

ABSTRACT

BERG, CHRISTOPHER BENJAMIN. *Sailing, Rafting, Time-Traveling, and Straitjacketed: The Evolution of the American Adam*. (Under the direction of Thomas David Lisk.)

In 1923, D. H. Lawrence asked a question that has dogged American Literature scholars ever since. His work, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, gave the European perspective on American Literature:

Where *is* this new bird called the true American? Show us the homunculus of the new era. Go on, show us him. Because all that is visible to the naked European eye, in America, is a sort of recreant European. We want to see this missing link of the next era (3-4).

High school English teachers perpetuate this myth: many call American Literature “derivative,” and arbitrarily assign the birth of American Literature as distinctly American at varying points during the nineteenth century. Before “X” author – Cooper, Poe, Longfellow, Hawthorne, or any of a myriad of others – they claim, American Literature was English Literature in a different setting.

Responding to this challenge, R. W. B. Lewis, in his 1955 book, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*, answered Lawrence’s challenge, identifying the “true American” in literature as a prelapsarian Adam figure. He culled the name for his American *bildungsroman* hero from Emerson’s Journals: “the plain old Adam, the simple genuine self against the whole world.”

The authors he named as participating in the myth of the American as Adam read as a canon of nineteenth century American Literature: Hawthorne, Melville, Thoreau, Emerson, Whitman, Cooper, and the younger Henry James. These men, he argued, created the identity

of an initiatory protagonist who was “morally prior” (128-9) to the world in which he lived. Lewis’s work was a stunning success; however, it had several oversights. Lewis also wrote that in our modern era, post-World War II America, the picture of the American as Adam has been “frowned quite out of existence” (195). He bemoaned the “current rigidity” (196) of American Literature, which characterizes positive thinking and innocence as willful ignorance. Ihab Hassan, in a 1961 book entitled *Radical Innocence*, wrote of contemporary scholars’ belief in the idea that current fiction was “a spent form, irrelevant to the goals of a Supersociety committed to a galactic adventure, and therefore no longer receptive to the piteous heroics of the individual soul” (3-4).

My thesis will attempt to demonstrate that the American as Adam has not disappeared from our Literature; that, indeed, he had not disappeared even when Lewis wrote his book. I will examine four novels from various periods in American Literature, including Herman Melville’s *Redburn*, Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, J. D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*, and Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five, or, The Children’s Crusade*. *Redburn* being named in Lewis’s book as an exemplary novel of the American Adam, I will first examine its protagonist, Wellingborough Redburn.

I will explore each character in order to compare the aspects of their Adamic natures. I will compare their encounters with society, their morals, their confrontations with evil, and finally the manner by which each character chooses to continue his life in relation to his fellow man. Furthermore, I will look for ties between them that Lewis may not have found. My conclusion will explain my findings and discuss the evolution of the Adamic figure into the mid-twentieth century.

Sailing, Rafting, Time Traveling, and Strait-Jacketed:

The Evolution of the American Adam

by

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Dedication

My father, Dr. James Berg, and my mother, Sarah Berg, encouraged me to read from the day I could. Thank you.

Above all, this is dedicated to my wife, Sarah, for her understanding, support, and love; without which I would have never been able to even begin this work.

Biography

Christopher Benjamin Berg was born June 15, 1978, at the University of Tennessee Hospital in Knoxville, Tennessee. His father, James, was a doctoral candidate in Ecology at the University of Tennessee and his mother, the former Sarah Karnes, was an English Teacher. They instilled in him an early love of reading, upon which he blames his choice to study English.

Eventually, the family, with the new addition of a daughter, Katherine, relocated to the suburbs of Charleston, West Virginia. James became the director of the Department of Science and Mathematics at the University of Charleston; and Sarah joined the faculty of Overbrook Elementary.

Chris attended Nitro High School, from which he graduated in 1996. He matriculated at the University of Charleston. While there, he was active in a number of organizations: the student newspaper, of which he was a layout editor and sportswriter; the Greek community, as a member of Tau Kappa Epsilon; and a literary honor society, Sigma Tau Delta. He was also a student athlete, a varsity oarsman for four years on the crew, where he met his (now) wife, the former Sarah Bristow.

In May 2002, Chris graduated from the University of Charleston and moved to North Carolina, where he joined his fiancé. In August 2003, he began graduate study at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, from which he hopes to receive his Master of Arts in English in May 2005. He and Sarah were married on July 10, 2004 in Sarasota Bay, Florida, aboard the Marina Jack II. There were dolphins and manatees present, following the boat.

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Abbreviations

There are several novels appearing throughout this thesis. To save time, I used the following abbreviations:

RB – Herman Melville's Redburn

HF – Mark Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

CR – J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye

SF – Kurt Vonnegut's The Slaughterhouse Five

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 General Introduction

The question of identity has long been central to scholars of American Literature: in a society many say has no culture of its own, can any single element unite American literature? High school English teachers – my own and others I have met – perpetuate the myth that American literature, in the beginning, was completely derivative and that no literature that can be identified as distinctly “American” emerged until the middle of the nineteenth century. D. H. Lawrence gave the European and American views in his 1923 work, Studies in Classic American Literature. Regarding the American viewpoint, he wrote:

Listen to the States asserting: “The hour has struck! Americans shall be American. The U. S. A. is now grown up artistically. It is time we ceased to hang on to the skirts of Europe, or to behave like schoolboys let loose from European schoolmasters” (Lawrence 3).

Giving the European perspective, he wrote:

Where *is* this new bird called the true American? Show us the homunculus of the new era. Go on, show us him. Because all that is visible to the naked European eye, in America, is a sort of recreant European. We want to see this missing link of the next era (3-4).

When did American literature become distinctly American? What are the traits embodied in the American experience that are seen in literature? The myth that American Literature was mostly transplanted British literature in content and style until Edgar Allan Poe is easily disproved by two canonical Colonial texts. Early in Colonial writings, William Bradford remarked in his Of Plymouth Plantation, that the new world was “a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men – and what multitudes there might be of them they knew not” (Bradford 87). This statement demonstrates the negative associations that nature and wilderness held for the Puritans. Their European minds were shocked at the

Native Americans and the intractable wilderness surrounding them. Bradford later wrote, “there was the mighty ocean which they had passed and was now as a main bar and gulf to separate them from all civil parts of the world” (88). They were afraid of the land, and believed that only the “Spirit of God” could sustain and keep them.

Not much later in the Colonial era, when most American colonists were still decisively European, Cotton Mather wrote in the same spirit. The Puritans had now been in the New World for over seventy years; however, the ideas of the American wilderness still had not changed. In the opening sentence, Mather writes that the early Puritans had “embraced a voluntary exile in a squalid, horrid, American desert . . .” (Mather 203). The great natural world of North America was still seen as terrible and frightening. God had come with the Puritans, but they did not see in nature the beauty of his creation.

Jonathan Edwards, fifty years later, saw things differently. According to Michael J. McClymond, the natural world held, for Edwards, the sole significance in reflecting and transmitting the awareness of God. All things in nature conveyed to Edwards an essential sense of divine glory (McClymond 104). The loveliness of nature was one of America’s greatest treasures, and after people had been here long enough, they began to see this glory. In contrast to Mather’s views of a “squalid, horrid, American Desert,” Edwards wrote in his Personal Narrative that, as a youth, he had several “secret places of my own in the woods, where I used to retire by myself and was from time to time much affected” (Edwards 286).

Indeed, Edwards loved the wilderness. The wild beauty of nature was the perfect place to converse with the Almighty. Rather than see it as a place of fear, Edwards writes later in his Personal Narrative, “[the path to God lies] alone in the mountains, or some solitary wilderness, far from all mankind, sweetly conversing with Christ, and wrapped and

swallowed up in God” (Edwards 288). Europe was crowded and dirty. The New World, on the other hand, was full of places where a man could get away from his fellows and meditate on God. The environment of the New World was, to Jonathan Edwards, perfect for solemn communion with the Lord.

From this example it can be seen, then, that a full century before Poe, Americans were demonstrating a vast difference between themselves and their European counterparts. They no longer feared the world to which they had come; rather, they celebrated and embraced it as a manifestation of God’s work in its purest form. Early textual examples notwithstanding, however, the question of identity remains. Scholars still ask themselves the same question that D. H. Lawrence asked. In the December, 1959 issue of PMLA, Frederic Carpenter wrote: “The search for some single myth or hypothesis to explain American character and history has informed much of our recent criticism” (Carpenter 599).

Carpenter clarified two distinct myths that had emerged, each one defended by a number of critics. The first myth was that of the “noble savage,” exemplified by such characters as Deerslayer; and the second was that of “The American Farmer,” made concrete by the image of a farmer in the garden of the world, civilizing the wilderness by God’s grace. Both images were troubled by the modern estimation of America as the industrial giant, a “colossus of the western world” (Carpenter 599).

According to Carpenter, in 1955 a work emerged that could unify the three individual myths under a single banner, one that would describe the character of the American Experience (in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson). That book, which named the character in its very title, was The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century, by R. W. B. Lewis (Carpenter 599). By naming the character the

“American Adam,” Carpenter wrote, Lewis accomplished a twofold purpose: first, he distinguished the character from the rest of the world by using “American,” and second, he established originality through an allusion to the Biblical first man (602).

Lewis’s book was extraordinarily well received. Such scholars as Henry Nash Smith, in reviewing The American Adam, wrote, “Mr. Lewis has written an exciting and indispensable book. No one henceforth will be able to undertake a serious inquiry into nineteenth century American culture without taking it into account” (Smith 392). Sherman Paul wrote in The New England Quarterly, “the book is . . . efficiently neat, and runs smoothly over obstacle after obstacle, page after page” (Paul 258). The review that characterizes the manner through which Lewis’s work would come to exert its greatest influence, said: “The best proof of the soundness of Lewis’s thesis is the ease into which it unfolds. *There are few gaps or inconsistencies in his argument*” (emphasis added Thorp 72).

Lewis’s work was to have a profound effect on the way in which American literature came to be studied. He answered the questions regarding the nature of early American culture and identity (the specifics of which will be discussed in section 1.2, “Adam Defined”); however, his work was so well received that it also colored the manner in which the literature of the mid-twentieth century was viewed. Scholars, citing his work, wrote that the American Adam had been somehow lost by the 1950’s.

Lewis created the modern identity crisis in the closing chapter of his book, when, labeling his contemporaries as living in “The Age of Containment,” he wrote:

American thought and expression would not, in recent years, seem very hospitable to the moral and artistic sensibility of the nineteenth-century party of Hope. The hopeful attributes are phenomena . . . about which we are today somewhat embarrassed: the culture’s youthful indiscretions and extravagances . . . we

sometimes congratulate ourselves austere for having settled . . . upon a course of prolonged but tolerable hopelessness (195).

Such a statement, in such an influential scholarly work, was bound to affect the manner of examining modern American culture. Lawrence Buell, writing for American Literary History in 1989, stated, “The image of the American pastoral as social conscience has come increasingly to look like an archaic exclusionary construct” (3). More recently, critic Ann Douglas has characterized the literature of modern America as “post-optimism.” She writes of America’s disillusionment with itself, of the fact that innocence became, by the mid-twentieth century, out of the question (Douglas 84).

Thus the quandary once erased now returns: to paraphrase D. H. Lawrence, we still don’t get the true American.¹ Ihab Hassan wrote in 1961 of his contemporaries in the study of American literature and their disdain for the modern, that they “condemn current fiction as a spent form, irrelevant” (Hassan 3). He also pointed out, however, that as times had changed, so had the innocence of our Adamic figures. Hassan wrote that the modern hero of the American novel was not precisely the liberal victim, nor the conservative outcast, nor even the radical rebel. He is a combination of and a refutation of all three: while flawed in manners that preclude sainthood, he is not quite a criminal (Hassan 6). The modern hero, with this passion for life and care for others despite the horrors of a world following two World Wars and a Great Depression, retains his innocence, albeit in a manner completely different from that of his earlier counterparts. The difference between the innocence of the hero and the destructive nature of the modern experience defines his situation (6-7).

¹ “Where is this new bird called the true American? We still don’t get him” (Lawrence 3).

While this notion is not precisely in keeping with the traditional Adamic qualities, it provides a manifestation of Adam and his Eden in modern society. In a world that has witnessed brutality in excess of all previous wars and conflicts – millions of soldiers dead in two world wars, millions of civilians murdered in the name of racial homogeneity, worldwide hunger and unemployment in a Great Depression, and hundreds of thousands of civilian lives erased instantly by the dropping of only two bombs – it has become necessary for notions of innocence to evolve (Hassan 11-12). Technology has become a double-bitted axe: it has made improvements in the quality of life that have vastly extended the average human lifespan, but it has also unleashed previously unimagined destructive force upon humanity (14).

The American Romanticists who represent the major focus of Lewis's work were of a different time. America had its wars: the Civil War was a horrifying reminder of human brutality; however, in those wars, men fought one another face to face. Their deaths could fit within the composition of an Adamic experience, because these men had faced one another with nothing but "the aid of [their] own unique and inherent resources" (Lewis 5). The modern Americans were confronted with the cruel fact that life could be destroyed at a whim by a faceless technology. They necessarily recoiled, and in recoiling, implicitly asserted that innocence (in a different form) could be maintained (Hassan 15).

The American Adam of Lewis has evolved, along with his society. In order to identify his existence and attempt to quash notions of a lost Adam, this study will examine Lewis's Adam from two works that are generally regarded as exemplifying the concept of the nineteenth-century Adam: Herman Melville's Redburn and Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn. These two novels provide an evolutionary account of the generation of the American Adam.

From the characteristics of these two Adams and the qualifications set forth by R. W. B.

Lewis, I will examine two modern works in order to provide the identity of an evolved pair of modern Adams who, while perhaps seen as unstable, are Adamic figures nonetheless: J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye and Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five.

1.2 Adam in Literature

The incarnation of Adam and his Eden has been present throughout English Literature. According to J. M. Evans, in the introduction to his study of Milton's epic, Paradise Lost, "few stories have worked so powerfully or so continuously on the imagination of Western Man as that of the Fall of Adam and Eve. It has been one of the dominant themes of our theology, literature, and art for nearly two thousand years" (9). The prevalence of the Fall of Man in Western Literature might suggest that the American Adam is not a unique character in literature; however, the differences between the American presentation of Adam and the European focus on the world already fallen refutes this.

The biblical Adam was not a fully developed character: he was a skeletal sketch, an anonymous progenitor. All we learn from Genesis is that God breathed life into Adam, and then told him that he could "freely eat" (Genesis 2:16) of "every tree in the garden," – of every tree, that is, except that of "the knowledge of good and evil" (2:17). Adam was naked, free from sin, and immortal, until, at the urging of Eve, he ate the forbidden fruit. He was then cast out and forbidden return.²

Paradise Lost presents the Fall of Man as an unavoidable occurrence, making all descendants of Adam as sinners. Within it, Milton presents an account of the Book of

² For the complete portion of Genesis discussing Adam and Eve, see Appendix A.

Genesis, and his injunction that all mankind from Adam forth is born in sin is given in powerful and haunting language:

Against his Maker; no decree of mine
Concurring to necessitate this Fall,
Or touch with lightest moment of impulse
His free will, to her own inclining left
In even scale. But fall'n he is, and now
What rests but that the mortal sentence pass
On his transgression, death denounced that day,
[...] Justice shall not return as bounty scorned (Paradise Lost X.43-54)

Milton's purpose, according to Stanley Fish, is "to educate the reader to an awareness of his position and responsibilities as fallen man, and to a sense of the distance which separates him from the innocence once his" (Fish 1). Fish further describes his method as "to re-create, in the mind of the reader . . . the drama of the Fall, to make him fall again exactly as Adam did and with Adam's troubled clarity" (1).

