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Embracing the Other: Christian Cosmopolitanism in Tolstoy and O'Connor

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Abstract

Embracing the Other: Christian Cosmopolitanism in Tolstoy and O'Connor

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In this paper, I am suggesting that instead of using a traditional definition of cosmopolitanism, such as "thinking and feeling beyond the nation" (Cheah and Robbins) or "pluralism" plus "fallibilism" (Appiah), we consider instead Yale theologian Miroslav Volf's term "embrace" as the framework for expanding our understanding of cosmopolitanism. This term is linked to standard interpretations of cosmopolitanism through its emphasis on hybridity and openness, but it differs in its undeniably religious implications. By applying Volf's theoretical framework to concrete literary examples – namely, Lev Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Il'ich* and Flannery O'Connor's "Greenleaf" – it becomes clear that Ivan Il'ich's and Mrs. May's identity-shaping (religious) encounters with the "Other" are an opening up – or hybridizing – of their identities.

This paper concludes that in Volf's view, and Tolstoy's and O'Connor's as well, religious affinity is an impetus and not a hindrance to cosmopolitanism.

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Introduction

The recent years have seen a resurgence in the discussion surrounding cosmopolitanism, with the publication of books and essays such as Derrida's "Cosmopolites de tous les pays, encore un effort" (1997), Cheah and Robbins' *Cosmopolitics* (1998), Breckenridge et al's *Cosmopolitanism* (2002), and Appiah's *Cosmopolitanism* (2006). These books suggest definitions ranging from "thinking and feeling beyond the nation" (Cheah and Robbins) to "pluralism" plus "fallibilism" (Appiah). In this paper, I am suggesting that instead of using any one of the definitions offered by these theorists, we consider instead Yale theologian Miroslav Volf's term "embrace" as the framework for expanding our understanding of cosmopolitanism. This term is linked to standard interpretations of cosmopolitanism through its emphasis on hybridity and openness, but it differs in its undeniably religious implications. By applying Volf's theoretical framework to concrete literary examples – namely, Lev Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Il'ich* and Flannery O'Connor's "Greenleaf" – it becomes clear that Ivan Il'ich's and Mrs. May's identity-shaping (religious) encounters with the "Other" are an opening up – or hybridizing – of their identities. These texts lend themselves well to this discussion; since Ivan and Mrs. May do not initially seem to fit the typical characterization of "cosmopolitan," we are able to explore the effects religion has on their expanding cosmopolitanism. Tolstoy's character is a mildly successful middle-aged man whose biggest dream is owning a home in St. Petersburg and decorating it just like all the other homes of his contemporaries. He does not read, he does not travel, and he

rarely associates with anyone different from himself; multiculturalism and globalization mean nothing to him. O'Connor's character despises those around her – her sons, the Greenleafs, the black farm help, and the scrub bull – while congratulating herself for the many obstacles she believes she has overcome. She feels herself perpetually the victim, and her greatest dream is for her sons to marry "nice" girls who will take care of the house and farm after she dies. Through their interactions with the "Others," however, Ivan and Mrs. May both undergo religious transformations, ultimately forgoing their former, rigid identities for new, fluid ones that make room for "Others." In Volf's view, therefore, and Tolstoy's and O'Connor's as well, religious affinity is an impetus and not a hindrance to cosmopolitanism.

Taking a distinctly Christian stance as he examines the role of "Otherness" in shaping identity, Volf suggests the term "exclusion" to explain the violence, racism, intolerance, and conflict that often accompany encounters with "Others." Using examples such as the Serbo-Croation conflict, LA race relations, and the story of Cain and Abel, Volf defines "exclusion" as withholding forgiveness, perpetuating violence, or simply denying the existence or humanity of others. He then offers what he calls "embrace" as a cosmopolitan alternative to exclusion, with forgiveness as the bridge between the two.[1] Basing this concept on the person and work of Jesus Christ, Volf defines "embrace" as the creation of space in one's identity for the "Other" through self-giving love and a recognition of the humanity of the "Other."

In exploring these two terms, Volf addresses Foucault's critique of boundaries and exclusions by insisting that it is not possible to exist without either boundaries or oppression – the result inevitably would be either boundless chaos or ordered inequity. Volf demonstrates how boundaries marking identity can be both barriers *and* bridges ("we are who we are not because we are separate from the others who are next to us, but because we are *both* separate *and* connected"), therefore advocating for nonexclusionary boundaries and an awareness of our own exclusionary tendencies (66). Volf goes on to affirm Edward Said's notion of hybrid, overflowing cultures with his own understanding of the "fluidity of identities" within these encumbered cultures. "Other cultures are not a threat to the pristine purity of our cultural identity," he writes, "but a potential source of its enrichment" (Volf 52). This understanding of identity calls to mind Appiah's understanding of cosmopolitanism: "People are different, the cosmopolitan knows, and there is much to learn from our differences" (xv). We cannot truly know ourselves, therefore, without knowing the "Other," and once we encounter the "Other," we cannot remain unchanged.

