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Ruins

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Abstract

There has been much scholarly investigation regarding Thomas More's *Utopia* and Walker Percy's *Love in the Ruins*, but never into the relationship between the two texts. This thesis attempts to rectify this omission by explicating the influence that the former has on the latter. In order to do so, a brief historical background of each author and the environment in which they lived is offered. While separated through the vast chasm of spatial and temporal context, Percy used More's work to create a character, develop a landscape, and convey a message for the modern world. He did so by focusing on several of More's principal themes and inverting them in order to create an equally uncomfortable environment. In *Love in the Ruins*, Percy highlights the division created by absurdist ideology in contrast to the community created by submission to a tyrannical government in *Utopia*. This thesis is an investigation of the relationship between the two texts' treatment of religion, socio-political policy, and signification which reveals a deep structural unity that also seeks to contribute to modern and historical conceptions of the utopian genre. While an exact definition of the genre is difficult to isolate, a working description of utopia is offered by Ruth Levitas and used throughout this thesis. In order to discover the Utopian aspects of these two works, the reader must not focus on how the works fit into the genre, but rather how they inform and contribute to it. With this approach in mind, the author of this thesis attempts to illuminate the connection between the two works so that our modern understanding of them might be enriched.

Table of Contents

Introduction:

Walker Percy uses fiction to express the need for dystopia in achieving salvation, and he does so by placing his work in the American South, which he juxtaposes against Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*. In *Love in the Ruins*, published in 1971, the small Louisiana town in which Percy's protagonist, Dr. Thomas More, lives is a mass salvage yard of wayward souls utterly consumed by myriad anxieties. The community, ironically named Paradise, serves as a microcosm for the fragmentation and isolation experienced throughout the United States in a once futuristic period, the weekend of July 4th, 1983, our country's greatest celebration of freedom. Although the novel is set roughly a dozen years in the future, the social struggles of *Love in the Ruins* mirror those that were occurring in America during the time in which Percy was writing. In the 1960s, a tumultuous decade, the United States fought an unpopular war against Communism in the distant and unfamiliar jungles of southeast Asia (Vietnam 1963-75), the burgeoning counter-culture endorsed sexual promiscuity, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 finally managed to overturn legal segregation in our society, although doing little to change the prejudice of those indoctrinated with the evils of racist ideology. Inside the novel, Vietnam transforms into a proxy war in Ecuador between nebulously defined political factions, which everyone critiques, but no one truly understands; the "Love Clinic" becomes an unabashed center for reducing human sexuality to a purely scientific exchange, robbing Eros of any of its reverence and all of its intimacy; and finally, strict segregation between the races builds tension on both sides of the color line. Dr. More, a

shirttail relative of his namesake, Sir Thomas More, author of the seminal work of the Utopian/Dystopian genre, *Utopia* (1516), participates in this community and recognizes the chaos surrounding him.

Just as Paradise can be viewed as the opposite of Utopia, Dr. More is the antithesis of his Saintly ancestor. Whereas Sir Thomas More was devoutly Catholic, a staunch defender of his faith, and deeply involved in the politics of his day, his distant progeny is a lapse Catholic who has lost his faith. There are obvious differences between the two individuals, but what unites them is their interest in exploring alternatives to the respective decaying societies which they inhabited. *Utopia* is dedicated to the idea that private property was the leading cause of this social decay and that an egalitarian society should be based upon the dissolution of private property and the incorporation of a communal system of all property, physical, intellectual, and otherwise. In *Love in the Ruins*, Dr. More takes a less philosophical approach by inventing his Ontological Lapsometer, a diagnostic tool designed to gauge the human psyche. He hopes that this instrument will effectively measure an individual's position on the scale of what he refers to as Angelism-Beastialism, and thus begin mankind on a path to rediscovering what has been lost as a result of the Cartesian Split.

Interestingly, in all my research, I did not come across a single scholar who investigated the relationship between More's Utopia and Percy's Paradise. It seems as though most have been satisfied with the Catholic connection of the two authors, while occasionally mentioning that the fictional Dr. More is a descendent of the English saint. Scholars tend to focus on themes such as scientism (Ketner), the Cartesian split (Sitman and Smith), violence (Leigh), racism (Akins), and the Eucharist (Desmond) when writing

about *Love in the Ruins*. All of these issues are examined in varying degrees in the following pages, but they are done so in direct comparison to their role in the fictional land of Utopia. It seems as though something is happening in Paradise that is equally horrifying as Utopia, but for reasons that are diametrically opposite. Dr. More lives in an environment in which there exists overwhelming freedom, but little responsibility a surplus of ideology, but no conviction, and an overwhelming amount of signification with very little meaning. The deafening stasis of Utopia is here juxtaposed against the riotous noise of disingenuous ideology in Paradise.

The social calamities surrounding More help to create an utterly chaotic and defeated state, a state in which society has become fractured and fragmented along all conceivable lines of what is ironically referred to as "civilization." Opposing ideologies concerning race, politics, religion, philosophy, sexuality and sexual preference, education, euthanasia, and geographical orientation are heavily debated topics in the novel's intense scenes. As the citizens of Paradise, and by extension, seemingly the entire human race, have sought to align themselves with their chosen ideologies, they have lost the ability to live in harmony with one another, choosing instead to wage a war of ideology among themselves. The myriad micro-cultures in Paradise seem to be fighting a battle for a universal set of societal values that each misguided sub-sect thinks will ultimately achieve the greatest good. Unfortunately, each sect of Paradisians is so convinced of its own legitimacy and superiority that all that results is chaos. Percy alludes to Yeats' poem, "The Second Coming," when he notes that in Paradise, "The Center did not hold" (18). With the dissolution of commonly held values and belief systems, discord has come to reign supreme in Paradise. Any sense of community, even

a tenuous one, has been obliterated and replaced with dozens of conflicting ideologies. In short, although perhaps a bit hyperbolic at times, *Love in the Ruins* is Walker Percy's satiric mirror held up to twentieth century Western civilization.

Given the massive amount of scholarly investigation into Utopian Studies during the twentieth century, a brief overview of the subject can provide a sharper definition and context. The field of Utopian (and, by extension, Dystopian) Studies is a nuanced, controversial, and complex arena in which definitions and theories are constantly in flux. As Ruth Levitas states in the introduction to her book, *The Concept of Utopia*, "Although we may initially think we know what Utopia is, when we try to define it, its boundaries blur and it dissolves before our eyes" (2). This is an appropriate sentiment since the literal translation of the word *utopia* is derived from Greek meaning "no place." The beauty of Levitas' interpretation of Utopia lies in its fluidity. The conception of what constitutes an ideal society is highly subjective, wholly dependent upon personal perspective, and thus, it begs ceaseless debate. Still, Levitas provides us with perhaps the most apt definition to date: "Utopia is the expression of the desire for a better way of being… It allows for the form, function and content to change over time" (8). Although deeply flawed the Paradise of *Love in the Ruins* stresses this evolution of form, function, and content through the protagonist, Dr. More, whereas Thomas More's *Utopia* seeks a constant state of perfection, but dissolves into imposed stasis.

According to Peter Fitting, "Today the Utopian project of finding a different way of organizing social reality seems more vital than ever" (121). He goes on to argue that this is due to the social calamities that have befallen mankind in the 20th century. As mankind becomes increasingly overwhelmed with his own self promulgated ideology, he

seeks to organize his convictions to fit his reality. The two texts analyzed in this thesis exemplify this point perfectly as both attempt to carve social perfection from the decaying artifact of the human experience. But whereas *Utopia* seeks to stifle the evolution of man through a restriction upon the accepted values of the Utopians, Percy's text examines many different ideologies, most of them absurd, before championing an existential path to the Christian faith. This way of life affords each individual the opportunity to come to a common set of values organically through trial, rather than having one's values thrust upon him/her, as is the case in *Utopia*.

Despite *Utopia's* ostensible goal of achieving, in literary form, an ideal commonwealth, the text has been a subject of controversy since its initial publication nearly five hundred years ago. The island nation of Utopia, described and endorsed by the protagonist, Raphael Hythloday, contrasts sharply with the England that More inhabited and contributed to as a public figure as under-sheriff of London and later as personal advisor to King Henry VIII. At issue is More's public endorsement, albeit through a fictional character, of such radically liberal reorganizing of political thought, while deeply involved with the political exigencies of the House of Tudor. Because of this discrepancy between More's professional position and the themes of *Utopia*, the problem of authorial intent has become paramount in any investigation of what *Utopia* means and how it should be perceived. Modern critics focus mainly on three points: the communal ownership of private property, freedom of religion, and the devaluation of materialism.

Utopian narratives as a literary genre, and their nefarious offspring, dystopian works, owe an indescribable debt to their progenitor Sir Thomas More. The seminal text

of the genre is More's appropriately titled Renaissance work, *Utopia* (which itself owes no small debt to Plato's *Republic*). Further, the socio-political structure of *Utopia* serves as a vital and necessary paradigm from which Walker Percy incorporates and opposes specific ideas to create the landscape of *Love in the Ruins*.

 Published on the eve of the Protestant Reformation in 1516, *Utopia* implemented Humanist ideals in order to describe, in narrative form, the pursuit of the perfect commonwealth, one in which man was finally able to achieve what More considered to be civic and moral perfection. Hanan Yoran posits, "[More's] Utopia is a true republic… in which no individual subverts the general interest for personal gain. The purposes of the Utopian institutions are the advancement of the material welfare of every citizen as well as the moral and intellectual improvement of every individual" (5). Every individual is valued equally and the communal ownership of property enforces this principle.

 Utopia is divided into two sections. Book I serves to frame the narrative by introducing the three primary characters, Raphael Hythloday, Thomas More (a fictionalized version of himself in a hypothetical setting) and More's friend, Peter Giles (again, a character, not the man himself). While in Bruges on official business for King Henry VIII, More is introduced to Hythloday through their mutual friend, Peter Giles. Because of the questions surrounding the authorial intent of *Utopia*, it is difficult to ascertain whether the characters of More and Giles are to be accepted at face value, or satirically. (For the purposes of this project, I will not speculate upon More's authorial intent, but focus on what the text itself offers to the investigation). The three enter into what is commonly referred to as the "Dialogue of Counsel," in which Raphael defends his decision to abstain from political advisement, in spite of his expertise in such matters,

and offers his opinion on the state of England. Early on Book I, Hythloday makes his

position clear by stating that the distinction between servitude and service to a prince is

"only a matter of one syllable" (14). He goes on to say that, "[The king's advisors]

approve and even flatter the most absurd statements of favorites through whose influence

they seek to stand well with the prince" (15). From Hythloday's perspective, to be in the

service of a prince is not to be a willing and useful participant in political debate and

practice. Instead it would be an act of personal betrayal in which all controversial speech

is avoided in order to appease the prince's other advisors, while taking great care to

assure the sovereign of his superiority. Such an act would directly contradict Raphael's

principles, to which he adheres strictly and without compromise.

Immediately following this discussion concerning political advisement,

Hythloday does begin to offer his opinions, but to his peers in private as opposed to his

superiors in an official meeting. Our protagonist rails against English customs, such as

the heinous punishment for theft, enclosure, massive standing armies, and most

importantly for our purposes, private property. Raphael argues that the punishment for

theft is unjust and extreme, that enclosure widens the economic gap and reinforces the

class system, that standing armies inevitably lead to war, and that private property, which

inevitably leads to greed and pride, is the root of all social evils. After each instance of

offering sound advice on how to cure the ills of the English political establishment,

Hythloday steps back and repeats his refusal to offer counsel to any prince or king. He

believes that no good can come from his counsel: either he will be ignored, or he will be

heard. In the case of the former, he will have wasted his time; in the case of the latter,

since his advice would seem radical, he would be viewed as a traitor. At one point,

perhaps astonished by his new friend's candor, More exclaims, "This academic philosophy is quite agreeable in the private conversation of close friends, but in the councils of kings, where grave matters are being authoritatively decided, there is no place for it" (33). To which Raphael responds, "This is just what I was saying… There is no place for philosophy in the council of kings" (33). Raphael's philosophy advocates an honest, objective investigation of political practice as opposed to the status quo that England had become accustomed to at that point in their history.

Thomas More actually wrote Book I after finishing Book II, a lengthy monologue by Raphael in which he explains the major elements of Utopian society. William Cotton explains: "[More] came to feel that the long Utopian monologue of Hythloday required a much more elaborate introduction and indeed justification for its existence" (44). Near the end of Book I, Raphael begins to focus more on the nation of Utopia. By declaring of the Utopians, "I contrast them with the many other nations, which are constantly passing new ordinances and yet can never order their affairs satisfactorily" (36), Raphael effectively sets up the polemic nature of Book II. The preceding pages of political debate have served as a satisfactory introduction to which our protagonist can spend the remainder of the text offering an alternative. Raphael has addressed the social and political ills of England, and now he can explain what he feels to be the likewise virtues of Utopia. Book II then consists almost entirely of Raphael Hythloday's description of the island nation of Utopia.