The Seasons, by James Thomson, is another long poem in which we see Edenic imagery and mankind's irrevocable separation from Paradise. The opening lines of the section entitled "Spring" are obviously Edenic in reference:

Th' expansive Atmosphere is cramp'd with Cold;
But, full of Life and vivifying Soul,
Lifts the light Clouds sublime, and spreads them thin,
Fleecy, and white, o'er all-surrounding Heaven.
Forth fly the tepid Airs; and unconfin'd,
Unbinding Earth, the moving softness strays ("Spring" 28-33)

Thomson's poem is a constant cycle between images of Edenic paradise and horrifying pictures of want, betrayal, and evil. Each time he describes an idyllic scene such as the one above, acts of God (through Nature) are visited upon man, thwarting his brief encounter with Paradise:

For oft, engender'd by the hazy North,

Myriads on Myriads, Insect-Armies waft
 Keen in the poison'd Breeze; and wasteful eat,
 Thro' Buds and Bark, into the blacken'd Core,
 Their eager Way. A feeble Race! Yet oft
 The sacred Sons of Vengeance! [sp] on whose Course
 Corrosive Famine waits, and kills the Year ("Spring" 120-26)

The traditional English images and tales of Adam and Eden are those of a lost cause, of an irrevocable split between the prelapsarian Adam, "with native honour clad" (Paradise Lost IV.289), and modern, postlapsarian mankind. The American Adam, however, created by a hopeful people, is a prelapsarian figure of "heroic innocence and vast potentialities, poised at the start of a new history" (Lewis 1), who must encounter and prevail over the evils of a postlapsarian and corrupt humanity.

1.3 The American Adam Defined

The importance of The American Adam has been established: nearly every reviewer wrote at least one passage regarding the power and form of Lewis's vision. My research of these reviews uncovered about ten, from journals such as American Literature, Modern Philology, The New England Quarterly, and PMLA. All reviews were positive. What composed Lewis's Adam and how was it so unique in tying together the loose ends of cultural mythology?

Lewis established, for the first time, an accurate account of a native "American" mythology: not only its characteristics, but also the manner by which it was generated. He took what many still regard as America's greatest thinkers and writers – Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, the James family (Henry Sr., Henry Jr., and William), Cooper, and Whitman – and examined the works of each, finding a common thread, a unique "American" identity, which he labeled "The American Adam."

The identity, he noted, was a uniquely American composition. In previous societies, the work of cultural genesis took place through the works of successive individual men of genius: e.g., the Roman myth, established by Vergil's Aeneid, based primarily upon the humanistic ideals set forth by his predecessor, Cicero. The American myth was, and remains, the result of a collective group of men: the United States, even in Emerson and Whitman, has not yet produced a Cicero and a Vergil (Lewis 4-5). Rather than view life "within a long, dense corridor of meaningful history – the American myth saw life and history as just beginning. It described the world as starting up again . . . in a . . . second chance for the human race" (5).

The Americans living in the second quarter of the nineteenth century were in the position of having to differentiate themselves from Europe. Following the complications of its birth throes, every culture seems to produce, in its adolescence, its own determining debate over the ideas that preoccupy it: money, power, sexual roles, the order of nature, etc. This debate, wrote Lewis, may actually compose the culture on its most basic level: "a culture achieves an identity not so much through the ascendancy of one particular set of convictions as through the emergence of its . . . distinctive dialogue" (2). Intellectual history exposes not only the dominant ideas of a nation or era, but also the arguments and debates over those ideas. The ideas and terms that arose most frequently in the American dialogue were innocence, novelty, experience, sin, time, evil, hope, the present, the future, and tradition (3).

The new hero of this culture was to become the embodiment of this set of idealistic clashes, a new personality involved in a new adventure:

... an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources (Lewis 5).

In a generation deriving much of its literary and moral education from the Bible, it was not a surprise that the new hero was identified with a prelapsarian Adam: he was the first man, with a morality prior to experience, and in his newness he was innocent. History lay before him, and he experienced the world as it came to him (5-6).

It is significant that the generation of the Adamic archetype was a long and collective process. While in the beginning Adam was more a motivating factor, as his story formed, he became an ever-present figure: an almost literal embodiment of the original Adam. The American Adam is first realized in James Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo in The Deerslayer (Lewis 91). After Cooper, Hawthorne, as was his nature, explored the darker side of Adamic existence: Adam on the edge of a wilderness, facing a morally ambiguous world and the possibility of falling under the influence of that world. He was one of the first to notice the double nature of an Adamic character: he was noble, yes, but also alone and faced by a tribal ego arrayed against his innocence (111). However, of all the novelists in the period, it was Melville who explored the character of Adam in his trials in almost every work he produced. Melville created Adam after Adam, sending each one forth full of expectancy, only to find that each one encountered corruption in the world, and that only in the ability to hold oneself separate from that corruption, to maintain innocence tempered by wisdom, would Adam triumph (136).

Another interesting fact that Lewis uncovered was that the literary use of the fall of humanity and of Adam as the model for various protagonists occurred most compellingly in

the final works of many novelists in the period studied by Lewis (ca. 1820 to 1910):

Hawthorne's Marble Faun and Melville's Billy Budd. Furthermore, the final work of Adamic formation that Lewis discusses, Henry James's The Golden Bowl, actually used the name "Adam" for its Adamic figure (Lewis 6).

One of the contradictions that has been overlooked in Lewis's work is his dismissal of the presence of any modern American bildungsroman protagonists as Adamic. At the same time, Lewis asserts that "America, since the age of Emerson, has been persistently a one-generation culture [of which] the unluckiest consequence . . . [has been] the sheer dullness of unconscious repetition. We regularly return . . . to all the old conflicts, programs, and discoveries" (9). Even when he does mention contemporary (ca. 1955) novelists, it is in a deprecatory tone: he writes that most serious efforts at fiction (in his time) have suffered from contemporary hopelessness. He mentions the character of Holden Caulfield in J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye as an unstable realization of the struggle of the modern innocent to cope with the "disruptive rituals of the actual world" (198).

1.4 Questions and Works

It is not surprising, given Lewis's statements, that American fiction following the first World War would suffer, once more, from a lack of critical understanding of a central identity. However, Adam is alive in American literature; and just as Lewis found him in ties between the intellectual works of the nineteenth century, Adam can be found in ties not only between twentieth-century novels, but also between his past and present incarnations. While he has been forced to evolve with the world, he is still present on some fundamental level. Rather than, as Lewis wrote, a negative and unstable embodiment of current hopelessness,

the modern Adam is uniquely adapted to retain his innocence despite the corruption rampant in the world.

In order to uncover the ties between the “new” Adam and the old, it is necessary to examine novels from both periods with Adamic protagonists. Upon comparison of the similarities and differences between the characters, I will discuss conclusions regarding a modern Adamic character, with several ties to Lewis’s as well as some different, yet still Adamic traits. Close study of each Adamic character will reveal the characteristics that compose a trans-generational picture of the American Adam, from a traditional Adamic evolution through Adam in his modern manifestations.

Because of the emphasis on Melville in The American Adam, the first novel I will study is Redburn, about which Lewis wrote that the “Adamic coloration of the experience which most interested Melville [first] became explicit” (136). Redburn details the experiences of a young man who sets out from home to confront the world. He encounters the embodiment of evil and corruption in the form of Jackson and the world of Liverpool, and becomes witness to the depravity that exists independently of him in the world. He contemplates the evils of that world and returns wiser but still innocent. By chronicling the evolution of a single classic Adamic figure, Redburn will provide a base for my study of the evolution of the character of Adam.

Robert Jackson writes that The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is one of the foremost “definitively American” literary texts (Jackson 48). Huck has several distinctively Adamic traits: separation from the past, innocence, and experiences with worldly corruption through which he must pass. Despite – or perhaps because of – several critical troubles with Twain’s masterpiece, and Lewis’s spotty coverage of the novel, I find it an ideal second step.

The selection of twentieth century American texts was more difficult. Many post World War II critics dismiss much mid-twentieth century Adamic fiction as genre fiction (science-fiction, fantasy, historical fiction, etc.) and therefore non-literary. Prejudice against genre fiction aside, for this study it was necessary to seek texts by authors that have been largely recognized as literary by a number of critics: the possibilities were still numerous, and included such characters as Ayn Rand's Howard Roark from The Fountainhead, Hemingway's Nick Adams, Jack Kerouac's narrator in On The Road, Joseph Heller's Yossarian from Catch-22, and John Updike's Rabbit Angstrom.

Because Lewis singles out Holden Caulfield as an example of the failure of Adam in modern fiction, I selected The Catcher in the Rye in order to demonstrate that it is, in fact, an example of the modern Adam as concordant with the idealist's view of the American Adam. Indeed, Charles Kaplan, in 1956, wrote of Holden Caulfield and Huck Finn, although separated by seventy years, as "true blood-brothers, speaking to us in terms that lift their wanderings from the level of the merely picaresque to that of a sensitive and insightful criticism of American life" (Kaplan 76-7). Holden is innocent: he faces a world full of "phonies" and paints a picture of the flawed Eden of mid-century New York City; he witnesses numerous instances of corruption but cannot bring himself to participate in them; he withdraws from the world in order to preserve his innocence. In essence, he is one of the first modern embodiments of the "new" Adam.

Due to the aforementioned critical prejudice against writers of "genre fiction," Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five was more difficult to select. While many of his novels do, in fact, contain elements of the surreal and of "science fiction," his work is primarily a search for Eden in modern American life. Billy Pilgrim, the title character of Vonnegut's

Slaughterhouse Five, has many Adamic characteristics, but also the work as a whole, with its overt references to Eden in Billy's "exhibit" by the alien inhabitants of Tralfamadore, make this novel ideal for a study of the modern American Adam.

In addition to comparing the protagonists from the above novels with the ideals espoused by R. W. B. Lewis, I will also examine facets of the Adamic novel that Lewis might have missed. Among these are a possible redemptive agency found in an "other," as well as the attitude of the authors toward their creations. I hope to demonstrate that not only is the American Adam alive, but also that his modern embodiment shares much more with his predecessors than previous studies have assessed..

Chapter 2: Nineteenth Century Adamic Figures

2.1 Herman Melville's Redburn

Redburn is the ideal novel to begin the study of the evolving American Adamic figure. The devotion of an entire chapter to Herman Melville in R. W. B. Lewis's The American Adam, and his statement that Melville's literary explorations of the American Adam first became explicit in Redburn (Lewis 137), both serve as solid foundational reasons. Redburn as a foundation, however, goes much deeper: as Lewis wrote, from Redburn on, Melville "[dispatched] hero after hero, Adam after Adam . . . full of hopeful expectancy" (136). As Melville's first and youngest Adam, Redburn also demonstrates the growth of an innocent child-Adam into a young Adamic adult and, as such, provides a picture of the intitatory rites of the archetypal nineteenth-century Adam, perfect for a beginning in this study of the evolution of the American Adam into his modern form.

Lewis wrote that Melville did not want to accept the betrayal of innocence that faced the Adam-figure when he became immersed in the world, and often revisited the ground of his own worldly experience in order to prove the betrayal avoidable (Lewis 130). As Redburn grows, he realizes that he has not, heretofore, recognized the essence of evil, and that in order to rise above evil, he must first realize what true evil is. Throughout Redburn's encounters with the "real world" in Liverpool, and with each successive incident, the narrator provides another mental dialogue that demonstrates another step toward his adulthood. As the novel progresses, the narrator shows Redburn as less concerned with himself and more concerned with the world, eventually beginning the profound digressive social commentaries that color Melville's later work. In effect, Redburn learns to avoid the fall awaiting the Biblical Adam by recognizing and avoiding the evil already in the world.

One of the complications in dealing with such a novel as Redburn is Melville's own expressed dislike of the work. While most critics do not see the work as the failure that Melville, the perfectionist, perceived, they ignore it in favor of Moby-Dick. According to Terry Eagleton, we must avoid the "humanist fallacy – the naïve notion that a literary text is just a kind of transcript of the living voice of a real man or woman addressing us" (120). D. H. Lawrence, albeit more colorfully, concurred, "Never trust the artist. Trust the tale. The proper function of a critic is to save the tale from the artist who created it" (Lawrence 8). Later, he writes "The greatest seer and poet of the sea for me is Melville" (139).

Lawrence's injunction notwithstanding, some critics see flaws in Redburn that must be addressed. One such flaw is what some critics label the apparent incoherence between early chapters and later ones; specifically, the unity promised does not appear (Bowen 100). The counter to this argument is found not only in the unity of Redburn's Adamic characteristics, but also in the slowly evolving angle of his perspective as Redburn grows in the course of his voyage. While some of the "sermon-like" passages obviously break with the point of view of a youth, the actual narrator is a grown man narrating the voyage of this youth. As Merlin Bowen wrote, arguing against a perceived "incoherence," there must be a distinction made between the narrator, "Redburn-Now," and the character, "Redburn-Then." It is from the vantage point of an adult (unlike that of Huckleberry Finn), that Redburn's experiences are narrated (102).

According to John Wenke, however, in order for the novel to be an artistic success, Melville had to reverse his prior narrative technique from that of Typee, Omoo, and Mardi: in all three of these novels he had narrated from his accumulated learning. In Redburn, it was necessary to repress that accumulated knowledge in order to give an account from an

innocent's point of view of experience (especially the experience of evil) as it happened. In short, the narrator had the dual challenge of portraying the innocent's shock when a new experience reared its head, and at the same time moralizing about that occurrence after the fact in order to demonstrate its effect on the boy (Wenke 76-77). As the novel progresses, these moralizing passages become less concerned with the self and more concerned with the world in which the self exists; in effect, these passages become a manifestation of the character's maturation and initiation.

The first symbol of Redburn's Adamic initiation is mentioned in the first chapter. In the Redburn home, a glass ship occupies a place of honor on display in the parlor. It is the object of much admiration to the local townsfolk, and many local children come to gaze at it; imagining, perhaps, as Redburn did, that they, too had been to sea. The ship becomes an allegory of Wellingborough Redburn's inexperience: it is clear and flawless, representing his uninitiated view of life at sea. As a child, he had impulses to destroy the ship, to destroy his innocence: he would shatter the illusion of perfection in order to learn what life at sea had to offer. Redburn, of course, does not destroy the ship, but his description of her current state as he begins to recall his first voyage offers much insight into the ship's symbolism:

We have her yet in the house, but many of her glass spars and ropes are now sadly shattered and broken, -- but I will not have her mended . . . a gallant warrior in a cocked-hat, lies pitching head-foremost down into the trough of a calamitous sea under the bows -- but I will not have him put on his legs again, till I get on my own; for between him and me there is a secret sympathy; and my sisters tell me, even yet, that he fell from his perch the very day I left home to go to sea on this *my first voyage* (RB 8).

Melville's narrator, remembering the boy he was, will not repair the object most representing his shattered illusions. The symbolic action of the figurehead falling on the very first day of his absence from home provides a "clear" allegory of the initial breaking of Redburn's

boyhood leading to a manhood that, while still innocent and good, becomes tempered with the wisdom gained from experience.

Aside from his later sermons, the narrator of Redburn gives the perfect image of an untried boy who leaves an isolated hamlet in order to seek glory. In fact, as Michael Bell has suggested, it is difficult to see an Adamic figure in the initial character narrated: he is “little more than a collection of puerile illusions” (559). Bell points out, however, that the first impression of Redburn is an incomplete Adam: he is prone, as many rustics are, to ignorance of the difference between reality and the world of books (559). There are Adamic characteristics latent in Redburn from the beginning, and as the tale progresses, so does the inner Adam’s growth (Bell 559-60).

One of the primary Adamic characteristics latent in Wellingborough Redburn is his eager willingness to abandon his past, illustrated in the passage describing his leaving home.

Examine Lewis’s depiction of the idealized American Adam:

Happily bereft of ancestry, untouched . . . by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone . . . ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources . . . Adam was the first, the archetypal man . . . in his very newness he was fundamentally innocent. The world and history lay all before him (Lewis 5).

