers that Hooper has been educated in “recent industrial change.” The increasing industrialization of the modern British economy has benefited the British State; a strong economy allows the State to exert more power on surrounding economies. The State wants the new generation to believe in the value of industrialization, to believe that, through greater industrialization, social perfection can be achieved. The less admirable effects of industrialization, such as pollution and colonial exploitation, were not featured in Hooper’s education. Rather, the State has built an education system which seeks to create a generation of citizens who believe in the State’s power to create social perfection. When modern history is presented as a series of increasingly beneficial improvements, citizens are more likely to believe that social perfection is a possibility—that the pursuit of perfection is not a fallacy. But, as I discussed in chapter one, social perfection is a fallacy; perfection is not achievable, and rhetoric of a utopian future engenders hatred of the imperfect present. Hooper has been taught to believe in social perfection, and for this reason he values efficiency. Yet, Hooper’s incompetence demonstrates the flaw in a system of education which is based on a fallacy; Hooper believes the State will reach maximum efficiency, will reach perfection, regardless of his participation in that process.

Hooper has been instructed in a social narrative presented as linear, progressive, and ineluctable. Satisfied by this narrative, Hooper and his colleagues do not attempt to examine other external discourses: Riding in the officers’ carriage of the military train, Ryder observes that “None of them had a book” (10). Reading books is an unnecessary

expenditure of energy. Reading is perceived as inefficient because the act does not provide an immediate, superficial, and calculable benefit. This perception benefits the State because exposure to narratives which contradict the State narrative, the perfection narrative, could undermine the State's message. If citizens do not believe that social perfection is possible—and that such perfection is only possible through obedience to the State—citizens will begin to question the legitimacy of the State's power. Thus, the State's education system has discouraged its citizens from reading.

The progenitors of people like Hooper, the people with State power who have inculcated the perfection fallacy into the new generation, are represented by Rex Mottram, who is a Canadian politician and a member of Parliament (111). Mottram's primary desire is to increase his power within his State, within the UK government. He seeks to shape himself into what the State views as a perfect politician: As Ryder observes, Rex seeks "to consolidate his gains; to strike the black ensign, go ashore, hang the cutlass up over the chimney and think about the crops" (185). In other words, Rex desires to become the archetypal warrior-politician which the modern State demands. Thus Mottram wants to have the right connections, he wants to talk tough about rivals—to "give Europe a good strong line. Europe is waiting for a speech from Rex"—he wants to say the right things at the right time, and he wants a wife from an aristocratic family. His moral obligation is to act in a way that gains him the most power and therefore brings him closer to perfection. I am using the term perfection ironically, as perfection is a fallacy, but for Mottram perfection is a real possibility, if he checks the right boxes. Mottram's prioritization of power limits the external discourses to which he is willing to expose himself. It makes sense that Mottram has engendered the Hooper generation:

Mottram does not place any value on formal education. Referring to a university education, Mottram says, “No, I was never here. It just means you start life three years behind the other fellow” (111). Formal education is an inefficient means of gaining power, power being, to Mottram, the only metric by which any act should be judged. Mottram’s phrase “start life” suggests that life does not even begin for Mottram until he can start gaining power. If Mottram could have skipped his entire childhood, he would have done so. He went through childhood because he had to. If Mottram were to justify the concept of childhood, he would do so by noting that it is a necessary box one must check on the illusory road to perfection. And Mottram is not the only one who views life as such a checklist. He does not want to be three years behind the “other fellow” because there are many fellows who have decided that Shakespeare will not help them. It is better to educate oneself by reading industrial statistics and stock quotes. Mottram believes he is in a kind of race with these other fellows. Thus he is always looking to the future, to the perfect finish line, a point which is always on the horizon but never quite within reach: “Rex demanded a wider horizon” (185). Mottram has no love for the present. He is focused entirely on the future, and only on a superficial future in which he is closer to perfection.

Indeed, it is arguable whether Mottram is capable of love in any form—of the past, of the future, of another person, etc. Love, like education, is not an effective means of gaining power. Love for the wrong person or the wrong thing could lose one power. The perfect politician displays just the right amount of love. I use the term “display” because the perfect politician does not actually feel any love; he only plays the role of love, displaying just the right amount to garner the approval of his equally loveless

colleagues. In his courtship of Julia Flyte, Mottram attempts to display a sufficient facsimile of love to convince Julia to marry him. In a scene at Brideshead, Mottram brings Julia a tortoise for her Christmas present. The tortoise's shell has been garishly bedazzled with diamonds forming Julia's initials (164). The living creature is usurped by the glittering façade. In Mottram's eyes, the creature has been improved by the diamonds, brought closer to perfection. The tortoise symbolizes Mottram's idea of love—a superficial gesture serving as a means to self-promotion. Mr. Samgrass wryly asks what will happen when the tortoise dies: “Can you have another tortoise fitted into the shell?” (165). Of course, one cannot place a new tortoise in a dead tortoise's shell. The shell is a part of the tortoise. When the tortoise dies, so does the shell, regardless of how many diamonds one puts on it. The internal discourses inside our shells are what shape us into conscious beings. To bedazzle one's exterior with titles, political appointments, and social accomplishments may seem appealing. But such efforts toward a more perfect exterior will not grow one's vapid interior.