According to Raphael, he inhabited Utopia for a period of five years after accompanying Amerigo Vespucci in his discovery of the New World. The nation was initially founded by Utopus who, after conquering the peninsular country, promptly set

the natives and his own soldiers to work cutting a fifteen-mile-wide channel that separated the peninsula from the mainland, thus making it an island. Free from outside influence, Utopus began implementing his political, philosophical and theological ideals. As Raphael narrates to Thomas More and Peter Giles, 1,760 years after the island's initial conquest, the primary principles that Utopus set forth while establishing his reign are still practiced. Things in Utopia have been more or less the same for nearly 1,800 years. There is no private property on the island, and the inhabitants are freely allowed to exercise whatever religion they choose, the caveat being that they must believe in some form of God and the immortality of the soul. Of course, there are numerous other laws that the Utopians live by, but those serve to reinforce these two major tenets. These laws, strictly enforced, have basically eradicated vices such as pride and idleness, both of which run rampant in More's England and Percy's *Love in the Ruins*.

More's literary achievement often overshadows his political service in his native England. In fact, there are some who believe that the ambiguity concerning More's intent in writing *Utopia* was not out of fear of Henry VIII or the Tudors, but rather in service on their behalf. John Freeman argues that More, through his protagonist, embedded Tudor doctrine throughout *Utopia*: "More provides a telling demonstration of how his humanist training in letters allowed him to pursue power and privilege, while still maintaining the humanist pose of detachment from… such maneuverings" (427-28). Chief among Freeman's arguments is his investigation of Hythloday's great oppressor, enclosure. Freeman continues, "Raphael's recapitulation of enclosure legislation is particularly important since so many other contemporary ills – vagrancy, theft, unjust punishment – are causally linked to enclosure" (431-32). In this way, Freeman argues, More was able

to maintain both a reputation as a leading figure among his Humanist colleagues, fighting against the policies of Tudor institutions, while simultaneously establishing himself as a valued member of the political elite.

Utopia and *Love in the Ruins* share a good deal in common in the way that they are constructed. Percy set up his novel as a sort of foil for Utopia in order to draw parallels between the two texts. The most obvious of these is the narrative strategy that he uses to compare Paradise with Utopia. Both use first-person narration to comment on their respective societies, as well as symbolism in naming their respective narrators. In *Utopia*, More uses Raphael Hythloday as a medium through which he is able to comment on the social ills of pre-Reformation England while satirically suggesting an equally negative socio-political paradigm in the form of Utopia. The name, Raphael Hythloday, adds to the equivocal nature of More's purpose in writing his "little book" for "Raphael in Hebrew means the bearer of good tidings, while Hythloday is based on a Greek word for nonsense" (Cotton 51). This contradiction in nomenclature confuses the purpose of our narrator and, by extension, his literary creator. In one sense More may be suggesting that Hythloday's sharp criticism of England, coupled with his vast knowledge of Utopia, could potentially provide a cure for the ills of sixteenth-century Europe. However, his surname would seem to imply that none of what he says should be taken seriously and that the entirety of the narrative can be interpreted as the musings of a Humanist author playing with accepted modes of being and social construction. Percy's narrator, meanwhile, is named after the author of *Utopia*. The modern More seems to be describing his society in much the same way as his ancestor's protagonist. He is focusing the reader's attention on the ills of contemporary America while offering a suggestion for

a better way of life. Both men were devoutly Catholic, but as this thesis will attempt to prove, Percy's novel approaches Catholicism as a means of discovering reason and meaning through choosing God, while More's text works in the opposite fashion. The Utopians construct their society on logic and secular political practices, failing to incorporate their spirituality in a positive manner, instead thrusting a mandatory, sanitized mode of religion on all members of the commonwealth.

These two works then, share the desire to comment on the societal ills of their day and offer remedies. When the texts are examined closely, one begins to get a sense that while "*Utopia*" may be labeled a Utopian work, much of the social commentary within can hardly be ascribed to an "ideal society" as there exists no desire to seek improvement. The Utopian oligarchy is arrogantly convinced that they have already achieved perfection, and that utter stasis is the only way to conserve it. Likewise, much of *Love in the Ruins* is transparently satirical and darkly Dystopian, (especially the war being fought over separate ideologies) even though some elements lighten the bleak landscape. This is a testament to the flexibility of the genre. Just as a completely perfect society is impossible because of human nature, subjectivity, and the concept of original sin, so too is a completely imperfect society impossible. The vital element of any definition of Utopia, lies in the intention. A Utopia consists of the intent to create a better way of life for all and the successful execution of the common good, whereas a Dystopia is the perversion of this intent by a group seeking to control the very conception of the common good and the values attached to such an abstraction. Obviously there are many opposing groups attempting to seize this type of control in *Love in the Ruins*, but in the end, victory is gained through the individual's singular existential experience of coming to faith of his

own freewill. The citizens of Paradise will inevitably continue to struggle for control, but at least one individual has discovered the Utopian principle the ideal common good through his reunion with God.

It is my contention that, while More had a noble purpose in writing his *Utopia*, the society that he created is actually far more Dystopian than Percy's Paradise in *Love in the Ruins.* The central principle of life in Utopia is that all property is to be shared and that all citizens are subject to living by the same standards. This leads to a sterile society that is simultaneously "perfect" and dehumanizing. The Utopians' system of communal living results in a form of perfection in that each of its citizens is of equal value. Further, they live in almost total harmony due to their highly moral system of law. Each person shares freely and works for the common good of the state. How could they not? They aren't given any choice to do otherwise. Utopia is structured not to encourage freewill and goodwill, but rather to make manifest a self-imposed system of restriction and oppression based on abolition of not only private property, but privacy itself. As Hythloday himself states, "Everyone can feel secure of his own livelihood... they do not have to worry about their future" (94). The Utopian political machine provides this numbing security while ensuring that the future will be no different from the present or the past. Given the previous 1,760 years of Utopian life, one need not doubt this promise.

The only oversight needed to keep the Utopians in line is the guaranteed conformity of the citizens themselves, but this proves to be more than enough. In such a system no political or religious hierarchy is necessary. Anyone seeking to oppose the majority is either ignored, banished, or executed. More has used logic in creating his political fantasy land, but has rendered it devoid of even a spark of spirituality or

creativity. Certain defects of the human character have been eliminated in Utopia as a result of More's social construction, but it is our defects that define our humanity by leaving room for growth, both personally and in our communities. In Utopia, there is no creativity, no need for rejoicing, and, perhaps most glaringly, no signification. Without the power to name, the ability to conceptualize and abstract is lost, which results in a stagnant society, lacking meaning and purpose.

Obviously, modern society as depicted in *Love in the Ruins*, with the racism, volatile bipartisanship, religious schisms, and overall collapse of community, is hardly ideal. In fact, what makes Paradise so chaotic is that it is nearly the opposite of Utopia. Paradise, as a model for modern society in general, has become a socio-political paradigm that values freedom of thought and expression to the extent that it is characterized by a kind of hyper-signification where, often times, the most moronic have the loudest voice and the largest audience. Myriad opposing ideologies are the result of this hierarchical system in which each member of society is free to choose his or her value set. This obviously results in a disordered system, but it is only from this disorder that Percy's hero, Dr. Tom More, can ultimately achieve salvation.

Unlike the oppressive stasis of Utopia, Paradise is a haven for a reckless brand of expression and signification. Therefore, Percy's protagonist is given the option to drink, to womanize, to theorize and contemplate to the point of dissipation. In short, he has been given the option to sin. But he has also been given the option to redeem himself through his choices. Ultimately, what saves Dr. More is his decision to turn his life over to God. This decision would not have been possible in Utopia, as that decision has

already been made for each citizen, at least nominally, by a decree that forces every member of society to hold monotheistic beliefs.

Although Sir Thomas More may have eliminated several Cardinal Sins in creating his Utopia, the fact that he did so at the cost of our very humanity ironically places his seminal text of the utopian genre in a position better suited for dystopian studies. Simultaneously, in spite of the reigning discord in Paradise, *Love in the Ruins* champions the utopian notion of the pursuit of perfection by affording freewill and subjectivity to each of its citizens, regardless of the consequences. *Utopia* creates a perfectly ordered system, devoid of expression, whereas *Love in the Ruins* consists of a perfectly chaotic system overflowing with signifiers and human potential for improvement, as well as digression. What follows is an investigation of how *Love in the Ruins* incorporates and opposes the basic tenets of *Utopia* to show negative aspects of contemporary society, while also offering a Utopian solution for an ideal society focused on achieving the common good; namely, the existential path to faith.

Therefore, my thesis has a three-fold purpose. First, given the religious background of the two authors, I will attempt to prove that the religion of the Utopians, while widespread, is prosaic and lacking the vital spiritual aspect of true faith. Conversely, Percy's Paradisians have little use for the Christian deity, but Thomas More is only able to save the catastrophe that he very nearly causes by turning his will over to God, thereby stressing the essential need for faith and the belief that salvation flows from a willingness to seek forgiveness.

Secondly, the political structures of the two texts are very nearly diametrical. Utopian political structure is contingent upon discipline and rigid conformity and seeks to

offer security to its citizens through widespread paternalism. The Paradisians, while

highly politically opinionated, have very little in the way of political oversight, whether

governmental or otherwise. This lack leaves their society in peril, but also allows for the

freedom to operate independently of any regimented ordinances that would seek to

control them. This is not to say that there are not groups seeking to control others in

Paradise, just that, instead of the government seeking this control, it is the citizens

themselves, aligned with their colleagues in ideology, seeking to impose their set of

values upon one another. Also, as in *Utopia*, there exists racial paternalism in *Love in the

Ruins* (as it must exist given that Percy's fiction is a representation of modern American

society), but it is being staunchly rejected by the revolutionary African Americans of

Paradise.

Finally, there is the matter of signification, the process through which human

beings construct meaning and interpret our nature. On the island of Utopia, there is very

little opportunity to participate in this basic and essential activity. There exists a rigid

method of brainwashing from a young age that, coupled with various restrictive policies,

leads to an inability, and indeed an aversion, to any form of diverse symbolic interaction.

Percy's now anachronistic version of a future America consists of a highly entropic and

chaotic system of signification and inter-subjectivity that, at times, can make the reader's

head spin, but nevertheless exposes certain fundamental truths concerning the

deficiencies of human nature, namely avarice and the inevitable compulsion to sin

attached to it. However, as Dr. More navigates his path through this hyper-signification,

he also comes to recognize the ultimate signifier and signified, God. The task of the

protagonist (and the reader) is to interpret, analyze, and arrange this multitude of signs in

order to save the world from his Ontological Lapsometer.   When these three elements of the two texts are examined closely, it becomes apparent that *Love in the Ruins* constitutes a modern literary foil of *Utopia*. Paradise is equally as horrific of an environment as Utopia, but its horror is directly proportionate to the amount of absurd ideology being debated. The degree of horror in More's text however, is relative to the oppressive nature of the Utopian socio-political edifice.   Percy's text incorporates and inverts the major tenets of *Utopia* in that it allows for the choice of faith, freewill, and the ability to construct the world based on individual interpretations of signification, no matter how warped they may be.

Chapter One:

Throughout this investigation, it will be important to remember that both authors were fiercely Catholic men whose faith profoundly influenced all aspects of their lives, including their writing. As Percy wrote in his essay, "Notes for a Novel About the End of the World," "I do not conceive it to be my vocation to preach the Christian faith in a novel, but as it happens, my world view is informed by a certain belief about man's nature and destiny which cannot fail to be central to any novel I write" (111). Neither author is attempting to edify, but rather to illuminate what he finds to be certain truths about his society that perhaps the average person is only vaguely aware of as s/he goes about routine life. This is not to say that More and Percy are "religious" writers, but rather that their morality derives directly from their faith, and that morality is explicitly expressed in both *Utopia* and *Love in the Ruins*. Both men were devoted to the "Good News" of the New Testament, as well as a devout keeping of the sacraments. Nevertheless, given their different socio-historical milieus, two men arrived at their faith in different ways.

Thomas More was born in London on February 7, 1478, during the second reign of King Henry IV and would later become a prominent political and religious member of the House of Tudor under Henry VIII. Martin Luther had yet to pen his "Ninety-Five Theses" strongly condemning many practices of the Church, most notably, the sale of indulgences. Thus, in 1478, Catholicism was the only acceptable religion throughout most of Europe. As a young man, More was placed under the care of Archbishop Morton as a page. Seeing a wealth of potential in More, Morton nominated his young pupil for enrollment at Oxford where More showed an avid interest in classical literature. Upon

returning to London, More pursued a career in law, which would remain his occupation throughout his life. However, his faith would prove to be his life's passion. In fact, he even lived in a Catholic monastery for a brief period after earning his law degree. Facets of monastic life such as routine prayer and penance would remain with More for the rest of his life. When More was forced to make a decision between the crown and his faith, he chose his faith. Asked to swear his allegiance and to promote the sovereignty of Henry VIII over that of the Pope, he refused and was eventually beheaded in 1535. His final words are reported to have been, "The King's good servant, but God's First" (Jokinen).

