摘要

文学是时代的产物，带有明显社会的印记。对于作家来说，时代观念是一个宏观的概念，一个历史的范畴，它本身具有丰富生动的内涵和宽泛的外延。但是，作为特定社会中的人，作家不可能逃脱社会价值体系的影响。因此，从作家的作品中，读者可以获取当时价值体系的直观印象。

恶人形象一度是文学作品重要的组成部分，其突出了人性的阴暗面，是作品解释人性，打动读者和弘扬道德的重要手段。恶人形象的塑造固然会受作家个人价值取向和选材角度的影响，但起决定作用的因素还是特定时代的价值体系。本文试图通过描绘恶人形象在不同时期美国文学作品中的嬗变，分析社会价值体系对刻画恶人形象的影响，最终揭示美国社会价值体系经历的发展与变化。本文将着重对分属三个历史时期，即 20 世纪以前，19 世纪末 20 世纪初，和 20 世纪中期，几位代表作家的作品进行剖析和比较。

第一章对 20 世纪前美国传统社会几位代表作家笔下的恶人特征进行探讨。清教主义自殖民地时期即作为正统道德观念在美国社会得以沿袭，其提倡的隐忍，节制的思想曾经是传统美国社会特别是新英格兰地区人们行事的准则，激励着他们建设自己的美利坚合众国。在 20 世纪之前，美国社会的正统价值体系一直都是以清教主义思想为主导。清教主义严苛地禁锢着人们的言行，其中的加尔文教成分极力倡导"人生而有罪"，只有部分谨遵上帝旨意行事的人才可得到"救赎"。在这一时期的代表作家纳撒尼尔·霍桑作品《红字》中，每一个人物的塑造都渗透着清教主义标准的影响，其中尤以奇凌沃斯为代表。霍桑赋予奇凌渥斯的三个特征，即"虚伪"，"魔鬼信徒"和"折磨并从中获得快感"成为 20 世纪前美国恶人的代表特征。麦尔维尔作品《比利·巴德》中的克兰格特以及亨利·詹姆斯作品《贵妇画像》中的奥斯蒙德作为这一时期恶人的典型代表也都具有这三个特征。

第二章对恶人形象在 20 世纪初的美国文学作品中的变化进行了探讨。世

纪之交的美国社会在政治经济和文化各方面经历着剧变,传统的价值体系遭受前所未有的冲击。20 世纪前文学中特征鲜明的恶人形象在这一时期的文学作品中已经难以找寻。这一时期的反面人物似乎只具有部分或者零星传统"恶人"的特征。同时,作家在作品中对他们的指责和抨击也更加冷静和理性,与 20 世纪以前作家嫉恶如仇的态度大大不同。恶人这一曾经叱咤于传统作品中不可或缺的重要形象变得模糊和难以界定。威廉·福克纳作品《喧嚣与骚动》中的杰森·康普生是这一时期典型的反面人物。一方面,福克纳在他身上寄托着自己对"罪恶"的概念,这在杰森对自己的侄女,白痴弟弟和佣人的态度中可以看出;另一方面,从福克纳对杰森人生际遇的勾勒中,读者会产生同情甚至理解的情绪。这在 20 世纪前的文学作品中是不多见的。此时期另一位作家厄尼斯特·海明威作品《太阳依旧升起》中的罗伯特·考恩是作品中的反面人物,他虚伪,不合时宜,肆无忌惮的从杰克身边将布莱特夺走。然而,尽管海明威在作品中对考恩时有讥诮,读者却很难从他身上读到"罪恶"或者作家对他深刻的谴责。这表明,在美国社会经历着新旧交替的同时,传统价值体系中的某些成分也在悄然发生着变化,那种普遍的震慑力和约束力逐渐失去效力,人们看待恶人形象的态度和标准也更趋于宽容。

第三章则对 20 世纪中期的美国作品进行了探讨。20 世纪中期,伴随着二战的结束和科学技术的飞速进步,美国的物质文明有了极大的发展,尼采"上帝已死"的论断为美国人接受并大行其道,传统价值体系存在的基础被颠覆。人们对于世界的看法更加自由和趋于多元化,这种变化在作家的文学创作中也得到了体现。传统的恶人形象在很多文学作品中无迹可寻。索尔·贝娄的《受害者》正是这一时期的代表作品。埃尔比貌似造成莱文萨尔的痛苦,但是贝娄并没有赋予埃尔比传统恶人那样鲜明的特征,或者说埃尔比并不是出于"恶意"造成了莱文萨尔的痛苦。而莱文萨尔的痛苦很大程度上是其主观臆想的产物,他是一个"妄想症"患者。对于埃尔比早年的痛苦,莱文萨尔的确难辞其咎。作品以"受害者"为题,通篇却找不到可供谴责的对象,传统文学创作中不可或缺的恶人形象已经不知所踪。作者此时侧重表达的是没有正统价值体系的年

代里，人类的迷惘和出路。但可以看到，作为一位富有责任感的人道主义者，贝娄并不是充满了价值体系坍塌后的悲观。他笔下埃尔比和莱文萨尔在小说的结尾处自身产生了更为清醒的认识，从而自己寻找到了走出困境的路。上帝的死亡见证了正统价值体系的覆灭。没有上帝的年代里，人类在意识和行为方面更为自由，人性方面得到更大程度的解放。

纵观全文可以看到，在美国文学作品中，恶人形象经过几个世纪的嬗变逐渐走向衰微。在现代主义和后现代主义作品中寻找奇凌渥斯那种阴险邪恶具有"魔鬼"特征的恶人几乎不再可能。这并不是说，在今天的美国社会中人们不再对人进行是非的评判，善恶观仍然是社会价值体系的重要组成部分，但是，人们对罪恶所采取的态度较之他们先辈所处的年代的确发生了很大的变化。随着科学，社会学的发展和精神分析学说的普及，人们更多地尝试用精神病理学方面的词语，诸如"疯狂"，"妄想"或者"强迫症"来取代传统的"罪恶"。很多人权主义组织甚至要求取消"死刑"。如何看待罪恶是社会价值体系的一部分，美国文学中所反映的这种趋势，表明美国人看待罪恶的标准渐趋宽容和理性，人类在思想，意识和行为方面赢得了更大的自由。

关键词：恶人形象，价值体系，衰变

ABSTRACT

Literature, as the outcome of an era, will inevitably be scared with the characteristics of the society. For one particular writer, the conception of the era is macroscopical and historical, which is embodied with extraordinarily rich connotation and extension. However, as a human being under certain social context, the writer can by no means escape from the influence of the prevailing value system. Hence, from a writer's works, readers can gain an intuitionistic impression of the value system of his or her era.

The villain figure has once been quite an integral part of literary works, which lays stress on the darker side of human nature, hence, it is essential in theme expression and human nature exploration, and never fails to fascinate readers. Though the villain figure modeling will to some extent be affected by the personal values or different perspective of the writers, it is fundamentally dominated by the value system of the era. This thesis attempts to depict the transformation of the villain figure in American literary works of different periods, hence, explores the development of the value system which influences the writers. The thesis will mainly discuss the works of several representative writers of three periods, namely, the period before the 20th century, the early 20th century and the mid 20th century.

The first chapter mainly discusses villain figures in the works of several representative writers before the 20th century. Puritanism, as the orthodox of the traditional United States, dominated the American society for hundreds of years ever since the Colonial Period. The doctrine of "bearing" and "abstinence" motivated the early settlement dwellers to construct the new Republic. It has been the core of the value system of the American society before the 20th century. However, the Calvinism element in Puritanism advocated "human is born with sin",

and only those who rigidly follow the instructions of God can be "saved".
Nathaniel Hawthorne was one of the most eminent writers of this period. In his
masterpiece *The Scarlet Letter*, the embodiment of the Puritanism morals is
everywhere, which is especially distinctive in defining the villain of the book,
Chillingworth. Hawthorne endowed Chillingworth with three villainy features,
namely, "hypocrisy", "Devil disciple" and "torturing and enjoying", which were
commonly shared by the villains in the literature of this period, e.g., Claggart in
Billy Budd by Melville and Osmond in *The Portrait of a Lady* by Henry James.

The second chapter mainly concerns the transformation of the villain figure in
early 20th century American literature. The United States of this period was a
country where the beliefs, standards, traditions, and values of the past had become
increasingly shattered by the cataclysmic events and where, as yet, no new
synthesis of widely shared belief had yet emerged. The prominent "Chillingworth"
villain with distinctive characteristics was hard to find in literary works of this
period; it seems that the new "antagonist" only possesses part of the features of the
traditional villain. The villain figure, the once all-powerful part integral to
traditional American literary works has declined in early 20th literature. Jason
Comps in *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner, as the most "notorious"
figure of this period, deviates a lot from the villainy characteristics of
Chillingworth. On the one hand, he possesses "pure evil" defined by Faulkner,
which is distinctively reflected in his attitude towards his niece Quentin, his idiot
brother Benjy and the servant Rastus. He humiliates them and enjoys the bully
behaviors. On the other hand, he is endowed with rich hints for compassion by
Faulkner, for which reader cannot help sympathizing. This is rare in traditional
works before the 20th century. Robert Cohn in *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest
Hemingway is another antithesis figure of this period. He is hypocrite and selfish,
who "steals" Brett from Jake shamelessly However, Hemingway. though scorns

him now and then in the book, fail to make him "evil" and readers alike cannot find him sinister like Chillingworth or Claggart. It should be noted that when the American society underwent the transformation, something of the value system was transcending stealthily. The traditional universal values had gradually lost its control, and people began to hold a more tolerant and rational attitude towards villain figure.

