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Christina Stead's Fiction and the Changing Sense of Decorum

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CHRISTINA STEAD'S FICTION
AND THE CHANGING SENSE OF DECORUM

by

Kate Macomber Stern

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

December

1982

To Christina Stead, with deep gratitude

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Before writing this dissertation, I did not understand why a person of normally restrained expression would suddenly, on the acknowledgements page, burst into a sputter of thank-yous and praise. One of the lessons of this dissertation has been learning why acknowledgements pages are as they are; indeed, I now realize that they are usually, in all their apparent excess, models of restraint. In keeping with this, I only hope that those mentioned will realize how much their help has been appreciated, and how restrained my remarks are.

I would first like to thank Dr. Harry Puckett for his excellent guidance throughout this project, and for his encouragement. The suggestions and support of Dr. James Rocks and Dr. Bernard McElroy have also been appreciated. It is probably unusual to have a husband and family who are devoted readers of the author about whom one is writing, and serious critics of one's dissertation. I have greatly appreciated their help. Aida Kotlarsky spent many hours with me discussing her friend Christina Stead, and I enjoyed this and appreciate it. Finally, I offer a general, clumsy, but sincere thank you to the many people not mentioned who have contributed to this study.

VITA

The author, Kate Macomber Stern, is the daughter of Richard Stern and Gay Clark Stern. She was born August 19, 1952, in Iowa City, Iowa.

Her elementary and secondary education were obtained at the University of Chicago Laboratory School, with the exception of one year at the Scuola delle Suore Salesiane in Venice, Italy.

In September, 1969, she entered Washington University, and received a B.A. in English in May, 1973. She attended the University of Iowa in 1974-75, and was granted an M.A. in English in May, 1976.

In September, 1977, she began the doctoral program in English at Loyola University of Chicago, receiving a teaching assistantship during her two years in residence. She was awarded a Dissertation Fellowship for 1981-82.

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INTRODUCTION

Literary propriety--decorum--is among the most provocative and complex critical terms. In general, it refers to the "proper" subjects of literature; the "proper" depiction of character, where characters speak, feel, act, and view the world in a manner "appropriate" to their type; the "proper" manner of treatment, as tragedy or comedy, and the distinction and separation between different types of treatment. The sense of what is decorous in literature is to some extent based on the sense of what is decorous in life. "Decorous in life" is itself obviously problematic, but for purposes of the discussion, it can be divided into three parts by analogy to the three aspects of literary decorum. Thus, it refers to our sense of what elements properly constitute life--that is, the proper subjects of life. It refers to our sense of what words, feelings, actions, and views of the world are proper to different types of human beings. This includes both our sense of what is appropriate to a certain person, and our sense of what is polite, or decorous in the narrower sense of proper manners. It refers to the way we view life--as tragic or comic, for instance--and if we do not have a single view, the manner in which the types of experience fit together.

An example will serve to illustrate the way in which these different aspects of decorum may come into play in

reading a literary text. In Ulysses, Stephen Dedalus urinates during his walk along Sandymount Strand, and that act triggers a meditation on the sea. Let us consider this in terms of literary propriety. First, as a subject of literature, urinating is--was--improper or indecorous; it violated the sense of the proper subjects of literature. Second, urination was an improper action for the hero; the scene violated the sense of the proper actions of heroes. Third, the act of urination, a traditionally low action appropriate to comedy, is combined with a meditation on the sea. This violated the sense of what kinds of experience could properly be presented together in a work of literature.

Let us now consider the scene in terms of what is decorous in life. First, it is obvious that urination is proper to life; that is, that it is a part of life. The scene does not violate our sense of what elements properly constitute life. Second, we know that urinating is something proper to everyone, heroes and queens included. The scene does not violate our sense of what is appropriate for a hero in life. Third, that Stephen would meditate on the sea while urinating must also seem proper to us. Though we might not make the connection between these very different waters ourselves, we can imagine that a connection could be made between such different things in a person's mind.

To summarize these observations, we can say that the scene violated the sense of what was proper in literature, but it confirmed the sense of what was proper in life. The

proof of this latter point is that Ulysses is a modern classic; large numbers of people have found in it a reality which for them is true, proper, or decorous. Because Ulysses is a modern classic, it has also redefined our sense of what is proper or decorous in literature. Presumably, a scene such as that discussed would no longer be considered improper.

In this discussion, I have made certain decisions about what readers would find to be proper or plausible in the scene. Before going further, it is necessary to consider this matter of plausibility, for it is a central aspect of literary decorum. To return to the scene from Ulysses, one can imagine that this scene, or Ulysses as a whole, could violate a reader's sense of what is proper to human experience--of what is plausible. Clearly, it is not only inferior books which may violate our sense of decorum, but also great books. Though writers have sometimes tried to dispute assertions that their work is implausible--Dostoevsky's citing newspaper accounts to "verify" the characters and events of his novels is perhaps the most famous example--it is well known that there is no external evidence which can persuade readers that a novel is plausible or true if they do not find it so. It is simply, as Aristotle said more than two thousand years ago, recognition (or not). Of course it is mysterious how and why recognition occurs (or does not); however, that it occurs is indisputable, and that it is central to why we read also seems certain. Thus, it is important to say at the outset of this study that in discussing decorum--the sense

of what is proper, real, true, natural, or plausible in literature--we are not only concerned with the writer's sense of decorum, but with the reader's acceptance or recognition of that literary reality as proper, true, or natural--in short, with the reader's sense of decorum. It is also important to say that while the subject of literary decorum is complex and elusive, it is also immediate and intuitive, for we are constantly appraising whether a writer's sense of what is proper, true, or natural is indeed, in our judgement, proper, true, or natural.

The connection between standards of literary decorum and the real world is longstanding; indeed, arguments for decorum--and for changing the standards of decorum--have traditionally been made on the basis that literature should reflect the order of Nature. In The Poetics, Aristotle suggests that the tragic poet should first visualize each scene of the drama as it would occur in life, so he will write what is proper and avoid inconsistencies.¹ Cicero, who translated the Greek To prepon into the Latin decorum, shared the idea that the rules of decorum reflected the rules of Nature: "What is contrary to Nature is, by definition, a breach of decorum."² Johnson defended Shakespeare's "indecorous" tragicomedies as being "just representations of general Nature."³

With Wordsworth's deliberate overthrowing of neoclassical standards of decorum--largely because they were artificial or unnatural--we have tended to see this as no longer an issue.

We moderns sometimes think that questions of decorum have been disposed of because all traditional standards have been violated, yet modern realism may be associated with conventions as to proper subject, character, and manner of treatment just as surely as romanticism or classicism. Of course, current standards of literary decorum are not prescribed in the manner of Horace's Ars Poetica, but critics and readers continue to have expectations about the way reality should be represented in literature--expectations about proper subject, character, and manner of treatment--even as these expectations are continuously challenged and revised by new works.

The most extensive analysis of realism and the issues of decorum associated with it occurs in Erich Auerbach's Mimesis. Auerbach understands the rise of realism as a gradual emancipation from classical standards of decorum, and he characterizes modern literature in terms of the issues of decorum--that is, according to questions of proper subject, character, and manner of treatment. He finds the basis of realism--the basis of the challenge to classical standards of decorum--in the story of Christ, because there, mundane narrative detail and "low" characters are combined with the sublime story of Christ.⁴

Auerbach locates the beginnings of modern realism in Stendhal's The Red and the Black, for it presents a "tragically conceived life of a man of low social position" (p. 457) situated within a contemporary historical context. Auerbach

identifies the mixture of styles as a central feature of realism, pointing to Victor Hugo's extreme mixture of sublime and grotesque elements as being in "utter contrast to the classical treatment of subjects and the classical literary language" (p. 468). In the discussion of Balzac's Le Père Goriot, Auerbach again points to the serious treatment of "low" subjects--the ugly, the commonplace--though Balzac defers to classical standards in titling his work a comedy. Thus, Auerbach characterizes the fiction of this first generation of modern realists in terms of a changed sense of decorum:

The serious treatment of everyday reality, the rise of more extensive and socially inferior groups to the position of subject matter for problematic-existential representation . . . the embedding of random persons and events in the general course of contemporary history, the fluid historical background--these, we believe, are the foundations of modern realism. (p. 491)

Auerbach discusses the novels of Woolf, Joyce, and Proust in terms of their focus on increasingly ordinary events--indeed, on random, insignificant incidents. He characterizes this later generation of modern realists in terms of their "transfer of confidence" (p. 547), where the exploration of random occurrences is seen to reveal more about the nature of reality than great, exterior events and turning points: "there is confidence that in any random fragment plucked from the course of life at any time the totality of its fate is contained and can be portrayed" (p. 547). Auerbach points to James Joyce's framing of his epic around "the externally insignificant course of a day in

the lives of a schoolteacher and advertising broker" (p. 547). The brown stocking which Mrs. Ramsey measures against her son's leg in To the Lighthouse gives Auerbach's final chapter its title, and illustrates the kind of matter which has been treated seriously by this generation of realistic writers.

Auerbach discusses two dominant moods in the writing of this later group of modern realists. On the one hand, he finds that their deep exploration of single, "ordinary" moments suggests a reality which is almost infinitely rich. On the other hand, he senses an atmosphere of hopelessness, even of "universal doom" (p. 551) in these works, for in the relentless treatment of the everyday, there is no certainty of anything beyond; indeed, the multiplicity of narrative perspectives characteristic of these novels suggests that it is difficult to know even the most concrete reality much less something as complex as "the 'real' Mrs. Ramsey" (p. 536).

In Mimesis, Auerbach examines the changing "representation of reality in Western literature" (the subtitle of Mimesis). Each work he has chosen to discuss alters the sense of what subjects and characters may properly be depicted in literature and in what manner they may be depicted; that is, each work discussed redefines what is decorous. Auerbach uses the word decorum mostly in reference to classical and neoclassical standards; however, I have adopted it in this study because Auerbach so successfully characterizes modern literature in terms traditionally encompassed by decorum, and also because it suggests the continuity of the critical

tradition--that is, because it suggests that the questions raised by the classical critics are ones which we continue to raise in relation to modern literature.

Christina Stead's eleven novels and two books of stories are partly within the tradition of modern realism Auerbach is describing, but her best novels, The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone,⁵ are also surprising to someone accustomed to that tradition. In all Stead's work, she presents a startling picture of everyday life, but in The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone, her realism is interlaced with a powerful romanticism which is never undercut. In these novels, Stead presents protagonists whose external characteristics make them unusual as heroes, yet who have qualities associated with the traditional hero such as courage, idealism, and compassion. Though these protagonists emerge from Stead's strange "everyday" worlds, they are able to move towards rich, creative lives. In Stead's best novels, the common, the ugly, even the horrific are presented, but rising out of this, and prevailing over it, are individuals who embody qualities and affirm values which have long been cherished. In The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone, the strangely traditional and utterly modern are integrated to create an original and compelling picture of what is proper to human experience.

I have chosen to discuss Christina Stead's (b. 1902) novels in terms of decorum because they are, in some respects, so flagrantly indecorous--they shock our sense of what is

proper--and also because they affirm values which have always been cherished--they are profoundly proper. I have also chosen this term because decorum, in life and literature, is a central concern in Stead's fiction, one which engages her characters. This is not to say that her novels are self-reflexive or meta-communicative texts in any modernist sense; however, like many novels, they provide a kind of commentary on themselves. Thus, just as we are trying to discover what is proper to life (in the novels), so the characters are trying to discover what is proper to life (in the novels). Just as we are determining whether the real world (in the novels) is consonant with our conceptions of decorum, so the characters are trying to determine whether the real world is consonant with their own private ideas of decorum. Thus, the interaction between ideas of decorum and reality is not only one which we, as readers, are concerned with, but one which is also a central subject of the novels.

According to Stead's sense of decorum--her sense of what the world is--life is endlessly original and various, and it consistently surprises us and seems strange to us because our ideas of decorum are too limited, too proper in the pejorative sense. Thus, that the nature of life in the novels is strange and surprising is itself considered within the novels. The point of this is not to say that a reader, finding the novels to be strange and implausible, is then cornered by the assertion that they are meant to be so. It is to say that the implausibility, impropriety, and incredibility

of the real are central to Stead's vision of the world, and persistent subjects of her fiction. In Stead's first novel, Seven Poor Men of Sydney, a character engages this matter: "You doubt me? It was so; the ranges of human experience go beyond human belief." The attitude is evident throughout her fiction, as in The Salzburg Tales: "I only tell fairy-tales (said the Philosopher), for I would rather be seen in their sober vestments than in the prismatic unlikelihood of reality." And in The Beauties and Furies: "'Nothing is lunatic in this world: everything happens.'"⁶ For Stead and her protagonists, life violates our expectations because we are often tied to proper, conventional notions of life. In For Love Alone, we learn of Teresa: "Everything she did was so strange and comic that no one would believe it. She had managed to get out of the gaol, she had discovered how original real life is" (p. 263). "The gaol" in Stead's fiction consists of conventional, "decorous" notions of life, ideas which are often promulgated by society and in polite letters.

The matter becomes more interesting, and complicated, because in Stead's fiction, the incredibility of the real may extend to literature which presents the real. In The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone, the protagonists find the true, incredible nature of life expressed in literature, but most of those around them find serious literature to be improper and implausible. In For Love Alone, Teresa thinks:

[W]hat went on around her was hoaxing and smooth-faced hypocrisy. Venus and Adonis, the Rape of Lucrece, Troilus and Cressida were reprinted for three hundred years; St. Anthony was tempted in the way you would

expect; Dido, though a queen, was abandoned like a servant-girl and went mad with love and grief, like the girl on the boat outside. This was the truth, not the daily simpering on the boat. . . . (p. 73)

Later, on the boat, one of Teresa's acquaintances speaks:

"Why is it called Dawn? How can dawn possibly look like a woman? When is Man a pentagon? Why can't Prometheus have clothes on?" . . . This Monday morning, going to school, Teresa had with her Louy's Aphrodite and Ovid's Art of Love, illustrated. The two girls, while not daring to touch the books, considered them, on Teresa's lap, with a mixture of shame and curiosity. This, too, she had to explain and even to speak for. Martha, the implacable, said, "Are they really classics? Why do we have such things for classics? How do you know people did them in the olden days?" (pp. 107-08)

For Stead and her protagonists, life violates "proper," conventional notions; and literature also violates "proper" notions of life, but in doing so it confirms our true experience.

Stead's interest in the incredibility of the real and the implausibility of fiction which presents the real takes on a particular significance for two reasons. Stead has often said that her novels are based on herself and people she knows, and her novels have themselves sometimes been criticized as implausible or incredible. In Randall Jarrell's Introduction to The Man Who Loved Children, he considers the implausibility of fiction and of Stead's novel:

When you begin to read about the Pollits you think with a laugh, "They're wonderfully plausible." When you have read fifty or a hundred pages you think with a desperate laugh, or none, that they are wonderfully implausible--implausible as mothers and fathers and children, in isolation, are implausible. There in that warm, dark, second womb of the family, everything is carried far past plausibility: a family's private life is as immoderate and insensate, compared to its public life, as our thoughts are, compared to our speech. . . .

Dostoevsky wrote: "Almost every reality, even if it has its own immutable laws, nearly always is incredible as well as improbable. Occasionally, moreover, the more real, the more improbable it is." Defending the reality of his own novels, he used to say that their improbable extremes were far closer to everyday reality than the immediately plausible, statistical naturalism of the books everyone calls lifelike; as a proof he would read from newspaper clippings accounts of the characters and events of a Dostoevsky novel. Since Christina Stead combines with such extremes an immediately plausible naturalism, she could find her own newspaper clippings without any trouble; but the easiest defense of all would be simply for her to say, "Remember?" We do remember; and remembering, we are willing to admit the normality of the abnormal--are willing to admit that we never understand the normal better than when it has been allowed to reach its full growth and become the abnormal.⁷

The plausibility of Stead's fictional world cannot be proved; we may not remember (or view) the world the way it is represented in Stead's fiction. However, the subject of plausibility is especially interesting because of Stead's comments about her fiction. For Stead as for her protagonists, the truth about life comes out in literature:

Q: Are all your characters based on people you know?
 Stead: Oh, yes, you can't invent people or they're puppets. . . . I like puppets. I have a puppet. But you shouldn't write about them.⁸

Unlike many writers, Stead is explicit about the people and situations upon which her novels are based:

Q: The bank that you worked at in Paris, when you were writing The Salzburg Tales. . . .

Stead: Yes, Bertillon.

Q: Yes, was it like the extraordinary banking house in House of All Nations?

Stead: As like as I can make it. . . .

Q: So your husband would have been something like the Alphendéry character?

Stead: He was Alphendéry.⁹

Stead believes, "[t]he virtue of the story is its reality and

its meaning for any one person: that is its pungency."¹⁰

This view is borne out with Stead's own novels, for her most critically acclaimed works, The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone, are also her most autobiographical in that the protagonists are Stead's fictional counterparts. She writes of The Man Who Loved Children:

"I translated my family experience detail by detail to Annapolis and Washington. Bill [Stead's husband] and I found the right setting there. We stayed in Annapolis until we found a house that would match 'Lydham Hill' and another that matched Watson's Bay. It became a kind of crossword puzzle to change it all over with details about trees, subsoil, salinity, and so on supplied by the Washington government."¹¹

When asked why she left Australia as a young woman, Stead replied, "'It's all there in For Love Alone,'" and elsewhere she says, "'Teresa in For Love Alone (that's me of course). . . ." ¹²

The translation of life into literature, nature into story, has been lifelong for Stead. From her earliest days, the celebration of the real, in all its diversity and strangeness, was in story:

I was born into the ocean of story, or on its shores. I was the first child of a lively young scientist who loved his country and zoology. My mother died--he mothered me. I went to bed early . . . he, with one foot on the rather strange bed I had, told his tales. He meant to talk me to sleep; he talked me awake. A younger child, fatherless, [Stead's cousin] had come to take my cot; and my bed was made up on a large packing case in which were my father's specimens, a naturalist's toys. . . . There was the crocodile head with a bullet hole over the left eye, the whale tooth, splendid ivory with an ivory growth in the root canal, the giant spider-crab . . . a plate-sized disc picked up on a near beach, the kneecap of some monster extinct millions of years before, a snake's beautiful skeleton. "What is in the packing case?" I would tell and, what I forgot, he told. . . .

I must leave out all the stories of those many nights, a thousand, between two and four and a half, which formed my views--an interest in men and nature, a feeling that all were equal, the extinct monster, the coral insect, the black man and us, the birds and the fish; and another curious feeling still with me, of terrestrial eternity, a sun that never set. . . . I rejoiced in it. . . . 13

Stead's early knowledge and acceptance of the strangeness and endless diversity of nature shaped her vision of human experience and the larger world. But her first childhood productions described the natural world, a world which was incredible or improper to some of her teachers:

I first made my mark with a poem written suddenly in arithmetic class, at the age of eight, of which all is now forgotten but the line "And elephants develop must." Mr. Roberts, a fatherly and serious teacher, confiscated whatever it was . . . and asked suspiciously, "Who wrote this?" and "What is must?". . . . My next achievement, my first novel, was an essay, at the age of ten, on the life-cycle of the frog.

A little later, Stead shifted to the human world:

About this time [age fourteen] began the first great project of my career, celebrating a teacher of English I had fallen in love with (in schoolgirl innocence) and called the "Heaven Cycle"--I am mildly concealing her name. It was supposed to be hundreds of poems; it reached thirty-four. She was grateful I think. The other teachers were accustomed to adolescent eccentricity, all except one, a teacher of French, who was heard to say that she thought it disgraceful to take the name of a teacher in vain. This view of literature astonished me and did not move me. (It is common enough--"How can you write about real people?")

It was accepted by this time at school that I was a writer; and I accepted it simply, too, without thinking about it. 14

Stead is, in a sense, a natural artist, and she believes story is itself natural: "The creation of something out of nothing is the most primitive of human passions and the most optimistic." 15 In The Salzburg Tales, she writes: "The earth breeds songs and tales quicker even than weeds" (p. 415).

The only literature which Stead objects to is polite and sentimental literature, which hides the true words, passions, actions--nature--of human experience: "'I dislike polite letters, self-conscious classicism, pseudo-philosophers (among writers). . . .'"¹⁶ "'You see, as a child I thought all those stories about happy homes, happy families, were all conventional lies.'"¹⁷ Indeed, Stead's novels are themselves a revolt against the proper or traditionally decorous: "'The essence of style in literature, for me, is experiment, invention, "creative error" (Jules Romains), and change; and of its content the presentation of "man alive" (Ralph Fox).'"¹⁸

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore what "man alive"--in literature--means to Christina Stead. We do know, at least, from the outset that a central part of "man alive" for her is story, and she writes about why this is so:

It is the hope of recognizing and having explained our own experience.

It is the million drops of water which are the looking glasses of our lives.

The story has a magic necessary to our happiness. In the West no one knew of the thousand and one nights, Oriental stories in Arabic, until they were translated by the Abbé Antoine Galland in France. They were a wild success. Fashionable young men collected round the Abbé's home calling for him; and, when he appeared, cried, "Tell us another story, Abbé, tell us another story." (That happens in New York at night, too, when, as I have seen, friends gather and tell their remarkable, endless folklore.) And the belief that life is a dream and we the dreamers only dreams, which comes to us at strange, romantic, and tragic moments, what is it but a desire for the great legend, the powerful story rooted in all things which will explain life to us and, understanding which, the meaning of things can be threaded

through all that happens? Then there will no longer be a dream, but life in the clear.¹⁹

In Mimesis, Erich Auerbach discusses the changing conception of decorum in Western literature through analysis of short passages from the literatures of different countries and periods. I have adopted Auerbach's method on a very limited scale, in order to explore Christina Stead's sense of decorum. The greater part of this dissertation focusses on The Man Who Loved Children, usually considered to be Stead's masterpiece, through a close reading of three passages from the novel. Each of the first three chapters of the dissertation considers a single scene which is reproduced within the text. The method of analysis is not schematic--the close reading moves through each scene almost line-by-line; however, the scenes have been selected because they present central features of Stead's world. Through this close reading, Stead's sense of decorum--her sense of how the world is ordered, or orderable in art--begins to emerge. With an understanding of Stead's sense of decorum in a single novel, it is then possible to consider Stead's other fiction in light of the features identified in the first three chapters. The fourth chapter focusses on For Love Alone and the final chapter considers The Little Hotel and two stories from The Salzburg Tales, so that a more general understanding of Stead's fiction may be gained.

Notes

¹ Aristotle, The Poetics, Chapter XVII, in Criticism: The Major Texts, ed. Walter Jackson Bate (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Jovanovich, 1952), pp. 29-30.

² Cicero, De Officiis, in Literary Criticism in Antiquity, ed. J. W. H. Atkins (Cambridge: The University Press, 1934), I, 43-44.

³ Samuel Johnson, Preface to Shakespeare, in Criticism: The Major Texts, ed. Bate, p. 208.

⁴ Erich Auerbach, Mimesis, trans. Willard Trask (1953; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 72. Further references to this work appear in the text.

⁵ Christina Stead, The Man Who Loved Children (1940; rpt. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965). Further references to this work appear in the text.

Christina Stead, For Love Alone (1944; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1979). Further references to this work appear in the text.

Colin Roderick, Twenty Australian Novelists (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1947), p. 197.

⁶ Christina Stead, Seven Poor Men of Sydney (London, 1934; rpt. New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1935), p. 313.

Christina Stead, The Salzburg Tales (London, 1934; rpt. New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1935), p. 188.

Christina Stead, The Beauties and Furies (London, 1936; rpt. New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1936), p. 197.

⁷ Randall Jarrell, "An Unread Book," Introd., The Man Who Loved Children, Christina Stead (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965), p. vi.

⁸ Joan Lidoff, "Christina Stead: An Interview," Aphra, 6 (1976), 62.

⁹ Ann Whitehead, "Christina Stead: An Interview," Australian Literary Studies, 6 (1974), 238. (First aired on London program Lateline, 18 July, 1973.)

10 Christina Stead, "The International Symposium on the Short Story: Part One, England," Kenyon Review, 30 (1968), 447.

11 Graeme Kinross Smith, "Christina Stead: A Profile," Westerly, 1 (1976), 74-75.

12 Rose Marie Beston, "An Interview With Christina Stead," World Literature Written in English, 15 (1976), 94.

Lidoff, "Christina Stead: An Interview," p. 54.

13 Christina Stead, "International Symposium on the Short Story," 444-45.

14 Christina Stead, "A Writer's Friends," Southerly, 28 (1968), 163-64.

15 Joan Lidoff, "The Female Ego: Christina Stead's Heroines," New Boston Review, 2, No. 3 (1977), 20.

16 Stanley Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, Twentieth Century Authors (New York: H. W. Wilson & Co., 1942), 1330.

17 G. K. Smith, p. 74.

18 Kunitz, p. 1330.

19 Stead, "The International Symposium on the Short Story," p. 446, p. 449, p. 447.

THE MAN WHO LOVED CHILDREN: INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

The Man Who Loved Children has two large and interlocking subjects: it is the story of how a vital, discordant family lives, and it is the story of how an extraordinary individual emerges from that family. Louisa is the novel's rather unlikely heroine and, as the book opens, the facts of her life are these: she is eleven-and-a-half; she is the eldest child--caretaker and stepsister to five siblings; she lives in the Georgetown suburb of Washington, D.C., in the year 1936.

Parents and siblings are usually the central human facts of a child's life, and certainly the Pollit family is for Louisa. The novel's first chapter introduces (step)-mother Henny, father Sam, Louisa 11, Ernie 9, Evie 8, Saul and Sam 6 (the twins), and Tommy 4. The family is not merely the backdrop for Louie's activities nor a monolithic being against which this heroine revolts. Each of its members--though most notably the parents--has an idiosyncratic vision and language to match, and all the Pollits must be contended with seriously. This is a bildungsroman of an unusual sort: its central personage, Louisa, does not dominate the novel's pages except by force of character.

The ten years' war between Sam and Henny is made clear in the novel's first chapter, though the children are

evidence that there have been détentés. Sam comes from a working class district of Baltimore (Dundalk), and he is employed as a naturalist at the Department of Fisheries in Washington, D.C. Sam's first wife has died in Louisa's infancy, and Sam has married the daughter of a prominent Baltimore businessman whose Washington connections help to advance Sam's career (a fact not recognized by Sam). Sam lives so thoroughly amidst his own sugary conceptions that he could be happily married to anyone, except Henny. She is the only person able to force Sam to glimpse what is intolerable to him--the dark underside of life.

Henny is a woman of aristocratic tastes whose expectations of a grand, easy life have been dashed by marriage to Sam. Her father's pet and the youngest daughter of fourteen children, Henny is spoiled and difficult. Sam is the first man to have offered her marriage after six years on society's social calendars. Henny despises Sam's relentless rosiness, even as she knows it is this quality which allowed Sam to marry her. He is her only--and her worst--possible mate, as she is his only possible bad mate. David Collyer has provided his daughter and her brood with a large house in Georgetown, and it is here that the Pollits live as the novel opens.¹

The Man Who Loved Children contains numerous minor characters--Louie's siblings; Sam's sisters Bonnie and Jo; Henny's sister and mother; Henny's lover, Bert Anderson; Louie's teacher Miss Aiden, best friend Clare, and Louie's

relatives through her natural mother--but the novel mainly develops around Louie, Sam, and Henny.

The novel's first four chapters reveal the workings of Pollitry, as Sam calls his family, on a Saturday and Sunday in June; the family is first seen without external intrusions. In these chapters, we see the intense merriment and vitality of Pollitry, and we also see the intense brutality that is part of this family's life. Sam and Henny's treatment of one another is brutal, and Henny is sometimes cruel towards her stepdaughter, Louisa. Sam's "brutality" is inadvertent, and consists of constant talking through which he hopes to make the children, and especially Louisa, adopt his ideas about life.

In the novel's first chapter, Sam learns he has been chosen to go on the Smithsonian Expedition to Malaya, and midway through the novel he departs. While in Malaya, he incurs the wrath of his superior, Colonel Willets, who communicates his displeasure to Washington. With Sam's return from Malaya, family fortunes decline considerably. Henny's father dies with an estate much smaller than expected, so Tohoga House must be sold, the Pollits move to a ramshackle house in the poorest section of Annapolis, and Henny's dividends diminish. A child is born to Henny but an anonymous note asserts the baby is not fathered by Sam, and relations between husband and wife deteriorate further (the child's parentage is left uncertain). In Sam's absence, several colleagues have spoken against him, and,

because of Colonel Willets' complaints as well, Sam is unjustly accused of various and serious wrongdoings. Sam will not defend himself against the slander for he feels to do so would sully him, and without the protection of Henny's father, he is fired from his job.

Poverty and Sam's constant presence at home exacerbate tensions between husband and wife, and domestic life becomes unendurable. During Sam and Henny's worst argument, Louie decides she must kill her parents to save her siblings and herself. Although Louie loses her nerve, she knows she cannot live as she desires at home, and, at the end of the novel, she leaves for "'a walk round the world'" in search of the important destiny she believes is hers.²

As indicated earlier, literary decorum refers to the proper subjects of literature; the proper depiction of character, where characters speak, feel, act, and view the world in a manner appropriate to their type; and the proper manner of treatment, as tragedy or comedy, and the distinction and separation between different genres and "styles." The Man Who Loved Children challenges our sense of what is proper in all these respects.

The novel presents the emergence of an extraordinary adolescent girl from a family as the most serious of subjects. The Man Who Loved Children is not a novel of domestic manners in any traditional sense. Stead explores the strange languages, passions, actions, and colliding visions of the world which occur within the family, and

the way in which a consciousness is formed in the family.

Randall Jarrell writes:

A man on a park bench has a lonely final look, as if to say: "Reduce humanity to its ultimate particles and you end here; beyond this single separate being you cannot go." But if you look back into his life you cannot help seeing that he is separated off, not separate--is a later, singular stage of an earlier plural being. All the tongues of men were baby-talk to begin with: go back far enough and which of us knew where he ended and Mother and Father and Brother and Sister began? The singular subject in its objective universe has evolved from that original composite entity--half-subjective, half-objective, having its own ways and laws and language, its own life and its own death--the family.

The Man Who Loved Children knows as few books have ever known--knows specifically, profoundly, exhaustively--what a family is. . . . (p. v)

But the central subject of the novel is not only the family.

The Man Who Loved Children also knows, as few books have ever known, what a female child genius is, and how that person lives within and emerges from the family. The novel--as a bildungsroman with a female protagonist, and as an exploration of the family as the origin of almost all that we all are--enlarges our sense of the proper subjects of serious literature.

Decorum also refers to character types, where characters speak, feel, act, and view the world in a way proper to their types. The characters in The Man Who Loved Children often violate conventional conceptions of what is proper, yet they confirm our experience of the way human beings really are. Louisa is a clumsy, messy, dirty adolescent as the novel opens, yet she has numerous qualities associated with traditional heroes such as bravery, insight, and the ability

to take action. She is a thoroughly surprising, and thoroughly convincing hero. Sam, Louisa's father, is all optimism and sweetness and chastity and love for children. Despite negative, complicating aspects of these qualities in Sam's character, this portrayal of a man and of a father is unusual. Henny also violates traditional depictions of a woman and a mother. She is bitter, darkly sexual, violent, and pessimistic; her gift is to reduce life to its rawest, lowest elements. Medea seems to be her only literary antecedent, a resemblance Stead may have had in mind, judging from comments she made prior to writing the novel: "'[E]veryone has a wit superior to their everyday wit, when discussing his personal problems, and the most depressed housewife, for example, can talk like Medea about her troubles. . . .'"³

Yet Henny even violates the type represented by Medea, making up charming, silly songs and rhymes for her children, embroidering magnificent doll clothes, and playing Chopin and Brahms on the piano. The Pollit children also violate conventional conceptions of what is proper for children, even as their inventive languages, strange passions, and odd perceptions of the world confirm our experience of the way children really are. The Man Who Loved Children at once shocks and corroborates our sense of what is proper for a human being--a hero, a father, a mother, a child.

There is yet a third way in which decorum is pertinent to a study of The Man Who Loved Children, and that is in relation to the classical (and neo-classical) dictum

concerning the distinction between genres and the separation of styles. Though by now the mixture of styles and genres is thoroughly familiar, The Man Who Loved Children is unusual in the vast range of experience presented. In the novel, reality is a collision of realities; the novel encompasses the heroic, romantic, realistic, expressionistic, fantastic, and comic. Jarrell writes of the novel's "tragic weight" (p. xxxii). These profoundly different types of experience, and attitudes towards experience, occur side-by-side in the novel. The family's miming, rhyming, and nicknaming occur alongside a grotesque drowning of a cat and a meditation on freedom. Stead's use of these different "styles" creates an extraordinary picture of the multiplicity of life and the disparate nature of experience.

The Man Who Loved Children presents a powerful and surprising picture of human experience, one in which the heroic and horrific, passionate and practical, and playful and grotesque are intermingled. Stead's novels are not decorous according to traditional conceptions, nor even according to the conception of modern tragic realism as set forth by Auerbach; however, they present a coherent, unified world with its own order. The purpose of this dissertation is to describe the quintessentially and peculiarly modern sense of decorum, a modern sense of what the real world is, which emerges from Stead's integration of such surprising and disparate elements into an artistic whole.

The first three chapters of the dissertation explore Stead's sense of decorum through a close reading of three important scenes from The Man Who Loved Children. Chapter One considers the scene in which Louie and her siblings present a play to Sam for his birthday. In this chapter, "Decorum in Literature," we examine the way in which literary language--in this case, the language of Louie's play, "Herpes Rom"--is capable of presenting a truth, a reality which for the audience--in this case Sam--is not the truth, is not reality. We begin with a discussion of decorum in literature because the scene reveals how literary language contradicts the conventional, decorous sense of what is "proper." This leads into a discussion of Sam's language. His language is not literature, but it is a man-made construction, and the only way Louie can combat it is in literature. Because "Herpes Rom" considers love between a father and daughter, we are led into a discussion of Sam's love for Louisa. The presentation of love in Louie's play again violates Sam's conception of what is conventional and decorous, yet, like the language of the play, it is shown to emerge from the "ordinary." Thus, the first chapter--through discussion of Louie's play, its genesis in life (in the novel), and Sam's reaction to it--is primarily concerned with the way in which literature violates and confirms our sense of life, and so it serves as a kind of paradigm for our consideration of The Man Who Loved Children itself.

Chapter Two, "Decorum in Everyday Life," considers the scene in which Sam and Henny have their worst argument. In this chapter, we see decorum not as a literary idea, for we see the strange hate, or lovelessness, which is precipitated by two contrary visions of the world. The two private ideas of decorum held by Sam and Henny are seen not only to conflict with one another, they are also shown to be profoundly in conflict with reality. Sam is outraged that the children should hear Henny's raging and their argument--though Sam himself initiates the argument and involves the children in it--for it violates his sense of what husbands and wives should be to each other, and consequently, his idea of what fathers and mothers should be to their children. Henny, in turn, is outraged that Sam does not want to hear "the truth," her truth. He will not look at the world she sees everyday, the world of dirt, vice, pretense, and hypocrisy. In this scene, Sam and Henny's bond of hatred is shown to be maintained partly through their concern for proper appearances, so decorum as a concern in everyday life is also raised in this more limited sense.

Sam and Henny each violate the other's conception of decorum, but the portrait of these two characters also violates our sense of what is conventional or decorous. Sam and Henny are so consumed by their particular visions of the world that they seem bizarre and grotesque. Yet just as they shock us with their strangeness, their

languages, passions, actions, and visions of the world are shown to emerge from natural impulses and desires. The scene violates our sense of decorum not only because of its strangeness, but because it is so natural, so human, so proper in its impropriety.

Chapter Three considers the novel's concluding scene in which Louie leaves home. In this chapter, we consider a character who understands the private notions of decorum maintained by those around her, and the vast distance between those conceptions and reality. Louie knows that Sam's vision fails from an excess of optimism and idealism, while Henny's vision fails from a deficiency of these. She is able to find the mean between excess and deficiency through her own clear vision, and she is also able to create a full, profoundly proper life. Louie's struggle is towards self creation and self realization, and against external and internal obstacles to that. Though she violates our sense of a hero in terms of external characteristics, she embodies the qualities of mind and heart that human beings have always valued. Perhaps the greatest truth, and mystery, of the novel is that the heroic individual can emerge from the strange world as completely not strange, but right--and that we immediately recognize this rightness. Stead's sense of decorum--her sense of what the real world is--integrates the strangely traditional and utterly modern into a powerful and original vision.

Notes

¹ As indicated earlier, Stead transposed her family experience from Sydney to Washington, D.C. and Annapolis, and the facts of her family's life are very close to those of the Pollits: "'Both my parents were Australian-born, children of youthful English immigrants of poor origins. My mother died in my babyhood, my father soon remarried, and I became the eldest of a large family. My father was an early twentieth-century Rationalist Press Association Rationalist, Fabian Socialist, by profession a naturalist in the Government Fisheries Department; later he formed and managed the New South Wales Government State Trawling Industry. My childhood was--fish, natural history, Spencer, Darwin, Huxley, love of the sea (from dinghies and trawlers to the American Navy of 1908 and the British Navy), and the advancement of man (from the British Association for the Advancement of Science to the Smithsonian Institution). Eldest, and a girl, I had plenty of work with the young children, but was attached to them, and whenever I could, told them stories, partly from Grimm and Andersen, partly invented.'" Kunitz, pp. 1329-30. Stead describes her stepmother's family, the counterpart of Henny's family in The Man Who Loved Children: "[Stead's father, David Stead] met his future father-in-law, Frederick Gibbons, a pleasant Edwardian, dressy, well-to-do, who owned considerable property . . . and had a Victorian villa in five acres of ground on the road. He and his wife, Kate, from a South Coast dairying family, had had ten or eleven children. There were only two at home, a middle-aged bachelor brother [in the novel, Barry] and the youngest daughter, Ada, a very pretty dark slender girl, who became David's second wife. They had six children and lived at Lydham Hill [in the novel, Tohoga House]. . . ." Christina Stead, "A Waker and Dreamer," Overland, 53 (Spring 1972), 33-37.

² The novel is divided into ten chapters and thirty-nine sections, and it is carefully structured. The first chapter is divided into three titled sections, and it treats Louie's parents separately but equally. Section 1 is titled "Henny comes home," and Section 2 is titled "Sam comes home." In Section 3, "Sunday a Funday," mother is home from shopping, father is home from work, and the children do not go to school. The Pollits are first shown without external intrusions.

The novel's first four chapters reveal the life and doings of the Pollit family in their Georgetown home. Chapters Five and Six show the Pollits away from Tohoga House. In Chapter Five, Sam leaves on the Smithsonian expedition to Malaya, Louie visits her natural mother's relatives in Harpers Ferry, and Louie, Evie, and Henny visit Henny's family at their Baltimore estate. Chapter Six shows Sam in Malaya, and reveals the ill feeling building against Sam at work.

The last four chapters show the family's decline and Louie's emergence. In Chapter Seven, Sam returns from Malaya, Henny's sixth child is born (and Sam's seventh, perhaps), Henny's father dies, and the Pollits lose Tohoga House. In Chapter Eight, Pollitry moves to Annapolis, and Sam is suspended from his job. Chapter Nine focusses on Louie's life at school and her literary productions, including a play, a sonnet cycle, a series of poems, and a fantastic note. In Chapter Ten, Sam and Henny have their worst argument, Henny kills herself, Sam gains the promise of work, Bonnie returns to the Pollits, and Louie leaves home.

There are several errors in The Man Who Loved Children regarding ages and birthdates of characters, and this has led to some confusion; however, the time elapsed in the novel is clear. The novel's first four chapters occur on one-and-a-half days. The novel begins on a "June Saturday afternoon" (p. 3--the first sentence of the novel). On the next day, "Sunday a Funday," Ernie tells the family it is June 14, 1936 (p. 44). (He is calculating the number of quotations Louie has learned in the year; one hundred and sixty-five, he determines.) Thus, the novel begins on June 13, 1936. Pages 24-149 take place on this Sunday: Pollitry wakes up; Sam tells the family that he is to go to Malaya; all do household chores amidst much frolicking and talk, especially by Sam; Henny meets Bert Anderson downtown; Aunt Jo Pollit visits to discuss Aunt Bonnie Pollit's scandalous behavior; Sam and Louie go for a walk and discuss murder; and Sam and Henny argue and have sexual intercourse.

Chapter Five, Section 1 (p. 150) describes Louie's summer life at Harpers Ferry; she is there two months (p. 160). Sections 2 and 3 take place at Monocacy in the Fall (Sam has left for Malaya). Section 4 takes place in Washington in the late Fall, 1936.

Chapter Six, Section 1 begins on a "March night" (p. 199)--it is now 1937--and it shows Henny at home with the children writing letters to Sam. Section 2 shows Sam in Malaya, answering the children's (and Gillian Roebuck's) letters. It is mid-April, as the dates on the letters show (p. 243).

Chapter Seven concerns the "family corroboree" upon Sam's return from Malaya, Henny's father's death, and the birth of the baby, Charles Franklin. When Sam comes home, it is at least late April (presumably, he returns after he

writes the children). He has been away eight months (pp. 252 & 276), which would mean that he left home in late August.

In Chapter Eight, Section 1, the family moves from Tohoga House in Georgetown to Spa House in Annapolis. It is mid-June, 1937 (pp. 324 & 332), one year after the novel opens. Section 2 takes place over the summer. Section 3, "Miss Aiden," takes place in the Fall at the beginning of the school year (1937). Section 4, "Clare," begins in November (p. 342), moves to "before Christmas" (p. 343), "through the winter months" (p. 346), and finally to a "Saturday in early April" (p. 347)--in the year 1938--when Sam takes Louie and Clare for sodas. In Section 5, "What will shut you up?" "Spring was coming" (p. 356).

Chapter Nine, Section 1 begins "It was May" (p. 366). Louie decides to write a play for Sam's birthday, which is in June (p. 385), specifically, June 23 (p. 386). Section 2 takes us to Sam's birthday (p. 398), and includes the play and Miss Aiden's visit. It is now June, 1938, two years after the novel opens. Section 3 takes place the night of Sam's birthday, June 23: Sam reads Louie's "Aiden Cycle" to the children; the anonymous note arrives about Henny's infidelity and Sam and Henny argue; and Louie tells her siblings a bedtime story. Section 4 takes place the following day, June 24, 1938, with Henny raging at the children because of her argument with Sam the previous night. Section 5 takes place on the next day, June 25, where Bert Anderson says "goodbye" to Henny.

Chapter Ten, Section 1 begins "Henny stayed two days at Hassie's" (p. 453). She returns home to Eastport "on the third day" (p. 454), so it is June 28. The afternoon of her return, Jo Pollit comes to tell of the birth of Bonnie's illegitimate baby, born a day or so before. Section 2 takes place that afternoon and night, and includes boiling the marlin. Section 3 takes place on the next day, June 29, and also concerns the marlin. Section 4, "A headache," takes place later that afternoon, and through the night. Section 5, "Monday morning," takes place on the next day, June 30, and it is the day Henny takes poison. Section 6, "Truth never believed," begins three weeks after Henny's burial (p. 511), so it is mid-July, 1938. "Towards the end of July . . . on Monday the twenty-fifth" (p. 518), Sam has a promise of work, Bonnie and her baby return to the family, and Louie confesses her part in Henny's death to Sam. "The next morning" (p. 524), Tuesday, July 26, 1938, Louie leaves home and the novel ends, two years, one month, and thirteen days after it begins.

The confusion over time elapsed in the novel probably arises from errors in the ages of characters, most notably Louie. On the novel's first page, we learn that Louisa is eleven-and-a-half, and later that her birthday is in February (p. 35). However, the following Summer, Louie "was getting on past thirteen" (p. 329); in fact, she would be twelve-and-a-half at this point. The following Spring (1938), we learn

that "Louie was only fourteen" (p. 378), whereas she would be thirteen-and-a-half at this point. (Stead's own birthday is in July, and one wonders--idly--if this is a cause of the discrepancy.) There are similar problems with Sam's and Ernie's ages.

One source of confusion is Ernie's chart, which lists the birthdays and ages of most of the Pollits (p. 64). (Ernie does not know Henny's age.) Ernie is a meticulous calculator and counter, and it seems unlikely that he would make errors; however, Sam's birthday is listed as February 11 when it is later celebrated on June 23. The length of time elapsed in the novel is clear, but the minor errors of birthdates and ages may cause some small confusion.

³ Australian Women's Weekly, 9 March, 1935, as quoted in Ronald G. Geering, Christina Stead, Twayne World Author Series (New York: Twayne, 1969), p. 44. Geering writes of this quote: "A report of Christina Stead's comments as communicated to an overseas representative of the paper. The author has endorsed the accuracy of the report."

CHAPTER I

STRANGE LOVE, STRANGE LANGUAGE: DECORUM IN LITERATURE

The following scene takes place on Sam's fortieth birthday, and centers around a play Louie writes for Sam's birthday present. "Herpes Rom" dramatizes a hideous relationship between a father and his daughter, one which partially reflects the relationship between Sam and Louie. As the play is a reflection of that relationship, the scene presents important characters and themes of the novel. It reveals Louie both as adolescent and as emerging artist. It reveals Sam's childishness, egotism, humor, fatherly didacticism, and incomprehension. It shows something of the relationship Louie and Sam have with Henny, and something of Louie's siblings. The passage is about the workings of art on an audience. It is about the relation between art and life, and about the relation between human beings and nature.

The examination of the novel begins with the "Herpes Rom" episode not only because it introduces important characters and themes, but also because Louie's way of representing reality is similar to Stead's--to understand the play is a way to understand the novel. Just as The Man Who Loved Children is a key to the rest of Stead's fiction,

so Louie's play is a key to The Man Who Loved Children. In Louie's play as in Stead's novel, the way people talk, feel, act, and view the world is as surprising as it is compelling. For Louie as for Stead, the most primary and ordinary human relationship--that of parent and child--involves words, passions, and actions which jar our conception of life even as they confirm our experience.

"Herpes Rom" represents only part of Stead's vision, but it is an important part of it. In the play, Louie focusses on the dark strangeness of ordinary life. Stead's vision encompasses this, but contains heroic, romantic, and comic elements as well. Though Louie emerges as the hero who can transcend the "ordinary" life of the family, when she writes "Herpes Rom" it is the difficulty and complexity of that life with which she is contending.

The Man Who Loved Children is remarkable partly as it reveals the many tongues in which individuals, especially in families, speak. Polity is an organism or polity not only with its own history and customs, but with its own languages as well. The strangest of all the novel's many languages is the literary language of Louie's play, "Herpes Rom."