While More was Catholic by birth, Walker Percy's road to the faith was decidedly different. Born into a prominent southern family in 1916, Percy would eventually eclipse each of his relative's accomplishments through his literary excellence, but his faith would prove to be his defining characteristic, as well as his most cherished one. Among his distinguished family members were a Secretary of War under Confederate President Jefferson Davis; a United States Senator; the accomplished poet and autobiographer of *Lanterns on the Levee*, William Alexander Percy; and several prominent industrialists who helped to shape the economic landscape of the South following the period of Reconstruction in the wake of the Civil War (Samway). For Percy, perhaps a stronger influence than his family's greatness were the suicides of both his fraternal grandfather and his father. Three short years after his father took his life, his mother drove off a bridge and drowned, an event that Walker believed to be yet another suicide. As a result of these tragedies, suicide became a theme that he dealt with in several of his novels (Short 77).

The deaths of his parents led to Percy and his two brothers to being legally adopted by their uncle, William, requiring a move to Greenville, Mississippi. Uncle William, an attorney as well as a poet, proved to have a strong impact on young Percy's literary sensibilities. In an essay simply entitled, "Uncle Will," written over thirty years after William Percy's death, Percy wrote of his uncle's selfless decision to adopt him and his brothers: "Whatever he lost or gained in the transaction, I know what I gained: a vocation and in a real sense a second self; that is, the work and the self which, for better or worse, would not otherwise have been open to me" (55). Through his appreciation for the fine arts and classical literature, Percy's uncle introduced his nephew to a new way of examining the world around him, a world which could often be better understood more through narrative fancy than through empirical evidence. Because of his uncle's celebrity, giants of the literary field, such as William Faulkner, were often guests in William's home. In a 1967 interview conducted by Ashley Brown and anthologized in *Conversations with Walker Percy*, Percy said of Faulkner's influence on his writing, "As for Faulkner, he never meant as much to me as he did to some other writers… Will Percy, my uncle, used to have Faulkner over for tennis, but he often arrived dead drunk and couldn't play" (11). Perhaps Percy's irreverent attitude toward Faulkner arose from his familiarity with his character, but nevertheless, being raised in a home owned by an accomplished author who often hosted one of America's greatest writers influenced young Walker's interest in literature.

The desire to maintain an independent sense of self, while also operating in a professional capacity similar to that of his father and uncle, both lawyers, led Percy to attend medical school at Columbia University after completing his undergraduate work at

the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. In a 1985 interview with Jan Nordby

Gretlund, Percy said of his initial career choice, "Everybody in my family had been

lawyers, it was a tradition in the family to be going into law. And I knew damn well I

didn't want to do that. I had no use for it at all" (103). This statement sets Percy in direct

opposition to More the barrister. Percy used his medical experience to diagnose the

malaise of the human spirit similar to the way that More used his law background to

diagnose the social ills of early sixteenth-century England. This is obviously reflected in

Dr. More who attempts to calculate the degree of Angelism-Beastialism in individuals

with his Lapsometer, and *Utopia* itself, which is a rational and logical alternative to its

author's England

     While at Columbia, Percy contracted tuberculosis after performing an autopsy on

a tubercular cadaver. He spent the next few years convalescing and reading some of the

great philosophers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The works of Existentialist

thinkers like Albert Camus and Martin Heidegger led Percy to begin to question the

infallibility of science as an institution. Following his recovery, Percy took a trip to the

American Southwest with his childhood friend and author of *The Civil War: A Narrative*,

Shelby Foote. This vast, largely undisturbed region (the opposite of the traditional South

of his childhood, a South defined by decorum and sentimentality) had quite an effect on

Percy. Shortly after this sojourn, he abandoned the medical profession entirely and

decided to devote himself to writing. Then, a year later, he wed a nurse whom he had

met while recovering, Mary Bernice Townsend (nicknamed Bunt). After a year of

marriage, the couple simultaneously converted to Catholicism (*Walker Percy: A*

Documentary Film).

Self-schooled in the tenets of Existential thought, Percy saw no conflict between his faith and his philosophy, but rather felt that they worked in tandem to produce his world view. According to Linda Whitney Hobson,

> Percy's Catholicism is of the classical type defined by Thomas Aquinas: faith is at least partly a form of *knowing* and, as such, has important cognitive effects on the believer. This means that the believer – an existentialist as well as a Catholic – can *choose* to believe or not; can choose to perceive God's abundant grace or not; and thus can take control of his spiritual life and, following that, his daily life. (6)

Percy viewed modern man as a pilgrim, a wayfarer attempting to navigate his environment in an ongoing existential search for truth and community. What made Percy an existentialist in the truest sense of the word was that he made the *choice* to convert to Catholicism. He viewed the world as infinitely free as a result of the philosophical readings he had done during his convalescence, and his conversion was an honest, willing decision to turn his life over to God. In his essay, "Why Are You a Catholic?" Percy comments on the difference between choosing one's faith in the modern age and the obligatory Christianity of pre-Reformation England, "[T]he present age is better than Christendom. In the old Christendom, everyone was a Christian and hardly anyone thought twice about it. But in the present age the survivor of theory and consumption becomes a wayfarer in the desert… which is to say, open to signs" (314). Without the ability to investigate, interpret and choose God, He loses his meaning and relevance. In choosing to trust in God for his salvation, and by accepting His grace near the end of *Love in the Ruins*, Percy's protagonist, Dr. Thomas More, follows his literary creator's

lead in living as both existentialist and Catholic. It is this choice that places *Love in the Ruins* in the category of utopian literature, in spite of the dystopian feel of the environment in which he lives. Despite its horrific landscape, Percy's book is optimistic, due to the ever-present possibility of receiving God's grace, whereas More's *Utopia* is pessimistic because of the stagnation inherent in a society devoid of the potential for improvement. In fact, the nature and role of Catholicism in *Love in the Ruins* critiques the religious influences at work in *Utopia*, which calls for a chronological and categorical comparison of the two works.

The framework of *Utopia* is not necessarily explicitly influenced by Thomas More's Catholicism, for the Utopians are not concerned with any form of organized religion, Catholic or otherwise. Utopia has no clergymen and no Sacraments; moreover, no Mass is ever celebrated.   But we learn near the end of the text that Hythloday and his fellow travelers have introduced Catholicism to the population of Utopia and that the beliefs, if not necessarily the practices, have been adopted by a large portion of the Utopians. More suggests that this aspect of European influence will lure the island's inhabitants toward Catholic Christian Faith. However, the very structure and symbolism inherent in that Faith seem to contradict the Utopian way of life. In-Suk Cha writes,

> The way in which globalization occurs plays an important role in the transculturation of an idea from one person or culture to another. With transculturation, the schemata in question are entirely transformed. The alien has become familiar but it is no longer quite what it was. It has transformed to fit into a new structure, and that structure has had to change to accommodate it. (26)

The problem however, is that neither the Catholic faith nor the Utopian way of life is structured so as to allow for accommodation. According to Hythloday, many citizens have been converted and baptized, but given the rigidity of the ideologies of these opposing entities, one doubts the success of these religious conversions for either the individual or the state. Catholicism is profoundly personal faith that cannot flourish in an oppressive system like Utopia.

Hythloday believes that the Utopians are eager to convert to Catholicism because they see a correlation between their way of life and the life that Christ advocated. As our narrator says, "I think they were also much influenced by the fact that Christ approved a communal way of life for his disciples, and that among the truest communities of Christians the practice still prevails" (85). This implies that the Utopians see themselves as having found perfection without the direct influence of the Christian faith. They have seemingly created Paradise without the added element of Christ's teachings. Their "right reason" has led them toward achieving their perfect society. This rationalism can be compared to the scientism of *Love in the Ruins*. Both perspectives lead to horrifying conclusions because the stuff of human creation is being worshiped, rather than the mystifying nature of the Creator. Travis DeCook suggests in his article, "Utopian Communication," "Even the arrival of Christianity to Utopia can be viewed, to some degree, as a process more notable for the confirmation of existing Utopian values than as the emergence of a radically new religious system" (7). Although right reason is, like all things, supposedly endowed in each of us by God, the fact that in Utopia organized Catholicism is a result of right reason, as opposed to the other way around, places a premium on the logical over the spiritual. By creating a government based upon logic,

rather than Christianity or any other form of worship, the Utopians established a regimented society that places a stranglehold on their individual autonomy. Likewise, by placing a premium on scientism, the citizens of Paradise entangle themselves in their own web of hyper-signification as this practice emphasizes the power of science to explain all the mysteries of the universe.

It seems as though, in spite of More's wish to create a society predicated upon reason, the author's faith, as part of his world view, couldn't help but inform the work. More scholar, J.H. Hexter finds that, "[T]he Utopian Discourse is the production of a Christian humanist uniquely endowed with a statesman's eye and mind, a broad worldly experience, and a conscience of unusual sensitivity who saw sin… as the cancer of the commonwealth" (195). In formulating *Utopia*, More combined his unique political talent with his strict faith in order to establish a society so civically perfected as to not need the principles of Christianity in order to function. He implemented his political knowledge to abolish what he saw to be wickedness. He did so by creating a communal society that seemed inherently virtuous. However, this society was not sinless because of the character of its citizens, but rather because of the tenets woven into the social fabric of Utopia, tenets which placed an emphasis on conformity to eradicate sin. This conformity leads to a loss of humanity despite the intentions of the Utopian social schema.

As a devout Catholic, More would have been well acquainted with the Seven Deadly Sins, or Cardinal Sins. Three of the seven are readily discussed and debated throughout the first book of *Utopia*: Pride, Sloth, and Greed. In Book II, however, these sins have vanished. By chastising English socio-political practices and proclaiming the likewise virtuous practices of the Utopians, the sinful nature of the Europeans is placed in

diametrical opposition to their counterparts in the "New World." Although no

descriptions of specific individuals or personal narratives of the indigenous culture are

given, Hythloday claims that the citizens of Utopia live in complete harmony with one

another, every man satisfied with his lot and position in life. Each citizen works a six-

hour day together for the common good and plenty, which eliminates sloth. Since all

property is communal and housing is frequently rotated (42), the concept of greed never

materializes in the minds of the Utopians. Little to no difference in the quality or style of

clothing and jewelry occur. Gold has been devalued due to its lack of practical use.

Utopia has no complex notions of symbolic interaction. An object is ascribed value in

exact accordance with its pragmatic function. Thus golden urns are used as chamber pots

and precious jewels as nothing more than shiny toys for young children (55-56). And as

all men are equal in a society free of the materialistic impulse, pride, the greatest sin, is

no longer a factor. It was these three sins, according to More, that were destroying the

social and moral fiber of England. Thus in the creation of his ideal society, these sins

have been eradicated through his socialist system of communal property. The human

impulse remains, but is never made manifest due to the oppressive Utopian government.

The Utopians support no clearly delineated religious denominations, but on the

other hand, atheism is not tolerated. Pagan practices such as worshiping the sun or other

celestial bodies are sanctioned. What matters is that each member of society holds a

belief in a supreme ruler who created the world and all of its inhabitants. As an extension

of this law, no person is allowed to preach too vehemently in support of his or chosen

method of worship in order to prevent various religious sects from taking hold. This is

directly countered by the various ideological constituencies of Paradise who take great

pleasure in imposing their will and their beliefs upon others. Between the two texts, their

exists an either/or proposition: In Utopia, you can be executed for preaching your

personal beliefs too vehemently, whereas in Paradise, the expectation is that everyone

align themselves with some form of ideology and preach its merits until they are blue in

the face.

The Utopians refer to the supreme deity as Mithra, and he is the same power

whom Christians refer to as God, the sole creator and benefactor of the universe. In

regards to the "religious freedom" of the Utopians, Hythloday discusses one

qualification, "The only exception [Utopus] made was a solemn and strict law against any

person who should sink so far below the dignity of human nature as to think… that the

universe is ruled by mere chance rather than divine providence" (86). Atheism is illegal.

So while each member of society is free to worship in whatever fashion he or she

chooses, that choice is ultimately limited, and people are forced to believe in divine

providence, at least nominally, while also being prohibited from establishing organized

denominations. This decree was passed unilaterally by Utopus, the original conqueror of

the island and is not open to debate, discussion, or negotiation.

Many readers find Utopus' order for the exclusive practice of monotheism and his

stated reasoning for it satisfactory. Utopus saw a clear distinction between the soul and

the body and claimed that to believe otherwise was blasphemous. In short, for Utopus,

atheism violated the dignity of nature. Further, Utopus was able to conquer the region

because of the infighting among the myriad religious denominations that occupied the

island before his invasion. As Hythloday tell us, "Utopus had heard that before his

arrival the inhabitants were continually quarreling over religious matters. In fact, he

found it was easy to conquer the country because the different sects were too busy

fighting one another to oppose him" (85). However, the closing paragraphs of Book II,

which are paramount to understanding the motivation for the preceding pages, are

expressly concerned with what More, via Hythloday, considered the greatest threat of all

to a civil and spiritual society: pride. Hythloday describes pride as "the prime plague and

begetter of all others" and states, "I have no doubt that every man's perception of where

his true interest lies, along with the authority of Christ our Savior… would long ago have

brought the whole world to adopt Utopian laws, if it were not for one single monster…

Pride" (96). Utopian citizens aren't given the option see view their self-worth as

something separate from what they have been endowed with by Mithra. By forcing the

Utopians to believe in divine providence, Utopus created a communal lifestyle through

the dissolution of pride.