Compare this to the narrator’s description of his departure from home:

Yes, I will go to sea; cut my kind uncles and aunts, and sympathizing patrons, and leave no heavy hearts but those in my own home, and take none along but the one which aches in my bosom . . . So I broke loose from their arms, and not daring to look behind, ran away as fast as I could . . . It was early on a raw, cold, damp morning toward the end of spring, and the world was before me; stretching away a long, muddy road . . . I thought that this indeed was the way to begin life . . . (RB 8-9).

Despite the “collection of puerile illusions” alluded to by Michael Bell, from the outset the text exhibits examples of Wellingborough Redburn’s Adamic characteristics. He eagerly

anticipates his new life; and happily anticipates his separation from family and home. He leaves his familial expectations and ancestral baggage behind, carrying only a gun and his father's guidebook. The inclusion of the guidebook may lead some to conclude that Redburn did not, in fact, leave the "inheritances of family" behind; however, when the book is seen as a spiritual guide, almost a Bible, it ceases to become a familial artifact and becomes a resource for spiritual guidance. As this resource is found lacking later in the novel, the Biblical metaphor becomes clearer – Melville's well-known lifelong religious questioning is offered as evidence.

The initiation of Redburn into the knowledge of worldly evil is the primary tie between Melville's novel and Lewis's Adam. James Miller, referring to Redburn and White-Jacket (which many consider Redburn's sequel), effectively agrees with Lewis's understanding that Melville is "portraying the impact of the world on the innocence of the boy in both books" (Miller 1959, 277). Redburn, whom Miller calls the "Young Seeker," must remove his mask of isolation and uncover his bond with humanity. By doing so, he must not compromise his innocence, but look beyond it (278-9). In the beginning, Redburn is not as noble in his innocence as Lewis's Adam is; he is, instead, merely more naïve. It is this naïveté that must be erased in order to create a buffer between the character and the evil he experiences. The relatively minor misfortunes that befall Redburn in New York brace him for the encounters with true evil he experiences later in the work (Bell 560).

When the *Highlander* first prepares to leave the harbor, Redburn encounters his first experience with the harsh reality of sea life and his first initiation into the necessity of an authority figure. Ordered by the first mate to clear the shavings from a carpenter's work into a specific location, Redburn takes initiative and places them in a drier location. The mate

begins swearing and shouting at him: something Redburn has never experienced. When he tries reasoning with the mate, “he flew into a terrible rage, and without explanation reiterated his order like a clap of thunder. . . . From that time I learned that sea-officers never gave reasons for [their orders]. It is enough that they command it” (*RB* 29).

Redburn next grows closer to a realistic vision of the world by the actions and language of his fellow sailors. He has never seen adults outside of his idyllic, moral, middle-class village, and remarks, “at the time I did not know what to make of these sailors; but this much I thought, that when they were boys, they could never have gone to Sunday School: for they . . . used words that I could never hear without a dreadful loathing” (*RB* 32). His initial impression is one of shock: yet another illusion is shattered, and Redburn does not know what to make of it. Harsh words and personal abuse characterize Redburn’s treatment aboard the *Highlander*, but he suffers mostly not from the wickedness of the men but from the vision of their depravity in general, exemplified not only by their swearing but also by their treatment of everyone else (Arvin 104).

As the novel progresses, Redburn becomes able to distinguish between his moral outlook and the nature of evil. Sitting among a group of sailors when they begin telling stories, he says:

I began to think they were a pretty good set of fellows after all, barring their swearing and another ugly way of talking they had; and I thought I had misconceived their true characters; for at the outset I had deemed them such a parcel of wicked hard-hearted rascals that it would be a severe affliction to associate with them . . . I now began to look on them with a sort of incipient love . . . (44)

It is in the general good feeling that the heart of the passage lies, for it is here that he learns to distinguish between a tough shell and the evils of man. While Redburn maintains his self-

imposed isolation, he has begun to realize that his narrow worldview, while fundamentally moral, is not by any means universal, or even common.

The evil of mankind is embodied in the sailor Jackson, who, in his first meeting with Redburn, tells him that he had “better steer clear of him ever after, for if ever I crossed his path . . . he would be the death of me” (46). Instantly recognized as a villain, Jackson is a character who will come to fulfillment in the villainous Claggart of Billy Budd. According to Newton Arvin, the evil of the world is concentrated in the sailor Jackson. Jackson – physically hideous, stricken with some fatal, disfiguring disease - bullies everyone he can (especially those who treat him kindly), and feels nothing but hatred for all mankind (Arvin 104). Eyes are traditionally symbolic as “windows into the soul,” and Jackson’s eyes demonstrate how ugly his soul truly is: “he squinted with one eye, and did not look very straight out of the other” (*RB* 53); “it [his squinting eye] must have belonged to a wolf, or starved tiger . . . I would defy any oculist, to turn out a glass eye, half so cold, and snaky, and deadly” (55).

Apart from his eyes, Redburn says, “nothing was left of this Jackson but the foul lees and dregs of a man” (56). Inwardly evil, “he seemed to be full of hatred and gall against everything and everybody in the world” (59). Even his speech is evil: he talks of his past as a pirate and an ex-slaver, and he speaks with relish regarding the treatment of slaves aboard ships through the “Middle Passage.” Even though Melville had not yet clarified his anti-slavery stance, as he was to do in “Benito Cereno,” Redburn’s description suffices to show Melville’s contempt for the trade and those who participate in it. Jackson does, however, provide two great insights for Redburn: first, that a clever (if diabolical) and mentally superior man can possess great power over those who would otherwise be his superiors; and

second, since “[Jackson’s] wickedness seemed to spring from his woe” (*RB* 56),” that the world can create evil in a man (Lewis 137).

While several people in the novel aboard ship have demonstrably evil effects on Redburn, it is in Liverpool that Redburn, the child Adam, truly evolves into the adult Adamic figure he will become. Lewis tells us that the American Adam is a prelapsarian figure living in a postlapsarian world. Redburn must find a way to deal with the postlapsarian state of the world in which he lives. The Liverpool experiences are real-world experiences derived from mankind’s folly in general, rather than the evil bound in a single man or a few disconsolate sailors. Newton Arvin wrote that “Jackson is easily first among the personal embodiments of evil in this book, but in addition to him and to all the personages, and more overpowering than any of them, there is the infernal city of Liverpool” (105). Redburn’s experience here, like everywhere else in the novel, begins with gradual disillusionment, but swells into a crescendo:

[The] dark, begrimed, polluted streets, the great prisonlike warehouses, the squalid dwellings, the loathsome haunts of vice and crime, and the beggars, the quacks, the crimps, the peddlers who populate these infested purlieus like moral grotesques – in all this there is a power quite comparable to . . . the London of Bleak House and Our Mutual Friend, or the Dublin of Ulysses (Arvin 105).

Redburn’s first encounters in Liverpool are mild, and in keeping with Bell’s idea of a gradual removal of naïveté, prepare him for his true Adamic confrontations with the rampant evil of civilization (of which Liverpool serves as a microcosm).

His first disillusionment is more a slap at his youthful idealism: while sitting in the tavern wherein he takes his meals with the crew, he “remained alone . . . meditating profoundly . . . seated upon an English bench, under an English roof, in an English tavern . . . And this is England?” (*RB* 127). Redburn cannot reconcile the England of his imagination

and education with the England surrounding him; however, this scene does not end his loss of idealistic imagination. Throughout the voyage from New York, he had read his father's old guidebook, now hopelessly outdated, building what he believed "an unerring knowledge of Liverpool" (144). He memorizes the book, and once ashore in Liverpool, resolves to follow his father's footsteps around the great port city. He has built an image of the guidebook as infallible, and feels almost as if his deceased father is guiding him once more: "with the map in my hand, [I would] follow him through all the town. . . . For thus would I be performing a filial pilgrimage to spots which would be hallowed in my eyes" (146).

All of the historic and beautiful landmarks found in the guidebook are gone, replaced by dingy new industrial ones. He finally succumbs to the fact that, not only is his father gone, but the guidebook, which had been a spiritual guide to the city of Liverpool, is hopelessly outdated. This becomes a step in his maturity: the narrator calls him "a sadder and wiser boy" (151). His abandonment of the guidebook and of his absent ghost-father holds Biblical metaphors as well. It is fairly simple and accurate to rename the guidebook "The Book of the Father," and his father as a "Holy Ghost," a claim bolstered by his earlier claim to be making a "filial pilgrimage" to "hallowed" places.

Redburn having lost his childish illusions regarding fantasy, the narrator shows us the musings of an American Adam, finally ready for the series of confrontations with evil that occur in the rest of Redburn's Liverpool stay. Indeed, Melville almost restates a portion of Lewis's conception of the American Experience:

There is something in the contemplation of the mode in which America has been settled, that, in a noble breast, should forever extinguish the prejudices of national dislikes . . . Settled by people of all nations, all nations may claim her for their own. You can not spill a drop of American blood without spilling the blood of the whole world . . . our blood is as the flood of the Amazon, made up of a thousand noble

currents all pouring into one . . . who was our father and mother? . . . Our ancestry is lost in the universal paternity . . . We are the heirs of all time . . . the estranged children of Adam restored as to the old hearth-stone in Eden (162-63).

Following this, the close of chapter 34, Redburn's confrontation with evil begins in earnest. He becomes immersed in a world entirely alien to his experience thus far, bewildered and frightened by things that are completely foreign and chaotic (Cook 545-46).

He first encounters a group of starving women in Launcelot's-Hey, a group that he tries repeatedly to comfort with food and water. He rushes between several police officers, then to authorities ranging all over the city, and finds that most of them echo the sentiments of the first authority figure he approaches when he sees the women: "It's none of my business, Jack . . . I don't belong to that street" (*RB* 174). Through an encounter with a desperate old man trying to sell him a stolen ring, he learns about the practical avoidance of evil: after being knocked to the ground by that criminal, "[he] shunned those scoundrels like the leprosy." The next time he was followed in a similar manner, he says, he "stopped, and in a loud voice, pointed out the man to the passers-by, upon which he absconded" (187).

In his newfound wisdom, Redburn is able to understand the existence of corruption, an existence that no longer shocks him. He describes the pawnshops located next to the taverns, "no doubt, mutually to facilitate business operations" (188), where desperate men would pawn their very clothing for money to buy just one more drink. Redburn has finally learned not to trust the openly corrupt: he understands that while he may be, as Lewis wrote, a character "morally prior" to the world in which he lives (128), others are not so.

As Redburn's maturity becomes more evident, Melville, in a style anticipatory of many of his later novels, often digresses into moralistic monologues commenting on the wider world. Many of these digressions in Redburn consciously mention Eden (as in the

passage above), as well as Adam and Eve. When recalling the deaths of the pitiful women in

Launcelot's-Hey, Melville makes another such statement:

Adam and Eve! If indeed ye are yet alive and in heaven, may it be no part of your immortality to look down upon the world ye have left. For as all these sufferers and cripples are as much your family as young Abel, so, to you, the sight of the world's woes would be a parental torment (182).

Redburn is becoming more adult in his outlook; he begins to understand the difference between his perceived "hardships" as a young boy and true hardship in the real world. In Chapter Forty-One, Melville not only gives us a reminder of Redburn's Adamic innocence, he also makes a profound political statement:

Being so young and inexperienced then, and unconsciously swayed in some degree by those local and social prejudices, that are the marring of most men, and from which, for the mass, there seems no possible escape; at first I was surprised that a colored man should be treated as he is in this town [Liverpool]; but a little reflection showed that, after all, it was but recognizing his claims to humanity and normal equality; so that, in some things, we Americans leave to other countries the carrying out of the principle that stands at the head of our Declaration of Independence (195).

Eventually, however, Redburn must encounter deception and prevarication even in the outwardly beautiful, for which Melville introduces Harry Bolton, "a native of Bury St. Edmunds" (210), which earns him the reference of "my Bury blade." In order that Redburn truly become initiated, however, he must be removed even further than Liverpool: Harry takes him to London. It is in the Aladdin, a sort of luxury house in which Redburn and Harry spend a "mysterious night" (the title of Chapter 46), that Redburn encounters a vision of true evil: a literal palace of temptation, glittering with what James Miller called "sumptuous attractions" (Miller 1962, 63), its furnishings a deceptive façade that masks the hidden iniquities that disorient and horrify Redburn (64). When the narrator discusses the place, he uses an Edenic metaphor: "All the mirrors and marbles around me seemed crawling over

with lizards; and I thought to myself, that though gilded and golden, the serpent of vice is a serpent still” (*RB* 228).

Harry, disappointed in his obscurely evil goal, returns with Redburn to Liverpool and the *Highlander*. It is upon departure from Liverpool that Redburn finally begins to understand that trusting anyone, even seeming aristocrats with little outward corruption, is folly. Harry is completely ignorant of the ways of the sea, and Redburn “almost vowed to myself that, spite his protestations, Harry Bolton never could have been to sea before” (245). Harry, who at first seemed a British counterpart to Redburn, demonstrates through his easily defeated personality that he can never be an Adam; unlike Redburn, who has adapted swiftly to sea-life, Harry is easily crushed: “Few landmen can imagine the depressing . . . effects of finding one’s self . . . at the beck of illiterate sea-tyrants . . . poor Harry, proved no exception . . . [he became] as a hunted hare to the merciless crew” (249).

As Redburn’s character has evolved into a more adult Adamic figure, the effects of evil penetrate his psyche less often: he has learned that only through recognition of evil can he avoid being consumed by it. As Redburn matures, the evil embodied in Jackson begins to consume his body: it can no longer infect Redburn, the sole innocent on the *Highlander*, so as a result it destroys its host: “His [Jackson’s] cheek became thinner and yellower, and the bones projected like those of a skull. His snaky eyes rolled in red sockets . . . the prospect of . . . death now before him, seemed to exasperate his misanthropic soul . . . as if he had indeed sold it to Satan” (265).

James Miller agrees with this assessment, marking Jackson’s death as the final step of Wellingborough Redburn’s initiation. He writes of Jackson’s coughing fit at the end of the voyage that splashes the crew with blood: “Jackson’s death seems . . . [to be a] baptism – in

blood . . . [they seem to] realize that his death is their deliverance” (Miller 1959, 283). That this event takes place at the opposite end of a voyage from Redburn’s “baptism” at the hands of the chief mate is even more suggestive. Having been baptized in his innocence with a weak name founded in inexperience (Buttons), it is fitting that Redburn’s final growth into an Adamic manhood be witnessed by a baptism of blood.

The close of Redburn provides insight into the character of a new man. Long after arrival home, Redburn learns that Harry has died because of the British boy’s incompetence. While Harry died, however, Redburn has lived; and unlike the Redburn of the earlier pages in the earlier pages of the novel, he does not try to recapture his past: “yet I, Wellingborough Redburn, chance to survive, after having passed through far more perilous scenes narrated in this, *My First Voyage*” (RB 301). Redburn, looking back, no longer attempts to question reality, and Harry’s death merely reminds him of a past that is irrecoverable: he learns as much from Harry’s early death as he does in their initial encounter (Miller 1959, 288).

Redburn’s initial beliefs and characteristics are those of an untried, egocentric youth: he places the past on a pedestal, he looks to appearance as the indicator of character-worth, and he is confident in the goodness of the world. Through the novel, Redburn evolves into a character almost stereotypical of Lewis’s American Adam. His innocence is retained, but tempered now with wisdom; and he recognizes the fact that true injustice is not seen in the false hardships of a selfish boy’s thwarted ambition. He relies more often on his own resources to confront and solve problems, and concurrently dismisses the ghosts of his father and the irretrievable past in learning to rise above true evil. The evolution of Redburn is the evolution of the early incarnation of the American Adam.