Perhaps the most curious manifestation of Mottram's perfectionist ideology is in his conversion to Catholicism. Mottram has no religious internal discourses. Religion, like love, is a box one must check in order to become an ideal modern politician. For Mottram, conversion to Catholicism is necessary in order to marry Julia—conversion is a box to check so that the next box, marriage, can be checked. It is not a Catholic law that Catholics cannot marry non-Catholics. However, the most politically proper marriage takes place between two members of the same church. Julia explains to Mottram that “a mixed marriage is a very unostentatious affair” (191). Mottram wants the most ostentatious “affair” possible. Thus he makes the decision to convert to Catholicism.



Lady Marchmain, Julia's mother, is disturbed by Mottram's reasoning for conversion, perceiving that he has no spiritual attraction to Catholicism (191). Mottram hopes that his conversion will be a simple matter of signing some contract, like the laws he signs in Parliament. Lady Marchmain tries to explain that formal conversion to Catholicism requires considerable preparative study—conversion is an intellectual experience necessitating the evaluation of many external discourses. Responding to Lady Marchmain's concern, Mottram's dislike of education surfaces: "Look, Lady Marchmain, I haven't the time. Instruction will be wasted on me. Just you give me the form and I'll sign on the dotted line" (192). Taking the time to learn Catholic teachings would only put Mottram behind the other fellows. The idea that the instruction would be "wasted" on Mottram evokes Mottram's appreciation for efficiency; an efficient action produces no waste. Knowing that he will not gain anything from religious instruction, that he is impervious to religious discourses, he seeks to avoid a futile exertion of energy. Nonetheless, Lady Marchmain insists that Mottram must receive religious instruction in order to convert. Mottram's attitude towards his conversion exasperates Father Mowbray, a priest specializing in conversion. Mowbray complains to Lady Marchmain that Mottram "doesn't seem to have the least intellectual curiosity or natural piety" (192). We cannot have a healthy internal discourse without intellectual curiosity. We must be curious about the external discourses to which we are exposed, curious enough to investigate those discourses internally. Yet, Mottram sees no immediate, calculable value to having intellectual curiosity. Thus he has omitted this practice from his mind. The other characteristic which the priest claims that Mottram lacks is "natural piety"—the internal discourse which draws people to examine spiritual and religious matters, and to

respect these matters. One can be an agnostic and have natural piety. Indeed, one can be an atheist and have natural piety—that is, one can be an atheist and still have some interest in and respect for religiosity. Mottram has no sense of piety because piety does not serve his perfectionist ambitions. Only the appearance of being pious will help him, and this desire to act the part is what exasperates Father Mowbray.

By the time of the prologue and the epilogue, 1944 (351), Mottram has gained considerable political power in the UK government (349). He is able to exert his influence domestically and abroad. Education has been modernized, curriculums have been made more efficient, and intellectual curiosity has been discouraged. Hooper's generation has emerged from the secondary schools; they have emerged with values like that of Mottram—a belief in social perfectionism and a belief that only obedience to the State can bring about a perfect society. Mottram now gives polemical speeches on the radio. Nanny Hawkins asks Ryder, “Did you hear Mr. Mottram last night? Very nasty he was about Hitler” (349). Mottram, a powerful, narrow-minded man preaching invective in order to solidify domestic obedience, has ironically become a mirror of Hitler's own rise. To be fair, Hitler deserves to have very nasty things said about him. However, people like Mottram cannot understand the real threat that Hitler poses—Hitler is a threat to civilization, to culture, to humanity. Hitler is bent on achieving his version of a perfect society; he laces his rhetoric with the delusion of the *Übermensch* and the Aryan utopia. Mottram, with no sense of culture, spirituality, or the real value of human life, can only dislike Hitler because of the economic disruption Hitler has caused. Hitler and the Nazis have damaged the UK's economy and have caused a great deal of inefficiency; Hitler has stifled Mottram's own vision of perfection. Hitler is a threat to Mottram's political

power, should the Nazis win the war. Yet, Mottram has also benefited from Hitler. Mottram knows how to play the role of the political hero, the perfect savior. It is the same role that Hitler plays. If we cannot subvert the narrative of perfectionism, fascists will continue to rise and fall. The most effective way to challenge this narrative is by practicing a particular moral framework—love in the present.

Ryder's initial recognition of love in the present occurs during a conversation with Cordelia, Sebastian's youngest sister. Ryder is distraught upon learning of Sebastian's living conditions—Sebastian is an alcoholic living in Morocco, renting a dingy hotel room above a bar (304-05). Yet, Cordelia does not seem particularly distraught. She confides in Ryder that Julia does not love Sebastian like the two of them do. Ryder hesitates, struck by Cordelia's words: "'Do.' The word reproached me; there was no past tense in Cordelia's verb 'to love'" (308). Cordelia's use of the present-tense form of love causes Ryder to make the unpleasant realization that he does not love Sebastian. That is, Ryder does not love the person Sebastian is now, in the present. During their youth at Oxford and their early visits to Brideshead, Ryder's friendship with Sebastian was as strong as a brother's (34). From his friendship with Sebastian, Ryder learns that "to know and love one other human being is the root of all wisdom" (45). Ryder's love for Sebastian contributed to Ryder's own self-love. Ryder refers to his love for Sebastian as a form of wisdom because Ryder's internal discourse grew from his experiences with Sebastian; Ryder became wiser. Yet, Ryder's love for Sebastian has faded. Ryder cannot accept the dissolute person who Sebastian has become. Ryder still cherishes his memories of Sebastian, he still loves the Sebastian of the past, and it is this Sebastian whom Ryder likes to recall: "It is thus I like to remember Sebastian, as he was