Sam's birthday began in a lovely morning, and everyone got up early. There was dew on everything, the cedar-waxwings were eating the mulberries, and there was the sound of a bombardment from the corrugated iron roof of the new shed, where the wasteful little wretches, in their hundreds, threw down scarcely tasted berries. There was haze over everything, dew on the ant-hills, and the determined, brilliant wasps were at work, scratch-

ing wood fiber off the old wooden bench with a light rasping sound, zooming dizzily and plastering with a do-or-die air. It was so steamy-soft that the birds were relatively silent, except the bobbing, stripping cedar-waxwings and the black "devils of the sky," far off with a soft cah-cah. The sky was gray with humidity, the sun could be looked at with the naked eye, a pan full of liquid, like a dish of snapdragon, and against this sky the leaves were sharp and austere as in a steel engraving. Henny, running about early to get the tea "so that the kids could prance around their father," declared that she felt nervous as a cat. Louie looked at the silky sulky reflections of sepia and dun in the creek and thought they were like the shades of a woman's unsunned breasts; there was a still, breeding, inward-looking moist atmosphere, so that it seemed beans would begin to push out of the earth suddenly; it was like a bride, heavy with child, dull and potent. Louie could hardly lift her heavy stumps, even when Henny called sharply, but she did arrive in the kitchen in time, and there Henny was kind to her, asked her if the children had all a present for their father, and what she had got for him; and furtively, and with a shamed face, Henny gave Louie a little parcel in tissue paper for him; it was a pair of hand-knitted socks (which he preferred and which were easier to reheel and retoe). "And your present?" whispered Henny. Louisa said, "I wrote a play." Henny looked at her curiously, wondering at her cheapness, but at length said, "Well, I suppose your father will like it, at any rate," and sent her off upstairs with the tea, where a great jamboree was in progress.

"Is this a present for Sambo-the-Great?" inquired Sam, lifting the tissue paper parcel off the tray.

"From Mother," said Louie.

Sam squinted comically at them all, opened it, and, after inspecting the knitting, said, "Well, I don't say no, boys and girls: socks is socks; but I love hinges and nayrers [nails] en doyleys, even ef the stitches which is there are a bit spidery, en doyleys Little-Womey, enwhaleboats en bugeyes what is on the way, en I will go fishin for eisters en whales disarvo [this afternoon], en I like the shavin' brush what Charles-Franklin guv me—" and he looked at Louie.

"And Louie wrote you a play," said Ernie, dancing with excitement. Louie marked time shamefacedly, "It's a tragedy, and it's only in one scene."

"Hit's doubiless a tragedy," remarked Sam, "en once seen, is seen pretty often: bit whar is hit?"

"In my room," Louie said unwillingly, "but the varmints" (she waved her hand towards Ernie and Evie, who for once dropped their squabble and glanced with meek conceit at each other), "the varmints know it; they are going to recite it."

"We learned it," burst out Evie, and looked all round the room, red with excitement. "And you can't understand it." Sam stared at them all, grinning and pleased as punch at the great secret, which he had known was simmering for the past week.

"We don't know what it means," said Ernie.

"Ernie is the father, and Evie is the little girl," Saul told them; "it is about a father and a little girl."

They were all mystified and excited. Sam said, "What's all this? Now, Little-Sam, you bring in the prog, en after prog we see the play."

The two actors scooped up the oatmeal with the greatest speed, but Sam insisted on everyone polishing his plate with his tongue, before the play. Then, when the coffee was put round, Louie came and put a piece of paper in front of Sam and herself recited the prologue, which was nothing but a quotation from Longfellow (*The Masque of Pandora*):

*Every guilty deed
Holds in itself the seed
Of retribution and undying pain.*

Sam, with open mouth, meanwhile had been looking from her to the paper and from the paper to her, for on the top of the paper he read, in painful capitals: TRAGOS: HERPES ROM. JOST 1. When Louie had finished reciting, he asked in a most puzzled voice, "What is this, Louie?" Louie gravely pointed to the paper, "This means—TRAGEDY: THE SNAKE-MAN. ACT 1. There is only one act," she explained: "I thought we could do it too, this evening when Miss Aiden comes."

The two actors, meanwhile, were swollen with pride and agitation.

"Why isn't it in English?" asked Sam angrily. Louie was at a loss to explain this, so she scolded, "Don't put the children off. You follow on the paper." The others meanwhile left their places to crane at the sheet. "There are two actors," said Louie, "The man—*Rom*—whose name is Anteios; and the daughter—*Fill*—whose name is Megara. Evie is Megara, and Ernie is the *Rom*, Anteios."

"Why can't it be in English?" said Sam feebly. Louie smiled vacantly, like a little child, "I don't know—I thought—anyhow, go on, Anteios! Ia deven . . ."

The boy and Evie then proceeded to recite.

ANTEIOS: *Ia deven fecen sigur de ib. A men ocs ib esse crimened de innomen tach. Sid ia lass ib solen por solno or ib grantach.*

MEGARA: *Men grantach es solentum.* ("Men juc aun," said Louie)
Men juc aun. ("Ben es bizar den ibid asoc solno ia pathen
 crimenid," said Louie, and Evie repeated it with several
 promptings.)

ANTEIOS: *Corso!* (shouted Ernie with enthusiasm). *Ib timer ibid
 rom.*

At this point, Evie, whose memory had failed completely,
 broke down and burst into tears, much to Louie's discomfiture.
 With a brusque gesture, she thrust Evie behind her into a seat
 against the wall (where she sobbed soundlessly for a minute and
 then looked up, her fat brown face pearly with two tears).
 Louie announced now, "I will do Megara: Evie forgot it."

MEGARA: *Timer este rom y este heinid pe ibid fill.*

"I don't understand," said Sam, with a floundering expression,
 "what is it?" Meanwhile Ernie rushed on,

ANTEIOS: *Ke aben ia fecend?*

MEGARA: *Tada jur vec tarquinid trucs ib rapen men solno juc
 men pacidud. Y hodo men solentum es du. Alienis dovo.
 Nomen de alienis es hein. Vad por ic vol fecen ibid ocs blog.*

ANTEIOS: *Ib esse asenen—asanen—men libid fill.*

MEGARA: *Sid ia pod ia vod chassen ib semba fills re Lear.*

ANTEIOS: *Roffendo!* (shouted Ernie and again shouted). *Ke
 tafelis!*

At this the children began to giggle and Ernie, repeating with
 a great shout, "*Roffendo! Ke tafelis!*" all the children cried,
 "*Roffendo! Ke tafelis!*"

"Do they know what it means?" asked Sam, rousing himself
 out of a perfect stupor of amazement. Louie explained reproach-
 fully, "Yes: that means, 'Horrible! What a she-devil!'" Sam's
 eyes popped, but further remarks were prevented by Ernie in-
 sisting with his cue "*Ke tafelis! Ke tafelis!*" Louie continued.

MEGARA: *Fill in crimen aco ib aben aunto plangid. Cumu mat
 dic ia cada: sol vec incriminenidud. Sid aten atem es grantach
 ke pos fecem. Ia ocen ib esse volid prin men aten men atem,
 men jur. Alienis vol mort ib.*

ANTEIOS: *Ke alienis? Esse ib imnen? Brass im, men fill.*

MEGARA: (Shrieking feebly) *No im! Suppo! Alienis garrots im!
 Herpes te!*

ANTEIOS: *Ke alienis? Esse im immen? Ke fecen ib? Brass, brass
 im! (Aside) Ma Herpes? (At this point Ernie began to writhe
 and hiss, poking out his tongue instantly at all present,
 imitating a snake.)*

MEGARA: (Shrieking feebly) *Ia mort. Ib esse alienis! Ib mort im! Occides! Occides! Mat!*

ANTEIOS: *Ia solno brass im. Men libid fill* (but in embracing Megara, Anteios hisses again like a snake).

MEGARA: (Shrieking hoarsely) *Mat, rom garrots im, Occides!*
(And she dies.)

After this striking scene in double-dutch, Sam, looking with pale annoyance on Louie, asked what the Devil was the use of writing in Choctaw. What language was it? Why couldn't it be in English?

"Did Euripides write in English?" asked Louie with insolence, but at the same time she placed the translation in front of her father, and he was able to follow the *Tragedy of the Snake-Man, or Father*.

Father—Anteios and Daughter—Megara.

ANTEIOS: I must make sure of you. In my eyes you are guilty of a nameless smirch. If I leave you alone for only an hour you sin.

MEGARA: My sin is solitude. My joy too. Yet it is queer in your company only I feel guilty.

ANTEIOS: Naturally! You fear your father.

MEGARA: Fear to be a father and to be hated by your daughter.

ANTEIOS: What have I done?

MEGARA: Every day with rascally wiles you ravish my only joy, my peace of mind. And now my solitude is two. A stranger is there. The name of the stranger is hate. Go, for he would make your eyes bulge out.

ANTEIOS: You are sick, my beloved daughter.

MEGARA: If I could, I would hunt you out like the daughters of King Lear.

ANTEIOS: Horrible: what a she-devill

MEGARA: (I am) an innocent girl that you have too much plagued. As mother says, I am rotten: but with innocence. If to breathe the sunlight is a sin, what can I do? I see you are determined to steal my breath, my sun, my daylight. The stranger will kill you.

ANTEIOS: What stranger? Are you mad? Kiss me, my daughter.

MEGARA: (Choking) Not me! Help! The stranger strangles me. Thou snake!

ANTEIOS: What stranger? Are you mad? What are you doing? Embrace, kiss me. (Aside) The snake? (He tries to hiss to himself.)

MEGARA: (Shrieking) I am dying. You are the stranger. You are killing me. Murderer! Murderer! Mother!

ANTEIOS: I am only embracing you. My beloved daughter. (But he hisses.)

MEGARA: Mother, father is strangling me. Murderer! (She dies.)

As soon as Sam had read this, Louie also put beside his plate the vocabulary to prove that her translation and the words were quite correct; and with a cheek of burning pride, full of playwright's defiance, she waited for his verdict. Sam said slowly, "And where is Act II?" Louie was short. "It all happened in Act I." The children, oddly excited, shrieked with laughter, and Louie, after one glare, rushed out of the room. Sam fumbled with the papers, muttering, "I don't understand: is it a silly joke?" He asked the children, "Did Looloo tell you? What is her darnfool idea?"

Ernie explained,

"She said she would have written it in French, but she doesn't know enough grammar, she said. So she made up a language."

"Damn my eyes if I've ever seen anything so stupid and silly," complained Sam, looking at the vocabulary again. He shouted, "Looloo, you come back here: don't stay in there blubbering! Oh, for God's sake, it's my birthday: don't be an idiot." Louie trailed slowly out, while the children, chapfallen, considered her mournfully. Evie, extremely abashed at having forgotten her part, had squeezed herself into her mother's chair with Tommy and put her arm round his neck.

Sam said, "Sit down, Looloo: blow me down, if I know what's the matter with you. Instead of getting better, you are getting more and more silly." He suddenly burst into a shout, "If Euripides or any other Dago playwright makes you as crazy as that, you'd better shut up your books and come home and look after your brothers and sister. I can't understand it with a father like you have. I'm sorry I didn't insist on your learning science, and nothing but science. Whatever your stepmother's influence, you've had my training and love from the earliest days, and I did not expect you above all to be so silly: you were the child of a great love. However, I suppose you'll grow out of it." He sighed, "At least, I hope so: you're growing out of everything else. Well, let's say, some day you'll be better."

Louie began to squirm, and, unconsciously holding out one of her hands to him, she cried, "I am so miserable and poor and rotten and so vile and melodramatic, I don't know what to do. I don't know what to do. I can't bear the daily misery. I can't bear the horror of everyday life."

The scene opens with a description of the natural world--oddly, in human terms. Cedar-waxwings are "wasteful little wretches." We then encounter the wasps, at work with a "do-or-die" air. They are characterized in terms usually reserved for human beings, though terms very different from those describing the cedar-waxwings. But this is no Fable of the Beasts: Stead is not forcing animal behavior to conform to human, nor is she ridiculing man by finding his counterparts in the animal world. The natural and human worlds are simply alike and part of one another.

After the natural world is discussed, largely in what we think of as human terms, the human world enters. Henny feels "nervous as a cat." Louisa can barely move her legs--"stumps" (that is, like trees)--in the heavy weather. Henny and Louisa react to the world as differently as do cedar-waxwings and wasps. It is not only the narrator who makes the connections between human and natural worlds. Louisa looks at the reflections of trees in a creek and thinks they are "like the shades of a woman's unsunned breasts."

In this early morning, the sky is like "a pan full of liquid"; it is described in terms of a human artifact. Though one does not usually think of sky as a container, particularly of something heavier than air such as liquid, of course it can contain water, especially in vapor form. There is a "breeding, inward-looking" atmosphere, the air

of fertility so intense that "it seemed beans would begin to push out of the earth suddenly." The day is then connected to a pregnant bride, another (now human) image of breeding. It is a surprising comparison, and a surprising image. One does not usually characterize a day using beans and brides, nor think of a bride as pregnant. Nor does one think of something (especially a bride) as being simultaneously "dull and potent," yet it is an apt description of a pregnant bride and of this heavy, still, affecting day. The passage itself is stupefying, so crowded with odd juxtapositions that we come to accept the odd as ordinary in the human and natural worlds.

This is a lengthy description of nature (for this novel), and that fact, combined with the discussion of breeding, makes one feel that something important is to happen. Further, one feels this because it is one of the extraordinary days on which "the sun could be looked at with a naked eye." In the play, Megara speaks of breathing the sunlight. To look directly at the sun suggests looking directly at the source of life. The play's words for 'sun,' atem, and 'breath,' aten, are similar, further suggesting this connection. The sun is sometimes associated with maleness as the earth is associated with femaleness (breeding, bride). Louie's play, "The Tragedy of the Snake-Man, or Father," looks directly at the male source of life.

The scene shifts to the father and the human world of breeding, Sam's birthday. Then, there is an odd exchange.

Henny gives Louisa a pair of hand-knitted socks "furtively, and with a shamed face." To someone unfamiliar with the novel, it is surprising that a wife's gift to her husband should be given in such a manner. But The Man Who Loved Children is partly an exposition of married hatred, and in fact Henny's act (by page 399) is surprising only for its kindness. The war between Sam and Henny has been intense throughout the novel, but it has lulls and this is one of them. The differences between them are so great that the two can barely communicate. Here, Henny does not give the socks directly to Sam but, as with her insults, passes them through a child. As she misinterprets and rejects his acts of kindness throughout the novel, he deprecates hers:

"Well, I don't say no, boys and girls: socks is socks; but I love hinges. . . ."

The contrasts and contradictions within Sam's character are extreme and readily apparent. Sam has proclaimed his birthday a family holiday, and has been exulting over presents from five of his children. Sam's attitude towards his birthday epitomizes his character: childish, egocentric, joyful. Sam's childish and self-aggrandizing sides are revealed again when Louie appears with Henny's gift: "'Is this a present for Sambo-the Great?'" He is as delighted to receive another present as any five-year-old, and thinks such offerings are due him. Sam refers to himself in the third person, a feature of language typical of children and royalty.

Sam reviews his presents in his Artemus Ward dialect, one of Sam's many languages in the novel.¹ He teases the children about their presents, humoring and belittling them at the same time: "'but I love . . . doyleys [Evie's present], even ef the stitches which is there are a bit spidery. . . .'" After Sam completes his review, he looks at Louie as she alone has yet to makè an offering. When Louie announces her present, "'It's a tragedy, and it's only in one scene,'" Sam's linguistic abilities at once take over to denigrate and humor: "'Hit's doubtless a tragedy'"--a pathetic product-- "'en once seen [in one scene], is seen pretty often: bit whar is hit?'"

Sam is a master manipulator of words but, ironically, this inventor of languages repeatedly puzzles at and derides Louie's play for not being in English. Louie has merely carried one of her father's salient characteristics to its logical extreme, as children often do. Sam uses language, as often in this scene, to dominate and one-up his family. Louie employs an exotic language which forces Sam to enter her world as she has been forced to enter his. She is not only the unassailable authority, but the only authority in that language, and thus Sam cannot talk her play away.

Sam is not only child with his children but father to them. Before Sam allows the play to begin, he insists the children lick their oatmeal bowls clean, reversing the usual admonition to children not to lick their plates. Sam's

ideas about how things should be done are often original or at least contrary to custom, yet he does not extend to his children this freedom to deviate. He allows, or insists upon, their diverging from social norms, but is rigid in requiring them to adhere to his own sense of propriety. The Man Who Loved Children is concerned with those who slavishly uphold society's conventions and values, but it is also an exploration of the individualist who makes a tyranny of his own truths.

The licking of the oatmeal bowls is significant not only as revealing Sam's way of seeing and manipulating the world. It also reveals the curious world that children in general and Louisa in particular must inhabit. The representation of Louisa as a child-artist is one of the novel's achievements, and shows the distance between the conventional picture of children and what they may in fact be like. Although Louisa's play, about to be performed, is a work of utter seriousness, Sam's instruction to lick the bowls clean reminds us that these are children. A child, it seems, is a creature constantly shifting among radically different realms, on the one hand writing (or performing) a play invoking deep passions and, on the other, licking a bowl clean according to a father's instruction. In the novel, children know what adults consider appropriate to children, and they partly accede to this conception. But this role has almost nothing to do with their essential being--passions, opinions,

interests, aspirations. Licking the oatmeal bowls is one of the foolish conventions inflicted on these children by their father, and one which they succumb to mostly because they are in a weak position. The topsi-turviness which begins the chapter--nature discussed in human terms, people described as animals--is thus carried over into Sam's world and the child's world.

Sam is a great explainer. Though he misunderstands most things--himself, his family, his colleagues, his government--he believes he understands most things, and expatiates on numerous matters throughout the novel. Yet when Sam is presented with "The Snake-Man," "about a father and a little girl," he is mystified. His blindness is ironic because Louie's play is partly based on his own psyche and on his relationship with his daughter. Typically, when Sam is confronted with a point-of-view different from his own, he can explain it, or explain where it errs. Louie's play is so passionate, forceful, and unrelenting that, though he tries, he cannot explain her play away.

Sam's friend Saul Pilgrim tells Sam that when he talks he creates a world, and this is evident throughout the novel. Louisa has created a world out of words as well, so in a sense her act is an imitation of her father. However there is a crucial difference: Sam's words obfuscate the truth; his verbiage buries the world. Sam's constant verbal out-pourings focus on the "moral, high-minded world" (p. 9), and

he can barely acknowledge anything that does not conform to his rosy vision of life: "tragedy itself could not worm its way by any means into his heart. Such a thing would have made him ill or mad, and he was all for health, sanity, success, and human love" (p. 47). Louie's words are an attempt to treat a situation honestly; to reveal the truth not to cover it. Sam's language has replaced the world for him, so as even ten-year-old Evie knows, Sam "'can't understand'" the world depicted in Louie's tragedy.

The "Snake-Man" is an obviously grotesque figure, and Louie's play thus seems strange from the outset, not only to Sam but probably to any reader. Yet Louie's choice of title could not be more appropriate. Sam is a naturalist who loves almost every creature. He is a rationalist too, and detests superstitions. However, Sam abhors snakes, and they are part of his only superstition. He believes that when he dreams of snakes, as he does several times in the novel, terrible things will ensue. Snakes are evil, devilish creatures to Sam and they forebode ill, yet it is a Snake-Man that Sam becomes in "Herpes Rom." Instead of recognizing this figure so important to his psyche, he is puzzled by it, just as Anteios is in the play. Sam is the son of a Free-thinking father and fundamentalist mother. He combines the two by becoming a dogmatic atheist whose mind is suffused with Christian symbols, the snake as a symbol of the devil being clearly adopted from Christian iconography.

Despite Sam's training as a naturalist, his feeling about snakes cannot be overcome.

Sam is a complex of ironies and contradictions, and, though he is extreme in this respect, this characterization reflects Stead's larger sense of the world. The novel explores the ironies and contradictions of Sam's character, but it also makes these reasonable, natural, and unsurprising. Ironic and strange as it is that a naturalist-rationalist-atheist should have such a superstition about snakes, we are made to understand the genesis of Sam's feeling. The ironic, contradictory, and strange are made to seem ordinary in The Man Who Loved Children.

But Sam as Snake-Man is appropriate in relation to Louie's experience as well. Snakes are often phallic symbols, and it is Sam's instruction about sex to Louie which partly inspires "Herpes Rom":

Sam . . . much perturbed because Louisa had an "unscientific" view of procreation . . . had given her three books--Shelley's Poems (to help with her poetry, said he), Frazer's Golden Bough (for the anthropological side of the question, said he), and James Bryce's book on Belgian atrocities (to explain our entry into the war and the need for America's policing the world, said he). (p. 378)

What Louie learns from these books is quite different from what her father anticipates:

Louie now read stern proofs of stranger fairy tales acted in reality, more gruesome than any Grimms have recorded, though the Grimms are fearful enough, with their tales of forest cannibalism and murders. From the two latter books Louie was able to fill her day-dreams and night thoughts with the mysteries of men's violence . . . young girls sent into barns with

detachments of soldiers and "the ripening grain," soldiers winding the hair of women around their sabers and thus dragging them to the floor to satisfy their bestial desires. . . . Sam had revealed to her in a few weeks, and without a word of his, the unspeakable madness of sensuality in past ages and concealed imaginations . . . and her father had told her to study the books carefully with the following strange words: "It is the father who should be the key to the adult world, for his daughters". . . . [S]he began suddenly to despise and loathe Sam. . . . (p. 379)

Here, the narrator comments on decorum: accounts of rituals and battles "acted in reality" are stranger than fairytales. In the narrator's only other intrusion of this kind, life is again viewed to be as strange or "indecorous" as any fiction. Louie is telling her siblings a fantastic bedtime story, "Hawkins, the North Wind," "while things just as queer as Hawkins went on downstairs: Henny, of course, it was not Hawkins shrieking . . ." (p. 432).

Louie consistently uses the language Sam gives her to combat his language. Of the books Sam gives Louisa, Shelley's Poems affects her most. When Louisa reads The Cenci (itself based on an historical account), she perceives Beatrice to be a companion in suffering: "she began marveling . . . for it seemed that (eliminating the gloomy and gorgeous scene) Beatrice was in a case like hers" (p. 382). Louie quotes to Sam from The Cenci--using the language he has given her against him--and he is shocked by her recitations until he realizes they are from the book he has given her (pp. 382-83). The books Sam gives Louie cause her to loathe her father, but they also give her an artistic rendering of that loathing.

Sam's gift of books inspires "Herpes Rom" in two senses. It causes Louie to erupt with the passion she then depicts in the play, and it shows her how to depict that passion. Ironically, Sam's love, which makes him give Louie the books, produces hatred; and that hatred too is a gift, for it allows her to write the play.

Louie distinguishes her situation from Beatrice's, where incest actually occurs. Indeed, such an act is unimaginable in, and to, Sam; and unlike Cenci, he would never do anything willfully or overtly evil. But because language is Sam's primary vehicle, it is appropriate that books should be his way of introducing Louie to sex--"the father should be the key to the adult world, for his daughters.'" The undercurrents of incest are powerful, even if they are unconscious. During one battle, Sam tells Henny he has reduced his manifestations of love for Louisa because it enrages Henny (p. 127). Henny, "creature of wonderful instinct" (p. 36), is not persuaded and continues to detest Louie. Henny's revulsion from Louie's physical being, particularly her sexual being, is connected to Sam's unconscious incestuous talk. Throughout The Man Who Loved Children, Sam tries to draw close to Louie, but she has begun to reject his company as the novel opens. It is Evie, whom Sam calls Little-Womey (woman), that Sam turns to next. Louie is interrupted from writing "Herpes Rom" by the following: "'Why is Mothering out all day? Why is the Henny-penny always away from the chicken-lickens now? . . .

Why. Little-Womey, soon you got to be my wife, I speck'" (p. 385). Louie's choice of the word 'Herpes' in the play's title is appropriate because as a naturalist, Sam uses the Latin designations, but it also suggests the diseased sexuality associated with Sam.

The snake as phallic symbol and as a figure for the devil are so widely known that Louie's use of the snake in her play has not only the private significance of snakes to Sam and Louie, but a far-ranging significance. The figure would be effective if one knew nothing of Louie's experience or of Sam's psyche and religious background. Though initially bewildering, even bizarre, it becomes highly reverberant and apt, connected to the private experiences of Sam and Louie, and the public domains of religion, psychological theory, and literature. In Louie's world as in Stead's, the bizarre is often profoundly realistic.

Sam constantly tries to impose his sugary ideas on Louie both through his frequent private lectures and through his gifts of books, so in a sense one of Louie's major obstacles is Sam's attempt to "educate" her. However, Louie does learn an enormous amount from Sam--though what Louie learns is rarely what Sam intends to teach. Louie's strength and independence of mind allow her to use Sam's instruction to construct and refine her own vision of the world. The frequency and force with which Sam puts forth his own views causes Louie to sharpen her wits and words to combat his.

But it is not simply that Louie reverses Sam's lessons. He gives her Shelley's Poems "to help with her poetry," and it prompts her to write "Herpes Rom." Sam rejects the play, but he has helped in its birthing.

Irony is so deeply at the heart of The Man Who Loved Children that one ceases to view it as that. It is ironic that Sam, great ridiculer of religion, should believe so thoroughly in one of religion's primary symbols. It is ironic that Sam, great fearer of snakes, should be figured as a Snake-Man in his daughter's play and should not recognize that figure. It is ironic that Sam, great espouser of chastity and married love, should become a symbol of perverted sex to his daughter. But while the novel consistently reveals ironies, it is not ironic in the conventional sense of the term. 'Irony' suggests that there is an order from which one is diverging, but if the order is that nature and human experience are always surprising, various, and strange, then occurrences which would usually be viewed as ironic become the norm. The Man Who Loved Children makes us inhabit its world so completely, the most surprising--ironic?--thing becomes that human beings continue to point out ironies at all, as if the world operated, or had ever operated, in "normal" or traditionally decorous ways.

One hardly knows how to use the word 'ironic' in describing Little-Womey's reaction to the play. Louie has enlisted two of her siblings to act out "Herpes Rom," but

after Evie's first lines as the daughter, she collapses in tears and forgetfulness. This forces Louie to take over the part of Megara, intensifying the drama of the situation because the connection between the play and life (in the novel) becomes even surer. That Evie would forget her lines is entirely plausible due to her age and the difficulty of the lines. But passions frighten Evie (we see this elsewhere in the novel, as when she freezes at Louie's anger (p. 52)), and besides, she is Sam's "Little-Womey." Her sudden forgetfulness seems to be an instinctive recoiling from the play's passions, and an unwillingness to offend her father. Evie has told Louie, "'Daddy said I could be his wife,' . . . looking up at her confidentially and not sure whether she would laugh and approve" (p. 385). The novel always provides the "appropriate" explanation for a character's action--Evie is young and the play is difficult--but there are more subtle motives as well, and ones not always ascribed to children. Stead consistently violates conventional conceptions of what is appropriate, or decorous, for a child (a family, a bird) even as she confirms our experience of what children (and the world) are like.

The play proceeds with two interruptions from Sam, expressing his bewilderment. This bewilderment places him in contrast to the children, who are "oddly excited." Though they announce to Sam before the play, "'We don't know what it means,'" they participate in it fully and react to its pulse.

Throughout the novel, the children are delighted by imaginative language and use language creatively themselves. They are full of lively stories, made-up words, puns, odd humorous pronunciations, nicknames, skits. Here, their excitement is partly that "Herpes Rom" has been a secret, and now the secret is out. There is evidence for this before the play when all are bursting to let Sam in on what is to come. But it is after the play that the children are "oddly excited" and the choice of 'odd' confirms that something beyond revealing a secret is operating. It is the poetry of the play, its language and passions, which excite them.

The reader may be in something of Sam's position when he first interrupts with "'I don't understand,'" as "Herpes Rom" is initially confusing. Yet Sam's incomprehension is so fierce as to be of interest. At the conclusion of the performance, Louie presents Sam with a translation, but it is not the language which is Sam's only obstacle. After reading the play in English he repeats, "'I don't understand.'" Ironically, the children understand more than their father.

Sam is constantly engaged in trying to make others understand him, and adopt his dialects, sentiments, projects, and views; however, "'I don't understand'" is Sam's refrain whenever he listens to others. Louie continually tries to make her father understand--himself, her, the difference between them--but her efforts are always misunderstood:

"You will soon understand many things, Looloo-girl,"
She smiled sourly.

"You will be like me!"

She grinned, "How do you know I will be like you?". . . .

"I don't want you to be like me," cried Sam,
annoyed; "don't be such a dope. I only want you to think
the way I do: and not even that if you have good reasons
for your convictions."

Louie grinned sarcastically, "You say so, but you're
always trying to make me think like you; I can't. . . ."
(pp. 354-55)

Sam's incomprehension of Louie and their situation sometimes
seems malicious, and some critics have seen Sam as such.²

Yet there is abundant evidence that Sam's words and actions
are innocent, and his incomprehension genuine. Louie finds a
letter her natural mother had written about Sam before her
death: "'Samuel . . . does not understand women or children.
He is such a good young man, he is too good to understand
people at all'" (p. 524). When Louie reads this letter to
Sam in the closing pages of the novel, Sam characteristically
misunderstands the words, construing them as thorough praise.

The surest proof of Sam's innocence is his bewilderment
at Louie's play. The "Herpes Rom" episode suggests our
literature's most famous play-within-a-play, which Hamlet
uses to determine his stepfather's guilt or innocence: "'The
play's the thing/ Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the
King.'" Though Louie has no such explicit motive, her many
attempts to make Sam understand suggest that catching his
conscience is part of her unconscious purpose. Unlike
Claudius, who knows of his contemptible deeds, Sam believes
so completely in his own goodness that he does not recognize

himself in the play. But ironically, Sam too is proven guilty by the play through his reaction. Sam's flaw is his profound incomprehension, his inability to understand any viewpoint but his own. In tandem with this is Sam's desire to inflict his rigid vision of the world on others. Sam's reaction to "Herpes Rom" proves him guilty of innocence. Incomprehension is Sam's flaw rather than any wrong act. The antagonist in Stead's fiction is no traditional villain.

How people do and do not understand one another is a central theme of the novel, and the word 'understand' occurs frequently as characters talk to one another. Sam and Henny are grotesques--characters who have embraced a few truths to the exclusion of others, interpreting all experience by these axioms and so turning them into falsehoods.³ All their endless flow of words does not produce understanding between these characters of conflicting visions. What the novel suggests is the failure of any worldview. The reader may sometimes feel sympathetic to Henny when she rages against Sam's relentless rosiness, or with Sam when he protests against his wife's rages or expresses a genuine affection for his children, but the novel subverts such simple responses.

Part of Louie's mental journey is gaining an understanding of her parents. Of all the children, she is the only one who tries to understand Sam and Henny's relationship: "Louie tried to piece the thing together; Ernie concluded that adults were irrational" (p. 35). Midway through the

book we learn, "There was nothing that Sam had to say that Louie did not already understand" (p. 333). Though Sam is complex, his ideas and reactions are limited and repetitive, so it is possible for Louie to feel that she has mastered her father. Unlike her parents, Louie wants to understand and in having this desire educates herself about the world: "Louie never said what was in her mind and she had a kind heart; so she came down . . . and listened for hours to the notions that these strange poor folks [neighbors] had about themselves. . . . Sam had a voice, she had an ear . . ." (p. 72).

Sam and Henny are great talkers, but they cannot listen to words in conflict with their own visions of the world, their own private conceptions of decorum. They rarely speak to one another as a result, using their children as messengers and translators, and when they do it is usually to rail at the other's distorted viewpoint. When either talks to anyone, the result is a monologue. Their voices fill the book, yet they never seriously converse with anyone. Sam's simple statement, "'I don't understand,'" becomes a tragic refrain. Louie is the novel's hero partly because she alone seriously tries to understand Pollitry and others. She is not trying to develop a "worldview" or a "personality." She is trying merely to be clear-headed.

Being clear-headed, however, does not have to mean consciously clear-headed. While Louie's play is unquestionably

an imaginative recreation of her relationship with Sam and potentially a vehicle for his understanding, Louie is apparently unaware of these aspects. Besides giving the play to Sam for a birthday present, she hopes there will be a second performance that evening when Miss Aiden, her beloved teacher, comes to dinner. How can Louie's behavior be explained in light of the play's autobiographical content? Louie is a natural artist, or in traditional terms, she is inspired. The play comes out quickly, in one evening, and there is no evidence that she associates it with her own life as she is writing it:

In June would be Sam's birthday, and for it she would write a play which the children could act. She got out her pen and paper, and, instead of writing for Miss Aiden, wrote for herself, not for the children, a strange little play. When it was written (there were scarcely twenty lines in it), she turned it into a secret language that she began to make up there on the spot. (p. 385)

Though the subject of "Herpes Rom" emerges from the depths of her being, the actual writing of it is almost automatic. Another of Louie's compositions is written in Miss Aiden's class. "This production . . . left Louie astounded (for she had no idea how she had written it, nor why with such ease) . . ." (p. 337). In the throes of Louie's crush on Miss Aiden, she takes on another project. Though this is memorizing, not writing, there is a similar automatic and unconscious impulse: "She began to learn Paradise Lost by heart. Why? She did not know really: it was a spectacular way of celebrating Aiden" (p. 340).⁴ Strictly speaking,

Louie is not fully aware of what she has written, and it is for this reason that she can so innocently offer her play to Sam for a birthday present.

It is, to a large extent, this unconscious awareness that bewilders Sam. He knows Louie is a threat, but he does not know how to name it. Language fails him. Anteios' first speech--"I must make sure of you. In my eyes you are guilty of a nameless smirch"--recalls Sam's actions when Louie is writing the Aiden Cycle ("a poem of every conceivable form and also every conceivable meter in the English language" (p. 340)). Louie goes to her room "to do homework" each night, until Sam decides he must make sure of her:

[T]hen Sam decided that all Louie's homework must be done in the family dining room, under the eye of one and all. . . . When the others had gone to bed, Sam was full of little speculations and homilies, trying to draw her out, trying to get in touch with her. . . . Sam felt he must fight it out with Louie; it was now or never in the struggle for power. (pp. 340-41)

Sam believes that his guidance will improve Louie, and that to guide her he must know her views so that he can correct them. Sam's misguided benevolence is transformed into sheer threat when Anteios speaks. Anteios' talk of the "'nameless smirch'" corresponds to the numerous times when Sam finds fault with Louie, but cannot specify her wrong. After the play, Sam speaks his version of the accusation: "'blow me down, if I know what's the matter with you.'" Sam calls Louie many names in the course of the novel and often tries

to define the nature of her "'smirch,'" but, like Anteios, he cannot ever name it.

While Louie may be as little conscious as Sam is of the "'nameless smirch,'" she knows the uses of art. Art is a condensation and intensification of life, and so is this play a condensation and intensification of life in the novel. Megara says, "'Fear to be a father and to be hated by your daughter,'" but Louie has never spoken so boldly to her father. While hatred is clearly a part of her feeling toward Sam, it is not the whole of her feeling toward him. There are instances elsewhere in the novel when she loves and admires him. Implicit in this play-within-a-novel is the question of the relation between art and life.

When one reads "Herpes Rom," initially one feels, yes, this is the truth of the situation, this is Louie's essential emotion and this is the essence of Sam's action. Yet with the evidence of the novel in hand, one knows that Louie's feelings toward her father are more complex than hatred, and Sam's actions, while suffocating, could not actually prove fatal to Louie (as Anteios' are to Megara). "Herpes Rom" reflects part of the situation, but it does not represent the whole of it. The play is a reduction and simplification of Louie's feelings towards her father because it focusses exclusively on hatred. By reducing and simplifying Louie's feelings to one passion, it intensifies and enlarges the importance of that passion. "Herpes Rom" is, in short, a fiction.

Nevertheless, it is about this aspect of their relationship which Louie chooses to write. In a sense, "Herpes Rom" is truer to life than life (in the novel). That is, though Louie has never said, "'Fear to be a father and to be hated by your daughter,'" this is a crucial aspect of her feelings. Though Sam is not a Snake-Man in life, this figure captures aspects of his nature more precisely than anything "realistic" said of him in the novel. Life is complex, fuzzy, and uncertain compared to art. Focussing on one aspect of a person (or forty) instead of four thousand is distortion, and fiction, but it may at least capture that aspect. Literature is the only way for Louie to suggest truths not allowed in Sam's proper, decorous conception of himself and life. Thus, "Herpes Rom" is a means of access to certain parts of the relationship between Louie and Sam.

The closest Louie comes to Megara's "'Fear to be a father and to be hated by your daughter'" is one night when Sam is making his familiar, mistaken comments about Louisa, himself, and universal brotherhood. Sam periodically interrupts himself to ask, "'What are you thinking of, Looloo? . . . What are you writing, Looloo. Are you making notes of what your dad is telling you?'" (p. 363). Louisa is in fact writing, "'Shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up, I can't stand your gassing, oh, what a windbag, what will shut you up'" (p. 363). Sam finally peers over her shoulder to

answer his own questions, and Louie allows him to read what she has written. In the play, Anteios asks Megara, "'What have I done?'" and this reflects Sam's innocent stance as well. When Sam reads what his daughter has written, our sympathies switch to him as Stead makes clear his pain and incomprehension of Louie's hatred: "He was terribly hurt. He could hardly believe his eyes. . . . 'What is the matter with you? You're mean and full of hate. I think of love and you are all hate. . . . Your devil of a stepmother has done for you. . . . I don't understand you'" (p. 364).

The Man Who Loved Children simultaneously shocks and corroborates our sense of how people talk to one another. There is a natural recoiling from the hatred and violence in the novel as there is from hatred and violence in life. The characters recoil from the venom themselves. Yet Louie's cruelty toward Sam finally comes to be accepted and even admired. As we read page after page of Sam's naive, impossible idealism and of his inadvertent tyranny, his incessant talk smothers us as it smothers Louie. It becomes increasingly clear that Sam will never understand, nor will he let Louie alone: "'You don't understand, Dad: I am sympathetic, but I heard it too often; I can't stand it anymore'" (p. 439). Sam's love and language are suffocating Louie, though he does not realize this. Sam is benevolent, but he is not beneficent.

Louie's cruelty to Sam may be partly explained by the fact that she is an adolescent, at an age when such outbursts

commonly occur against parents. Like Louie, many adolescents find their attempts at parental reform futile and want to leave home as soon as feasible. Louie's rebellion may be more extreme than some, but then Sam is extremely incomprehending.

However Louie's ability to be cruel has a more specific source within the novel. Though one often thinks of children learning love from their mothers, among Henny's great lessons to Louie is how to hate. Cruelty is also Henny's defense (and offense) against Sam:

Whenever Louie's irritations got too deep, she mooched in to see her mother. Here she had learned, without knowing she had learned it, was a brackish well of hate to drink from, and a great passion of gall . . . something that put iron in her soul and made her strong to resist the depraved healthiness and idle jollity of the Pollit clan. (p. 258)

Stead's heroes are remarkable ecosystems, their surprising needs met from various sources and obtained in ingenious ways (and sometimes instinctively). Dorothy Green writes:

[I]t makes sense to describe this work as an 'ecological novel.' It presents the observer with the spectacle of a struggle for survival in a habitat which is too small and too impoverished for the 'fighting fish' it contains. The dominant male survives in it, his mate succumbs, but his daughter, partly because of, partly in spite of her genetic inheritance from her father and her own mother, partly because of the characteristics acquired from her step-mother, manages to fight her way out of this closed ecosystem. . . .⁵

It is crucial that Louie learn to resist her father. She gains the knowledge of how to do so from her stepmother. Ironically, Henny's instruction in cruelty and hatred are great gifts to Louisa because they allow her to survive Sam.

Cruelty is not Louie's first reaction to Sam, however. She asks numerous times to be sent to her natural mother's relatives in Harpers Ferry where she spends summers, but Sam rejects these suggestions: "'Good heavens, I'm trying to bring you closer to me, and the first thing you think of is to go off to Harpers Ferry'" (p. 364). Sam's persistent incomprehension provokes directness to the point of cruelty, but even this does not make Sam understand.

In "Herpes Rom," Megara feels, and is, endangered by Anteios. Her solitude and peace of mind are destroyed by Anteios, and also by the hatred he arouses within her: "'And now my solitude is two. A stranger is there. The name of the stranger is hate.'" For Louie as well, hatred is a stranger invading her soul, as much an intruder to her peace of mind as Sam is. Louie does not like the behavior which results from this hatred, and it keeps her from her poetry to which she is very dedicated. After Sam reads Louie's commentary of "shut ups," she is remorseful, unable to write her daily sonnet, and intensely self-doubting:

Louie heard the screen door close and felt a pain in her heart. . . . Then she rose mechanically and got out her pen and journal preparatory to writing her sonnet to Miss Aiden; but she sat staring at the blank page. She put her head in her hands, not even crying, groaned, "What can I do? What will be the end of me?" (p. 364)

Megara's statement, "'my solitude is two,'" is also true for Louie.

People, and characters in novels, are sometimes involved

in situations anathema to them. But a subtler fact is represented here: people (and characters) are sometimes overtaken by passions which are anathema to them. They detest the emotion and themselves for feeling what they do--the passion is a stranger to, and in, their being--yet it is there. In an extreme form it is madness; and indeed Anteios, like Sam, accuses his daughter of being sick and mad.

Megara's statement--"'And now my solitude is two. A stranger is there. The name of the stranger is hate'"--may initially seem bizarre, unconnected to Louie's experience and to human experience. The language is of course metaphorical and its power derives from that. The metaphor makes the passion hate, experienced as substantial, take on flesh. Hate as stranger is more real, more true, more like hate, than hate as simply a passion. The dialogue of "Herpes Rom" is odd not only because it is in an invented language, but because of its content. The brevity and intensity of the statements are unlike ordinary human speech, and particularly unlike Sam's volubility. Yet ironically, it is Sam's simple words, clear expression, and constant explanations which obfuscate rather than the strange language of Louie's play.

When Anteios accuses Megara of being sick and mad, she responds: "'If I could, I would hunt you out like the daughters of King Lear.'" Regan and Goneril are our literature's

worst daughters, and for Megara to aspire to be like them is shocking and affecting. Megara violates the conventional conception of how a daughter talks, feels, and acts, as Regan and Goneril do in King Lear. But the allusion to King Lear reverberates beyond Regan and Goneril. Sam is a kind of Lear figure in several ways. Like Lear, he acts wrongly without realizing it, and errs by believing too much in words. Like Lear, Sam wants his daughter to say what he believes is appropriate, particularly in avowing her love for her father. The issue is one of decorum. Like Lear, Sam is outraged when one of his daughters does not speak as he desires. Megara's next statement further suggests the connection between Cordelia and Megara: "'(I am) an innocent girl. . . ." Like Megara, Louie feels she is innocent, but she also has been "'too much plagued.'" Megara and Louie do not have the patience of Cordelia, but more closely resemble another innocent daughter, Shelley's Beatrice, in desiring vengeance.

Megara continues to protest her innocence, but she also makes a surprising assertion for a heroine: "'As mother says, I am rotten: but with innocence.'" It is difficult to imagine Cordelia or Beatrice saying, "'I am rotten,'" but the indecorous becomes appropriate as it reflects the real world. Henny, too, feels Louisa is rotten but not blameworthy. Conversely, Sam, like Anteiros, loves his daughter but finds her guilty. Though Henny has neglected Louisa

for much of the novel, Louie prefers this neglect to Sam's love:

Henny, delicate and anemic, really disliked the powerful, clumsy, healthy child, and avoided contact with her as much as she could. It happened that this solitude was exactly what Louie most craved. Like all children, she expected intrusion and impertinence: she very early became grateful to her stepmother for the occasions when Henny most markedly neglected her. . . . (pp. 33-34)

Significantly, Louie depicts Megara calling "'Mother'" twice in the play. The neglecter becomes the protector, just as the benevolent father becomes the predator.

Like Megara, Louie sometimes feels she is rotten, especially when she has expressed her feelings directly (for instance, when she allows Sam to read the "shut ups"). After the performance of "Herpes Rom," she weeps, "'I am so miserable and poor and rotten and so vile and melodramatic. . . .'" Louie's self hatred is appropriate to her age as adolescents typically feel they are 'rotten' from toe to top, but the emotion springs from a more particular source. As Louie has learned to hate from Henny, she has also learned self-hatred. Henny despises herself, but she has transformed that self-hatred into a virtue. When Sam's "high-minded" sister Jo rages that sister Bonnie has had an illegitimate baby at her house, Henny's proud self-loathing erupts:

"I'm as rotten as she is . . . I've taken money from a man to keep his children--I'm a cheat and a liar and a dupe and a weak idiot and there's nothing too low for me, but I'm still 'mountains high' above you and your sickly fawning brother [i.e., Sam] who never grew up--I'm better than you who go to church and than him who is too good to go to church, because I've done everything. I've been dirty and low and done things you're

both too stupid and cowardly to do, but however low I am . . . I haven't got a heart of stone, I don't sniff, sniff, sniff when I see a streetwalker with a ragged blouse, too good to know what she is: I hate her but I hate myself. I'm sick of the good ones . . . nothing's too good for you, nothing's too bad for me; I'll go and walk the street with that poor miserable brat sister of yours--we'll both get something to eat and some men to be decent to us, instead of loudmouthed husbands and sisters who want to strangle us--that's what you said, you can never go back on that, and in that your whole black cruel cold heart came out of you and tried to strike her down with it, like a stone as he'd like to strike me down when he gets all he can out of me--and I know you both, I know you all--she's the only good one and that's because she's like me--no good--good because she's no good. . . . I can't stand it--" (pp. 463-64)

The only virtue Henny allows in her world is perverse: Bonnie is (like Henny), "'good because she's no good.'" Henny's statement is a powerful articulation of the immorality behind the moral pretensions of the world (highminded Jo detests Bonnie's immorality so thoroughly that she says, "'I should have strangled her with my own hands'" (p. 463)). Indeed, the "good" becomes no good. There is revulsion from Henny's views and language, partly because she is so self-righteously "bad," but her rage is also "beautifully, wholeheartedly vile" (p. 10), and a magnificent persuasion to self-loathing.

Painful as Henny's "heritage of self-hatred"⁶ is to Louisa, this exposure to Henny's vision of the world allows Louie to understand aspects of her own life and the world not included in Sam's rosy view. Henny makes Louie understand the desperate, hopeless self-loathing which is part of the human condition, and she also helps Louie to perceive (and resist) the sinister aspects of people whose love is

like Sam's (or Anteios').

Sam's love causes him to intrude upon every aspect of Louie's life, including her relationship with the natural world. In the play, Megara says to Anteios: "'If to breathe the sunlight is a sin, what can I do? I see you are determined to steal my breath, my sun, my daylight.'" Megara is a creature of nature, breathing the sunlight. Stealing Megara's sun is equivalent to stealing her breath. Anteios' threat to intrude upon Megara's relationship with nature is life-threatening.

Louie's connection with nature is expressed as an affinity with particular kinds of creatures, plants, and skies.⁷ Though Sam, a naturalist, has imbued his daughter with a love for and knowledge of the natural world, only Louie has a pure, vital relationship with nature. Sam, the scientist, frequently intrudes on nature's workings, trying for example to teach a bird some of his songs (p. 50); or trying, out of love, to interfere with a natural predator-prey relationship (p. 23). Sam's treatment of the children is similar to his treatment of the natural world: his intrusions are unwitting, or innocent, acts of arrogance, as misguided as they are benevolent. Throughout the novel, Louie's acts of freedom and creativity are associated with nature. Indeed, contemplation of nature is associated with her writing "Herpes Rom": "this evening, looking at the sky bloom darkly and the pendent globe of Jupiter . . . she had

a splendid idea" (p. 385). Sam's intrusion into Louie's relationship with nature threatens her inner, and true life. Such an act is tantamount to stealing Louie's breath as well.