2.2 Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Mark Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn opens with the remark, "I never seen anybody but lied, one time or another" (1). This comment would seem to preclude any perception of the novel's title character as an Adamic figure; however, Huck is a natural second step in the evolution of the American as Adam in literature. In 1935, Ernest Hemingway wrote, "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn . . . All American writing comes from that" (qtd. in Champion 3). Harold Bloom concurred. "The three best American books," he wrote, "Huckleberry Finn, Moby-Dick, [and] Leaves of Grass – have in common also that they are each the most American of books" (Bloom 1).

Lacking the polish of several of his literary predecessors, characters such as Melville's Redburn or Hawthorne's Miriam (from The Marble Faun), Huck is nonetheless just as Adamic, perhaps even more so. With Huck, Twain stepped away from the romantic literary ideal of Adam – even satirized it – and created a natural, prelapsarian Adam, isolated from society. The world seen through Huck's eyes is at many points almost literally a Garden of Eden, and his moral maturity, gained through his experiences, is precisely in keeping with the "moral position" espoused by Lewis (5). Most important, however, are Huck's Adamic traits: he is at home most in nature, an innocent figure, emancipated from the past, and isolated from both his society and its values.

One of the central characteristics of the American Adam, and related to Huck's isolation, is the Adamic freedom from civilization, past and present. Lewis wrote that the hero of the American myth was "emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry" (5): of all the major characters in American literature to whom this applies, Huckleberry Finn is

foremost. Huck is, in all senses of the word, the very incarnation of these attributes. He rebels, as David Burg wrote, against all “false constraint[s] upon natural behavior” (303).

Several scholars critical of Huckleberry Finn suggest that the novel is a structural failure, a picaresque novel composed of disjointed episodes of action interspersed with idyllic scenery. Their criticism is based on the plan set forth in Chapter 15 and subsequently undermined by an unfortunate fog, that Huck and Jim would go to Cairo, in southern Illinois, and “sell the raft and get on a steamboat and go way up the Ohio amongst the free States” (*HF* 125), thereby freeing Jim from bondage. From this, many critics assume that the novel is about Jim’s escape efforts, which grossly oversimplifies and misreads the characters and themes of this complex work. The novel centers on Huck, the first-person narrator and sole character into whose mind we may enter.

The apparent lack of structure and focus disappears when we read The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn as the history of a young American Adam. From the beginning, we see Huck as “morally prior” to the society in which he must live, a condition Lewis found essential in the American Adam (Lewis 128). His narrative details his encounters with the “realities of social experience and action,” of his growing awareness (similar to that of Redburn) that he is living in a corrupt world and must either become a part of that corruption or somehow learn to avoid it. When we read the subplot of Jim’s slavery in this light, we see that he is not, as some claim, the central character; rather, he is one of several catalysts in Huck’s moral education whereby his initiation and subsequent rejection of society occur. In short, Huck must either come to terms with the most troublesome aspects of the society in which he lives; or, “light out for the territory” (438) and find his own way.

At the beginning of the novel, Huck tells us of his discomfort with human society and all it entails. "The Widow Douglas," he says, "she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilise me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer, I lit out" (*HF* 2). James Johnson, in Mark Twain and the Limits of Power, commented that the act of "sivilizing" Huck would destroy that part of his character that most defines him, "an enviable state of grace and freedom that can exist only outside of social structures" (85). Society, composed of fallen mankind and structured by laws created to keep such men in line, is antithetical to a free, prelapsarian man.

Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas are, in Huck's words, "decent," the embodiment of upstanding middle-class values; according to R. J. Fertel, however, "'Decent' from Huck's point of view connotes its opposite: hypocritical. Having to be 'regular and decent,' being acculturated, in short, is what Huck [resists]" (86). Huck sees "sivilization" as repressive, vindictive, and lacking in sympathy. The women's attempts at enforcing the rules of proper society make Huck, in his words, "so lonesome I most wished I was dead" (*HF* 5). In an oft-cited 1955 article, Lauriat Lane summarizes Huck's eternally oppositional relationship to society:

Even on the simplest plot level the world of Huckleberry Finn is one of deception . . . [the] falseness in his relations with the world at large merely reflects the difference between his standards and those of the outside world. Huck's truth and the truth of the world are diametrically opposed (1).

Lane's note on deception demonstrates the importance of Huck's point of view in understanding his character. Because we see the world solely through Huck's eyes, the

justifications he provides for his many deceptions make us more sympathetic: he builds them to protect himself and Jim from society, the deceptions of which are infinitely more harmful.

If the proper society of Miss Watson and the Widow fails to appeal to Huck, the “moral degeneracy” (Levy 384) of his father is no better. Pap represents the “lower orders” of society: he exhibits the behavior of those who resisted progress, the poor whites of the South who, according to Louis Budd, “served the South’s reactionaries by opposing education, insisting on white supremacy, and lining up against governmental interference of any kind” (96). Pap is as cruel in his oppression of Huck as Miss Watson and the Widow are gentle. His only reason for seeking Huck is exploitative: he sees Huck as a form of property through which he can gain a fortune (Wieck 44).

Whereas the Widow and Miss Watson are stereotypically civilized, Pap is the opposite. He is brutal and abusive, even bestial. The passages about Pap reveal no socially redeeming characteristics:

Pap he hadn’t been seen for more than a year, and that was comfortable for me; I didn’t want to see him no more. He used to always whale me when he was sober and could get his hands on me . . . (*HF* 18)

He was most fifty, and he looked it. His hair was long and tangled and greasy, and hung down, and you could see his eyes shining through like he was behind vines. It was all black, no gray; so was his long, mixed-up whiskers. There warn’t no colour in his face, where his face showed; it was white; not like another man’s white, but a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body’s flesh crawl . . . (30-31)

Pap’s repulsive person is inhuman: he admits it himself. When he pretends penitence for his past in order to gain control of Huck, Pap extends his hand to the reformers, saying, “Look at it, gentlemen, and ladies all; take ahold of it; shake it. There’s a hand that was the hand of a hog . . .” (35). Pap is figuratively the beast within man, a completely fallen animal.

After three days imprisoned in Pap's cabin, Huck must reject that culture as well. He escapes through a symbolic murder-suicide, shooting a pig and spreading its blood around the cabin before sinking it in the river. That single action accomplishes several others. First, in killing a pig, he is figuratively murdering his father, the subhuman pig. By denying Pap, he releases himself from the identity of oneself as the moral and fleshly extension of one's father (Johnson 87). In committing "suicide," he places himself outside the structures of society and culture. The murder-suicide symbolically dissolves all social ties and allows Huck to develop according to Adamic instinct, rather than the corrupt values of a postlapsarian world.

One of the greatest ironies in Huck's character is that while his nature craves solitude, he cannot fully isolate himself. He must have a friend; however, his personality will not allow him to be his free self with those who might repress his instincts (Kastely 415-16). Even Tom Sawyer, while mischievous, is a representative member of his society: the archetypal "bad boy." Tom's pranks, illustrated by his needlessly complex scheme to free Jim, follow codes established by high-adventure novels. Tom, who cares only for play, not for Jim, cannot understand and therefore rejects Huck's objection to his plan as not "regular" (Hoffman 33-4).

Huck, the "fugitive from society who cannot be alone," is isolated from white society but longs for a friend (Schacht 196). Jim, a slave, provides the perfect companion: he fills Huck's need for company without raising the concerns of society. The will of a slave imposes no demands, restrictions, or rules upon Huck (Johnson 94-5). Huck and Jim, both wanderers in search of freedom, both primitive and cast out from society, are able to journey together, eventually sharing a bond that catalyzes Huck's essential moral growth.

Huck's freedom from the past includes, of course, the symbolic "murder" of his father. In orphaning himself, he separates his identity from that of his father, rejecting what Lewis called the "usual inheritances of family" (5). Likewise, in his "suicide," he severs his identity from his own past, and thereafter, throughout the novel, adopts several names and identities: Sarah Williams, George Alexander, George Peters, George Jackson, valet for the absurd Dauphin of France, and Tom Sawyer. In this adoption of names, each of which creates an actual identity, Huck again parallels Adam, who, as the first man, named each object in the world: "whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof" (Genesis 2:19). More significant, however, is the implicit disavowal of civilization in the narrative itself.

The first such renunciation appears in the opening chapter. The Widow forces Huck, who has just returned from fleeing her home, to learn the story of "Moses and the Bulrushers." "I was in a sweat to find out all about him; but by-and-by she let it out that Moses had been dead a considerable long time; so then I didn't care no more about him; because I don't take no stock in dead people" (2). This statement implies a question – deliberately tinting one's perception of Huck as a character – effectively, "What right have the long dead to affect the living?"

Another pattern of historical repudiation in Huckleberry Finn is literary. Tom Sawyer's foolish plan to free Jim hinges on outmoded literary adventure ideals – he mentions Casanova, Henry IV, and The Count of Monte Cristo, among others – and nearly gets them all killed. Huck sees through the idiocy of these plans, which are based on traditional literary romanticism, and rejects them. He finds no sense in rescuing Jim through outmoded, foolishly idealistic, and traditionally acceptable methods.

The Grangerford/Shepherdson feud offers a final repudiation of family history. Huck stays, for a time, with the Grangerford family, which has been warring with the neighboring Shepherdson family for generations. The youngest of the Grangerford clan, Buck, is a mirror of Huck in more than name: they are nearly the same age and have a similar temperament. The main difference between the two lies in familial ties. Buck, embedded in the culture of his family, dies because he cannot deny the false reality of his family's feud. Bruce Michelson, writing of Buck, says that he "cannot see hypocrisy and waste in these intermittent slaughters that are deeply tangled with family history and dignity" (130). Huck, however, as an orphan, unencumbered by family, "wished [he] hadn't ever come ashore that night, to see such things" (*HF* 174).

Concurrent with Huck's liberty from society, and a crucial element in a complete understanding of his Adamic state, is his rapport with nature. "Living in a house," he tells us, "and sleeping in a bed, pulled on me pretty tight, mostly, but before the cold weather I used to slide out and sleep in the woods, sometimes, and so that was a rest to me" (25). When Huck is taken by his father and begins living in the woods, he appears quite content initially, as he says, "It was pretty good times up in the woods there" (38).

While Huck and Jim drift on the Mississippi, idle and complacent, we find several more passages indicating Huck's affinity for the natural world. Chapter 12 illustrates one such moment: "We caught fish, and talked, and we took a swim now and then to keep off sleepiness. It was kind of solemn, drifting down the big still river, laying on our backs looking up at the stars, and we didn't ever feel like talking out loud" (100).

The world Huck depicts along the river is, at times, literally a Garden of Eden, with himself as Adam. On Jackson's Island, he finds all he needs in order to live: "plenty

strawberries, ripe and prime; and green summer-grapes, and green razberries” (61). The island is a complete vision of Eden: solitary, beautiful, and bountiful, but also the home of snakes, which eventually cause Huck and Jim to leave. Chapter 19 furnishes a complete description of Huck as Adam, adrift in his Edenic paradise at dawn:

[You] see the mist curl up off of the water, and the east reddens up, and the river . . . and then the nice breeze springs up, and comes fanning you from over there, so cool and fresh, and sweet to smell, on account of the woods and flowers . . . everything smiling in the sun, and the song-birds just going it! [...] So we would put in the day, lazying around, *listening to the stillness*. [...] Soon as it was night, out we shoved; when we got her out to about the middle, we let her alone, and let her float wherever the current wanted her to . . . *we was always naked, day and night, whenever the mosquitoes would let us* . . . I didn’t go much on clothes, nohow (emphasis added 178-9).

The abundant Edenic images invoked throughout the narrative also indicate Huck’s status as Adam. In order for the novel to be the chronicle of Huck Finn as Adam, however, the Adamic protagonist must become aware of the corrupt moral state of the world. Lewis, in a particularly long passage in Chapter 7 of The American Adam, explains:

[The] traditional hero is at the center of [his] world . . . but the American hero as Adam takes his start outside the world, remote or on the verges; its power, its fashions, and its history are precisely the forces he must . . . master or be mastered by. [...] The Adamic hero is an “outsider,” but he is “outside” in a curiously staunch and artistically demanding manner. He is to be distinguished from the kind of outsider – the dispossessed, the superfluous, the alienated, the exiled – who began to enter European fiction in the nineteenth century[...] There is no satisfactory character there for . . . Redburn, Pierre or Billy Budd, for Huck Finn or Daisy Miller [.] These are . . . morally *prior* to the world which nonetheless awaits them; as between them and the world . . . [it is not that] the realities of social experience and action catch up with them; but it is they who approach and enter into those realities (128-9).

The antebellum South, wherein The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn takes place, had several entrenched social structures that Huck confronts. The plantation system created a pseudo-aristocracy at the top of which were a wealthy few, whose wealth was based on slavery. The concept of an aristocracy, of a select few deemed superior to contemporaries

based solely on wealth and birth, is antithetical to the American Adam. The “peculiar institution” of slavery is even more so. “If you put a chain around the neck of a slave,” wrote Emerson in “Compensation,” “the other end fastens itself around your own” (132). Adam is free, necessarily unencumbered by entrenched structures, while slaveholders, tied as they are to the plantation system, are not free.

One of the more frequently noted aspects of the work that links it to the “American” half of the American Adam is the satire of monarchy and aristocracy. Huck and Jim, while aboard the raft, are outside formal societal structures. They are free, there, to create themselves, to be their own masters, and live as they choose. The raft is a pure democracy: following Huck’s escape from the feud, he and Jim agree that there “warn’t no home like a raft, after all. Other places do seem so cramped up and smothery, but a raft don’t. You feel mighty free . . . on a raft” (*HF* 176).

The arrival of two frauds, one claiming to be the “Duke of Bridgewater,” the other calling himself the “late Dauphin . . . Looy the Seventeen, son of Looy the Sixteen and Marry Antonette” (186), transforms the raft into a mock-monarchy. Whereas the original raft was a vehicle by which Huck and Jim would secure their freedom, the advent of the Duke and King changed it suddenly into a place of exploitation, “conceived in deception and effected through lies” (Kastely 426). Huck and Jim, once free to drift, now have to wait on the two counterfeit noblemen: the “King” feeling depressed, asks them to treat him according to his rights, “so Jim and [Huck] set to majestyng him, and doing this and that and t’other for him, and standing up till he told us we might set down” (*HF* 188).

Their arrival demonstrates to Huck just how petty a nobility can be, even though, he says, “It didn’t take me long to make up my mind that these liars warn’t no kings nor dukes,

at all, but just low-down humbugs and frauds” (188). The dialogue between Huck and Jim regarding the two demonstrates Huck’s growing awareness that nobility does not arise from a title, but exhibits itself in everyday action (Rubenstein 76). Examine the following exchanges between the two, in Chapter 23:

By-and by, when they was asleep and snoring, Jim says:
 “Don’t it ‘sprise you, de way dem kings carries on, Huck?”
 “No,” I says, “it don’t.”
 “Why don’t it, Huck?”
 “Well, it don’t, because it’s in the breed. I reckon they’re all alike.”
 “But, Huck, dese kings o’ ourn is reglar rascallions; dat’s jist what dey is; dey’s reglar rascallions.”
 “Well, that’s what I’m a-saying; all kings is mostly rascallions, as fur as I can make out.” (230)

Had Adam remained in the Garden, all mankind would be naked, free, and equal. Huck’s Adamic identity cannot respect the false authority of the Duke and the Dauphin, whose authority is doubly false because the identities themselves are lies. He further explains his disdain for aristocratic authority thus:

“All I say is, kings is kings, and you got to make allowances. Take them all around, they’re a mighty ornery lot. It’s the way they’re raised.”
 “But dis one do *smell* so like de nation, Huck.”
 “Well, they all do, Jim. *We* can’t help the way a king smells; history don’t tell no way”
 [...] “Well, anyways, I doan’ hanker for no mo’ un um, Huck. Dese is all I kin stan’.”
 “It’s the way I feel too, Jim. But we’ve got them on our hands, and we got to remember what they are, and make allowances. Sometimes I wish we could hear of a country that’s out of kings.”
 What was the use to tell Jim these warn’t real kings and dukes? It wouldn’t a done no good; and besides, it was just as I said; you couldn’t tell them from the real kind (232).