that summer, when we wandered alone together through that enchanted palace” (79-80). There is nothing wrong with Ryder recalling the good times he had with his friend. However, focusing only on who a friend once was causes the friend’s present self to pale in comparison. Ryder has idealized his memories of Sebastian; the “palace” they walked through was not enchanted, nor was it a palace. When compared to the idealized, amiable, attractive Sebastian of Ryder’s youth, the current, struggling Sebastian seems undeserving of love. To Ryder, the current Sebastian represents the past Sebastian’s lost potential—the lost chance at achieving perfection. Thus Cordelia’s words awaken Ryder to his hypocrisy; Ryder believed that he still loves Sebastian, but Ryder realizes that he only loves a memory, a version of Sebastian which does not exist in the present.

Reacting to Cordelia’s narrative about Sebastian’s current life, Ryder manifests a desire to save Sebastian. That is, Ryder wants to act in a way which brings Sebastian a better future. He exclaims to Cordelia, “Poor Sebastian!...It’s too pitiful. How will it end?” (308). He asks Cordelia this question because his mind has already shifted to thinking of Sebastian’s future. Ryder wants to help create a version of Sebastian that is worthy of love, a future Sebastian who does not and never will exist. The thought of the current Sebastian is “too pitiful”—too pitiful to think about, too pitiful to warrant deeper evaluation in Ryder’s internal discourse. His internal discourse is limited, and he is unable to see the positive elements of Sebastian’s life. Cordelia tells Ryder that, though Sebastian is an alcoholic, he has been accepted as a custodian of sorts at the local monastery (307). Sebastian can be in a place which gives his life some meaning and connects him to his Catholic faith. He will be looked upon fondly by the missionaries, who “will think of him as a queer old character who was somehow part of the Hope of

their student days, and remember him in their masses” (309). Sebastian has a community in Morocco. His situation may be pitiful, but it is not “too pitiful” to render him unworthy of love.

Ryder’s conversation with Cordelia represents a conflict between love in the present and the perfection fallacy. Cordelia understands that she has a moral obligation to love in the present. Her love does not apply solely to Sebastian, it applies to the world. We see her love for the world in her healthcare work—Cordelia volunteers as a nurse in the Spanish Civil War and later serves as a nurse in WWII (258, 348). Because Cordelia is able to love in the present, she is able to work toward a better future. She is aware of the present world’s imperfections, of the great suffering in the world, but her love for the present gives her the strength to accept this suffering and to have a healthy outlook on the future. Cordelia’s discourse about the future is healthy because it is realistic: On leaving Spain, she tells Ryder, “the authorities were very polite, thanked me for all I’d done, gave me a medal and sent me packing. It looks as though there’ll be plenty of the same sort of work over here soon” (301). For all her efforts, Cordelia receives the standard thank-you package and is sent away. She knows that Spain, now under Franco, will continue to suffer and that more suffering is likely with the prospect of an impending world war. Yet, Cordelia does not feel that her work has been futile. She does not entertain the notion of achieving a utopian society, and therefore her work is not tainted with hatred of the present’s imperfections.

When Ryder finds out about Cordelia’s volunteer work in Spain, he is troubled by the thought that she has wasted her youthful potential: “It hurt to think of Cordelia growing up quite plain; to think of all that burning love spending itself on serum

injections and delousing powder” (300). Ryder does not want his idealized, youthful memory of Cordelia to be compromised by Cordelia’s present self. Cordelia has lost the chance at the perfect image Ryder hoped she would become. Ryder believes that Cordelia has wasted the “burning love” she had as a youth. But Cordelia’s love is not a finite resource, it is an ongoing practice. Ryder’s struggle to relinquish the idealized past distorts his internal discourse, and thus he fails to see the beauty of Cordelia’s actions and the positive work she has done. This struggle parallels Ryder’s inability to relinquish his memory of Sebastian as the perfect youth he once loved. In truth, Sebastian was never perfect, no human ever is. Ryder does not yet have the open, skeptical outlook necessary to abide by love in the present. At Lord Marchmain’s deathbed, Ryder will convert from intolerant atheism to agnostic Catholicism. Only then will he be able to use love in the present as his moral framework.

At Lord Marchmain’s deathbed, Ryder becomes increasingly resistant to any religious reference, and he is especially intolerant of the presence of any priest. We have discussed Ryder’s efforts to keep Father Mackay from the deathbed and Ryder’s attempt to draw the doctor to his side. Yet, a shift occurs after Julia gives Father Mackay permission to enter the room (337). Father Mackay begins to perform the rites of absolution, but Lord Marchmain gives no sign of hearing; he appears to have passed into an unconscious, near-death state. At this point, Lord Marchmain is still an adamant atheist. In order to be fully absolved, he must give some sign that he has understood and accepted the priest’s prayers. Ryder, the intolerant atheist, kneels and begins to pray: “O God, if there is a God, forgive him his sins, if there is such a thing as sin” (338). Ryder is having a conversion experience; his atheism is being displaced by agnostic Catholicism.