After Megara accuses Anteios of wanting to steal "'my breath, my sun,'" she threatens that he too will be robbed of his life: "'The stranger will kill you.'" (The stranger is the hate within Megara.) Anteios responds to Megara's threat by coming closer to her: "'Kiss me, my daughter.'" Like Sam, Anteios repeatedly tries to draw closer to his daughter even when she withdraws. In the novel, what Sam offers as love is experienced as suffocation by Louie. Similarly, Anteios' request for a kiss is experienced by Megara as strangling. When he asks for an embrace, she responds: "(Choking) 'Not me! Help! The stranger strangles me. Thou snake.'" Love is also the stranger, hate. In "Herpes Rom," love is death. The intimate connection Louie perceives between the natural and human worlds is evident in the title of her play, "The Snake-Man." She does not equate nature with good, but understands the destructive potential of the natural. Anteios is a snake, and the natural can be fatal.

Anteios reacts to Megara's choking by asking her to embrace him again. He is still puzzled by her and her talk of the stranger, and repeats: "'What stranger? Are you mad? . . . Embrace, kiss me.'" Like Sam, Anteios is forever unable to understand his daughter's reaction to him. It is

apt that Anteios cannot understand the stranger because, as with Sam, his own nature is a stranger to him. Further, hate as a stranger is an appropriate metaphor in relation to Sam because Sam frequently proclaims that the emotion is foreign to him. One night, he eavesdrops on Louie reciting and, believing what she quotes to be original, he thinks, "yes, she loves love and hates hate as I do" (p. 476). "Hates hate as I do" is an indictment itself; Sam is capable of the emotion. Consciously, however, hate is always a stranger to him.

Finally, the stranger becomes not the hatred within Megara but Anteios himself: "Megara: (Shrieking) 'I am dying. You are the stranger. You are killing me.'" Anteios has produced hatred within Megara. Now, the source of that passion, Anteios, embodies that passion, even if unknowingly. Apparently, one cannot generate hatred in another if one is not hateful oneself. Louie is able to convey this in her short play by the apparently bizarre movement of the stranger from one body to another. Yet we are familiar with the notion that a passion is contagious, that it can be passed from one person to another.

Stranger (as hate) and snake (with its sexual undertones) fuse to become the father. Like Sam, Anteios cannot face the existence of these. Anteios still cannot realize his effect on his daughter, and believes his are acts of love: "'I am only embracing you. My beloved daughter.'

(But he hisses.)" Anteios' last words are accompanied by hissing. He is the snake Megara accuses him of being, but he never realizes this. After Anteios' final words of affection, Megara dies. He kills her innocently, or unknowingly, with love and language. Malice, even murder, is possible without intent and without a harmful act.

Anteios' killing of Megara does not reflect back to a particular scene in The Man Who Loved Children (though it is an ironic foreshadowing of what is to come). Louie has extraordinary will and believes she has a great destiny, yet despite her strength she has enormous self-doubts and is, after all, only fourteen at this point in the novel. There is a possibility, she feels, that her spirit will be killed by Sam--innocently, with love and language--and this is the possibility she chooses to represent in "Herpes Rom."

The "Herpes Rom" episode is central to the novel for several reasons, the first of which is that it fully establishes Louie as a serious heroine. "Herpes Rom" reveals that Louie understands the destructive nature of Sam's love and language; and she understands that Sam's innocence will only perpetuate his destructive love and language until, indeed, they destroy her. The "Herpes Rom" episode is thus important because, just as it shows the narrow and unchanging limits of Sam's understanding, it reveals Louie's enormous capacity to understand, and her growth towards greater understanding of which the play is the fullest expression.

The episode is also important because it reveals that Louie's capacity to understand does not end in mere understanding. Rather, it occurs through and is expressed in art. "Herpes Rom" is only twenty lines, but it is a brilliant rendering of Louie's particular situation. In her short play, Louie shows Anteios repeating the same sentiments and words over and over in the face of Megara's rejection of them, just as Sam repeats the same sentiments and words over and over in the face of Louie's rejection of them. The Snake-Man is a figure profoundly representative of Sam, as discussed earlier. Yet even as the play is a crystallization of Louie's own situation, it contains nothing which limits it to her situation--indeed, quite the opposite.-

In writing "Herpes Rom," Louie invents a language so that she can precisely express her private sphere (p. 385); however, the language she invents is based on several Indo-European vocabularies and grammars. It is thus not only Louie's private language but a semi-universal language. Louie does not designate time or place in the play; "The Snake-Man" is anytime, anywhere--the true locus of art. The snake as devil and male sexual symbol are ancient and semi-universal figures. Further, through allusions and echoes, Louie reaches out to the roots and classics of our literary tradition. Though she does not assert that "The Tragedy of the Snake-Man, or Father" is to be like a Greek tragedy, when Sam asks why the play is not written in English,

Louie replies, "'Did Euripides write in English?'" and the play has something of the primary, even primitive, force of those dramas. Besides the background of Euripides--Elektra and Medea come especially to mind--"Herpes Rom" includes a reference to Shakespeare. There is the allusion to King Lear, and one thinks of Hamlet as well (because of related themes and the play-within-the play). "Herpes Rom" is also inspired by Louie's reading of The Cenci, and the play's prologue is from Longfellow's "The Masque of Pandora." Though Louie's play is of course not comparable to the dramas of Euripides, Shakespeare, or Shelley in quality, that "Herpes Rom" is associated with these works indicates Louie understands her relationship with her father--a relationship in which hatred and love are inextricably and explosively intertwined--as a basic and eternal human relation, and one which has long been a literary subject. Louie is not mired in the personal and particular; rather, she can transform her private material into something of broader significance. The "Herpes Rom" episode is important, therefore, because it reveals that Louie is an artist.

"Herpes Rom" is, in the narrator's words, "a strange little play" (p. 385), yet it reflects important aspects of The Man Who Loved Children, and it is also associated with the roots and classics of our literary tradition. The significance of this is profound, for it suggests the way we should consider not only the play but the novel itself

and even serious literature in general. According to Stead, literature always violates proper, conventional notions of life; it is always, to varying degrees, strange and indecorous. In a sense, Sam's reaction to "Herpes Rom" is only an extreme version of our own reaction--surprise, even shock--at the reality represented in literary works. But there is another side to this matter suggested by the "Herpes Rom" episode. The virtue and value, the psychological truth, of Louie's play is inextricably connected to its strangeness and "indecorousness." The play is strange because it is true, because it emerges from Sam's nature and language, and from Sam and Louie's relationship. According to Stead, we consistently assert the proper, believe in the proper, even as we experience a reality which contradicts the proper. We need literature--as Louie does--because, stripped of the proper, it is one of our primary ways of exploring the real. The "Herpes Rom" episode thus suggests the way in which truth and strangeness may be inextricably connected in literature, and thus, the way in which a literary work may both violate and confirm our sense of life.

Stead's sense of decorum includes the heroic as well as the horrific, the sublime as well as the grotesque. After exploring the dark side of Stead's vision, we will move, along with Louie, towards the novel's sublime moments

in which Louie fully emerges as the novel's hero. In the next chapter, however, we will examine more closely what Louie has called "'the horror of everyday life.'"

Notes

¹ Stead says of Sam Pollit, "'[H]e's a picture of my father--that's no secret.'" Jonah Raskin, "Christina Stead in Washington Square," London Magazine, NS 9, 11 (1970), 74. In another interview, Stead discusses the choice of Samuel Clemens Pollit as this character's name: "'The name came from a leader of the Communist Party in Great Britain, Harry Pollit. Samuel Clemens for Sam because Mark Twain was one of the two American humorists my father favored (the other was Artemus Ward).'" R. M. Beston, pp. 93-94.

There is another basis for Sam Pollit's name and his language. Stead's paternal grandfather was also named Samuel, a man very like Sam Pollit, but appropriately, resembling even more closely Sam Pollit's father in the novel, Grandfather Charles, Louie's paternal grandfather. In Stead's essay on her father, David Stead, she writes of her grandfather Samuel Stead:

"Samuel, the father, [of David Stead] was born in 1846 in Maidstone, 'a man of Kent.' He spent his childhood round and about, his holidays at the sea, at Margate and Ramsgate. How he used to say those two words! Ramsgate, the harbor, shipping, lifeboat, beach; Margate__! He went to work at twelve with paintpot and brush, up a ladder, thick hair upstanding, lively Sam, cracking jokes and singing songs he handed on:

'Slap dash slap with a whitewash brush,
Talk about a County Ball!'

He loved Charles Dickens, lived in a Dickensian world. The family talk after him was full of Dickens words: 'Only Brooks of Sheffield, when found made a note of, cowcomber, a lone lorn creetur, Mrs. Harris, Codlin's the friend, not Short.' Dickens in 1861 brought out Great Expectations, in which the transported convict Magwitch makes a fortune in sheep in Australia and secretly supports a boy in England. In 1864, Samuel, aged eighteen, made himself a small box like a toolbox, of wood bound with iron, with a light padlock; and with it under his arm stepped aboard a sailing ship for Sydney, leaving behind numerous brothers and sisters. He was one of the youngest.

Samuel got a job in North Sydney at his trade, carpenter, painter, builder, married, had children, became his own man, built weather-board houses for themselves to live in. The second house was called Minstead, after his second wife; the last, at Mortdale, was called Gad's Hill. He was a freethinker, an Oddfellow (of which he became a Grandmaster), belonged to the Dickens Lodge and, at its annual

meetings, recited and acted from Nicholas Nickleby, Pickwick Papers, David Copperfield, Oliver Twist." (In The Man Who Loved Children, Grandfather Charles performs scenes from Great Expectations.) Stead, "A Waker and Dreamer, Overland, 53 (1972), p. 33.

In a biographical sketch on Stead, we learn more about the origins of Sam Pollit's language: "Christina herself has an extraordinary memory, evidenced by her exact recall of her father's idiom in The Man Who Loved Children. Sam Pollit's style of speech is not distinguishable from her father's colloquial style in a short article he wrote for the Green Room Annual. . . ." John B. Beston, "A Brief Biography of Christina Stead," World Literature Written in English, 15 (1976), 81.

David Stead's books further indicate the origins of Sam Pollit's language. In "A Waker and Dreamer," Stead says that she can hear her father talk when she reads his books:

"The fish on the wall in those early days were beautifully tinted drawings done to illustrate his first book, Fishes of Australia (1908). After his death, his widow Thistle Harris produced from his MSS. another book, Sharks and Rays of Australian Seas. When I dip into this book, I am at home again and hear the old sea names I knew well. For he told us everything he could; he 'expatiated,' as he said. Now, I read a bit about the Wobbegong and I see suddenly a real wobbegong I saw somewhere, at Bateman's Bay perhaps, when a child; I hear the eucalypts rustling at old Lydham, the cockchafer beetles, burnished gold, falling from the boughs, smell their peculiar smell; and the whole landscape of childhood rises up, a marvelous real world, not bounded by our time, fragrant, colored by the books he liked, Typee, The Voyage of the Beagle, Extinct Monsters, a book I loved as well as Grimm, The Sleeper Awakes. That landscape stretched far and wide, with his talk of foreshores and rising and depressing coasts, the deeps, the desert; the landscape had no time limits, it had 'giants and pygmies of the deep' (one of his lectures), extinct monsters roaming among extinct cycads and mud swamps, it had Triceratops, Mastodon, Diprotodon, Labyrinthodon, Palorchestes, the extinct giant kangaroo, all brought near by the living fossils, and in the wonderful talk there were volcanoes--Krakatoa and Mauna Loa--how is it possible to reconstruct in a few pages the life of a man and his children, when the man has a genius for verbiage, a tireless 'interest in every aspect of nature' (his words) which he brought always to his friends, his writings and his family?

But I know, I can remember, how my life was filled with story from the first days, and this book of Rays and Sharks is to me the life poem of an unusually gifted man and of our long morning." Stead, "A Waker and Dreamer," p. 37.

² Joan Lidoff, "Obscure Grievs: The Autobiographical Fiction of Christina Stead," Diss. Harvard University 1976, p. 181.

Veronica Brady, "The Man Who Loved Children and the Body of the World," Meanjin, 37 (1978), 232-33.

Other critics prefer Sam, and find Henny to be primarily at fault. (Colin Roderick, Twenty Australian Novelists, p. 194; Robert Boyers, "The Family Novel," Salmagundi, 26 (1974), 22.) In fact, Stead is scrupulously even-handed with them, and does not "blame" either character. As Sam tells Louie, "[W]e must not blame either side" (p. 477).

³ I use the word 'grotesque' as Sherwood Anderson discussed it in Winesburg, Ohio: The Book of the Grotesque, and I will quote from this well-known passage because it applies so thoroughly to Sam and Henny. "[I]n the beginning when the world was young there were a great many thoughts but no such thing as a truth. Man made the truths himself and each truth was a composite of a great many vague thoughts. All about in the world were the truths and they were all beautiful.

The old man had listed hundreds of the truths in his book. I will not try to tell you all of them. There was the truth of virginity and the truth of passion, the truth of wealth and of poverty, of thrift and profligacy, of carelessness and abandon. Hundreds and hundreds were the truths and they were all beautiful.

And then the people came along. Each as he appeared snatched up one of the truths and some who were quite strong snatched up a dozen of them.

It was the truths that made the people grotesques. The old man had quite an elaborate theory concerning the matter. It was his notion that the moment one of the people took up one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood." Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio: The Book of the Grotesque, ed. John Ferres (New York: Viking Press, 1966), pp. 25-26.

⁴ Stead has written several of her novels this way. She speaks of writing her first novel in an interview: It was just something I did almost without thinking, as it were. I'm not quite sure about those things. Q: You said once, I think, that you wrote it as something to leave behind you? You were so ill that you thought you would die? Stead: Yes, yes, that's right. But I didn't intend it to be published. It was just, almost instinctive, you know. Whitehead, pp. 235-36.

⁵ Dorothy Green, "The Man Who Loved Children - 'storm in a teacup,'" in The Australian Experience: Critical Essays on Australian Novels, ed. W. S. Ransom (Canberra: Australian National University, 1974), p. 176.

⁶ Lidoff discusses the "heritage of self-hatred" which she asserts not only binds the female characters of the novel together, but characterizes Stead's fiction, and even fiction by women in general. Lidoff, "Obscure Grievs," pp. 51 & 141. Joan Lidoff, "Domestic Gothic: The Imagery of Anger, Christina Stead's The Man Who Loved Children," Studies in the Novel, 11 (1979), 201-15.

⁷ Stead is the daughter of the prominent Australian naturalist David Stead, and gained an extensive knowledge of nature from her earliest days: "Before sitting up in my high chair, there was another ritual. I was lifted up by David and we did the rounds of the dining-room, while I had to name fish, bream, trout, gurnard, john dory; their fins, pectoral, dorsal, ventral, caudal; the photographs of men, Cuvier, Buffon, Darwin, Huxley, and Captain Cook. These were the first words I learned; or rather the first word was 'itties' (fishes). . . .

The house was surrounded by two paddocks, an old orchard, grassy places and a belt of trees, pines, camphor laurels and others, some seventy years old. It was a splendid place for children. One of the paddocks was occupied by two emus, which came to us as striped chicks. . . . David and his boys filled in [the courtyard well] and made a tall aviary there, with many birds, budgerigars, a cockateel, finches. In the other old well, outside the kitchen were two large turtles. One of the servant's rooms was used by David for his Museum, to which the children had access every Saturday, a miscellany, Aboriginal weapons, a humming bird, crabs, a crocodile, a whale's tooth. . . .

Round the courtyard stood the cages containing snakes, a boobook owl, a kookaburra, two kinds of possum, black and honey-colored, and in various corners of the house were aquaria and various small beings, such as fire-bellied newts and pygmy opossums." Christina Stead, "A Waker and Dreamer," pp. 35-37. Elsewhere Stead writes: "This animal learning, though shallow, has been a pleasant solace." Christina Stead, "A Writer's Friends," p. 163.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS NATURAL AND PROPER: DECORUM IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The Man Who Loved Children consistently challenges our sense of what is natural and of what is proper. The following scene is the worst between Sam and Henny in the novel, and is among the most hate-filled episodes in literature. Henny has threatened suicide, infanticide, and homicide from the early days of marriage; however, the intensity of the argument depicted in "A headache" surpasses anything seen before, as the children's reactions indicate.

The scene brings to a head Louisa's (and our) frustration, curiosity, and agony over why these tragically mismatched people will not separate. As it does this, it finally determines that Sam and Henny will never change their situation. The scene reveals the languages, muddled passions, inaction, and distorted visions of Sam and Henny, and the way in which they mesh and tangle because of their different weaves. Explanations for Sam and Henny's tolerance of their intolerable situation thus emerge. First, both love the children--however strangely that love is manifested--and will not be separated from them. Second, both are deeply concerned with acting "properly" or maintaining "proper" appearances.

"A headache" is an astonishing picture of the ironies

and complexities within human beings, and it is also a shocking portrayal of a marriage--one which violates the conventional sense of how people talk to one another, feel about one another, and act towards one another--yet it is a portrayal which is also profoundly convincing and compelling.

"A headache" reveals Stead's sense of decorum partly through the characters' reactions to the scene. The passage shows the darkest extreme of Stead's vision, and the characters are shocked by this side of life even as they experience it. The passage shows improper concern with proprieties at the conclusion of the argument, and characters are surprised by this too. "A headache" may violate our conceptions of life, but this is not the result of the scene's unreality because those living the scene also find it to be shocking. The characters' reactions thus serve as a paradigm for our reactions to the strange life of the novel.

In "A headache," Louie accepts this dark aspect of life and the contradictions within her parents as part of the ordinary, and she determines to revolt against it. One of the most surprising features of "A headache" is that it occurs alongside of--indeed, it engenders--the novel's most sublime moments. Yet as the scene is a kind of descent into hell for Louie, albeit a terrestrial hell, so it is proper that she should move from that towards a still terrestrial, but nonetheless sublime life. The Man Who

Loved Children challenges our sense of decorum not only because of its surprising elements, but because of the combination of those elements.

"A headache" is preceded by two episodes which have caused relations between Sam and Henny to worsen dramatically. Sam has marshalled his family to boil a marlin for a night and a day to demonstrate his theories of natural economy. His lesson against waste has transformed a magnificent fish, caught for sport by Sam's friend, into "FISH-FRY, BIKE-OIL, MARLIN-BALM, MACHINE-OIL, HAIR-OIL, LEATHER-GREASE; OIL, OIL, OIL" (p. 495). Sam's act--done to save the marlin from being wasted for the purpose of man's sport--has required the use of every household pot, and has covered Pollitry, people and their belongings, with the smell of fish. "A headache" is also preceded by Sam's receiving an anonymous note which claims that Henny is an adulteress, and that Sam's seventh child, born on his return from the Malayan expedition, is not his own. The marlin is the last straw for Henny as the anonymous note is for Sam. The anger seeded by these two occurrences erupts in "A headache."

HENNY FROWNED AT THE STREAKY CREEK through the window and turned back to her room, pulling the door after her. She began going through bundles of papers and old letters that she pulled out from long-closed drawers.

A telephone ringing without answer presently woke the house. Ernie came panting upstairs, excited, "Moth, it's Miss Wilson, Tommy's teacher."

"Tell her I'm out."

"She says to say can she see you for a minute if she comes over?"

"Tell her I'm out."

"O.K."

At the same time she heard Sam shouting outside, "Hey, Tommo! Your teacher is coming to pay us a visit."

"Oh, keep your sticky beak out," muttered Henny miserably. Louie, who had awakened, wanted to know if Miss Wilson was coming: "No, no, no, no," Henny said.

Then there was Sam questioning Ernie in the hall and, "Your mother told you to tell a lie and you told it, despite what I've told you?"

Then some muttering. "More trouble," said Henny to Louie. "Why doesn't he drop down dead? Was he sent by God to worry women?"

Then Ernie coming upstairs and saying, "Mother, Daddy says you are not to make us tell lies," with a very frightened face; and Henny screaming at Sam over the balustrade, and Sam shouting, "Shut up."

Ernie was stuck on the stairs between them but Louie withdrew backwards into her room.

"You wanted to see the old maid so you could pour your woes into her ears," Henny cried; while Sam, pushing Ernie aside, started to come upstairs, saying in a deep voice that she must close her trap.

But Henny went on laughing, "You can't shut me up now. You want the truth, let it be the truth: he only wants the truth, but he wants my mouth shut. Why don't you leave me alone? This is my house. Go and sit on the beach with your clothes. I'm sick and tired of washing the fish out and your dirty papers full of big talk."

"Henny," said Sam sullenly, "you be quiet or leave my house. I have the whiphand now, owing to your own deed; if you do not get out, I will put you out by the force of law."

She screamed hoarsely, "You get out of here, get out, I'll kill you, I'll kill you; you've only been waiting for this like a great foul monster waiting, sneaking, lying in wait to take my children away. If you touch them I'll kill you: if you try to put me out, I'll kill you."

She turned quickly to Louie, who was standing thoughtfully in the doorway, and shouted, panting, "Louie, don't you ever let a man do that; don't you ever do what his women are doing—a woman's children are all she has of her body and breath, don't let him do that, Louie, don't let him do that. He has been waiting for years to snatch them from me; now the dirty wretch has been watching me and thinks he has an excuse. Don't let him."

She picked up a slipper which had stood on the washstand since she had smelled the fish oil on the sole and rushed at him

to strike him in the eyes with the heel. He seized her arm and tried to bend it down. "Put that down, you fool, you mad-woman," he bellowed. "You'll push me downstairs, Henny—look out!"

"I'll kill you," she panted, "I'll push you downstairs, I don't care if I go too. I'll break your neck."

She suffocated, struggled as he put his large hand over her mouth, bit it.

"Henny, Henny," he cried in desperation himself, "shut up. Don't let our children hear."

She tore the hand away in a violent spasm. "You rotten flesh," she screamed, insane, "you rotten, rotten thing, you dirty sweaty pig, pig, pig."

She vomited insults in which the word "rotten" rose and fell, beating time with it.

"Henny, shut your foul mouth." He let go of her and flung away to the doorway of Louie's room, himself revolted by her and the terrible struggle.

The children who had crept into the hall below stood rooted to the floor, listening to this tempest, trembling. Louie sank down on her bed in a stupor, her heart beating hard. It was not the quarrel, nor even the threats of murder, but the intensity of the passions this time that stifled them all. And why, out of a clear sky? They never asked any reasons for their parents' fights, thinking all adults unreasonable, violent beings, the toys of their own monstrous tempers and egotisms, but this time it seemed different.

Henny was shrieking, "Ernest, Ernest, Louie, your father's struck me; come and save me, Ernest, your father's killing me, he's trying to kill me, help—"

Louie started up and rushed out into the hall, "Leave her alone."

"Henny, Henny, be quiet, or I'll knock you down," shouted the desperate man.

She rushed to her window, which was at the back nearest a neighbor (though that was still a hundred and fifty yards distant), and cried, "I'll call Mrs. Paine: I'll tell everyone in the street, and you won't get away with this, you rotten foul murderer. You think you're so fine with your bragging and science and human understanding—oh, I've heard all about it till I could scream myself insane with the words; and you can run everything, and world problems, when all the time it's other women, you hypocrite, you dirty, bloodless hypocrite, too good, other women, scientific women, young girls, and your own wife—I'll write to all your scientific societies, I'll write to the Conservation Department, I'll tell them what my life has been—beat me, knock me down, I can't stand it. You threaten but do nothing.

nothing to give me a chance, to get out, not till you've got something on me to steal my children: you won't—you won't—I'm going to kill them all, I'll kill them all tonight, I'll pour that stinking oil on fire down your throat and kill my children, you won't get them—there'll be a sight tomorrow for the people to see: try to explain that away, try to explain it to God or in hell, wherever you go——”

“Louie,” said Sam sternly, “go and throw cold water over your mother; go and force her to be quiet. If she sees you—” But Louie had only entered the room, in her confused, embarrassed way, when Henny turned to her and began to vociferate abominable insults, and pushed her out of the room after which she locked the door, and shouted through the door, “I'm going to kill myself; tell your dirty father to go downstairs. I'll kill myself, I'll do it: I can't stand it any longer.”

“Mother, Mother,” called Louie.

Ernie had come upstairs and now rushed to the door and beat on it, crying out, “Mother, don't, don't, please.”

Henny was silent. Louie sobbed brokenheartedly against the door, and Ernie seemed to have lost his wits. He sank to her feet and blubbered there.

“She won't do it,” said Sam nervously.

They heard the children whimpering downstairs, and Sam with a gesture sent Louie down to them, but she clung to the door, “No, no, Mother, don't!”

Suddenly, they heard the bolt being drawn: Henny stood there with chalk-white face, her great eyeholes, coal-black, “Get out of here, you lot of howlers, leave me alone.”

“Henny,” said Sam; but at that she screamed in such a fury, “If you speak another word to me in your life, I'll slit my throat the same minute,” that they all retreated, leaving her again behind the bolted door.

There she stayed for hours. Louie, creeping breathlessly up the stairs, avoiding the creaking boards as well as she could, heard the tearing of papers stop and Henny call out, “Who's that spying on me now?” and then would ask feebly, “Can I get you a cup of tea, Mother?” until Henny at last answered, “Yes, I'll take a phenacetin: this headache is killing me.”

Louie saw her mother at last. Henny was dressed, as if to go to town, but only snarled when Louie showed her surprise. There was a smell of fire at which Sam bolted upstairs to thunder on the door and ask (without response) what Henny was doing; and at last, Henny came downstairs with her hat on, an old red hat, left over from the previous summer. At once Sam barred her way, asked her where she was going, if she was coming back to her home again, and particularly ordered her not to show herself in the streets, looking like a hag of eighty in that skittish little hat. Then he snatched it from her head. At once Louie ran

up, full of indignation, calling upon Ernie to defend his mother, but Ernie was too overwhelmed to know how or when to defend her. As she at last ran jerkily down the avenue, in a black hat, sobbing and trying to fix the collar of her blouse, Ernie ran after her with a very pale, working face, to ask if she was going to come home again.

"I don't know," she replied stonily.

"Won't I ever see you again?"

"I don't know."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know."

"Mother," he burst out crying, buried his face in her waist, "are you going to kill the children?"

"Don't be a fool; I'll leave that to your father."

pp. 496-501

"A headache" begins, "Henny frowned at the streaky creek." At this point in the novel, only the suggestion of Henny's relation to nature is needed. She is affected by and connected to nature, even as she is opposed to it. The wife of a naturalist in the Department of Fisheries, Henny "despise[s] animals" (p. 12), and particularly "hate[s] fish" (p. 453) and their smell (p. 472). Nevertheless, if against her will, Henny finds her allies in nature: "[S]he felt involuntarily that the little marauder [the mouse] was much like herself, trying to get by" (pp. 12-13). Naturalist Sam insists she kill the mice (he is part of what Henny and mice must get by), but Henny will only kill the domestic outlaws when she smells them, or when she finds a pregnant female. Anti-natural that she is, Henny is a character of powerful instincts and senses. Her acute sense of smell, the least tutored (or most natural)

of the senses, determines some of her actions as it would for any animal. Though the mother of six (stepmother to a seventh), life and propagation are misery in her eyes. It is her peculiar sympathy for the pregnant mouse which makes her kill it.

Henny is no Earth Mother, and her frowning at the creek anticipates her "unnatural" threats to come. However, Henny's dislike of nature does not separate her from it (she is affected by mice and the streaky creek), as Sam's love of nature does not attune him to it (he destroys marlin and mice). The scene shows Henny's threats of infanticide to emerge from a powerful, instinctive love for her children. The most "unnatural" threats are engendered by the most "natural" primary instinct. Her actions are simultaneously of nature and against it, as is her frowning at the creek.

As "A headache" opens, most Pollits are resting from the marlin ordeal. (They have been up most of the stormy night watching boiling water disintegrate the fish.) Though Henny is awake, she refuses to answer the telephone and the household is awakened. Henny refuses to meet with her son's teacher, who is on the telephone, and asks Ernie to say that she is out. Henny's behavior seems inexplicably selfish and irresponsible, first allowing the family to be awakened and then refusing to meet with Tommy's teacher. However, it subsequently becomes clear why Henny will not answer the

telephone, and why she specifically will not speak to Miss Wilson. Henny has lied, begged, and borrowed to keep her children fed while Sam is out of work, and Miss Wilson is one of her creditors. Henny's strange acts are revealed to stem from a profoundly natural desire to "'fend for her offspring'" (p. 370). Henny's acts of apparent selfishness and irresponsibility actually reflect her love for her children and her prudence. (It would be imprudent for Henny to answer the telephone and speak to creditors she cannot pay.) No one in Pollitry knows much of what Henny does or why she does what she does. Stead presents the bustle, talk, proximity, and noise of family life (especially of large families), but the novel reveals a curious feature of family life: despite its intimacy, there is much the members of a family do not know of one another.

In this instance, as so often in the novel, the secret exists because Henny wants to maintain a front. She has not only lied and borrowed to feed the children, but also to keep up appearances--in a word, to maintain decorum. Her attempt to avoid the creditor runs smack into Sam's sense of decorum--one does not teach the children to lie--and so begins another of the day's arguments. Because Sam and Henny avoid face-to-face meetings, Sam sends Ernie to reprimand his mother. This provokes Henny: "'You wanted to see the old maid so you could pour your woes into her ears.'" Despite Henny's miserable marriage, she despises unmarried women.

Even as Henny begins yet another argument with Sam, she looks down on Miss Wilson as an "'old maid'" (she similarly derides Sam's unmarried sister Jo). Henny's acid tongue cuts through everything, yet she adheres to social hierarchies and proprieties. No matter what marriage is, it is proper; and spinsterhood is contemptible. Henny will beg, borrow, and lie to Miss Wilson, but she is repelled by her improper state as an unmarried woman.¹ The contradictions and ironies of Henny's character are as extreme as those within Sam. The distance between Henny's reality and her sense of propriety is vast, but she does not alter either her situation or sense of propriety to bring these in closer relation. In Stead's fiction, human beings are constituted of seemingly impossible contrasts, constantly trying to bring reality into consonance with an inflexible sense of decorum.

Sam's accusation that Henny is teaching the children to lie is no trivial matter to Sam, as he values honesty highly. Henny's instruction that Ernie lie to Miss Wilson also brings up Sam and Henny's larger fight over control of the children: "'Your mother told you to tell a lie and you told one, despite what I've told you.'" Arguments are not self-sustaining and Stead is masterful at showing how Sam and Henny constantly locate new material for their conflagration. Here, Sam has accused Henny of teaching the children to lie; he then brings up the matter of parental

the eye," and how this wonderful adventure went on for hours, always with new characters of new horror. In it would invariably be a woman with a cowlike expression, a girl looking frightened as a rabbit, a yellow-haired frump with hair like a haystack in a fit, some woman who bored Henny with her silly gassing, and impudent flighty young girls behind counters, and waitresses smelling like a tannery (or a fish market), who gave her lip, which caused her to "go to market and give them more than they bargained for." There were men and women, old acquaintances of hers, or friends of Sam who presumed to know her, to whom she would give the go-by, or the cold shoulder, or a distant bow, or a polite good day, or a black look, or a look black as thunder, and there were silly old roosters, creatures like a dying duck in a thunderstorm, filthy old pawers, and YMCA sick chickens, and women thin as a rail and men fat as a pork barrel, and women with blouses so puffed out that she wanted to stick pins in, and men like coalheavers, and women like boiled owls and women who had fallen into a flour barrel; and all these wonderful creatures, who swarmed in the streets, stores, and restaurants of Washington, ogling, leering, pulling, pushing, stinking, overscented, screaming and boasting, turning pale at a black look from Henny, ducking and diving, dodging and returning, were the only creatures that Henny ever saw.

(pp. 8-9)

Sam's world is nowhere to be found in Henny's, as Henny's world is nowhere to be found in Sam's:

Sam, their father, had endless tales of friends, enemies, but most often they were good citizens, married to good wives, with good children (though untaught), but never did Sam meet anyone out of Henny's world, grotesque, foul, loud-voiced, rude, uneducated, insinuating, full of scandal, slander, filth, financially deplorable, and physically revolting, dubiously born, and going awry to a desquamating end. (p. 10)

Clearly, Sam and Henny do not believe they are lying. Sam tells Louie, "'She . . . has lied to them, pretended I lied, I, who never told a lie in my life, Looloo'" (p. 132).

Indeed, both believe they are teaching their children the truth about life as is natural and proper for parents. Like Sam's incomprehension, his and Henny's lying is innocent, or

unintentional; they simply cannot see beyond their own limited visions of the world. Ironically, Henny's small and obvious lie, which begins the argument, is benign because it protects her as family bread-borrower. The larger kind of lying is much more serious, and affects all that Sam and Henny do and say. The distance between Sam and Henny's visions of the world and the world itself is vast. Both have a failed sense of decorum--a failed sense of what the real world is, what it is proper to notice and think about that world--and this puts them constantly at odds with everyone and everything around them.

An ironically positive outcome of the endless battle over whose truth shall become the truth is Louie's own concern over this matter. The first entry in her diary is "'I will never tell a lie'" (p. 360). This resembles her father's "'I . . . never told a lie in my life, Looloo,'" but Sam's statement is only true in the narrowest sense. Sam and Henny are potentially antidotes to one another's distorted visions, but these incurables refuse to learn from one another. Louisa is influenced by the liar Sam as well as the liar Henny. She is able to form a truer picture of the world because the opposite distortions of her parents serve as correctives to one another.

Louie's "'I will never tell a lie'" is also important as the artist's motto. Part of the statement's significance is that the artist proclaims his or her work to be fiction,

so it cannot be called lying (Sidney's argument in "An Apology for Poetry"). But the remark has another more important implication for Louie and The Man Who Loved Children. The second entry in her diary is as follows: "'What a strange thing that when a minister or a clerk or a justice of the peace pronounces a few words over a man and a woman a cell begins to develop'" (p. 360). The genesis of Louie's misconception that a wedding causes conception is story: "This was confirmed by her reading of various sentimental stories in which, after a hasty wedding, the bridegroom departed leaving the bride at the altar, and yet some months later a baby appeared on the scene" (p. 360).

Literature can lie about life, Sir Philip notwithstanding. Of course, Louie's "Herpes Rom" is a kind of distortion, or fiction, as discussed earlier. But it is another kind of artistic lying which the diary entry calls to mind: the lying of sentimental and polite literature which hides the true words, passions, actions, and visions of human beings. Louie portrays passions faithfully and unashamedly in "Herpes Rom"; she is true to life if not completely to her own situation. But The Man Who Loved Children, Stead's fictional representation of her own childhood, is the more important example.³ Stead has said that as an adolescent, she thought only Strindberg "'told the truth about families.'"⁴ In The Man Who Loved Children, the

tells the truth about one family, its jokes, horseplay, games, and rituals, and its darker side as well, as seen in "A headache." The Man Who Loved Children is no polite, sentimental account of family life. Louie's "'I will never tell a lie'" is central to Stead's own sense of the artist's vocation.

The argument between Sam and Henny grows as Henny attacks those things which constitute Sam's truth: "'I'm sick and tired of washing the fish out and your dirty papers full of big talk.'" Of Sam's many projects in the novel, transforming the marlin into oils is among his fondest, because it demonstrates his theories of natural economy. But the marlin means something else to his fishwife:

It was in all the cracks of the old cement floor, in the hairy timbers of the walls and shelves, in the chimney, in the washtubs. . . .

She was conscious of the rich rotten smell and the softness of it in her hair: there was a faint mark already on the pillow where she had lain and a greasy fingermark on the library book. She lifted her old slippers and smelled it on their sodden soles; there was a dark mark on the light gray silk hem.⁵
(pp. 494-95)

Connected to the fish in Henny's mind, and sentence, are Sam's "'dirty papers full of big talk.'" Sam's truth is not only the natural world and its practical uses, but "'big talk'"--"pamphlets from the Carnegie Peace Foundation, scientific journals, and folders from humanitarian leagues" (p. 27) as well as Sam's own papers. Henny must wash out the fish oil, and Sam's "'dirty papers'" need washing too.

Dirt is an important subject for Henny in the novel

and, besides mice, the only natural image associated with her. Henny takes Louisa and Evie to visit her mother and sister at Monocacy, her family's Baltimore estate. The two girls are sent off while the three women discuss "varicose veins, girls in factories with unwanted babies . . . clots in the brain and heart . . . the romantic Barry" (p. 170), the miseries of marriage, and methods of suicide. Early in the conversation, Henny is worried that her daughters will hear the vile talk. But Henny's mother, Old Ellen, herself the mother of fourteen, finally persuades Henny that Louie should be allowed to listen:

Henny laughed with irritation, "Let her stay, let her hear the dirt." Old Ellen laughed, "You want to hear the dirt?"

"She's got her ears stuffed with dirt," said Henny. . . . Old Ellen affected to disregard the child's blush and cried,

"Well, I've got a head full of dirt. You could comb it out. . . . Life's dirty, isn't it Louie, eh? Don't you worry what they say to you, we're all dirty. . . . The worst was when they were all at school and running to the stables and dirtying up the house. . . ." (p. 181)

Dirt is Henny and her mother's metaphor for life, but both are occupied with it (or against it) on a literal level as well. They switch between its literal and metaphorical senses easily. Old Ellen's, "'I've got a head full of dirt'" is meant to be taken on two levels, as Henny's "'She's got her ears stuffed with dirt'" is not only Henny's usual accusation that Louie is physically dirty, but an acknowledgement that Louie is full of Sam and Henny's dirt (words or worldviews) as well. Dirt is Henny's truth but it is

Sam's dirt, fish and "'big talk,'" which she wishes to wash away to reveal the true dirt. Sam and Henny see the huge distance between their spouse's truths and the world--indeed, the distance is exaggerated because of their distorted visions--but neither can help the other shorten this distance.

Sam has his own concept of dirt, and it consists of all that his spouse embodies. Henny has been brought up to marry a man who would indulge her tastes and desires as an idle, high-society woman. To Sam, dirt is everything associated with that life, including adultery. Sam discusses Henny's world with the children:

"[W]e would have none of the archaic, anachronistic, dirt, filth, and untidiness which Henny strews about because she comes from the stupid old world. Baltimore, my native heath, used to be famous in the world for commerce, yes, even for banking (though you know what I think of the Greedy, the Money-Powerful). . . . But there is a secondary strain in dirty old Baltimore, and that is a shameful love of vice. Not only did these silk-shirted 'great ladies' . . . breed slaves and sell them down to horror and hell, they were themselves bred for marriage to wealthy men from abroad and from home too, I'm sorry to say. Baltimore loves other things much worse, a real underworld of vice, which is, strange to say (you kids will understand this later), considered the upper world, society--a wicked convention which has imposed itself on a silly world, full of drinking, card-playing, and racing." (p. 328)

For Sam, Henny is dirty, the embodiment of vicious frivolity and sexual promiscuity. Thus, after Henny rails against Sam's dirt, he retaliates, escalating the argument by attacking her dirt: "'I have the whiphand now, owing to your own deed; if you do not get out, I'll put you out by the force of law.'" Henny's "'own deed'" is adultery, revealed to Sam

by an anonymous note. (She denies it to Sam, but the reader knows of her affair with Bert Anderson.) One of the central issues between Sam and Henny is sexual fidelity, so it is not surprising that Sam raises the matter in this argument. Though their hatred might seem to nullify concern over sexual fidelity, it does not.

Sexual fidelity has been a subject of consuming importance to Sam and Henny from the early days of marriage. Before Sam goes to Malaya, he discusses with Saul Pilgrim how to ensure Henny's fidelity in his absence (p. 121). Later, when Sam returns from Malaya, he is never more upset than when the anonymous note arrives about Henny's affair, though their marriage is collapsed. Sam brings up sexual fidelity more frequently than Henny (as in "A headache"), but it is not only he who is concerned with the matter. Though Henny ridicules Sam's fidelity to her, it concerns her as well:

As soon as she understood the number of persons going [on the Malayan expedition] she sneered, "I suppose you fine scientists can't get along without secretaries; I suppose you're taking some of those eighteen-year-old high-class women along."

His face became stern, "Henrietta!"

"Well, are you?"

"I won't answer such insinuations!"

She let out a howl of laughter, "I hear your answer. I know your breed; all you fine officials debauch the young girls. . . ."

"Perhaps I have made a mistake, but Heaven knows I have been faithful to my marriage vows."

She chuckled, "The more fool you!" (pp. 127-28)

At this point Henny seems not so eager to ensure Sam's fidelity as to make him see the "dirt" in his own life and

mind. Later in this same pre-expedition fight, however, Henny's accusation of sexual infidelity produces violence. Sam hits her, and she cuts Sam's arms with a knife. After a bloody lull they talk on, Sam spurred by the violence to try and undo it through a reconciliation. The scene of astonishing hatred changes radically: "'My dear girl,' he said passionately, 'let us have another child, the seal of all our sorrows. Let us start a new life with it. . . . I want you to understand me'" (p. 149). Sam's fidelity has profound meaning for Henny, despite their hatred, despite her affair with Bert Anderson, and despite her ridiculing Sam's fidelity to her: "She started up, trembling; but his long fidelity to her, of which she felt sure, moved her beyond all her resolutions" (p. 149).

Because of the hatred and violence which dominate Sam and Henny's marriage, their concern with sexual fidelity would seem to be mere surface acceptance of "proper" forms of behavior. Indeed, this indicates how deeply important such surfaces and forms are to Sam and Henny. One may consider the concern with propriety to be unimportant because it is superficial, but the evidence is otherwise. Nothing moves either of them more, to violence or to sex, than this subject. The importance of sexual fidelity to them produces a curious cycle: a disagreement moves to accusations of infidelity; accusations of infidelity produce violence; violence produces the desire for reconciliation

and sex; and sexual feeling is aroused by thoughts of the other's fidelity. This strange weave of violence and sex, hatred and children, is the weave of Sam and Henny's marriage.

In The Man Who Loved Children as in "Herpes Rom," one cannot always distinguish between actions and passions which are ordinarily opposed. Embrace and suffocation share a boundary; at the epicenter of violence is its strange bed-fellow, sex. We come to accept the resemblance of such conventionally antithetical acts of passion as violence and sex; indeed, their cohabitation comes to seem natural. Yet at the same time, we recognize Sam and Henny's marital weave as grotesque in its reduction, or replacement, of love with these muddled passions. Sam and Henny's relationship is at once radically unconventional and natural.

As mysterious as are the workings of sex and marriage, sexual fidelity has another concrete significance. Sam threatens to have Henny thrown out of the house for her deed "'by the force of law.'" Smack in the center of the most mysterious aspect of among the most complex of human relationships, the law of the land appears. One reason Sam has been unwilling to separate from Henny is that he knows she will gain custody of the children. When Henny suggests they separate, beginning when Sam leaves for Malaya--"'we can fix things up without anyone noticing particularly'"

(p. 141)--he answers:

"You will never break up my home. I know that's been your object for years and the aim of all your secret maneuvers. I love my children as no man

ever loved his before. . . . Some women cannot even understand such love as man feels in his strength for the weak ones playing round him . . . the light of the years to come for me; and the law would give them into your charge because you are their mother, no matter what kind of woman you are." (p. 141)

Similarly, Henny knows, as does Sam, that if she commits adultery and they separate, Sam will gain custody of the children:

"Connie O'Meara thinks she's a modern woman; and I have a vote too. But the fact remains that a man can take my children from me if he gets something on me; and a lot of fat old maids and scrawny hags in their fifties stand back of every darn man-made law. . . . I have to be pure and chaste before getting married and after--for whom please? for Samuel Pollit; otherwise, I'm no good before and he can take my children after. He's dying to do it, too, and have them brought up by that monster Jo Pollit . . . or his beautiful Louisa, in memory of dear Rachel, the great love. . . ." (p. 137)

Sam and Henny both love the children and do not want to be separated from them, but their love for the children almost causes the family's destruction because it helps to keep Sam and Henny together. Ironically, and tragically, love allows the near destruction of the beloved (the children). It is in large part this love which makes it necessary to keep up appearances and maintain the marriage as a convention.

Henny responds to Sam's threat to remove her by force of law with her own threat:

"You get out of here . . . you've only been waiting for this like a great foul monster, waiting, sneaking, lying in wait to take my children away. If you touch them, I'll kill you: if you try to put me out, I'll kill you."

Sam has accused Henny of "'secret maneuvers'" to wrest the children from him, and she accuses him similarly of "'sneaking, lying in wait.'" But both threaten to use more extreme means to gain control of the children. Henny counteracts Sam's threat of the law with "'if you try to put me out, I'll kill you.'" Though law rules over sexual relations in the sense of punishing adultery and rules over human relations in the sense of punishing murder, human passion--creative and destructive--cannot be ruled. Sam's threat of legal measures is mocked by the force of Henny's passion. The law which orders society is superseded by another force which orders human affairs, passion.

But the source of Henny's passion is, if anything, more elemental than love. Henny addresses her next comments to Louisa, repeating her fear that Sam will take the children from her. Then, Henny makes her plainest statement about what the children mean to her, and she includes all mothers in her statement: "'[A] woman's children are all that she has of her body and breath. . . .'" Henny's love for the children is passionately physical; she feels the natural connection between mother and child very strongly. But for Henny, children are not only the incarnation of the mother's body but of her breath, suggesting that word's ancient connection to spirit.⁶ That spiritual connection itself occurs through the physical, by means of breath. Henny's love for her children is grounded in their natural, physical

connection to her.

At the same time, she is genuinely concerned with their well-being. When Sam is in Malaya, Louie briefly forgets to give Henny a letter from him. While telling her siblings a bedtime story, Louie remembers the letter and runs downstairs to give it to Henny, followed by "the children" (as the eldest child is apt to call siblings):

The children had tumbled downstairs again and were gathering like soft-footed, eel-haired ghosts around the fire.

"Go upstairs and get into bed," called Henny harshly. "You'll hear what you have to hear in the morning."

"This is a most important letter, this is the letter I have been sitting up for to put me out of my misery," said Henny stormily to Louie, "and you go and hide it; what did you do it for? Are you a devil or a girl? You great woodenheaded idiot: oh, go up to bed and take that great moonface out of my sight. . . . Oh, stop that bawling. Good night, good night."

Louie, on the stairs, heard her say, "He sent money: look--five hundred dollars. Now, thank God, the children can eat." (p. 208)

Henny berates the children and cruelly insults Louisa, but her misery is caused by their deprivation and relieved by money to buy them food. The children are used to Henny's dismissals and they usually dismiss them. In general, the arguments of family life are considered surmountable, or survivable: "Of course this morning, every morning, was full of such incidents. That was family life. They were all able to get through the day without receiving any particular wounds . . ." (pp. 52-53).

As the novel progresses, however, relations between

Sam and Henny deteriorate and the treatment of the children worsens. While it is preferable that Sam and Henny love the children rather than hate them, their love makes the children suffer enormously both because it keeps Sam and Henny together, and because of the forms their love takes. While it is a child's (human being's) genius to recognize love no matter what form it takes, it is also tragic that children (human beings) accept love even in its terrible forms. Louisa is extraordinary in that she finally rejects Sam's love because it manifests itself in ways so hateful to her. Love is the natural glue of family life, but in The Man Who Loved Children, that can be a terrible, even fatal thing. Sam and Henny's passions are muddled and distorted, like their visions of the world, and they do not recognize the enormous distance between these passions and their manifestation and effect.