Chapter Three mainly dwells on the literary works of the mid 20th century. In the mid 20th century, the United States had undergone two world wars, and the traditional value system was subject to collapsing. "God is dead" proposed by Nietzsche is widely accepted by Americans. The death of God brings about the death of Satan. The foundation of traditional values is overthrown. Americans hold dimensional perspective towards the world around them. *The Victim* by Saul Bellow is the representative work of this period. The antagonist Allbee is too nondescript and desperate to fit his role of tormentor well. He cannot be considered absolutely evil, in part because he does not actively or viciously seek revenge for past wrongs. It is also proved Leventhal, the superficially "protagonist", suffers from paranoia, hence, it is his struggle within himself, not necessarily the struggle between antagonist and protagonist, causes Leventhal the greatest pain. Moreover, Leventhal has indeed caused Allbee numerous pains in the early years. The traditional villain in American literature has a trend of diminishing in modern and postmodern literature, and readers cannot find the victimizer easily. The death of God witnesses the collapse of the traditional value system. In the era without God's presence, human beings enjoy more freedom in conscious and behavior.

In conclusion, villain figures in American literary works have lost its original power through centuries and even diminished in lots of modern and postmodern works. It does not mean that human being is not judged in terms of "kind" or "vicious" in today's American society. However, the attitude people hold towards

"evil" has indeed changed a lot from that of their early ancestors. In the modern society, the term "evil" has been more and more often replaced by such terms as "madness" or "insanity." Some human right organizations even require government's abolishing the "death penalty". The attitude towards "evil" is part of the value system of a society. The diminishing trend of the villain figure in American society indicates that the Americans have held a more tolerant and rational attitude towards evil. Human beings have gained more freedom in ideology and conscious, and hence, should take more responsibility for themselves now.

Key Words: villain figure, value system, diminishing

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Introduction

Literature, as the outcome of an era, will inevitably be scared with the characteristics of the society. For one particular writer, the conception of the era is macroscopical and historical, which is embodied with extraordinarily rich connotation and extension. However, as a human being under certain social context, the writer can by no means escape from the influence of the prevailing value system. Hence, from a writer's works, readers can gain an intuitionistic impression of the value system of his or her era.

Many scholars have dealt with evil in their academic research, e.g., Andrew Delbanco's *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil* (1995), Stephen A. Diamond's *Anger, Madness, and the Demonic: The Psychological Genesis of Violence, Evil, and Creativity* (1996) and also Carl Goldberg's *Speaking with the Devil: Exploring Senseless Acts of Evil* (1997). These western scholars paid special attention to the depiction of evil and the villain figure in American literature, hence, attempted to find out the correlation between the problem of evil and the society or the culture. However, our Chinese scholars have devoted little attention to this field and we can not find enough materials dealing with "villain figure" research. A brief review reveals that there are profound essays dwelling on a single villain figure, with no special reference to the social background or literary genres, e.g., Li Naikun of Shandong University has discussed the villain Heathcliff in his *Artistic Feature of Wuthering Heights*. This essay is just an immature attempt in this field to correlate the transformation of the villain figure with that of the social background, the values and the condition of human beings.

The villain figure has once been quite an integral part of literary works, which

lays stress on the darker side of human nature, hence, it is essential in theme expression and human nature exploration, and never fails to fascinate readers. Though the villain figure modeling will to some extent be affected by the personal values or different perspective of the writers, it is fundamentally dominated by the value system of the era. This thesis attempts to depict the transformation of the villain figure in American literary works of different periods, hence, explores the development of the value system which influences the writers. A complete and comprehensive study of the villainy figures in American literature will take much more time and space than allowed in the scope of this thesis. Due to the limitation of perspective and length, this thesis will mainly discuss the works of several representative writers of three periods, namely, the period before the 20th century with Puritanism as the dominant value system, the early 20th century and the mid 20th century

The essay consists mainly of three parts, dealing respectively with three decades in the development of the United States.

The first chapter mainly discusses villain figures in the works of several representative writers before the 20th century. Puritanism, as the orthodox of the traditional United States, dominated the American society for hundreds of years ever since the Colonial Period. The doctrine of "bearing" and "abstinence" motivated the early settlement dwellers to construct the new Republic. It has been the core of the value system of the American society before the 20th century. However, the Calvinism element in Puritanism advocated "human is born with sin", and only those who rigidly follow the instructions of God can be "saved". Nathaniel Hawthorne was one of the most eminent writers of this period. In his masterpiece *The Scarlet Letter*, the embodiment of the Puritanism morals is everywhere, which is especially distinctive in defining the villain of the book, Chillingworth. Hawthorne endowed Chillingworth with three villainy features,

namely, "hypocrisy", "Devil disciple" and "torturing and enjoying", which were commonly shared by the villains in the literature of this period, e.g., Claggart in *Billy Budd* by Melville and Osmond in *The Portrait of a Lady* by Henry James.

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villain figure.

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American society indicates that the Americans have held a more tolerant and rational attitude towards evil. Human beings have gained more freedom in ideology and conscious, and hence, should take more responsibility for themselves now.

Chapter One Mankind Devil before the Twentieth Century

1.1 Rigid Traditional Value System

No one will fail to infer "Puritanism" when the traditional value system of the United States is discussed. It was brought into the New Continent in the dawn of the new Republic and has remained the dominant ideology since then. Nobody can definitely point out when it has begun its controlling of the American mind, nor can anyone indicated when it has lost or will lose its power. It is the core of the traditional value system.

Puritans was the name given in the 16th century to the more extreme Protestants within the Church of England who thought the English Reformation had not gone far enough in reforming the doctrines and structure of the church; they wanted to purify their national church by eliminating every shred of Catholic influence. In the 17th century many Puritans immigrated to the New World, where they sought to found a holy Commonwealth in New England. Puritanism remained the dominant cultural force in that area into the 19th century.

Associated exclusively with no single theology or definition of the church (although many were Calvinists), the American puritans further develop and promote the Puritanism ideology with unique tint of American characteristics.

Puritanism generally extended the thought of the English Reformation, with distinctive emphases on four convictions, among which "that personal salvation was entirely from God" and "that the Bible provided the indispensable guide to life" have been laid great emphasis, and hence become the morality credo of the whole puritan times.

The Puritans believed that humankind was utterly dependent upon God for

salvation. With their predecessors in England and with Luther and Calvin they believed that reconciliation with God came as a gift of his grace received by faith. Puritans regarded humans as sinners, unwilling and unable to meet the demands, or to enjoy the fellowship, of a righteous God apart from God's gracious initiative. Puritans believed that belief in Jesus and participation in the sacraments could not alone affect one's salvation; one cannot choose salvation, for that is the privilege of God alone. All features of salvation are determined by God's sovereignty, including choosing those who will be saved and those who will receive God's irresistible grace. The Puritans distinguished between "justification," or the gift of God's grace given to the elect, and "sanctification," the holy behavior that supposedly resulted when an individual had been saved; according to *The English Literatures of America*, "Sanctification is evidence of salvation, but does not cause it" (434).

With the early English Reformers the Puritans believed, second, in the supreme authority of the Bible. Puritans, Anglicans, and the many in between all believed in the Bible's final authority. But Puritans came to argue that Christians should do only what the Bible commanded. Anglicans contended rather that Christians should not do what the Bible prohibited. The difference was subtle but profound. Among Puritans considerable differences eventually appeared over what Scripture demanded, especially in questions relating to the church. These disagreements should not hide the Puritans' overriding commitment to the authority of Scripture. They made as serious an attempt as has ever been made in the English-speaking world to establish their lives on the basis of biblical instruction. Hence, the Bible enjoys an extraordinary authority in the Puritan times and any attempt to argue or disobey it would heavily be condemned.

Because of its diffuse nature, when Puritanism began to decline in America is difficult to say. Some would hold that it lost its influence in New England by the early 18th century, but Jonathan Edwards and his able disciple Samuel Hopkins

revived Puritan thought and kept it alive until 1800. Others would point to the gradual decline in power of Congregationalism, but Presbyterians under the leadership of Jonathan Dickinson and Baptists led by the example of Isaac Backus (1724-1806) revitalized Puritan ideals in several denominational forms through the 18th century.

During the whole colonial period Puritanism had direct impact on both religious thought and cultural patterns in America. In the 19th century its influence was indirect, but it can still be seen at work stressing the importance of education in religious leadership and demanding that religious motivations be tested by applying them to practical situations.

Among the numerous influences Puritanism had exerted upon the American mind, one point was especially notable in the discussion of this thesis. That was, in a society with Puritanism as the dominant ideology, people held rigid attitude towards the "right" and "wrong". The villain figure must have occupied quite a position in both reality and literary works.