Ryder is still unsure if there is a God, he is unsure if Catholic concepts like sin exist. Ryder is skeptical, and he has become open to the possibility that these concepts exist. He is willing to examine religion with his internal discourse. Ryder prays for some kind of sign, if only “the bare acknowledgement of a present” (338). Lord Marchmain is drifting toward a place where the past, present, and future do not exist, where time and space are one. Ryder’s prayer for Lord Marchmain to return, briefly, to the present, is also a prayer that Ryder himself return to the present. Ryder has been so caught up in the past and future that he cannot love himself: he hopes that Julia will remain in his future, though he knows this hope is vain (340). Ryder is like Julia, who tells him in an earlier scene that “I feel the past and the future pressing so hard on either side that there’s no room for the present at all” (279). As with Ryder, Julia has too much regret for the past and anxiety about the future to have any love for her present self. Now at Lord Marchmain’s deathbed, Ryder hopes that there is some room left for the present, just enough for Lord Marchmain’s, and his own, conversion. Ryder is becoming aware not only of his own present state, but also of the world in its present form: As he prays, he reflects that “all over the world people were on their knees before innumerable crosses” (338). Ryder is on his knees with these people; he recognizes that the act of prayer is powerful because through prayer one connects with people around the world who are praying at the same time as oneself, in the present. He does not know whether or not God exists; he is agnostic. But he has become open to religious discourse, and he has accepted his fascination specifically with Catholic discourse: he is an agnostic Catholic.

Ryder’s conversion to agnostic Catholicism continues as he watches Lord Marchmain briefly awaken to make the sign of the cross (338). At first, Ryder fears that

Marchmain's motion is to wipe away the priest's blessing, to deny the love he has been offered in the present. But when Marchmain completes the symbolic gesture, Ryder recalls, "Then I knew that the sign I had asked for was not a little thing, not a passing nod of recognition, and a phrase came back to me from my childhood of the veil of the temple being rent from top to bottom" (338). Ryder has prayed for a sign indicating the possibility of God's existence, and he has interpreted Lord Marchmain's conversion as that sign. Yet, the sign itself is not over; it is not a fleeting moment to be resigned to the past, to memory. The sign is not "a passing nod of recognition." The sign is ongoing. The sign exists in the present and therefore it is always with him. It is a sign that Ryder can love himself for who he is now, that he can accept the part of himself that is fascinated by Catholic discourse. In the introduction, I discussed William James's assertion that conversion creates a sense of wholeness (James 186). While James is referring to conversion to a particular religion, rather than conversion to an agnostic form of that religion, James recognizes that conversion can be a gradual process. Ryder's conversion to agnostic Catholicism is ongoing, it is in the present. Ryder's recollection of the image of the temple's veil being torn apart is an allusion to *The Bible* (*The Bible*, Matt., 27.51). On Jesus's death, the veil in the Temple of Jerusalem is rent in two. The purpose of the veil was to separate the holiest part of the temple, where God resides, from the human portion, where people worshiped (Quarles 272). Thus the rending of the veil represents the removal of the barrier between God and humanity. The image of the veil indicates that God's connection with humanity is now continuous; the veil is not merely lifted, it is torn in two. The image of a veil suggests self-censorship; to put a veil over one's eyes is to limit one's vision, to limit one's reality. The veil was put in place by Ryder himself.



Thus the tearing of the veil arises in Ryder's mind to signify the creation of a wholeness within Ryder's consciousness, the removal of a barrier, the acceptance of previously suppressed internal discourses. The veil cannot be un-sundered. Like the connection between God and humanity, Ryder's conversion is ongoing; he will not become an intolerant atheist again.

As I discussed in the introduction, a conversion experience can be gradual, but conversion is not necessarily linear; one's conversion can have both hills and trenches. As we move to the epilogue of *Brideshead*, Ryder has descended into a trench. His love of the present has been overshadowed by regrets about the past and concerns about the future. Specifically, Ryder is concerned about the war and about the next generation. He is concerned by what people like Hooper suggest about the fate of England. The perfection fallacy has inundated modern England, as it has Germany. One cannot blame Ryder for his struggles; the world is at war, and God seems to have abandoned the people for whom he rent the veil. The present seems bleak. Ryder's internal religious discourse is not actively suppressed as it was prior to his deathbed conversion. Rather, the flood of new discourses created by the war have overshadowed and confused his religious discourse. His mind shifted to the severe discourses of the future, Ryder's ability to evaluate the present discourses has been compromised. Ryder's career is in the arts; he is an architectural painter (226). Now in charge of a military unit, his position could not be further from artistic discourse. And the great architectural structures are crumbling beneath bombs every day. Brideshead, a once great work of English architecture, has not been bombed. But it has been repurposed into a military administrative building. The frescoes that a younger Ryder once painted on the walls have been cruelly defaced by