It is interesting that More, a strict Catholic, living in a strictly Catholic time and

place, would advocate the freedom to worship God as each individual's choice. Sanford

Kessler posits, "More suggests that he did indeed favor religious freedom for Christians

by presenting an attractive, albeit fictional, account of this principle's political

advantages" (212). It is true that there are many political advantages inherent in a society

that advocates religious freedom. Utopia, for instance, is a nation consisting of citizens

who live in near perfect harmony with one another in large part because the government

does not *directly* interfere with the religious practices, rituals, and beliefs of its citizens so

long as they recognize a monotheistic deity in their life and worship in a peaceful

manner. However, there is a vital caveat to Kessler's statement, one that, in my opinion

goes beyond the limits of human nature: tolerance. Kessler further observes, "More

carefully shows, however, that religious freedom can only promote civic peace if the religions enjoying its benefits become more tolerant" (212). For these "political advantages" to be made manifest in Utopia, England, or any other society in Christendom, the citizens of these principalities must be willing to show absolute tolerance.

Of course authorial intent must be brought into question on this point. It is possible that More advocated the practices portrayed in his Utopia, but it is just as possible that his creation was nothing more than a satire directed toward the efficiency and authority of the Tudor government. When examining the many possibilities of *Utopia*, it is important to remember More's political position when writing it: "As Lord Chancellor in early post-Reformation England, he wrote scathing polemics against Martin Luther and his English followers and sanctioned, if not actively participated in, the actual persecution of heretics" (Kessler 210). Regardless of his intentions, in writing *Utopia*, the textual evidence shows that More created a society predicated upon right reason, the eradication of sin through logic, and a required belief in a monotheistic deity coupled with the prohibition of "excessive" religious expression. These principles of his text work in unison to create an oppressive society utterly devoid of expression and choice.

The religious tones of *Love in the Ruins* could not be more directly oppositional to *Utopia* in spite of the fact that most members of each society value their moral principles over any religious worship. Whereas the Utopians are forced by law to believe in divine providence and also prohibited from vehemently preaching their personal beliefs, most citizens of Paradise in Percy's novel seem to have lost any desire to establish a

relationship with God, whatsoever, but they love lecturing their neighbors about euthanasia and the superiority of their race. For instance, Ellen, Dr. More's secretary (and later his wife) is described in the following terms: "though she is a strict churchgoer and a moral girl, [she] does not believe in God. On the whole she is embarrassed by the God business. But she does right. She doesn't need God. What does God have to do with being honest, hard-working, chaste, upright, unselfish, etcetera" (157). Percy's description of Ellen could fit any member of Utopia. In establishing their perfect society, the Utopians have secularized their culture by eliminating the need for God, but their lives have been robbed of a certain richness by doing so. Likewise, most members of Percy's society have no use for God, but unlike Utopia, in Paradise, the world rests on the brink of catastrophe. No amount of sophistication or socio-economic political strategy can save the world without the freedom of the individual to seek out his or her faith, regardless of how absurd that search may seem. Without faith and the ability to worship without restriction, reason eventually breaks down, and the result is invariably sin and chaos.

In Utopia, society is able to govern and police itself because people are required to share the same fundamental beliefs, not only beliefs concerning religion, but also regarding the communal ownership of property and the devaluation of material goods among others. In Paradise however, society is fragmented to such an extent that people cannot agree on the color of the sky, much less the nature and will of God. One of the binding characteristics of Utopian life, tolerance, is totally absent in *Love in the Ruins*. Also unlike Utopia, there is an overwhelming amount of choice in all aspects of life in Paradise – most significantly, in matters concerning religion. Most people continue to

claim a religion, but they do so without any sense of passion. It seems as though their

reasons for claiming a religion have more to do with aligning themselves with the politics

of a particular sect of Christianity, rather than a devout belief in the foundational

religious principles of those sects. For instance, a schism has occurred within the

Catholic Church resulting in three separate factions, all of which mistrust one another.

This rupture reenacts the Protestant Reformation, in which the solidarity of the Catholic

Church was forever shattered. There's the American Catholic Church, "which

emphasizes property rights"; the Dutch schismatics, "who believe in relevance, but not

God"; and the remaining Roman Catholics, "a tiny scattered flock with no place to go"

(Percy 5-6). The American Catholic Church has integrated all of the major tenets of

Western capitalism into its dogma, while the Dutch schismatic Catholics advocate

marriage and procreation among their clergy members. Percy uses scathing satire in

order to portray a world that is "in the ruins." In such a world, the ability to voice an

opinion – no matter how obnoxious, misguided or naïve – trumps the desire to seek truth

and community. The conflicts which arise from the multitude of varying religious sects

in Paradise are exactly what Utopus was attempting to safeguard Utopia against through

his religious decree. Paradisians speak of God irreverently, and most seem more

concerned with idle gossip than with the Word. This is due in large part to the advances

of science and intellect that have usurped God in this fictional future. Our narrator and

protagonist, Tom More, is a living embodiment of this confused state of priorities.

However, the "Good News" that Dr. More eventually comes to accept and embrace is

that there is love yet to be found among these ruins if one has the patience. He reflects to

himself near the end of the book, "Here's one difference between this age and the last.

Now while you work, you also watch and listen and wait" (382). Human beings should

continue to strive for the ideal society, but recognize that they cannot force the

emergence of Utopia through imposing their will. Rather it must be made manifest as an

organic effect of what Walker Percy routinely referred to as "the search."

Our introduction to Tom occurs at a point of great catastrophe, both for him

personally and for the world at large. An impending disaster is rapidly approaching, the

scope of which the reader will not fully understand until near the end of the novel. What

is clear from the onset, however, is that Tom is a broken man, perhaps in greater disrepair

than the society in which he lives. In his article, "Omission of Sin," Jim Forest suggests

that "Dr. Thomas More – a modern man who can't quite buy the ideology that there are

no sins and there is nothing to feel guilty about – is battling to recover a sense of guilt,

which in turn will provide the essential foothold for contrition, which in turn can

motivate confession and repentance" (35). Although not made explicitly clear at the

beginning of the novel, Tom has completely lost his faith in God on account of the death

of his daughter, Samantha. Tom feels an enormous sense of guilt, but instead of

confronting his it head-on through confession and a reliance on his faith, Tom delves into

womanizing, which, ironically, raises no feelings of guilt whatsoever. He has placed God

at the bottom of his priorities and beliefs, and he is lost without his faith. Tom recognizes

his sins, but he is unable to seek forgiveness. While discussing his mental health with his

colleague, Max Colley, he states, "The problem is that if there is no guilt, contrition, and

a purpose of amendment, the sin cannot be forgiven" (117). He is aware that his lust

goes against his religious convictions, but he has become numb to the point that he is

unable to feel remorse. Without remorse, without guilt, Tom feels that his sins cannot be

absolved. His lack of guilt distresses Tom greatly and is one of the primary reasons that

he can no longer accept God.

One of the chief themes of Percy's novel is that scientism cannot comment on the

true nature of the individual self. Scientism is the belief that science holds the best hope

for discovering answers about the existence and nature of the universe, along with

everything in it. Percy uses scientism as a kind of new form of rationalism with which he

can compare the Paradisians to the Utopians. John Desmond, "The social ills in

[Paradise] are symptoms of a deeper metaphysical disorder. Percy examines the conflicts

between religious belief and secular power in a culture now dominated by the ideology of

scientism" (118). The modern More, is a living embodiment of the struggle between

faith and reason for dominion over the human soul. He views himself as a scientist first

and foremost, a psychiatrist who believes that gnosis can serve to reunite the body with

the soul. More's religion has become an afterthought, a mere consideration in his

hierarchy of priorities. As Tom puts it,

> I believe in God and the whole business but I love women best, music and
>
> science next, whiskey next, God fourth, and my fellow man hardly at all.
>
> Generally I do as I please. A man, wrote John, who says he believes in
>
> God and does not keep his commandments is a liar. If John is right then I
>
> am a liar. Nevertheless, I still believe (6).

As a direct result of the loss of his despair, Tom has constructed a device that he

calls the More Qualitative – Quantitative Ontological Lapsometer that can diagnose the

malaise afflicting modern man. The only thing he is missing, prior to his introduction to

Art Immelmann (Satan incarnate), is the ability to treat the malady once diagnosed.

According to Linda Whitney Hobson, the gnostic seeks union with God, but through knowledge rather than faith: "To become perfect again, and reunite himself with God, [the gnostic] must discover the right knowledge, or gnosis, - ignoring faith entirely – that will make it possible for him to control his predicament" (76). Tom's life has become one in which he seeks to gain control in order to make himself and society whole again with his invention, rather than trusting in God and the mysteries of Faith. Just as the Utopians valued their political system as a means of attaining perfection, so too does More value science as a means of transcending the despair of modernity. His confidence as a scientist has crossed the threshold into pride because it no longer comes from a place informed and inspired by God, but rather through an unhealthy belief that he can remedy what God has split, the human psyche, with his Ontological Lapsometer. It is only at the end of the novel, when the catastrophe that he speaks of has passed, that More is able to put the use of his invention into perspective. He still believes that the Ontological Lapsometer is capable of saving the world, but it can only do so by making individuals aware of the causes for their discontent, rather than treating their malaise through Art Immelmann's metaphysical application of his device.

Lewis Lawson argues that More's need for fame arises from a sort of hybrid affliction combining an Oedipal Complex with a mid-life crisis, a malady known as "The Nobel Prize Complex" and first identified by Helen Tartakoff in 1966 (177). To Lawson, Tom has an ulterior motive for creating his Ontological Lapsometer: "While he may say and even think that he wishes to return the world to a Utopian condition for everyone, he is really driven by a highly personal motive" (176). According to Lawson, Tom's desire is derived from a self-righteous need to replace God with science. In his utter despair,

Tom views science as a reliable answer to the maladies that afflict modern man. If Tom is right and his machine can end the suffering of mankind by reuniting the body with soul, then we no longer have to work on building a relationship with God or improving ourselves as human beings. Mankind can be programmed to perfection through a practical application of science. Likewise, while there is no innovative technology that binds the Utopians in perfection, they have used their minds to create an "ideal" society which places a premium on logic over faith. Mirroring the Utopians, Tom has also marginalized God. "Let me confess that what worries me most is that the catastrophe will overtake us before my scientific article is published and so before my discovery can create a sensation in the scientific world" (7). As More begins to elevate his reliance on science, his faith is replaced by his vanity, which threatens to destroy him and the world itself.

According to Franklin Wilson, More's spiritual decay can be traced to his refusal to attend Mass and receive Communion. Wilson argues that, in the wake of his daughter's death, "More no longer swallows Christ; he no longer has life in him; he no longer dances like David before the ark, but lives rather like a subterranean creature solely for the satisfaction of biological need" (208). Tom's wife, Doris, who ran off to South America with an Englishman devoted to the tenets of Eastern spirituality, was a lapsed Episcopalian who had little use for Christianity. Samantha, however, seemingly had a nearly preternatural faith in the Catholic Church and its teachings. Tom describes his daughter as "chubby, fair, acned, and pious, the sort who likes to hang around after school and beat Sister's erasers" (12). Samantha was Tom's church-going companion and their faith was their common bond. Together they would attend Mass and receive

34

Communion. Tom says, "The best of times were after mass on summer evening when Samantha and I would walk home in the violet dusk, we having received Communion and I rejoicing… remembering what he promised me for eating him, that I would have life in me" (13). After they were home and Samantha had been tucked into bed, Tom would set up the grill, drink whiskey, listen to opera, and make love to his wife. Before he lost his faith, there was no clumsy hierarchy of Tom's preferences. He trusted in God, and thus, he was able to enjoy all of his other interests equally and without guilt. Within him was the life that had been promised through his act of Communion with Christ. Music, whiskey, and making love to his wife were all gifts from God that Tom was able to partake in organically and without sin as long as he faithfully recognized from whom they came and what purpose they served. All of this changes when Samantha becomes ill and dies.

However, Samantha's death is not in vain, for as she lies dying she urges her father to rely on his faith: "Don't commit the one sin for which there is no forgiveness… The sin against grace. If God gives you the grace to believe in him and love him and you refuse, the sin will not be forgiven you" (374). While he has obviously turned his back on his religion, his daughter's words stick with More throughout the text as he parallels the flesh of Christ with his daughter and the physical attributes of his girlfriend Moira. Near the end of the novel, Tom, as narrator, asks, "Is it possible to live without feasting on death?" (374). Of course the Eucharist in the Catholic Mass is a celebration of that very question, and transubstantiation is perhaps the most vital element of the Catholic faith. Therefore, the central aspect of life for a practicing Catholic is the act of feasting on the death of Christ, a death that paradoxically infuses life into the believer. Through

most of the text, More perverts the act of Communion by playfully feasting on the kneecaps of Moira. While relaxing in their makeshift sanctuary, a room at the decaying Howard Johnson's off the freeway, Moira asks Tom how much he loves her. He responds, "Enough to eat you," as he sensually "eats" her kneecaps (254), which he had referred to earlier as "perfect little biscuits" (126). In the absence of his faith, Tom is desperately searching for a replacement for the Eucharist. He is seeking the grace that he knows subconsciously is always offered to him, but seeking it in the wrong place. It is only at the end of *Love in the Ruins*, as he remembers the dying words of his daughter, that Tom manages to receive God's grace and that he is able vanquish Art Immelman by praying to his ancestor: "Sir Thomas More, kinsman, saint, best dearest merriest of Englishmen, pray for us and drive this son of a bitch hence" (376).