Huck eventually abandons the two “aristocrats.” His denial of them demonstrates his growth in understanding corruption. “I didn’t want no trouble with their kind,” he tells us, “I’d seen all I wanted to of them, and wanted to get entirely shut of them” (327). This

statement has several implications reflecting on his Adamic character. This portion of the novel, as Kastely informs us, “allows us to understand the appeal of an ethics of exploitation when civilization is corrupt” (427): a statement that also applies to his rejection of the slaveholding “decent” society embodied by the Widow Douglas. Huck’s rejection of both civilizations is a rejection not only of exploitation, but also of corruption: he becomes aware of the postlapsarian state of mankind, and wants “to get entirely shut” of it.

Huck refuses to take part in a culture of exploitation, and heads to the Phelps farm to rescue Jim: “not fixing up any particular plan, but just trusting to Providence to put the right words in my mouth when the time come; for I’d noticed that Providence always did put the right words in my mouth, if I left it alone” (329). This remark provides evidence of two things: first, Huck has declared his self-reliance, and second, that he has rejected the idea that slavery is God’s will. If he feels that he can trust in Providence to help win Jim’s freedom, then he must also realize that Providence condones the freeing of a slave.

Huck’s evolving attitude toward slavery is the most telling aspect of his Adamic character. Many critics note that one of the greatest turning points in the novel occurs with Huck’s apology to Jim in Chapter 15. This apology, and the statement following, “I didn’t do him no more mean tricks, and I wouldn’t a done that one if I’d a knowed it would make him feel that way” (133), present Jim as irrevocably human.

Despite the fact that Huck sees Jim as human, he still feels that freeing him from slavery is somehow wrong: “I begun to get it through my head that he *was* most free – and who was to blame for it? Why, *me*. I couldn’t get that out of my conscience, no how nor no way” (135). Later, in Chapter 31, he still feels that freeing a slave is morally wrong, has written Miss Watson to turn Jim in, but decides to free him anyway:

, . . . I was the best friend old Jim ever had in the world, and the *only* one he's got now; and then I happened to look around and see that paper [the letter to Miss Watson].

It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a trembling, because I'd got to decide, for ever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

"All right, then, I'll *go* to hell" – and tore it up (321).

The culture in which Huck dwells has divided his heart against his head. Embedded as he is in freedom and innocence, "the constraints and compromises of civilization" are incompatible with his persona (Robinson 50). The social structure of slavery has stigmatized Jim as a slave, but Huck's trust in his own beliefs and his rejection of societal mores frees him from the constraints of expected behavior and moral value. This becomes evident in his eventual belief that if he trusts to "Providence" (God), then Providence will "put the right words in my mouth" and allow him to free Jim. When Huck realizes that what he is doing is right, that God will support his plan, his Adamic identity is fully established. He knows that society and civilization are morally corrupt, but he is also aware that he must work within society's rules when he frees Jim; hence his acquiescence with Tom's imprudent elaborations on the plot to free Jim.

"It warn't no use to say any more; because when [Tom] said he'd do a thing, he always done it" (*HF* 350), he tells us, after Tom suggests changes that will "take about a week" (351). Tom is society's child. His plan to free Jim shows no commitment to anything but his own elaborate game (Johnson 114). Huck's adoption of Tom's identity demonstrates his understanding that, as himself, he cannot be a part of society; and his identity as Adam recognizes that he must work with "society" to accomplish his goal of acquiring Jim's freedom.

The close of the novel, “I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she’s going to adopt me and sivilise me, and I can’t stand it. I been there before” (*HF* 438), is seen by some critics as a weakness, a sudden transformation used to escape a work that was rapidly growing out of proportion (Robinson 66). When we read The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn as a novel of an American Adam, however, we realize that this “transformation” is really no transformation at all: it is a growth in understanding.

Huck realizes that he is outside of civilization from the beginning: “The Widow Douglas,” he tells us, “she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilise me; but it was rough” (2). The various episodes throughout the novel serve to educate him as to why he cannot become civilized. He is an Adam, “morally prior” to civilization: society may be ready for Huck, but he can never be ready for it. “I been there before,” he says, a statement of his acceptance of the corruption of civilization. However, an Adamic figure cannot allow himself to become indoctrinated by a postlapsarian society: he will “light out for the Territory,” where will be free of such constraints.

2.3 Summary

The American preoccupation with the rights of man formed the breeding ground of the Adamic figure as the central identity of its literature. The very nature of the American principle of individual freedom restricted the influence of the past (Lewis 15). The logical extension of this was the fictionalization of men without history, of sovereign individuals the only precursor of whom was the Biblical Adam before the Fall: the American Adam.

The American literary idealization of Adam consisted of a series of initiatory rites for a young innocent, freed from – or bereft of – history and societal constraints, going forth into a fallen world of which he knows nothing; affecting – and affected by – that world, and either

maintaining his innocence or losing it. It was Herman Melville, according to Lewis, who first made this ideal manifest (128). Melville dispatched “Adam after Adam, in novel after novel – sending them forth like Whitman’s child” (Lewis 136), into a fallen world, where they would either find a way to rise above – or be consumed by – the postlapsarian nature of their fellow men.

Melville’s novel Redburn was his first full-length exploration of the Adamic ideal, and within it, he exhibits the full range of traditional Adamic characteristics. Redburn is an innocent, isolated figure. His father, traditionally a symbol of society and authority, is long dead: Redburn is by this manner separated from history. His journey to England is one by which he gains an understanding of his postlapsarian world, and a realization that he must somehow either become a part of its corruption or learn to avoid it. The ghosts of the past and the evil of the fallen world form an inseparable binary that he dismisses; and his newfound self-reliance and innocent awareness of evil form the core of the Adamic character.

The evil in Redburn is easily recognizable: Redburn witnesses “poverty, poverty, poverty, in . . . endless vistas” (*RB* 194) while in Liverpool. Jackson, the human embodiment of fallen man, meets a fitting end: his wages prove to be the wages of sin, dying a horrifying, bloody death that literally baptizes the crew in blood. Melville, through Redburn, refuses to accept the betrayal of innocence; he forces the character to rise above the fallen society in which he lives (Lewis 130).

The second novel studied in this chapter, Mark Twain’s The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, exhibits many of the same Adamic characteristics as Redburn. Huck is innocent and isolated, fully outside of the society in which he lives. His denial of all parental

figures, of Pap, the Widow Douglas, and Aunt Sally, is a denial of the structures of civilization. His journey down the Mississippi, like Redburn's journey to Liverpool, is one by which he learns of the fallen state of the world, and his rejection of that world, at the end of the novel, is an affirmation of his Adamic selfhood.

Though Redburn and Huckleberry Finn share many Adamic characteristics, there are differences, which, while subtle, nonetheless demonstrate the evolving nature of the American Adam. Redburn, though isolated from his peers and his past, nonetheless exhibits ties to a family and some small structure of society. Huck, however, sets himself apart from society entirely, denying his past, his ancestors, and all of "sivilization." Through this, the Adamic figure takes a further step from society.

The other difference most easily witnessed is in the narrowing scope of their respective journeys. Redburn, like many of Melville's characters, must leave the country to finally understand the postlapsarian state of the world in which he lives. Huck, on the other hand, merely drifts southward on the Mississippi River, eventually arriving in a town that mirrors his home. The shift witnessed here is one that brings the prelapsarian Adam into the understanding that his own society is just as fallen as the rest of the world.

Despite any differences witnessed between the traditional Redburn and the later Huckleberry Finn, none suffice to separate Huck from the ideal presented by R. W. B. Lewis. Huckleberry Finn is just as much an American Adam as Wellingborough Redburn. Even in irony, the authors of Adamic figures in the nineteenth century sought to strengthen the ideal of the new Adam. Their purpose, Lewis states, was "not to destroy the hopes of the hopeful, but to perfect them" (193).

Lewis's work, however, ignores two facets of the Adamic novel that are witnessed in both Redburn and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Both exhibit a character, an "other" with whom the protagonist travels, by which they become more able to cope, at least temporarily, with the world in which they live. For Redburn, this redemptive agent is Harry, through whose character he witnesses a fall that could have been his own. Jim's relationship with Huck is different from Harry's to Redburn; however, he serves a similar purpose. Through Jim's struggle and growth as a human figure, Huck learns that he cannot embrace "sivilization."

The other, perhaps more subtle aspect of the Adamic novel is the authorial attitude toward the Adamic character. While both authors may admire the Adamic ideal of a man outside society, "morally prior" to the world in which he must live, they are also somewhat patronizing, albeit affectionate. They realize that the ideal is impossible: the narratives of both Redburn and Huck end before adulthood. They also present the characters as somewhat tragic: Redburn is doomed to sail forever, seeking an innocence abroad that he cannot find at home, and Huck will forever strike out for the territory ahead of society, wandering forever westward as he avoids the "sivilization" in which he cannot live.

Neither Redburn nor Huckleberry Finn appears in what Lewis called the "age of containment" (195): postwar America. The skepticism of modern man, he tells us, "takes the form of a hostility to human nature as self-wounded and self-wounding beyond repair" (196). The original corrective to the claims of innocence in America "has declined into a cult of original sin" (196). He writes that the American Adam, in our age, "has been frowned quite out of existence" (195). The next chapter will address this statement: we will discover

whether the American as Adam is only a defining character for early American literature, or if, indeed, he has evolved only in the face of extreme change.

Chapter 3: Adam in the Postwar Twentieth Century

3.1 J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*

R. W. B. Lewis dismisses the Adamic hero as very unlikely in post-World-War II America. “The Emersonian figure – ‘the plain old Adam, the simple genuine self’ – has been frowned quite out of existence” (195), he writes in the Epilogue to *The American Adam*. He does not dismiss the ideal of Adam entirely: “there is, undoubtedly, an occasional vitality in American fiction. And wherever we find it, we encounter again traces of the hopeful or Adamic tradition, seen . . . in a comic or ironic perspective” (196-97); however, he does call the modern Adamic figures “inadequate” (198), and specifically mentions “Salinger’s . . . unstable adolescent [Holden Caulfield]” (198) as an example.

Ihab Hassan, in *Radical Innocence*, sees Lewis’s perspective as pervasive in modern literary studies, “Professors of the view that the [American] novel is defunct . . . condemn current fiction as a spent form, irrelevant . . . and therefore no longer receptive to the piteous heroics of the individual soul” (3-4). He calls this view “myopic,” saying that the contemporary hero, “confront[s] experience and [recoils] again to preserve its sanity or innocence” (4), just as his predecessors did.

Adamic figures must come to terms with the world in which they live in order to be content. Each must either create his own Eden within a specific society, as did Natty Bumppo, or he must find a way to live within the world and not become corrupted, an innocence exemplified by the paths of Redburn and Huck Finn. In *American Apocalypses*, Douglas Robinson postulates that the Adamic figure accomplishes this dream through a sort of personal apocalypse. Robinson, who agrees with Lewis on the literary identity of the American as Adam, writes that “[the] apocalyptic path to happiness . . . lies either backward,

to a lost childhood world of “freshness” and “newness,” or forward to a future utopia, a technologically advanced society . . . two paths, one dream” (69).

Robinson’s accurately named “metaleptic apocalypse” is found in a self who rejects the existing in favor of an apocalypse of the soul unwilling to partake of the postlapsarian corruption of humanity (70). In this instance, the metalepsis involves a metaphorical substitution within the soul for the deceitful and false happiness offered by the corrupt society, such as the river and the raft of Huckleberry Finn. The two paths of Robinson’s apocalypse, progression and regression, both serve the same end, the creation of a self unfettered by the sin and evil engendered by the Fall of Man. Of these two paths, Holden Caulfield, the protagonist of The Catcher in the Rye, chooses that of regression: “I’m seventeen now,” he tells us, “and sometimes I act like I’m about thirteen” (CR 9).

Holden’s tale is consciously set up as initiatory, and in the opening of the novel, we see the characteristic Adamic rejection of the past and tradition. The opening sentence refers to a likely inspiration for his name, and rejects the tradition from whence it arose: David Copperfield. Compare the first sentence of Holden’s introduction to the narrative:

If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you’ll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don’t feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth (1).

with that of David Copperfield:

Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. To begin my life with the beginning of my life, I record that I was born (as I have been informed and believe) on a Friday, at twelve o’clock at night. It was remarked that the clock began to strike, and I began to cry, simultaneously (Dickens 5).

Holden's conscious rejection of the David Copperfield mode of narrative is an obvious rejection of literary tradition, similar to Huck's rejection of the foolhardy plans set forth by Tom Sawyer during the freeing of (the already free) Jim, but the connection and implied rejection is even deeper. In going into "all that kind of crap," David Copperfield tells us, "I was born with a caul" (6). Copperfield's family then advertised the caul, regarded as a good omen and a protective shield, for sale. Through his surname, however, Salinger allows Holden to retain his caul; figuratively shielding him from the kind of societal indoctrination embraced by young David Copperfield.

Holden's story is clearly a *bildungsroman*: he must encounter the adult world and choose his place within it. However, is it of that special type of *bildungsroman* that R. W. B. Lewis chose to name "The American Adam"? Robert Gutwillig writes that the "shock and thrill of recognition" (5) is the primary factor in The Catcher in the Rye's long-standing popularity. People identify with Holden, and want to know if he will compromise and become an adult in good standing or be ground under the authoritarian heel of civilization (5). "There has never been a more "American" novel than The Catcher in the Rye" (2), writes Gutwillig in a statement eerily reminiscent of Hemingway's emphatic declaration about The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn cited in Chapter 2.2 (above): "All American writing comes from that."

While Hemingway himself was not fond of Salinger's book, the juxtaposition of Huck and Holden is a common one in critical writings. Indeed, in one of the first reviews of The Catcher in the Rye, found in The Atlantic Monthly, Harvey Breit discussed the similarity between the two characters: "Like Huck, Holden is neither comical nor misanthropic. He is an observer" (82). Ernest Jones, in another contemporary review, tells us that, like Huck,

“His [Holden’s] sense of alienation is almost complete – from parents, from friends, from society in general . . .” (76). As recently as 1997, in fact, Stephen Whitfield, in a whimsical adaptation of the opening of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, writes:

Holden has . . . been born to trouble – yet another reminder that, in the opinion of long queues of literary critics, you can’t know about him without your having read a book by Mr. Mark Twain called The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (574).

While the ready identification of Holden Caulfield and Huckleberry Finn is only circumstantial evidence of Holden’s Adamic character, it does provide a starting point for a case that he is a modern American Adam. Despite several claims to the contrary, Holden is innocent. He is an outcast, isolated from family and society by his own mental and moral state, and his journey is one in which he must witness and encounter corruption and choose whether to compromise his beliefs or reject the corrupting influence of civilization altogether and find a way to reconcile his own Adamic presence within the postlapsarian world.

Holden, like his Adamic predecessors, must flee home, family, and society; he must become a wanderer, cut off from civilization (Heiserman and Miller 25). The society of Holden’s narrative is not a vague, generalized concept, but located within a specific social network connoting power: the prep-school world. Even when he reaches New York, Holden’s social connections are with friends from Ivy-League schools, whose “phony” preoccupation with dating, sex, and movies he cannot completely avoid, try as he will (Brookeman 58-9).

Holden begins his narrative as an outsider. He is “standing way the hell up on top of Thomsen Hill” (*CR* 2), watching a football game. The game, he tells us, is anything but ordinary to his peers: “The game with Saxon Hall was supposed to be a very big deal around Pencey. It was the last game of the year, and you were supposed to commit suicide or

something if old Pencey didn't win" (2). From Holden's perspective as an outsider, however, the game takes on a different light:

You could see the whole field from [where he was standing], and you could see the two teams bashing each other all over the place. You couldn't see the grandstand too hot, but you could hear them all yelling, deep and terrific on the Pencey side, because practically the whole school except me was there, and scrawny and faggy on the Saxon Hall side, because the visiting team hardly ever brought many people with them (2).