bored soldiers (346-47). Hooper cannot understand why anyone would build such a place as Brideshead; he asks Ryder, “What’s the use of it?” (350). Brideshead is not an efficient building, and therefore Hooper cannot appreciate it. Aesthetic appreciation is not an aspect of Hooper’s internal discourse—a fact which, for the artist Ryder, is particularly distressing. Ryder is not the only one worried about the future and is struggling to cope with the changes of the present: Still residing in Brideshead, the aging Nanny Hawkins cannot cope with the harsh new external discourses. Ryder reflects that “The changes of the last years had come too late in her life to be accepted and understood” (348). To understand a new external discourse, we must be able to evaluate the discourse internally, integrating that discourse into our overall cognitive structure. Hawkins, who must be in her mid-eighties at this point, does not have the mental strength for such a feat. But Ryder is only 39 years old (5). He is still capable of evaluating the troubling discourses of his present world. In order to evaluate them, he must renew his love for the present. He must have a conversion experience.

Ryder saves his visit to Brideshead chapel for last (350). His neglect of the chapel suggests apathy towards his internal religious discourse. However, the fact that Ryder visits the chapel at all indicates that he is still an agnostic Catholic and not an atheist. Though he does not come to Brideshead chapel looking for a conversion experience, he is seeking some connection to the present. Just before going to the chapel he tells Hooper “I’m homeless, childless, middle-aged, loveless” (350). Without a sense of love in the present, Ryder feels not only loveless but homeless as well. The places where he once felt at home have changed irremediably. Even Ryder’s present age seems alien to him—he tells Hooper he is “middle-aged” because he longs for the youth he has lost. Certainly,

Ryder is middle-aged, but we do not go around telling people we are middle-aged unless our age bothers us, unless we cannot come to terms with our present selves. While Ryder is still an agnostic Catholic, he has lost the sense of provisional wholeness which he experienced at Lord Marchmain's deathbed. As Ryder enters the chapel, he is struck by its unchanged appearance. Specifically, Ryder notices the "art-nouveau lamp" which continues to burn as it had during his earlier visits (350). The continuous flame symbolizes the ongoing, the eternal present. The flame will never be veiled, as God's presence will never be separated from humanity. Ryder says a prayer, and as he exits his internal discourse comes alive. His thoughts reveal the nature of his conversion: Ryder thinks of "a small red flame—a beaten-copper lamp of deplorable design, relit before the beaten-copper doors of a tabernacle; the flame which the old knights saw from their tombs, which they saw put out; that flame burns again for other soldiers, far from home, farther, in heart, than Acre or Jerusalem" (351). The small flame burning in the chapel is connected to flames around the world. At Lord Marchmain's deathbed, Ryder pictures people around the world praying; now he pictures the flame which soldiers throughout history kept burning. The flame which the "old knights" saw is not a different flame. It is not to be relegated to a severed past. The flame of the old knights is the same flame that Ryder sees in the chapel, "burning again for other soldiers." Even though these soldiers are "far from home," they are not homeless. Ryder is not homeless. And he is not loveless. The flame is "red" rather than orange or yellow because the flame symbolizes God's love. Love is not something which we must wait for, longing for a perfect future. It is not a feeling we only remember as nostalgia, a feeling irrevocably lost. The love which Ryder sees in the flame is a love Ryder can feel right now, in the present. And he does

feel that love. Ryder has had a conversion experience. Still an agnostic Catholic, he is not certain that God exists, but he is certain that he can love himself in the present. His internal discourse has gained a sense of wholeness. Ryder is no longer indifferent; he is willing to skeptically analyze religious discourse. Ryder leaves the chapel looking “unusually cheerful” (351); he is ready to face the “age of Hooper” with understanding and love.

Ryder’s conversion in the chapel will not be his last. He will continue to experience valleys and trenches of spiritual connection. But the flame will burn on. Love in the present, the moral framework revealed in *Brideshead*, is not easy to practice. But the practice is possible for anyone capable of having an internal discourse. The past and future will always be a part of our realities, and it is good to have memories and hopes, lessons learned and experiences to come. The external discourses we take in form part of our own internal discourses in an ongoing consciousness-building process. The discourses we have explored and those we have yet to explore are important; our pasts and our futures are important. But Waugh’s novel suggests that when the past and the future apply so much pressure that there is “no room for the present at all” (279), we can lose our love for the present. We lose a sense of wholeness, and we are prompted to seek wholeness in the perfection fallacy. We believe that only in the future will we have a self that is worthy of love; we believe in a perfect version of ourselves that will never be attainable because perfection is a fallacious concept. And because we are imperfect we hate our present selves. When we hate ourselves, we are vulnerable to the ideology of State perfectionism. The State wants us to believe that social perfection is possible and that social perfection is possible only through obedience to the State. The State projects

our self-hatred toward a particular group, a religious or racial minority, a class, an ideology, etc. Then we believe we can eliminate our self-hatred by eliminating the Othered group. Cara, Lord Marchmain's mistress, observes that "When people hate with all that energy, it is something in themselves they are hating" (103). Though Cara is referring to Lord Marchmain's hatred of Lady Marchmain, her statement can be applied to State rhetoric as well. The State encourages its citizens to hate a particular group by exploiting the self-hatred of those citizens. The State's rhetoric is even more effective when its leader's energy is drawn from self-hatred: Hitler hated himself, and he found an outlet for his self-hatred in Jewish and Slavic populations. When we practice love in the present, the hatred-driven perfection fallacy is met with skepticism. We are able to work towards self and social improvement because the present seems worthy of love, and we want to nurture what we love. As an agnostic Catholic, Ryder is able to find love in the possibility that God exists, in the enduring love which the flame represents. No matter what religious or secular manifestation of love we perceive, we can all practice love in the present. In doing so, we will have a healthy internal discourse, resistant to the perfectionist ideologies of the modern world.