1.2　Mankind Devil with Three Characteristics

Puritan times might be that span of time when Satan was quite a public figure, but even as early as Hawthorne and Melville, "American romancers shifted the demonic form Satan to mankind itself" (Kuehl, 17). This does not mean that devil figures do not play a strong role in these novels. Quite the contrary, antagonists sometimes literally turn into devils, as is the case with Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter*. Whether or not we agree with John Becker that "an event happened to him within the story which gave him the motivation to turn himself into a demon" (Becker, 101), we see that Chillingworth has become evil. Likewise, in Melville's short novel *Billy Budd* and Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*, the characters of Claggart and Osmond serve as the absolute evil villains. In his novel *The Scarlet*

Letter, Hawthorne concerns himself primarily with two kinds of evil, malicious evil, as defined by Colin McGinn earlier, and sin as evil. The hypocrisy of the Puritan townspeople, the sin of adultery committed by Hester and Dimmesdale, the hypocrisy and sin of Dimmesdale who dared no confess — these are examples of the latter type of evil found in the work. Hawthorne uses terms such as guilt or sin when discussing these acts.

The evil that primarily pertains to the villain, however, is not this latter kind, but "malicious" evil, like the diabolical intellectual or "the mad scientist".

The characteristics of Chillingworth, relevant for discussion, are as follows:

1) He is a hypocrite-villain representing pure evil

2) He makes a pact with the devil or is meant to be fiend.

3) He tortures and enjoys the act of torture.

There are other American villains of this period who share some, if not all, of these characteristics. Simon Legree of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is malicious in his sadistic pleasure of the pain he causes his slaves. He gives instructions to two of his Black slaves on how to be cruel overseers. He "had trained them in savageness and brutality as systematically as he had his bull-dogs [...]" (Stowe, 492). The slaves must be responsible for their cruel behavior, but it is Legree who is the locus of evil in the novel. Even as Tom lies dying from the beating he received under Legree's orders, the master shouts for his overseers to continue because he wants "every drop of blood he has, unless he confesses" (Stowe, 584). Gilbert Osmond in *The Portrait of a Lady* shares this maliciousness, though Osmond's tactics cause mental, not physical, suffering. Like Chillingworth, Osmond is also a hypocrite, in that he pretends to be something else entirely to his intended, Isabel Archer.

1.1.1 The Primary Feature -- Hypocrite Villain

Gilbert pretends to be nothing more to Isabel than a gentleman of Europe, one

who enjoys the intelligence of his bride-to-be. Once married, however, Isabel realizes that her husband takes pleasure from her mental suffering and that he despises her (James, 373-374). And though she "pleads the cause of freedom" she can see that he is "ashamed" of her (James, 379) and that, rather than grant her the freedom to express her own ideas he "expected his wife to[...] enter into his opinions, his ambitions[...]" (James, 380). Osmond does not wish for his wife to be independent, he wants her life to be thoroughly regimented and constrained one. "Her mind was to be his – attached to his own like a small garden-plot to be deer park".

What Isabel comes to comprehend, too late, about her husband was that "under all his culture, his cleverness, his amenity, under his good-nature [...] his egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers" (James, 377-378). The word "hidden" tells the reader of the hypocritical nature of Osmond. Had he given vent to his true feelings, and revealed his true personality, it is doubtful that Isabel would have married Osmond. Osmond was able to get what he wanted, money and the power to quell his wife's independent spirit, precisely because he pretended to be otherwise; he fulfilled his role as hypocrite. Roger Chillingworth, too, fulfilled this role in *The Scarlet Letter*.

Though his life with Hester began prior to the first scene of the book, Chillingworth enters the story of *The Scarlet Letter* when Hester is on the scaffold, with the townspeople there as witnesses to her shame. "When he [...] saw that she [Hester] appeared to recognize him, he [...] raised his finger [...] and laid it on his lips" (Hawthorne, 62). From the beginning we read of Chillingworth warning Hester not to reveal who he is. We learn that he is her husband and that he does not wish the community to learn his true identity.

Chillingworth wants revenge against the man who had an affair with his wife and fathered his wife's child. "Chillingworth, disappointed in his hope of gaining

his wife's affection, hated the man who had gained it unsought and even unwished *[sic]* ... Although his anger was natural and forgivable, it became a fatal sin when he nourished it..." (Abel, 209). The adulterer has something that Chillingworth wants, the love of his wife.

Chillingworth himself says to Hester, "I shall seek this man [...] Sooner or later, he must need be mine!" (Hawthorne, 76). Thus begins his foray into evil. Revenge is a prime motivation when contemplating evil acts, so it will not be too far off when Roger becomes absolutely evil.

By concealing his true identity (that he is Hester's husband) from the townspeople and Dimmesdale, Chillingworth also becomes a hypocrite-villain. Chillingworth conceals his identity so he could ingratiate himself among the townspeople to find the man who had slept with his wife. He does no know who it is as first but he soon discovers that Hester's lover was the Reverend Dimmesdale. This concealing aspect shows that Chillingworth's revenge is personal and that he is a hypocrite-villain, following Trilling's definition.

"Trusting no man as his friend, [Dimmesdale] could not recognize his enemy when the latter actually appeared" (Hawthorne, 129). And as for Chillingworth, he could probe into Dimmesdale's heart at will, because of his depiction." He became, thenceforth [...] a chief actor in the poor minister's interior world. He could play upon him as he chose [...] the victim was forever on the rack [...]" (Hawthorne, 139). This brings to mind the viciousness of Claggart in *Billy Budd*, and of Gilbert Osmond in *The Portrait of a Lady*. In both stories the villains hid their true natures from their victims so as to endure the success of their plans for causing sufferings.

In the chosen work of Melville, Claggart wanted to bring about the destruction of Billy Budd, to destroy Billy's innocence, and he knew he would succeed because Billy would never be able to comprehend the magnitude of true evil. He could label Billy the "Handsome Sailor" to his face and be certain that Billy would not

understand the hate and envy that lay beneath his use of the phrase. Claggart is unable to "annul" the evil that is part of his nature but he is an excellent hypocrite when he chooses to be because "readily enough he could hide [his evil]" (Melville, 78). Because of this, Claggart falls under the category of the hypocrite-villain, as Chillingworth does. Billy could not hope to survive the onslaught from such an enemy. He is utterly defenseless before the evil mind of Claggart (Matthiesen, 164).

As mentioned previously, Claggart and Chillingworth are not the only villains who use hypocrisy as a means to an end, an end that usually signifies the destruction of their chosen victim. In Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, Gilbert Osmond and his former mistress scheme to persuade heiress Isabel Archer to marry him. In doing so, Gilbert deceives Isabel as to his real nature and leads her to believe that his intentions are honorable. When his real nature is exposed after the marriage, it is too late, and one realizes that Gilbert has worked to try and destroy Isabel's freedom and independence. It testifies to James' great artistry that Gilbert is such an effective villain. As Foster admiringly affirms, "few 'psychological' villains have ever been sketched with greater power than Gilbert Osmond [...]" (208).

1.1.2   The Second Feature -- Principal of Devil

It is not enough that Chillingworth is a hypocrite and a revenge seeker. He also becomes diabolical, the third significant characteristic mentioned above. When he sees the letter "A" on Dimmesdale's breast, he conducts himself with the fervor one would associate with the devil. "Had a man seen old Roger Chillingworth, at that moment of his ecstasy, he would have had no need to ask how Satan comports himself [...]" (Hawthorne, 137). It is at that moment that Chillingworth's diabolical nature comes forward. He has come to relish the torture of his victim, just as Satan

would.

When we are first introduced to him, we assume that Chillingworth truly wants to heal Dimmesdale. Indeed, he "deemed it essential, it would seem, to know the man, before attempting to do him some good" (Hawthorne, 123). It appeared as if Chillingworth was a good doctor, until his need for revenge, and his pleasure in dissecting Dimmesdale's pain, became all encompassing. Sacvan Bercovitch echoes this idea that Chillingworth began as a good man. "Even Chillingworth, that least ambiguous of villains, is essentially a good man who has been wronged, who lies in order to find the truth, who prods his victim to confess (partly, perhaps, through love) [..]"(15). That Chillingworth made a choice is certain. That he is "essentially a good man" could be a likely observation (even Hester says as much) except for one crucial fact. Hawthorne himself makes it clear that this is not true of Chillingworth.

It seems as if God and the devil are in competition for Dimmesdale's soul, and Chillingworth is to act as the devil's henchman. When Chillingworth loses his quest because of Dimmesdale's confession and subsequent death, he no longer has any purpose and therefore he too must die.

Revenge had been everything to Chillingworth, as Hawthorne states (258). And when the object of his revenge no longer existed, his life ended because his purpose no longer excited. Chillingworth could not exist without the object of his revenge; his life depended on his ability to torture Dimmesdale. Similarly, as he precipitated his death of Billy, so too did Claggart's actions precipitate his own death, though it was unforeseen by him.

Hawthorne means for us to understand that Chillingworth literally turned into a devil. Whether the audience believes in such supernaturalism or not, the characters in the story see him this way. And though Melville does not portray Claggart with quite the same diabolical deformities as Hawthorne does Chillingworth,

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nonetheless his physical features do suggest something evil, especially in the confrontation scene where Captain Vere tells Billy for the first time about Claggart's accusation of Billy's attempts to organize a mutiny. Claggart is enjoying the results of the fabricated story on the innocent victim.