This image, of the teams "bashing each other all over the place," is contrasted, later in the first chapter, by a private game of football played with a few friends:

I suddenly remembered this time, in around October, that I and Robert Tichener and Paul Campbell were chucking a football around, in front of the academic building. They were nice guys, especially Tichener. It was just before dinner and it was getting pretty dark out, but we kept chucking the ball around anyway. It kept getting darker and darker, and we could hardly *see* the ball anymore, but we didn't want to stop doing what we were doing (4-5).

According to James Bryan, the organized competition of football is a symbol of the rejected society: Holden can tolerate, even enjoy it with his peers, but an organized game is chaotic (1065). Immediately, then, Holden is portrayed as being between two worlds. In his juxtaposition of the adult world, seen in an organized football game, with the innocent world, that of his October play, Holden finds the adult world wanting.

The football game is the first stage in Holden's emotional and intellectual change, which James W. Johnson called "the evolution of a moral attitude" (5). It shows his detestation of societal structures, and leads directly into the episode in which he must reject one who fully accepts and meshes with society: his roommate, Ward Stradlater. Stradlater is the symbolic representation of society among Holden's peers: he is an attractive youth, and an athlete; but beneath the veneer, Stradlater is disgusting:

He always *looked* all right, Stradlater, but for instance, you should've seen the razor he shaved himself with. It was always rusty as hell and full of lather and hairs and crap. He never cleaned it or anything. He always *looked* good when he was finished fixing himself up, but he was a secret slob anyway (*CR* 27).

Stradlater embodies the worst Holden sees in society: he is a true “phony.” “The reason he fixed himself up to look good,” Holden tells us, “was because he was madly in love with himself. He thought he was the handsomest guy in the Western Hemisphere . . . [but] he was mostly a Year Book kind of handsome guy” (27). Within the confines of Pencey Prep, Stradlater is the representative of adult hypocrisy: he wheedles Holden into writing his English essay so that he (Stradlater) can take Jane Gallagher, a girl Holden idolizes, on a date; although Holden has failed academically at Pencey, Stradlater will capitalize on his failure, academically and socially, for his own advancement (Strauch 12).

Holden's idealization of certain individuals is important. Unlike Huck, whose story takes place in an idyllic natural paradise, Holden, whose environment is the northeastern megalopolis surrounded by people, has little contact with nature, although the park and the museum later provide necessary Edenic locales. Holden must have something to love, something with which he can create his Eden, and lacking the beauty of nature, he must love people. Aside from such innocents as children, nuns, and Jane Gallagher, however, few people are worthy of idealized, Edenic love (Levine 94).

To Holden, Jane represents purity in woman. She evokes memories of a happy summer two years ago, when he “used to play checkers with her all the time” (*CR* 31). In his state of idealized love, he remembers her innocence: “She'd get [her kings] all lined up in the back row. Then she'd never use them. She just liked the way they looked when they were all in the back row” (32). Stradlater, the youthful representative of corrupt society, beats

Holden for defending her when, upon returning from his date with her, Stradlater implies that he has “[given Jane] the time in Ed Banky’s goddam car” (43). “Goddam” is present throughout the novel; however, in this case, Stradlater has violated Jane’s innocence, making them both “fallen” or “damned.”

Youthful society, through Stradlater, has defiled Holden’s Eve, and bloodied his nose in the process. “All of a sudden,” Holden tells us, “I decided what I’d really do, I’d get the hell out of Pencey – right that same night and all . . . I decided I’d take a room in a hotel in New York” (51). The “phoniness” of youth has rejected him, and in turn been rejected by him; therefore, he must go to New York, where, in a hotel and on his own, he will confront adult society for the first time (Heiserman and Miller 26).

While Holden is on the train, we encounter one of the paradoxes of Holden’s character that is also present in Huck: his lies. According to Charles Kaplan, “The yardstick which Holden applies to the world is . . . the test of truth” (79). We see Holden’s lies exhibited on the train, when he creates a false identity in order to protect the feelings of an older woman, the mother of one of his classmates, who has noticed the Pencey sticker on his bag. “Her son was doubtless the biggest bastard that ever went to Pencey,” he tells us, but he refuses to reveal his true opinion of her son, because “mothers are all slightly insane [about their children” (*CR* 55). Holden’s lies are, like Huck’s, defensive: it is the harmful lies, the “phoniness” of society that he cannot abide (Kaplan 78). Holden is more protective of her feelings than of his own: a foreshadowing of his later identity as “Catcher in the Rye.”

Two notable story lines merge once Holden reaches New York. The first is his need to know what happens to the ducks in the Central Park lagoon “when it gets all frozen over” (*CR* 60). The ducks, as central figures in one of the book’s only natural environments, are of

great concern to Holden. They are inhabitants of what is, to him, an Edenic environment (Heiserman and Miller 27). The cabbie to whom he addresses the question “turned around and looked at me like I was a madman” (*CR* 60), having no understanding of, nor care for, the innocent ducks.

The second story line is Holden’s eventual encounter with adult society and its corruption. If Holden’s school was a muted purgatory, his hotel is “an insistent Hell” (Baumbach 60). The paragraph in which Holden describes his check-in is particularly vital for our understanding of the nature of his confrontation:

We got to the Edmont Hotel, and I checked in. I’d put on my red hunting cap when I was in the cab, just for the hell of it, but I took it off before I checked in. I didn’t want to look like a screwball or something. Which is really ironic. I didn’t *know* then that the goddam hotel was full of perverts and morons. Screwballs all over the place (*CR* 61).

His room is “very crumby . . . with nothing to look out of the window at except the other side of the hotel” (61).

What Holden sees outside his window, however, is most important: it provides two extreme views of sexual corruption. Holden, the observer, is confronted in the first window by “one guy, a gray haired, very distinguished-looking guy with only his shorts on . . . [who] took out all these women’s clothes, and put them on” (61). His second view is of “a man and a woman squirting water out of their mouths at each other,” after which he remarks, “[The] hotel was lousy with perverts. I was probably the only normal bastard in the whole place” (62).

After witnessing sexual corruption, Holden feels he must confront the issue of his own sexuality. He first starts to call a burlesque stripper, a girl with whom he can “make time.” At the last moment, however, he decides that he cannot go through with it, and hangs

up the phone. He goes out and gets drunk, and when he arrives back at the hotel, the elevator operator asks if he is “Innarested in having a good time” (90).

Holden makes the appointment and goes to his room, where he “get[s] all dolled up for [the] prostitute” (91). When she arrives, he cannot go through with the act. Jonathan Baumbach, commenting on this incident, writes, “If Jane represents sacred love profaned [by Stradlater], the prostitute . . . represents profaned love unprofaned” (61). Holden wants to save her; however, the prostitute has fallen too far for redemption. He refuses to victimize her and becomes, in turn, a victim himself, when the brutal Maurice (the elevator operator) beats and robs him. Through Holden’s attempt to redeem her, the prostitute becomes an adult parallel to the now-fallen Jane Gallagher. Maurice, by robbing and beating Holden, becomes an adult parallel to Stradlater: Holden becomes the abused outsider for his defense of purity (Strauch 17).

One of Holden’s most pervasive dislikes is his hatred of movies. In the first chapter, he tells us about his brother, D. B.: “He used to be just a regular writer . . . He wrote this terrific book of short stories . . . Now he’s out in Hollywood, D. B., being a prostitute. If there’s one thing I hate, it’s the movies. Don’t even mention them to me” (*CR* 1-2). This attitude reveals a fundamental aspect of Holden’s personality. Movies, presenting a false image of life, are corrupt, or “phony.” His comparison of D. B. to a prostitute presents his brother in a fallen state because of his involvement with Hollywood. Holden replaces his former feelings of idolization for D. B. with the same cynicism with which he regards the rest of society, refusing to allow himself to fall in the same manner as D. B. (Oldsey 210).

Despite his aversion to movies, they lead indirectly to two of the most substantial illustrations of Holden’s belief in the virtue of purity, an innocence found only in those as yet

uninitiated by postlapsarian society. Both come while Holden is passing time while waiting for his movie date with Sally Hayes. The first is his encounter with two nuns while eating breakfast. That they have no money bothers Holden, because he feels they deserve better: “All the two of them were eating for breakfast was toast and coffee. That depressed me. I hate it if I’m eating bacon and eggs or something and somebody else is only eating toast and coffee” (*CR* 110).

Holden is drawn to the nuns, adult figures who have not compromised with – or been compromised by – society. His guilt stems from their lack of wealth, something he has always had access to through his family (Heiserman and Miller 26). He absolves his imagined guilt by giving the nuns ten dollars – a large sum for a boy in 1950 – as “a contribution” (*CR* 110), despite the fact that they are not currently “taking up a collection” (109). Seeing innocent figures impoverished makes Holden feel awkward: “After they left, I started getting sorry that I’d only given them ten bucks for their collection . . . Goddam money. It always ends up making you blue as hell” (113).

The second incident becomes a definitive moment in Holden’s development. He sees a small boy, oblivious to the hectic world around him, who inspires his redemption:

The kid was swell. He was walking in the street, instead of on the sidewalk, but right next to the curb. He was making out like he was walking a very straight line, the way kids do, and the whole time he kept singing and humming. I got up closer so I could hear what he was singing. He was singing that song, “If a body catch a body coming through the rye” . . . It made me feel better. It made me feel not so depressed any more (115).

As several critics note, Holden mistakes the words to the song, originally written by Robert Burns. The original words, while innocent and sad, do not have the import given them by

Holden: “Gin a body meet a body, comin thro’ the rye / Gin a body kiss a body, need a body cry” (Burns 844, ll. 1-2).

Like the Copperfield allusion, both the original words of Burns’s song and those Holden applies to his life have bearing on the interpretation of his character. Holden’s narrative, like that of the anonymous singer in the first line of Burns’s song, is distinguished by chance encounters. The second line has great import as well, when we remember Holden’s description of “the closest we [he and Jane] ever got to necking” (CR 79):

I asked Jane what the hell was going on . . . then all of a sudden, this tear plopped down on the checkerboard. One of those red squares – boy, I can still see it. [...] I don’t know why, but it bothered the hell out of me. So what I did was, I went over and made her move over on the glider so that I could sit down next to her . . . Then she *really* started to cry, and the next thing I knew, I was kissing her all over – *anywhere* – her eyes, her *nose*, her forehead, her eyebrows and all, her *ears* – her whole face except her mouth and all (78-79).

Holden either cannot make this connection because of ignorance, which is unlikely because we already know how well-read he is; or because he does not want to acknowledge it because he has already denied literary tradition in the form of “that David Copperfield crap.”

Symbolically, Holden is the catcher. Carl Strauch mentions the red hunting hat as representing his goodness, “worn backwards, like a catcher” (10). His desire to be a catcher is threefold. First, it stems from his desire to reverse time and catch James Castle, whom Holden remembers from Whooton School, a boy who jumped from a window and died because of peer pressure (10). Holden wants to catch himself, to save himself from the fall about which he is warned by many authority figures. The most important character to whom the catcher motif applies, however, is Phoebe, his younger sister.

Holden develops an obsession regarding Phoebe and corruption. Having lost one brother to death and another to Hollywood “prostitution,” Holden cannot allow Phoebe to fall

victim to the myriad falsehoods he associates with society. Phoebe, an innocent, is representative of all children, for whom Holden has undying admiration, seen in his encounter with a schoolmate of hers near Central Park: “She was a very nice, polite little kid. God, I love it when a kid’s nice and polite . . . Most kids are. They really are” (CR 119). The first location to which he proceeds following his decision and subsequent encounter is one of the more symbolically rich areas in the story, the quiet, unchanging Eden he sees in the Museum of Natural History.

He goes to the Museum, “even though it was Sunday and Phoebe wouldn’t be there with her class or anything, and even though it was so damp and lousy out” (119). His decision makes him happy: the Museum is one of Holden’s Edenic ideals. In his description of that idealization, we see the most important aspect of Holden’s desire to be the Catcher:

The best thing . . . in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was . . . You could go there a hundred thousand times, and that Eskimo would still be just finished catching those two fish, the birds would still be on their way south . . . Nobody’d be different. The only thing that would be different would be *you*. Not that you’d be much older or anything. [...] You’d just be different, that’s all. [...] I kept thinking about old Phoebe going to that museum on Saturdays . . . how she’d see the same stuff I used to see, and how *she’d* be different every time . . . It didn’t exactly depress me to think about it, but it didn’t make me feel gay as hell, either. Certain things they should stay the way they are (121-22).

Holden associates the Museum with unchanging beauty, a beauty not afforded to the thousands of visitors within its halls each year. He knows Phoebe is changing, and though she is still innocent, he knows she, too, will grow as he did. We can relate this idea symbolically to Genesis: Holden wants Phoebe to eat from the “tree of life,” which brings eternal youth and health unchanging, rather than the “tree of knowledge,” which causes mankind’s ejection from Eden.

Holden still cannot bring himself to go to Phoebe. He must first find the moral maturity to face her because he fears the growing possibility of her corruption. He goes to the park, which in childhood, in purity, he knew “like the back of [his] hand” (154). Once there, however, he becomes lost searching for the lagoon: “I *knew* right where it was . . . but I still couldn’t find it . . . I kept walking and walking, and it kept getting darker and darker and spookier and spookier” (154). Here in his childhood Eden, Holden cannot find his goal until it is completely dark, and the pond, a symbol of his innocence, is “partly frozen and partly not frozen” (154).

Holden ruminates on his dead brother, Allie, buried in the ground and unable to go inside when it rains or snows. The park has become, in Carl Strauch’s words, “Holden’s Dark Tower, Dark Night of the Soul, and Wasteland” (19). In this paradise of his youth, the ducks are gone, and his mind is bleak. The frozen area of the pond becomes his frozen innocence, while the liquid area is his future. When skipping the last of his change across the liquid surface – the future of his Eden – he thinks of Phoebe and regains his composure, his need to live and save others from becoming fallen: “I started thinking how old Phoebe would feel if I got pneumonia and died. It was a childish way to think, but . . . I couldn’t get that off my mind, so finally what I figured I’d do, I figured I’d better sneak home and see her” (*CR* 156).

He sneaks into his parents’ apartment, and after talking with Phoebe for a while, Holden confesses his need to be the “Catcher in the Rye.” Phoebe corrects him, but he still tells her his fantasy:

Thousands of little kids [playing in a field], and nobody’s around – nobody big, I mean – except me. And I’m standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff . . . That’s all I’d do all

day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be. I know it's crazy" (173).

Phoebe, worried that their parents will "kill" Holden, asks what he will do next. He tells her he will go to visit one of his old teachers, Mr. Antolini. Phoebe gives Holden all of her money, \$8.85, and he begins to cry: this display of innocence begins Holden's final confrontation and leads to his illumination regarding society (Baumbach 61).

The episode at Mr. Antolini's house provides Holden's final confrontation with the corrupt adult world. In his previous two confrontations, Holden mistrusted those with whom he interacted: he did not like Stradlater; and Maurice was contemptible. Mr. Antolini, whom Holden trusts and goes to for help, gives him valuable advice and proceeds to betray him in the worst way possible.

It is Antolini who, at first, gives Holden the advice he seems to require, a warning and a character assessment at once:

This fall I think you're riding for – it's a special kind of fall, a horrible kind. The man falling isn't permitted to feel or hear himself hit bottom. He just keeps falling and falling. The whole arrangement's designed for men who, at some time or other in their lives, were looking for something their own environment couldn't supply them with (*CR* 187).