## Conclusion—

“A harmonium in a gothic case”: Realism and Satire as

## Approaches to Moral Exposition

The analysis of moral frameworks in Greene’s *The Human Factor* and Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited* enhances our understanding of the novels as a whole. Yet, the two works can be contrasted by their different stylistic approaches: While the tone of Greene’s prose is darker and more serious, Waugh’s prose has a more satirical tone. I argue that Waugh’s use of satire creates an obstacle to the effectiveness of the moral frameworks portrayed in *Brideshead*. The realism of Greene’s delivery results in a more compelling depiction of morality and moral obligation in *The Human Factor*. One of the best ways of judging the moral complexity of a work is by examining how the “villains” are treated; if the villains have psychological depth, if they are round characters, the novel as a whole is likely to have depth. If the villains are flat and cartoonish, then the novel is likely to have a more simplistic moral component. I will compare *The Human Factor*’s primary villainous character, Cornelius Muller, with *Brideshead*’s Rex Mottram in order to expose the disparity between Greene and Waugh’s literary approaches.

As I discussed in chapter two, Muller is a deplorable character. He is avowedly racist, even suggesting that black people do not go to the same heaven as white people (*The Human Factor* 157); he views other human beings as pawns in a game. The extremity of his views might lead one to conclude that Muller is a flat character, a foil for Castle’s considerably more humane views. However, Greene adds psychological depth to Muller in various scenes. For example, when Muller visits Castle at Castle’s home, seven years after their last meeting, Castle reflects that the evil figure of his memory “looked

more human – perhaps it was that he had taken on with promotion greater responsibilities and with them uncertainties and unanswered questions” (100). Burdened with obligations to his State, Muller has aged. He has committed himself to a game which has demanded much of him and which will always demand more. Muller is not an immortal archetype of pure evil; he is a human—he has anxieties, he suffers, and one day he will die.

Muller’s anxieties parallel those of Castle in that both men have important decisions to make which will affect the world. Greene adds a touch of humanity in Muller’s awkwardly polite interaction with the family dog: “Buller fawned on the stranger with a total lack of discrimination and left a trail of affectionate spittle on Cornelius Muller’s trousers. ‘Nice dog, nice dog,’ Muller said with caution” (99). Buller treats Muller as he does any guest, as another human who may or may not give him some pats. Unsure of how to interact with the drooling English bulldog, Muller gives a tentative “Nice dog, nice dog,” as if to assure himself that the dog is in fact nice. Muller does not lash out at or kick the dog, even as he prepares his cruel plans for Uncle Remus. The rhyming parallelism of the names “Buller” and “Muller” is a subtle reflection of Muller’s inner contradictions—his humanity and his inhumanity, his desire to practice internal discourse and his more powerful desire to suppress it. Muller plays the game, but he cannot play as uncritically as Buller plays with the trouser legs of his be-slobbered victims.

Even Muller’s religious views are contradictory; he believes that there is apartheid in heaven, claiming of the black South Africans that “I don’t suppose they’d enjoy our sort of heaven” (157). Muller is so invested in the political game that he believes it continues in heaven, an eternal game from which he can never escape. Yet, despite his blasphemous religious views, Muller has the most religious faith of any of the

characters in *The Human Factor*. When Castle seems skeptical that the afterlife exists, Muller tells him “I’m quite sure there *is* an after-life” (157). Unlike Mottram, who has no religious feeling, Muller has a complex and contradictory religious discourse. He has attempted to justify his belief in the game by grounding that belief in religion; apartheid is part of God’s plan. The South African State is carrying out that plan, and therefore Muller is not only an agent of the State but an agent of God as well.

For Muller, religious conviction is a product of gamification. Muller’s religion, at least in its current form, did not exist prior to his adoption of gamification as his moral framework. While Muller may have been religious before he began working for BOSS, gamification demands that its adherents prioritize the game. Therefore, any religion that Muller had prior to his adoption of gamification would have been elided or reshaped into something else, distorted to serve the game. The service that Muller’s religion provides is to justify gamification and suppress his internal discourse. Muller’s version of religion is simplistic and uncritical. His faith has no skepticism; he is “sure” that there is an afterlife (157), and he is equally confident that his afterlife will be a desirable one. For some people, such as Charles Ryder, religion can be a continued practice of fascination and skepticism; Muller’s version of religion is the opposite. It is a suppression and a justification—a suppression of internal discourse and a justification of a morally suspect framework.