Utopia and *Love in the Ruins* hold conflicting beliefs about the power of faith to redeem the world. The Utopian notion is that, so long as the members of a society are forced to agree that God exists, the model of an ideal socio-economic paradigm can be firmly established through logical tenets of political science involving the devaluation of material goods and the dissolution of private property. Following that, man should be able to live in harmony with his fellow man, though destined for an agonizing life of stasis and conformity. In *Love in the Ruins*, Walker Percy offers an alternate vision, one that is simultaneously both terrifyingly apocalyptic and sublimely optimistic. Instead of suggesting that the world rely on reason as a means of finding God, he claims that the opposite should be true in attempting to establish a dynamic society with the potential for greatness and salvation. For Percy, only through the direct influence of God's grace, coupled with the desire to worship Him, can man be reconciled with himself. He

36

proposes that perhaps the world occasionally needs to be shattered to ruins in order for mankind to rediscover his humanity through his faith. Further, *Love in the Ruins* advises that religion must be valued over the advances of science. For Percy, despite of the many merits of modern technology, when we begin to bow to the cult of scientism, faith takes a backseat, and the result is a chaotic system bordering on apocalypse. There exists nothing that can be discovered, interpreted and/or utilized without the will of God. It is this principle that Percy uses to invert the primary religious themes of *Utopia* in *Love in the Ruins*.

Chapter Two:

Violence and fear are themes that are explored in both *Utopia* and *Love in the Ruins*. In the former, these elements are distributed by the pervading oppressive Utopian political machine, consisting of a prince and around 200 hundred syphogrants, that rules More's island nation. The primary merchants of violence in Utopia are those tasked with passing judgment on convicted "criminals," namely the priests, syphogrants and governors. When a citizen fails to submit to the oppressive tenets of Utopian laws, s/he is dealt with harshly. This swift justice is a component of the Utopian political machine's insistence on domination over its citizens. The violence executed by the state serves a double purpose. It instills fear in would-be dissidents, while also alleviating the fear that a subversive faction could threaten the consistency of Utopian life. Violence and fear are treated in a decidedly different manner in Percy's narrative. The apocalyptic nature of *Love in the Ruins* allows for a culture of fear and violence that Dr. Thomas More must overcome in order to save the world from catastrophe. Like his ancestor, More is concerned with the mounting violence and fear in his own time and place. While Percy does highlight the paternalism inherent in the American political landscape, especially as it relates to racism, *Love in the Ruins* is not a book about social or political policy. Rather, Percy uses his novel to explore violence and fear, as well as racial paternalism, among other themes, in order to champion religious salvation over political authority. The government of Utopia boasts of this paternalism, crediting it with the safety and harmony of the island. Percy, however, flips this ideology on its head by exploring its dehumanizing aspects on both sides of the racial divide in regards to racism and prejudice in America.

Sir Thomas More sought to create the ideal society in every respect with the publication of his *Utopia*. He did so by isolating the island nation, not only in its proximal relation to England, but also in its philosophical relation to the West in general. The New World had only recently been discovered when More was writing his book. Without modern media tools such as the internet or television, the citizens of Europe could only speculate as to the mysteries of the Americas. There existed a rabid audience, eager for information regarding the New World. More wisely seized upon this curiosity by placing his narrator, Raphael, in the role of world traveler alongside Amerigo Vespucci. While Vespucci returned home with the news of an entirely new and previously undiscovered continent, Raphael was given permission to remain behind to continue the exploration (11). Without the means of corroborating Raphael's narrative or verifying the location of the island - "it didn't occur to us to ask, nor to [Raphael] to say, in what area of the New World Utopia is to be found" (7) - the validity of More's text was in question. However, just as Europeans were incapable of verifying Utopia's existence, they were just as incapable of discrediting it since More set up the narrative as an actual account of the travels and observances of a member of Vespucci's expeditionary crew. Merely the idea that a place such as More's island nation *could* exist was enough to draw significant interest.

To a Renaissance reader, *Utopia* must have seemed like a form of Heaven on Earth, a new version of Eden, in which all things were shared as a means of obtaining the ideal commonwealth. In the modern age however, it is recognized that More's *Utopia* is a fiction outlining a potential paradigm for social change (or not, depending on your view of his authorial intent). The political landscape of Utopia may be capable of abolishing

criminal activity and affording men the opportunity to live in peace with one another, but this security comes at a great cost to the Utopians' humanity as many of their personal freedoms are restricted.

In Book One of *Utopia*, Raphael examines the imperfections of England in order to juxtapose them with the perfect state of Utopia. According to More's narrator, many of the practices of the English are illogical and serve to damage the state and her citizens rather than promulgate goodwill and accord among the masses. For instance, one of his primary accusations against the English is their punishment of thieves. During More's time, convicted thieves were usually executed by the state. Raphael sees this punishment as being grossly disproportionate to the crime. He argues that not only does execution severely exceed the crime of thievery, but that thievery is itself is produced by the politics of the state. Raphael blames the nobility for creating a culture of poverty in England. Many citizens are not trained in a practical profession, but are instead used as servants for noblemen. When they are dismissed from their masters, they struggle to find work because they have no practical training. Those who are trained as farmers are rapidly losing their livelihoods and their homes in direct proportion to the rising number of individuals practicing enclosure. By cordoning off massive portions of land for the cultivation of sheep's wool, the local gentry are forcing working families into poverty by robbing them of their agricultural occupations (19-21). As Raphael passionately states, "The tenants are dismissed; some are stripped of their belongings by trickery or brute force, or, wearied by constant harassment, are driven to sell them. By hook or by crook these miserable people… are forced to move out" (19). The greed of a few noblemen, gentry, and abbots results in the misery of the common man. Without the means to earn a

living, these former servants and farmers are forced to lead a life of robbery in order to feed their families.

Of course, in Utopia, this is not the case at all. Each member of society is taught a skill in addition to two years of mandatory agricultural training. Thus, everyone is able to contribute to society, as well as reap the benefits of their locality's yield. Further, enclosure does not exist as the land is shared by all and harvested for everyone's consumption. In Utopia, there is no need for thievery since all are afforded their equal share of food and goods so long as they are willing to work side by side with their fellow citizens to promote the common good. An imposed work schedule, coupled with the equal distribution of all property, effectively eliminates the need for any man to steal or to fear his neighbor stealing from him.

Beneath this veneer of security and plenty, Utopia is actually structured as an oppressive society because the citizens of the commonwealth have their choices made for them. In discussing the security of the utopians, David Glimp argues that "The Utopian artifact – the vast armature of daily routine, season ritual, social structures, disciplinary mechanisms, pedagogic practices and governmental activity that constitute and regulate Utopian life – organizes existence in such a way as to reduce the possibility of misfortune for its people" (269). The paternalistic Utopian government seeks to control every facet of every individual's existence under the fraudulent pretext of ensuring the quality of life of all Utopians. Since everything is predetermined, pre-organized, and pre-scheduled for every member of society, there is little potential for any calamity to befall them. The Utopians feel that fear is the cause of vice, and thus the Utopian governmental practices are validated. According to Raphael, "Fear of want, no doubt, makes every living

creature greedy and rapacious – and in addition, man develops these qualities out of sheer pride, pride which glories in getting ahead of others by a superfluous display of possessions. But this kind of vice had no place whatever in the Utopian way of life" (50).

Nominally, the Utopians operate on a democratic system of government, in which a governor is elected by Utopian senators, known as, "syphogrants." These politicians are freely elected and offer counsel to the governor. Once elected, each governor serves a life-term in office "unless he is suspected of aiming at tyranny" (43-4). However, while the governor of each Utopian city serves a lifelong term, the tranibors, or head syphogrants, have brief term limits, only one year. The length of each tranibor's term ensures that any tyranny a governor may be aiming toward will not be discovered. In the event that it is discovered, the tyrannical governor in question will have little to worry about since the tranibor's term will be up within a year. Regardless of the question of any potential for specific despotism by a governor, the discrepancy between their term limits and those of the tranibors ensures the influence of the governors over the citizens and senate of Utopia.

While it may be true that the social institutions and practices of the Utopians act as a safeguard against any harm befalling their nation's residents, they also serve to restrict their freedoms. Citizens are not allowed to travel without permission from the proper authorities, establish permanent residency, own a shred of private property, or participate in any market activity dealing with the use of currency. The penalties for these "crimes" are severe. At best a Utopian found guilty of these transgressions can hope to become a slave, where, through years of hard labor and submission, s/he might possibly be released back into the general population, where s/he can look forward to a

lifetime of even more submission. In Utopia, there is nothing to fear, but there is also nothing to celebrate.

Conversely, in *Love in the Ruins*, crime, chaos, and general discord are prevalent while governmental structure is almost nonexistent. This allows for a fiercely violent community, but the violence, anxiety and fear exhibited in Percy's text are a testament to the humanity of his characters, and the fallibility of mankind. Fully aware of the pervasive apathy in modern society, Percy implemented intense violence and horrific apocalyptic warnings in his novel in order to shake the reader into a previously unrecognized sense of awareness. In a 1987 interview with Robert Cubbage for *Our Sunday Visitor*, Percy remarks: "There is a positive side to horror. It can provide the turning point in one's life; it can even usher in a religious conversion. Any catastrophe… can be an occasion for… revelation. Horror penetrates the ordinariness of everyday life and opens one to mystery" (186). Paradise is perhaps one of the most horrifyingly dangerous societies ever presented in American literature, and Percy does indeed show the positive side to horror through Tom's salvation.

In spite of the vehement political opinions of the Paradisians, there seems to be little, if any, government presence in the novel. The reader is informed of this early on: "Powers and principalities are everywhere victorious" (5), but there is little direct evidence of this, and much of the political landscape of the novel is left to the imagination. In Fedville, the federally-owned complex of Paradise, various institutions thrive: the hospital, the Behavioral Institute, and the Geriatrics Center. The government's involvement and influence in these institutions remains vague and difficult to ascertain. While the operations of the government are nebulous at best, the ideological factions of

43

Paradise run wild in opposition to one another. There is a religious presence, an

intellectual presence in the form of the students and faculty of Dr. More's university, a

scientific presence comprised of the employees of the Love Clinic, and a counter-culture

presence in form of the denizens of the swamp. If it weren't for the President's

anticipated appearance in Paradise on the Fourth of July to attend the Pro-Am Golf

Tournament and then deliver a patriotic speech, the reader might be left to assume that

the United States had become an anarchy. Without even the slightest oversight, in

Paradise, each member of society is basically allowed to do as s/he pleases, regardless of

the legality of their pursuits. This leaves the characters in *Love in the Ruins* vulnerable to

myriad threats of violence, while simultaneously instilling a deep sense of fear and

anxiety in our protagonist.

Although there is very little explicit evidence of the governing bodies of Paradise

in the narrative, it is clear that the war between Democrats and Republicans continues to

be waged in imaginary lands as well as modern society. The political chasm in Percy's

novel has also been sharply divided in crude sects: liberals and republicans, in much the

same way as they seem to be in contemporary society. However, there is absolutely no

effort toward achieving even the slightest degree of bipartisanship between the two

parties. No longer content with referring to one another as liberals and conservatives, the

official monikers Democrat and Republican have been discarded and replaced by

LEFTPAPSANE and Knothead, respectively. More informs the reader that the former is

an acronym, "which stood for what, according to the Right, the left believed in: Liberty,

Equality, Fraternity, The Pill, Atheism, Pot, Anti-Pollution, Sex, Abortion Now,

Euthanasia" (Percy 18). Conversely, Knothead is a label stemming from an embarrassing

incident in which the Republicans unwittingly adopted the new title of the Christian

Conservative Constitutional Party (CCCP), an error that seemed to represent a degree of

solidarity between their party and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In response to

the blunder, the Republicans took ownership of their mistake by designing banners with

the slogan, "No Man Can Be Too Knothead in the Service of His Country" (18).

Regardless of the venomous attempts on both sides of the political aisle to mock

their counterpart with derisive branding, neither party has had success in passing

meaningful legislation. The LEFTPAPSANE were able to remove the phrase "In God

We Trust" from pennies, while the Knotheads have contributed to funding contraception

in rival countries and regions where the population is predominately black, such as Africa

and Alabama. Both "victories" highlight the amount of overlap that occurs in Paradise

with regard to the myriad opposing ideologies. While the difference between these

groups is nominally political, issues of religion and race influence their policy making.