Holden cannot stop thinking about Mr. Antolini's advice. He continually revisits it as he prepares for bed; however, after he falls asleep – still pondering the advice – "something happened," Holden tells us, "I don't even like to talk about it" (191).

What follows is the ultimate societal betrayal of Holden Caulfield. The man he trusts, to whom he feels he can go when even his parents might reject him, becomes an illustration that all of adult society is dishonest and corrupt: "I woke up all of a sudden. I don't know

what time it was or anything, but I woke up. I felt something on my head, some guy's hand . . . it was Mr. Antolini's hand . . . he was sort of petting me or patting me" (192).

Eventually, Holden decides to leave. He decides to hitchhike westward, and create his own Eden, much in the manner of Huck. "I figured I could get a job at a filling station somewhere," he tells us; however, he decides that he must avoid fully interacting with corrupt people: "I'd build me a little cabin somewhere . . . right near the woods . . . I'd want it to be sunny as hell all the time . . . I got excited as hell thinking about it" (198-99).

When he walks to Phoebe's school, however, to let her know of his plans, he learns that he cannot leave her to be corrupted:

While I was sitting down, I saw something that drove me crazy. Somebody'd written "Fuck you" on the wall . . . I thought how Phoebe and all the other little kids would see it, and how they'd wonder what the hell it meant, and then finally some dirty kid would tell them. [...] I hardly even had the guts to rub it off the wall with my *hand* if you want to know the truth . . . I went down by a different staircase, and I saw another "Fuck you" on the wall. I tried to rub it off . . . but this one was *scratched* on, with a knife or something. It wouldn't come off. It's hopeless, anyway. If you had a million years to do it in, you couldn't rub out even *half* the "Fuck you" signs in the world. It's impossible (201-2).

Holden realizes, now, that evil is ineradicable, and that the world is fallen (Baumbach 62).

Holden leaves the school, but realizes that if he is to "catch" Phoebe, he will have to stay in New York to do so.

Phoebe leaves the school, trying to find Holden, because she still believes that he is leaving. She is furious, but Holden redeems himself in her eyes by purchasing a ticket for her to ride the carousel. The carousel episode, the last of Holden's narrative, is also his redemption (Baumbach 63). He sits in the pouring rain, protected by his hunting hat, watching Phoebe on the carousel:

I didn't care, though [that the rain was pouring]. I felt so damn happy all of a sudden, the way old Phoebe kept going around and around. I was damn near bawling, I felt so damn happy, if you want to know the truth. I don't know why. It was just that she looked so damn *nice*, the way she kept going around and around, in her blue coat and all. God, I wish you could've been there (CR 213).

Holden's final realization is that with his help, Phoebe's innocence can be as unchanging as the museum figures. In his presence, she cannot change: she will always reappear "in her blue coat and all." While the west, engulfed by civilization and corruption, cannot be his redemption (J. W. Johnson 7) as it was Huck's, Holden has finally realized how his Adamic identity can exist in a fallen world. He must be the protector of innocence, a role he adopted with the nuns, with the children at his school, and now, ultimately, with Phoebe. While this is not a realistic belief, it provides final evidence, however romantic, of his innocence.

Holden Caulfield is a modern American Adam. He is a wanderer, an outcast, in love with humanity but revolted by society and its lies. His innocent heart forgives all those who do him wrong; however, he learns how to adapt and live in their world through his experiences at their hands. The Catcher in the Rye is his narrative of self-discovery, in which we see a young Adam realizing his role as protector of innocence. Adults have failed society, and continually fail those in their charge; Holden's realization is that he alone, the only adult worthy of the company of children, can save others from the postlapsarian corruption he sees in the world.

3.2 Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five

Kurt Vonnegut's most recognized novel, Slaughterhouse-Five, or, The Children's Crusade: A Duty Dance with Death, tells the story of the most successful massacre of civilians in history, the Dresden firebombing in World War Two, during which he was kept

as a prisoner of war in a Dresden slaughterhouse. The novel brings together all of Vonnegut's notions about the human condition and contemporary American society, as seen through the eyes of Billy Pilgrim, an "innocent Adam falling into the terrible wisdom of the twentieth century" (Reed 10). While Billy has much in common with the American Adams discussed in preceding sections, his character and story are vastly different, differences that some might say preclude his inclusion as a modern American Adam.

Slaughterhouse-Five differs from preceding novels in this study because Vonnegut creates perfection in another world, outside belief, and contrasts it with the brutal facts of reality (McGinnis 55). Like Redburn, Huck, and Holden, however, Billy possesses a naiveté which experience cannot destroy: he is ultimately innocent, and must find a method by which he can come to understand the modern, fallen world (Sieber 147). That method is precisely what sets him apart from other American Adamic figures. "Billy Pilgrim," Vonnegut tells us, "has come unstuck in time" (*SF* 23).

The moral structure of the book, often confusing, has made it among the ten most frequently banned books in America. Several parent groups call it anti-Christian, and still others claim that it presents a blasé attitude regarding death. The Drake School District of North Dakota actually ordered it burned in 1973, prompting a letter from an insulted Vonnegut discussing the morality present in the book³. In Palm Sunday, Vonnegut's autobiographical collection, he tells us that the problem is in the manner by which people perceive their religion, and that "millions who are bewildered and heartbroken by the legal victory [against banning Slaughterhouse-Five], who think some things should never be said, especially about religion" (8).

³ See Appendix B

The difficulty that so many religious people feel is in the presentation of Billy as an Adamic or Christ-like figure (depending on the reading): they feel the book mocks religion because so many perceive Billy as ridiculous. Nothing, however, could be further from true. Billy cannot accept the “universal reality and pivotal place of suffering in human experience” (Morse 21). Another objection is raised by the aforementioned attitude toward death, seen in the refrain “So it goes,” repeated in the novel with each mention of death. William Allen rebuts this objection in his 1991 book, Understanding Kurt Vonnegut: “Precisely because the story was so hard to tell, and because Vonnegut was willing to take the two decades necessary to tell it – to speak the unspeakable – Slaughterhouse-Five is . . . a masterpiece sure to remain a part of American Literature” (77-8).

Several critics have called Billy a fantasist, claiming that he engages in fantasy in order to avoid real life. They claim he is delusional, citing the fact that the first time Billy becomes “unstuck in time,” he has just suffered a head injury. Even if this is so, his fantasies, like the lies of Holden Caulfield and Huck Finn, are purely defensive, even protective, and are contrasted with those of others. Paul Lazzaro, one of two embodiments of evil within Slaughterhouse, fantasizes about killing. The government presents a fantasy that it respects life (Deer 718). Billy’s fantasies, however, are about Eden, about how to improve the lives of others. It is within Billy’s time traveling, fantasy or no, that we find one of the most identifiably Edenic scenes in modern literature: the “zoo” episode on the planet Tralfamadore, in which a naked Billy Pilgrim and mate live in an environment created specifically for them, with all requirements needed to sustain a happy life present.

The final objection to Slaughterhouse is that it paints government, specifically the government of the United States, in such a horrific light. It is precisely here that the Adamic

nature of Billy Pilgrim begins to assert itself. Billy is anti-government. He is outside society and must discover how to deal with the commonplace occurrence of death and suffering on a grand scale (Morse 81). In a 1973 interview in Playboy magazine, Vonnegut explains this moral dilemma:

When we went into the war, we felt our Government was a respecter of life, careful about not injuring civilians . . . Well, Dresden had no tactical value; it was a city of civilians. Yet the Allies bombed it until it burned and melted. And then they lied about it (Standish 95).

This assertion is a near echo of Ihab Hassan's statement about the innocent hero in modern fiction, the dilemma faced by those who write of innocence, of Adam, in the postwar world. "The alienation of self," he writes, "its response to martyrdom or rebellion or both to the modern experience, has been briefly observed in history . . . [which] predicts no salvation for man and accords no meaning . . . to his efforts" (20). Hassan tells us, further, that what "the world faces ultimately depends on man's response to the destructive elements in his experience. Nowhere is that response more richly articulated than in the modern novel" (20).

Billy, like Wellingborough Redburn, Huckleberry Finn, and Holden Caulfield, is an outsider, morally and intellectually. Like Holden, he wants nothing more than to help his fellow man address the difficulties presented by a hypocritical and destructive society. Like all American Adamic figures, Billy must confront and conquer the most pressing evil witnessed in his life. The hellish landscape of death through which Billy must travel following the bombing of Dresden becomes, in his eyes, the literal fall of man. Particularly important is the continual recurrence of Edenic imagery, even a literal personal Eden. By the end of the novel, Billy recognizes the contemptibility of the fallen world and begs his fellow men to refuse a part in that contemptibility (Merrill 179).

Billy's status as outsider, his fundamental goodness and innocence, are established early in the novel. He first appears as a "servant to servicemen" (Giannone 89), a chaplain's assistant. "A chaplain's assistant," writes Vonnegut, "is customarily a figure of fun in the American Army. Billy was no exception. He was powerless to harm the enemy or to help his friends . . . He was a valet to a preacher . . . bore no arms . . . and had a meek faith in a loving Jesus which most soldiers found putrid" (*SF* 30-1). Vonnegut emphasizes Billy's isolation in relation to his fellow soldiers throughout the novel. Following the Battle of the Bulge, when Billy "tags along" (*SF* 32) with three other soldiers, Vonnegut presents us with a sharp contrast. The first three soldiers are identifiable martial figures, bearing weapons and ready for action, after whom plods Billy, "empty-handed, bleakly ready for death, [with] no helmet, no overcoat, no weapon, and no boots . . . he didn't look like a soldier at all" (*SF* 32-3).

Roland Weary, the antitank gunner, becomes Billy's first encounter with adult evil. Like Melville's Jackson in Redburn, Roland is obviously not good. Vonnegut's description of him at once evokes sympathy and revulsion:

Roland Weary was only eighteen . . . at the end of an unhappy childhood spent mostly in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. He had been unpopular in Pittsburgh . . . because he was stupid and fat and mean, and smelled like bacon no matter how much he washed. [...] He [used to] find somebody . . . even more unpopular than himself, and he would horse around with that person for a while, pretending to be friendly. And then he would find some pretext for beating the shit out of him (35).

There is a symbolic connection with Pap Finn: both characters are identified as pigs, the lowest of creation. Weary, however, is more vile and cruel than Pap. Vonnegut tells us about Weary's passions: "his father's collection of guns and swords and torture instruments and leg irons and so on" (35). At one point, "Weary told Billy about neat tortures he'd read

about or seen in the movies or heard on the radio – about other neat tortures he himself had invented” (36).

Weary, as Billy’s first direct confrontation with evil, attempts frequently to corrupt him. He threatens Billy with spiked brass knuckles, asking, “How’d you like to be hit with this – hm? Hmmmmmmmmmm?” (37). We also learn about his attempt to corrupt Billy sexually:

He [Weary] had a dirty picture of a woman attempting sexual intercourse with a Shetland pony. He had made Billy Pilgrim admire that picture several times. The woman and the pony were poised before velvet draperies which were fringed with deedle-balls . . . The picture that Weary had was a print of the first dirty photograph in history (40).

That the print is not only of “the first dirty photograph in history,” but also of bestiality, is symbolically significant: Billy is sexually innocent, and Weary’s picture is particularly foul, especially befitting his established identity as a pig. It demonstrates simultaneously Billy’s isolation and innocence, as well as Roland Weary’s evil nature.

Even as an adult, Billy is isolated from the rest of society. Billy leads a life revered as the American Dream. Indeed, his life is almost a caricature of that Dream: he is wealthy, has a wife, two children, and even a dog named Spot (Giannone 88). Prosperity, in Billy’s case, has little to do with peace of mind. He goes to a psychiatrist, who cannot understand Billy’s empathy. The psychiatrist, a representative of society whose values are inferior to those it judges as warped in Billy, isolates Billy for two hours a day by making him go to his empty house and nap (Reed 18).

Edenic imagery and environments are recurrent throughout Slaughterhouse-Five. From the moment Billy becomes “unstuck,” he is continually reaching for Eden (Mustazza 102). The first allusion to Eden comes in connection with one of the Germans who capture

Billy and Weary. The corporal, whose legs are “thrust into golden cavalry boots which he had taken from a dead Hungarian colonel on the Russian front” (*SF* 53), tells a recruit that if he looks into the shine on the boots deeply enough, he will see Adam and Eve. Billy, Vonnegut tells us, “stared into the patina of the corporal’s boots, saw Adam and Eve in the golden depths. They were naked. They were so innocent . . . so eager to behave decently. Billy Pilgrim loved them” (53).

This allusion connects to Billy’s first physical encounter with Eden. “Next to the golden boots,” Vonnegut writes, “were a pair of feet which were swaddled in rags . . . Billy looked up at the face that went with the [feet]. It was the face of a blond angel, of a fifteen-year-old boy. The boy was as beautiful as Eve” (53). Billy identifies innocence with Adam and Eve, and seeing the “lovely boy, the heavenly androgyne” (53) gives Billy a renewed hope; it allows him to escape his doubt (Reed 15).

The one Edenic scene within Slaughterhouse-Five that is truly identifiable as only a dream occurs (chronologically) just after Billy’s internment in a prison camp. Sickened from lack of food, Billy is placed in a hospital and given morphine. The dream he has is of a paradise; however, Billy is not an Adam in this instance:

Under morphine, Billy had a dream of giraffes in a garden. The giraffes were following gravel paths, were pausing to munch sugar pears from treetops. Billy was a giraffe, too . . . The giraffes accepted Billy as one of their own, as a harmless creature as preposterously specialized as themselves (*SF* 99).

This is the Edenic dream that refers directly to Billy’s isolation: he cannot identify with humanity, which, as he has seen, is cruel; instead, he identifies with innocent giraffes, peaceful, vegetarian creatures with a purpose other than destruction (Deer 719).

The two most significant Edenic episodes in Slaughterhouse-Five relate to the aliens from Tralfamadore, from whom Billy learns the nature of time and death. On the night Billy is taken to Tralfamadore, he cannot sleep, because due to the nature of his relationship with time, Billy knows that he is about to be kidnapped. He goes downstairs and turns on the television. When he turns on the television, Billy becomes “slightly unstuck in time” (*SF* 73). Vonnegut then describes Billy’s perception of a war movie in reverse: he watches as German planes suck bullets from American planes, which then “exerted a miraculous magnetism which shrunk the fires, gathered them into cylindrical steel containers, and lifted the containers into the bellies of the planes” (*SF* 74). The bombs are taken to America, “where factories were . . . dismantling the cylinders, separating the dangerous contents into minerals” (74). This pacifist reversal, however, is incomplete. The most meaningful section of the movie, to Billy, was not on the screen:

The American fliers turned in their uniforms, became high school kids. And Hitler turned into a baby, Billy Pilgrim supposed. That wasn’t in the movie. Billy was extrapolating. Everybody turned into a baby, and all humanity, without exception, conspired biologically to produce two perfect people named Adam and Eve (75).

A simple reversal of war, of the ultimate fall of humanity, from cruelty to innocence, causes Billy to mentally extrapolate back to the most innocent of the species (Mustazza 105).

Following the war movie, aliens from Tralfamadore kidnap Billy, and create perhaps the most literal incarnation of Eden in modern literature, the only point at which Billy is truly happy. Vonnegut summarizes Billy’s experience early in the novel: “He was taken to Tralfamadore, where he was displayed naked in a zoo . . . He was mated there with a former Earthling movie star named Montana Wildhack” (*SF* 25). The habitat is an obvious Eden, an environment created by a superior intelligence in which all material needs are met. Billy and

Montana, as Adam and Eve, are nude, and feel no shame in being so, because “most Tralfamadorians had no way of knowing [if they] were not beautiful” (113). They are also the sole members of mankind on that world; therefore, they become the progenitors of humanity, insofar as it exists on Tralfamadore.