Muller is not oblivious to his internal contradictions; part of him is aware that his moral stance is problematic. Spotting a brief questioning look from Castle, he says “Oh, I know you are laughing at me” (157). Muller does not expect Castle to understand his views because Muller is not sure that he fully understands them himself. The fact that



Muller knows that Castle is internally scoffing at him indicates a level of perceptivity and self-awareness that Mottram never displays. Muller must struggle to suppress his internal discourse, his knowledge that his moral compass is untenable. It is ironic that Muller's religious piety serves only as a scaffolding for his inhumane moral compass. Muller's ability to perceive the irony of his religious views—and his recognition that others are capable of perceiving this irony—demonstrates the complexity of his character.

The complex and contradictory nature of Muller's character is further evidenced through the subtle regret he displays in his interaction with Hargreaves. Muller suspects that Castle is a double-agent before anyone at MI6 and, worried that Castle has stolen the documents, he visits Hargreaves, one of Castle's MI6 superiors (190). Hargreaves attempts to reassure Muller that his concerns are unwarranted, but Muller's anxiety is not allayed. Muller cites Castle's black wife and son as evidence that he is a double-agent, but as he does so he seems aware that his racism is a burden: he tells Hargreaves, "You take things so lightly over here. I sometimes envy you. Things like a black child" (194). In Muller's dialogue, there is a tone not only of envy but of regret as well. He is an intelligent man, capable of internal discourse, and part of Muller would like to practice internal discourse, but in order to be an effective player he must deny this aspect of his cognitive architecture. Thus the man burdened by responsibilities which Castle observes at his home is reinforced in Muller's later visit to Hargreaves. Hargreaves is not convinced by Muller's evidence, but Muller's anxiety proves justified. Muller is committed to the political game and he is a sharper player than most. But he knows that the game will drain his life, will require a constant effort of cognitive suppression, will age him prematurely, and for these reasons he envies Hargreaves.

Muller is well into the immoral side of the morality spectrum, but he has depth, he has humanity. In Greene's tragic and ironic portrayal, Muller's humanity is expressed through his inhumanity: as I discussed in chapter two, Muller is a pathetic figure. He is the dead vulture, killed by his own folly, killed by his own efforts to kill others, and buried next to those others in the same desert grave.

Waugh's portrayal of Rex Mottram has less depth than Greene's rendering of Cornelius Muller. Mottram is a buffoonish character, whose daft gullibility is evident when Cordelia tricks him into believing fake Catholic dogma: Mottram confronts Father Mowbray, asking him "what about the Pope who made one of his horses a cardinal? And what about the box you keep in the church porch, and if you put in a pound note with someone's name on it, they get sent to hell. I don't say there mayn't be a good reason for all this...but you ought to tell me about it and not let me find out for myself" (*Brideshead* 194). Mottram does not question that any of these fake dogmas and rituals are true; he has so little sense of religion that their falsity is lost on him. Mottram is only converting to Catholicism so that his marriage to Julia will seem more proper. He wants to check the box of conversion as efficiently as possible, and he is willing to believe—or act as if he believes—just about anything. What Mottram objects to is the idea that Father Mowbray has not given him all the "facts." He confronts Mowbray as he would a political colleague who has been holding out on him. Mottram is no doubt considering asking Mowbray to join him for a few hands of poker to even the score.

The scene is quite humorous, but it is not realistic. Cordelia is in her early teens in this scene (219). She is an intelligent girl who is known for her pranks, but she never expects that Mottram will actually believe her tales: "Oh, Mummy, who could have

dreamed he'd swallow it? I told him such a lot besides. About the sacred monkeys in the Vatican – all kinds of things” (194). Cordelia is right to be surprised by Mottram's gullibility. Mottram is an adult, in his early thirties at this point (111). He has already proven that he can handle matters in the political and legal realms, including helping Ryder and Sebastian avoid a jail sentence for their public intoxication (119). Could a man with the skills to gain power in the political world be so easily tricked? Perhaps, but his obliviousness is not limited to Cordelia or Catholicism. As I discussed in chapter three, he has no ability to love, no appreciation of art or education. He seems able to do nothing other than check the right boxes, and he does so with efficiency and bombast. Even his effort to get Ryder and Sebastian out of jail is hardly an intellectual affair, he walks into the jail and is immediately given respect by the police simply by looking like someone who should be respected: “Rex stood in the charge room looking the embodiment – indeed, the burlesque – of power and prosperity” (119). Mottram shapes himself into the State's idea of a powerful politician, and therefore he appears to the police as a man worthy of respect. Sometimes, we must all play certain roles in order to garner respect and social approval. Yet, Mottram is not aware that he is playing a part. He is playing the part because it is the only thing that occurs to him to do. There is no sense of self-awareness or irony in his psyche. Where Muller recognizes that Castle is inwardly laughing at him, Mottram cannot recognize that Cordelia is pranking him. Muller recognizes his own hypocrisy, even as he suppresses his internal discourse. Mottram cannot recognize anything about himself because he has no internal discourse; no suppression is necessary. Mottram is only good at one thing because he is only a one-dimensional character. Waugh criticizes his own writing through Ryder's assertion that

Mottram is the “burlesque” of prosperity and power. Mottram is a caricature of power, not a true example of a powerful human. Later, when Julia tells Ryder that Mottram “isn’t a real person at all” (257), she is highlighting a flaw in Waugh’s novel—Mottram is not a real person, at all.