1.1.3   The Third Feature – Torturing and Enjoying

The last component of the villain figure of this period is torturing and the enjoyment of inflicting pain. Several traditional villains torture those they have marked as their prey. They relish the act of torture and the power it gives them over these victims. However, the type of torture differs slightly. Gilbert Osmond engages in psychological torture in his endeavor to control Isabel's mind. Simon Legree engages in physical torture in order to demonstrate his absolute control over his slave's entire being, including their bodies. Chillingworth, by contrast, engages in torture of the spirit in his attempt to take control of Dimmesdale's soul.

These characteristic of the traditional villain – malicious evil, hypocrisy, using intelligence for evil deceit, performing purely evil acts – have pervaded in most of the literary works before the 20th century and been shared by almost notorious figures of the decade. It should be noted that both authors and the social environment of this period acknowledged in their mind a severe and unshakable value system, which defined clearly what was right and what was wrong. The value system, undoubtedly, is the system with Puritanism as the core.

Chapter Two   Specious Villain of the Early Twentieth

Century

Although World War I began in 1914, the United States did not enter that war until 1917. Strong isolationist sentiment continued after the war ended. The senses of a great civilization being destroyed or destroying itself, of social breakdown, and of individual powerlessness became part of the American experience as a result of its participation in World War I, with resulting felling of fear, disorientation, and on occasion, liberation. Certainty that an old order has ended (whether one looked ahead with fear or anticipation) marked what more than one social critic called the "modern temper."

Other forces making for rapid social change and resulting disorientation had been at work in the country for some time. Urbanization, industrialization, and immigration had been altering the appearance and character of the United States since the end of the Civil War and they continued apace after World War I. New technology evolved as well. Actually, the most important intellectual development in the period between the wars was certainly the growth of modern science. For many literary intellectuals, the chief problem raised by the expansion of scientific authority was the corresponding loss of authority for traditional, humanistic explanations of the real world and human life.

Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner, undoubtedly, were two of the most eminent and exceptional writers of the time. Both of them portrayed in their fictions, as lots of other their contemporary writers, the difficult, perhaps insoluble plight of the early 20th century mankind, living in an era where the beliefs, standards, traditions, and values of the past have become increasingly shattered by the cataclysmic events of the times and where, as yet, no new synthesis of widely

shared belief has yet emerged.

Readers can still find antithesis protagonists in their works. However, it should be noted that the traditional sinister and diabolic "Chillingworth" villain figure has stealthily been replaced by some "specious" villain figure, who, to some extent, is embodied with part of the features of the "Chillingworth" villain figure, yet, has excluded lots of abhorrent features of their early counterparts. It seems that the writers have become more impersonal and unbiased in modeling the character in their works. This might be best explained by the fact that the shattering value system freed the human being under it to a large extent.

2.1 Jason Compson

2.1.1 Villainy Elements

Jason Compson is the means by which William Faulkner dramatizes his belief in the presence of evil in the modern world. Although he is probably the most credible of the three brothers in *The Sound and the Fury*, when viewed in relation to the innocent Benjy, he functions as the embodiment of evil. In commenting on his character, Faulkner once explained:" To me, he represented complete evil. He is the most vicious character in my opinion I ever thought of."

The toxic bitterness of Jason's voice in section 3 assaults us by ridiculing the highly unnatural sympathies that the novel has earlier asked us to cultivate. In Jason's "sane" eyes, Benjy ought to be merely the asylum's star freshman, Quentin tried to go swimming without knowing how, Mr. Compson needed nothing so much as a one-armed straitjacket, and Caddy is once and always" a bitch."

Jason's attitude towards woman places him the confinement of traditional villain. He begins and ends his section with the same words:" Once a bitch, always a bitch." Although his words apply literally to young Quentin, it becomes

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increasingly evident that all women are in his opinion bitches. He has no emotional attachment to any women; women exist in his world only to be exploited, physically or financially. He violates nature by reducing the sex act to a mechanical function. To him it is a service that must be paid for, one that has no moral dimension.

He has "every respect for a good honest whore" whose sexual desires can be regulated on a commercial basis; he feels only contempt for his niece who in following her natural instincts has "no more respect for what I try to do for her than to make her name a byword in the town." His sexual habits are skillfully juxtaposed against those of his niece, not to elevate primitive instincts over mores of society (it is easy to see Jason's harassment is in part responsible for her sexual rebelliousness), but rather, thoroughly ironic contrast, to highlight his mechanical qualities and expose his hypocrisy.

Jason qualifies as a villain in his exploitation of those weaker than he, especially women. Because his mother, from whom many of his attitudes stem, had decreed that Caddy be banished for her sin, he is able to effect a profitable financial arrangement whereby his sister, his niece, and his mother are all duped, and his bank account swells. Family emotional ties are put on a purely business basis. Caddy, being weak (emotional), derives pleasure from sending money for her daughter; similarly his mother derives a vengeful sort of pleasure from the check-burning ritual. Young Quentin has no real need for the money, since she is provided with the physical necessities. Therefore, in a kind of circular logic, the money belongs to him.

Nor does Jason limits his exploitation and violation to the weaker sex. He shows a sadistic streak in taunting Luster, particularly concerning the circus ticket, He has nothing to gain by burning the much-coveted ticket except some sort of malign superiority derived from Luster's disappointment. Since there can be no

practical gain, he is simply satisfying a perverted emotion.

His attitude towards Benjy is perhaps even more significant in defining his basic weakness. He feels an antipathy towards Benjy which is entirely plausible in terms of his character but which is finally more understandable in terms of pure allegory. Melville explains this kind of antipathy in Billy Budd where he juxtaposes Claggart, the master-of-arms who has "a depravity according to nature" with the innocent Billy. Jason, like Claggart, must destroy his obverse; this act he accomplishes through castrating Benjy (destroying the life principle) and confining him in an institution. His feelings towards his bother are expressed in sterile and mechanical metaphors, words suggestive of his own personality:" the great American gelding snoring away like a planning mill."

2.1.2 Pardonable Elements

Though Faulkner imbued all his sense of evil in this figure, we can still note that there is a shade of difference between the Jason Compson and his counterparts before the 20th century: consciously or unconsciously, Faulkner had put in Jason some accounts for the his villainy, which has intrigued some decedent readers and critics to come out in defense of Jason. We cannot deny that we are momentarily impressed by the figure by the depiction of him by Faulkner. He grew up lack of true care. He in a sense assumed the whole burden of the family. He approached life with a chip on his shoulder, loudly proclaiming, "I'm Jason Compson. See if you can stop me" (Faulkner, 190). The reader cannot help but sympathize with the confused character.

2.1.2.1 Housemaster in a Sense

No matter how cruel or greedy Jason is in his treatment to his family, we can by no means deny his contribution to the family. After Quentin's suicide and his

father's death, it is he who takes up the responsibility of the whole family. Though he effects a profitable financial arrangement whereby his sister, his niece, and his mother are all duped, and his bank account swells, he is, as the only man in the family, the housemaster in a sense.

For example, he fathers little Quentin, and confines her instead of indulging like his father. Mrs. Compson reminds Quentin that Jason "is the nearest thing to a father you've ever had" (324) [162]. And he regularly thinks of Quentin as something like a daughter: "If it was my own daughter now it would be different . . ." (307) [154] and "I say it'd be bad enough if it was mine; I'd at least be sure it was a bastard to begin with, and now even the Lord doesn't know that for certain probably" (286-287) [144]. By playing a strong father to his niece, Jason secretly yearns to correct his own father's silent encouragement of Caddy's and Quentin's unnatural closeness, a closeness that steadfastly excluded him; Jason prides himself on being "a different breed of cat from Father" (250) [126].

2.1.2.2 Lack of True Care

The willful, sullen child who trips through Benjy's section repeatedly rejects and is rejected by his siblings and father, and his mother can manage no more than a formal acknowledgment of her preference for him. Jason fosters his pure defection from the core of the family by fighting with Caddy, by jealously destroying Benjy's toys, or by tattling on Caddy and Quentin. Such behavior naturally deepens into the isolation of Jason's adulthood, an isolation sealed by paranoia and festering with masochism.

Even to her favorite son, Mrs. Compson can offer no sustained warmth or security. Driven like his brothers to supplement her insufficiency, Jason finds Quentin in Caddy's arms and Benjy in her bed. As a result, he comes to depend on his grandmother for the attention he has been refused elsewhere. The connection is

not one that attracts much of the novel's attention because it serves chiefly to establish a more extreme version of the crisis of "filling the vacuum." For Jason's Damuddy dies at the very instant her most natural replacement, Caddy, also 'dies.' This is an excessive eruption of spacing and death at the origin, and it determines the third Compson brother's recoil from the obligations of creative supplementation.

Jason reacts violently to the loss of Damuddy:

After a while even Jason was through eating, and he began to cry.

"Now you got to tune up." Dilsey said.

"He does it every night since Damuddy was sick and he can't sleep with her." Caddy said. (31) [17]

"Do you think buzzards are going to undress Damuddy." Caddy said. "You're crazy."

"You're a skizzard." Jason said. He began to cry.

"You're a knobnot." Caddy said. Jason cried. His hands were in his pockets.

"Jason going to be rich man." Versh said. "He holding his money all the time."