[1] "Forgiveness is the boundary between exclusion and embrace…Beyond offering forgiveness, Christ's passion aims at restoring such communion – even with the enemies who persistently refuse to be reconciled" (Volf 125-126)

Tolstoy

Following Foucault and Said further, Volf begins with an assumption that individual identities are situated within the social network each person is born into and in which he or she develops. Turning to Tolstoy, we see that Ivan Il'ich's milieu, therefore, is the one stipulated for him by his father. Like all other young men of his age and class, Ivan enjoys harmless affairs and mild debauchery before marrying and settling into his official career duties. Tolstoy writes of Ivan's life:

> Vse uvelecheniia detstva i molodosti proshli dlia nego, ne ostaviv bol'shikh sledov; on otdavalsia i chuvstvennosti, i tshcheslaviiu, i – pod konets v vysshikh klassakh – liberal'nosti, no vse v izvestnykh predelakh, kotorye verno ukazyvalo emu ego chuvstvo (All the passions of childhood and youth went by without leaving big traces on him; he had been given to sensuality and vanity and – towards the end, in the upper classes – to liberalism, but it was all within certain limits which were correctly pointed out to him by his instinct *PSS* 26:69-70)[2].

Ivan is guided solely by propriety, pleasure, and social convention, doing anything only because he firmly believes that it is what should be done; he is an "institutional product"[3] of his society. Ivan's attitude towards life reads like a hybridization of the perspectives of *Anna Karenina*'s Alexei Karenin and Stiva Oblonsky: «On treboval ot semeinoi zhizni tol'ko tekh udobstv domashnego obeda, khoziaiki, posteli, kotorye ona mogda dat' emu, i, glavnoe, togo prilichiia vneshnikh form, kotorye opredelialis' obshchestvennym

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[2] All citations from *PSS*; parenthetical citation in the text indicates volume and page number, and unless otherwise noted, translations are from Leo Tolstoy. *The Death of Ivan Ilyich and Other Stories*. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

[3] Michel Foucault sees criminals, or "delinquents," as "institutional products" of prisons, which produce, perpetuate, and then punish delinquency. Individuals like Ivan Il'ich are likewise products of the social institutions that produce, control, and then judge them (301).

mneniem» (He demanded of marital life only those comforts of dinner at home, housekeeping, bed, which it could give him, and above all, that decency of external forms which was defined by public opinion. In the rest he sought a cheerful pleasantness, and if he found it, he was very grateful *PSS* 26:74-75). Ivan is rendered, to use Volf's words, "docile and productive, obedient and useful" by what Foucault calls the "power of normalization" enforced by society's "carceral mechanisms" (62). The first intrusion on this docile, ordinary life comes only when Ivan's wife, Praskovya Fedorovna, becomes pregnant and begins to nag and abuse him incessantly. There then develops between husband and wife an aloof hostility, yet even this manner of relations, because he does not consider that it ought to be any different, Ivan comes to regard as normal. Volf would suggest that Ivan's full consent to this "normal" pattern of life has to do with his desire for identity within his society – a desire fuelled by a system of exclusion. Volf writes, "Evil is capable not only of creating an illusion of well-being, but of *shaping reality* in such a way that the lie about 'well-being' appears as plain verity" (89). The exclusive "power of normalization" (evil, in Volf's terms) resonates with something in Ivan's very self, and he acquiesces to it willingly[4]. Indeed, Ivan is unwilling to upset the regularity of his life by questioning it, and his primary desire, *tout court*, is to live «khorosho i priiatno» (well and pleasantly), a phrase repeated more than a dozen times in the novella.

This, then, establishes Ivan's situated identity, and Tolstoy writes «Tak shla zhizn' Ivana Il'icha v prodolzhenie 17 let so vremeni zhenit'by» (So went Ivan Ilyich's life

[4] Volf writes, "If people acquiesce, it is not because they are *forced* to acquiesce, but because there is something in the texture of their selves that resonates with the logic of exclusion" (90).