Passion is alive in this scene, and it reproduces. Henny's anger increases to rage and multiplies to violence. Though anger is an eruption itself, it is also kindling for greater anger and violence. Sam holds back Henny's arm, alerting her that she may seriously injure him: "'You'll push me downstairs, Henny--look out!'" Sam's warning suggests he does not think his wife would intend to seriously hurt him. But nothing is unthinkable to enraged Henny: "'I'll kill you,' she panted, 'I'll push you downstairs. I don't care if I go too. I'll break your neck.'"

Sam cannot bear Henny's raw passions and words, and he tries to cover her mouth: "'Henny, Henny,' he cried in desperation himself, 'shut up. Don't let our children hear.'" Throughout the novel, Sam tries to control what the children hear. This is an issue during Sam and Henny's first argument:

"You know yourself we can't go on like this."

"I wish to God we could not," said Henny desperately, "but we can, that's the devil of it--"

"It's on account of this language," Sam exclaimed impatiently, "that I have to come down like this in the middle of the night. My children ought not to hear such expressions. They hear nothing like that from their father. And I must insist on your controlling your language while I'm away." (p. 140)

Sam prohibits swearing (though he calls Henny "devil," exactly the word he complains of here in her speech). Sam's intense concern with what the children hear may seem strange in light of the children's experience, but it reflects Sam's profound belief in words. Words can express what Sam believes is proper, and in a sense, these words are the world for Sam. No matter what the children experience, it is proper words about experience which he believes are real.

Ironically, Sam's sense of what the children should not hear does not include his many schemes to murder "'misfits and degenerates'" in service to the perfect state. Sam's ideas are barbaric, and his neologisms--'Monoman' and 'Manunity'--are technically barbarisms as well:

"My system," Sam continued, "which I invented myself, might be called Monoman or Manunity!"

Evie laughed timidly, not knowing whether it was a joke or not. Louisa said, "You mean Monomania."

Evie giggled and then lost all her color, became a

stainless olive, appalled at her mistake.

Sam said coolly, "You look like a gutter rat, Looloo, with that expression. Monoman would only be the condition of the world after we had weeded out all the misfits and degenerates." There was a threat in the way he said it. "This would be done by means of the lethal chamber and people might even ask for the painless death, or euthanasia, of their own accord."

Louisa couldn't help laughing at the idea, and declared, "They wouldn't."

"People would be taught, and would be anxious to produce the new man and with him the new state of man's social perfection."

"Oh, murder me, please, I'm no good," squeaked Ernie suddenly. Of course he had instant success. . . .
(p. 50)

Though the younger children are less critical of Sam's notions, they are sufficiently experienced to know that Sam's ideas do not jibe with reality.

By page 497, Sam's "'don't let the children hear'" resonates. It recalls Sam's extreme and misguided belief in words; it recalls the distance between Sam's "proper" language and reality; it reminds us that the children, for whose benefit the comment is made, have, ironically, benefitted. Sam has inadvertently taught them not to believe in words, or to sift out the real from the merely proper in them. Finally, Sam's love of language has been adopted by Louisa, but she has transformed this into something positive.

Henny despises Sam's proper words, and ridicules his attempts to shield the children for she knows they see and hear everything. Yet as with so much about these opposing forces, in fact Sam and Henny share this concern. Despite

Henny's ridiculing Sam, she also tries to control what the children hear, even as she exposes them to terrible things. After Old Ellen persuades Henny to let the girls listen to the discussion of life's dirt, Henny repeatedly interrupts to reprimand her mother: "'Mother! Louie, run out on the lawn. Mother, I wish you wouldn't talk that way before the children. Evie, run and play in the drawing room! Will you stop it, Mother! You're disgusting'" (p. 182). Old Ellen continues talking and Henny repeatedly tries to make her stop and to make the children leave the room. Sam is more concerned with controlling what the children hear than Henny (she does not believe in words quite as he does), and in "A headache," it is Sam who voices this concern. But Henny demonstrates elsewhere in the novel that she shares this concern, and at least sometimes, she tries to conceal what life is (in her view) from the children. Sam's and Henny's failed sense of decorum--their deeply mistaken conceptions of what the world is--is buttressed by their belief in words.

Henny is not quieted by Sam's "'don't let the children hear'"; indeed, his desire for her to shut up intensifies her shrieking. Sam has also tried to stop Henny's words by covering her mouth with his hand, but she bites his hand: "'You rotten flesh,' she screamed, insane, 'you rotten, rotten thing, you dirty sweaty pig, pig, pig,'" 'Rotten' is one of Henny's usual insults, and Louie has used it in

"Herpes Rom" (Megara: "'As mother says, I am rotten . . . '"). Henny's language reduces the world, ironically, through metaphor and elaboration. Here, Henny reduces a human being, her husband, to its lowest form. Rotten flesh is a human being deprived of everything that makes it human, spiritual and physical. It reduces to, finally, a "'rotten thing.'"

A human corpse is seen by Sam as a future daffodil (p. 297), while Henny sees a living human being as rotten flesh, or like a corpse. Sam reduces the world by "improving" it, and denying the underside of existence. Yet, ironically, his improved world does not include art, fine artifacts, history, French, or diversity of languages and cultures. He prefers a universal language and universal brotherhood in a communal society, with the natural world as sustenance and entertainment. Sam's improved world is rosy but rather diminished.⁷ Henny reduces the world by concentrating on dirt and vice, and denying that virtue and good will exist. Yet Henny plays Chopin and Brahms, embroiders beautifully, and adores fine furniture, cloth, and food. The contradictions and ironies within Sam and Henny are almost endless, seeming to define character as that which is habitually inconsistent.⁸

Though Henny appreciates beautiful things, sees the Pollit efforts to be virtuous, and knows of her own attempts to improve life for her children, none of this finds its way into her dark vision of the world. In this scene,

Henny's language is at its most reductive, and stems from her rawest, ugliest passions. Appropriately, she expresses these passions in the most elemental, lowest terms: "'You dirty sweaty pig, pig, pig.'" It is hard to descend from "'rotten flesh,'" but Henny succeeds by disintegrating rotten flesh into dirt and sweat, and through the furious repetition of 'pig.' Henny's contempt for and connection to the natural world are evident in her speech. Her images are primarily from the natural world, but they are largely images of decay and rot, and of animals usually despised. Henny's language is natural, strange as it is, but it is the dark, destructive extreme of nature which it--and she--express.

At this point in Sam and Henny's argument, one may feel repelled by the words on the page and want to leave the scene. This very reaction occurs in Sam, who is revolted and leaves the scene: "He let her go and flung away to the doorway of Louie's room, himself revolted by her and the terrible struggle." Henny too has a physical reaction to the argument. She says to Louie afterwards, "'This headache is killing me.'" It is Henny's headache which gives the section its title; it is not trivial that she is physically sickened by the argument. The children are terrified by their parents' argument, and react to it physically also: "The children . . . stood . . . trembling. Louie sank down on her bed in a stupor, her heart beating hard. . . . Ernie

seemed to have lost his wits. He sank to her feet and blubbered there." Pollits, like the reader, are horrified by familial hatred and violence, yet Sam and Henny's battles occur. Our reaction to the scene is not the result of its unreality because it is shocking even to those causing it and participating in it. Rather, hatred and violence are inherently repugnant, a fact which can be attested to by anyone who has experienced (even as a witness) intense hatred or violence.

We are revolted and shocked as life violates our conceptions of life (even when life is in a novel). Need one prove that hatred and murder have always been a part of family life, and a part of love? "Unnatural," we say, but how to explain their persistence.⁹ Absolutely shocking, yes, but isn't this partly because human beings often forget or repress the most vile words, passions, and acts of life. Shocking, hideous, and even nauseating as this scene is, it is profoundly human. In The Man Who Loved Children, the horrifying and strange are natural.

Familial hatred and violence have long been literary subjects, but we are as consistently shocked by the artistic rendering of them as we are by their occurrence. Medea is perennially shocking, now for more than two thousand years, partly because it concerns familial hatred and violence.

"The Oresteian Trilogy," King Lear, Hamlet, The Cenci, The Brothers Karamazov--the list is long--are shocking, and

classic, partly because they concern this central, if horrific, aspect of life. The persistence of a phenomenon does not ensure that it will be accepted as part of the order of things in literature or in life.¹⁰ Stead's sense of decorum, her sense of what the real world is, includes this darkest side of human experience. In The Man Who Loved Children, this aspect of life does not cease to shock, characters or readers, but it is fully acknowledged. The characters' reactions affirm Stead's conception that life may be surprising and shocking even as it is experienced. Their reactions also suggest the human difficulty in accepting the strange and sometimes shocking nature of life as "ordinary" or natural.

Sam and Henny's "obscene drama" (p. 326) continues, on scene, Henny ranting against Sam's words: "'I've heard all about it till I could scream myself insane with the words.'" Sam believes in the power of words, but Henny believes in their power in another way; they are making her insane, driving her to suicide. She has shouted this in an earlier argument: "'I've had . . . your . . . everlasting talk, talk, talk, talk, talk . . . filling my ears with talk, jaw, jaw till I thought the only way was to kill myself to escape you . . . saving the whole rotten world with your talk'" (p. 143). In the novel as in "Herpes Rom," words can kill. In "Herpes Rom," however, we may accept this strange fact because the world of the play and its

language are so strange. The foreign language serves as a barrier, and events happen more at a distance; we accept more because it is foreign. Here, the horror is unmediated and the strangeness of the scene results not from foreign language, but because it is from the very heart, or base, of human experience.

With Henny's retreat to her room, the Pollits (and reader) are in a strange suspense. Sam calls out "'Henny,'" and she speaks the final words of the argument: "'If you speak another word to me in your life, I'll slit my throat the same minute. . . .'" One feels early in the novel that Sam and Henny's situation cannot continue, yet it has for two years and five hundred pages. With Henny's knife poised at her throat ready to slit herself at Sam's next word to her, it seems certain that finally something must change in their situation. But the aftermath of the argument proves otherwise. Henny emerges from her room dressed as if to go to town, and strange things occur:

[A]t last, Henny came downstairs with her hat on, an old red hat, left over from the previous summer. At once Sam barred her way, asked her where she was going, if she was coming back to her home again, and particularly ordered her not to show herself in the streets, looking like a hag of eighty in that skittish little hat. Then he snatched it from her head. . . . [S]he at last ran jerkily down the avenue, in a black hat, sobbing and trying to fix the collar of her blouse. . . .

Sam and Henny share a deep concern with propriety, a concern which has helped to keep them together. After this devastating argument, one does not expect Sam to be

"particularly" concerned with how Henny appears in public. After his wife threatens to kill him, his children, and herself, one does not expect his concern with her appearance to extend to a "skittish" hat. After this battle, one would not expect Henny to dress for town, replacing the red hat with a black one because a lady in the 1930s does not appear publicly without a hat. After Henny's threats, one would not expect her to adjust the collar of her blouse as she runs away from home. There could be no two things farther apart than infanticide and a skittish red hat, yet Sam and Henny both make the transition easily. Again, Louie's reaction serves as a paradigm for our reactions. When Henny emerges from her room "dressed, as if to go to town . . . Louie showed her surprise" (but Henny "only snarl[s]" when she does so).

Strange as the horrendous argument between Sam and Henny is, perhaps its strangest aspect is that it concludes with an altercation over proper attire. The "skittish little hat" incident is brief, but it is extremely important and epitomizes an important aspect of Sam and Henny's relationship. While the differences between Sam and Henny are enormous (and these cannot be underestimated), they are similar in their concern with acting properly, and this, along with love for their children, has shaped their lives. That this concern is seen after such an excruciating argument indicates how central a concern it is for them. As a central

concern, it extends beyond dress into most areas of their lives.

Indeed, Sam and Henny's desire to act properly has forced their unwanted union, as Sam and Henny have both told Louie:

"I knew before marriage to Henrietta Collyer that she and I should never have come together, but a young man's sense of honor, misplaced as medieval chivalry, prevented me from making the break." He put his arm along her shoulders.

"But Mother said she didn't want to marry you," Louie remarked. . . . (p. 131)

Sam may scoff at "'medieval chivalry,'" but his actions are still determined by a code at least as "'misplaced.'" When the "domestic agony [has become] intense" (p. 338) due to parental quarrels, Sam still will not consider separation from Henny (p. 438). For Sam, separation from Henny is impossible because he believes families must remain together. According to Sam's conception, separation is misery, no matter what the family's misery in unity:

"Could I see our children scattered, divided, with divided loyalties, trying to understand a sentence against father or mother! What a shocking thing! It is impossible," and he shuddered. "No, home is the place for fledglings till their wings are grown and they can flit to their own place in the world." (p. 147)

Sam's shock that the children would hear "'a sentence against father or mother'" is astounding in light of Sam and Henny's years of pronouncements against one another. For Sam, the workings of a family are fixed in nature, and follow a course as necessarily as do a fledgling's.

Sam's adherence to this "proper" notion of the family

is destructive not only to the children and Henny, but to himself. Sam loves a woman who loves him (p. 356), but Sam will not allow himself this happiness because he believes it would be wrong to separate from Henny:

"There is a wonderful young woman, Looloo, who seems to be--is--my perfect mate: it would be for me one of those marriages made in heaven. I cannot think of it because of your mother. Naturally." . . .

"It is dishonorable in the eyes of the world. And the little old world is not always wrong. Good name is something too. . . . Most people are simple good folk: they believe in the plain honest ways of living, the old-fashioned ways that my mother believed in. No, we cannot contravene the ways of the honest, humble poor, the ways of innocence and the integrity of family life. The home, the hearth, the family and fatherhood, the only ideals the old Romans had that were any good, little as they lived up to them."

Louie burst out crying.¹¹ (pp. 478-79)

At this point in the novel, the reader may feel like crying also, so misplaced and harmful is Sam's sense of propriety.

Sam is deeply concerned with maintaining a good name, and talk of good name is one of his refrains. This man who is buttressed by hundreds of sayings and songs has a favorite: "'Good name in man and woman is the immediate jewel of their souls'" (pp. 90 & 467). However, Sam's concern with maintaining his good name is so extreme and misguided that he will not answer false charges brought against him at work because he feels to do so would sully him. Saul Pilgrim, Louie, and Ernie beg Sam to answer the charges, but he only responds that to do so would taint him: "'Who touches pitch is defiled'" (p. 313). Consequently, Sam is fired from his job and the family falls

into extreme poverty, circumstances which cause relations between Sam and Henny to worsen, and which bring about the near breakdown of the family.¹² Sam's sense of propriety is not reprehensible but, like all Sam's other beliefs and views, it is entirely at odds with his situation and the world. Sam's failed sense of propriety results from his inability to acknowledge any aspect of experience beyond his own sugary ideas and words.

Henny derides Sam's sense of propriety throughout the novel, pinpointing the distance between what he upholds and the life they lead, yet Henny is also deeply concerned with propriety. Though she complains constantly of Sam to her children, sister, and mother, publicly she discusses him "properly." When Sam is in Malaya, she encounters an acquaintance on a streetcar and praises him. Henny's show of decency extends beyond comments about Sam:

Getting into the car, Louie slipped on her turned heel and went sprawling "in full sight of the whole car, covering me with embarrassment," as Henny put it; and a pleasant-faced middle-aged gentleman came to the rescue, taking off his hat to Henny. In the car Henny met a neighbor, whom she detested and called an old upholstered frump . . . but each woman at once became tenderly confidential with the other, and a long discussion ensued about the awkwardness of young girls, and yet the impossibility of sending "young girls" about the city alone. This was but a prelude to Mrs. Bolton's searching questions about Mr. Pollit in his absence; and Henny, with a great degree of wifely pride and modesty, retailed all Sam's political opinions and described his work with the Anthropological Mission in the Pacific.

"You must be very proud of your husband," the woman remarked with affectation.

"Oh, I am," Henny answered, with perfect good grace, "I think he is a remarkable man, he works so hard, and

no one can shake him from his opinions. He would not change his opinion for anyone, once he had one. Samuel does not really care for success, but for science and getting at the truth of things. I think he is a really remarkable man; but I suppose that's foolish of me."

Mrs. Bolton's cheerfulness diminished perceptibly, but they went on "la-di-daing," as Henny called it, until Henny unexpectedly got out at the White House. This enchanted Louie, who at once began looking for squirrels.

"I could have slapped her face," cried Henny, "old upholstered busybody, prying and poking, 'What is Mr. Pollit doing now?'" she mimicked. "She had better find out what her daughter is doing now, running round with other women's husbands: I wonder she dares to look me in the face, or any woman. If my daughter did that I'd stay at home. A woman with a daughter like that pawing my daughter. I was simply fuming and it was all I could do to be decent to her."

The morning was full of excitement, with its infinite and mysteriously varied encounters, Henny giving battle on great provocation and invariably coming off victorious. (pp. 195-96)

The discrepancy between Henny's words and feelings is humorous, but it evidences a serious disjunction. Henny is sometimes aware of the enormous discrepancy between what she perceives as proper and what she perceives as real, but this changes neither her sense of propriety nor her view of the world. But Henny is not always cognizant of the vast distance between "propriety" and reality. She is outraged that "'a woman with a daughter like that'" would be on the street, as sexual propriety is deeply important to her, yet Henny is having an affair herself, and besides, her own words and acts are far more shocking. Her outrage that such a woman would be "'pawing my daughter'" seems incredible in light of Henny's choking of Louisa. That a woman of Henny's words and actions could be "'cover[ed] with embarrassment'" by her adolescent daughter's tripping in a streetcar

illustrates the seemingly impossible contrasts which exist within Henny.

Henny's concern with propriety extends beyond marital and sexual relations into the family's material conditions, and about these she is utterly serious. Early on, Sam's allowing Ernie to work, even as a joke, almost causes Henny to leave Sam (p. 108). After the family's financial decline, Henny still will not allow her job-hungry son to take a child's odd job, and she is humiliated by their condition:

. . . Henny, more ferocious than ever, had absolutely forbidden him ("whatever your father says") to run errands for the grocer, black boots, or do any of the things that his imagination suggested to him. Henny kept completely to herself, refusing to speak to any of her poor neighbors. . . . She was ashamed of everything, especially ashamed of her laboring husband who could be seen at any hour of the day crawling about the house and acting like a common workman. Why wasn't he at work? the neighbors might be asking. Henny, too, had suddenly become ashamed of having so many children; for now that Collyer was dead and the estate dissipated, people asked her ordinary questions.

"It's all bets off, and they think I'm one of themselves," Henny told her friend, old maid Miss Orkney. "I'm ashamed to go out of the house with that string, I'm like a common Irish Biddy." (pp. 324-25)

Contemptuous as Henny is of her poor neighbors she is still embarrassed to be perceived as undignified by them. Though the family could be aided by income from their son of pecuniary instincts, Henny's contempt for "'common'" work disallows even this small solution. Sam and Henny focus on proprieties irrespective of reality, and so their proprieties are entirely improper.

Sam and Henny are thorough antagonists and each finds

the other's attempts to maintain appearances ridiculous, hypocritical, and contemptible; however, because of their shared concern with propriety, they sometimes appear to cooperate in this respect. In the skittish hat incident, both are determined that Henny be properly attired in a hat (even as they cooperate antagonistically). When Louie's teacher comes to dinner, Sam and Henny go to some lengths to make things appear proper. Miss Aiden's visit is important partly because it provides the first view of Pollitry from the outside. In the course of the novel, we learn a few things from relatives' comments and Saul Pilgrim, but until Miss Aiden's visit, we really only know Pollitry according to the Pollits. Miss Aiden's visit reveals the desperate familial and financial situation, and the distance between Sam and Henny's sense of propriety and their real situation.

When Louisa first invites Miss Aiden to dinner (for the night of Sam's birthday), Henny "made up her mind to let Miss Aiden see how the little girl really lived and how the grand Pollits really lived and how she, 'the mother of so many children,' really lived" (p. 398), but in fact, Henny does nothing of the kind. Poverty and marital strife are improper to Henny, and she tries to conceal them. Early in the novel, we learn that Henny will only use the fancy linens to which she is accustomed from Monocacy:

At other times they would find her . . . leaning over a coffee-soiled white linen tablecloth (she would have no others, thinking colored ones common), darning holes

or fixing the lace on one of her lace covers inherited from Monocacy, her old Baltimore home. (p. 5)

Miss Aiden comes to dinner at the depths of the family's poverty, four hundred pages later: "First came the thread-bare damask cloth (Henny still thought all colored cloths vulgar . . .). The cloth was much darned, yet in holes, and coffee-stained" (p. 409). Even though the cloth is stained, darned, and "yet in holes," Henny will not give it up, as Sam will not let go of his equally battered marriage. Experience will not alter Henny or Sam's sense of propriety. The proper cloth has become improper, a figure for Henny's failed sense of the world, but Henny cannot recognize this. Ironically, Miss Aiden does see how the Pollits really lived, for she sees not only the family's poverty, arguments, rituals, and games, she also sees the proprieties which are so at odds with the rest, but which are as much a part of how Pollitry really lived as anything else.

Miss Aiden notices that Henny does not speak during dinner except to instruct six-year-old Tommy and ten-year-old Evie in table manners: "'Tip your plate outwards, Tommy-boy!' and to Evie, under her breath, 'Use both hands to wipe your mouth!'" (pp. 420-21). Appropriately, the two corrections Henny makes are in more-or-less senseless manners. The manners Henny teaches her children here are adhered to for the sake of appearing well-mannered, and they are ludicrously, and tragically, out of step with

circumstances. Their uselessness makes them another figure for Henny's failed sense of the world.

Though Sam, according to Miss Aiden, has not adhered to some norms of proper behavior--he "had neither washed his hands nor put on his coat" (p. 419)--he too adjusts his language and behavior to the occasion. As Henny uses a "voice of sweet admonition" (p. 418) with Miss Aiden, Sam drops his Artemus Ward talk in favor of more formal constructions: "'Have we salad, Henrietta?'" (p. 421) he asks. Sam addresses his wife directly rather than communicating through a child, and uses her full name rather than a nickname. Henny does not respond, so Sam "repeat[s] politely" his question, using the same formal construction: "'Have we salad to come, Henrietta?'" Henny takes Evie aside so her daughter can pass along news of the salad's fate to Sam: "'Tell your father that the snails ate the lettuce, and I had no money to buy trimmings!'" (p. 421). Evie is accustomed to passing messages between her parents even when they are in the same room, and she repeats her mother's words to the whole table rather than solely to Sam. Propriety and reality clash again, and all turn to Miss Aiden to see her astonishment at this collision.

Miss Aiden's visit not only confirms the vast distance between the family situation and Sam and Henny's sense of propriety, it reveals how common their sense of propriety is. Miss Aiden is shocked by exactly those things which

Sam and Henny try to conceal, their marital strife and their poverty. Indeed, Miss Aiden can barely believe what she finds to be the real world of Pollitry: "'I had no idea,' she thought, 'that there was a place as primitive in the whole world'; and she began to wonder how they lived at all" (p. 419). Miss Aiden reacts to what she characterizes as Sam and Henny's "'domestic rift'" (p. 418) at dinner: "Miss Aiden flashed a look of astonishment from one to the other . . ." (p. 421). Miss Aiden can barely comprehend Pollitry because her own life has been limited to the "proper":

Dinner was something Miss Aiden was never to forget; for she had passed what she considered a very rebellious, but was really a very respectable life within the confines of the agreeably slick. Like Sam (though she was an honors student in English and Higher English), she saw truth, beauty, and progress in terms of twenty-five cent story magazines. . . . (p. 419)

Unlike Sam and Henny, Miss Aiden's conceptions of life have not been severely tested by experience, until now. Her sense of propriety has been maintained through partial, rather than almost complete blindness to the real.

Sam's sense of propriety has been formed according to his mother's strict moral and ethical codes, and Henny's has been formed according to the norms of her aristocratic past. While Sam and Henny are extreme in their concern for propriety, most of the novel's characters (including Miss Aiden) share this concern. It is the distance between reality and propriety, between infanticide and a skittish

hat, which is extraordinary with Sam and Henny, not the fact of it. On the one hand, their sense of propriety sustains them and is a civilizing force. It is preferable that Henny dress for town rather than kill her children, and that Sam object to her hat rather than slap her. However, adhering to proprieties which do not apply to their situation has driven Sam and Henny to barbarous behavior. Like their love for the children, their sense of propriety almost destroys Pollitry both by keeping Sam and Henny together, and because of what the desire to be proper makes them do. The profound ironies and incongruities of Sam and Henny's relationship culminate in a final one: these antagonists are shown, amidst their worst argument, to be mismatched not only because of their differences, but because of their similarities as well.

Sam and Henny's inappropriate sense of propriety has a significance for the novel as a whole. Henny's stained white linen tablecloth, darned, and "yet in holes," is a figure for the failed sense of decorum explored herein. Sam and Henny retain mistaken notions of how people should talk, feel, act, and view the world, and they cannot change these views. Thus, they constantly struggle between their visions of the world and the world itself, between "propriety" and reality. In "A headache," Louie fully accepts that the tablecloth is irreparably torn, and that though her parents will never discard it, she must.

"A headache" is Louie's descent into hell, akin to Odysseus' visit to the underworld, Dante's trip to the Inferno, and Bloom's excursion to Nighttown. From this experience, Louisa has a perception about the family situation which leads her to change that situation. Her descent into hell is a necessary prelude to the journey which moves her towards her destiny. But unlike Odysseus, Dante, and Bloom, Louie does not visit hell through supernatural means, nor even through the aid of dreams. Hell is found in broad daylight, and is readily accessible. Indeed, Louie's hell is shockingly prosaic. Odysseus' and Dante's hells are subterranean, other worlds. Bloom's hell is on the other side of town, but also on the other side of the day and mind--in the dream (or nightmare) world. Louie's hell is unexpectedly, almost inadmissibly, in the epicenter of society, the family home. In a sense, the strangeness and horror are increased by the location.

Of course, much that is not hellish takes place in the Pollit home. Louie's sphere is not the Mediterranean nor even as large as Dublin. Most of her obstacles and pleasures occur in the home because that is her sphere. Hell is part of that sphere, that home, as are Pollit games, meals, and stories. Still, Odysseus' goal is Ithaca and Bloom ends his odyssey back in his own bed. To reach her goal, Louie must leave home (this is, however, within the tradition of the bildungsroman).

While the location of hell has shifted, the fact of it as part of human experience has not. Hell is the worst extreme of human possibility, wherever it has been located, and writers and readers have always recognized it as part of human experience. "A headache" is hellish and it is also human.

Hell is a place that heroes particularly have visited. Louie, like her predecessors, suffers through it, learning from the suffering of those condemned to stay there. Sam and Henny remind one especially of Dante's sufferers, inflamed with passion, blind to their errors, eternally re-enacting the misery of their lives, eternal antagonists. Like Dante the pilgrim, Louie talks to the sufferers. She tries to make Sam and Henny stop or see, but only she, not they, can learn from suffering. Like her predecessors, Louie emerges from hell with new insight, finally able to move towards a higher destiny. Hell has a sublime counterpart and in The Man Who Loved Children, it too is part of life. But the journey there cannot be made until the hero suffers hell.

Notes

¹ Stead's stepmother, to whom she sometimes refers as 'Henny,' shared this view of unmarried women: "'Henny had always hated the schoolteachers who looked after her children at school. That might be a basic reason why I didn't like schoolteaching. She used to insult them: 'Old-maid schoolteacher, doesn't know anything about it.' A very old-fashioned woman.'" Lidoff, "Christina Stead: An Interview," p. 58.

² Stead has commented on this in an interview: "'That's the family situation essentially, it's the parents trying to gain control of a child's mind. It happens between lovers, and it often happens between husband and wife.'" R. M. Beston, p. 89.

³ Stead discusses this in interviews:

Q: You've set The Man Who Loved Children in America, but you've said that it is based on your own childhood
Stead: Yes.

Q: Why then did you choose to transpose the location?
Stead: Ah, well, for a simple reason--to shield the family. I mean, it would have been too naked. Then my husband and I went to great trouble to change everything. Everything's authentic that I say there--about the Chesapeake, the salinity. . . . It's a strange comment on family life that so many people like it, isn't it? I only wrote about mine, but thousands of people seem to think it represents family life.

Whitehead, pp. 242-43.

Another interviewer asks the same question:

Q: When you wrote [The Man Who Loved Children], did you draw on your childhood?

Stead: Oh, of course. Yes. . . . But it's odd how many people it appeals to. It makes one wonder about people's childhoods. I never expected that book . . . [ellipses in interview] I wrote it to get it off my chest. Still, it just shows you--the modern family. Peculiar childhood. And yet, it is family life.

Lidoff, "Christina Stead: An Interview," p. 44.

⁴ Stead speaks about this: "'Last week at dinner I met a teacher from the United States. He said, 'When I taught The Man Who Loved Children, two of my women students said to me, 'I can't read it, Henny is such a bad mother,'" And

you know my father would have said that. He would have said, "Books shouldn't be about bad subjects." That's just what my father would say! "Shouldn't write about a bad woman."

When I was about fifteen, I thought there was only one true writer in the world who told the truth about families, and that was Strindberg. I read many stories, of course, about good fathers and mothers and little girls running to their mother's laps, and I thought it was all lies, all nonsense, like we have commercials now on TV. I thought they were commercials, some kind of story they sold people." Lidoff, "Christina Stead: An Interview," p. 44.

⁵ Stead was asked about the marlin episode in an interview.

Q: What about the description of the boiling of the fish near the end of The Man Who Loved Children, where the playful camp atmosphere turns into a concentration camp atmosphere?

Stead: No, it's not a concentration camp atmosphere. I didn't intend that. Sam Pollit is a grown-up child. But it was true, all of it. I mean it happened, though in real life it was a shark and not a marlin that we caught. We were a family greatly interested in the natural world, in plants and animals. We used to go swimming a lot as children and there were sharks in the water and one of us remained on the rock above as a lookout, to spot any shark, quite visible even deep down in those clear waters. There were sharks hanging about and one day we tied a line to a buoy near our rocks and we did catch a shark. My father boiled it, got all the oil from it. You know there is a tremendous amount of oil in a fish like that. He boiled it in the clothes boiler, and you can imagine how annoyed my mother was.

Raskin, p. 74.

⁶ The ancient Greek and Roman conception held that the spirit was breathed into the body. Hence, Latin spirare, 'to breathe,' became our words 'aspirate' and 'perspire' as well as 'spirit.'

⁷ Stead's own father shared these opinions, as she writes in "A Waker and Dreamer": "He liked to lecture, he liked meetings and he did not miss the arts; he had the outdoors, the sea, the shore, the bush. He whistled very tunefully, and usually tunes from operas, but only moral operas--Martha, William Tell, Maritana, and a motif from the overture from Semiramide. He was shocked that the arts so often dealt with what seemed to a pure man, unsavory subjects; and then, the wrongdoers were not

usually admonished, punished, made to repent; or not chastened in such a way as to discourage others. . . . He extended his sobriety to the intellectual world . . . no French or history. He hated us learning history at school, because it was a record of old European villainy and bloodshed; he gave the French no credit for their enlightenment or struggles for liberty; and he disliked Pasteur, perhaps because Pasteur thought wine good." Stead, "A Waker and Dreamer." p. 34.

8 Of course there is nothing new in this. In The Poetics, Aristotle outlines four qualities of dramatic characters: "The fourth point is consistency: for though the subject of the imitation, who suggested the type, be inconsistent, still he must be consistently inconsistent." Aristotle, The Poetics, in Criticism: The Major Texts, ed. Bate, p. 28.

9 In Stead's Seven Poor Men of Sydney, a character says the following: "'If it were not so natural the murder tabu would not be so fearfully strong'" (p. 183).

10 Two other examples come to mind. Lady Chatterly's Lover was scandalous in the twentieth century as if sex were an aberration recently discovered. 'Booze' has been a slang word since the fourteenth century.

11 Stead's own father was also deeply influenced by his mother's views, as Stead writes: "The mother, Christina ["The name Christina has been given to the eldest daughter in the Stead family for at least three generations now" J. Beston, p. 79] was nonconformist in religion and strict, with many tabus; no dancing, smoking, cardplaying, alcoholic drink, theatre and so on. . . . On her deathbed, when David was fifteen, his mother, as he told it later, made him promise to keep her rules of life; and he was proud of doing so. He never went to the theatre or concerts; he abhorred dancing, because of the contact of bodies; he did not allow kissing or embracing in the home, nor endearments, nor cajoling, which he thought led to degrading habits of mind. The home was however, because of his own gaiety and talent for entertainment, and endless invention, gay and lively." Stead, "A Waker and Dreamer," p. 34.

12 Stead's father lost his job in circumstances similar to those of Sam, and Stead writes about this: "David's appearance, of whiteness, fairness and all that goes with it, dazzled himself. He believed in himself so strongly that, sure of his innocence, pure intentions, he felt he was a favored son of Fate (which to him was progress and therefore good), that he was Good, and he could not do anything but good. Those who opposed him, a simple reasoning, were

evil. This was not his mother's work but his own nature. He would sing certain songs, especially when something went wrong in the Department or his work in the naturalist societies, some defeat, jibe, or unkind joke; he would sing, 'Dare to be a Daniel, Dare to stand alone, Dare to have a purpose true and Dare to make it known.'

In the course of his long career in the Department, David ran into bitter opposition, which he ignored when he could, laughed off when he could; but which he allowed to grow out of containment, because he could not consider compromise, nor any view but his own. The state industries did not make money; but he always cried out that a young socialist industry is not supposed to make money, it is for the people. Nevertheless this failing was made the excuse for many shocking crass attacks, both on the government, its ministers, and on him personally. . . . He believed he was safe because he was Good; and from the word Good we get the word God, he said, and from the word Evil, we invented the Devil. He was ousted from the department, from the industry unfairly, because they were able to bring against him a serious charge, an error in judgment, made in a fit of righteous anger. It sprang entirely from this firm belief he had in his own purpose: opponents, particularly political opponents, were really Evil in the flesh.

He could speak of this to no one (but to me); but he knew now that his career in the department was ended. . . . I can never forget his expression, in misery, at the numerous unfair and rascally charges voiced in Parliament and carried in the newspapers. 'Dare to be a Daniel'--but the time had come when it was not enough; it was no use at all." Stead, "A Waker and Dreamer," pp. 35-37.

CHAPTER 3

A STRANGELY TRADITIONAL HERO: DECORUM REDEFINED

The following passage is the conclusion to The Man Who Loved Children, and part of a section titled "Truth never believed." The novel ends with the beginning of Louie's journey, a journey away from home and towards the important destiny which she feels is to be hers. Louie is finally distinguished from Sam and Henny in that she can act positively whereas they are bound to words. Indeed, Sam ends the novel about to realize his ambition of being a radio show host; he will be wholly and merely talk. Louie is able to move towards a better world not only through language and literature, and imaginatively through fantasy, but actually and actively. She is the novel's hero partly because she alone can act positively.

The Man Who Loved Children concerns language both as obfuscation and revelation, but the novel's last, extraordinary moments consist primarily of silence, action, and vision. Louie's leaving home makes her see herself and the world differently. Her new vision does not derive from contemplation; rather, action leads to new vision. Louie's new vision at the end of the novel is possible because she is able to leave the past in deed and word. She runs away

from home, and she also frees her mind of words. Louie is momentarily able to experience the world freshly and directly, without the intermediary of language. Action and true perception come first; words follow.

The Man Who Loved Children stands within the tradition of modern realism in its presentation of an everyday world which is often grim, sometimes terrifying, and even in its presentation of a protagonist who is a clumsy, overweight adolescent girl. The novel is unusual and surprising within that tradition, however, because this protagonist is also seen to have characteristics of traditional heroes which allow her to rise out of that world, and she affirms epic and romantic values.. Like Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's Ulysses, Stead's strangely traditional hero draws upon the heroic past for sustenance, but unlike Dedalus, Louie by the end of the novel is able to affirm with absolutely no ironic qualification a sense of destiny and fulfillment. Like the protagonists of Women in Love, Stead's hero moves towards a larger world, but unlike either Birkin or Ursula, Louie consciously perceives herself as part of an heroic and romantic tradition.

As Sam and Henny both shock and corroborate our sense of what human beings are (and of what fathers and mothers are), Louie violates and confirms our conception of what a hero is. She is at once the most unlikely and traditional of heroes, and she is unusual partly because she is both

these at once. Louie has qualities conventionally associated with the classical hero: courage, idealism, and compassion. The depiction of Louie as someone who realizes that action is what ultimately matters recalls Aristotle: "[L]ife consists in action, and its end is a mode of action not a quality. Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse."¹ Louie also has qualities of the romantic hero; she is an emerging artist, passionate and solitary. She is also part "anti-hero"--adolescent girl, clumsy, odd, overweight. Her sphere is the home, school, occasional outings to downtown Washington and visits to relatives. Her passion for freedom is first evidenced while she is fixing oatmeal for the family.

Stead's juxtaposition of quotidian and heroic does not elevate the facts of everyday life, nor diminish the essential grandeur of heroic impulses and actions. While much of the novel's humor derives from these juxtapositions--Louie defends her honor against an accusation of stolen cookies--the portrait of Louisa is ultimately serious, and these sometimes comical juxtapositions are part of the novel's most serious aspect. Stead's sense of decorum gives us a world full of such surprising combinations and contradictions; human beings are full of unexpected gifts and terrors; age, sex, station, and place have, on an important level, nothing to do with what one is. In Stead's

world, it is necessary to comprehend, and even embody, the contradictions and ironies of life in order to prevail. The hero must emerge from the ordinary--be of it and unlike it--that is, be extraordinary. Louie lives in and emerges from a world at once grand and utterly trivial. This modern hero has nothing magical about her origins; indeed, in knowing whence she comes we are convinced that such a person is part of the modern world.

Louie has extraordinary will, and perhaps more than anything else, this quality traditionally associated with heroes is what allows her to emerge from her "ordinary" world. Two distinct kinds of will are important in relation to Louie, the first of which is commonly called willpower. Throughout the novel, Louie tries to direct and control her actions to certain ends, including the willing of a stronger will. But more important in relation to Louie is will as the motive force according to which character unfolds in a certain direction. This kind of will operates almost independently of conscious direction or control, and is in that sense antithetical to willpower. Stead speaks about this second kind of will in relation to her fiction: "[Stanislavski] says that every character has the power of will in him. My job, the writer's job, is to let the character develop his will."² Thus, will in this sense is almost synonymous with character; indeed, it may be the very essence of character.

In the concluding passage of the novel, Louie's actions stem from this second kind of will. In leaving home, she ceases trying to control or direct her actions. Rather, Louie moves naturally, almost instinctively, as if her will were in tune with some greater will or identity. It is finally this natural, powerful will towards rightness--this almost unconscious, yet certain movement towards the truly proper--which characterizes Louie, and which allows her to emerge from the ordinary. The unfolding of Louie's will is the novel's essential action or movement. What and who causes it--how, where, why it occurs--is the primary subject and the final mystery of the novel.

In The Man Who Loved Children, it is not only the dark side of human affairs which both violates and confirms our sense of life, but the representation of heroism, virtue, and love as well. Even as Louie's journey toward a better world is conventional in conception, it is oddly extraordinary in its execution. However, Louie's journey at the end of the novel is preceded by Henny's startling death, an occurrence which finally, and ironically, brings peace to the Pollits. Louie knows that her parents cannot mend the central tear of Pollitry, their marriage, but after the argument depicted in "A headache," she is convinced that they will not dismember the family organism either: "'They're too cowardly to separate'" (p. 501). Louie's realization that her parents are unable to act or change persuades her

to take action. Sam and Henny have justified murder and suicide to the children, and Louie is familiar with their arguments in favor of mass and individual killings. In one of Sam's discussions of "countenanced murder," he tells Louie:

"Murder might be beautiful, a self-sacrifice, a sacrifice of someone near and dear, for the good of others. . . . The extinction of one life, when many are threatened . . . wouldn't you, even you, think that a fine thing? Why, we might murder thousands . . . the unfit. . . ." (p. 135)

Henny wishes death on all whom she cares for: "'Oh, why didn't he give her an overdose and put her out of her misery?'" (p. 167). Henny frequently tells Louisa that she wants to kill herself--"'Why don't I tie a stone round my neck and drown myself in his idiotic creek?'" (p. 325), and her refrain in the novel is "'Let me die'" (p. 327).

With the argument in "A headache," the Pollit family situation deteriorates to its lowest point, and there is no sign that things will change except to worsen. It is towards the end of this seemingly endless battle (it continues through the night when Henny returns from town) that Louie realizes her parents will not separate, and it is then that she considers killing Sam and Henny:

It must be done to save the children. "Who cares for them but me?. . . . Those two selfish, passionate people, terrible as gods in their eternal married hate, do not care for them; Mother herself threatened to kill them. Perhaps she would: at any rate, their life will be a ruin even if they are allowed to go on living." . . . [A]s for Henny, she did not see how her fate would be better if she went on living. (pp. 502-503)

Louisa debates the question extensively, and decides where each of the children would live if she were to kill her parents. After much worry, she determines it must be done: "It fell to her, no one else would do it or understand the causes as she did. Then she would at once be free herself. She made up her mind to do it at last" (p. 503).

Sam and Henny have spoken about methods of murder and suicide, and Louie decides how to kill her parents based on these talks:

Henny said impatiently, "There are so many ways to kill yourself, they're just old-fashioned with their permaganate. . . . I'd drown myself. Why not put your head in a gas oven? They say it doesn't smell so bad. I don't know. I thought of asking my dentist, Give me some of that stuff, nitrate, no, nitrous oxide. . . . Why, Sam has cyanide in the house any time. . . . Catch me eating two hundred aspirins--my heart would kill me; I couldn't stand that. . . . Why be in misery at the last?" (p. 164)

Death is attractive to Henny, and the only misery she associates with it derives from the discomforts of dying from certain methods.

Louie decides to take action the next morning (she chooses the household cyanide), but full of doubt and panic, she pours poison into only one teacup, and then nonverbally warns Henny not to drink the tea: "[S]he was struck dumb. She pointed to her mouth, the cup, shook her head" (p. 506). Sam enters the room, unintentionally about to prevent Henny from drinking the tea:

. . . Sam came into the kitchen, bringing with him . . . the six tiny cups made from carved wood and lined with soft silver.

"Daforno . . . we is going to hev our tea in poor Lai Wan Hoe's beautiful little gift. . . . Frow dat out, Looloo, we goin to hev Chinese tea daforno."
(p. 506)

Sam would also have unknowingly saved himself had Louie put cyanide in both teacups as she intended; he is almost magically invulnerable to hurt. Henny realizes Louie has placed poison in the teacup, and she completes the action which her stepdaughter has begun. Before Henny drinks the poisoned tea, she explains her action to come, absolves Louie, praises Louie's "'guts'" in acting, and, in her final words, condemns the family:

"The oil is everywhere and your dirty sheets falling on me to suffocate me with the sweat, I can't stand it anymore--she's not to blame, she's got guts, she was going to do it, she's not to blame, if she were to go stark staring mad--your daughter is out of her mind--" Sam looked at Henny with hatred. "All right," said Henny, "damn you all!"

She snatched the cup and drank it off quickly, a look of horror filling her as if she would have stopped herself but could not arrest the motion. She made a few steps with the cup, while Sam said, very puzzled, "What is this? What is going on?" Louie tried to explain but could only shake her head: even in her mind she could not think of any words. At the outer door of the kitchen, leading to the glassed-in porch, Henny stopped, turned round, and then fell straight towards them, to her full length along the new cement floor. (pp. 506-07)

Henny's threats to leave Sam and to kill herself have been as perennial, and inconsequential, as her cardgames of Patience. The night before Henny's death, she finally wins at Patience, or wins at waiting. Waiting, inaction, and fear have been her life, her game, since her "futile, anemic youth" (p. 456), and now "her game was out . . . she had no

game" (pp. 471-72). Henny's will is to disintegrate self and world, and her means of doing so has been words. Her will is finally marshalled but only to destroy itself, the ultimate will-not. It is profoundly appropriate, and a dark irony, that Henny's major action in the novel is to kill herself. Randall Jarrell writes of Henny: "[S]he is never more herself than when she destroys herself" (p. xxxiv).

Henny's action is clearly her own, yet she would not have killed herself without Louisa's complicity. (At least, she had been unable to do so.) Louie is not responsible for Henny's death, yet she has prompted it.³ In the aftermath of Henny's death, with visits from relatives, neighbors, teachers--all creditors of Henny, it turns out--Louie remains silent about her part in Henny's death. Sam feels vindicated by Henny's death--good and truth have triumphed over evil and lies--and her enormous debts have aroused the sympathy of which he has felt so deserving:

"All things work together for the good of him that loves the Truth," said the train to him. . . . Even Henny's death had worked for him: even Henny's debts. . . . "It is lovely to be loved!" said the train to him. (p. 520)

Sam's goodness and Henny's wickedness have been proven by fate, according to Sam, and he repeats his assumptions and conceptions about life with renewed conviction and fervor. Louie is subjected to "'The same old story'" (p. 521) on an afternoon walk with Sam. Unable to stand his mistaken

notions any longer, she suddenly blurts out the true story of Henny's death and her plan to kill Sam as well. Sam does not believe Louie's confession though she repeatedly affirms that what she has told him is true: "'I am telling the truth: I never lie. Why should I lie? Those who lie are afraid of something'" (p. 522). Sam's first reaction is, characteristically, "'I don't understand you'" (p. 522), but for him Louie's confession becomes "'an incredible absurdity,'" "'the damnedest, stupidest, most melodramatic lie,'" and "'a stupid adolescent crisis.'" Such tumultuous, ugly passions have no place in his cosmology. Indeed, he cannot even admit them into his mind, as he tells Louie: "'The truth isn't in you, only some horrible stupid mess of fantasies mixed up with things I can't even think about'" (pp. 522-23).

Sam's truth resides only in his words, as Louie realizes once again: "'You don't notice anything. Everything has to be what you say'" (p. 523). Though Louie knows that Sam will never understand her, his incomprehension is so tenacious that it takes her some time to accept it. She responds to his incredulity one last time, incredulously, with the opening words of the passage which describes the first steps in her "'walk round the world'":

"Then you don't believe me?"

"Of course not. Do you think I'm going to be taken in by a silly girl's fancies? You must think me a nitwit, Looloo, after all." He laughed and put his arm on her shoulder, "Foolish, poor little Looloo."