Jason cried. (42-43 [23]

Jason never manages to replace the supplemental presence of Damuddy with another. Her absence condemns him to a perpetual sense of exclusion, diminishment, and impoverishment. For example, Mrs. Compson reminds him that "'it was always her and Quentin. They were always conspiring against me. Against you too.... They always looked on you and me as outsiders'" (326) [163]. Over his father's grave he reflects about "when we were little and one thing and another and I got to feeling funny again, kind of mad or something, thinking about now we'd have Uncle Maury around the house all the time, running things like the way he left me to come home in the rain by myself" (252) [127]. Even the Compson name,

which Jason equates strictly with the family fortune, is dead to Jason. "I reckon the reason all the Compson gave out before it got to me like Mother says, is that he [Mr. Compson] drank it up. At least I never heard of him offering to sell anything to send me to Harvard" (245) [124].

2.1.2.3 Money as Means of "Feeling Security"

We may be disgusted by Jason Compson in lots of occasions in the novel. Yet, beside the point above, there is one more point any sensible reader will not fail to notice and to feel kind of unfair for Jason. That is, Quentin, the elder brother was sent to Harvard at the expense of Benjy's "Paradise", however, Jason was sent to work at a comparatively early age. This point may contribute a lot in Jason's everlasting restlessness with money. It seems to Jason hoarding money can bring the feeling of security, which he has always lacked, as we have discussed above.

Jason recognizes that he can never afford the extravagance of suicide or cynicism: "'I never had time to go to Harvard like Quentin or drink myself into the ground like Father. I had to work' " (224) [114]. At the same time that he resents his impoverishment, however, he also sees his "slavery" as a salvation from the intolerable self-indulgence he so scorns in the rest of his family:

Well, Jason likes work. I say no I never had university advantages because at Harvard they teach you how to go for a swim at night without knowing how to swim and at Sewanee they don't even teach you what water is. I say you might send me to the state University; maybe I'll learn how to stop my clock with a nose spray. (243) [123]

Work unambiguously established the value of time; each minute has a negotiable worth in tangible money. Surely one source of the strength of Jason's

commitment to his work is that it protests against suicide's announcement that time is worth nothing. I shall discuss similar unspoken assertions of Jason's moneymaking shortly, but we should first notice that the realm of petty finance appeals to Jason precisely because it seems devoid of anything except intrinsic significance. Time, decay, desire, incest, and sexuality seem to have no place in the financial devotions of the one Compson who refuses to be mastered by the metaphysical:

After all, like I say money has no value; it's just the way you spend it. It doesn't

belong to anybody, so why try to hoard it. It just belongs to the man that can get it

and keep it. (241) [122]

Jason acts on the fatherly advice that Quentin refuses; money can displace grief, frustration, deprivation: "watching pennies has healed more scars than Jesus" (221) [113]. And lob, after seeing Jason speed from check forging at lunch to stock jockeying to hardware huckstering, senses that Jason wants to leave something behind: " 'You fool a man whut so smart he cant even keep up wid hisself.... Dat's Mr. Jason Compson....' "(312) [156]. Jason insists that his most profound disappointment in life is nothing more than the loss of his best financial opportunity, the promised clerkship in Herbert Head's St. Louis bank. He and Mrs. Compson are sure that at least Caddy would "have enough regard for the family not to jeopardize my chance after she and Quentin had had theirs" (246) [125]. Jason's entire "chance" for a future had rested on the missed job.

Jason's entanglement in the stock market similarly displaces without eradicating fundamental sources of anxiety and frustration. Despite perpetual setbacks, Jason persists with futile schemes. The more he loses of course, the more deeply he is committed, since "I just want to hit them one time and get my money back. I don't

want a killing . . . I just want my money back . . ." (292) [147]. Jason furiously believes that for every loss there will be an equal and opposite compensation. In fact, to the extent that the stock market both impoverishes and enriches it is an analogue for Caddy, who first deprives Jason and then returns c kind of wealth to his embezzling hands. Stock transactions impersonalize for Jason the cycles of gain and loss that trouble each of the Compson brothers. And yet they also embody the very forces that have dispossesses Jason originally. Throughout his warfare with Wall Street, Jason is a two disadvantages: he is excluded from the center of power ("These damn Jews . . . with all their guaranteed inside dope" [292] [147]) and he must endure comic lapses of time before he receives vital information (" 'What are we paying you for'? I says, 'Weekly reports?' "[282] [142]). To suffer setbacks because he is an outsider and because he is behind time is unwittingly to reproduce the circumstances of his loss of Caddy. Perhaps a suggestion of his namesake's behavior can be found in one of Mr. Compson's tirelessly supplied metaphors: "it is hard believing to think that a love or a sorrow is a bond purchased without design and which matures willynilly and is recalled without warning to be replaced by whatever issue the gods happen to be floating at the time" (221) [112-13].

Jason's blind devotion to finance seems to provide a refuge from the problems of lost love and sorrow that destroy his brothers. By reducing the stakes and by evading the expressive significance of his gestures, Jason constructs his own "reducto [sic] ad absurdum" as an alternative to suicide. Lust as he trivializes Quentin's obsession with time through his incessant attention to being "on time" and never getting "enough time," so Jason shrinks the agony of loss to the annoyance of financial reverses.

Because Faulkner fails to give Jason Satanic stature – that is, he does not imbue him with the introspective nature either to define or admit sin – Jason's

violation of the human heart, unlike Brand's and other Hawthorne protagonists', is not a deliberate act against a Divine Creator. Rushing madly around, speaking with a sarcasm that has a ring of truth to it, he is a comic character. His development points up how detached, how alienated from God man has become in the hundred years that separate Faulkner form Hawthorne. Because Jason is all intellect, he feels no tension between head and heart; the Faust-like quality is missing and with it is missing a great deal of the grandeur of the earlier Hawthorne figures who wrestle with sin.

2.2 Robert Cohn

Another notable villain figure of this period is Robert Cohn, who is an antithesis figure in *The Sun Also Rises* of Ernest Hemingway. As is known, Loeb Harold is the stereotype of Cohn, who was an important figure in Paris' expatriate community. He is also remembered in the literary world as the model for his part in *The Sun Also Rises*, wherein his early kindnesses to Hemingway (using his influence with Horace Liveright to get *In Our Time* published) was repaid by being portrayed as Robert Cohn, the cowardly and especially "Jewish" villain. However, the anecdote between the two writers is by no means the concern of this thesis.

Though he is the first character to appear in *The Sun Also Rises*, Robert Cohn is not the novel's hero; rather, Cohn is the hero's foil, the character who will serve to highlight the protagonist's strengths and weaknesses by contrast. According to Jake, at least, Cohn is insecure and self-conscious. He is perpetually broke and a dabbler in the arts. Jake, who describes him to us, comes to hate him, and for good reason, since Cohn steals the woman Jake loves. He is hypocrite and selfish sometimes. When he steals Brett from Jake, he is indeed shameless and extraordinarily proud. A lot of decedent critics, such as Egal Feldman, referred to Cohn as a "notorious" villain in their essays.

However, though through the whole novel, we can sense the ridicules Hemingway holds towards Cohn Robert now and then, we can hardly find the sinister characteristics with which the writers before the 20th century had endowed their protagonists.

In fact, if there is a typical Hemingway hero, Robert Cohn is something like the exact opposite of that. He learns not by doing, but by reading. (Ironically, the world-famous writer Hemingway was suspicious of books. A fundamental tenet of the author's credo was: Believe only what you have seen with your own eyes.) Most of Cohn's ideas about life and how to life it appear to have come from the printed page. He wants to visit South America because he has read about it. Most likely, his badly-misplaced fantasies of a lasting love affair with Brett come from books, too. Cohn believes in true love and can't conceive of sex as recreation, as Brett does. No wonder their brief time together ends disastrously for him.

Cohn's innocent romanticism sharply separates him from the others. He doesn't understand that the war has destroyed innocence, love, and trust. He believes that sleeping with Lady Brett on their trip to San Sebastian means they will love each other forever. For Brett, a collector of men, their romance means very little, but it takes a vicious insult and three fistfights before Cohn understands how little Brett cares.

Robert Cohn often doesn't know when and where he belongs. He pursues Brett after she has made it clear she doesn't want him. He has little self-knowledge and cannot understand why his more worldly wise friends make fun of him. But is he really so different? Apart from being Jewish and relatively inexperienced, Cohn is an expatriate much like his so-called friends. The "in crowd" keeps him at a distance, however, because he's an effective scapegoat for their own failings.

Jake and his friends have learned about life from life; Cohn has learned what he knows from books. He accepts illusions over realities, and this gets him into

trouble. Yet, because he doesn't see the world as completely tarnished, he is not defeated by it. For Cohn, the world is a place of life and hope. He does not see it as a wasteland.

Cohn may remind you of a puppy in his need for love and acceptance. He slavers after the first woman who accepts him and lets her dominate him. He likes to be mothered. There is something pathetic about Cohn, maybe even tragic. He wants so much to belong-simply to be loved and cared for-and yet we know he'll never be accepted.

Yet Cohn also has strengths. At Princeton he was a champion boxer, and when he's finally forced to fight, he does so furiously. He knocks down Jake and Mike, and he attacks Romero, too. This fighting is noble in that it means Cohn will stand up for what he believes in, yet it is also stupid because it gets him nowhere. Cohn doesn't simply fight and walk away; he fights and then feels pathetically guilty about it. His last act is to beg forgiveness from Jake. Jake forgives him, though he knows he shouldn't. Jake also knows as well as we do that Cohn should never have asked to be forgiven.