Rather than working toward progress, Paradise, and seemingly the entirety of the United

States, has become more concerned with slinging mud in the direction of their opposition

than working together to create a better society and build stronger ties of community.

The divisions in Paradise, not only ideologically, but also within the individual,

are constantly nearing a point of critical mass. The Cartesian split of the self, which has

resulted in what More refers to as "Angelism-Beastialism," creates an extreme discontent

just below the surface of many Paradisians, and that discontent is constantly threatening

to spill over into incidences of violent rage, most especially when an individual is made

aware of his or her discontent. Strangely, for some, this rage assuages the malaise, at

least temporarily. As a psychiatrist, Dr. More is routinely exposed to these sorts of

episodes. Charley Parker, a friend of Tom's, schedules a life insurance checkup and appears to check out well in every way. A successful golf-pro, husband and father of two successful boys, Charley seems to be the model of happiness. When Tom passes his device over Mr. Parker's head, however, the readings that register contradict the outward joviality of his patient. His "deep pineal, the site of inner selfhood" (38), measures minimally. Charley denies any feelings of depression or anxiety, but after a moment of introspection, verbalizes his feelings to Tom: "I mean like this morning I looked at myself in the mirror and I said, Charley, who in the hell are you? What does it all mean? It was strange, Doc. What does it all mean, is the thing" (39). In spite of Charley's ability to succeed according to the generally accepted rules of society (wealth, talent, family), there still appears to be something missing, something of a deeper meaning that eludes him. At first, Charley's existential dilemma merely causes feelings of anxiety, but they soon develop into deeper feelings of anger. Once aware of his unease, Charley becomes defensive regarding his way of life. A model of the "American Dream," Charley has become increasingly paranoid that society is blaming him and others like him, for the world's problems. At one point, responding to this sort of accusation from his son, who recently dropped out of MIT and moved to the swamp, he says, "It's a goddamn lie… Ain't nobody starving in no swamp… That's humbug… You know what he accused me of? Starving n-------. You know what he called me? A hypocritical son of a bitch" (43-4). As the anger slowly rises, Tom collects a reading which measures a sharp increase in the previously dormant "deep pineal, the site of inner selfhood." By articulating his discontent and accessing his rage, Charley is able to expose himself to himself. He has become abstracted to such an extent that only his passionate rage is able

to expose Charley to himself while simultaneously creating a sense of equilibrium. Through Charley, Percy suggests that the key element is finding a balance in the human impulse to act in accordance with the primal instinct, while also conceptualizing abstractly. This cure is only temporary, however, and without a more permanent solution, the individual will once again gravitate toward a pole on the Angelism-Beastialism spectrum.

Aside from the major catastrophe that More's Ontological Lapsometer could cause, an event that would permanently seal man from himself, there is also a pending race war that threatens what little stability exists in Paradise. The overt hatred between white and black citizens is the principal example and catalyst of fear and violence. The palpable tension threatens to erupt at any moment. In the novel, African Americans are believed to be inferior, malevolent, and insignificant by their neighbors in Paradise. In discussing the nearly universally accepted attitude toward black people in Paradise, Dr. More informs the reader, "The Negroes around here are generally held to be a bad lot. The older Negroes are mostly trifling and no-account, while the young Negroes have turned mean as yard dogs. Nearly all the latter have left town, many to join the Bantus in the swamp. Here the conservatives and liberals of Paradise agree" (17).

While most members of the Paradise elite are staunch racists, the attitude of their creator, Walker Percy was decidedly different. While not involved in the demonstrations of the 60's, Percy was committed to the notion of equality among all people. In an interview conducted in 1968 by Carlton Cremeens, Percy was quoted as saying, "I'm not an activist, a racial activist. I don't march in picket lines, but I am completely convinced of the rightness of the Negro struggle for civil rights. My writings I think reflect this"

(17). He identified his place in this struggle not only as a Southern writer, but also as a

Catholic. Raised in a household that valued the tenets of Stoicism, young Walker shared

his uncle's paternalistic views toward African Americans. This philosophy, or at least

William Alexander Percy's version of this philosophy, advocated the protection and

instruction of the black population as a sort of obligation, an altruistic sacrifice. In spite

of this paternalism, or perhaps because of it, the Southern stoic saw African Americans as

being inferior as a consequence of their race. According to Farrell O'Gorman, Percy's

Catholic conversion led him to reexamine his social ethics, including his opinions

regarding segregation, a practice that he had once staunchly defended: "Percy's

commitment to the civil rights movement was a direct consequence of his religious

conversion, and it is only in connection with his Catholicism that it is properly

understood" (70). Therefore, Walker's faith inevitably led him on a righteous path

toward adopting desegregation and egalitarian principles. These beliefs are made

manifest in *Love in the Ruins* through Dr. More's relationships with several black

characters, most notably, Elzee Acree, Victor Charles, and Uru.

      Tom More believes that the United States is fundamentally fragmented, and he

further believes that this fragmentation has its roots in the American tradition of slavery,

> Even now, late as it is, nobody can really believe that it didn't work after
>
> all. The U.S.A. didn't work! Is it even possible that from the beginning it
>
> never did work? That the thing always had a flaw in it, a place where it
>
> would shear… Was it the n----- business from the beginning? What a bad
>
> joke: God saying, here it is, the new Eden, and it is yours because you're
>
> the apple of my eye; because you the lordly Westerners… believed in

me… And all you had to do was pass one little test, which was surely

child's play for you because you had already passed the big one. One

little test: here's a helpless man in Africa, all you have to do it not violate

him. That's all. One little test: you flunk! (56-57).

This quote suggests that the United States was doomed to fail from the very beginning.

The helpless man in Africa was violated to the extent that the most powerful nation of the

20th century was predicated upon his exploitation throughout the history of this country.

The irony of course is that along with the prosperity of the United States came the Civil

Rights movement, a series of events that shattered 400 years' worth of segregation and

slavery in this country, if not 400 years of racism, in a single decade. Now that African

Americans had been given a level footing with the rest of the population, at least in a

nominal sense, white America became resentful of the black man's success as well as

fearful of the implications of that success. This resentment and fear is best represented in

Love in the Ruins through Percy's presentation of racial paternalism and Dr. More's

relationship to Uru, the leader of the Bantu revolution.

For Percy, this racial paternalism is an obstacle in the path of reconciliation

between the races. It derives from the concept of patriarchy, and its central claim is that

the subjugation of the black race is mutually beneficial for both parties. James Oakes

explains "in the decades immediately following the American Revolution, white

Southerners spoke of slavery as a 'necessary evil;' but after about 1830 they developed a

more aggressive defense of slavery and began to refer to it as a 'positive good'" (587).

This exercise in semantic gymnastics ensured the continued oppression of African

Americans leading up to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's. Racial paternalism

prevents both black and white alike from owning up to history and facing the elephant in the room: slavery, and the subsequent century of racism and hatred in the United States.

Racial paternalism can be seen at several points throughout *Love in the Ruins*, but perhaps the most glaring occurs in the midst of the attempted Bantu revolution. While attempting to retrieve a rifle from his home, Tom encounters Colonel Ringo, a distinguished veteran of the war in Ecuador, guarding the gates of Paradise Estates. Ringo has been tasked with guarding a small food supply of molasses and soybean meal from a group of youthful Bantus. In his efforts to do so, Ringo is shot in the scrotum while taking a young prisoner named Elzee Acree. From their initial interactions, modes of stoic paternalism set in as if from an inherent collective instinct. As More puts it, "Between the two of them they've struck up an ancient spurious friendship and I've had enough of both" (289). Within a few short lines of dialogue, Ringo refers to Elzee as "boy" three times as he tends to the Colonel's wounds while simultaneously fixing him a cocktail. Acting in accordance with his position in this dynamic, Elzee routinely responds to Ringo's requests with "Yes suh!" (289). Just moments earlier, the two had been shooting at one another, but now they are acting out the same stale pathology of racial paternalism inherent in Southern stoicism. Adrienne Akins argues, "The dehumanizing nature of Colonel Ringo's direct address of Elzee as 'boy' and his description of his as 'a good boy' violate the sacred rights of equality and dignity which Percy deems necessary parts of the Christian scheme" (68). Just as Elzee is unaware of why he is rebelling or who exactly he is rebelling against, Ringo is simply reenacting an impulse to keep the minority in what he perceives to be its rightful place. Once the two

are actually united in discourse, they do nothing to alleviate the century's old problems between their races, choosing instead to strike up their "ancient spurious friendship."

Not all racial relations are as seamlessly alleviated as the one between Elzee and Ringo. From the first words of Percy's narrative, it is clear that someone is attempting to assassinate Dr. More. Thus, Tom is in a constant state of fear from the moment that we encounter him until the epilogue of *Love in the Ruins*. While More suspects any number of possible assailants, it becomes clear as the novel progresses that he is being hunted by members of the Bantu faction in Paradise because of his prime property, which the Bantus hope to use as a tactical operations base in order to utilize the massive television transmitter sitting atop his home. While en route to visit with a colleague of his, Max Gottlieb, in order to discuss possible sponsorship for his article and funding for the production of his invention, Tom happens across a group of three African American revolutionaries discussing, of all things, Tom himself. There is some disagreement as to what do in regards to Dr. More among the three individuals. Victor Charles, More's friend of twenty years and somewhat Anglicized black, does not want any harm to befall the protagonist. A willing participant in the social dynamic of racial paternalism, Victor seems content with the status quo of a segregated Paradise. He continues to believe in the goodness of people in spite of the fact that he is not allowed to accompany Tom into a bar owned by a fellow Baptist. After discussing the irony of Victor's position with him, Tom laments, "Here is a black Southerner making common cause – against me – with a white Southerner who wouldn't give him the time of day" (148). Victor has become a willing participant in a social dynamic not wholly unlike the one willfully entered into by the Utopians. Like the Utopians, he trusts his oppressors and has willingly entered into a

51

social contract with them ensuring his persecution. Victor trusts the white man as he has been indoctrinated with his way of life and his religion along with his ancestors for hundreds of years. Although a charming and compassionate character, he is static and incapable of seeing the antecedents that have led to the oppression of the African American. As such, he cannot grasp the totality of the Bantu's revolutionary plan and seeks to protect Tom at every turn.

The leader of the group, Uru, a former wide receiver for the Detroit Lions, states in unequivocal terms that the situation calls for any means necessary in order to achieve the goal of the revolution, a complete and uncompromising takeover of Paradise. In response to Victor's reticence, Uru boldly admonishes him: "And I'll tell you something else… This is war and don't you forget it. All this talk about some people being nice, listen. They're nice all right. They're so nice and polite that you mothers been castrated without knowing it" (104). While Victor is a somewhat compromised and naive revolutionary, in that he would prefer to peacefully overthrow the white establishment in order to create an African American led colony, Uru has no qualms about the use of violence to achieve that goal. A self-professed Ph. D in political science from Michigan State University, he is well acquainted with the various economic, religious and cultural strategies that white America has implemented throughout history in order to subjugate the black race.

Uru sees through the veil of paternalism that has been cast over the eyes of many African Americans in Paradise. The brains behind the assassination attempts on Dr. More, not to mention the entire Bantu-led revolution itself, he is both well-educated and militant. During his dialogue with Tom, he seamlessly shifts the topic of conversation

from a violent kidnapping that he ordered, to what he perceives to be the great feats of white men: "the Fifth Symphony, the Principia Mathematica, the Uranus guidance system" (299). Along with his chameleon-like ability to shift from an aggressive revolutionary to an intellectual, he can also alter his dialect to suit his purpose. In one breath, he mocks Victor's Southern lexicon, and in the next, "dipthongs his I's broadly and curls his tongue in his R's," (297) leaving Dr. More to correctly assume that Uru is from Michigan. This linguistic dexterity allows Uru to present himself as a black man aware of his roots and as an African American in the process of manifesting his autonomy, no longer attached to the stigma slavery.

Uru believes that the principal weapon in the arsenal of American racial paternalism is the Christian religion. After the abolishment of slavery, white Americans were no longer allowed to use any form of violence or bondage to keep blacks "in line." A numbing agent had to be created and administered in order to ensure white supremacy. According to Uru, as well as many religious and ethnic scholars, this formula was Christianity. Simply put, the idea was that by indoctrinating African Americans with the promise of a better life to come, they would forget about their underprivileged status here on Earth and choose to focus on their salvation. After Victor exalts his belief in the general goodness of people, Uru proceeds to ridicule him and his beliefs, while implying that he and Tom are fully aware of this religious conspiracy:

> They really did right by you, Victor. Here you are fifty years old and still shoveling dog shit. I'll tell you where right comes from - they know it, Chuck knows it, only you don't… That's where they smarter than you, Victor. They don't need a gun. They made you do what they want

without a gun and even made you like it… That's where they beat you,

Victor, with sweet Jesus… Doc here knows what I mean, don't you,

Doc?... He knows the joke alright and the joke's on you, Victor. All these

years you either been in trouble or else got nothing to your name, they

been telling you about sweet Jesus. Now damned if you don't holler sweet

Jesus louder than they do. (303)

Far from Percy's ideal that community and salvation are achieved through faith, Uru

believes that the faith imposed upon his race has been the chief deterrent in their social

advancement. The parallel between Uru's theory and the forced monotheism of Utopia

cannot be overlooked. In the wake of slavery, Uru believes that shackles were traded for

Bibles as a means of white control. Similarly, Utopus' monotheistic decree upon his

initial conquest of Utopia ensured an eternity of oppression for the citizens of the island

nation. However, as Percy suggests through his characterization of Tom and his

salvation (both spiritual and literal), religion is not the enemy of civilization. The enemy

lies in the inability to choose and act with ultimate agency in accordance with one's will.