She shook him off and said nothing. Sam went on talking to her gently, chidingly, lovingly. When they reached home, she made him another cup of coffee and went upstairs. Out of the old redwood box she took an old-fashioned bag made of grass and raffia, and embroidered in beads by her mother, at one time. Into this she put a few clothes and a dollar bill that one of the visitors had given her after Henny's death. She hardly slept at all, but when she heard Sam begin his whistling early the next morning, she got up and dressed quickly and quietly. She heard the warm, old, jolly, pulsating home life beginning its round: "Little-Womey, *Philohela minor!* Git up, git up!" It was only six o'clock, and the boys were still drowsily groaning and rubbing their heads on their pillows. She heard Evie grumbling in her bed and dragging herself out of it and Sam thumping on the wall: "You, Gemini, hey, you Navel Academy, what's about your early-morning swim?" She expertly got downstairs and to the kitchen with her satchel. Once there, she banged the kettle about to sound as if she were making the tea, and heard Evie's grumble, "Looloo's making it," and, taking some food out of the icebox (she was always hungry), she ran out of the house and in no time was screened by the trees and bushes of the avenue. She smiled, felt light as a dolphin undulating through the waves, one of those beautiful, large, sleek marine mammals that plunged and wallowed, with their clever eyes. As she crossed the bridge (looking back and seeing none of the Navel Academy as yet on their little beach, or scrambling down the sodden bluff), she heaved a great breath. How different everything looked, like the morning of the world, that hour before all other hours which Thoreau speaks of, that most matinal hour. "Why didn't I run away before?" she wondered. She wondered why everyone didn't run away. Things certainly looked different: they were no longer part of herself but objects that she could freely consider without prejudice.

In a few minutes, she reached Clare's little cottage and saw Clare walking about in her nightdress, down the passage. Clare came to the door, seeing her, with big eyes, and half whispered, "I say, where are you going?"

"I'm going to Harpers Ferry. I'm going to my Auntie Jo's to get some money, and then I'm going out there; won't you come along?" Clare stared at her longingly, but Louie could tell from her hesitation that she was going to refuse. "You won't come, too?"

"Oh, Louie! Oh, Louie! Oh, Louie!"

"You won't come?"

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"I just can't. I don't know why not. I have my little sister."

"I suppose, if I had any decency," said Louie slowly, "I'd think of my little sister and brothers, but there's Auntie Bonnie. No, there are plenty of them. Well—good-by."

"Are you really going?"

"Yes, of course."

"You're all right," said Clare.

"Why don't you come, Clare? What is the good of staying here?"

"I can't, Louie, I can't."

"All right." Louie turned about and went down the path till she got to the gate, then she looked back. Clare had come to the front door. A milkman was coming down the street. Louie lingered, "I'll write you a letter when I get there."

"You send me your address, and I'll write to you."

It was this that was final: Louie's last hope went then. "Well," said Louie, going out of the gate, "I won't see Miss Aiden any more, will I?"

"What will she say?" asked Clare. "Well, anyhow, I suppose, you'll come back for school."

"Will I?" cried Louie, awaking from a doleful mood, "will I? No, I won't. I'll never come back."

Clare sniffed, and Louie saw that she was crying. Louie looked at her stupidly and, humping one shoulder, began to walk away.

"Good-by, Louie!"

"Good-by!" She walked away without looking back, feeling cheated and dull. Clare did not really think she should go. She walked across the market space and into Main Street, looking into a little coffee shop and wondering if she would have a cup of coffee. She had never been in there, because it was like a fishermen's hangout, dingy and dubious. But no, she walked on. Everyone looked strange. Everyone had an outline, and brilliant, solid colors. Louie was surprised and realized that when you run away, everything is at once very different. Perhaps she would get on well enough. She imagined the hubbub now at Spa House, as they discovered that she was not bursting up the stairs with their morning tea. They would look everywhere and conclude that she had gone for a walk. "So I have," she thought, smiling secretly, "I have gone for a walk round the world." She pictured Ernie, Evie, the twins, darling Tommy, who loved the girls already and loved her, too; but as for going back towards Spa House, she never even thought of it. Spa House was on the other side of the bridge.

The section's title is "Truth never believed," and this partly refers to Sam's rejection of Louie's confession that she intended to kill Sam and Henny, and that she played a part in Henny's death. Louie realizes one last time that her father will not believe any truth but his own. With this full acceptance that Sam will not believe her, Louie responds no further: "She shook him off and said nothing." Louie has not only learned the power of words from her parents, but the ineffectuality of talk. Sam and Henny have argued at length, but little is ever resolved or even communicated by their words. When Sam does not believe Louie's confession, she simply stops talking.

The contrasts and contradictions of Louie's character and in her relationships are as great as those within Sam and Henny; however, the ironies of Louie's character work to positive ends, and they are shown to be proper in the highest sense. It is ironic, but appropriate, that Louie, the character of greatest linguistic gifts, should also most fully realize the limits of words, choosing silence and action as her modes. The power of silence and perception in the face of Pollitry's torrential language is a dominant theme of the novel. Louie simply sees, in silence--or in the tersely eloquent language of "Herpes Rom"--the truth about her family and her situation. Yet the closing paragraphs of the novel give unexpected power and beauty to this mode of grasping reality, which is so

characteristic of Louie, so uncharacteristic of her parents, and yet so obviously stems from Louie's experience with her parents.

Sam and Henny sometimes interpret Louie's silence as acquiescence and sometimes as rebellion. In this instance, Louie's silence gives Sam the opportunity to continue in one of his favorite activities: "Sam went on talking to her gently, chidingly, lovingly." Sam has blamed Louie's confession on Henny's influence and "'this drama and poetry and nonsense'" (p. 523). His remedy will be, as usual, to eliminate outside influences and increase Louie's exposure to him. Sam remains wrong-headed, smothering, and intolerable, but the final word characterizing his talk with Louie is "lovingly." This is the last scene with Sam and Louie together and it not only reminds us of how impossible Sam is, but it recalls that Sam is, first and last, loving. He is the man who loved children, of course, and that fact is as full of irony as it is of truth from the novel's beginning to its end.

Sam and Henny's talk has replaced action; Louie's silence is a preparation for action. Louie understands her situation entirely by this time, and there is not so much as a sentence of realization or decision:

When they reached home, she made him another cup of coffee and went upstairs. Out of the old redwood box she took an old-fashioned bag made of grass and raffia, and embroidered in beads by her mother, at one time. Into this she put a few clothes and a dollar bill that one of the visitors had given her

after Henny's death. She hardly slept at all, but when she heard Sam begin his whistling early the next morning, she got up and dressed quickly and quietly.

Louie's actions are characterized not only by silence but by the absence of thought. She acts purposefully in preparing for her journey, yet she does not deliberate or reflect about either her situation or her action. Sam and Henny's language is spread indiscriminately over everything, and adds up to a kind of noise. Unlike her parents, Louie has the ability to be "struck dumb." She is linguistically gifted, but language is only one of her modes. Words have a proper place for Louie, and they do not replace action or world as they do for her parents. Louie can distinguish the creative and destructive uses of language, passion, action, and vision. Her sense of decorum--her sense of what the real world is--is based not on ignoring large parts of the world, as is her parents', but on looking at it from all sides. Partly because Louie understands the destructive uses of language as well as its proper uses, she can move towards the better life which she envisions.

As Louie prepares for her journey on her last morning at home, and the novel's last morning, she considers the pleasures and noisy vitality of Pollitry:

She heard the warm, old, jolly, pulsating home life beginning it round: "Little-Womey, Philohela minor! Git up, git up!" It was six o'clock, and the boys were still drowsily groaning and rubbing their heads on their pillows. She heard Evie grumbling in her bed and dragging herself out of it and Sam thumping on the wall: "You, Gemini, hey, you Navel Academy, what's about your early morning swim?"

Evie is aroused by two of her favored nicknames, Little-Womey and Philohela minor.⁴ The twins are called Gemini, as usual, but since the family has moved to Annapolis and the boys have developed an interest in the Naval Academy, Sam christens his twins the Navel Academy. Sam's humor and linguistic ingenuity are bursting out of him at 6:00 a.m., as is his enthusiasm for the day. Sam is perennially--relentlessly--energetic, and full of suggestions of pleasurable activities for his children. The very last we see, or hear, of Sam is his good-natured, clever side, as in the end he speaks "lovingly" to Louisa. Pollit home life has been several parts agony, yet it is ultimately described affectionately as if to counter, or even forgive, the difficulties of that life.⁵ Louie's tenderness towards the "warm, old, jolly, pulsating home life" is a natural reaction as she leaves home, and is perhaps shared by Stead and the reader as all are about to depart from Pollitry. This is one feature of the novel which may make it seem strange or even incredible to some readers. How can a world so filled with madness, hatred, vile language, and suffocating love also be presented in terms that Stead uses consistently throughout the novel, as "jolly," frequently happy? Yet that world comes to seem the real world, and one upon which Louie and the reader can look back with as much nostalgia as horror.

Jarrell writes:

As we read we keep thinking, "How can anything so completely itself, so completely different from me and mine, be, somehow, me and mine?" The book has an almost frightening power of remembrance; and so much of our earlier life is repressed, forgotten, both in the books we read and the memories we have that this seems somehow friendly of the book. . . . Aristotle speaks of the pleasure of recognition; you read The Man Who Loved Children with an almost ecstatic pleasure of recognition. You get used to saying, "Yes, that's the way it is," and you say many times, but can never get used to saying, "I didn't know anybody knew that." . . . The Man Who Loved Children makes you part of one family's existence as no other book quite does.⁶

Louie knows the rituals of her family minutely, so she easily pretends this day is life as usual:

She expertly got downstairs and to the kitchen with her satchel. Once there, she banged the kettle about to sound as if she were making the tea, and heard Evie's grumble, "Looloo's making it" . . .

Yet it is not life as usual, and in an instant--by the end of the sentence--Louie has left home:

. . . and, taking some food out of the icebox (she was always hungry), she ran out of the house and in no time was screened by the bushes and trees of the avenue.

Louie moves from being enmeshed in the family's routine to being completely free of it. Yet she has only run out of the house, behind the trees and bushes she has gone by many times.

As with Henny's death, Louie's leaving home has been prepared for throughout the novel, yet its occurrence is finally surprising.⁷ Part of the surprise is that both these events occur so easily and quickly. Both occurrences

are fully connected to surrounding events, yet a radical departure from them. Neither begins a new chapter, paragraph, or even sentence. Louie has run out of the house before and it is clear how easily she might run to the store, or run back in. Henny has fainted so often that it takes the family some time to realize that she has had anything worse than a bad fall from a fainting spell. Momentous events partly surprise because they so closely resemble normal activity. Strange as Louie's quick, unremarkable leave-taking may initially seem, extraordinary acts are frequently not accompanied by fanfare; indeed, if they are, it is partly to ensure that they are distinguished from the ordinary. Momentous events occur within time, connected to preceding events; it is only in retrospect, as we extract them from their surroundings, that they begin a new chapter.

Even as the extraordinary act may resemble the everyday, immediately it causes a transformation. Actor and world--life itself--are utterly different. Though Louie has left the house countless times before, this leave-taking is wholly new. Sam has often accused Louie of being sour, sullen, and ill-natured, and she has sometimes been so with him. Yet once free of the house, the smile which Sam had so often tried to coax out of Louie appears instantly, and when Louie considers her journey at the end of the passage, she is "smiling secretly" again. It is a silent, simple

act, yet a pure expression of Louie's changed state upon leaving home. This instantaneous change is produced by action, not words or a talking cure.

Louie's sense of her physical being is also immediately transformed when she runs away: "She smiled, felt light as a dolphin undulating through the waves, one of those beautiful, large, sleek marine mammals that plunged and wallowed with their clever eyes." Throughout the novel, Louie has been depicted as messy, clumsy, dirty, and fat:

This messiness was only like all Louie's contacts with physical objects. She dropped, smashed, or bent them; she spilled food, cut her fingers instead of vegetables and the tablecloth instead of meat. She was always shamefaced and clumsy. . . . She slopped liquids all over the place, stumbled and fell when carrying buckets, could never stand straight to fold the sheets and tablecloths from the wash without giggling or dropping them in the dirt, fell over invisible creases in rugs, was unable to do her hair neatly, and was always leopard spotted yellow and blue with old and new bruises. She shut drawers on her fingers and doors on her hands, bumped her nose on the wall, and many a time felt like banging her head against the wall in order to reach oblivion and get out of all this strange place in time where she was a square peg in a round hole. (pp. 58-59)

Louie has been presented in such terms so often throughout the novel that a reader may at first reject her as the hero, or suppose her to be wholly anti-hero. But Louie has to be seen as a kind of natural hero, even as this last association with the dolphins suggests. The dolphins are large and heavy, like Louie, plunging and wallowing through the world. But their beautiful consonance with their world suggests Louie's consonance not only with the world about

her but also with our traditional notion of what a hero or heroine should be--beautiful, intelligent, free, and active. As Louie leaves home, she mimics her customary, clumsy morning sounds to mislead the family: "She banged the kettle about." Yet a minute later this adolescent feels, almost magically, "light . . . beautiful . . . sleek." Louie is no longer "a square peg in a round hole," but, like the dolphin undulating through the waves, its undulations like the undulations of the sea, she is completely and magnificently in tune with her world.

Louie's choice of the dolphin is significant also because the dolphin is among the most intelligent of mammals: ". . . those . . . marine mammals . . . with their clever eyes." Louie's intelligence is not diminished by her association with the dolphin. Here, there is no opposition between man as intelligence and nature as instinct. In this best of times at the end of the novel--no longer a "strange place in time"--man, or adolescent girl, and nature are beautifully alike and in harmony. The dolphin's "clever eyes" also suggest the connection between sight and intelligence, or vision and understanding, which is developed in the remainder of the passage.⁸

The connection between mind and eye, between inner and outer worlds, continues with Louie's walk: "As she crossed the bridge (looking back and seeing none of the Navel Academy as yet on the little beach, or scrambling

down the sodden bluff), she heaved a great breath." In practical terms, Louie must cross the Eastport bridge in order to reach Annapolis and then Harpers Ferry. On this bridge, she naturally looks back at Spa House to make sure she has not been spotted by the family in the midst of running away. But crossing a bridge also has the larger, and familiar, significance of leaving the past behind (Louie looks back at Spa House), overcoming an obstacle, and entering new territory. Louie's crossing the bridge is significant in all these senses. The bridge is a suggestive image--and a defiantly ordinary image--for Louie's crossing over, because a bridge both connects and separates. Louie's act grows out of her past and Spa House, yet it is also a break from that past, an independent act essentially different from all that has preceded it.

The symbols or figures in The Man Who Loved Children are frequently meaningful for characters as well as reader. Crossing the bridge is important to Louie, and as she crosses it, "she heave[s] a great breath." Though this is partly a breath of relief, the wording is such that something larger is suggested. We recall the image of the dolphin--classical symbol for the departure from one world to another, and specifically the transport from a quotidian world to a world of spirit. Breath has long been connected to spirit and when Louie crosses the bridge, she experiences

a spiritual enlargement. Louie is not thinking, something connected only to the inner world. Her transformation is associated with and revealed through the simplest, most ordinary physical acts of smiling, crossing a bridge, breathing, and seeing. Yet these actions are also connected to the grand possibilities of human life: happiness, entering new mental territory, spiritual enlargement, and new vision. In The Man Who Loved Children, inner and outer worlds, mind and body, human being and nature are always closely bound, but in its concluding pages they are most in harmony for Louisa. Despite the ordinary and conventional nature of Louie's actions, the concluding passage is powerful and extraordinary.

Louie's leaving home not only changes her sense of herself, it transforms her perception of the world. It is six o'clock in the morning, but it is also the morning of Louie's new life: "How different everything looked, like the morning of the world, that hour before all other hours which Thoreau speaks of, that most matinal hour." Everything looks different and "like the morning of the world," but that world is not otherwise described. Louie experiences the pure seeing which occurs in the morning of life and which precedes words. This simple, pure seeing is one of the rarest, most extraordinary acts.

Thoreau is invoked, and his discussion of early

morning in Walden enriches the passage:

Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself. I have been as sincere a worshipper of Aurora as the Greeks. . . . Morning brings back the heroic ages. I was as much affected by the faint hum of a mosquito making its invisible and unimaginable tour through my apartment at earliest dawn, as I could be by any trumpet that ever sang of fame. It was Homer's requiem; itself an Illiad and Odyssey in the air, singing its own wrath and wanderings. There was something cosmical about it; a standing advertisement . . . of the everlasting vigor and fertility of the world. . . . Morning is when I am awake and there is a dawn in me. Moral reform is the effort to throw off sleep. . . .

. . . I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor. It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts.⁹

In this dawn hour, Louie too feels a part of nature, and she wonders innocently at the new world in which she has awakened. This dawn hour is also the hour of Louie's mental and spiritual awakening. Louie has a passion for the greater world beyond the physical, but, as for Thoreau, the transcendent is usually associated with and expressed through nature.

Dawn is the hour of heroic activity for Thoreau, and even the mosquito's hum and wanderings exemplify this for him. Louie in this dawn hour, almost as unlikely a hero as Thoreau's mosquito, is finally able to run away in search of a greater destiny. Thoreau, however, is self-consciously

ironic, challenging outright conventional standards of decorum in his coupling of the mosquito with Homeric heroism. Louie's heroism, though also a challenge to literary convention, is offered in the level tone of Stead-as-narrator. The placing of an awkward adolescent in Thoreau's world is not so insistent as the mosquito's hum, but it reminds us that Louie's silent dawn-hour is nonetheless connected to language, Thoreau's language, which Louie has quietly made her own, appropriating it as she appropriates Euripides in "Herpes Rom"--innocently, as a child, but in a way that challenges the wordy world which she is leaving.

The first stopping point of Louie's journey is Harpers Ferry, the home of her natural mother's relatives where she often spends summers, and she associates Harpers Ferry with moral purity:

For nine months of the year were trivial miseries, self-doubts, indecisions, and all those disgusts of preadolescence, when the body is dirty, the world a misfit, the moral sense qualmish, and the mind a sump of doubt: but three months of the year she lived in trust, confidence, and love. (p. 163)

Louie's uncle in Harpers Ferry has told her the story of Pilgrim's Progress, and she imagines the Celestial City to be in the area of Harpers Ferry:

Louie . . . getting herself confused with Christian meandering upwards Beulah, she and Dan with Christian and Hopeful freed from Doubting Castle, seeing somewhere in the air (over the greens of West Virginia), the Celestial City, freed by the golden key Promise--but what promise? The promise of reaching the grass uplands of youth and understanding the world. (p. 162)

The object of Louie's struggle and journey is the Celestial City, but she must first reach the key Promise--"the grass uplands of youth and understanding the world"--to free her from Doubting Castle. Louie's movement is away from the Doubting Castle of Pollitry and aspects of her own nature, and towards "understanding the world" and the better, purer life "somewhere in the air" near Harpers Ferry. Louie's journey is her attempt "to elevate . . . life by a conscious endeavor," and it is a moral act in the highest sense.

A reading of Thoreau especially recalls that Harpers Ferry is, and was particularly in Thoreau's day, as much a symbol of the American surge towards freedom as Concord. Louie's Harpers Ferry relatives understand "the history of the Union as a history of the curtailment and abolition of involuntary servitude" (p. 151), and John Brown's uprising against slavery is an event well known to Louie. Louie's individual revolt is connected to this other revolt against a political, social, and, above all, moral injustice. But once again it should be noticed that Louie's quiet, natural heroism differs as much from that of John Brown as it does from Thoreau's mosquito. It does not call attention to itself, yet it is a quest for freedom of the highest order--a freedom, in part, from linguistically imposed worldviews which darken the radiant world.

The sentence containing Thoreau's name is immediately succeeded by the following: "'Why didn't I run away before?'

she wondered. She wondered why everyone didn't run away." Louie, much like Thoreau, must leave home and what Thoreau calls "not life" in order to know life truly.¹⁰ As soon as Louie does leave home, her mind is "dusted" off and she can see the world clearly: "Things certainly looked different: they were no longer part of herself but objects she could freely consider without prejudice."

The Man Who Loved Children is profoundly concerned with how people of different "prejudices" view the world. Sam and Henny personalize all objects: everything is part of them or their system of thought, so they are unable to freely consider anything. Sam and Henny can never view anything without prejudice, bound as their sight is to their distorted visions of the world. However this passage makes no reference to Sam or Henny, nor to anyone but Louie. Louie has considered the world with prejudice as well, for the exigencies and desires of ordinary living make it impossible to view the world disinterestedly. Only leaving home allows Louie's past assumptions and conceptions to fall away so that she can view the world without prejudice. The new world before her is again not described except that it is different, and Louie does not try to define it. Indeed, the world is transformed because she is free of such definitions--that is, without them and liberated of them. To view the world without prejudice is, strangely but rightly, one of the rarest acts. To freely

consider life is difficult because of its simplicity.

There are only six sentences between Louie's leaving home and her consideration of the world without prejudice; however, the conclusion of the novel describes a quasi-visionary experience, and an immense amount occurs in this short time and space. The abundant language of the novel has given way to a plain, direct style. Louie's new perception is neither created by words nor inspired by them. Indeed, it is partly characterized by their absence, as visionary experiences usually are. The brevity and stylistic simplicity do not diminish the passage's richness; rather, they indicate that the richness resides in the experience itself--in new vision, not in words. Yet the language of the passage has its own power and meaning. As Louie's simple, primary acts are also the central, significant acts of life, the simple, primary words of this passage express central, significant aspects of human experience. The simple acts are rare and deeply moving, as is the simple language.

The quasi-visionary experience at the conclusion of The Man Who Loved Children brings the novel to a crescendo, but the rising movement is broken with Louie's visit to Clare, her best friend. Though Louie is a great fantasizer, she is firmly attached to the outer world. As she leaves home, she grabs some food, and as she reaches Clare's cottage, her quasi-visionary experience is set aside.

Louie is no slender, ephemeral variety of dreamer. Louie moves quickly and easily among radically different realms, and though this is reminiscent of her parents' shifting from infanticide to the skittish hat, theirs is a kind of madness based on a failed sense of the world, whereas Louie's results from her acknowledgement and understanding of the disparate aspects of experience. Louie is, and must be, practical as well as visionary, disinterested as well as passionate. She is the novel's hero partly because she comprehends, and embodies, seemingly contradictory qualities.

Clare is Louie's "alter ego" (p. 341), and these best friends are in communication through letters and notes in class when they are not talking. They have discussed a walking trip to Harpers Ferry before, so when Louie finally does leave home, she naturally asks Clare to accompany her. Louie tells Clare her destination, and asks Clare three times if she "'won't'" go. Louie consistently uses the word 'won't' in asking Clare to accompany her, but Clare responds using a different verb:

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"I just can't. I don't know why not. I have my little sister." . . .

"I can't, Louie, I can't."

For Louie, the decision to leave home is a matter of will. 'Can' is a verb which no longer obtains for her. When Clare explains to Louie, "'I have my little sister,'" the

reader knows what this refers to:

. . . Clare's poverty was no secret to anyone--she came of a brilliant family that after the death of father and mother had come into the hands of a poor, stiff-necked maiden aunt. One eldest sister was even now at work helping to keep the two younger sisters and small brother. As soon as Clare graduated, she would take up the burden. (p. 342)

Clare's family responsibilities are an obstacle to her running away, and when Clare refers to these responsibilities Louie thinks of her own siblings: "'I suppose if I had any decency,' said Louie slowly, 'I'd think of my little sister and brothers, but there's Auntie Bonnie. No, there are plenty of them.'" Louie cares for her siblings, and she does not leave home until Bonnie returns and Sam has the promise of work. But her parents' constant insistence on what is or is not decent is precisely what she flees. Louie has met her family responsibilities, but in a sense these responsibilities are never-ending, and her father's ideas of decency would keep her at home forever. It is part of Louie's strength that she is not controlled by notions of propriety and decency inappropriate to her situation, as are her parents. She knows it is important for her to leave home--proper in the highest sense--and she does so.

After Louie first tells Clare that she is leaving, "Clare stared at her longingly." When Louie asks Clare why she cannot leave, Clare answers, "'I don't know why not.'" The family is not offered (by Clare or the novel)

as a sufficient obstacle to her leaving home. Clare's "'I can't'" has a deeper source: what distinguishes her from Louie is a failure of will. And Louie's will--even her willfulness--is a legacy from both her parents. Louie realizes that Clare will not accompany her, but also that "Clare did not really think she should go." Clare is surprised by Louie's boldness and asks, "'Are you really going?'" Clare extends her own timidity and weakness to Louie. But once assured that Louie is going--"'Yes, of course'"--Clare praises her friend: "'You're all right.'" It is an affirmation not a question. Besides Louie, Clare is the most independent, gifted, and appealing character in the novel, and her decision not to act serves partly as a foil to Louie's very different decision.¹¹ When Louie leaves Clare's cottage "she looked back," as she looks back at Spa House. Louie is not only distinguished from Pollitry, but from her "alter ego" Clare as well. Now, all are part of Louie's past.

The quiet, heartfelt struggle between the two girls is essentially a contest between will and a conventional sense of decorum. Will is of central concern to Louie, and her strong will is one of the qualities which distinguishes her from the novel's other characters. Louie's will has been strengthened by circumstances, conscious effort (a willing to will), and reading (including Nietzsche, a favorite of hers).¹² However, like so much

which characterizes Louie, the seeds of her strong will have been present since infancy, as Sam tells the children:

"Bluebeak (I called her Ducky then), Ducky was playing with her blocks--and she was wonderful at building with them, so serious, stopping for nothing, nothing could disturb her, shrieks, the milkman coming, the streetcar, nothing--" (p. 357)

Sam and Henny have long recognized Louie's extraordinary will, but they have not always seen it as an asset, as Henny rages to Bert Anderson:

"I just know that if she makes up her mind to do a thing, she'll do it: and it isn't just her damned obstinacy, although I yell at her that it is: it's that she's deaf."

"I didn't know."

"No, not deaf! She doesn't know there's anyone else alive walking this earth but herself. So if she wants to do it, she'll do it and if you cut her fingers off, she wouldn't know it, she'd just go and do it. . . ." (p. 94)

Henny's remark suggests one of the most powerful and attractive features of Louie's will at its best. She is hardly conscious of willing at all. This mode of willing is characteristic of the closing passage, and it contrasts significantly with Louie's attempts to develop willpower. There are many instances of the latter in the novel, but the most dramatic occurs when Ernie announces to his family that the center of a flame is cool. The children immediately begin passing their fingers through the flame, but Louie reacts differently:

The children meanwhile were dashing their fingers back and forth . . . giggling and licking their hands. Louie, with a slight smile, stuck out the little finger

of her right hand and held it in the flame. The children's faces stilled with surprise . . . and Sam . . . cried, "Looloo don't be a fool!". . . . There was a nasty smell of frying flesh in the room. Louie withdrew her finger and showed it to them for an instant, charred, and then coolly walked out of the room to go and wrap it in oil. Evie and little Sam were bawling . . . while Sam repeated several times angrily, "Looloo is a cussed, mulish donkey. . . ." He even asked angrily, "Looloo, isn't it hurting you?"

"It is not hurting me," she said stiffly.

"It must be."

"Nothing hurts me, if I don't want it to," she told him. . . .

But Ernie pussyfooted out to the kitchen and asked, "Doesn't it hurt, Louie?" to which Louie replied with a smile, "Yes, of course it hurts, but it doesn't matter." (pp. 384-85)

Louie believes tolerance for physical pain reflects and increases psychic strength. This demonstration of will causes Sam to leave Louie alone for an evening, and it is in the solitude of this evening that she writes "Herpes Rom." To both the family and herself, this physical trial is proof of her determination and it prompts another act of will, writing "Herpes Rom." This act, however, is characteristic of the unconscious willing that Louie achieves in her best moments. Both in the writing of "Herpes Rom" and in her determination to leave behind even Clare, this unselfconscious willing is Louie's most powerful instrument against conventional decorum.

The relation between will and decorum is crucial. Willpower is a form of imposition, as any conventional decorum is a form of imposition. The quantities of energy that Sam and Henny expend in their efforts to impose on

Louie and upon each other their private sense of what is decorous or proper constitutes a destructive and even paralyzing form of will. It is associated finally with Henny's suicide but also throughout the novel with Sam and Henny's inability to separate, and it is this paralysis which finally precipitates Louie's will to act. Her will in this moment of departure stands in stark contrast to the kind of willpower which imposes a private or a conventional sense of decorum. It is a kind of spontaneous willing, which has however been nourished by literature, and which is associated with the free acceptance of the world in all its endless "indecorous" variety and maternal beauty.

Louie's will appears to waver briefly in the final scene with Clare. It is difficult for these best friends to say goodbye, and they continue talking. With Clare's unwillingness to join Louie now certain, they consider Louie's future:

"I won't see Miss Aiden any more, will I?"

"What will she say?" asked Clare. "Well, anyhow, I suppose you'll come back for school."

"Will I?" cried Louie, "will I? No, I won't. I'll never come back."

Louie's "'Will I? . . . will I?'" is addressed to herself more than to Clare. She is asking herself what she does 'will' for the future; indeed, eleven of her twenty words are forms of 'will' and 'I.' Earlier, Louie has packed and left home without deliberation, and here again, she determines

her actions without deliberation: "'No. I won't. I'll never come back.'" Finally, Louie says "'Goodbye'" to Clare--appropriately, it is the last word spoken in the novel--and "look[ing] at her stupidly," Louie walks off. Uncertainty about her actions to come occurs again, and again she resolves the matter without deliberation: "She walked across the market space . . . looking into the coffee shop and wondering if she would have a cup of coffee. . . . But no, she walked on." Louie wonders about her future actions as earlier she had wondered why she did not run away before, and wondered why everyone did not run away. Now, she wonders at the new world she sees before her: "Everyone looked strange. Everyone had an outline, and brilliant, solid colors. Louie was surprised and realized that when you run away, everything is at once very different."

Louie faces the world innocently at the end of the novel, without prejudice and full of wonderment. Louie's innocence is a kind of wisdom, unattainable by her parents or even Clare. Sam and Henny are always making sense of the world; neither their senses nor their minds are free to see, or understand, clearly or truly. Louie is able to see freshly because she can shed the past and past conceptions, because she can become "stupid." She is not making sense out of the world; rather, she is able to let the world reveal itself to her senses--"make sense" to her.

The willingness to be innocent in turn allows the possibility of new vision and wisdom: the see-er becomes the seer.

Louie's reactions have a further significance for the novel as a whole. When Louie experiences the world clearly and truly, "Everyone looked strange," she is "surprised" by what she sees, and "everything is . . . very different" from her conceptions of it. Louie's reactions reflect Stead's larger sense that the world is usually different from our ideas of it, and thus we see it as strange and surprising. In this sense, Louie's reactions may also serve as a paradigm for our reactions to life in the novel.

Strangely, but appropriately, Louie's innocent state partly results from an act of will--leaving home--and occurs in tandem with her strong will. She faces the world and her future with wonder, but she moves forcefully into that world and future. Louie's will is a quality of character or heart, and leads her to action. But her mind and senses are left free, or innocent, to absorb the consequences of her action. Louie's act is spontaneous and visionary, not an effort of will, but as if in accord with some larger will. This combination of strong will and innocence is also apparent in her artistic work. Louie writes quickly and surely yet without thinking, and wonders how she has written what she has. Like her action and new vision, artistic creation occurs through will yet in silence and innocence. Her writing is a willing of words distinct from language as talk

or thought--a verbal action of new vision. Strange as this combination of will and innocence may seem, it evolves from the novel and is necessary to it. It is crucial that Louie have the will to extricate herself from Pollitry, and the innocence to experience the world freshly. The contrasts and ironies of Louie's character are necessary, and work harmoniously to a positive end.

Louie has the first realization about her running away after she has observed the world around her for some time. Thought follows perception: "Louie was surprised and realized that when you run away, everything is at once very different." Louie only understands that her act of running away has transformed the world well after this has been demonstrated. The assumptions of this "very different" world are not established for Louie yet, but realizing "everything" is altered, she reconsiders her future. In such a different world, still undefined, "Perhaps she would get on well enough." Louie accepts the indefinite nature of things as she has calmly wondered. Unlike Sam and Henny, Louie can reside comfortably in uncertainty, possessing in her best moments a version of Keats's negative capability.

The novel's concluding paragraph moves fluidly and logically, and Louie's consideration of her future--"Perhaps she would get on well enough"--is followed by thoughts about her past and then about her present:

She imagined the hubbub now at Spa House, as they discovered that she was not bursting up the stairs with their tea. They would look everywhere and

conclude she had gone for a walk. "So I have," she thought, smiling secretly, "I have gone for a walk round the world."

Louie thinks of what her family imagines her to be doing, and that leads her to think of what she is actually doing. She translates a walk from what it has meant in her past, to her family, to what it means in her new world. The extraordinary act again resembles the ordinary--both are walks--yet it is wholly different.

Louie's final words, "'I have gone for a walk round the world,'" remind us that she is not only running away from home, she is embarking on a greater voyage towards "understanding the world" (p. 162). Louie has anticipated this walk from the early pages of the novel:

[S]he felt a growling, sullen power in herself which was merely darkness to the splendid sunrise that she felt certain would flash in her in a few years. . . . Louie knew she was the ugly duckling. But when a swan she would never come sailing back into their village pond; she would be somewhere away, unheard of, on the lily-rimmed oceans of the world. This was her secret. But she had other intimations of destiny, like the night rider that no one heard but herself. With her secrets, she was able to go out from nearly every one of the thousand domestic clashes of the year and, as if going through a door into another world, forget about them entirely. They were the doings of beings of a weaker sort. (p. 59)

Louie has taken her walk imaginatively many times, and it is connected to her deepest, most passionate side. She writes the following to Clare:

"Everyone thinks I am sullen, surly, sulky, grim; but I am the two hemispheres of the Ptolemaic marvels, I am lost Atlantis risen from the sea, the Western Isles of infinite promise, the apples of the Hesperides and daily make the voyage to Cytherea, island of snaky

trees and abundant shade with leaves large and dripping juice, the fruit that is my heart, but I have a thousand hearts hung on every tree, yes, my heart drips along every fence paling. I am mad with my heart which beats too much in the world and falls in love at every instant with every reflection that glimmers in it." And much more of this, which she was accustomed to write to Clare, stuff almost without meaning, but yet which seemed to have the entire meaning of life for her. . . . (pp. 436-37)

One of the most notable features of these imaginary walks is their difference from the walk Louie finally takes. Far from turning into a swan, she remains her plump, dolphin-self. And far from romantic expressions, or language of any kind, she acts quickly and simply.

As Louie is about to leave the past for good, she pictures her siblings one final time:

She pictured Ernie, Evie, the twins, darling Tommy, who loved the girls already and loved her too; but as for going back to Spa House, she never even thought of it. Spa House was on the other side of the bridge.

Louie feels affection for her siblings, but crossing the bridge has changed everything so entirely, Louie's new world is so much the right world for her, that she does not consider recrossing the bridge. As Louie does not deliberate prior to leaving home, she "never even thought" of returning to Spa House once she leaves it. Will involves a kind of instinctive certainty distinct from thought. Though Louie has thought, and occasionally talked, about Pollitry, her situation, and her destiny in the course of the novel, ultimately thought and talk are inappropriate--understanding is insufficient--and action is the only proper course.

Earlier in the novel, crossing the bridge has been impossible for Louie, despite the number of times she has physically crossed it, and now recrossing the bridge, though still physically possible, is spiritually impossible. The extraordinary act does indeed transform actor and world, and life itself.

Until Louie takes action at the end of the novel, she could be submerged because of family or insufficient strength; this bildungsroman has no retrospective ease.¹³ Yet, ironically, it is partly the very things threatening to submerge Louie which finally propel her to take action. Louie's experience of "the infernal middle kingdom of horror" (p. 381) has increased her passion for a better world, strengthened her will, fed her imagination, and sharpened her understanding of the world.

However Louie's passion for a better life and world is based not only on a rejection of the misery she knows. It has been fed, or perhaps ignited, by Sam (and his sisters); Henny (and her family); the Harpers Ferry relatives; and books, school, and fantasies. Louie has had the benefit of Sam's idealisms (and also the benefit of having their foolish aspects revealed by Henny). She has had the benefit of Henny's notion of a grand life (and also the benefit of having its hollow aspects revealed by Sam). She has had the benefit of her Harpers Ferry relatives' ideals (and has

recognized the faults there as well). Finally, she has had the world of books, school (and Miss Aiden), fantasies, and her imagination, and this has never been toppled.

Louie's passion for a better world is the result of good and "bad" experiences. Characteristically, she has made use of all in her experience, and in this sense all her experience is good. Some critics adopt the hatred Louie sometimes feels for Henny and especially Sam as their own attitude towards these characters, but this is not the true tone or ground of the novel, as Dorothy Green writes:

Horrible as the book often is, there is no tone of grudging resentment in the narrative; behind it is the clear awareness that only this particular combination of circumstances, this extraordinary mixture of tragedy and buffoonery, could have led to the evolution of this particular species of artist. Louisa's temporary hatred for her father is the healthy hatred of an animal whose existence is threatened; it passes when the threat is removed and is an ingredient of the book, not the ground of it.¹⁴

The deeply affirmative conclusion of The Man Who Loved Children casts the novel in a new light. Louie's walk around the world is finally necessary, and possible, because she has the will, imagination, intelligence, and passion to make that journey. Yet much of Louie's nature is understood with reference to Pollitry. She is clearly affected by, though emphatically not explained by her parents. Louie is an original but she does not arise ex nihilo. Because Louie emerges from Pollitry as such an extraordinary consciousness, we come to view Pollitry more sympathetically. Indeed, Louie's final positive action changes the way we consider

the novel as a whole because such an ending is so much the result of what precedes it. As Louie is completely different from her family yet of them, her present is connected to her past and completely different from it. Appropriately, the 'bridge' which connects and separates is the novel's last word.

Perhaps the greatest truth and irony of the novel is that out of the strange Pollit world emerges a character whose qualities of mind and heart are those which human beings have always valued. Louie actively moves towards a better world; a more authentic language; purer, higher passions; a clearer, truer vision of the world; and a vital, harmonious relationship with nature. Measured against traditional or even modernist standards of literary decorum, Louie cannot be the hero--a fat girl, messy and awkward, she should "properly" be a minor character. But Stead's sense of decorum is finally traditional with respect to the qualities which prevail. Perhaps Aristotle can explain why Louie's version of heroism is ultimately so familiar to us: "[I]t is possible to fail in many ways . . . while to succeed is possible only in one way (for which reason also one is easy and the other difficult--to miss the mark easy, to hit it difficult). . . ." ¹⁵ It is only the extraordinary individual who affirms the values and embodies the virtues human beings have always cherished. Stead shows extensively how people miss the mark--the flawed language, muddled

passion, inaction, and distorted vision of Sam and Henny-- and also how one person hits it and prevails.

Finally, it is necessary to return to the title of the concluding section of the novel, "Truth never believed." As discussed earlier, this partly refers to Sam's rejection of Louie's confession. However, because this is the title of the novel's final section and because of the provocative nature of the words, its significance must be considered further. The Man Who Loved Children contains no fiction writer's disclaimer; indeed, Stead has often claimed that the novel is autobiographical. In a sense, the title challenges the reader, suggesting that life as it really is will never be believed. Louie offers this same opinion to Sam, though she is referring to those who know Pollitry directly rather than through the novel:

Louie's lip trembled, "When I begin to get near home, I begin to tremble all over. I never told anyone what it is like at home."

"That is right, Looloo: a merry heart goes all the way; there is nothing we cannot forget if we have a high ideal fixed before us."

She said in a rebellious tone, "That is not the reason: I do not say it because no one would believe me!" (pp. 355-56)

Stead has told the strange, surprising, and sometimes shocking truth of what happened, and it will not be believed.

However Stead has written a novel, not an autobiography. It is the life made out of life, the transformation which is fiction, that Stead believes in. Stead did not visit her

childhood home at Watson's Bay, the original of Spa House, upon her return to Australia:

By a magic that I came by by accident, I was able to transport Watsons noiselessly and as if it were an emulsion or a streak of mist to the Chesapeake; and truly, the other place is not there for me anymore; the magician must believe in himself.¹⁶

Stead believes the truth comes out in writing, and she does not like to discuss her own life anymore: "The real person never appears - and certainly not the real experiences. . . . [Stead's ellipses] [If y]ou write about yourself . . . and/or someone close to you - the truth will come out. . . ." ¹⁷

It is not only the truth about life which will not be believed, but the real truth--the truth of the fiction.

Throughout the novel, Louie quotes from literary works to comment on her life and thoughts. Her reading is passionate and personal, acting as a kind of example of how and why we read The Man Who Loved Children or any work of fiction. Literature is Louie's language; it speaks for her; it says what she is, feels, knows, and needs to say intensely and truly. Louie's recitation of passages from literature often supplants her own speech. When she does communicate in her own words, those words are often her literary works. When Louie writes "Herpes Rom," she creates a language to express more precisely her own sphere (p. 385). The need for poetic diction--a truer, richer, more powerful language--is evidenced in this act. Ordinary language is not sufficient to express human experience. At the end of the novel, Louie does not

have a language to express the new sphere into which she has journeyed. The search for an authentic language which will describe experience truly--a literary language in the highest sense of that term--has just begun.

Like "Herpes Rom," The Man Who Loved Children speaks in a "strange" language and "distorts" the world, but both works do so because they truly present a mind's grasp of experience. At the end of the novel, Louie momentarily views the world clearly and truly, without distortion. She is able to do so because she is not grasping the world--she is temporarily without intelligence or language. The human grasp of experience follows and that is most truly expressed, for Christina Stead as for Louie, in the extraordinary language which is literature.

Notes

1 Aristotle, The Poetics, p. 26.

2 Smith, p. 74.

3 Louie's first and last acts towards Henny in the novel are to give her a cup of tea.

4 Philohela minor, the American woodcock, is found in the Northeast; however, it is an appropriate nickname for Evie because of its characteristics: "The woodcock is a startling game bird: crouched and watching for danger with its big eyes . . . and protected by plumage the color and pattern of dead leaves. . . ." "Woodcock," New Encyclopedia Britannica: Micropaedia, 1974 ed. Evie is big-eyed, fearful, "brown," drab, and always trying to protect herself by matching her surroundings (agreeing with Sam). Some of Sam's other nicknames for Evie are discussed in the novel: "She had many petnames, any, in fact, that occurred to Sam, such as Penthestes (a chickadee) or Troglydytes (the house wren), names of engaging little dusky birds or animals" (p. 26).

5 Stead speaks about this in an interview:

Q: I was struck by your control of the viewpoint in The Man Who Loved Children: you have the reader climbing the wall over Sam or Henny, but you keep your cool all the time. Is that your own technique or were you imitating a literary model?

Stead: I wasn't imitating anyone. It's the child's viewpoint that I'm faithfully reproducing. We live through agonies, and we grow up perfectly straight. What happens to Lou doesn't upset her so much.

R. M. Beston, p. 92.

6 Jarrell, pp. v-vi, xxii-xxiii, & xli

7 Randall Jarrell writes of Henny's death: "And yet we are surprised to have it happen, this happening as thoroughly prepared for as anything I can remember in fiction." Jarrell, p. xxxiv.

8 Of course it is an ancient connection. In classical Greek, 'opaw' means both 'to see' and 'to understand,' just as 'I see' also means 'I understand' in English today. It is a connection found in many languages.

⁹ Henry David Thoreau, Walden, ed. Larzer Ziff (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961), pp. 68-70. Stead writes that Thoreau was one of her favorite writers, along with others important to Louie in the novel: "'In English and American letters my favorites were Thoreau, Melville, Ambrose Bierce, along with Bacon (for pithiness alone), Shelley, Shakespeare, and many others of course.'" Kunitz, p. 1330.

¹⁰ "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately. . . . I did not wish to live what was not life. . . ." This passage occurs directly after Thoreau's discussion of early morning. Thoreau, p. 70.

¹¹ Stead speaks of this: "'[Louie is] a determined person and in her limited experience a realist. Most people would put up with the situation as her friend Clare does.'" R. M. Beston, p. 92.

¹² Louie's "motto" is from Nietzsche's Thus Spake Zarathustra: "'By my hope and faith I conjure ye, throw not away the hero in your soul'" (pp. 312 & 329), and she tells Sam, "'Out of chaos ye shall give birth to a dancing star! Nietzsche said that'" (p. 302). Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, in The Portable Nietzsche, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1968) p. 156 & p. 129. Stead became deeply interested in Nietzsche when in school, as her cousin writes: "She became absorbed in philosophy and psychology and discovered Nietzsche, from whom she delighted to read to all who would or would not listen." Jean Saxelby and Gwen Walker-Smith [Stead's cousin], "Christina Stead," Biblionews, 2, No. 14 (1949), 41.

¹³ Stead discusses part of this matter otherwise in an interview:

Q: Your father was obviously, while being this fascinating character, such a powerful influence that he was in danger of holding back the development of yourself and the other children?

Stead: Well, there wasn't any danger of that really, because there was such a terrific impulse given in the beginning, in the early years, that I don't think that there was any danger later on. He didn't consciously hold back people. . . . [H]e'd had so much fun as a young father that he was longing all his life for that sort of thing, you know. Curious thing. He was a very curious man.

Whitehead, p. 243.

¹⁴ Green, pp. 176-77.

15 Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, in Introduction to Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1947), Book II, Chap. 6, p. 340.

16 Stead, "A View of the Homestead," Paris Review, 14 (1974), 126.

17 Letter received from Christina Stead, 3 June 1981.

CHAPTER 4

FOR LOVE ALONE: ISSUES OF DECORUM

Christina Stead's fiction is quite varied in subject and style, but The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone may be considered together because Stead's sense of decorum is similar in these novels, and they are her best works. Both the similarity and quality of these novels may be related to another fact which distinguishes them. The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone are Stead's most autobiographical works, her only novels in which the protagonists are Stead's counterparts. For Love Alone takes up a character very like Louie five years after The Man Who Loved Children closes--Louisa is fourteen at the end of the novel, Teresa is nineteen at the beginning of For Love Alone--so, in a sense, For Love Alone is the autobiographical sequel to The Man Who Loved Children. However, while For Love Alone was published in 1944, four years after The Man Who Loved Children, it was mostly written about eight years earlier, so it is also a predecessor to The Man Who Loved Children.¹

The focus of Stead's fiction is character--"I'm a psychological writer, and my drama is the drama of the person"²--and The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone

contain the most fully drawn and deeply felt portraits in Stead's fiction, attributes which must pertain to their being autobiographical. But it is not only psychological depth and emotional intensity which distinguish these novels, they also contain the most admirable and interesting of Stead's protagonists. Dorothy Green writes:

[These] novels represent one of the most remarkable accounts ever written of what it feels like to be a creative artist who is also a woman, a woman of intellect and passion, to whom both are equally necessary, growing from childhood through adolescence to the threshold of full adulthood.³

Teresa and Louisa are able to prevail over dark, difficult aspects of experience because they imagine a greater world, and they are able to move towards that world because they have qualities of mind and heart which have long been valued. In For Love Alone and The Man Who Loved Children, Stead places strangely traditional heroes in the modern world, thus integrating two worlds ordinarily opposed and defining a new sense of decorum.

The first half of For Love Alone takes place in Sydney, Australia, and the second half takes place in London. The novel spans more than four years in the mid 1930s. As the book opens, Teresa Hawkins is a nineteen-year-old teacher of the "Special Class," "the truants, the deaf, the mad, and the imbecile" (p. 51). Living with her father, two brothers, and a sister on the outskirts of Sydney, she is a great reader and fantasizer, longing for a full, passionate life which she sees lived by no one around her. Teresa determines

that she must leave home and go abroad in order to live as she desires, and to move towards the important destiny which she believes is hers.