In some ways Cohn is not that different from Jake. Both are grownup adolescents and both love Lady Brett hopelessly. As much as Jake tries to separate himself from Cohn – there is even a point at which we wonder why they're friends at all-we finally have to believe that they are simply two sides of the same coin. Cohn is a failed comic hero, Jake a failed tragic one.

Chapter Three   Diminishing Villain in the Mid-Twenties

3.1 A World without God and Satan

The United States after the two world wars entered a period of high development. It was extremely various and multifaceted. It had been vitalized by international currents such as European existentialism and Latin American magical realism, while the electronic era had brought the global village. The spoken word on television had given new life to oral tradition. Media and popular culture had increasingly influenced narrative. Great changes had taken places in the society, science and technology, culture and economy. Meanwhile, the traditional value system became more and more outdated, which could not be compatible with the high developments in all the aspect of the nation. "The America won the war, yet the Americans became lost." "God is dead" proposed by the wise Nietzsche in the previous century got in popularity in the new power of the world.

God is dead" (German: "Gott ist tot") is a widely quoted phrase by Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). It was first written in *The Gay Science*, section 108 (New Struggles), and then in section 125 (The Madman), but is also found in Nietzsche's classic work *Also sprach Zarathustra*, which is most responsible for popularizing the phrase. The full quote is as follows:

God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we, murderers of

all murderers, console ourselves? That which was the holiest and mightiest of all that

the world has yet possessed has bled to death under our knives. Who will wipe this

blood off us? With what water could we purify ourselves? What festivals of

atonement, what sacred games shall we need to invent? Is not the greatness of this

deed too great for us? Must we not ourselves become gods simply to be worthy of it?

- Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

God is dead is perhaps one of the most commonly misunderstood phrases in all of the 20th century literature. The phrase should not be taken literally, as in, "God is now physically dead," or, "Jesus, both the son of God and God himself, died on the cross"; rather, it is Nietzsche's controversial way of saying that God has ceased to be a reckoning force in the people's lives, even if they don't recognize it. After all, the philosopher is famous for his "punning" writing style that can be easily perceived as ambiguous. Thus, according to Nietzsche, it is time to transcend both the concept of God and the "good vs. evil" dichotomy found within most religions. The phrase is also commonly misunderstood as exultation, whereas it is clear from the full context that it is instead a lament.

The death of God is a way of saying that humans are no longer able to believe in a cosmic order. The death of God will lead, Nietzsche says, not only to the rejection of a belief of cosmic/physical order but also to a rejection of absolute values themselves— to the rejection of belief in an objective and universal moral law. This leads to nihilism, and it is what Nietzsche worked to find a solution for by re-evaluating the foundations of human values. This meant, to Nietzsche, looking for foundations that went deeper than the Christian values most people refuse to look beyond.

Nietzsche believed that a natural ground for morality should be sought in order to avoid this calamity. He believed that the majority of men did not recognize (or refused to acknowledge) this death out of the deepest-seated fear. Therefore, when the death did begin to become widely acknowledged, people would despair and nihilism would become rampant, as well as the relativistic belief that human will is a law unto itself— anything goes and all is permitted. This is partly why Nietzsche saw Christianity as nihilistic. Only by having the foresight to re-establish human

values on a new, natural basis could this nightmare future be avoided.

Nietzsche believed there could be positive possibilities for humans without God. Relinquishing the belief in God opens the way for human's creative abilities to fully develop. The Christian God, with his arbitrary commands and prohibitions, would no longer stand in the way, so human beings might stop turning their eyes towards a supernatural realm and begin to acknowledge the value of this world. The recognition that "God is dead" would be like a blank canvas. It is a freedom to become something new, different, and creative— a freedom to be something without being forced to accept the baggage of the past. Like an open sea, this can be both exhilarating and terrifying. It would be a tremendous responsibility, and, Nietzsche believed, many would not be up to it. Most people rely on rules and authorities to tell them what to do, what to value, how to live. The people who eventually learn to create their lives anew will represent a new stage in human transformation, that is, as Nietzsche advocated, an increasing measure to cultivate human qualities that continually strive for mastery and refinement in all matters, thus extolling existence.

3.2 Victim without Victimizer

Samuel Chase Coale makes a good case for the presence of evil in contemporary literature in his book *In Hawthorne's Shadow*. He makes an even better case for the influence of Hawthorne on subsequent American writers. But it is necessary to differentiate between the problem of evil as expressed in the writings of writers today and the evil villains who foster it.

3.2.1   Allbee – An Incompetent Villain

In Saul Bellow's *The Victim*, we find that the idea of the villain has changed significantly. The typical villain is gone, perhaps deliberately excluded, or rather,

included as part of man's nature, in his unconscious. In this chosen work of Saul Bellow, Allbee is meant to be the antagonist. Though it is obvious that he seeks revenge on Leventhal, his position as the characterization of villainy is tenuous at best. He is as watered-down villain.

Leventhal and Allbee meet in the park after several years. Allbee is watching Leventhal with the intention of approaching him. We learn later that he wants something from Leventhal, and that he blames Leventhal for his unfortunate circumstances. According to Leventhal's description of him, Allbee looks a homeless person. From Allbee's face Leventhal concludes that he is a drinker. There are other examples like this that lead one to formulate the opinion that Allbee looks like a transient and is therefore not financially stable, to say the least. Leventhal observes that Allbee "wore a flimsy shirt of material tat must have been imitation silk; it opened on the chest on the dirty hem of an undershirt; his light cotton suit was soiled" (Bellow, 24). Allbee is taller than Leventhal, but Leventhal is heavier.

By contrast, Leventhal is described as a burly man with a large head, a large nose, and large eyes (10). He looks impassive, but not "insolent" (23) as Allbee appears. There is nothing about Leventhal to suggest the "seediness" which he ascribes to Allbee. Leventhal seems to be a model of unremarkable respectability. Bellow writes that Leventhal's eyes have "an intelligence not greatly interested in its own powers [...]" (10). However, Leventhal seems to be the type to become easily shaken. At their first meeting, Leventhal is standing "resolute" but in his "agitation" he can feel tremors in his arms (22).

Allbee, the antagonist of the story *The Victim*, enters Leventhal's life when Leventhal is at the park, catching him unaware. Leventhal does not at first recognize him." We learn that Allbee knew Leventhal years ago, and that he blames Leventhal for his having lost both his job and his wife. Though at first

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Leventhal denies any blame, he comes to realize that Allbee was right, somewhat.

Allbee has come to Leventhal in part to get Leventhal to accept this blame and in part to get some help. Though he has a specific purpose in targeting Leventhal, what he hopes to gain is not made explicitly clear. It is not until halfway through the novel that Allbee finally gets around to telling Leventhal what he wants. Prior to that, he pops p unexpectedly a few times to disturb Leventhal, and even when he does not literally come into sight, he appears in Leventhal's head enough that Leventhal's normal patterns are disrupted.

It is enough to distress the latter. He speaks to his friend Harkavy about his troubles with Allbee. "Leventhal hurriedly set forth all that Allbee had done and said, and, despite his haste and his eagerness to find out what Harkavy knew, he interrupted himself [...] which in his heart he recognized to be appeals to Harkavy to confirm the absurdity, the madness of the accusation"(76).

Leventhal wants his friend to reassure him that he is not to blame for Allbee's misfortunes. Harkavy does not immediately soothe him and Leventhal cannot put the questions out of his mind. He imagines that another acquaintance has already judged him as the one responsible for Allbee's current situation. He cannot bear that others might find him responsible and goes through some real anguish at the thought. "Didn't he know, he himself, that he (Leventhal) had never consciously wanted to harm Allbee? [...] Of course he did. It was for Williston [...] to explain why he was ready to believe such a thing" (85).

Allbee has a grievance against Leventhal; he admits that himself, but he also wants something else, some help. What that would entail Allbee himself is not sure, though it appears that he wants a job. "I could use some help [...]. I don't know what sort. I wanted to take that up with me. You could help me if you wanted to'"(Bellow, 127).

Allbee has moments of villainous behavior, to be sure, but he cannot be

considered a traditional villain. There are several reasons for this. The first is that he does not enter into a pact with the devil. Nowhere in *The Victim* does Bellow make this suggestion. One would not necessarily expect a writer in the twentieth century to feature a devil-pact in his fiction; nonetheless, it is an interesting comparison to traditional fiction writing. Instead of this devil-pact, Bellow gives us a weakened, watered-down version a villain, in the form of a pathetic man who needs someone to blame for the incompetence that led to his failure, in both his professional and personal life. He seeks revenge on Leventhal, but he is not out to claim his soul for the prince of darkness. He is malicious, yes, diabolical, no.

Another reason that Allbee cannot be villain archetype is that he has none of the hubris typically characterized as an inflated pride that becomes all consuming it. Allbee cannot be said to possess either the pride or the envy found in the descriptions of many villains of earlier centuries. He re-enters Leventhal's life literally begging. He lost his job and his wife and seems to have no pride left. It is this lack of pride that enables him to blame Leventhal for his own misfortunes. His revenge is therefore of a different sort, and his demeanor certainly not one similarly to a fiend, but of a spiritually crippled man. And though he may feel some envy for Leventhal's station in life, such envy (if it exists) may not be called a motivator for his revenge.