Paternalism denies this. It destroys the fabric of society by creating a simple, two-fold

hierarchy consisting of a lone, binary opposition: black and white.

Chapter Three

The most terrifying aspect of Utopian society is the utter lack of signification. The inability to communicate freely renders the Utopians little more than mindless automatons. Like most other matters involving political and social policy on the island, this is achieved primarily through the prohibition of private property. As stated above, every aspect of life in Utopia is subject to government control. Desires, needs and wants are constantly stifled, or at the very least re-channeled, in order to advance the common good. This includes the most fundamental human impulse, what separates man from all other creatures: the need to make meaning in life through individual expression. This is achieved through language, the ability to name, symbolize and communicate.

Homogenization is ubiquitous in Utopia. The consistency of sameness in every element of society serves to reinforce the notion that expression is suspect and that individuality is categorically dangerous. For instance, their cities are structured so as to appear perfectly indistinguishable from one another. According to Raphael, "There are fifty-four cities on the island, all spacious and magnificent, identical in language, customs, institutions, and laws…If you know one of their cities, you know them all, for they're exactly alike, except where geography itself makes a difference" (41). Architecture, an art form heavily valued in the great societies of antiquity that the Utopians claim to revere, has little value on the island. The municipalities are planned in exactly the same fashion, and the houses are all built to resemble one another. There are no latches or locks on any doors because "there is nothing private anywhere" (42). Indeed, there can be nothing private in order for the Utopian method of government to thrive. The foundation of their political machine is crystal clear transparency. Without

the ability to monitor the inhabitants of the island, the entire framework could collapse. As Hanan Yoran observes, "While the whole point of Utopia is said to be the realization of each person's *humanitas*, the social order is based on discipline, control, and supervision, practices which abolish the space for free activity" (9).

Every city in Utopia is essentially a massive supervised prison. The public must seek authorization from their government in order to enjoy even the most modest freedoms, such as travel. Citizens are not allowed to venture outside of their respective towns without a signed letter of permission from the governor. In fact, to promenade about the grounds of one's own district is discouraged without the approval of one's father or spouse. If consent is granted, either for intra-national or local travel, a person is not given a bite to eat on her or his journey until a full day's work is completed, wherever s/he may be (53). According to Raphael, the logic behind these laws is to prevent laziness and conspiracy. He tells More and Giles, "There is no chance to loaf or any pretext for evading work; there are no wine bars or alehouses or brothels, no chances for corruption, no hiding places, no spots for secret meetings" (53). A telling signpost of any tyrannical government is a fear of its citizens. The government openly acknowledges its fright through by preventing Utopians from to travel, to meet in secret, to have any kind of private life at all.

This brings us to the foundational principle of Utopian society, the abolition of any and all forms of private property, including intellectual property. In order for the society to work efficiently, Utopian invasion of intellectual property begins at a young age in the life of every school child. What is happening with the students of Utopia is less a form of education and more a form of propaganda. The students are not only

taught subjects such as arithmetic and history, but also a government-issued brand of

morality. John Rodden in an interview conducted with Megan Giller of the *Texas*

Observer draws a clear distinction between education and propaganda. Although the

question he is asked deals with the modern issue of teachers basing their curriculum

around an assigned textbook, his comments are nevertheless poignant and relate directly

to the educational system of Utopia: "Education opens your mind to a larger way of

seeing, and to different points of view. Propaganda indoctrinates you to a single point of

view and narrows your vision of the world; it closes down your mind to a single

perspective" (30). A form of mind control is practiced throughout Utopia to establish this

"single perspective." This impedes their progress as human beings, robbing them of their

interiority. Children content with the status quo will become willingly oppressed citizens

of the Utopian regime. Raphael informs us that in regards to the education of the youth

in Utopia:

> Instruction in morality and virtue is considered just as important as the
>
> accumulation of learning. From the very first they [priests] try to instill in
>
> the pupils' minds, while they are still young and tender, principles which
>
> will be useful to preserve the commonwealth. What is planted in the
>
> minds of children lives on in the minds of adults, and is of great value in
>
> strengthening the commonwealth: the decline of society can always be
>
> traced to vices which arise from wrong attitudes. (89-90)

There is a fine line between education and indoctrination, and the schooling of Utopian

children crosses this line. There is no separation of church and state in the Utopian

educational system, thus all students receive a dogmatic brand of indoctrination initiated

by the state. What is considered virtuous or moral is predetermined for each member of society from a young age. The pivotal word in the above quotation is "wrong." A conscience that is constructed by the state will inevitably be unauthentic. Morality cannot and should not be forced on anyone by an oppressive authority. Doing so restricts the autonomy of the individual and renders her or him little more than cogs in the wheel of the political apparatus. A person's morality and their set of values is paramount in the construction of identity. If right and wrong are dictated for every member of a society from a young and impressionable age, everyone will invariably agree on all matters of state because they have the same foundation from which they draw conclusions. This is, of course, highly convenient for the powers that be in Utopia. The Utopians' conclusions are predetermined by the oppressive state of Utopia that wishes to restrict the autonomy of its citizens in order to maintain control. This indoctrination ensures that the status quo of Utopian ethics will not be disturbed and that the calculated manipulation of the Utopians will be practiced for generations.

Utopians begin to develop an aversion for physical private property even before they are enrolled in school. In addition to the endemic spread of homogenization, (which instills a longing for sameness among the youth) the devaluation of all material goods and the strictly pragmatic approach to symbolic interaction prevents Utopians from ascribing more or less value to any object in any abstract or arbitrary fashion. Specifically, Utopians are told how to think about all elements of life and society, rather than being afforded the opportunity to come to their own conclusions. The most famous instance of this is the Utopians' attitude toward precious metals.

The Utopians do keep vast reserves, but since they do not own private property, there is no need for currency. Therefore, the treasury is maintained only, "as a protection against extreme peril or sudden emergency. They use it above all to hire… foreign mercenaries" (54). These various forms of capital aren't locked away in a vault, but rather put to use in ways deemed practical. The argument is that since gold and silver are two of the most useless medals, they are also two of the least valuable. According to Raphael, "Human folly has made them precious because they are rare. In contrast, Nature, like a most indulgent mother, has placed the best things out in the open, like air, water, and the earth itself; but vain and unprofitable things she has hidden away in remote places" (55). This organization of material value results in the Utopians' crude, yet highly practical use of "precious metals."   Throughout the island, chamber pots are fashioned out of gold and silver, and slaves are forced to wear opulent jewelry in order to "bear the mark of some disgraceful act" (55). Pearls and diamonds are given to young children as toys to be cast off in shame as they approach adolescence. The Utopian regime controls the value placed upon any potentially threatening form of currency by attaching to them an intense stigma. The beauty and rarity of the above mentioned metals are ignored, and indeed mocked. In this way, the symbolic worth of these metals is subverted, rendering them basically obsolete in Utopian society. Utopians interact with all objects as their government would have them do – blindly and without passion, prejudice or preference. Hythloday informs the reader that the Utopians' take great pride in their philosophy and quest for knowledge, but the constriction of their meaning-making capabilities and the destruction of their interiority makes this claim difficult to accept.

As usual, *Love in the Ruins* has taken a major thematic element from *Utopia* and investigated its opposite. Percy's novel is so rife with signification that the myriad symbols cannot possibly be processed from any one critical theory or interpretation. *Love in the Ruins* could be described as a regional, universal, contemporary, eternal, post-colonial, post-modern, new historicist, new critical, Marxist, psychoanalytical, existential approach to the human condition in relation to despair and salvation. Of course some of those approaches are mutually exclusive, but the point is that Percy is bravely attempting to formulate a theory of man as wayfarer (through several different critical lenses.) One of the ways in which this is achieved is through the partitioning of various ideologies among the Paradisians. They have little patience for anyone who takes an oppositional stance in regards to race, religion, politics and any number of other ideologies. It is largely this argument over ideology that sets More to work at creating his Ontological Lapsometer, a project doomed to fail from the beginning.

In addition to being one of the greatest novelists of his generation, Percy was also a prolific essayist, primarily concerned with the role of language in the ontology of the human race. He consistently incorporated theories that he initially posited in his essays into his fictional prose. To this end, Percy's concern with the role of language in developing an anthropology is vital in constructing an existential novel, such as *Love in the Ruins*. Perhaps the most influential of Percy's essays in relation to *Love in the Ruins* is his seminal work "The Delta Factor."

First published in 1975, this work brought considerable attention to the author as an essayist. In it, Percy explores reasons to explain why people so often feel bad in good environments and good in bad environments. Specifically, he is concerned with man's

tendency to be overwhelmed with the everydayness of life in the modern world, while only feeling truly alive and invigorated in moments of great chaos, confusion, and despair. In short, how is it that man struggles to find contentment in the modern age? Why must there always be a threatening catastrophe in order for us to feel organically human? In order to answer his own question, Percy begins with what he believes to be a general truth: "The theories of man of the former age no longer work and the theories of the new age are not yet known" (7). Contemporary man is therefore in a transitional phase marked by the quest for a new set of values. Based on the theory that man has come to the dawn of a new and unnamed age, he believes that the best way to approach his overarching question is to begin, "where man's singularity is there for all to see and cannot be called into question… That singularity is language" (7).

Language is what elevates men above all other organisms. While it may be true that many animals have the ability to engage in a form of primitive communication based on exercises in stimulus-response, these activities can hardly be described as language. They are merely causal relations based on dyadic behavior. In "The Doctor and the 'Delta Factor,'" Kevin Majeres states, "The dyad is the basic dimension of [the] non-languaged world. It encompasses the realms of physics and chemistry entirely, and extends upwards to contain biology, physiology, animal behavior—all are mere series, however complex, of cause-effect dyads" (585-586). No matter how complex these causal relationships may be, so long as they remain dyadic in nature, they pale in comparison to the triadic communicative relationships exhibited among mankind. The behaviorist's desire to anoint various primates as creatures equipped with speech notwithstanding, man is the only creature capable of interpersonal communication

because it requires the ability to think abstractly. The ability to couple an object with a sign, while simultaneously recognizing the infinite possibilities of the object separates man from all other entities.

Moving forward from this basic assertion, Percy attempts to understand and describe what occurred within Helen Keller's mind when she first became aware of the mystery of language. One morning Anne Sullivan signed the word <u>water</u> into her pupil's hand and suddenly Helen understood not just the object being signed, but the myriad meanings and consequences of that object. This recognition spawned an awakening in young Helen that went far beyond linguistics. From that moment on, she was able to understand the *nature* of things which led to the birth of an interior consciousness. Learning how to communicate exposed her to herself. It introduced her to her emotions. Percy described Keller's epiphany in the following terms: "Before, Helen had behaved like a good responding organism. Afterward, she acted like a rejoicing symbol-mongering human. Before, she was little more than an animal. Afterward, she became wholly human." (38). Percy called the event that Keller experienced, "The Delta Phenomenon," the idea that all things are understood in an irreducible triadic relationship consisting of a sign, a signified, and a signifier.

It is from this principle that man possesses the ability to conceptualize and create, to evolve. Although the tendency of man in the modern era is to take this process for granted, Percy believed that it could have the potential to explain the malaise that man consistently experiences. However, as the Cartesian split between mind and body suggests a distinction between man, language, and other physical and conceptual objects

in nature, it would appear as though the Cogito offers a precursor to The Delta Phenomenon.

In the article, "The Rift in the Modern Mind: Tocqueville and Percy on the Rise of the Cartesian Self," Matthew Sitman and Brian Smith argue against Descartes: "By tearing mind from body and thus dividing the unity that the Christian understanding of man provided, Descartes set man on the path to forgetting that he is always a problem to himself – that his science and his philosophy will never fully explain the mystery life presents us" (16). In *Love in the Ruins*, Thomas More attempts to refute this claim by explaining the mysteries of life through science. Having disowned his faith after the loss of his daughter and thus denying the Christian understanding of man as a unified creature, he believes that his Lapsometer can somehow reunite the mind with the body, can collapse the dichotomy of Angelism-Beastialism. The paradox is that The Delta Phenomenon is the defining characteristic of man, but it is also the cause of all of man's suffering. If man could not think abstractly and recognize the triadic nature of existence, he would not be a man, but he would be free from this modern malaise with which Percy was so concerned. No other animal is afflicted with the anxiety that comes with the everydayness of a Wednesday afternoon, but no other animal is blessed with the ability to conceptualize The Delta Phenomenon, or conceptualize at all, for that matter. The problem then is how to overcome the burden of existence with the notion that man alone is able to think triadically. In *Love in the Ruins*, Walker Percy envisions the consequences of a world in which this question did not have to be answered, but merely circumvented through a technological advancement in the form of the Ontological Lapsometer.