Early in the novel, Teresa becomes infatuated with her Latin tutor, Jonathan Crow, who has received a travelling scholarship to England. Teresa's desire to go to Europe is thus reinforced by the desire to join Jonathan Crow in London. She begins to work in a Sydney hat factory, learning office skills at night so that she can gain employment once overseas. After more than three years of saving, ill from eating too little and walking long distances to save money, Teresa makes the voyage to England. Jonathan Crow is there, but he torments her with love repeatedly offered and withdrawn. Teresa becomes increasingly weak, and believing she is to die soon, she begins to write a book, "a paper which she would leave" (p. 417). She is employed by James Quick, an American recently arrived in London, and after some months and the end of Teresa's attachment to Jonathan Crow, Quick and Teresa fall in love. Towards the end of the novel, she has a brief, intense love affair with Harry Girton. The final chapters of the novel are an almost unbroken lyric, a crescendo of vision and passion, as Teresa begins to live as she has long desired.⁴

For Love Alone is not an appropriate title for the novel, and it is not Stead's title.⁵ An important part of what Teresa desires is love, but her struggle is a larger

one than that, and one which is quintessentially modern. Stead describes it: "'This struggle for self creation and self realization in the very highest sense is the really moral view of the story'"⁶ Teresa is not a solitary hero, eschewing connection with others in order to realize herself as an artist, but neither does she find an answer solely in love. Rather, Teresa is an unusual and distinctively modern hero because she combines the struggle for self realization and the desire for love, and both are of the highest value to her. In the prologue of the novel, Teresa is associated with Ulysses, and though she sometimes considers her journey to be a "buffoon Odyssey" (p. 343), the association is finally serious rather than ironic. Of course, Teresa's movement towards a free, passionate, creative life is different from Ulysses' struggle, and we have information about her daily work and home life which would be unthinkable--indecorous--in a classical portrayal of a hero. But Stead is presenting a serious hero, one who embodies qualities of the traditional hero yet emerges from the modern world--is a modern--and in combining these different worlds, she employs a sense of decorum unusual in modern fiction.

Of course, modern literature has its own galaxy of heroes, but they differ from Teresa either because they are treated ironically, like Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, or because they do not conceive of themselves in heroic terms, as Lawrence's Birkin or Ursula Brangwen. In For Love Alone and

The Man Who Loved Children, the protagonists' heroism is treated seriously, seldom tempered by irony; and the protagonists consciously align themselves with traditional heroic figures, often figures from epic and romantic literature.

For Love Alone's opening pages establish that the world of the novel participates in the traditional in an unusual way. In Teresa's world, traditional and modern elements are intertwined, and both are penetrated by unexpected incongruities, as in the prologue, "Sea People":

IN the part of the world Teresa came from, winter is in July, spring brides marry in September, and Christmas is consummated with roast beef, suckling pig, and brandy-laced plum pudding at 100 degrees in the shade, near the tall pine tree loaded with gifts and tinsel as in the old country, and old carols have rung out all through the night.

This island continent lies in the water hemisphere. On the eastern coast, the neighbouring nation is Chile, though it is far, far east, Valparaiso being more than six thousand miles away in a straight line; her northern neighbours are those of the Timor Sea, the Yellow Sea; to the south is that cold, stormy sea full of earth-wide rollers, which stretches from there without land, south to the Pole.

The other world—the old world, the land hemisphere—is far above her as it is shown on maps drawn upside-down by old-world cartographers. From that world and particularly from a scarcely noticeable island up toward the North Pole the people came, all by steam; or their parents, all by sail. And there they live round the many thousand miles of seaboard, hugging the water and the coastal rim. Inside, over the Blue Mountains, are the plains heavy with wheat, then the endless dust, and after outcrops of silver, opal, and gold, Sahara, the salt-crusted bed of a prehistoric sea, and leafless mountain ranges. There is nothing in the interior; so people look toward the water, and above to the fixed stars and constellations which first guided men there.

Overhead, the other part of the Milky Way, with its great stars and nebulae, spouts thick as cow's milk from the udder, from side to side, broader and whiter than in the north; in the centre the curdle of the Coalsack, that black hole through which they look out into space. The skies are sub-tropical, crusted with suns and

spirals, as if a reflection of the crowded Pacific Ocean, with its reefs, atolls, and archipelagos.

It is a fruitful island of the sea-world, a great Ithaca, there parched and stony and here trodden by flocks and curly-headed bulls-and heavy with thick-set grain. To this race can be put the famous question, "Oh, Australian, have you just come from the harbour? Is your ship in the roadstead? Men of what nation put you down—for I am sure you did not get here on foot?"

In Teresa's world, the inhabitants, beliefs, customs, and literature are of the old world. Christmas is celebrated with pine trees decorated "as in the old world" and with "the old carols" sung, yet it is celebrated in the Summer, suckling pig eaten at one hundred degrees in the shade. Everything is turned around in this world; indeed, the "old world cartographers^[1]" picture of the world, with Europe at the top, is seen as "upside down." Geographical and physical entities in general are described in a manner contrary to expectation. England becomes "a scarcely noticeable island up towards the North Pole." The Pacific, the most vast of the earth's oceans, is "crowded." Up above, the sky is "crusted," and we see the Milky Way, but it is "the other part . . . broader and whiter than in the north."

Teresa's world is consistently contrasted to "[t]he other world--the old world, the land hemisphere," and it is described in terms which make us wonder at it, as if we were just landing in a new world. Though the location is described, it is left unnamed. Part of the mystery of this new world is that it is not new, for it contains "the salt-crusted bed of a prehistoric sea." This land in the water

hemisphere is only partly described in romantic terms. It contains great contrasts, not only "plains heavy with wheat . . . outcrops of silver, opal, and gold . . . trodden by flocks and curly-headed bulls," but also "endless dust"; it is "parched and stony" with "leafless mountain ranges," and "[t]here is nothing in the interior." The mystery of the place is finally solved in a surprising way. The "fruitful island of the sea-world" is Australia, and it is conceived in traditional terms, as a "great Ithaca." In this most unlikely Ithaca, the famous question of the old world may be asked of an equally unlikely Ulysses, Teresa.

For Love Alone is divided into two parts, and the first longer part, titled "The Island Continent," takes place in Australia. In the first chapter of the novel, Teresa and her sister Kitty listen to their father talk while they make dinner and sew dresses for a wedding they are to attend that afternoon. Andrew Hawkins (much like Sam Pollit) is expatiating about love--and women who have loved him--beauty, sex, society, and families. Again and again, Teresa criticizes her father's remarks, asserting her own superiority of judgement and mind. Andrew Hawkins addresses his younger daughter, Teresa:

"[I]n you I saw myself and I determined to lead you out of all the temptations of your sex, for there are many--many of which you are not aware--"

"There is simply nothing of which I am not aware," said the girl. (p. 10)

Teresa retires to her room, angered by her father's incessant talk and his criticisms of her, but when Teresa's two brothers come in for dinner, Teresa returns and Andrew Hawkins continues to jibe and tease her: "'Ants in her pants and bats in her belfry.'" Suddenly, Teresa strikes out hotly against him: "'You offend my honour! I would kill anyone who offends my honour'" (p. 11). This extravagant and lofty tone evokes laughter from the rest of the table-- "they had a character in Teresa"--but the battling continues with Teresa alternately righteous and ashamed at her outbursts.

Like Louie, Teresa desires to live according to a nobler standard, but her early attempts to do so sometimes make her seem foolish, melodramatic, or arrogant, as she realizes. The juxtaposition of honor and "'ants in her pants'" may be comical, and comical at Teresa's expense, but it reflects one of the novel's most serious aspects. In For Love Alone as in The Man Who Loved Children, the affirmation of traditional epic and romantic values is mixed with realism. Though Teresa's honor is ultimately a serious matter, not all her movements towards the nobler existence she envisions are grand. Like Louie, Teresa must learn to maintain and assert her ideals in the everyday, often sordid world of home and work.

Shortly after dinner, Teresa and Kitty leave for their cousin Malfi's wedding. Teresa is seen only briefly within

the context of her family, but she is at odds with her larger society in much the same way as with her family. At Malfi's wedding, the conventions which dominate the society out of which Teresa emerges are seen, conventions pertaining mostly to the establishment and maintenance of domestic life. Teresa and Kitty join in the single girls' rush for Malfi's bridal bouquet, which Stead portrays as demeaning and desperate:

They had nearly all discarded their hats and posies and stood breathing upwards, their eyes darkly fixed with pain, not pleasure, on the bouquet. As it left the bride's hand, involuntary cries burst from them and they leapt at what was falling towards them . . . their red, damp faces flushing deeper and taking on hungry, anguished and desperate expressions, as in the fatal and superstitious moment, they struggled for the omen of marriage. Anne, a plump, soft, timid butterfingers only touched a spray of maidenhair fern with two fingers; the bouquet fell lower, was batted dexterously away from her by Madeleine, a tennis-player and cousin Sylvia Hawkins . . . grabbed it, pushing her way through the dark, jostling mass, when it was wrenched from her. . . . [A]t this moment, Kitty, who had been hovering miserably, all indecision as usual, snatched the bouquet and as she did so, it fell to pieces.

"A foul," said Uncle Don, laughing slyly.

The bouquet had disappeared. . . . [T]he girls parted, billowing away from the spot like swans. Anne, desolate, stared down at the dusty floor and cried, "You've got your foot on it!"

On the farther edge of the circle stood Teresa, her long lavender dress creased and the hem dusty; from under the skirt a long branch of budding roses strayed out. (pp. 35-36)

This scene follows the bride's crying in her room, and her angry look at her new husband. The wedding guests realize that Malfi's is a desperate, unhappy union, but so powerful is the desire to be proper that all the young women struggle

for the omen of marriage, despite what it portends. Finally, the bouquet, fallen to pieces, is divided among the young women so that "the foul" is made fair, equally available to them all.

Teresa sets herself apart in this scene, standing on the farther edge of the circle and not leaping with the rest. The bouquet lands beneath her, at her feet, and she later refuses her portion of it. Teresa wants love, but she recognizes that her cousin's marriage has been made for propriety's sake; indeed, Malfi realizes it herself (p. 38) as do most of the other young women (p. 72). Teresa will not participate in what sometimes laughably, sometimes cruelly is considered decorous in everyday life.

For Love Alone contains a more extensive portrayal of society than The Man Who Loved Children, in part because Teresa is older than Louisa so that her sphere extends beyond the family. From the outset of the novel, Teresa's society is depicted as rife with false, foolish, and harmful notions of decorum to which she is clearly and inalterably opposed. This contrast between Teresa and her society is maintained throughout For Love Alone, and the nature of this opposition never changes:

They married, settled down in the Bay or in the suburbs along bus routes to the city, in order to reach their work in the shortest time and that was the end, then came the marriage sleep that lasted to the grave. She would sail the seas, leave her invisible track on countries, learn in great universities, know what was said by foreign tongues . . . perhaps suffer every misery, but she would know life. (p. 261)

In this respect, For Love Alone is a more conventional novel than The Man Who Loved Children, for the heroine is opposed to a rather stereotyped, foolish society. It is acknowledged within the novel, however, that Teresa perceives society as an amorphous, stereotyped "they." She writes to Jonathan Crow: "'By "they," I don't know who I mean. But I am trying to get by them--whoever they are'" (p. 251).

Teresa is not the novel's only character to question the decorum of everyday life. Her criticism of conventional propriety at Malfi's wedding is fortified by her father. Andrew Hawkins will not attend his niece's wedding at all, as he has explained to Teresa earlier: "'Ha--I don't approve of that hocus-pocus. You know that, Teresa. Love alone unites adult humans'" (p. 8). There are strong similarities between Andrew Hawkins and Sam Pollit, though Teresa's father is not nearly as fully drawn as Louisa's. Like Sam, Andrew Hawkins criticizes conventional propriety even as he adheres to it. Teresa recognizes this contradiction in her father, and responds much as Louie might to Sam: "'We're not illegitimate,' Teresa grinned."

In the second chapter of this study, *Decorum in Everyday Life*, we considered the private notions of decorum maintained by Sam and Henny, and the way in which these ideas conflicted with one another and with reality. In For Love Alone, decorum in everyday life is also a central concern; however, in this earlier novel, the characters'

private notions of decorum are less extreme than the views of Sam and Henny, and there is a more direct, explicit attack against conventional decorum than in The Man Who Loved Children.

From the outset of the novel, Teresa's struggle for self creation and self realization occurs in opposition to the everyday world of conventional decorum in which she lives. In Teresa's society, the possibilities of life--of work and of love--are limited, prescribed and circumscribed by the desire to be proper, but Teresa envisions a greater world of large possibilities. In the early part of the novel, however, she is only able to experience this world imaginatively, through fantasy and art. Some of her fantasies are organized, her "private movies":

There were halls of veined marble, strewn with purple, red, and white, with golden goblets and splendid male and female slaves to bring in the food; there were scenes of taverns, taken from Breughel, and in cathedrals . . . cannibalism from Grimm, brothels from Shakespeare. All this gave her unutterable pleasure . . . and it was to reach some circle, some understandings in touch with these pleasures that she felt she had to break the iron circle of the home and work; for she knew these things were not thin black shapes of fantasy, but were real. It was a country from which she, a born citizen, was exiled. She struggled toward it.

She heard eight bells from two ships. . . . How happy she felt at this moment! Without these orgies, she would have had nothing to look forward to. In a reasonable way, her trip overseas, the halls of learning, were part of this grand life which she lived without restraint in the caves, taverns, woods, colonnades, and eel pools of antiquity, and the night. Smiling to herself, she went downstairs slowly, feeling the dust and grain of the splintered wood with her bare toes. (pp. 82-83)

For Teresa, these fantasies "were real," and her real--imagined--life sustains her. In this respect, For Love Alone differs from a novel such as Madame Bovary, where the protagonist's fantasy of a romantic or grand life serves to harm or undercut rather than strengthen her.

From the outset of the novel, the intensity, beauty, and passion of Teresa's inner life is contrasted to her daily work and home life. Teresa is convinced of the truth and rightness of this greater world she imagines: "[She was in her bare room, ravished, trembling with ecstasy, blooming with a profound joy in this true, this hidden life, night after night, year after year . . ." (p. 74). Teresa has developed an intense secret life and happiness in solitude. As with Louie, Teresa's companion to her inner life is nature, and true to her role as a modern Ulysses, she looks to the sea:

She did not care if she never went to bed; the night stretched before her. "I know every hour of the night," she said joyfully and repeated it. It seemed to her that she knew more of the night and life than they all did down there. . . .

She was free till sunrise. She was there, night after night, dreaming hotly and without thinking of any human beings. Her long walks by the Bay, in which she had discovered all the lost alleys, vacant lots and lonely cottages, her meditation over the poor lovers from the city, her voluptuous swimming and rolling by herself in the deep grass of the garden and her long waking nights were part of the life of profound pleasure she had made for herself, unknown to them. (p. 71)

Early in the novel, it is clear and explicit that Teresa's imaginative life is the important part of her experience, rather than her daily outward life. Jonathan

Crow tells her that she is "'in touch with real things,'" unlike himself and the other university students, and Teresa responds:

"If you think my life is real to me--it's only a passage," she cried rudely.

"To?"

"To our secret desires," she said huskily. "To Cytherea, perhaps . . . or whatever island--but I always think of coral atolls, submarine volcanoes, the pearl gulfs of the north, a kind of Darwin's voyage of discovery, as the voyage to Cytherea. I do not think of their old islands," and she waved a careless hand towards the citadel of culture which the trees hid. (p. 190)

An important part of what Teresa desires is love, but that desire is inseparable from the larger voyage of discovery, the passage to the greater world she longs for. Though Teresa conceives the journey to her secret desires in traditional terms, her discoveries will be new. Teresa imagines that the voyage will be "'[t]o Cytherea, perhaps . . . or whatever island,'" and in fact her sea journey is from Australia to another island, England.

Though love is a central part of what Teresa desires, her struggle is made mostly alone and for herself; indeed, in a sense, its object is herself. Jonathan Crow despairs of not having anything to believe in, and Teresa questions him:

"Can't you live for yourself?"

"Myself alone?"

"Yes."

"Can you?"

"Certainly."

"That's wonderful," he said frankly. "I wish I had your grit." (p. 124)

Teresa sometimes considers herself to be selfish because of her solitary struggle, but she also realizes her singlemindedness is necessary. She tells Jonathan Crow: "'My character would never change. I was always the same, singleminded and selfish. If it weren't how could I do what I'm going to do?'" (p. 188). In fact, Teresa is portrayed as compassionate and generous with her siblings and others, but like Louie, she must sometimes violate prevalent notions of decency if she is to succeed in her struggle. (She too must leave home against her father's wish that she remain, care for the family, and keep it together.)

In For Love Alone, Teresa's struggle for self creation and self realization is not seen as selfish but as profoundly moral--proper in the highest sense. Stead has affirmed the importance of this struggle as "'the really moral view of the story,'" and when Teresa talks to Erskine, the hat factory supervisor who is in love with her, it is evident that she shares this view:

"It isn't only him [Jonathan Crow]. I have a great destiny."

Erskine straightened up with surprise, "What do you mean?"

"I have some kind of great destiny, I know. All this can't be for nothing. Glory and catastrophe are not the fate of the common man."

"God!" he said, feeling his pale chin, his pale eyes on her. "All that you're doing, you mean? You mean, all or nothing?"

"Yes. I know. I have to go, it isn't my fault. I am forced to. If I stay here, I will be nobody. I'd just be taking the line of least resistance." She said very earnestly, "My father wants me to stay at home and keep the house together, he doesn't know I'm going. . . . If I stayed here, I'd fall in love with

someone--you might make me, for instance--then I'd get married and stay here. I can't do it." (p. 281)

Teresa's flat assertion--"'I have a great destiny'"--may seem strange to a modern reader. This assertion and the conversation that ensues is not something we expect to find in Conrad's Heart of Darkness or Joyce's Ulysses, even though Marlow and Dedalus do have some sense of destiny. But their sense of themselves is so deeply imbued with irony and ambiguity that such a level, unambiguous affirmation as Teresa's would be unthinkable. Teresa is so earnest that she may strike a modern reader, accustomed to more diffident, more cynical heroes, as strangely as she strikes Erskine.

Like Louie, Teresa moves towards her destiny partly through extraordinary will, and it is one of her primary means of combatting conventional decorum. Teresa is also helped in her struggle by those who appear to be holding her back. Thus, while Jonathan Crow causes Teresa enormous suffering, he helps her to define and live according to her own sense of decorum. Though Teresa also encourages Jonathan and others to give up their mistaken notions of decorum--their "'jail ideas'" (p. 378)--finally only she has the will to do so. Crow asks her, "'Is it worth while going to the end of the night, digging in deep and finding out what we really mean, our needs?'" and she answers, "'What is worth more?'" (pp. 347-48). As with Louie, Teresa's movement towards the truly proper occurs partly through an effort of will; the more than three years during which she

prepares to go to England must be among the most extraordinary literary accounts of will in action. But Teresa is also propelled as if by some larger will, and in For Love Alone, this is explicit: "[H]er only concept of fate was that she was mysteriously in tune with some inaudible, continuous single note in the universe . . ." (p. 448).

An important part of Teresa's sense that she is in tune comes from literature, for there she finds her ideas of life confirmed. Literature is also important as a companion to her inner life, and along with nature, gives her solace. As with Louie, Teresa's notions of life--of love, will, bravery, heroism--are expressed in literature, but literature violates the "proper" ideas of those around her:

The things she wanted existed. At school she first had news of them, she knew they existed; what went on round her was hoaxing and smooth-faced hypocrisy. Venus and Adonis, the Rape of Lucrece, Troilus and Cressida were reprinted for three hundred years; St. Anthony was tempted in the way you would expect; Dido, though a queen, was abandoned like a servant-girl and went mad with love and grief, like the girl on the boat outside. This was the truth, not the daily simpering on the boat. . . . [T]he poets and playwrights spoke the language she knew, and the satirists and moralists wrote down with stern and marvelous precision all that she knew in herself but kept hidden from family and friends. (pp. 73-74).

When Teresa brings Ovid's Art of Love and Louy's Aphrodite on the ferry to work, an acquaintance comments:

"Are they really classics? Why do they have such things for classics? How do you know people did them in the olden days? . . . What are they read for? If you don't have to read them, why do you?" . . .

For all the men they had names: boy friends, fiancés,

husbands, and co-respondents, and there were flirts, engaged couples, married couples, and misconduct, but they recoiled at the improper words love and lover.

"Doesn't the word--lover, I mean," said Martha, at length, faintly disturbed, "seem indecent to you?"
(p. 108)

Literature is crucial for Teresa, as for Louie, because it is her means of exploring a reality not admitted in "decorous" conceptions, and it strengthens her to resist the "decorous" notions which prevail in her society. Most of the characters in For Love Alone accept a kind of middle range of experience where the passions, beautiful and horrible, are denied. For Teresa's acquaintances, discussion of love and lovers is indecorous in life as well as in literature. In For Love Alone as in The Man Who Loved Children, propriety has its own language and its own polite literature, both of which deny or disguise the passions.

When Teresa's Latin tutor, Jonathan Crow, first encourages Teresa to come to the university, she meets people with whom she can discuss books and ideas, men and women who have not followed the "proper" route of early marriage and children taken by her acquaintances. Yet to Teresa's surprise, the university students attempt to make serious literature polite, believing great authors to be exponents of conventional decorum:

Elaine, the fair and reticent, said that men of the most gifted sort, Balzac, John Stuart Mill, Comte, were famous for their loyalty. "What about Shakespeare?" said Miss Haviland. Clara said he only put his brothel scenes in and his bawdy lines because he was forced to by the low taste of the audience; one of the men declared he put them in to drum up business for the

entr'acte. The girls thought of Shakespeare as a pleasant, unfortunate English teacher, unfortunate because of Anne Hathaway, invalided because of genius.

"Everyone likes the obscene, that is real life," said Teresa, the bare-boned girl, unexpectedly, opening her lips for the first time.

"Not a great artist," stormed Clara.

"Those more than others, because their violence is more," said Teresa.

Clara frowned, "I don't know, I can't see it that way."

"He wrote 'Venus and Adonis' against his will?" asked Teresa triumphantly. (p. 183)

The university students have conceptions of decency similar to those of Teresa's relatives and acquaintances, and they see the classics as avoiding matters which they believe to be in low taste, or only including them because of popular pressure. For Teresa, literature is important precisely because it is a place where life in all its versions and manifestations is explored: "She had once, in the university grounds, offered to make a citation 'from English literature,' on any subject whatever mentioned to her" (p. 200).

Teresa has a rich, intense inner life, but like Louie, her experience is limited, as she realizes: "she herself knew nothing about life" (p. 78). At times, Teresa also finds literature incredible, but unlike the other characters, she accepts her inexperience as a reason for this. Later in the novel after Teresa arrives in London, she and Jonathan Crow kiss a first, and last, time:

As for the kiss, now she understood why The Kiss was so much written about, she had thought until now that it was overdone in books and that in polite literature it was a euphemism for union; not now. (p. 338)

Shortly thereafter, Teresa receives a note from Crow saying he has never loved her:

A little later, when she went out to get something to eat at the nearest teashop, she was surprised to see her face so white in one of the olive-lighted mirrors. She felt as if she were walking on the points of her toes. She was suffering and yet she felt lightsome, she heard a faint little singing. The whole thing was a surprise. A face pale as death was no more a fiction than The Kiss, it was all true. For some reason, she now thought, "We should go through a bit, know what things are really like before we criticize artists." (p. 340)

In the first chapter of this study, Decorum in Literature, we discussed the way in which "Herpes Rom" and The Man Who Loved Children may both violate and confirm our sense of life. In For Love Alone, the relation between reality as presented in serious literature and "proper" ideas of life is not raised dramatically, as in the "Herpes Rom" episode, but is considered explicitly by Teresa.

In Teresa's imagination and in the books she reads exists a world in which a free, passionate, creative life is possible, but this is matched nowhere in her daily experience. Teresa is not satisfied to keep this greater life as an ideal; rather, she wants to live in a way she knows is truly proper. Teresa's struggle for self creation and self realization is inseparable from her movement towards the greater world she imagines, a world which includes love, for she must realize herself within that world. The path she takes to do so is the story of the novel, and it is at once surprising and convincing.

Besides Teresa, Jonathan Crow is the most fully developed character in For Love Alone, and his effect on Teresa is more complicated and unusual than that of any character in the novel. Crow is a poor, cynical, bitter academic drudge who fears and mistrusts people of wealth, status, power--and women in general. Though he is neither as extreme nor as large as Sam or Henny, he is strangely reminiscent of them both. Like Henny, Jonathan sees hypocrisy, misery, and vanity everywhere he looks, but like Sam, he is able to talk and theorize almost ceaselessly about the reality he sees. These two aspects of Jonathan Crow are sometimes evident to him:

He had a mental misery which came back at intervals. He would feel grit, see glare, all sounds would be raucous, the world hopeless and full of oppressors and haters; and everything, with thick outlines, in crude black and white, stood out like figures in a stereopticon.

This vision to him was reality; when it came, he felt horror, but when it passed, he knew he had seen reality. . . . Come down to brass-tacks, the world was like that but mercifully we had to have illusions to go on living; it was a race-wide, world-wide, perhaps, knack of biological survival. (p. 197)

Part of Jonathan's bleak vision is a kind of dark Marxism where society and human relations are explained largely in terms of money. In Jonathan's view, property is everything, and his bitterness partly results from the conviction that his life and future possibilities have been determined, and severely restricted, by his lack of property:

"Property is everything. They don't want talent, or hard work, or even belief in the system, they want property or the evidence thereof. . . . What are our

lords and masters? Those with property. What are the despised? Those who have no property. Don't you see? You're full of fight. I don't say it's no good because you might win, you might get property--through some man, probably. But I can't marry some man. I beat them all at studies, where am I? On the foot path, looking for a job." (p. 214)

At times, Jonathan realizes his truth is distorted (and in this respect he differs from Sam and Henny), but this too causes him to be bitter. Jonathan talks to Clara, a wealthy young woman in his university discussion group:

"I was a slum kid and precocious from your point of view, though they're all precocious down there in the gutter. . . . I think anyone who comes from down there steals a march on you sheltered kids. Our eyes are unsealed, in the words of the poets."

"You mean," she said, "that what you see there, in Darlington, in Golden Grove . . . is the truth, the only truth?"

"But truth disturbs the golden mean, doesn't it? The bitter truth. No. We get distorted, too, and for life. That's the trouble. We don't see the truth either. But who does? What is it? "What is truth, said jesting Pilate, 'washing his hands of it." He coughed. (pp. 216-17)

Throughout the novel, Jonathan rails against the conventions of society, proclaiming to the students in his discussion group, "'Let us mop up all the débris of our accepted beliefs!'" (p. 180). Crow's prime target is romantic love, for he believes relations between the sexes are determined mostly by property. He tells Teresa:

"I'm afraid we have to face the world as it is . . . dust and back rooms, tram lines, influence, property, brothels, and nice girls wanting to rope a Mr., and that's the only kind of love there is. That's why I don't believe in it--not that I ever had it. . . . The answer? Free love! But women are not free. They want to be and acquire property." (pp. 216-17)

The role of women in society is a major concern in For Love Alone and Stead and thus has been considered a feminist writer by some, but the issue of woman's role, while important, is part of a nexus of other major issues, centering on the individual's struggle for epic or romantic affirmation in a world where reality either is or is supposed to be dull and grimy.

Jonathan Crow advocates equality of the sexes, and criticizes women's clothing, make-up, and manners as obstacles to their freedom. Yet Crow's voiced contempt for convention is in contrast to his way of life; for, like Andrew Hawkins, Sam, and Henny, he frequently adheres to conventional notions of decorum. Jonathan walks Teresa to the train station after she visits his discussion group:

He made her laugh at some girls clustered in front of the jeweller's. He said, "Would you like a ring?"

"I never thought of a ring."

"Bravo! I'll bet you don't wear these conventional clothes, either. . . . A lot of fuss and feathers! If women didn't go in for that, they wouldn't have half their disabilities. They ought to wear pants. . . . Their conventional clothes mean sexual frailty. Frailty means a protector. That's all wrong. If you wore pants, you could go anywhere."

"Here's the station!"

"That's right. Well, ta-ta! I'd go farther but I'm starving. Nineteen-twenty, my belly's empty."

"Let's go over there and have a cup of tea." She pointed to a small, badly lit shop across the tram tracks.

"No, thanks," he said stiffly, lifting a finger to his hat and bearing off. She was used to his changes of mood, but humiliated all the same. She did not know that he had not a penny in his pocket and that though he believed in the equality of the sexes, he could not tolerate the idea of a woman paying for her food when with him. . . . (p. 204)

Because Jonathan so frequently criticizes conventional standards of propriety to Teresa, it takes her some time to realize that he frequently adheres to such standards. Indeed, the extent to which he does so only becomes clear to her after she reaches England. Teresa tells Jonathan that she has cared for an alcoholic woman on the boat to England, and he is appalled:

He was stupefied and his dark eyes stared at her inimically. She regretted telling it to him. She had made up her mind not to, because she knew he disliked anything peculiar. . . . (p. 295)

Jonathan's views reflect prevalent notions with respect to morals as well as manners. Teresa identifies these as the source of Jonathan's suffering while speaking to James Quick later in the novel:

"He has a trouble no one can cure. . . . It is purity, old ideals, plain living and high thinking, you know," she laughed, troubled. "He is always talking about that and believes in it."

"Do you too?"

"Certainly, who doesn't . . . but he has really given his life to it and it wears him out. . . . It is an ideal of learning, that the flesh must be martyred and the mind improved. It's queer how these old superstitions survive. . . . Why does a decent thing at a certain point turn into the thing most loathed? You would think there were demons at work. That is a possibility for explaining the co-existence of God and the devil in Christian ideas. . . . Out of excessive innocence, belief, and aspiration, out of application, chastity and decorum, he has grown into a lazy hopeless man, full of lustful but impotent wishes." (pp. 395-96)

In For Love Alone, qualities and virtues upheld by Jonathan Crow, and society, are transformed into negative, destructive qualities, and prime among these is decorum itself. Like

Crow, Teresa believes in "purity, old ideals, plain living and high thinking," but Crow's beliefs have narrowed and reduced his experience, making him odd and a misfit, while they have been Teresa's means to a larger life. In For Love Alone as in The Man Who Loved Children, ideas of decorum may be harmful and the proper may become improper, but in The Man Who Loved Children, this is usually suggested dramatically whereas in For Love Alone, the "decorous" is explicitly identified as false and harmful.

Jonathan Crow is a kind of dark twin to Teresa, possessing a traditional idealism which is, however, destructive rather than vital; and also, like Teresa, attacking conventional decorum, but doing so in a destructive way. Though Crow is bitter about his own situation--a lifetime of ordinary pleasures sacrificed in order to reach the university (p. 125)--he shares and encourages Teresa's belief that it is necessary to resist conventional propriety in order to attain higher goals. Jonathan's encouragement of Teresa in this respect helps her, and it is evident from the first time he appears in the novel. Teresa and Kitty encounter Crow on their way to Malfi's wedding (p. 20), and he ridicules the occasion and their proper attire. Like Teresa, Crow disdains the marriages made for property and propriety.

Crow repeatedly upholds Teresa's ideas of life against conventional notions and customs. On many occasions, he

asserts his belief in her special nature: "'You have genius, I don't know, something that's for you. If anyone of us is to win out, it will be you. What have we? Suburban brains, acquiescence. You are a free spirit'" (p. 189). He suggests that she should become the leader of his university group, though she is an outsider (p. 184). Jonathan's belief in Teresa would be important no matter who he were, but the fact that he is associated with the university makes his opinion more meaningful to her:

His university talk was wonderful to her. She had never before had anything to do with a university man and it dazzled her that he was a medallist, a scholar, a coach, and yet so modest that he would explain himself fully to her. She told him, greatly moved, that she too wanted to get her degree and later go abroad.

"But I have no money and I must be my own scholarship out of my own earnings."

"That's wonderful," he cried. "I've never met a girl with such grit."

At the wharf he touched his hat, saying, "I don't take my hat off, on principle, just to get rid of those relics of chivalry." (p. 126)

Jonathan encourages Teresa to define and live according to her own sense of the proper, and he reinforces her belief that the bonds of conventional propriety are antithetical to doing so.

Teresa realizes that to attain what she desires requires more than eschewing conventional decorum, she must act positively as well. Early in the novel Teresa's inability to do so fills her mind:

She ought to run away. The only reason she did not run away was that she had not the courage. (p. 78)

Tomorrow, again she would begin to wait for the next day. What could happen to her taking the ferry, talking in the teachers' room? Would the sky fall if she simply walked out? She had never done a single brave thing in her life, defying the rules; just obeyed, gone to school, paid in her money. (p. 83)

Teresa's recognition that she must act is strengthened by Jonathan's admiration of her ambition to do so; indeed, she finally decides to run away the evening he praises her determination to go abroad. Teresa believes her ability to run away will determine whether or not she has a chance to succeed in her larger plans. Running away is also a means of leaving her teaching job, where she feels she will never learn about the world or know love, and to which she feels bound for life. On her return, she plans to work in an office in order to save money and gain experience to work abroad. As with Louie, the destination of Teresa's first journey is Harper's Ferry, the home of her dead mother's relatives (in The Man Who Loved Children, of course, this journey begins at the end of the novel). Harper's Ferry is an Australian town in For Love Alone, but Teresa's revolt against the restrictions of her life must also be considered an echo of John Brown's uprising.

Though Teresa's first journey is short--Harper's Ferry is sixty miles north of Sydney and she will take the train to her relatives' house nearby--it is a deeply significant act for Teresa:

As soon as she entered the railway carriage, the last link snapped, she forgot the school. . . . Most of the people sat congealed in a sort of sullen despair,

doing what they must, going where they must. If they only knew that it was only a matter of running away. . . . She had never felt so well in her life. . . . Looking out over the numerous crests, rising now towards the range, she felt at once the horror of the rooted forest and its secular, aimless, but stern struggle, and a joy, a veritable jubilation at the road which had been cut through the wild. . . .

She did not know where she was going; she was outward bound. This first train journey was only the first stride on a grand perilous journey. All the other people in the train seemed to her now buried in a strange *débris*, not really alive as she was, as her excitement increased. (pp. 134-35)

In fact, Teresa is not able to complete her first journey. After she leaves her relatives' home in Narara for Harper's Ferry, an exhibitionist follows her, and she is suddenly overwhelmed by the purposelessness of wandering alone in the woods, probably lost, to a place of no significance to her (p. 161). Teresa returns to her relatives' home where her brother Lance is waiting to retrieve her, angry that she has made him lose two half-days of work. Again and again, Teresa's quest for a greater life is qualified by the realities of the everyday world, but these do not undercut her quest. The journey to Harper's Ferry is not completed, but it increases her determination and allows her to leave the teaching job. Later in the novel, she considers this first journey: "This seat was right near the ticket-window where she had bought the ticket to Narara. She would look at the window dimly, begin to fix it and sometimes think of it. Then she would rejoice austerely, thinking, I did the right thing--that led me to this . . . " (p. 257). Teresa

takes this action herself, alone, but Jonathan Crow is important because he encourages her to act, indirectly when she goes to Harper's Ferry, and explicitly when she goes abroad. Crow not only encourages and admires her bravery, he also criticizes her when she is timid. Though this is sometimes for his own cruel purposes, it also pushes her farther along her special course. Jonathan writes her from England about his friends' impressions of her, based on her letters: "'They speak of your ambition--did you know it?--but say you have no courage. You must have the courage of your convictions!'" (p. 245).

Jonathan's encouragement and admiration of Teresa are combined with the possibility that he will love her, and this is of central importance. On Teresa's first visit to the university, one of Jonathan's female colleagues, Miss Haviland, talks to Teresa:

"He really likes you. I've often wondered what type of girl would really suit him and now I see. He talked about you before you came up. . . . [H]e spoke of your particular personal power and said you had some exceptional quality which he couldn't quite put his finger on. . . ." (p. 185)

Teresa believes that Crow's affection is contingent upon her ability to break convention and realize her ambition. He appears to want not only an unusual woman but also a relationship unencumbered by the social restrictions Teresa also despises. In fact, Crow is incapable of love and this causes Teresa to suffer enormously, but in the long period before she realizes he can never love her, his admiration

and promise of love help her to succeed in her quest.

Teresa also vacillates in her feelings for Crow (pp. 127, 199, 440), but in the major part of the novel, she wants him to love her; however, this desire is intertwined with moving towards her larger destiny: "Then she superstitiously came to think that . . . [i]f she won him, she would succeed, and in some mysterious way conquer her life and time" (p. 223). Teresa realizes that her attachment to Crow partly serves this larger purpose: "'I need Jonathan as an aim so as not to fail, even if he rejects me'" (p. 261). The two objects of Teresa's journey are connected and reinforce one another, but they remain distinct in her mind.

Jonathan Crow is a kind of dark twin to Teresa in another way, for he, like Teresa, has an extraordinary will born partly of adversity. However, as we come to know Crow better, and as Teresa comes to know Crow better, the difference between his way of willing and her way of willing becomes evident. Teresa's extraordinary will is a means to a larger life, and in this respect she stands alongside traditional heroes, whereas Crow's will diminishes his experience. For years, Crow has walked everywhere in his thick-soled boots to save tramfare (p. 192), having a single suit (p. 179) and no winter coat. He comes from a poor family and has reached the university through self-denial and will: "He willed

himself to work. He willed himself to sleep so that he could work the next day" (p. 193). He tells Teresa:

"I've lived on a tram line, near the railways with the engines whistling in my ears since I was a youngster. I had to stop my ears by will power or I'd never have got where I am"--he ground his teeth at this--"never have passed their beastly exams." (p. 210)

Jonathan has willed away all material desires in order to reach the university, but he has also sacrificed impulse and fantasy, even dreaming:

He had trained himself from earliest childhood to stoicism and had no daydreams; nor did he dream at night of what he could not have. What he could not buy, it was unmanly to desire. In the course of years he had reduced himself to a miserliness of mental life out of this sense of honour and revolt. If he desired or dreamed, he struck himself a mental blow; it was not thus, wanting like the weaklings, that the ambitious reached the moral and material heights; he had wanted a hair shirt at one time, but where to get a hair shirt? That too, he saw, was a luxury for him and so a weak fantasy which he quickly suppressed. (p. 196)

Even the desire for a hair shirt to reflect controlled desire must be suppressed. Crow's powerful will has allowed him to attain his goals, but his sacrifices have also embittered and reduced him to "a miserliness of mental life."

Teresa's deprivations have not been as extreme as Jonathan's--she rides the tram when tired, buys the Lindsays' magazine,⁷ and lives in a large house by the sea rather than a city slum--but Teresa also comes from a poor family (her father has long been out of work), and she walks long distances to save money, also doing without a winter coat (p. 178). Indeed, Jonathan and Teresa share a pride in their hardiness and ability to live sparsely (p. 186). In

order for Teresa to save the ship's passage to England, however, her material sacrifices must become much greater. Jonathan serves as an example in this effort: "She thought of how he had suffered and the noble ideal which had kept him going, in his poverty and pain, for so long. She would do it too" (p. 121). During the period of Teresa's saving, she wears only summer dresses (p. 271) and no coat, in her last year having a single dress:

She had only one dress at a time, which she washed and ironed every two days and darned in places, especially under the arms above the waist where her arms, swinging as she walked, rubbed holes. In sitting, she had to arrange the dress so that the mending did not show, and when the darns doubled, she took an old newspaper from home, always the same newspaper, which she carried under her arm. (p. 257)

Jonathan's willpower and self-denial serve as an example to Teresa (p. 252), but her sacrifices do not lead to bitterness or a smaller life. On the contrary, they become a way to a larger life. As with Louie, Teresa's will is spontaneous, a seemingly instinctive certainty that she is in tune with a greater world. This part of Teresa's will is different from her willpower, which allows her to impose restrictions on herself to reach the ends she believes in. Jonathan Crow's will, on the other hand, lacks both spontaneity and positive direction; indeed, Crow's tragedy is partly that he senses this. Crow's willpower is only used to impose severe restrictions on himself in order to attain ends which he barely believes in himself. Crow represents a way of attacking convention which is

self-defeating. While Crow resembles Teresa in his reaction against established decorum, his fight against it requires that he crush himself, crush his ability to love, by an imposition of will, or willpower, which is just as deadening, just as dehumanizing as the very decorum which he would overthrow. Teresa's will is, if anything, stronger than Crow's, but her will never has a crushing effect on her or her vision.

During Teresa's years of saving, she becomes increasingly remote from her family, relatives, and the university circle. The only people who know of her plans to go to England are her co-workers at the hat factory, but these are daytime friendships. Yet these years of isolation and hunger bring new awareness and alertness:

To be hungry was her life and a necessary condition of getting to Jonathan; therefore she did not mind at all, and it made life more interesting than it had been for years. She began to love the streets through which she passed and which were her life, she began to notice avidly shops, stands, the men and women lifting things up to their mouths. (p. 271)

In the last year when Teresa is most weak and ill, she has extraordinary visions of the world around her:

One day, walking home, she saw that the streets were quite empty, even though it was only five-thirty, and were of a gemlike blue. . . . She felt an access of energy. She bounded along, her legs moved with their long practice, their exquisite ease. It was a pleasure to walk, it was almost like flying. Things had a strange, friendly aspect, they were outlined with light they had no human look and yet one would say they nodded. (p. 260)

Shortly after this, Teresa's eyesight fails momentarily, she

bumps her head, and falls in the street. At first, no one helps her--"Fortunately, people are too modest to get mixed up with someone very thin and threadbare who drops down in the street, and she was left alone"--but a man finally aids her. Teresa's sacrifices during her years of saving are extreme, but they do not reduce her inner life; indeed, they increase the intensity and need for that life. Later in the novel, Teresa talks about her years of saving to Jonathan, and he comments:

"You must have had an empty life," he said with contempt.

"Empty? No, full! A burning full life, I had, while I was saving." (p. 372)

It is not only that Teresa's will and self-denial intensify her inner life, they are also practically necessary in order for her to reach England. Teresa must contribute at home to pay for food and expenses, and she is employed as a secretary in a hat factory. She has always spent little money, so to save the ship's fare of £44 (in the 1930s) requires her to live in semi-starvation for three years. One of Teresa's few means of saving is never to take the tram, so she has little energy not only because of less food, but also because of walking even longer distances.⁸ Teresa has calculated this precisely:

The tram ride only cost twopence, so that it might seem folly to wear oneself out in this way, but she was afraid to give in on any count and in some way the endless walking, walking, meant England. She was walking her way to England. In three years to the day, less Sunday and Christmas and one or two other holidays, she would have walked 2,772 miles and by the time she

sailed she would have walked just 3,000 miles. But on the other hand these three thousand miles represented seventeen pounds, three shillings, and four pence and perhaps a bit more, saved to take abroad. Now as she would not have more than a few weeks' money, about twenty pounds, when she landed in England, and the Australian pound was going down in relation to the English pound--and she considered twenty pounds a very generous margin--she considered the wear and tear on her body and beauty as nothing. With beauty and health she could not get one wave nearer to England, but even though her bones poked through and she was carried aboard, she was welcome, if she paid her fare; she could sail the seas like any free soul from Ulysses to the latest skipper. . . . She thought of death, indeed, but only as an obstacle that might prevent her sailing and must be circumvented. (pp. 273-74)

During Teresa's years of saving, she counts the number of steps to work, calculating the shortest and easiest route; she calculates the kind of step which will cost her the least effort; and she calculates the last point at which she can buy food so that illness does not keep her from sailing. Teresa's material sacrifices are obviously extreme, but they are necessary to her reaching England. Jonathan Crow's willpower is ultimately harmful to him whereas Teresa's is a means to a larger life; however, his powerful will serves as an important example and impetus to her.

Jonathan Crow dramatizes and romanticizes his sacrifices, in part to elicit sympathy, as he sometimes realizes. Teresa sees her sacrifices as part of her larger struggle, but they are not described in romantic terms and this reflects an important characteristic of Teresa and of the novel. Like Louie, Teresa is a great dreamer and fantasizer, but combined with this is her ability to calculate, her

extreme practicality. Teresa's idealism is affirmed and her quest is successful, but some of her obstacles are distinctly unromantic in nature, and the way she overcomes them is described in a manner hardly befitting a traditional hero. Teresa will "sail the seas like any free soul from Ulysses" onward, but to do so she must walk rather than take the tram to save two-pence, calculate the exchange rate of the Australian pound, and perhaps be carried on board ship with her bones sticking out. Such realistic elements are the ground of the novel, and they are vitally important to Teresa. When Teresa reaches "Port of Registry: London" (the title of Part II), she is ill and weak, so physically transformed that Jonathan Crow barely recognizes her. He carries her bags, helps her through customs (p. 291), takes her out to eat, has looked two days for a room for her (p. 297), and directs her to a good employment agency where she gets a job (p. 338). The importance of this practical help cannot be underestimated for the ailing Teresa: "No one had ever done anything for her before, of this kind" (p. 291). In For Love Alone, the heroine's idealism exists alongside such concerns as saving twopence, getting through customs, and finding a room to let and a job. In For Love Alone as in The Man Who Loved Children, heroic and romantic elements are always intertwined with realism, and this is part of what makes the novels so modern, but modern in an unusual way.

While Jonathan Crow plays an important part in Teresa's reaching England, after her first days there, he mostly causes Teresa to suffer. Crow's letters have vacillated between affection and cruelty, and in London there are months of meetings in which he vacillates similarly. Teresa is tormented by these meetings and also deeply puzzled by them. She repeatedly tries to determine whether or not they will have a love affair. Jonathan feels incapable of love (pp. 195, 227, 335) and has told Teresa so (pp. 349, 355, 395, 433), but there are times when both of them hope this will change (pp. 203, 205, 246-48, 335, 370). During these months, Teresa grows increasingly weak and ill, and the relationship finally becomes intolerable to her. In a sense, Teresa has willed her love for Jonathan--"Now I am forcing myself to think only of Jonathan. In the morning, as I raise my head from the pillow, I force myself to think of Jonathan" (p. 223)--and when Teresa finally gives him up, that too is an act of will: "Teresa, looking at him, released him from her will, it happened suddenly" (p. 401). In For Love Alone as in The Man Who Loved Children, the complexity of love and its many forms is an important theme, and Teresa's love for Jonathan--a willed love which she nevertheless feels at times--is one of the most fascinating forms of love Stead explores. Late in the novel, Teresa talks to James Quick about her relationship with Crow:

"No, I was guilty," said she. "I couldn't give up, be beaten by fate. That was it, I knew it was that."

It was never Johnny. He was always kind to me, a loyal friend. Even now, he is wretched, alone, and I am getting out of it."

"You still love him," said Quick, shortly.