A third reason that Allbee makes a poor villain is that he does not have that quality mentioned by McGinn, that malicious pleasure at the pain of others, pleasure that in the traditional classics could often be likened to the devil. Allbee does not gloat at Leventhal's failures. Nowhere in the text of *The Victim* does it state that Allbee gains pleasure from Leventhal's pain.

Fourthly, Allbee does not pretend to be something else to his potential "victim." He appears as he really is, and not as he wants Leventhal to view him. Thus, that last component of traditional villainy, hypocrisy (so well defined by

Lionel Trilling), is excluded in Bellow's portrayal.

Bellow's villain Allbee is remembered for what makes him human. Evil exists in him with his desire for revenge upon Leventhal and with his bigotry, but it is a very *human*, and thus unremarkable, maliciousness (if it can even be called that). We read it (as Bellow means us to) as mere human weakness and darkness. Disturbing yes, horrifying as something hitherto unknown, no.

We do not necessarily fear the evil in Allbee because we recognize, as Leventhal may not, that he is a weak man, not a strong and powerful one. He has limited power over Leventhal only because of Leventhal' weakness and blindness regarding himself, not because he is fiendishly clever.

3.2.2   Leventhal – Paranoia Sufferer

Bellow's Allbee has to be considered an ineffectual villain. He does not torture his victim to the depth that those in the traditional classics had. Indeed, Bellow makes it quite clear that Allbee is to be seen as a victim as well. As well, he leads us to the conclusion that Allbee is not meant to be the only antagonist in this story.

In the beginning of the story Leventhal admits that, in general, it is unfair that one man is comfortable while another has nothing; but he is unsure as to what he, personally, should do about it; he doesn't know what his duty is (70-71). And though he never agrees explicitly with Allbee's assertions that people "get it in the neck for nothing" and that "evil is as real as sunshine"(130), nonetheless there is a reluctant acceptance of the dark side of human nature, including his own.

In one of the last few chapters of the book, Leventhal realizes that he may have made some errors in judgment that affected the lives of other people. He himself has been part of his recent inner turmoil, not just the people around him, such as Allbee. Leventhal's remarks to himself show the struggle that is in him:" Eventually he had to have a reckoning with himself, when he was calmer and

stronger" (216).

Since Leventhal fights himself as well as Allbee, he too must be considered the antagonist that Allbee is. The evil is in him, as part of humanity. But this evil is connected with guilt, not deliberate malice, as it was for the hypocrite-villains of an earlier century.

Actually, from a modern psychological perspective, Asa Leventhal is a good example of someone suffering from paranoia. As a Jew in post-war America he is in a minority and he constantly feels that people dislike him or are even persecuting him because of his Jewishness. The situation is exacerbated by the arrival of Kirby Allbee, a figure from Leventhal's past who blames him for the loss of his job three years earlier.

The plot of the novel seems to be based on a novel by Dostoyevsky, The Eternal Husband, although Bellow says that the parallel, now obvious to him, did not occur to him at the time of writing. The theme of Dostoyevsky's novel is the dignity of man. The protagonist, Alexey Velchaniov is unwell physically (whilst Leventhal is unwell mentally, it could be argued) and both are burdened with guilt. Into the lives of each of these men comes a 'double'; someone they have hurt in the past and onto whom they can project their guilt. The 'doubles' prey on the guilt-ridden protagonists with a combination of love and hate. In each case there is an attempted murder, and the protagonist is healed. There are many further parallels, but what is actually important is the device of the 'double'. Allbee as Leventhal's 'double' is the anti-Semite Leventhal needs to justify his guilty feelings and sense of persecution, while Allbee needs to believe Leventhal to be to blame for his downfall so that he can blame the world for his troubles rather than himself. It is through their reciprocal blaming that they manage to escape from their afflictions.

Leventhal says of Allbee that he was "haunted in his mind by wrongs or faults of his own which he turned into wrongs against himself."

But this is equally true of Leventhal himself; he is afraid that his boss, his brother's wife, his mother-in-law and even his friend Williston are all against him because he is a Jew, even though he is never attacked on these grounds and never persecuted at all. It should also be noted that Leventhal does not seem to be a particularly pious Jew; he does not attend synagogue nor does he observed the public holiday, which seems to make his paranoia even less well-founded.

Leventhal's propensity to feel that he is the victim of persecution for no discernible reason is evident in his first meeting with Allbee. He is prepared to punch him before a word has passed between them merely because he approached looking 'suspicious'. Jonathan Wilson, however, argues that Bellow seems to be of the opinion that Leventhal has reason for being paranoid as city violence was fairly common. This does not seem to be a particularly a viable argument as Allbee is initially only verbally abusive, but progresses because Leventhal allowed himself to be so greatly riled by Allbee's presence. This can be seen in the description of his unease at being in a restaurant with his nephew when Allbee is also there.

Leventhal, in speaking to Philip, or smoking, or smiling, was so conscious of Allbee, so certain he was being scrutinized, that he was able to see himself as if through a strange pair of eyes...The acuteness and intimacy of it astounded him, oppressed and intoxicated him.

Another example of his general feeling of persecution and paranoia can be seen when Leventhal is musing upon the 'strange savage things' which go on around him.

They hung near him all the time in trembling drops, invisible usually, or seen from a distance. But that did not mean that there was always to be a distance, or that sooner or later one or two of the drops might not fall on him.

Further examples of his paranoia are evident in the fact that he believes that Allbee can have him blacklisted, even though he has been told that this is not the

case, he feels that subway doors deliberately close on him and trucks 'encircle' him, he believes that his ten year old nephew bears a grudge against him and the idea that his wife might be being unfaithful to him is even put into his mind by Allbee.

Returning to the theme of Allbee as Leventhal's 'double' it can be seen that Leventhal often projects some of his feelings onto Allbee, often those of which he himself is unconscious. The most important instance of this is seen in his projection of his sexual impulses. Bellow writes that when Leventhal descends in an elevator 'amid a crowd of girls, from the commercial school upstairs' he is 'largely unconscious of the pleasure that he took in their smooth arms and smooth faces'. However when Allbee is in the same elevator with Leventhal and the same girls, Allbee comments upon them as Leventhal's double, it is his job to make manifest Leventhal's hidden feelings, particularly those which he does not even admit to himself.

There is a further example of this when Leventhal returns to his flat to find Allbee in bed with a woman, whom he immediately thinks Mrs. Nunez, a woman from whom, throughout the novel Leventhal has felt a certain sexual suggestiveness emanating. Here Allbee is living what Leventhal desires, (even though it turns out that the woman is not Mrs. Nunez) and so alleviates some of his guilt.

By the end of the novel Leventhal is much more at ease with himself. Allbee has provided him with the means of justifying his paranoia and guilty feelings and so he now no longer feels that he is being blamed for everything, (after having begun to believe at one point that he really was to blame for Allbee's job loss), and is not so ready to blame others for his misfortunes. Bellow writes:

The consciousness of an unremitting daily fight, though still present, was fainter, less troubling...As time went on he lost the feeling that he had, as he used to say, 'got away with it', his guilty relief, and the accompanying sense of

infringement.

In the final chapter of the novel both men seem much more confident and at ease with themselves. Having had the opportunity to justify their feelings of guilt and persecution by projecting them onto each other, Leventhal and Allbee seen to have been able to overcome their respective feelings of paranoia and accept themselves.

3.2.3   Leventhal – Not So "Innocent"

Some have said that the death of God brought about the death of Satan. Man must now be responsible for the evil in him and surrounding him, and this is a main concern of Bellow in his book, *The Victim*. One author, speaking of the psychological genesis of violence, unintentionally yet positively captures the essence of Bellow's story and his protagonist Leventhal:

> We are the primary progenitors of evil. We not only define it, but [...] we wittingly or unwittingly create and perpetuate it. Therefore, it is we who are responsible for the much of the evil in the world; and we are each morally required to accept rather than project that ponderous responsibility-lest we prefer instead to wallow in a perennial state of powerless, frustrated, furious victimhood. (Diamond, 85)

That is what Leventhal must do on his journey, "accept responsibility" for what exists in the world.

One problem of evil that needs to be addressed is the idea of "perceived evil." What this means is that though Leventhal considers Allbee to be evil, that is *his perception*. This idea is important in light of the understanding of how such as perception would affect Leventhal. Allbee might be the tormentor Leventhal thinks he is. Leventhal may be attributing suspicious or sinister qualities to Allbee that he

does not actually possess. For Bellow and other writes of the modernist period, the villains are often projections of the protagonist's darker nature, rather than an entirely external diabolical personality.

Several critics have stated their beliefs that Allbee is Leventhal's double, his alter ego. Pure evil cannot keep a strong foothold in fictional situations in which the characteristics typically associated with a villain now have to be recognized as part of the protagonist too. Modern man has often denounced the supernatural as mere superstitions. We have come to understand that the capacity for both good and evil reside in us. "Facing and consciously assimilating the demonic-or the shadow-forces the recognition of a totality of being composed of good and evil, [..] as Jung said of the shadow, when we choose instead to constructively integrate the demonic into our conscious personality, we participate in the metamorphic *process of creativity* (Diamond,108). Leventhal's violence towards Allbee releases him from Allbee's clutch; he does not have a complete awakening, but he has at least woken up. He is not destroyed.