One of the benefits of Billy’s being “unstuck in time” is that it allows him to witness and finally understand the universality of death and the inevitability of war (May 29). Just as Redburn, Huck, and Holden had to come to terms with the deceit of fallen society, Billy Pilgrim must grow to understand the results of societal deception: death and war. Every episode in the novel has a reference point – forward or backward – in Dresden (Reed 13).

The bombing itself is the ultimate betrayal of Billy’s innocence by postlapsarian humanity: the landscape becomes a literal and symbolic hell. While Billy and his fellow prisoners hide below, Allied planes incinerate the entire city:

There was a fire-storm out there. Dresden was one big flame. The one flame ate everything organic, everything that would burn [...] When the Americans and their guards did come out [the next day], the sky was black with smoke . . . Dresden was like the moon now, nothing but minerals. The stones were hot. Everybody else in the neighborhood was dead. So it goes (*SF* 178).

Vonnegut’s refrain, “so it goes,” is one aspect of the novel that some critics say mocks morality: they claim that it makes death a meaningless occurrence. Death is a pivotal idea in modern life, a central point in news, pervasive and unavoidable (Hassan 6).

Slaughterhouse-Five, as a modern *bildungsroman*, uses death as the fulcrum about which

Billy Pilgrim’s Adamic initiatory rite swings. “So it goes” becomes a mantra uttered whenever any death, large or small, takes place. It is a corrective used to construct the unjustifiable as bearable and inevitable: it appears exactly one hundred times within the course of the narrative, not to make it meaningless, but rather to impart the same meaning to

all deaths, whether they are of lice or of one hundred thirty five thousand innocent civilians (Klinkowitz 87). While historically, death has pervaded society, with the advent of modern military technology, the scale becomes so great that such numbers become meaningless: the refrain is a commentary on our disregard of death, and by calling attention to our apathy, Vonnegut seeks to heighten our awareness. Death is as egalitarian as the democratic values espoused by Americans.

“So it goes” has another purpose, one referring specifically to Eden. Such a phrase denies mortality. Billy, speaking to a large crowd on the night of his death, tells them, “It is time for me to be dead for a little while – and then live again” (*SF* 142-3). Following his comment, he is shot; whereupon, Vonnegut tells us, “Billy experiences death for a while. It is simply violet light and a hum. There isn’t anybody else there. Not even Billy Pilgrim is there. Then he swings back into life again” (143). Billy’s existence does not truly end, for nobody, we learn, is found within the realm of death: “Not even Billy Pilgrim is there.” Billy’s quest, to communicate this to others, is to make mortality a “guarantor of immortality” (McGinnis 62). Billy’s message bypasses Christ as the bringer of eternal life: mankind, he claims, has possessed it since creation, when Adam ate from the tree of life (Genesis 2:9-17)⁴.

While many critics of Slaughterhouse-Five attempt to identify Billy as Everyman, he is a modern Everyman’s antithesis. Billy is, in all senses, an Adamic literary figure. He is isolated, in all senses of the word. He becomes the embodiment of prelapsarian man – in this sense, he is the Everyman of a prelapsarian ideal, of an egalitarian innocence prior to the society in which he lives. Billy does not, as Robert Merrill suggests, call for us to believe

⁴ See Appendix A

“with the Pilgrims, that there is nothing to be done about life’s injustices” (177), recalling a Calvinistic view of predestination. Rather, Billy presents a plea for responsibility, for the pursuit of prelapsarian grace not as a lost ideal but as a reachable state of innocence. He frames his story around one of the most horrifying tragedies ever to befall mankind, ever returning to that tragedy, until at last, he witnesses hope arising from the ashes. “Somewhere in there,” Vonnegut writes:

was springtime. The corpse mines were closed down . . . one morning, they got up to discover that the door was unlocked. World War Two in Europe was over. Billy and the rest wandered out onto the shady street. The trees were leafing out. There was nothing going on out there, no traffic of any kind . . . Birds were talking. One bird said to Billy Pilgrim, “*Poo-tee-weet*” (SF 215).

Chapter 4: Conclusion

“A century ago,” wrote R. W. B. Lewis in the “Prologue” to The American Adam, the challenge to debate was an expressed belief in achieved human perfection, a return to the primal perfection” (9). The American as Adam embodied that perfection: the individual, free from history and all its burdens, morally prior to experience and sin, and fundamentally innocent. However, Lewis continued, “Today, the challenge comes rather from the expressed belief in achieved hopelessness . . . We can hardly expect to be persuaded any longer by the historic dream of the new Adam” (9-10).

Ihab Hassan acknowledges this perceived disavowal of innocent and Adamic figures, using an analogy drawn from the works of William Blake:

[Half] a century ago, we used to say that the great and abiding theme of American literature was the theme innocence; now, after fifty full years of strange history, we recognize that America . . . has plucked the fruit of knowledge . . . The Song of Innocence, we are asked to believe, has finally given way to the Burden of Experience (34).

Hassan denies this, telling us that it is important “to perceive, as Leslie Fiedler did, that America is the only place where the encounter between innocence and guilt is still a meaningful reality” (34). Nonetheless, even he feels that the innocent figure is now “the victim [who] has a thousand faces” (69).

Are these men correct? Was D. H. Lawrence correct, when he informed us that it is the destiny of the American “to destroy the whole corpus of the white psyche, the white consciousness” (90)? Was he correct when he told us that Americans were self-deluding, believing in “the same old treacherous belief, which was really cunning disbelief, in the Spirit, in Purity, in Selfless Love . . . [making] a fool of it all the time” (98)? Have we lost what identity we once had?

We have not: the preceding chapters present a continuum of authors striving to present the struggles of prelapsarian protagonists. The identity of the American as Adam, the tenets of which R. W. B. Lewis set forth, directly contradicts the assumptions of D. H. Lawrence. The symbol-rich tale of Herman Melville's Redburn is the defining, conscious embodiment of the American Adam. He was young, innocent, and kindhearted. He set out from his mother's house in a prelapsarian state, was confronted by the postlapsarian world, and found a way to rise above the wretched depravity of all he saw. He is isolated in his innocence; he frees himself from the past – his father's ghost – and discovers that he is self-reliant, that the world lies before him, a world in which he can find and create his own Eden. Redburn chooses a life away from the corrupt laws of civilization, a life aboard ship, one of freedom.

Huckleberry Finn, while different, is Adamic nonetheless. Huck, like Redburn, is isolated, separate from the rest of society; unlike Redburn, however, Huck is aware of his isolation at the beginning. For Redburn, Harry Bolton was an agent of redemption, one who mirrored him, but had not the strength to liberate himself from the corruption of society. Jim, the innocent slave seeking freedom, serves a similar purpose for Huck. Huck, like Redburn, must journey to encounter the fallen world on his own. He, too, frees himself: he denies his ancestry, realizes that he cannot live with the deceptions of his fellow men, and chooses a life away from the corrupt laws of civilization. His tale ends when he decides to "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest" (*HF* 438), where he can be free, in an uncorrupted Eden, to live his Adamic life.

Once we reach postwar America and The Catcher in the Rye, however, the identity of the Adamic character evolves. The journey motif, so important in the novels of the

nineteenth century, is no longer fully plausible: the continent – indeed, the world – has become, in Huck’s terms, “sivilized.” The West has become the home of Hollywood, the moral center of a culture of deception. Previously inconceivable destructive force can be unleashed by an anonymous foe (Hassan 14). The journey of the innocent figure must become more internalized, as the only true wilderness remaining is the innocent psyche.

Holden Caulfield, however, is Adamic. There is a particular interthematic tie between Holden and Redburn that provides the first clue: both young men are seen at one point throwing the last of their money into a body of water, symbolically casting off the postlapsarian world by discarding one of its most necessary artifacts. Another readily visible trait of the American as Adam in Holden is his isolation – an isolation that some might label solipsism or insanity – we see upon closer examination that this isolation is not solipsism – nor insanity – but a defensive avoidance of the evil that has become so pervasive in his world.

Huckleberry Finn, and Redburn before him, had agents of redemption: other characters that helped them come to terms with their respective Adamic identities. Phoebe serves the same purpose in Catcher: it is her for whom Holden realizes he must grow; it is her for whom he assumes his identity as the “Catcher.” Holden, forever seeking ideals, the innocent outsider who confronts the postlapsarian world, is an American Adam, despite his seeming instability and the unrealistic nature of his goal.

With Billy Pilgrim and Slaughterhouse-Five, matters grow even more difficult; for Billy’s journey is one unlike any of those preceding. He journeys through space and time; his life turns around the fulcrum of the Dresden massacre. However, Billy is, like Holden,

Huck, and Redburn, fundamentally innocent and good at heart. He is isolated; but within his isolation, we see literal representations of Eden, wherein he becomes a true modern Adam.

Billy's message is often mistaken for one of quietism, of accepting and ignoring the overwhelming presence of death in the world; however, his refrain, "So it goes," serves the opposite purpose. First, no matter how grand or insignificant in scale, it imparts to all death an equal importance. Following that, it becomes a prelapsarian denial of death, granting all men a life without death as they had before the Fall. Billy, more than any other Adamic figure, rises above evil: he asks men to pursue the prelapsarian state to which they were born, not as a lost ideal, but as a realizable goal. Billy, through his mental time travel, is able to embrace an Eden whenever he so chooses, in this, the Tralfamadorians become agents of his redemption; he wants nothing less for his fellow man.

The American as Adam has evolved, rather than disappeared. His journey takes place in a different landscape; however, he is still innocent, still morally uncorrupted by a postlapsarian world. He desires not only to raise himself above the taint, but somehow to save another. He is not Christ, to whom Billy Budd is often compared: he will not completely sacrifice himself to rescue others, but he will provide a helping hand, he will catch other innocents, before they fall. He lives in a completely industrialized world, and must take his Eden where he can find it.

One aspect of the American Adam that Lewis did not mention was the presence of a character that, while not a redeemer, becomes an agent through which the Adamic figure realizes his own redemption. This redemptive agent, not mentioned in The American Adam, seems a necessary character in Adamic fiction. Not only is he present in the four books studied herein, he also appears in most of the works Lewis cites as conforming or

contributing to the American myth: we see this individual as Pearl in The Scarlet Letter, as Donatello in The Marble Faun, and as Queequeg in Moby-Dick.

Lewis also avoided discussing the authorial attitude towards these Adamic figures. In almost every case, that attitude is condescending, albeit affectionate. The patronizing approach tells us that while the authors may applaud the Adamic ideal, they realize that it cannot exist. They show us the embodiment of an impossible dream, and we recognize that these characters do not have a pleasant path ahead: Redburn forever at sea, seeking a metaleptic substitution for family and society; Huck wandering aimlessly, drifting further west as society encroaches; Holden's unending quest to preserve innocence; Billy's life laid out before him, unlivable because he knows the future. The American literary identity is that of a prelapsarian Adam; however, the identity always possesses a tragic quality, tinged with the knowledge of the author that Adam cannot ever fully live within our society.

In 1923, D. H. Lawrence asked the fundamental question: "Where *is* this new bird called the true American?" (3). In 1955, R. W. B. Lewis answered the question. The true American, he felt, was in the Garden, at least until the modern era: Adam, he felt, was lost in the modern age of containment. The American as Adam, however, is not lost. He is alive; however, he is different now. The modern Adamic figure lives in an age of anonymity, of death, and is therefore more psychologically unstable than his predecessors. His identity is neither less impossible nor less a portent of tragedy than theirs is; however, perhaps his authors are more aware of the terrible experience that is his fate, thus do they foreground it in his mental state. Adam has not been lost, he has only now begun to wear the straitjacket that awaited his literary predecessors had they continued to dwell in our fallen world.

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Appendix A

The Biblical story of Adam, from the King James Bible, Genesis, chapter 2-3.

[Start at Genesis 2.7]

[2.7] And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. [2.8] And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom he had formed. [2.9] And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. [2.10] And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. [2.11] The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; [2.12] And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. [2.13] And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. [2.14] And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.

[2.15] And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. [2.16] And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: [2.17] **But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.**

[2.18] And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. [2.19] And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and **whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.** [2.20] And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

[2.21] And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; [2.22] And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. [2.23] And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. [2.24] Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. [2.25] **And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.**

[3.1] Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? [3.2] And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: [3.3] But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

[3.4] And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: [3.5] For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. [3.6] And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. [3.7] **And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.**

[3.8] And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. [3.9] And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

[3.10] And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, **because I was naked;** and I hid myself. [3.11] And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? [3.12] And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

[3.13] And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. [3.14] And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: [3.15] And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. [3.16] Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

[3.17] And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; [3.18] Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; [3.19] In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

[3.20] And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. [3.21] Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them. [3.22] And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: [3.23] Therefore the LORD God **sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.** [3.24] **So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.**

Appendix B

Letter from Kurt Vonnegut, dated 16 November 1973, to the Drake School Board, following their burning of Slaughterhouse-Five:

[...]Certain members of your community have suggested that my work is evil. This is extraordinarily insulting to me. The news from Drake indicates to me that books and writers are very unreal to you people. I am writing this letter to let you know how real I am.

I want you to know, too, that my publisher and I have done absolutely nothing to exploit the disgusting news from Drake. We are not clapping each other on the back, crowing about all the books we will sell because of the news. We have declined to go on television, have written no fiery letters to editorial pages, have granted no lengthy interviews. We are angered and sickened and saddened. And no copies of this letter have been sent to anybody else. You now hold the only copy in your hands. It is strictly a private letter from me to the people of Drake, who have done so much to damage my reputation in the eyes of their children and then in the eyes of the world. Do you have the courage and ordinary decency to show this letter to the people, or will it, too, be consigned to the fires of your furnace?

I gather from what I read in the papers and hear on television that you imagine me, and some other writers, too, as being sort of ratlike people who enjoy making money from poisoning the minds of young people. I am in fact a large, strong person, fifty-one years old, who did a lot of farm work as a boy, who is good with tools. I have raised six children, three my own and three adopted. They have all turned out well. Two of them are farmers. I am a combat infantry veteran from World War II, and hold a Purple Heart. I have earned whatever I own by hard work. I have never been arrested or sued for anything. I am so much trusted with young people and by young people that I have served on the faculties of the University of Iowa, Harvard, and the City College of New York. Every Year I receive at least a dozen invitations to be commencement speaker at colleges and high schools. My books are probably more widely used in schools than those of any other living American fiction writer.

If you were to bother to read my books, to behave as educated persons would, you would learn that they are not sexy, and do not argue in favor of wildness of any kind. They beg that people be kinder and more responsible than they often are. It is true that some of the characters speak coarsely. That is because people speak coarsely in real life. Especially soldiers and hardworking men speak coarsely, and even our most sheltered children know that. And we all know, too, that those words really don't damage children much. They didn't damage us when we were young. It was evil deeds and lying that hurt us.

After I have said all this, I am sure you are still ready to respond, in effect, "Yes, yes – but it still remains our right and our responsibility to decide what books our children are going to be made to read in our community." This is surely so. But it is also true that if you exercise that right and fulfill that responsibility in an ignorant, harsh, un-American manner, then

people are entitled to call you bad citizens and fools. Even your own children are entitled to call you that.

I read in the newspaper that your community is mystified by the outcry from all over the country about what you have done. Well, you have discovered that Drake is a part of American civilization, and your fellow Americans can't stand it that you have behaved in such an uncivilized way. Perhaps you will learn from this that books are sacred to free men for very good reasons, and that wars have been fought against nations which hate books and burn them. If you are an American, you must allow all ideas to circulate freely in your community, not merely your own.

If you and your board are now determined to show that you in fact have wisdom and maturity when you exercise your powers over the education of your young, then you should acknowledge that it was a rotten lesson you taught young people in a free society when you denounced and then burned books – books you hadn't even read. You should also resolve to expose your children to all sorts of opinions and information, in order that they will be better equipped to make decisions and to survive.

Again: you have insulted me, and I am a good citizen, and I am very real.

Palm Sunday, pp. 4-6