"Love him!" she cried in horror. "I never loved him at all. I thought I did, though. He helped me. I will always be grateful to him." (p. 440)

Jonathan Crow describes himself as a "'sadist'"

(p. 354) and a "'soul-twisting pedagogue'" (p. 433) to

Teresa, and he believes she is a masochist (p. 433) partly because of her relationship with him. Some may adopt Crow's view of himself and Teresa,⁹ but there is abundant evidence that this is not the whole story. The suffering which Crow causes Teresa cannot be underestimated, but he also helps her immensely, both intentionally and inadvertently. Like Louisa, Teresa is helped by those who appear to be holding her back, both in spite of them and because of them. A difference between the novels is that Teresa explicitly acknowledges Crow's help (pp. 322, 372, 440), whereas the positive effects of Sam and Henny on Louisa are only shown. More important is the need to understand the differences between Crow and Teresa, which make it impossible to accept Crow's view of Teresa as masochist--or for that matter his view of reality itself. Teresa's actions move her towards the greater world she has envisioned, and the suffering which she endures is a necessary part of her struggle as it has traditionally been for the hero.

The ending of Teresa's relationship with Crow practically coincides with the beginning of her love affair with

James Quick. As we begin to learn about Quick, we see him as a kind of twin to both Jonathan Crow and Teresa, also representing a way of being "indecorous" but one which is neither as destructive as Crow's nor as vital as Teresa's. Quick is an American businessman who has arrived in London the week before employing Teresa. He has lived apart from his dispirited wife for most of their ten year marriage in an unsatisfactory "'married bachelorhood'" (p. 361). Quick is a generous, genial man with broad sympathies, a curious person of wide interests, especially political and literary, and a brilliant, energetic talker.

When Quick hires Teresa shortly after her arrival in London, he sees a woman who seems not to have eaten for several days and who has a persistent cough. In fact, Teresa believes she is going to die (pp. 368, 413, 452). During the years in which Teresa prepares to go to Europe, she has concentrated only on those subjects of concern to Jonathan, dropping all other interests. Quick revives Teresa and reignites her interest in the world, as she tells him: (Quick recalls her words) "'You've restored me to life. . . . I was dead to the world . . . I look forward to coming to work when I get up in the morning, I see the rest of mankind lives too'" (p. 362). Quick quotes poetry new to her, introduces her to writers she has not read, discusses radical political ideas and views of society, and talks with intensity and knowledge about so many subjects of interest to Teresa

that she suggests he institute "'a Chair of Quickery'" (p. 384) so others may benefit from his ideas as well. Teresa almost dies largely because of Crow, and Quick (as his name suggests¹⁰) practically saves her life.

In the sense that James Quick introduces Teresa to new subjects and spheres, however, he is similar to Jonathan Crow in his influence. Though Crow knows much less than Quick and much of his theorizing is ignorant ranting, he brings Teresa to the university, later introduces her to London, and talks about many subjects unfamiliar to her. In London, she tells him: "'With you, I am really seeing the world'" (p. 312). Teresa searches to "know life" (p. 261), and different as Crow and Quick are, both are important to Teresa partly because they introduce her to new possibilities of life, and books and ideas previously unknown to her.

The major way in which James Quick affects Teresa is clear: he loves her deeply and completely. He loves her because she is "brave, independent, and passionate" (p. 451), and also because she is "strange, thin, pale, hot-tempered and a dreamer" (p. 451). Oddly, James Quick's attraction to Teresa is in some respects similar to Jonathan Crow's in that both admire her for her personal power and unconventional nature. There is a crucial difference between the two men, however, for Jonathan is unable to love--not only Teresa but any woman--whereas Quick is "'always the lover'" (p. 415).

Quick offers Teresa a total, abandoned love, one in which her own self-realization is central:

He was a stepping-stone, he told her; she would be a Staël, a Récamier, a Catherine II. . . . Marriage was not what she thought it, the kitchen-range and the tea-table . . . she could have love, joy and all in the world that women were supposed to desire as well as those things women really wanted, in their hearts, dominion, learning. If she feared to be herself in marriage, he said, she could do without it. If she was not sufficiently sure, he did not mind at all, they would be lovers. (p. 444)

Like Teresa, James Quick believes in passionate love which is beyond the course of ordinary marriage (as he views it).

Besides Teresa, James Quick is the most sympathetic character in the novel, but again--like Crow, Andrew Hawkins, Sam, and Henny--Quick's unconventional ideas of society and love are combined with an adherence to "decorous" notions and "polite" behavior. Early in their acquaintance, Quick considers his employee Teresa:

"It's certainly queer that I sit opposite a woman for several months, every day, and I see her devastated by some illness or tragedy. I could ask but one doesn't do that. It isn't done! One can't ask point-blank, 'What's the matter with you? You look as if you were dying on your feet.' How simple it would be." (p. 387)

Quick frequently abides by proprieties, despite his sense that these notions are in fact improper and even injurious. Of course, Quick finally does approach Teresa and they fall in love, but this occurs in contradiction to Quick's ideas of what is proper or ordinary. So powerful are Quick's notions of decorum that while he thinks about Teresa for months, follows her at night, and dreams about her, he does

not recognize his love until much later because such an affair seems so implausible to him: "Scarcely, however, had James Quick thought, Why, I must be in love with this woman, than the improbability of it struck him and he clouded over again" (p. 410).

James Quick's ideas of decorum extend to language, as is evident by his response to Teresa's comment:

"I thought you had the face of an angel, I trusted you, you had a beautiful face," she said at last.

"A beautiful face!" he said in an astounded tone. "Did you really think it was beautiful? It's such a funny word to use about a man. No one says a man has a beautiful face."

"But men have," said Teresa. (p. 441)

For Quick, proper language does not mean polite language-- he is full of obscene jokes and stories--but he maintains strict ideas of what may or may not be said, ideas strong enough to alter his perception of the world and of himself. Because 'beautiful' is not a word conventionally used to describe men, Quick cannot imagine that Teresa would see his face as beautiful. Teresa is attempting to abandon mistaken notions of decorum, and this difference between them causes difficulties, especially because Quick is also beset with notions of what is proper in love, and especially to women in love.

This passionate man who loves Teresa partly for her own passionate nature in fact subscribes to many of the ideas and phrases which conventionally--and mistakenly, in the novel--surround love. Quick has told Teresa, "even if

she would not live with him as his wife but was afraid of public opinion 'as so many nice girls are' he would take care of her" (p. 443). Quick's decorous ideas are not restricted to living arrangements and customs. One night, Teresa talks to Quick about her love, and he is devastated:

Teresa began to tell him about herself, what her feelings really were in this honeymoon. . . . [H]e went cold, so cold, that she felt the warmth dying out of his breast; he lay like a dying man. She realized her mistake, with a pinching of the heart, and at once abandoned the thought of telling him the truth about her love. There were a thousand sides to it, it was pervasive, strong, intellectual, and physical, but he only wanted "a woman's love," the intensely passionate, ideal, romantic love of famous love affairs. . . . "Love is blind is the dictum, whereas, with me at least, Love sees everything." (pp. 449-50)

Quick's ideas about 'woman's love' have been formed partly from legends and books. After Teresa and Quick begin to live together, she tells him that she wants to work at his office again, or elsewhere. Quick is startled and saddened by her restlessness:

"I want to know that you are there waiting for me and that when I get home you will rush to the door as you do."

She was flattered, but she thought instantly, "It's the surest way to lose me." He was astonished that within three months this woman, whom he had pictured to himself as furiously passionate and to whom marriage would be heaven, should already be dull and discontented. As soon as she mentioned even the vaguest confusion in reasons for her discontent he became unhappy and said he "had not satisfied her," and he told her hundreds of queer stories, part of the legend of the male, in which a woman satisfied, slept, became languid, lazy and fat. She remembered in literature too, a dozen passages where "the satyrs ran off into the wood while the nymphs slept by the banks of the fountain." [But r]estlessness in a woman, to him, by tradition, was wrong. (pp. 467-68)

James Quick's notions of decorum are harmful to himself and others, and though there is no evidence that his views change, he is "not an obstinate, self-centered, or opinionated man" (p. 468). Quick recognizes another standard of conduct, one based on natural impulses and passions; he says to Teresa: "'Can I fly in the face of Nature?'" (p. 483). Quick's generous, romantic nature makes him encourage Teresa to live according to her own heart, even though doing so causes him to suffer.

The first months of Teresa and Quick's love affair are very happy--"For each of them it was the first, the true love, the love of youth, and magnificent lustihood, the love without crime and sorrow" (p. 446)--but strangely, and strange to Teresa, the love affair with Quick does not satisfy her: "For herself, she knew that the satisfaction of this great desire only made her more restless and energetic than before" (p. 468); "Her hunger had made her insatiable . . . she wanted to try men" (p. 454). The confidence and energy which Quick's love give Teresa soon send her on a course anticipated by Quick, a love affair with another man.

The last thirty-five pages of For Love Alone are the novel's most intense, centering around Teresa's affair with Harry Girton. Girton is a friend of James Quick and comes to Quick and Teresa's apartment partly to discuss his departure to fight in the Spanish Civil War. Girton has

lived with a fierce, jealous, older woman for ten years, and the circle of friends who gather at Quick and Teresa's apartment assume Girton and Manette are married, as they assume Teresa and Quick are married. (Quick has not yet divorced his estranged wife.) Quick, Teresa, and Harry Girton feel an extraordinary, powerful three-way bond. The two men feel themselves to be like brothers, and Teresa and Girton are deeply attracted to one another; and also (perhaps inseparable from the attraction), they are similar in appearance and personality. Manette senses the attraction and resemblance between Teresa and Girton when they have barely spoken to one another:

It was she, clairvoyant, too experienced, who left them, Harry and Teresa, with the feeling that day, that a love affair between them was at hand. Neither sought it, all waited for it, tremulously, as for the buds on the earliest tree when the air begins to swim. (p. 459)

Subsequently, Manette rages to Girton about Teresa, instead pushing him towards her: "He trusted her instinct. He knew that she would not be so jealous of a woman unless she scented a real pleasure for him there" (p. 460). The attraction between Girton and Teresa is sensed as if it were something literally in the air. All wait for it, knowing its advent to be as certain and natural, and also as mysterious and beyond their control as "the buds on the earliest tree when the air begins to swim."

Earlier in the novel, Teresa's acquaintances have

found literature which presents passionate love to be indecorous or incredible, while Teresa considers it to be true or proper. The issues of decorum in literature raised by the characters are ones which also concern us in relation to the novel. The depiction of passionate love in For Love Alone may violate our expectations--as the mixture of hatred and love may in The Man Who Loved Children--or it may confirm our sense of life. Of course, there is another possibility, one also raised in relation to The Man Who Loved Children. For Love Alone may both violate and confirm our sense of life; indeed, these may be inextricably connected. We value serious literature not only because it expresses our ideas of life but because, stripped of the "proper," it violates those ideas, and in doing so confirms our true experience.

Conventionally, we use the word 'love' to cover a wide range of reactions, and because there is only one word, we sometimes think they ought to be the same thing. In the novel, Teresa loves Jonathan Crow, James Quick, and Harry Girton, but each love is different from the others, and none of the relationships develops in a standard romantic way. Earlier in For Love Alone, Teresa has written the following to Jonathan Crow:

"Language is simply not large enough and though English is said to have the most synonyms and the most words altogether, it still lacks hundreds of thousands of words. The words joy, love, excitement are bald and general. That is why love stories I suppose sound so

dull, for the heroine or hero cannot feel just love it must be one of a hundred kinds of love he feels." (p. 249)

In the last chapters of the novel, Teresa's love for James Quick and Harry Girton are central subjects, but the description of her joy, love, and excitement is not "bald and general." Teresa's feelings for Girton are "one of a hundred kinds of love," and though she also continues to love Quick, with yet a different kind of love, she abandons herself entirely to the passion for Girton:

She now knew a bounding ecstatic gait which she had not felt since early girlhood, in the stern pride of sixteen. The golden young man called up in her mind when she was thinking of him, an endless succession of light images, golden days, golden globes within which she lived in the murk of London. There were flashes of light, a day which was always dawning, and her feet lightly touched on the shores of a smooth sea and such feelings of childhood, these visions which come to a child lying on its back under the sun in the grass, and blazing pictures of long half-wooded slopes down which they ran, and the running down, the slipping away of cool winds on a naked shoulder, the full glassy tide spilling over a swimmer sweetly writhing through it, all the exquisite sensations of healthy youth came to her mind when she thought of Harry; through him she began to live the sunburnt, wind-blown, nonchalant days of singing in the grass which had never been; she felt her flesh running into his and clinging to him, as if they had never been sundered and as if this and all life would go on in this glory for ever, as if no years would ever pass over their heads and as if at the same time, children were springing endlessly from his and her loins. There was honey in his thighs and new-pressed unfermented wine in all of him; and, mad with love, she sucked them both into her eyes, only then understanding love of a man. For the long and bitter time, she had steeled herself too much against misfortune; she had never dared to hope or be glad, in fear of failure; and it was only now that she was able slowly to relinquish her fierce grip on life, to relish the abandon of the senses. (p. 458)

The first time Teresa and Girton are alone together, briefly in her apartment, Teresa again feels this ecstasy. This time, for a moment, she considers her feelings for Girton in light of conventional morality:

Sitting facing him, petulant, uneasy, at the moment when he roused himself and began to speak, she received a violent impression of his virility and physical beauty. The perception of beauty is always a shock, the rest of the visible world fades for a fraction of a minute and the beautiful thing stands there alone in space, in more than lively contours; this was the way she saw Harry Girton that day. She saw then that she was falling in love with him. Adultery! Ugly word--but his beauty carried her off into love's Age of Fable: where no such words have ever been heard. . . . she heard, felt and saw him, smelled him. (p. 461)

Teresa realizes that her affair with Harry Girton is wrong in terms of conventional morality (though she is not married to James Quick), but she also knows that this love from the Age of Fable must be proper in a higher sense. Teresa wants to know life and part of what she must know is intense, passionate love. With Harry Girton, she finally "understand[s] love of a man" (p. 458). A reader may initially find the affair between Teresa and Girton unsettling, somewhat inappropriate. Teresa is deeply involved with James Quick, and for her to turn her attention from him, moving into a passionate affair with Girton, may violate a reader's expectations. It becomes clear, however, that this affair is necessary for Teresa and central to her development.

Teresa experiences beauty, love, and passion as a

shock, even as she recognizes them from the Age of Fable, and the depiction of Teresa's passion for Girton may shock or surprise us, and at the same time, we too may recognize it as true or proper. In For Love Alone as in The Man Who Loved Children, it is not only suffering and cruelty which are surprising to characters and reader, but beauty, love, and joy as well. As in The Man Who Loved Children, the grand possibilities of life are dreamed of and ideal, and they are also experienced physically--comprised of smell, sight, touch, and sound--their magnificence inseparable from their physicality.

Before Harry Girton departs for Spain, he tells Quick and Teresa that he will visit relatives outside of London. Teresa has relatives in the same area, and Quick, recognizing their love, encourages Teresa to take the train with Girton. Miserable as this makes Quick, he believes it is necessary and hopes that their hours together on the train will settle the situation one way or another:

"Have I merely got her on the rebound? Is she about to truly love another man? Am I, with my possessive passion, standing in the way of her happiness? I would never do that, whatever the pain--we, we must see it through. If she loves Girton and not me, if her restlessness ceases through him, I must give her up, it is better to do it now than when we are better used to each other." (p. 468)

The contradictions of Quick's character are evident in his insistence that Teresa travel with Girton, for on the one hand, he feels he cannot "'fly in the face of Nature'" (p. 483), but on the other hand, he believes the Girtons

are married and that this will keep Teresa and Harry apart. At the train station, Manette learns that Teresa is to travel with Harry, and, after they depart, a raging Manette tells Quick that she and Harry are not married: "[Quick] was overwhelmed. In spite of gossip, he had heard Manette so often called 'Mrs. Girton' that he preferred to think of her as married" (p. 474). Quick despairs, for he knows the honest Teresa will admit what is an absolute secret to him, that they are not married either.

On the train, Teresa and Harry shyly decide to stop for the afternoon and night at Oxford; Harry has gone to school there and Teresa has never been to the town. They spend the day walking and observing "the strange, sexless Fellows ambling in black gowns over their sheared lawns" (p. 476). Nature and passion are controlled, but the decorum of their surroundings is evident not only in the Fellows walking over sheared lawns. Teresa and Harry enter a bar where working men from the town argue about the impropriety of using the word 'worm' before ladies:

The men in the bar, workers from the town, hushed their voices and smiled pleasantly, because there was a lady present; and there was an argument because a young, flushed blond man, in liquor, had mentioned the ugly word 'worm' before ladies. (p. 477)

Amidst these surroundings, Teresa and Girton talk about their lives and about love, yet in their conversation, both sense they are being decorous as well:

[O]f what they said they remembered, later, very little, something to do with their hearts, how they

loved always, all their lives without knowing it, how they had thought of each other continually (although each thought that this was not all the truth) and whether one lost anything by refusing to love, and whether such things lasted, and the strange histories of men and women they had known; they talked about love.

Teresa felt all the time that there was some artifice in what she was saying and she believed he was only doing and saying what was the polite thing. (p. 476)

Alone together, the two do not fall into one another's arms, nor do they talk in unchecked intimacy. Their conversation is personal and about that which immediately concerns them, yet it is also partly dishonest and polite. At every turn, the development of Teresa and Girton's affair is both surprising and convincing. The strange course of their day together and their conversation is acknowledged within the novel, and it is seen to be the inevitable course of that relationship: "The feeling they had for each other, which was without a name, a strange relation, could not flower by any other means than this" (p. 476).

Teresa and Girton get a room for the night, and are told when checking in, "'I thought you were brother and sister, not husband and wife, you're that alike'" (p. 477). Their only night together is described briefly, and the next morning, Teresa arises early and dresses, watching Girton while he sleeps. He awakens and they embrace:

They felt a glow of simple happiness, without transport, almost without desire, which was like a heartfelt recognition of each other, a kind of inward smile. Teresa held him close for a moment and thought to herself, "This is life and death." (p. 478)

Yet shortly thereafter, Teresa and Girton go to breakfast and have the following exchange:

"If I could have breakfast with you like this every morning, I would be happy," he said, and she murmured, smiling, "You can, you know, if you want it," and she felt a great happiness at this untruth; there was not the least possibility of their ever living together and perhaps neither wished it. (p. 478)

Throughout the novel, Teresa has searched for passionate love and she calls hers and Harry's an "'absolute love'" (p. 480). How to explain that she considers her words to him an untruth, and that "perhaps neither wished" to live together? Though the "perhaps" is tentative, in fact the two separate and the love affair ends. Teresa and Harry are both living with others, and Harry is about to leave for Spain in order to fight in the International Brigade. On the other hand, neither is married, and Teresa could go with him to Spain, as she realizes (p. 487). Teresa has a powerful will and it is questionable whether the obstacles to her union with Harry Girton would stand in her way if she felt the thing most desired, most proper, were this complete love. Part of the explanation as to why "perhaps neither wished" to live together is as follows:

They had arranged their lives before the meeting took place; they now knew each other and what they desired was over. What more could life give these two? They sat close to each other in a great golden calm; but since they were stormy petrels, each looking for adventure not only in physical danger but in moral and heady regions, what could they do with this simple love that depended on and gave tranquility? (p. 478)

The reason for their separation is not certain; the

explanation is partly in the form of a question. But it seems that their "'absolute love'"--where all can be communicated between these strangely similar people, and where all passionate intensity is expressed--makes impossible what is necessary to them both, an intense, independent existence.

The love affair between Teresa and Girton does not end in a conventional manner. They do not run off to Spain together (though this is considered), they do not marry, and neither dies. Nor does their affair end in a manner more characteristic of modern realistic fiction, a love affair dried out, passion become habit and ennui. As they are about to separate, Teresa says, "'We will remember, at any rate,'" and while Harry is disappointed, he accepts this too (p. 480). It is as if for Teresa, the knowledge through experience of "'this sure happiness, this perfect, absolute joy'" (p. 479) is sufficient.

Teresa visits only briefly with her relatives, so anxious is she to see James Quick. With her return to London, it becomes more clear why she separates from Girton and stays with Quick. Throughout the novel, Teresa has wanted love, and Quick offers her a total, abandoned love, but she also needs something else: "She was too formed by adversity and too firm and ambitious by nature to take pleasure in their marital union alone" (p. 448). Teresa cannot tolerate a love affair which invades her solitude

and inner life: "[Quick] had no idea of how his constantly proffered love, sympathy, and help troubled her; she was used to thinking for herself" (p. 453). Early in their relationship, Teresa realizes that Quick cannot accept all the sides of her nature, and understanding this, she keeps her inner life from him. Teresa's relationship with Quick helps to satisfy her need for love, but it also allows, or even necessitates, the deepening of her inner life:

". . . her secret life became more intense" (p. 454). Teresa is initially unhappy that Quick's notions of a 'woman's love' force this secrecy: "She resigned herself now to playing a part with him, because she loved him, and in order to give him happiness. . . . She thought that each day would be a step farther into the labyrinth of concealment and loving mendacity" (p. 450). With her return to London, however, this changes.

Quick meets Teresa at the train station, overwhelming her with kisses, attention, and questions. This storm of love leaves Teresa impassive at first, but she warms to Quick shortly. Teresa fully realizes this love demands that she maintain and develop her inner, secret life, and this no longer saddens her:

After the episode of the first days when she felt her life would be a secret from him, she had felt lonely, unkind, and oppressed by him. . . . "But now I know, this is the only love, but not the first and not the last. I will know how to make myself a life apart. If James robbed me, I would dislike him for my empty heart, but as I know how to cultivate my heart and mind in secret now, I can only love him for giving himself to me."

She was smiling as she thought this again, and he said, "Why do you smile like that?"

"I am thinking I am free." (pp. 485-86)

Teresa realizes that her relationship with Quick demands that she cultivate a life apart, and this realization is happy and of central importance. Teresa has searched for passionate love and this is finally attained in her relationships with James Quick and Harry Girton, but throughout the novel, most of Teresa's happiest, richest moments occur alone, and with James Quick, she can continue to cultivate her secret, inner life. The satisfaction of her desire for love has freed her, and the lover she chooses, James Quick, also leaves her free. In a sense, it may be the imperfection of the love between Teresa and Quick which makes it, in the end, preferable to the complete love she experiences with Harry Girton. Such twists and turns as this make For Love Alone surprising, and different from standard realistic or romantic novels. It remains, however, realistic and romantic at once.

The conversation between Teresa and Quick quoted above occurs in the last chapter of For Love Alone, and Teresa's words are emphasized because they are the title of the novel's final chapter. Teresa's statement, "'I am thinking I am free,'" suggests she can be free within her love affair with James Quick, but the statement suggests something else as well. The parallel structure of the sentence's two halves, and the fact that they are not

separated by a relative pronoun makes us consider them as two separate assertions of equal importance. Teresa is smiling because she is free and because she is thinking, a process, as indicated by the form of the word, which is ongoing, continuous and active. Earlier, Teresa has needed Jonathan Crow as an aim and she also needs James Quick. If Teresa's only desire were for love, it would seem that she would stay with Harry Girton. From the novel's beginning to its end, it is not only love which Teresa desires, she also wishes to move towards the important destiny which she believes is hers.

Teresa's sense of destiny is important throughout the novel, but as with Louie, her destiny is not defined for her yet. However, in the second half of the novel, Teresa begins to write a book, and while it is only referred to in five short sections of the novel (and over about eight pages), it is of central importance. Throughout For Love Alone, Teresa has tried to define and live according to her own sense of decorum, but it is not sufficient that she think about the world and change her own life. Teresa's writing is her primary work--her act--a means to express her world, and one which she considers may change the world.

Teresa begins the book during the difficult early period in London when she is ill and physically weakened to such an extent that she believes she is going to die.

She tells Jonathan Crow about it first (p. 348). It is to be the story of Miss Haviland, their mutual friend at the university, and Teresa has had the book in mind since first meeting Miss Haviland. Crow inquires about the book later, and Teresa becomes excited talking about it:

He asked her about the book, the one that was to be about Miss Haviland. She tucked her gloves away behind a vase, took off her hat, stood up against the large oak table near the door, and clasping her hands, with eyes wide open and shining, she told him about it. . . . (p. 364)

Teresa suffers intensely during the early months in London, but as with Louie, her suffering triggers her writing, and doing so perhaps even sustains her.

Crow is surprised that Teresa has begun the book, and he asks to see it:

[S]he had really written some pages. This astonished him. He had thought it was one of the novels of life that the girls he knew had always been thinking about writing.

"I'd like to look it over," he said. She refused. It was not ready, she had to think it out, he could not see it before it was ready to print. He smiled and said eagerly, "You mean, you'll really write a book about Miss Haviland?"

"When I first heard her story I thought, I'll write about the sorrows of women."

"The sorrows of women," he said, laughing tenderly. . . . "Tell me about it."

"It will be called 'The Testament of Women.'"

"Rather funereal?"

"Or 'The Seven Houses.'" (pp. 364-65)

Like Louie, Teresa is able to connect her experience and sorrow to that of others, transforming her private material into something of broader significance.

The first time James Quick visits Teresa's room, on

impulse and unexpected, he finds her at work on her book. She lets him read the sketch of it, several pages of which are shown in the novel (pp. 411-13). James Quick questions Teresa about the author of these impassioned pages, for he is amazed by this output from his quiet, serious secretary:

"Who wrote this?" said Quick hastily, raising his startled eyes to her, but in a low tone of secrets.

"I wrote it, don't read any more."

"No, let me, let me, it's--it's--I can't express it to you, my girl, this minute, let me finish first."

"That's just a sketch, an introduction," she said coldly.

"Let me read, let me read." (p. 412)

Teresa's book is no longer to be about Miss Haviland--
 "'this robust work was too earthy for her dying hands'"
 (p. 411)--it is to be her own testament. Quick reads Teresa's introductory notes:

"'The Seven Houses' were not for Jonathan nor for anyone then living but when she was already in the nameless dust, blown about the streets, as such women are, since the beginning, this forgotten box and this black-masked testament would lie on the table in the cold room; and these pale leaves of poor sterile women, floated off the tree of flesh, would not have been without someone to carry their words, timid, disconnected, but full of agony as those choked out of people beaten to death, these despised and starved would, dead, and dying, and to come, have an advocate in the courts of the world. The tyranny of what is written, to rack and convert." (p. 412)

Teresa does not hold up writing as a goal; rather, it is something she does almost naturally or instinctively, reminiscent of Louie's writing "Herpes Rom." Yet, again like Louie, Teresa's writing is not only for herself. As Louie performs "Herpes Rom" for her family and hopes to again for Miss Aiden, Teresa conceives of a larger audience,

one which she consciously hopes to affect. Earlier, Teresa has told Jonathan Crow that he cannot read her book until it is "ready to print" (p. 364). Now, her testament will be left so that women such as herself will "'have an advocate in the courts of the world,'" and her introductory note ends, "'The tyranny of what is written, to rack and convert.'" Teresa considers leaving her book in her room to be found after her death, but she has also corresponded with Miss Haviland, partly about Jonathan and also about "the paper which she would leave," perhaps addressed to Miss Haviland (p. 417). Though Teresa's book and her desire to make it public are referred to only briefly, their importance must not be underestimated.¹¹ When Quick and Teresa begin living together, Teresa still fears she has only a short time to live, and to finish the book remains one of her primary concerns: "She was conscious of two desires, to accomplish her Testament . . . and to get to understand and love men . . ." (p. 448). In the novel, Teresa never considers that being a writer is to be her destiny, but the desire she lists first is to finish her book, and it is this which she plans to leave behind after her death.

There is a further aspect of this matter relating to Teresa and Quick's relationship. After Quick finishes reading the sketch of Teresa's book on his first visit to her room, he comments:

"I am astonished," he said. "Simply astonished--" he began to praise.

"It isn't to praise," said she. "It's to leave after me." (pp. 412-13)

James Quick is important for Teresa not only because he loves her and because his love allows, even requires, her to cultivate a separate life, but because he believes in and encourages the literary work which that life produces.

In the third chapter of this study, *Decorum Redefined*, we considered Louie's rejection of the mistaken notions of decorum held by those around her, and her attempt to define and move towards the truly proper. Like Louie, Teresa has a larger, more complex sense of the world than those around her. She recognizes the multiplicity of life, the darkest reaches of human experience and the sublime. Teresa wants to understand what is true, not what is "decorous" or politely said to be true. This longing to know the truth-- to understand life in all that it is, whatever it is-- overwhelms the fear and suffering which attend Teresa's search, and makes her a serious and deeply admirable heroine.

The concluding pages of For Love Alone do not have the dramatic upsurge of The Man Who Loved Children; however, the last chapters of the novel are extremely powerful, for there Teresa begins to live as she has long desired. In the depths of Teresa's unhappiness, she has sometimes wondered if "the false lore of society" (p. 454) were not in fact true. In the last chapters of the novel, this greater world is experienced not only imaginatively and through literature, but actually. For Teresa as for Louie, it is not enough to understand what is right or true, one

must act in order to remake life. Early in the novel, Teresa does not have the courage to act, as she realizes, but she knows action is essential if she is to move towards the life she envisions. Teresa's actions and experiences in the novel do not alter her vision of this greater life, but through her experience of what she has long imagined, this vision becomes much more powerful and meaningful. For Teresa, this greater life is not only present as an idea whose realization she longs for, it exists as a component or possibility of life. Teresa's mature romanticism is no less sublime than what she has earlier imagined; indeed, because her vision of a greater life is affirmed as actual and possible, it has greater power and meaning.

The grandest and most intense moments of For Love Alone occur in the final chapter, "I Am Thinking I Am Free." From the outset of the novel, Teresa has recognized that the decorum of everyday life is opposed to all that she believes is truly proper. She has agonized and puzzled over why intense happiness, love, poetry are in a profound way considered improper or incredible, are scorned or denied. Teresa takes the train from her relatives' home back to London, and on the train she has a quasi-visionary experience in which she sees all the best that life can be--all that she believes is truly proper--as possible, and available to all:

She turned and looked out of the train. "Perhaps there is balm in Gilead! Perhaps this will never cease. Perhaps this cry-woe and mea-culpa story, the

sadness of the world, the misery of existence is a lie, some abracadabra. . . .

"Can I doubt my own senses? Great love exists . . . perfect passion exists; how many other things exist then that merely sound like dreams and songs . . . are they there for all? Because if this thing is here for me . . . all pleasures, all desires should be for all--weak, struggling, mean, and drab, for us all, the hungry and the dispossessed, the ugly, the dying of limitless pain, the people left behind--it must be! Yes, it must be! Yes, we will have it, all passion, all delight." And suddenly as a strange thought it came to her, that she had reached the gates of the world of Girton and Quick and that it was towards Girton and Quick she was only now journeying, and in a direction unguessed by them; and it was towards them and in this undreamed direction that she had been travelling all her life, and would travel, farther, without them; and with her she felt many thousands of shadows, pressing along with her, storming forwards, but quietly and eagerly, though blindly. . . . She began to blush deeply, deeper than ever before, into her entrails and into the brain, her heart thickened with shame and at the same moment, life itself seemed to choke her. She suddenly understood that there was something beyond misery, and that at present she had merely fought through that bristling black and sterile plain of misery and that beyond was the real world, red, gold, green, white in which the youth of the world would be passed; it was from the womb of time that she was fighting her way and the first day lay before her. This was beyond the "Seventh House"--and when she understood this, that there was something on the citted plain for all of them, the thousands like thin famished fire that wavered and throve around her, pressing on, she knew why she continued restless and why the men, having so much in the hollow of their hands, kept on striving. At this moment sprang up in her for them, an inarticulate emotion of excitement quite beyond anything she had ever felt. All on this fabulous railway journey seemed divine, easy and clear, as if she had a passport to paradise. (pp. 483-84)

Teresa's affirmation of intense happiness, love, "all that merely sound[s] like dreams and songs" for all, is, like the conclusion of The Man Who Loved Children, in a profound way familiar. It is partly that Teresa's vision of shadows pressing on towards "the real world, red, gold, green, white"

resembles other visionary episodes, but it is not Thoreau who is called upon here. Rather, St. Teresa of Avila is invoked through the reference to the Seventh House, the final mansion of the soul as described in The Interior Castle.¹² In For Love Alone, Teresa's journey towards the ideal life which includes love of man has been associated with St. Teresa's spiritual journey towards the ideal life which is love of God; indeed, Teresa's testament is at one point titled "The Seven Houses." Of course, the differences between the Teresas are large and significant. Teresa Hawkins believes the sublime can be found on earth, even if briefly--"this was beyond the 'Seventh House'"--whereas St. Teresa believes the sublime life is found through God in the afterlife. But the similarities between them are also significant. Both believe passionately in an ideal life constituted partly of love, and their soul's journey--through the miseries and joys of the Seven Mansions of the Soul--is towards that life.

There is another important reason that the passage is familiar, one which is suggested within the novel. The ideal life--the truly decorous--is imprinted in all our minds; it is part of everyone's inner life:

She had read of the secret life of man, rather than life taboo in polite letters, which is the greater part of man's life; his true sorrows, sufferings, his hidden loves and his loves' crimes . . . and that complete ideal life which everyone dreams of alike in his vices and virtues . . . love, learning, fervour, and the flush of success. . . . (p. 309)

The "complete ideal life" which Teresa apprehends is familiar because it is part of all our minds and dreams; and it is thus described, and familiar, through literary, philosophical, and theological works. Like Louie, Teresa redefines the truly proper for herself, but much of what she redefines is not new; indeed, its importance is partly that her sense of the truly decorous is one that has long been recognized.

Though Teresa's vision is not in essence new, aspects of it are characteristically modern. On the train, Teresa wonders if all the philosophies of woe are mistaken, and she affirms happiness as the proper condition of human beings. Teresa recognizes that there are foolish, shallow ways in which happiness can be extolled, but she finds even these, in their acknowledgement of happiness as a possibility, more right than her own belief that life must be sacrifice and misery:

Why the false lore of society? To prevent happiness. If human beings really expected happiness they would put up with no tyrannies and no baseness; each would fight for his right to happiness. This phrase startled her, she had heard it before. It was she who, corrupted and hopeless, had told Francine that woman had no natural right to happiness. She saw now that she was the cheated one and that Francine was right. Woman, as well as man, had the right to happiness. Only it was necessary to answer the grim, enslaving philosophy of the schools.

The nauseating ideas of the slick magazines, the chitchat of every foolish woman were, in a way right as she was in every way wrong. (p. 454)

Soon after Teresa starts working for Quick, she says to him, "'Happy! Who bothers about that?'" (p. 384). Near the

conclusion of the novel, Teresa's relatives ask her the usual question about happiness--it is tacked on after a comment about her clothes:

Her relatives, who had seen her only once before, found her even thinner than then, but "Your clothes suit you, my dear," said they. "And are you happy now?"

Teresa took a long breath before she could trust herself to answer. "As happy as I never thought a human being could be, there are all kinds of happiness in the world and they all come together."

The great-aunt Minnie smiled under her lashes as she bent over some charity sewing, and then she said brusquely, in the stiff family style, "And what do you mean by that?"

"Can I tell you? Can anyone put it into words?"

"How ecstatic we're getting! Dear, dear," said the great-aunt, severely biting a cotton thread and smiling through her frown. (p. 480)

In For Love Alone, Teresa does not affirm tolerance or resignation, but boldly and surprisingly, happiness. The idea that human beings must strive for happiness, that there is a "right to happiness," is a quintessentially modern idea. Teresa's affirmation of this near the conclusion of For Love Alone is a departure from the sense of hopelessness which sometimes characterizes modern realistic fiction, though this affirmation is qualified in the last episode of the novel, an episode which will be considered subsequently.

The happiness Teresa affirms is constituted partly of love, and For Love Alone is not unusual in this respect, but the view of love is particularly modern. In For Love Alone, there is the possibility of "perfect passion" (p. 483) which does not issue in marriage or death. There

is also "the heat and activity of [Teresa's] domestic love for Quick" (p. 483), and that does not dissolve, but neither does it put an end to other love:

She had learned from Harry and made up her mind, if the chance came, to learn from others. (p. 483)

"But now I know, this is the only love, but not the first and not the last." (p. 486)

There is also the affirmation of women's freedom to love:

Women had a power to achieve happiness as well--but in what way? Only by having the right to love. In the old days, the girls were married without love, for property, and nowadays they were forced to marry of themselves, for wages. It was easy to see how upsetting it would be if women began to love freely where love came to them. An abyss would open in the principal shopping street of every town. (p. 454)

The idea that intense, romantic love should be sought throughout life, and that there is a "right to love," for women and for men, are characteristically modern ideas.

There is something else which is affirmed at the end of the novel, and though it is not affirmed explicitly by Teresa, it is the most important element, subsuming the other two. Teresa's is a "'struggle for self creation and self realization in the very highest sense,'" and at the conclusion of the novel, it is this struggle and the possibility of its being successful which are affirmed. Teresa knows it is the experience of love which allows her to say, "'I am thinking I am free'"; her self-realization has occurred partly through love. However, on the train, Teresa not only realizes that her journey has been towards the world of Quick and Girton, but also that she "would

travel, farther, without them" (p. 484). Teresa desires passionate love, yet most of her intense, complete moments occur when she is alone, as the train ride itself. Indeed, this final solitary journey recalls the first train ride to Narara: "Alone she found the way out, which alone does not lead to blindness, years of remorse and hungry obscurity" (p. 135).

As said earlier, For Love Alone is not an appropriate title for the novel, and it is not Stead's title. Teresa's struggle includes love, but it is a larger struggle than that, and one which is quintessentially modern. When Teresa redefines decorum for herself, she affirms this struggle for self creation and self realization. At the conclusion of the novel, Teresa's struggle is not completed but it is successful.

The struggle for self creation and self realization has long been associated with the artist, but it is one widely believed in by individuals in modern society. To assert this is not to say that it is universally accepted, or that it does not exist in shallow forms, or that it has not existed as a value previously. It is to say that the individual's struggle toward self-making is a central modern value, and Stead's exploration and affirmation of this is part of the reason For Love Alone is so deeply a modern novel. As said earlier, what Teresa defines as proper is not essentially new, for the values of human life and visions

of the ideal life are to some extent constant, but there is also a sense in which these values are defined in a particularly modern way.

One of the differences between For Love Alone and The Man Who Loved Children is that Teresa begins to live as she desires more fully in the novel itself while Louie has, in a sense, just begun life at the end of The Man Who Loved Children; however, the affirmative section of For Love Alone is fairly brief. Teresa only meets Quick as employer in the last fifth of the novel (p. 356), and they declare their love later, in the last seventy-five pages of the novel (p. 416). For Love Alone's most intense moments occur in the period of Teresa's affair with Harry Girton, yet he is only introduced thirty-six pages before the novel's conclusion (p. 455). Teresa's quasi-visionary experience on the train to London occurs seven pages from the end of the novel. In addition, the last episode of For Love Alone qualifies the brief affirmative section of the novel.

The ending of Teresa and Jonathan Crow's relationship is not the last we see of Crow in For Love Alone. Teresa meets him by chance while waiting outside a shop for James Quick, an encounter which is described on the last two pages of the novel. Teresa first sees Crow in the dark from behind, and does not recognize him. She considers his peculiar gait and twisted figure, thinking she would "like

to write a story on that incomprehensible type'" (p. 490). Teresa steps after the strange man, and, feeling himself to be followed, he turns around: "The man half-turned, stared, while the fringe of the bluish light fell on his unshaved lantern jaw and thick spectacles. Teresa felt a pang as if faced by a murderer. The vile-faced man, the bent-backed man, walking crowded with all the apparatus of melodrama was Jonathan Crow!" (p. 491). They have a silent face-off in the blue light of the street lamps, and Crow walks off without a sign of recognition.

At this final point in the novel, Teresa is deeply involved with James Quick, and she has had the affair with Harry Girton. Nevertheless, seeing Jonathan Crow affects her powerfully: "She put her arm in Quick's and they walked on, close together, but she felt as if death were in her heart" (p. 491). Teresa has forgiven Crow and we accept this, and expect he will be forgotten. But despite all that has occurred to Teresa, the pain which Jonathan Crow has caused her is not forgotten or undone. In For Love Alone, intense happiness and love are affirmed as possibilities of life, but they are only attained in a short part of the novel, and they are always in jeopardy. To the last moment of the novel, Teresa's vision of the ideal life and her movement towards it are mixed with tragic realism.

After Crow walks away, Teresa speaks the final words of the novel to James Quick: "After a while, Teresa sighed

bitterly. 'It's dreadful to think that it will go on being repeated for ever, he--and me! What's there to stop it?'" (p. 491). Teresa's final question is unanswered, but as we turn the last page and close the book's cover, an answer is suggested. Teresa is writing a book which she considers to be her testament, and on the penultimate page of the novel, she thinks she would like to write a story about Jonathan Crow. When Teresa raises this last question, we may consider that the novel before us is itself the answer to that question. Teresa does not assert at this point that her book, or any book, would prevent a relationship such as her and Crow's from recurring; however, Teresa believes in the power of literature, and she believes that her book may have the power "'to rack and convert.'" The conclusion of For Love Alone is almost abrupt, its open-endedness quite unlike the rich open-endedness of Louie's clear vision and walk round the world. However, it is significant that the novel ends not with an affirmation of happiness and love, but with a bitter sigh that life will continue on with much sadness, a question about how to change that, and, for Teresa, a desire to write a story.

In For Love Alone as in The Man Who Loved Children, the matter of redefining decorum engages not only the protagonist, for it is one which we consider in relation to the novel as well. Like Louie, Teresa has qualities of classical and romantic heroes, yet some of the values she affirms are

defined in a particularly modern way, and she is an "unlikely" heroine in terms of her external characteristics. Teresa is a new Ulysses, and though her struggle towards an intense, free, creative life is different from Ulysses' struggle, the association between them, like that between Teresa and St. Teresa, is finally serious rather than ironic. Stead is presenting a genuine hero, one who embodies qualities of traditional heroes yet emerges from the modern world--is a modern--and in combining these different worlds, she defines a new sense of decorum.

Notes

¹ Critics have assumed that For Love Alone was written close to the time of its publication in 1944, and previously, Stead has not corrected this assumption. However, in response to a direct question about when she wrote For Love Alone, Stead replies: "I wrote For Love Alone very early in my writing life, before The Salzburg Tales and without any thought of publication. . . . I wrote 7 Poor Men before that and also totally without thought of publication. I was quite weak (in London, where I got to after the For Love Alone struggle) and I thought I would die and I felt (pure instinct) I would leave a paper behind me - it was my husband-to-be who took the MSS (in Paris) to well known figure Sylvia Beach (Shakespeare & Co. rue de l'Odeon) and she said, 'Send it to a London agent.'" Letter received from Christina Stead, 2 August 1981.

The history of Stead's early writing proceeds: "'With Sylvia Beach's commendation, we had the courage to send the MS [of Seven Poor Men of Sydney] to England. . . . Peter Davies (a famous man, godson of Sir James Barrie and the original Peter Pan) was a friend to many writers; he admired Australian writers.'" Robert Fagan, "Christina Stead," Partisan Review, 46 (1979), 264. Peter Davies read Seven Poor Men of Sydney and asked for another work: "'I'd been to the Salzburg Festival for six weeks in 1931. So I got to work and wrote the Tales, in Paris, as fast as anyone could write. . . ." Smith, p. 72.

Peter Davies published The Salzburg Tales and Seven Poor Men of Sydney in 1934. (He also published the next five of Stead's novels.) Two other of Stead's novels were published in the 1930s (The Beauties and Furies, 1936; and House of All Nations, 1938); however, For Love Alone was not published until 1944, perhaps because of its autobiographical nature, or perhaps, like other of Stead's works, because it was set aside. (Cotter's England, published in the United States as Dark Places of the Heart, was written in 1953, and not published until 1966. Geering, "Christina Stead in the 1960s," Southerly, 28 (1968), 34.)

My supposition that Stead wrote most of For Love Alone about eight years before The Man Who Loved Children is based on the following. Stead arrived in London in May, 1928, and wrote Seven Poor Men of Sydney during her first Winter in England (1928-29). The Salzburg Tales was probably written in 1932 or 1933 (after Stead's visit to the Festival in 1931 and in time for it to be published in January, 1934). For

Love Alone was thus probably written sometime between 1929 and 1932. There must have been some revision or addition prior to publication, however, because Harry Girton is to fight in the Spanish Civil War. Stead does not refer to this revision or addition in her letter, and I do not know whether she does not because she considered the changes insignificant. The Man Who Loved Children "took about a year to write" (J. Beston, p. 83), perhaps including the months spent in Washington, D.C., Annapolis, and Baltimore learning about the area and finding suitable counterparts to Stead's childhood homes (Lidoff, "Obscure Grievs," p. 29). Stead and William Blake moved to the United States in 1937 (though they visited the country in 1935), so The Man Who Loved Children was probably written sometime between 1937 and 1939 (in time for publication in 1940).

² Raskin, p. 73.

³ Dorothy Green, "'Chaos or a Dancing Star?' Christina Stead's Seven Poor Men of Sydney," Meanjin, 27 (1968), 157. In this comment, Green is referring to Seven Poor Men of Sydney as well as The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone. Apparently, Green assumes that the major female character in that novel, Catherine Bagenault, is Stead's autobiographical counterpart. Stead talks about the characters in Seven Poor Men of Sydney in an interview:

Q: Did you know the sort of people in Sydney like the left-wing radicals in Seven Poor Men of Sydney? Did you mix in that sort of circle?

Stead: I didn't mix. I was there once or twice. For example, the one called Kol Blount I never met at all. . . . The girl Catherine, I met her, she was a friend of mine. . . . The one called Michael, the character all the people write about . . . I just invented him. Baruch Mendelsohn . . . was my first study of my husband to be. . . . I want to say that Joseph Bagenault is, was, a person I knew by sight but didn't know, but he was the one I felt most deeply about, the man who had no beliefs, no position, no hope, but kept on bravely. He's the real hero of the book.

Whitehead, p. 241.

⁴ "'Teresa in For Love Alone (that was me of course, everybody knows that) started off dreaming quite young. When I was fourteen I read George Henry Lewes' Life of Goethe, which spoke about the German universities. This inspired me so much I wanted to go to a university in Germany. That was the very first dream I had.'" Lidoff, "Christina Stead: An Interview," p. 54.

"'I went to Teachers' College [and taught feeble-minded children for a time] but did not like teaching and took a business course at night, so that I could travel

while working. It took me some years to save up the money but in 1928 I went to London, [Stead sailed from Sydney March 28, 1928, on the Oronsay] to look for a job, and hoped later to get a job in Paris somehow.'" Kunitz, p. 1330.

Stead's aim to go to Europe was reinforced by another factor: "'I'd read the life of Goethe as a young adolescent and wanted to see Heidelberg. I wanted to go to the Sorbonne, and these aims were reinforced by a manfriend's going abroad on a travelling scholarship. It's all there in For Love Alone. I said to myself, "I will give myself my own travelling scholarship," and so I did.'" R. M. Beston, p. 94. In London, Stead was hired at a grain trading firm by William Blake, her husband-to-be. Smith, p. 72. "Blake was a writer as well as a banker and investment manager. Before going to England, Blake had been co-editor of The Magazine of Wall Street. . . ." J. Beston, p. 82.

⁵ Lidoff, "Obscure Griefs," p. 232.

⁶ Roderick, Twenty Australian Novelists, p. 197.