Through this comparison of Greene and Waugh’s styles, I do not want to suggest that there is a hierarchy of genres, with realism holding a superior position to satire. Nor do I want to suggest that satire cannot be an effective medium for moral critique, or that satire is incapable of portraying round characters. Indeed, moral critique is one of the defining features of satire. For instance, Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal” exposes the immoral attitude of the British upper class toward the starving, impoverished people of Ireland. The style of the essay is hyperbolic, in that the dismissive and inhumane opinions of the British upper class are taken to their logical extreme through Swift’s suggestion that the Irish children be reconstituted into a “saleable commodity”—into food (Swift). After all, when a rancher has too many cattle and not enough land for them to graze, he can kill some of the cattle and sell the beef. With this logic, the Irish are portrayed both as animals and as economic statistics. The logic of Swift’s “proposal” reveals the morally fraught reasoning that the British government used toward the Irish. Sean Moore notes that one of the politicians to which Swift is responding is Sir Robert Walpole, British prime minister from 1721-1742 (Moore 682). Walpole famously said, “I know the price of every man,” reflecting the view that human beings are judged by their economic value (qtd. in Bent 557). His policies as Prime Minister included “efforts to appropriate Ireland’s revenues without consent” and without transparency (Moore 689). Walpole did not suggest that Irish people should be killed and turned into produce, but he

did view Irish people as units of economic gain or loss. While Swift's satirical "Proposal" is not intended as a realistic policy suggestion, the Proposal does reveal the complex moral disparities in Swift's society.

Swift's essay demonstrates that satire is capable of moral critique, in some instances more capable than realism. Why, then, does *Brideshead* struggle to achieve the same level of moral critique with Rex Mottram? I have suggested that the issue lies in Mottram's lack of depth. While it may be argued that satire entails that the characters being satirized are simplified—with certain characteristics hyperbolically inflated—I assert that the satire genre is capable of critiquing characters with depth. For example, in Voltaire's *Candide; or, The Optimist*, the eponymous protagonist displays psychological complexity even while he is being satirized: When Cacambo asks Candide to explain what "optimism" means, Candide responds, "Alas!...It is the obstinacy of maintaining that everything is best when it is worst" (Voltaire 140). In the early parts of the novel, Candide attempts to abide by the optimistic worldview of his tutor, Pangloss. Yet, Candide becomes aware that this optimistic worldview is flawed, especially once he is confronted with considerable suffering; when life is at its "worst," the optimist must obstinately delude himself that life is at its best. Candide's recognition of this self-delusion—a recognition which he reaches through internal discourse—indicates Candide's psychological depth; the fully deluded optimist does not cry out "Alas!" before explaining his worldview.

*Candide* is a satire of the Bildungsroman genre, in which the protagonist learns life lessons and grows as a person. It is a satire because, unlike the traditional Bildungsroman, the situations in which Candide finds himself are humorous and

hyperbolic—e.g., the scene where Candide and Cacambo rescue two naked women being chased by monkeys (119-21). Furthermore, Pangloss's philosophy of optimism is a satirization of Leibniz's philosophy (Rubino 91). Voltaire is making a moral critique of Leibniz, whose philosophy, in Voltaire's view, does not offer a viable moral framework. Voltaire's moral critique would not have been as effective if Candide were a flat character who never subjected his beliefs to internal criticism; we might still find optimism absurd, but our findings would not have the poignancy that we get from observing a round character come to this realization himself. The example of *Candide* demonstrates that satire can satirize round characters as well as flat. Therefore, Mottram could have been rendered as a more real, psychologically complex character and still be satirized. Indeed, the perfection fallacy which Mottram embodies would have been more poignantly rendered if Mottram himself had some awareness that his moral framework was flawed; there is pathos in watching a psychologically complex character delude himself. There is considerably less pathos in the delusions of a cartoon. The flaw in Waugh's depiction of Mottram, then, is not a flaw in the satire genre, but a flaw in Waugh's own execution. The value of the perfection fallacy resides in the fact that it is a real framework with negative ramifications for ourselves and our society. Real frameworks demand real characters, regardless of the genre in which those characters are portrayed.

*Brideshead* is Waugh's greatest work because it is his most sophisticated and most realistic novel. Ryder, unlike Mottram, is a round character. His psychological depth will continue to intrigue scholars for years to come. But Ryder's simplistic foil, Rex Mottram, offers less room for psycho-criticism. The perfection fallacy is a legitimate

moral framework; it is reflected in the twentieth century's striving politicians, in commercials that sell bodily perfection in the form of a product, in the ennui that we inevitably feel on the way to a college degree or a career promotion, in the self-doubt that we feel at night, knowing that we are missing something, knowing that there is some greater, pervasive spirit that exists but that we cannot bring ourselves to investigate. Yet, Mottram is less an exemplar of the perfection fallacy than its caricature. In contrast, Greene's portrayal of Cornelius Muller is a true example of gamification; he is committed to playing the political game, but his sense of irony allows him to see the shortcomings of his moral stance. Muller has enough awareness to even feel some envy and regret. Thus I conclude that, though both *The Human Factor* and *Brideshead* have much to offer as works of literature, Greene's novel is ultimately more successful at portraying the intricate moral reticulations which pervade modern society.

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