As mentioned above, Paradisians are by and large a troubled lot. The few characters that seem to operate free from the malaise of modern society are only able to do so as a result of sacrificing the ability to introspect. Thomas More recognizes these afflictions and develops an invention that can diagnose an individual's dissatisfaction. He boldly claims that his Ontological Lapsometer, in the hands of an able diagnostician "can probe the very secrets of the soul, diagnose the maladies that poison the wellsprings of man's hope" (7). As the name of More's instrument suggests, it diagnoses the nature and degree of an individual's lapse or fall. In naming this invention such, Percy had a clear purpose in mind. In "Walker Percy's Eucharistic Vision," John Desmond discusses Percy's convictions in the context of the Cartesian Split: "Following his Catholic beliefs, Percy saw the mind/body question, and the relation between spirit and matter, in terms of mankind's fall, i.e., as an ontological lapse in the order of being" (220). According to Percy, Descartes' declaration tore man in two halves, the mind and the body, the angel and the beast, software and hardware. The Lapsometer serves to reunite these opposing components of the human makeup by replacing the coupling aspect of man's being with the Ontological Lapsometer. This perversion of the human impulse to communicate organically leads to severe complications.

The catastrophe upon which the novel is centered would never have come into being if Art Immelman had not entered the picture and adjusted the Ontological Lapsometer by adding the therapeutic function. Art's supplemental contribution to the instrument enables it to "treat" the patient by massaging her or him into any desired state along the Angelism-Beastialism spectrum. In doing so, it releases man of all responsibility. The Lapsometer becomes something like Huxley's "soma," a wonder

drug that serves to replace an individual's cognition. It effectively enables mankind to circumvent the burden that comes with facing The Delta Phenomenon.

The Lapsometer is a tool that More believes can free man of the everydayness that is a natural byproduct of the Cartesian split between mind and body if he could only discover a therapeutic component. He is lamenting his ineptitude in this endeavor just before he is introduced to Art Immelman, whose style and character inform the reader that he is the Devil incarnate. Art's appearance is a strange anachronism of what someone not completely familiar with modern America would assume to be appropriate. Dressed "on the right" (200) and wearing an out-of-date gabardine jacket with patches attached to the elbows, a short-sleeve white shirt, dark pants, and sporting an old-fashioned flat-top haircut, he is a comical simulacrum of a traveling salesman from the 1950's. Art also smells of sulfur and seems to have the ability to appear and disappear from an area in an instant. He introduces himself to Tom as a liaison from the National Institute of Mental Health in Washington, D.C., and offers him a contract to fund the development of his Lapsometer. At first More refuses, but upon encountering Art a second time, he cannot resist. In the men's room shortly before Tom is due in The Pit, Art reveals to him the therapeutic component that he has constructed based on Tom's previous research. He then uses the Lapsometer to sedate More, inducing him to sign the funding paperwork while under the tool's hypnotic spell. It is through this Faustian transaction that Art becomes able to act independently of Tom's discretion and to distribute Lapsometers to hundreds of impressionable students in the Pit. Chaos inevitably ensues. Violent rage is both sparked and assuaged as students and faculty alike simultaneously engage in fistfights and lovemaking.

A clean sweep with the new and improved Lapsometer over the desired area of an individual's brain will cause that person to behave according to whatever function that area serves. Their anxiety will be stilled by achieving a balance on the spectrum of Angelism-Beastialism. With his invention in hand, the human race will no longer have to seek community and salvation through faith. They will no longer be forced to construct their own conception of the world that they inhabit. Instead, they can now substitute their autonomy for the numbing capacity of science to provide meaning and harmony in their lives.

John Desmond explains Percy's concern with the tendency of modern man to glorify science in his article, "Walker Percy and Suicide": "For Percy, when the modern 'autonomous self' rejects identity as a creature of God, it falls prey to definition by the reigning forces of scientism and technology" (61). In the absence or perversion of faith, the varying factions of the Paradisians struggle for the control and ubiquitous spread of a clearly outlined value system. Dr. More's hope is that his invention will help the masses think rationally, but Immelmann's addition to the Lapsometer has the opposite effect. Everyone who has been "treated" with the machine becomes manic. Their characters rapidly swing to whatever end of the Angelism-Beastialism spectrum toward which they are naturally inclined.

The main point that Percy is trying to make through the disaster of More's invention is that Behaviorism cannot possibly serve as an adequate explanation of mankind as the only symbol-making creature. The Ontological Lapsometer reads the sickness of the very soul and, with Immelmann's sinister therapeutic addition, treats it accordingly. The chaos that ensues in the Pit episode is an illustration of the falseness of

the Behaviorists' claims concerning language. There must be a coupler in order for an authentic triadic relationship to occur. It cannot merely be substituted by modern advances in technology. When this substitution happens in *Love in the Ruins*, a purely triadic community is not achieved as More had hoped, but rather the complexities of the human impulse to communicate are manipulated. What results is an utter collapse in the equilibrium of the Angelism-Beastialism spectrum, a communication breakdown with drastic consequences. These consequences are narrowly avoided through More's recognition of the evil surrounding him, which leads him to rely on his faith by praying for God to banish Immelmann once and for all.

In *Utopia*, effective triadic communication is destroyed by the double impact of indoctrinating the youth and legislating government control of all forms of private property. Conversely, *Love in the Ruins* offers a glimpse of what modern society might look like if we allow the hubris of technology to supplant organic triadic relationships. The answer, at least for Percy, is that regardless of how absurd strict adherence to various ideologies may be, the attempt to communicate one's feelings about them will always be preferable to a society in which we rely on technology to couple signifiers and signifieds.

In constructing his argument, Percy portrays technology in an evil light and naturally occurring human communication in a good light. He is not condemning science as an institution (after all, the man was a physician), but he is slamming the notion that science is to be heralded as the solution to the problems of the modern world. Champions of scientism argue that since religion cannot, as Kenneth Ketner suggests, "engage in the scientific method" (23) then there can be no shred of truth in the divine. Scientism, of its very nature, views abstractions such as religion and communication as

non-material entities. Knowing what we know of Percy's background, it is not difficult to see why the man had an issue with this line of thinking. So Percy devises a fictional litmus test within his own novel to illustrate the fallibility of science. There is no doubt that the Ontological Lapsometer is able to fulfill its function. Not only can it diagnose the human malaise, but, with Immelman's help, it can also serve as a therapeutic device. The problem is that Immelman's addition to the contraption does not allow for a healing function in the patient, but rather a regression of sorts which serves to dehumanize said patient. Instead of a transcendent return of man to himself, the reuniting of the Cartesian split, once treated with the Lapsometer, man reverts to a base version of himself. S/he becomes drunk with passionate rage, hedonistic lust, and misplaced sentimentality, as exemplified by the events in "The Pit" (233-242). The greater truth, Percy argues, lies in the mystery of life itself, the search as it were. If man is a wayfarer on the search for truth, then his primary function is bastardized by the compass that scientism claims to provide. This concept is cemented by Tom More's epiphany at the end of the text when he discovers that the course to truth lies not in science, but within man himself and his innate ability to navigate the world.

Conclusion:

For many reasons, it can be difficult to compare *Utopia* with *Love in the Ruins*. To begin with, the two texts were written nearly 500 years apart. Faced with this reality the critic must make a decision early on: do I take More at face-value and read his seminal text as a condemnation of the political apparatus of which he was a vital member, or do I take into account his Humanist leanings and view his work as a rhetorical exercise? I obviously chose the former. I worked with what More presented me rather than speculating about his purpose. Once that decision had been made, things became slightly more clear: More had written a political treatise professing his qualms with the political landscape of pre-Reformation England and proposed an alternative form of government in a mysterious, distant land. I found (and my research largely confirmed) that the society that he created seemed to have more negative than positive qualities. As one reads *Utopia*, one begins to see clearly the irony at work in its title. The restriction of personal freedoms, both physical and mental, in this "perfect society" is alarming.

Turning to Percy's novel, it was not as difficult to determine his fundamental purpose. Writing in a chaotic and violent time, he wrote a chaotic and violent satire to mimic the poor practices of contemporary society, while suggesting that man has the capability to seek out his fate rather than having it thrust upon him. It is this existential ideal that separates the two narratives and places them on opposite positions of the utopian spectrum. The principle question that should be asked in any conversation pertaining to the benchmarks of a utopian society, is whether or not the individual has the ability to operate independently of a domineering authority. If the individual is not, he is

surely living under dystopian condition. However, if each person is allowed to dictate his

or her own life, then s/he will find themselves in a Utopia.

In Utopia, effective communication is destroyed by the double impact of

indoctrinating the youth and legislating government control of all forms of private

property. The government restricts their citizens' ability to communicate from a young

and innocent age, effectively dehumanizing them in the name of prosperity, security, and

nationalism. The Utopian mission is to develop an indestructible community devoid of

anything but a rationed perspective. This is accomplished through the implementation of

a clearly defined system of shared property and transparency which robs citizens of their

interiority. Conversely, *Love in the Ruins* offers a mirror for modern society to gaze at the

deficiencies of technological hubris and unmitigated ideology. The text is a glimpse of

what modern society might look like if we allow the hubris of technology to supplant

organic triadic relationships with our fellow man and our surroundings. As Farrell

O'Gorman states, "Percy's vision... emphasizes not the individual's immersion in a

communal history, but rather his sovereign moral freedom in an essentially mysterious

present" (101). For Percy, regardless of how absurd strict adherence to various

ideologies may be, the attempt to communicate one's feelings about them will always be

preferable to a society in which we rely on technology to couple signifiers and signifieds.

The mystery is an essential part of the meaning. In Utopia, the technology for this

automatic coupling process does not exist, but the means with which to attempt to force

the Delta Factor on the individual is simply replaced by the state's provincial obsession

with control. In Utopia, this process is an all encompassing one in which all members of

society are made to follow the same prescriptive set of rules governing what constitutes

proper communication, which of course renders communication void. In Book Two of *Utopia*, there is not a single character that Hythloday describes, other than Utopus, who is essentially a stand-in for the State. This is because there can be no narrative in a place like Utopia as there exists not even the possibility for visceral, organic communication.

Tom More is a troubled man. He lives in a troubled society. His vices seem to be more than he can bear for the majority of *Love in the Ruins*. His lust overwhelms him and often puts him in comically claustrophobic positions. It appears as though alcohol will be the death of him considering both the massive quantities he consumes and his blatant disregard for the allergic reactions that it routinely causes him. Further, and most importantly, he is in a despondent state of despair, the most significant element of which is his inability to cognitively recognize his own condition. At the novel's climax though, when he is presented with a choice to either allow Art to conquer the world, or vanquish him, he chooses the latter by invoking the name of God. This act transcends Tom's personal religious conviction. It is a statement made on behalf of all mankind. He hurls Art back to the depths of Hell by proving to him that human beings are infinitely capable because of the freedom afforded us to choose regardless of the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Neither of the societies presented in *Utopia* or *Love in the Ruins* can be described as classically utopian. The former is an oppressive state which robs its citizens of the ability to think for themselves or to communicate effectively, while the latter is laden with hyper-signification which results in a disorienting mess of ideology. In order to discover the utopian aspects of these two works, the reader must not focus on how the works fit into the genre, but rather how they inform and contribute to it.

Utopia is not structured to describe an ideal commonwealth, but rather a non-existent one. As "no-place," Utopia is an amorphous and troubling example of a locale that serves as a foil for pre-Reformation England. As one continues to investigate the text, it becomes clear that More was not suggesting a viable alternative to the socio-political milieu in which he lived. Rather, he was issuing a warning to the powerful Tudor monarchy of the potential direction of the English political machine.

Walker Percy inverts many of the themes of *Utopia* to create an opposite, yet equally horrific society in *Love in the Ruins*. Whereas all Utopians are required to believe in God, most Paradisians claim to believe, but lack conviction. Also, Paradisians seem preoccupied with preserving a free market economy which lacks government intrusion. This is an obvious break from the Utopian tradition which stresses the communal ownership of all forms of private property. Finally, because of these government decrees, a void of signification exists among the Utopians who are unable to place abstract or arbitrary value on material entities. Conversely, the myriad opposing ideologies in play throughout *Love in the Ruins* destroys all attempts at effective communication. Ironically, their freedom to express themselves leaves them without an audience as most citizens only prefer the sounds of their own voices. These examples of Percy borrowing and inverting More's themes places the majority of the text in the dystopian genre. However, if we refer back to Levitas' definition of utopia, there is a case to be made for the utopian merit of *Love in the Ruins*. Within Tom More exists the desire for a better way of being as evidenced by his commitment to restoring the richness of the human experience through an existential path to faith. Despite the horrific

environments presented in *Utopia* and *Love in the Ruins* they both have much to contribute to the constantly evolving genre of Utopian studies.

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