⁷ This is the Lindsays' magazine Vision, which Stead herself enjoyed: "'[T]he only thing I liked about Australia at that time was a magazine brought out by the Lindsays and their friends called Vision; it was a quarterly, a sort of de-luxe affair, you know, it was very thrilling.'" Whitehead, p. 233.

⁸ Stead's salary at Henderson's Hat Factory was thirty-five shillings a week (J. Beston, p. 82), and "'I had to pay to live at home. My family couldn't get along. . . . Not that I gave so much. I was saving it for my trip abroad. But I did have to buy clothing, and a season ticket for the boat. We always lived round the harbor at that time. I took the ferry to the Circular Pier at Central Station Wharf. And I used to walk, a long walk, up to the hat factory.'" Lidoff, "Christina Stead: An Interview," pp. 49-50.

⁹ Lidoff writes, "Stead gives Teresa both a passionate imagination and the strength to act on it. However, Teresa accomplishes all that she does only by stoic, even masochistic self-denial. In For Love Alone, Stead does not recognize the costs of this extreme mode of accommodation. . . ." "Obscure Griefs," p. 100. Lidoff refers to Teresa's masochistic nature elsewhere in her dissertation (pp. 264, 279, & 284), but Stead does not share this view of Teresa, as she tells Lidoff in an interview. Lidoff asks Stead why Teresa loved "'the cruel Jonathan Crow,'" and she replies: "'Well, I think by the time he was cruel they were separated by a distance, weren't they, by a long distance. Therefore there was no daily contact. But, of course, cruelty is not disassociated from sex, is it? It's no good using the discarded old coinage of "masochism."

That really doesn't meet the situation. . . . He had a certain number of girls he kept on a string. Quite different types too. All different types. And he led off with this "pity me" routine. You know, "I come from the slums," and all that kind of thing, and "I had to struggle hard to get my scholarship." He was very rich in detail of his struggles. . . . And these men often are dependent on their mothers. He was. . . . "Did you have a hard day at college, Jonathan?" And then his tale of woe.'" Lidoff, "Christina Stead: An Interview," pp. 60-61.

¹⁰ Ronald G. Geering points this out in "The Achievement of Christina Stead," Southerly, 22 (1962), 205.

¹¹ Lidoff minimizes the importance of Teresa's writing, and this is a serious flaw in her analysis: "Ignoring part of her autobiographical history, Stead fails to pursue Teresa's development as a writer and instead channels all of her heroine's exuberance into the exercise of sexual power. This distortion is responsible for much of the novel's ultimate romanticism." "Obscure Grievs," p. 293.

¹² St. Teresa of Avila, Interior Castle, ed. and trans. E. Allison Peers (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1961), pp. 206-35.

CHAPTER 5

CHRISTINA STEAD'S UNIVERSAL LARDER

Christina Stead's eleven novels and two books of stories encompass a multiplicity of social objects, milieus, countries, and strata. Her fiction takes in international banking in Paris (House of All Nations); the Mozart festival in Salzburg (The Salzburg Tales); leftist politics in Greenwich Village (Letty Fox: Her Luck); a printing shop in Sydney (Seven Poor Men of Sydney); and post-War life in a Swiss hotel (The Little Hotel). Her protagonists include a suburban Englishwoman of literary aspirations (Miss Herbert: A Suburban Wife); a wealthy, unemployed New Yorker recently returned from World War II (The People With the Dogs); a lace trader and tale spinner (The Beauties and Furies); a war profiteer, swindler, and bon vivant (A Little Tea, A Little Chat); and a muddled, naive, determined girl who attaches herself to a businessman (The Puzzleheaded Girl: Four Novellas). Her novels consider romantic love (heterosexual and homosexual in Cotter's England), family love, a young woman's odyssey, a child's life.

Stead's fiction is quite varied in subject and style, but her sense of decorum is the same throughout her fiction in important respects. In all Stead's work, the endless

variety of nature, human beings, and the world is emphasized; all her fiction focusses on "how original real life is" (For Love Alone, p. 263). No matter what the world considered in a work of Stead's, it is always strange, surprising, and full of extreme contrasts and ironies. This is so not only for us, the readers, but for the characters as well, and the reason for this is explored in the novels. Central to Stead's sense of decorum--her sense of what is proper to life--is the tension between ideas of decorum and an "indecorous" reality in which the unexpected consistently occurs. Most of Stead's characters have private notions of decorum which are too orderly, too limited--do not admit the multiplicity of life. The characters are consistently confronted with realities not admitted in their private notions of decorum, so they find life strange, incredible--or, in a word, indecorous. Of course, the reality which the reader may find strange is a literary reality, but Stead's fiction not only explores the incredibility of the real but the incredibility of serious literature. As mentioned earlier, the point of this is not to say that a reader, finding the novels strange and incredible, is then cornered with the assertion that they are meant to be so. It is to say that the tension which operates as we read the novels is itself a central concern in the novels.

Stead's sense of decorum in her lesser works is essentially familiar to modern readers, for she presents

worlds in which the unexpected is expected--worlds in which the indecorous is ordinary--and characters who try, usually unsuccessfully, to order these worlds. In Stead's lesser works, we are fascinated by the characters and worlds she depicts, but there is no guiding protagonist whom we admire and whose perceptions of the world we trust, no character who understands the deluge of life which the novels depict. These works stand more fully within the tradition of modern realism as described by Auerbach, whereas The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone also contain heroic and romantic elements. In order to illustrate the way Stead's sense of decorum in The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone differs from that in her other fiction, we will consider her novel The Little Hotel and two stories from The Salzburg Tales.

The Little Hotel is set in Switzerland following the Second World War, and it concerns the sympathetic eccentrics who comprise the guests and staff of the Hotel Swiss-Touring. The proprietor of this fourth-class pension, Madame Bonnard, narrates much of the novel, and she suggests the reason for her guests' oddities: "People who do nothing for a number of years are naturally eccentric" (p. 22). Each character in The Little Hotel has a strange history--and present--and their lives are surprising to one another as well as to the reader as the comments of Clara, a member of the hotel staff, indicate: "'No, such things don't exist, such things are impossible'" (p. 111).

The small society of the little hotel includes the Mayor of B., a Belgian man and Nazi collaborator who has gone insane, and who constantly writes notes to the Bonnards--"documents," which he numbers--complaining "'about the GERMANS in the place'" (p. 11) of which there are none; Princess Bili di Rovino, an American widow of an Italian prince who prods her dog Angel to sing in fancy restaurants, and who plans to move to Argentina in order to marry a thirty-three-year-old Spaniard (after having a facelift in a Paris clinic), and in order to protect her money from falling currencies and the Russians; and Gennaro, a member of the hotel staff who was drawn in by the Italian fascists in his youth, and is now the tyrannical, irrational husband of Emma.

One of the minor but notable characters who highlights the issue of decorum is Mrs. Powell, an elderly American woman Madame Bonnard initially finds "agreeable and interesting" (p. 30). Mrs. Powell expresses her sense of discomfort at the mixture of races, a discomfort which has an extremely sinister basis:

"It isn't right to mix the races. You see a lot of them married to other races here in Europe. I've seen it everywhere. People here say it makes no difference, but I feel something when I see it. Now if there was nothing, if it did not shock, I wouldn't notice, would I? But everyone feels a sort of shock. Don't you feel a shock? . . . You see [the mixture of races] all about you, this disorder, this ruin of the fine old culture. . . . No one would approve of Hitler, but he understood the danger. . . . Now I cannot approve of the extermination of peoples and yet you might say he was like a surgeon cutting out

the disease. Yes, people have seen it, Darwin saw it, he was of a fine old family; but we of the good families are too few. . . . Our culture will break down and the Russians come in. Unless what few of the old cultured people are left will get together and bring order into this confusion, however hard it may be and go against our feelings. We must make a stand and do something whenever and wherever we see it." (pp. 30-31)

Mrs. Powell believes her order is natural, not only invoking Darwin's name, but also suggesting that a shock naturally occurs at witnessing the mixture of races. Mrs. Powell's desire to maintain propriety is not merely superficial, but is connected to larger and destructive notions. Thus, three pages later when Mrs. Powell is dismayed by seating arrangements which she sees as improper, we already know that her concern is just the surface manifestation of a profoundly improper, indeed obscene, idea of order.

The Little Hotel revolves around the lives of two guests, Mrs. Trollope and Madame Blaise--indeed, Stead's original title for the novel was Mrs. Trollope and Madame Blaise¹--and in the category of the novel's eccentrics, Madame Gliesli Blaise is first among equals. Madame Blaise is a wealthy, pretentious, vicious woman from Basel who has lived at the Hotel Swiss-Touring for seven months. She is visited every two weeks by her husband, a doctor who brings her "medicine"--drugs. Mrs. Trollope, her confidante, realizes that Madame Blaise "is a drug addict, though in a small way. She merely takes it to steady her nerves and she is in the doctor's care'" (p. 129). It becomes evident,

however, that the doctor's care is precisely what Madame Blaise escapes at the Hotel Swiss-Touring. Madame Blaise is an heiress, and she has become wealthier through illegal dealings with the Nazis after the War. She fears her husband will poison her if she stays in Basel with him, not only for her money but also to continue his affair with the housekeeper, Ermyntud.

In the meantime, Dr. Blaise has encouraged in his wife an extreme fear of disease so that she wears four layers of clothing day and night to protect herself (p. 103). One evening at a dinner with Princess Bili di Rovino, Mrs. Trollope and her companion Mr. Wilkins, and two other guests from the hotel, Madame Blaise describes how her husband has frightened her, circulating the photographs he regularly brings her:

"My husband talks to me about nothing but diseases. He talks of different things to his men friends; but to me only infection, vitiated blood, pus, syphilis, gonorrhoea, diabetes, psoriasis, scrofula, cancer. Look at the pretty pictures he is always giving me;" and laughing heartily, her big bosom wallowing, she handed Mr. Pallintost a photograph of a naked boy of about sixteen, with face and entire body skin covered with a crepy red tissue. . . . Madame Blaise was now passing round pictures of children with blue patches, men with psoriasis, and a late stage of cancer in a woman. (p. 91)

Madame Blaise returns these photographs to her purse, a crocodile bag with crocodile claws on either side, from which she then extracts photographs of her son, Hubert, announcing that she hopes he will become a homosexual so she will remain the woman he loves most. Shortly after this dinner, Madame

Blaise returns to Basel at her husband's urging--it turns out he has threatened to withdraw her drugs--and near the end of the novel, Madamé Bonnard learns that Madame Blaise has died of heart disease and left her estate to the housekeeper, Ermyntud, on the condition that she marry Dr. Blaise.

The lives of Madame and Dr. Blaise are sordid, corrupt, and strange, yet as with so many of Stead's characters, one of their strangest aspects is that in the midst of this, they maintain a deep concern with propriety. Madame Blaise always dresses for meals at the pension: "Madame Blaise, as usual, was dressed for lunch, in her old brown hat, trimmed with a fur band, her fur coat, her brown wool dress, her gloves and handbag, with new fur boots, rather pretty, half-way up her calves" (p. 114). She addresses Mrs. Trollope in a "society voice" (p. 68), and sometimes pretends Mrs. Trollope is her maid in order to impress shopkeepers, "a common trick of genteel women down on their luck," as Mrs. Trollope realizes (p. 66). In preparing for the dinner out with guests from the hotel, Madame Blaise sees the Princess Bili's fancy attire and returns to her room to change, but Dr. Blaise finds her choice of clothes inappropriate:

They were having a drink, when in came Madame Blaise with a beautiful evening hat, on a toque of feathers and gauze with two drooping plumes and a diamond in her hair. It was a French hat and the diamond looked well in Madame Blaise's hair; but Dr. Blaise took exception to the getup, said the hat did not suit the dress, nor the occasion, and certainly not the Princess's costume. (p. 85)

After all are assembled, Dr. Blaise drives the company into Lausanne, and he and Mr. Wilkins talk in the front seat: "They did not discuss business with the three women there. Mr. Wilkins charmingly discussed what was proper at that time of day and in those circumstances, in the East--various old eastern acquaintances, football and polo games he had played in and witnessed in the last thirty-five years" (p. 87). In the course of the evening, the Blaises' conversation turns cruel and ugly, but their concern with propriety exists alongside of this, and in this respect they resemble many of Stead's characters, notably Sam and Henny in The Man Who Loved Children.

The strange, surprising nature of life in the little hotel is evident to its proprietor, Madame Bonnard, and the novel begins with her exclamation: "If you knew what happens in the hotel every day!" (p. 7). She is repeatedly astonished by her guests' and staff's lives, as she tells us: "you are always astonished at how people can muddle their lives" (p. 16). Like many of Stead's characters, Madame Bonnard's chief concern is "to keep order" (p. 25 & 39) amidst the muddle and oddity of her world, but it shortly becomes clear that Madame Bonnard's order is of dubious benefit, in part because her concern with order supersedes all other interests. She hires two poor Italian sisters, Luisa and Lina, although Lina is recovering from tuberculosis. The arrangement suits Madame Bonnard because the two "would not dare make trouble"

(p. 39), and she simply does not tell the guests of Lina's condition. Madame Bonnard considers Charlie, the sixty-five-year-old hotel porter who has a long police record for compromising twelve-year-old girls, to be "a decent man" because he "knows everything about hotel life, he's well broken in, a clever old Frenchman, who no doubt is not very anxious to return to France" (p. 24). Charlie is orderly, of course, because he must be, as she knows. On the other hand, she hardly tolerates Herman, another member of the hotel staff, because "[t]his Herman was an imp of disorder. I don't know that he did anything wrong, but he disturbed everyone" (p. 41).

Madame Bonnard maintains order partly through intimidation and manipulation, but her husband, Roger, uses more direct and unpleasant means to control guests and staff. He riffles through the dying Miss Abbey-Chillard's suitcases for money to pay her hotel bill, money which she needs to pay her doctors. Madame Bonnard criticizes this and states that to search the guests' suitcases is strictly forbidden by Swiss law, but she accepts it. Madame Bonnard upholds "the logic of equality" in parcelling out furniture and goods to the guests (p. 25). In her view, equality is not so much good as logical because it contributes to the greater good, order.

Madame Bonnard's task of maintaining order consumes her life; indeed, in a sense her order replaces life for her.

She complains about a former guest who telephones her: "She talked so much about happiness and unhappiness, love and misunderstanding, that I began to dread hearing the phone ring. I had not the time" (p. 8). When the Mayor of B. is committed to an insane asylum, Madame Bonnard points out that during his hysterical episode he has "said something rude about us, the Hotel Swiss-Touring" (p. 58). Madame Bonnard's concern with maintaining order and propriety is partly reasonable, but it is also viewed ironically because of the nature of her order, and in this respect, she is like many of Stead's characters.

The central figure of The Little Hotel is Mrs. Lilia Trollope, a woman of simple humanity and conventional concerns. Mrs. Trollope's situation is as odd as that of the other characters, but she recognizes this and is able to change it. Mrs. Trollope's humane impulses and ideas raise her above the other characters; however, she is not portrayed as a serious hero but as a more-or-less ordinary woman. In this sense, she is a protagonist familiar within the tradition of modern realism, and differs markedly from the heroines of The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone.

Mrs. Trollope has been at the Hotel Swiss-Touring for more than a year with Mr. Robert Wilkins. At Mr. Wilkins' insistence, they pretend to be cousins and hold separate--though adjoining--rooms, but all realize that the situation is otherwise. Mrs. Trollope has in fact met Mr. Wilkins

twenty-seven years earlier at a party in Malaya:

He was a business acquaintance of her husband. They had danced together that evening and fallen in love, as it seemed to them later, at once. Mr. Trollope, a tall, thin faced but agreeable Englishman, already rich, was at the time courting two or three other women and had a passion for an Indian dancer. Several years later, Mrs. Trollope left her husband, the scandal being too public. . . . (p. 88)

Five years before the novel opens, Mr. Trollope has decided to marry again, and, as a gentleman, has agreed to divorce his wife on the grounds of his own infidelity. At this time, Mrs. Trollope had expected to marry Mr. Wilkins:

Mrs. Trollope then went to Europe with Mr. Wilkins, expecting to marry him at once. But all love affairs hold surprises, including those of such long standing that they resemble marriages. Mr. Wilkins remained her lover, lived beside her, but made her engage their lodgings wherever they lived and pay their rent. She had never before engaged rooms or paid rent. She said, deeply shocked:

"But people will think you are my gigolo."

"That is most flattering for a man of my age."

(p. 89)

It turns out that Mr. Wilkins' mother has extracted a promise from him and his sisters that they will never marry during her lifetime, and this promise has come to suit the selfish, egocentric Mr. Wilkins, as he tells Princess Bili:

"I have led a selfish life, Princess; entirely for myself. . . . I never did marry and I'm not sure I ever wanted to. . . . I was responsible to no one. That is what I don't like--being conscious of a responsibility to someone. Then I should feel my selfishness very acutely. . . . Oh, don't mistake me, Bili, you can do nothing with me. I am a selfish man." (pp. 127-28)

There is a further reason Mr. Wilkins will not marry Mrs. Trollope, the same reason he will not leave her. Mrs. Trollope is a rich woman whose divorce has made her richer,

and Mr. Wilkins wants to have her fortune in his hands. He has been gaining control of Mrs. Trollope's money slowly by having her take it out of England and bank it in his name. Under the post-War capital export laws, however, a couple can withdraw only half as much money annually as two unmarried people, so that marrying Mrs. Trollope would slow the rate at which Mr. Wilkins could gain control of her money. In the course of the novel, it becomes clear to Mrs. Trollope that Mr. Wilkins' loyalty to his mother is greater than his loyalty to her; that his loyalty to her is largely based on money; and that he has grown increasingly, and intolerably, selfish and cold. In the end of the novel, she leaves him and returns to England.

The strange, complex relations between Mrs. Trollope and Mr. Wilkins have a further peculiar aspect, one common in Stead's fiction. Amidst the oddity and difficulty of their lives, both are intensely concerned with proper appearances; indeed, concern with propriety has become a way of keeping their minds off the central issues of life. The dinner out with other guests from the Hotel Swiss-Touring is held at a hotel in which several ex-kings live, and "[t]hey laughed a little at the protocol difficulties of setting kings around one table, until someone said that each king ate separately in his room or suite to avoid such difficulties" (p. 100); however, Mrs. Trollope and Mr. Wilkins are equally concerned with decorum. When Princess

Bili appears dressed up for the dinner, Mrs. Trollope tells her, "'Bili, we weren't dressing, dear'" (p. 83), and Mr. Wilkins says, "'Please go back and change, Princess. . . . I say, Bili, you will put us all to shame. Do go and put on something suitable. I assure you it is just an ordinary restaurant in Lausanne. You will look like the Queen of England at a ragpickers' tea'" (pp. 84-85). Princess Bili assures them that she too "'know[s] what is done and worn'" (p. 85), but the argument continues. Once at the restaurant, Mr. Wilkins assiduously fulfills his duties as host of the dinner:

Oh, no hors d'oeuvre, said the Pallintosts, who had also talked over between themselves the propriety of their being asked at all; and going ahead, pressed by the doctor [Blaise] they ordered two cheap dishes of different sorts, just as they had decided beforehand; Aline took one a little dearer, Tony one a little cheaper, just above the cheapest of all.

"Have you smoked salmon, some real caviar Malossel, some Donarnenez sardines? I had them last time I was here," said the doctor.

The waiter went off to bring the maître d'hôtel. The doctor passed the menu to the Pallintosts. They refused. "Nothing, really nothing, but the main dish."

Out of politeness, then, Mr. Wilkins said he would take a sardine too. He insisted on more drinks. The maître d'hôtel arrived to show a fine piece of smoked Rhine salmon; and as it pleased the doctor he also suggested pâté de foie gras from Périgord. The doctor assented:

"Certainly, I always have it when I come here." . . . The Pallintosts refused wine, Mrs. Trollope said she hated it, Mr. Wilkins said he would have some, but rather pointedly consulted Mrs. Pallintost's taste; and she, pressed, said she preferred red, though she knew white was quite correct for sweetbreads. . . . In the course of the conversation [the doctor] had drawn out the special tastes of the guests. Mr. Wilkins then politely repeated the suggestions and the waiters were kept busy. (pp. 87-88 & 92)

Mrs. Trollope desperately wants to be useful, and she believes her sciatica, insomnia, stomach aches, and constant headaches partly derive from not having anything to do.

Mr. Wilkins is aghast at her attempts to remedy this, for he believes she is acting in a manner not befitting a woman of her station:

"The real reason I can't sleep, Robert, is that I have nothing to do."

"Why do you want to do anything, Lilia? We are retired," said Mr. Wilkins.

"I am going to ask them at church if there isn't something I can do."

"I hope you are not going to make us ridiculous, Lilia. Please remember the absurd Nice affair." Mrs. Trollope grew desperate and told me [Madame Bonnard] everything. When they had been staying in Nice two years before, she had absented herself every afternoon while Robert slept; until Robert, who had got up early from his nap, saw her wheeling an old woman in an invalid chair, into a pharmacy. Mr. Wilkins prudently pretended not to see her; but that night he found out that she had answered an advertisement and become companion for a wealthy invalid.

"Does she pay you?"

"I use the money for myself. You are always asking me what I want it for."

"You are disgracing us."

"What harm did I do, Robert?"

"Surely, you can see how very absurd you make me look! You will give this up at once, Lilia. Remember, we are retired now."

"I shall die of boredom! Supposing we live to be eighty? I am sick with boredom." (pp. 28-29)

Mr. Wilkins' interest in maintaining proper appearances supersedes his interest in substantial matters such as the quality of Mrs. Trollope's life, or the quality of their relationship. Mr. Wilkins' notions of decorum are harmful to his "cousin," but this does not cause him to alter these notions, and in this way he is like many of Stead's characters.

Mrs. Trollope is much more concerned with the painful reality of her situation (and that of other guests and hotel staff), but a significant part of her unhappiness derives from the impropriety of her situation. She considers the relationship as it has developed with Mr. Wilkins to be "'a scandal'" (p. 107) and "the shame and disgrace of her life" (p. 108), as she tells Madame Bonnard:

"Oh, dear Madame, I hope you will never be as unhappy as I am. You will never know, thank God, my agony and shame."

"Everyone admires and respects you both, I assure you."

"Ah, but I don't feel it. . . . What did you think of me, when I came and asked you for two rooms communicating, and us with different names; and said we were cousins, though we at once began to live a married life? He always makes me do it." (pp. 77-78)

Madame Bonnard shares Mrs. Trollope's concern with proper appearances, and she reassures Mrs. Trollope in those terms: "'Everyone admires and respects you both.'" As usual, Madame Bonnard refuses to be scandalized as long as her guests keep order and do not make improper remarks about the Hotel.

Mrs. Trollope is hurt by Mr. Wilkins' increasing selfishness, coldness, and greed, but the public manifestation of these is deeply important to her as well. Mr. Wilkins has begun reading the Financial Times and other newspapers and books at the dinner table:

Mrs. Trollope felt humiliated and complained; but he did just as he pleased and answered either with a derisive smile or a remark such as, "I assure you no one notices it, Lilia, but yourself." . . . Sometimes, when he opened his book, she would go up to

her room at once, saying that she had a headache or that her back was aching. Mr. Wilkins would rise politely as she left the table and would tranquilly go back to his reading. . . . Mrs. Trollope was very sensitive to appearances. (p. 26)

Like Madame Bonnard, Mr. Wilkins realizes that Mrs. Trollope's displeasure is partly that others will notice the impropriety, and he reassures her on this point. Mrs. Trollope repeatedly raises the matter of his reading at the table, always concerned with its irregular appearance: "'I beg you, Robert, do not read the paper in my face! What will people think? They will say, What a rude man!'" (p. 76). Such exchanges are far more frequent than any expressed concern over the depth and value of their relationship. As the novel progresses, however, Mrs. Trollope becomes able to speak directly--in her mind, indecorously--to Mr. Wilkins about her dissatisfaction, and this leads to Mrs. Trollope's leaving Mr. Wilkins, her major positive action in the novel.

Mrs. Trollope knows that it will be painful to leave Mr. Wilkins, but her life with him is painful, and it is also improper: "'I must get away. It will be agony; but this is agony and I am living a life of shame as well'" (p. 119). In Mrs. Trollope's view, her situation is odd and entirely wrong, and increasingly she cannot face it, as she tells Gliesli Blaise: "'I am not going down, Gliesli, to see Robert taking his two soups behind his newspaper while I watch this sad lot of scarecrows that we are, in the mirror'" (p. 115).

Mrs. Trollope has a concept of a better life, one

which she associates with the "'old ways'" (p. 100) and the "'dear old world'" (p. 43). She tells Madame Bonnard, "'I must love people'" (p. 50), but this desire is thwarted in the world in which she lives. Mr. Wilkins does not appreciate her love, and even rebukes her for concerning herself with others. Mrs. Trollope wants to be with her children--though they have ceased communicating with her until she has a proper arrangement with Mr. Wilkins, and after she has set up their trust funds--but Mr. Wilkins has determined they will move from country to country to gain the most advantageous exchange rates. Mrs. Trollope objects that his chart of currency rates is "'to be the chart of my life'" (p. 95), forcing her into temporary, unsatisfactory friendships born of proximity:

"But I want to be free. Life seems very small to me this way. And what are Madame Bonnard and Madame Blaise? Are they my old friends? Are they the kind of people I would pick out for myself? They are very nice but I can't go on all my life trying to love people at the table d'hôte." (p. 73)

Even Madame Bonnard reprimands Mrs. Trollope for her friendliness towards the hotel staff, saying it arouses jealousy and is bad for discipline.

Mrs. Trollope envisions a better life, but to a large extent the life she imagines is simply a conventionally proper one:

She saw quite sharply another life in England, where she would be a welcome rich divorcee of good reputation and friendly ways, who would have many friends. She would live in Knightsbridge, get up not too early, have a little maid to come in, trot round the

pleasant shopping streets and park, find friends in bars where her sort collected, go to the races sometimes, be welcome with her children and grandchildren, a sensible sophisticated loving grandmother, taking gifts, buying a French dress, going to dances in hotels. She was fifty, but there were decent men of fifty. (p. 119)

In England, Mrs. Trollope would live as she desires, knowing "normal, jolly, busy [people] such as [she] had known in the old days" (p. 114), and seeing movies about "natural sweet little boys" (p. 45). Her painful and improper relationship with Mr. Wilkins would give way to honorable marriage to a decent man of fifty. This way of imagining life contrasts sharply with that of the heroines of The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone.

In the end of the novel, Mrs. Trollope asks Mr. Wilkins to withdraw the money from the hotel safe, saying she will buy him the car he has wanted. (It is her money, but he has put it in his name.) Instead, Mrs. Trollope gives the money to the dying Miss Abbey-Chillard for her doctors in Zermatt, and hopes this "'one good deed'" (p. 137) will atone for her leaving Mr. Wilkins. She goes to Basel to stay with the Blaises--Madame Blaise has asked her to visit, to protect her from Dr. Blaise--but the situation there appalls and puzzles her, as she writes to Madame Bonnard: "'I know I am not clever: it is partly because I cannot believe that life is meant to be so ugly. I cannot understand the position of the housekeeper here'" (p. 141). Finally, Mrs. Trollope returns to England (after which Madame Blaise dies) and she

writes Madame Bonnard several letters, the contents of which Madame Bonnard relays in the last paragraph of the novel: "She wrote several times from England telling me about the prices of things and how strange she found the people's manners" (p. 144). Madame Bonnard also hears from Mr. Wilkins, who has moved to Rome and then to Cape Town, and who asks for news of his "cousin." The novel ends, "I do not know if they ever saw each other again."

In The Little Hotel, Stead presents a small society of people most of whom are loosely connected by circumstance; indeed, by the novel's end, all the guests of the Hotel Swiss-Touring have left to pursue their strange, sad, "ordinary" lives. Within this world is Mrs. Lilia Trollope, a woman of simple humanity and conventional concerns who is herself involved in a peculiar and unsatisfactory situation. Mrs. Trollope is able to alter her circumstances to make a life which is more suitable to her, yet the life she begins is not radically different, for she remains concerned with "the prices of things and [the] strange . . . manners" of people around her.

As in Stead's other novels, the nature of the (fictional) world is recognized and described by the characters, especially the protagonist. Mrs. Trollope tells Mr. Wilkins that "'Life seems very small,'" and that Madame Bonnard and Madame Blaise are hardly friends, and only then because of circumstance (p. 73). She sees herself and all of her small

society as "'this sad lot of scarecrows that we are'" (p. 115), and she laments that "'life is so ugly'" and the relationships around her so confusing and sordid (p. 141). Mrs. Trollope's understanding of her world raises her above the other characters, but her understanding also contributes to the sense that this is a sad and hopeless world, because there is little opportunity for a significantly better life, much less a rich, meaningful life.

All Mrs. Trollope's relationships and friendships, even as they are unsatisfactory, are broken by the end of the novel, and it is left uncertain whether any of these will ever resume, particularly her relationship with Mr. Wilkins. But overriding this is the sense that what happens is insignificant, unimportant even to those she knows. At the end of the novel, Madame Bonnard is already recounting the antics of a new guest when she suddenly remembers Mrs. Trollope: "He was a postman who had had a nervous breakdown and was staying in one of the little rooms at the top for a holiday. Ah, yes, Mrs. Trollope did not return to the Hotel Swiss-Touring" (p. 144). Madame Bonnard's concern for Mrs. Trollope is so slight that she barely remembers to tell about her, and we are left with the sense that her interest is at least partly whether or not one of her hotel rooms will be filled.

Like The Little Hotel, most of Stead's fiction stands within the tradition of modern realism in presenting

extraordinary "ordinary" people whose lives are often seen as strange and sad. The protagonists of Stead's other fiction--that is, excepting The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone--are sometimes more vicious than Mrs. Trollope, sometimes more insightful or experienced, but at most they lead only reasonably good or decent lives. In order to understand more fully the contrast between The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone and Stead's other work, we will briefly consider two stories from The Salzburg Tales. The Salzburg Tales is a work written in the manner of Boccaccio's Decameron and Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, its tales told by the "personages" assembled at the Mozart festival in Salzburg where the Miracle Play of "Everyman" is also performed.

The first story considered, "Day of Wrath," is told by the Schoolboy. It is about a woman who outrages society by committing adultery--an act particularly scorned because the woman leaves a wealthy husband for a poor lover--and who is finally forgiven, or at least pitied, because her daughter drowns in a ferry accident.

With the news that the woman has committed adultery, the Schoolboy's mother, maiden aunt, and the society of the seaport town in general are scandalized: "Society, great beast of tender skin, blind, with elephant ears, felt indignant, lashed its little tail and got hot round the rump" (p. 388). The woman's children, a girl of fourteen named Viola and a boy of ten, are forced to testify in court

about their mother, they are abandoned by their father, and they are scorned as the children of an adulteress.

One afternoon, the ferry carrying the schoolchildren home from town sinks, and many drown. After a few days, only Viola has not been found, and the Schoolboy's mother and aunt identify this as "the 'judgment of God'; though for what mortal sins the other bereaved women had been punished, no one thought to conjecture" (p. 389). After a week, Viola is found at "one end of the wreck, standing upright, uninjured, her right foot simply entangled in a rope." At this, "the founts of pity" break open, for all imagine "Viola standing in the green gloom for a week . . . looking for rescuers, astonished that they did not come for her, perhaps with a lively word on her lips at their slowness . . ." (p. 389). The Schoolboy has cried over this, and thinks that Viola has "died in that attitude to ask pity" (p. 389), and so, he realizes, it turns out. The story ends, "the women began to lament on the mother's account, and to say she was well punished and one could even pity her. The beast was appeased, as in ancient days, by the sacrifice of a virgin" (p. 389).

There is no extensive portrayal of the girl who is "sacrificed"--she is "pretty, but thin, with long black hair, and rather smart with her tongue" (p. 388); there is no attempt to make the reader like her particularly. Rather, Viola is an innocent, ordinary girl whose mother and society

have made the circumstances of her life difficult, and who dies in a freak accident and is by a freak accident not saved. Her society is foolish and cruel--a beast--because of its attempt to maintain propriety. In "Day of Wrath," neither the girl nor the society is seen to be unusual--indeed, the entire situation is familiar from ancient days. Rather, in this story Stead presents an ordinary world which is at once sad and ridiculous, a world which in this sense resembles the world of The Little Hotel and much of Stead's other fiction, and is familiar within the tradition of modern tragic realism.

The second story from The Salzburg Tales, "The Guest of the Redshields," is of a very different type. It is told by the Poet, a poor man, and it is about his visit to the castle of the Redshields. The Poet's journey to the castle and the room in which he stays are described in detail, and both are suited to his every requirement and desire:

In the afternoon we rode, with a small party, through the beech and chestnut forest, where deer abound, and over the pastures of the estate. The weather was showery, with gleams of sunshine; and so that we should not be encumbered with waterproofs, our host ordered out two small donkey-carts, which followed us at a strategic distance, with rugs, mackintoshes, galoshes and umbrellas. Outriders, discreetly passing behind distant clumps of trees, warned off picnickers, poachers and billposters; with them, a small band of waiters carried provisions hot and cold, which were prepared for us in a small clearing, when the sun shone, around four o'clock. (p. 54)

The Poet spends "a peaceful evening with [his] cultivated hosts," and then retires to his room:

A bookcase contained the English poets bound in shagrin, the French poets in morocco, the Arabian Nights, with augmentations, in oasis goat, a private edition of the journals of the most famous prosewriters and poets in parchment, and the secret annals of the Papacy, the Quai d'Orsay, Scotland Yard and the lost archives of Gortchakov bound in sharkskin. A universal dictionary, a rhyming dictionary, a thesaurus, an illustrated bestiary, inks of various colours and consistencies, pencils of all hardnesses, penhandles of many shapes, and pens of steel, quill and gold, were all fitted into a combination lectern and writing desk, which held also a dictaphone, an improved pantograph for writing by hand, and a stenotype machine. The modern poet could desire no more. (pp. 54-55)

After exploring more of the room's advantages, the Poet discovers a ladder at his window which leads into a park replete with "ideal vistas, terraces and wildernesses sweetly artificed" (p. 56). After an hour in the park, the Poet returns to his room to hear the knock of the maître d'hôtel at an invisible door in the wall: "This mode of access was to avoid the embarrassment a guest feels at hearing a passe-partout turned in his lock: moreover, since the passage was overheated, aliments could be conveyed along it without turning cold" (p. 56).

The maître d'hôtel asks the poet what aliments he would like, and the story turns at this point. Among "tea, coffee, cocoa, or some other thing [the Poet] might suggest," he chooses tea. The maître d'hôtel continues to question him as to his preferences:

"Ceylon, China, Russian or Indian tea?" he asked delicately, with pencil poised.

"China tea," said I.

"Black or green?" he asked.

"Black," said I.

"And of what flavour: Pekoe, Orange Pekoe, Congou,

Oolong, Soochong, Pekoe-Soochong, Poochong or Bohea?"

"My mother liked Soochong," said I.

"With, or without an admixture of dried tea flowers, or jasmine flowers?" he continued.

Said I: "With jasmine flowers."

"Now may I trouble you," he said politely, "to know whether you like it hot or cold, and with or without lemon, or milk or cream, and sugar?"

"With milk and sugar."

"As to the milk," said he, "will you have whole milk, skim milk, condensed milk, buttermilk, cream or whey?"

"Whole milk," I said, much taken aback.

"Should it be, sir," he said, "from the Guernsey or the Jersey herd?"

"Guernsey," I cried.

"Then as to the sugar," he said, "will you have cane sugar (white or brown), beet sugar, palm, maple or sorghum sugar?"

And when I replied: "White cane," he inclined and inquired: "From Cuba, the Philippines, Queensland or Natal?"

"Cuba, then," I said, thinking that no more discrimination could be required, even of a guest of the Redshields.

Sensing my fatigue, he asked softly: "May I suggest the Province of Camaguey?"

"Even so." (pp. 56-57)

After this, the Poet tries to simplify the process of selection, quickly announcing that he wants bread; however, a long medley of possibilities is again presented as to type of bread, until the Poet silences the servant with the following:

"Nothing it is to me, if maître d'hôtel you be, or fiend or dream, or the three: but take my word, I am only a poet, and I cannot cope with the verbal resources of your universal larder. Let me only not starve! Thank you, good night!" (p. 58)

At this, the maître d'hôtel gives "a soft submissive smile, like one, too courteous, that has not been well understood," and retreats from the room bowing. The Poet

closes his eyes, drawing "a bottle at random from the automatic bar," and soon after falls asleep, dreaming that he sees "Gargantua pouring from an ever-running bottle the active ferments of a monstrous digestion" (p. 58). The story ends on a comical note:

You can well imagine that when I reached home again, and my mother asked me: "Well, did you eat well at the Redshields? At least, I suppose they have pure food, if their servants are not thieves," I was in a position to rejoice her heart.

"The Guest of the Redshields" is in some ways a paradigm for all Stead's work, and in a sense for modern realistic fiction in general. The world of "The Guest of the Redshields" is infinitely rich and various, but this marvelous world is also exhausting and overwhelming because of its infinite variety. This endlessly rich world must be brought in relation to human beings, both in small ways--the Poet chooses among the types of tea with "'My mother liked Soochong'"--and also in the largest ways. The "'universal larder'" must be digested by the Poet, but for this huge task he would need "the active ferments of a monstrous digestion." In fact, the Poet is able to comprehend only a part of the world, and wants only enough of it so that he does not starve, only enough for the active ferments of his own digestion--or imagination. His mother, a kind of representative of the larger society, is unable to understand or imagine even a small part of the world. Her conventional concerns and ideas--Did her son eat well? She would expect so, unless

the servants were thieves--are as out of step with reality as the pathetic and comic attempts of Gregor Samsa's family to understand his situation in Kafka's Metamorphosis.

The worlds which Stead depicts always suggest the universal larder, for her fiction takes in many areas of the world, many types of experience, many levels of experience. But in most of Stead's fiction, the protagonist is left rather like the Poet at the end of "The Guest of the Redshields," overwhelmed and exhausted by the world presented to him--indeed, the Poet finally falls asleep--or else unable to understand it. However, while the Poet's tale ends, he is subsequently asked by the Broker, one of the personages at the Festival listening to his tale, if he can cook. The Poet responds, "'Yes, but only an orange soufflé'" (p. 58). The Poet can create only one thing out of all the possibilities available to him, but it is a marvelous and difficult thing. The Poet's tale that we have just heard is the one thing his imagination can cook, it is his orange soufflé, what he has digested from the world presented to him as the guest of the Redshields. In most of Stead's fiction, we see a world as rich and various as that in "The Guest of the Redshields," but the protagonists are not able to tell the tale, not able to digest the amazing and endlessly various world in which they live.

In The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone,

Stead presents two characters who are able to understand and even prevail in worlds equally strange, surprising, and various. Appropriately, and alone among Stead's protagonists, they are portrayed as serious emerging poets or writers. The Poet in "The Guest of the Redshields" is barely described; we know him only by what he does or what he makes, and he is of course a poet, or maker. Though we know an immense amount about the protagonists of The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone, there is a similarity to the Poet in this respect. Louisa and Teresa are part of complex worlds which they too express or digest through story, yet they themselves are in a sense clear or simple types. These protagonists accept the variety and strangeness of life, but they are themselves decidedly not strange. The ordinary world in which they live is extraordinary, but they are extraordinary in ordinary or familiar ways. Though they may violate traditional and even modernist standards of literary decorum in terms of their external characteristics, we recognize in them qualities which have traditionally been valued, one of which is the ability to make art. The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone are different from all Stead's other fiction for we have not only an endlessly rich world, but also heroic individuals who understand the multiplicity of life, who move towards what is clear and truly proper, and who are able to express their worlds in story.

Notes

¹ "'There's [a new novell] coming out this year. It's a little one I wrote when we were in Switzerland [in the late 1940s]. It's not about us. It's about the people in the hotel, more or less, mostly the English in Switzerland. . . . I called it Mrs. Trollope and Madame Blaise, but my English editors thought that wasn't a good title. We haven't yet decided on a title, but that's what it's about.'" Lidoff, "Christina Stead: An Interview," pp. 41-42.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we have used the word decorum in many ways. At this point, it may be useful to review these, making some connections among them.

We will begin with the most simple, familiar use of the word decorum, which refers to proper manners. In all Stead's fiction, this is an important subject, though propriety is not equally important to all of Stead's characters. (The protagonist of The Puzzleheaded Girl is probably the only character unconcerned with it.) In Stead's fiction, a desire to maintain decorum sometimes supersedes all other concerns--as when Henny will not allow Ernie to work, despite their poverty, and despite the fact that he wants to work--and then it is destructive. Concern with manners and attempts to maintain propriety can act as a barrier to life--as with Mrs. Trollope and Mr. Wilkins--but that barrier is also at times a shield, a way of avoiding or rising out of the horrible depths of human experience, as when Sam and Henny's argument ends with concern over her hat.

Stead's novels do not denounce this kind of decorum but neither do they wholly embrace it, as is clear when we look at Stead's heroines, Louisa and Teresa. Both these

characters are polite and decent, and these are viewed as positive attributes, but unlike most of Stead's characters, Louisa and Teresa are also capable of acting "improperly" when they see fit: they are not enslaved by notions of politeness. In Stead's fiction, proper manners are more often viewed as constraining than as a relief from the difficulty and complexity of life. More important, however, decorum is viewed as a central aspect of life, not any less real than the complex world, but in its simplicity and certainty, always opposed to it.

The second use of the word decorum is related to the first, but it is more complicated. The connection between the two uses is more clear when we use the word proper. The word proper clearly applies to decorum in the first sense above. A second meaning of proper refers to that which belongs to a person or thing--its properties (and so the word property)--that which is proper to it. We have used the word decorum in this study not only in relation to what the characters believe is polite, but also what they believe is proper to the world and to human beings, what they believe is proper to life. The characters' ideas of what is proper to the world are not as neat, not as simple, as their ideas of polite behavior, but in general these ideas are seen to be so limited that the characters cannot understand the world in which they live.

Of course, the attempt to understand and organize

experience is not itself mistaken; rather, like being polite, it is something which human beings do, and must do, to get along. On the other hand, the characters' ideas of the proper often have harmful consequences, and this is so in two ways. First, because the characters' views of the world are limited, and thus faulty, their actions are often misguided and harmful. Jonathan Crow's belief that property is everything makes him deny many aspects of life, and doing so almost destroys him. Second, the characters try to impose their mistaken notions of the world on others, and this often produces intolerable conflict, as with Sam and Henny. Of course, it is completely human to try and reshape experience according to one's ideas about experience, and to try and convince others that one's view of reality is correct. Though these actions are frequently destructive in Stead's fiction, they are not necessarily so, as is evident when we consider Stead's heroines.

Louisa and Teresa also have ideas about what is proper to life, but their ideas are not nearly so limited as those of the other characters. Louisa and Teresa are able to accept the endless variety of the world, rather than trying to reshape life according to a few limited ideas. This openness to the diversity of life is associated with their knowledge of the natural world: nature is infinitely various, so variety is accepted as natural or proper. Louisa and

Teresa's acceptance of this diversity is also associated with literature, for there the variety of experience is also expressed.

Stead's heroines also impose their ideas of decorum on others, but their way of doing so is very different from that of the other characters. Louisa and Teresa express their ideas of decorum in literature, rather than explaining the world according to a limited number of ideas. In The Man Who Loved Children, Louie never thinks about Sam at length; she never develops a series of statements or a theory about him. Rather, Louie's understanding of Sam is expressed in her recitations and especially in her play, "Herpes Rom." Louie's way of expressing her world is through an imitation of life rather than through statements about life, and her method is as natural to her as Sam's is to him.

Louie's way of presenting her view of the world to others also differs from Sam's attempt to impose his statements and theories about the world on others. Louie offers "Herpes Rom" to Sam as a gift. He is not forced to believe in it, it is simply presented to him. Of course this gift, put out into the world, has the power "to rack and convert," as Teresa also knows, but it does so subject to the willingness of others to accept it. Thus, in a quiet way, this gift can change ideas of what is proper; it can change ideas of decorum.

A third meaning of decorum, related to the previous two, is again more clear if we use the word proper. Stead's characters are not only concerned with proper behavior and with what is proper to life, but also with what is right, good, moral--in other words, proper. In Stead's fiction, the characters' ideas of what is right or proper are usually not in themselves reprehensible, but they are often applied blindly, irrespective of reality, and so are destructive. Thus, Sam's belief in family unity is not wrong, but his insistence on this despite the family disunity has harmful consequences. Jonathan Crow's development represents a different aspect of this matter. Crow's ideas of the proper have been learned much as he has learned proper manners, and Crow never fully believes in these ideas. Despite this, he continues to exert his willpower to attain these goals, and his sacrifices for something in which he does not truly believe embitter him. In Stead's fiction, ideas of what is right or proper can be harmful in various ways, but they are not always so.

In Louisa and Teresa, Stead presents characters whose ideas of what is right not only seem proper, they also have positive rather than harmful consequences. Louisa and Teresa's ideas are to some extent learned, but they also seem to come from within, a kind of instinctive sense of what is good, right, or proper. Their ideas of the proper are not new; indeed, these heroines affirm epic and romantic

values. Both find their ideas confirmed in literature, and they draw on literature for sustenance and direction, sometimes aligning themselves with figures from epic and romantic literature. Louisa and Teresa's belief in their ideals is as strong as Sam's belief in his; however, they are able to reshape their lives according to these ideals and thus we see them as heroes, whereas Sam's attempts to reshape his world are often pathetic or ridiculous, because his attempts are based on a distorted view of the world.

There is another way decorum has been used in this study, and it encompasses all that has been said so far--that is, Christina Stead's sense of decorum in her fiction. Stead depicts a world of seemingly endless variety, and characters who often find the world strange or incredible because their private ideas of decorum are too limited, too proper. Out of this world, however, emerge characters who have qualities which have traditionally been valued. These characters emerge against many odds and also because of those odds. They are able to reshape their lives in positive ways, and they are beginning to reshape the world through story. Stead's sense of the world is in some ways deeply traditional; the qualities and values which are affirmed would mostly be proper to Horace (though the age, sex, and station of these protagonists would not be). Thus, The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone are not only surprising because they present the strange, endless variety

of life, but also because they contain a traditional view. In these novels, Stead violates both traditional and modern decorum by combining them, and in doing so, she defines an original sense of decorum, a new sense of what is proper.

This brings us to our last use of the word decorum, and this refers to the way Stead's novels challenge the reader's ideas of literary decorum, the reader's ideas of what is proper to a work of literature. It is extraordinary to find a messy, clumsy adolescent girl who has qualities of traditional heroes and affirms epic and romantic values, even as she lives in a world which is frequently grim. It is extraordinary to find a secretary in an Australian hat factory who conceives of herself in heroic terms, aligning herself with traditional heroes, often from epic and romantic literature, and who then lives with a man who is in some ways traditionally decorous. Despite the proliferation of incongruities, the heroines are deeply earnest about their lives and visions, and are taken in earnest by the author. The ironic undercutting which we expect in modern realism is never the point--though it may provide a rich counterpoint--in Stead's autobiographical fiction. If The Man Who Loved Children and For Love Alone have moved us, if they have seemed true, right, or proper, then they have also revised our sense of what is proper in a work of literature, revised our sense of literary decorum.

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The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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