In *The Victim*, Leventhal must accept his baser nature, his "Allbee." He must acknowledge, too, his capacity for evil, as a human being. Allbee is not altogether evil, just as Leventhal is not truly innocent. Leventhal himself shares some of the evil of which he accuses Allbee of harboring. Because of this, Allbee cannot be absolutely evil.

It must be stated, however, that any evil that may be Leventhal's is not "pure" evil as McGinn defines it, but rather, "indifference [...] the idea that someone might be evil just because they do not care one way or the other about someone else's pain." McGinn tries to separate this from pure evil by calling this indifference a "moral failing" (McGinn, 66-67)

"Leventhal's real guilt is in unfeeling" (Fuchs, 45) is one critic's assessment. Another elaborates, "Asa Leventhal is not totally unaware of the suffering and evil

which dominate the modern world; ...He merely chooses not to concern himself with this aspect of life, and the isolation into which he recedes, is not unlike that glacial, betraying hardness of heart which characterized many of Nathaniel Hawthorne's characters" (Galloway, 91). This is the moral failing of which McGinn speaks.

Leventhal's coldness allows him to try and ignore Allbee, but not necessarily to torture him. What Bellow discusses in *The Victim* is not sin and its place in evil acts but the limits of human responsibility and whether or not a man is guilty for what he does not intend (Clayton, 31).

The active evil of Allbee is not as important to understanding the story as is the passive evil of Leventhal. Leventhal is the one who needs to learn a lesson. A comment by David Noble in his discussion of *All the King's Men* fits aptly here as well. "The innocent bystander is discovered to be a moral monster. At the story's end he surrenders his burden of innocence ... [he] has realized that he is a participant who must assume moral responsibility for his acts. (179)

Though his actions against Allbee were perhaps unintentional, Leventhal must bear some responsibility for these actions. As Galloway informs us, "as [Leventhal] gradually moves toward consciousness, he realizes that innocence itself can often be maliciously destructive" (92).

To be sure, there are strong suggestions that Allbee is a devil in disguise, so to speak. His need for revenge, his torture of Leventhal, and his savage nature all lend itself to the idea of his fiendishness. But we cannot dismiss Allbee as such for one crucial reason: he leads Leventhal to a level of self-awareness without destroying him.

Leventhal certainly considers Allbee's appearance in his life a form of torture (a mentioned above), but Allbee in actuality helps Leventhal by getting Leventhal to take a closer look at his life and motivates. "If Allbee is Leventhal's antagonist,

and double, he is also Leventhal's savior, the unwitting means to his redemption" (Baumbach, 52).

Without Allbee's interference, Leventhal may never have discovered parts of his true self. "By victimizing him, Allbee breaks down Leventhal's self-limiting defenses, destroys him in effect into wholeness...Spiritually ill, Leventhal can achieve salvation only after he has come to terms with the lower depths of his being – his Allbee" (Baumbach, 45-46)

Though we know Allbee wanted some sort of half-formed and unarticulated revenge, we cannot be certain, despite what Leventhal says (254), that he wanted Leventhal's death. Leventhal throws Allbee out, and does not suffer anymore because of it. He is freed. After Allbee is out of his life, Leventhal is less troubled, healthier, and less recalcitrant. His appearance changed and his expression softened somewhat (Bellow, 256). Leventhal was able to break free of Allbee before the latter destroyed him.

Conclusion

John Mortimer, who states that "Fiction has become, perhaps, over subtle and the frontiers of villainy have become blurred (…)," notes that contemporary American fictional portrayals of villainy have changed. "(…) Since Henry James few writhers have been gifted with a true sense of evil" (viii). As well, no longer do we have any villains who "come into their stories not only accepting their moral deficiencies but positively enjoying them" (Mortimer, viii).

This change may be charted most clearly by the comparison of villain figures in American literary works of different periods of time. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, for example, Roger Chillingworth is the tormentor of Dimmesdale, the protagonist. Chillingworth has been endowed by Hawthorne with several major characteristics, which were shared by almost all the villainy figures of this period, namely, Claggart in Melville's *Billy Budd* and Osmond in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*. However, in the literary works of the early 20th century, the most exceptional villainy figure is no longer embodied with all these features. Jason Compson and Robert Cohn, two notorious figures of two talented writers of this period, have deviated a lot from the traditional villain. Only part of the villainy features could be found in them. Writers have even endowed them with some elements which cannot fail to bring about compassion among readers. Apparently, villain figures, along with lots of other things of the American value system, have declined. This point can be best interpreted in *The Victim* by Saul Bellow, a representative writer of the mid 20th century. Through the whole novel, we can find nobody thoroughly worthy of blaming. It seems, after having declined for half a century in the American literary works, villain figures begin to diminish from the literary works.

Several questions arise from these changed depictions of villainy. We know that the traditional American archetype of villainy is gone. Certainly, in this instance anyway, American writing has changed in the last one hundred years. What remains to be answered is why.

In *the Death of Satan*, Andrew Delbanco examines evil in our culture. He writes that "evil tends to recede into the background hum of modern life (...)" (Delbanco, 7), and that "no one knows where to find him" (Delbanco, 9). He tells a reporter in a Newsweek article that "secular American society lacks a profound and coherent sense of evil such as our American forefathers experienced when took the Devil seriously" (Delbanco qtd. in Woodward, 65). He makes an intriguing point whose validity one must consider. But what do his words suggest about contemporary American literature?

Some critics state that American writing has changed in part because of the things people in our century has witnessed. The abominations have apparently affected the writings. "[...] Twentieth-century authors, who have witnessed two world wars and other horrors of similar magnitude, view chronological advancement as regressive. The world is moving toward entropic inanimateness and inertia through nightmare and apocalypse" (Kuehl, 249-250).

The current codifier of evil referred to is very specific; namely, Colin McGinn's definition that an evil person, a perpetrator of pure evil, is one whose "motive is precisely to cause suffering." Envy and "malicious enjoyment of others' misfortunes" (McGinn, 65, 69) also fit McGinn's definition of pure evil.

Thus, in novels, the perpetrator of evil, the villain, is one who enjoys the torture of his victims. "If the antagonist is evil, or capable of cruel and criminal actions, he or she is called a villain" (Abrams, 159). Also of interest is villainy as defined by noted scholar Lionel Trilling. Trilling states that the hypocrite-villain is a person who "systematically misrepresents himself in order to practice upon the

good faith of another" (Trilling, 16). Hawthorne's Chillingworth is this kind of villain, for the most part.

In our society, the term "evil" has been replaced by terms such as "madness" or "insanity." In our world today people seem to feel the need to understand the minds of perpetrators of evil acts. Often this means using the idea of depression or abuse or some other condition to suggest medical reasons for why evil exists. A disease becomes responsible, diminishing the culpability of the perpetrator. The "march of mind has substituted the idea of illness for that of evil intent and penalty" (Barzun, 64)

One noted scholar of evil and the demonic has similar ideas. He believes that Freud and his interest in the unconscious led to other considerations of evil, and that this interest of Freud was due in part to circumstances in his life. "Fateful events as Freud grew older—for instance, the first World War, and hi painful personal struggle against palatal cancer—forced him to confront, reconsider, and theoretically incorporate the problem of human aggression, destructiveness, death, and evil" (Diamond, 139). The potential for evil is within all of us, and understanding this is of greater interest than depicting absolute evil.

"Freud, by unveiling the nature of the human mind, made irrationality a topic of great popular interest" (Goldberg, 79). That interest, which Goldberg says began in the nineteenth century, continues today in Faulkner, Hemingway and Bellow, and their portrayals of paranoia and their focus on the self.

Basically, writers have been increasingly led to or chosen further exploration of the self and of the unconscious motivation of man. Perhaps the atrocities of the modern world have caused some writers to examine the reasons for them. Bellow's Leventhal wrestles with the possibility of his unintentionally harming another and all that that implies.

These are some theories as to the changing ideas in contemporary novels.

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Others, like Andrew Delbanco, say the devil was doomed to die in our imagination right from the founding of America. "One way to track the approach of modernity is to follow the devil's decline into invisibility [...] When American was founded [...] the devil as an imaginable creature was coming under the pressure of a new skepticism" (Delbanco, 23, 28). This skepticism, among other things. Led to what Delbanco terms our present "culture of irony." Without a devil as our absolute standard, authentic villain archetypes were also doomed to "invisibility".

Anyway, the declining trend of villain figures in the whole literary history of the United States is an undisputable fact. It may due to numerous reasons concerning human studies and social science. However, one thing is certain: the traditional value system has gradually lost its influence in the modern society, and hence, tended to be discarded by modern people. People today have become more unbiased and open-minded. In many parts of the world, the movements to require "abolishing the death penalty" have boomed. People have gained a more tolerant perspective towards themselves and others.

In a society without a single and solid morality system, human beings are endowed with exceptional freedom in conscious and behavior. However, they should also take more responsibility for themselves and the others in the society. This is an everlasting theme for the scholars of the modern and postmodern period.

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