during the seventeen years following his marriage *PSS* 26:76). After a few career setbacks and then advances, Ivan eventually moves his family to a charming new home in Petersburg, and he sets about decorating it in just the fashion of all other people of his means. Richard Sennett would suggest that this group identity Ivan has formed cannot possibly sustain his individual selfhood, for group identities “do not and cannot make for coherent and complete selves; they arise from fissures in the larger social fabric; they contain its contradictions and its injustices” (qtd. in Volf 52). Ivan is not yet fully himself because so far he has not examined his society’s values as they exist in relation to another group’s values; he has not discovered the essential attitude to his own culture of both separation and connectedness that Volf advocates. Ivan and his wife, though at odds in most situations, agree on who should be included and who should be excluded from their circle of acquaintances, and together they «ottirali ot sebia i osvobozhdalis' ot vsiakikh raznykh priiatelei i rodstvennikov, zamarashek, kotorye razletalis' k nim s nezhnostiami v gostinuiu s iaponskimi bliudami po stenam» (fended off and freed themselves from various friends and relations, ragtag people, who came flying with tender feelings to their drawing room with the Japanese dishes on the walls *PSS* 26:82). This seemingly innocuous behavior is actually the exclusion Volf condemns. Volf writes, “For exclusion to happen, it suffices for the self simply to strive to guard the integrity of its territory, while granting the others – especially the distant others – the full right to do whatever they please with the rest of the universe” (91). The only society Ivan recognizes is his own, and it is a “saturating hegemonic system” that nullifies all those who are outside of his social territory (Said 14). Just as he has not challenged the normalcy of his relations

with his wife, neither has Ivan thought to question whether or not there may be anything good and right outside of his own social identity.

It is fitting that Ivan is finally forced to examine his group identity as a direct result of his performing a mundane ritual of that very group: he is hanging drapes in his new Petersburg house – a house that is filled not only with drapes, but with «vse to, chto vse izvestnogo roda liudi delaiut, shtoby byt' pokhozhimi na vsekh liudei izvestnogo roda» (all that all people of a certain kind acquire in order to resemble all people of a certain kind *PSS* 26:79) – when he falls off a ladder and knocks his side against a window knob. According to David Danaher, it is the pain that Ivan experiences following this fall that finally "forces Ivan to concentrate on an evaluation of his life" (229). When Ivan's pain begins to produce in him such irritability that his wife can no longer tolerate it, she urges him to visit a doctor, and he obliges. This arrogant physician, according to Stewart Justman, first serves as a mirror through which Ivan can begin to reflect honestly on his own life:

> From Ivan Ilych's experience of this imposter come the first rays of enlightenment – not only a sense of what the wretches in his own power might feel but a dim perception of his own falsity, now glimpsed in another. Precisely in their arrogance and fraud, the doctors in 'The Death of Ivan Ilych' serve as the catalysts of the hero's awakening (99).

Even from the first doctor's visit, Ivan relates the conceit of the doctor to his own attitude as a judge in the courtroom, and he even likens the physical examination to being on trial. Yet although he has indeed begun to recognize his own falsity through that of the doctor (much as *Anna Karenina*'s Vronsky recognizes – and is disgusted with – himself in the visiting foreign prince), Ivan's enlightenment is still quite dim, and he focuses all his

energy on following the doctor's orders and acutely examining only his own *physical* health.

At the same time that Ivan acknowledges his own identity in that of the celebrity physician, he begins to pay attention to – and be annoyed by – the similarities between himself and his set of friends. Tolstoy writes, «Osobenno Shvarts svoei igrivost'iu, zhiznennost'iu i komil'fotnost'iu napominavshimi Ivanu Il'ichu ego samogo za desiat' let nazad, razdrazhal ego» (Schwartz especially irritated him with his playfulness, vitality, and *comme il faut*-ishness, which reminded Ivan Ilyich of himself ten years ago *PSS* 26:88). Yet Ivan continues to consult the doctors and implement their instructions, and he continues to spend time with his friends in the law courts and at the card table. By acknowledging only those within his own context, Ivan has taken himself "out of the pattern of interdependence and [placed himself] in a position of sovereign independence"; his separation from anyone unlike himself results in a "self-enclosed, isolated, and self-identical" identity (Volf 67, 65). Ivan has excluded all outsiders from his own self-referential circle, thereby repudiating the ambiguous nature of selfhood. The truth Ivan denies with this outlook, as Volf would see it, is that "the self is dialogically constructed. The other is already from the outset part of the self" (91). What Ivan will eventually come to perceive is that identity, far from being self-referential, includes connection, ambiguity, heterogeneity. The seeds of this heterogeneous identity first materialize not through his interactions with his friends or the doctors, who belong to his own economic circle, but through Ivan's encounters with and increasing dependence on his peasant servant, Gerasim.

Gerasim, though presumably part of Ivan's household long before Ivan falls ill, only enters the story when Ivan's health deteriorates to such a degree that he can no longer carry out his own chamber pot and Gerasim must do it for him. The peasant is in every way "other" than Ivan: his status as a servant automatically precludes him from Ivan's middle-class social milieu; he is young and cheerful, healthy and strong, and the very sight of him, «vsegda chisto, po-russki odetogo cheloveka, delavshego eto protivnoe delo» (always clean, dressed Russian style, performing this repulsive chore *PSS* 26:96) embarrasses Ivan. Unlike the callous celebrity doctor and Ivan's indifferent wife[5], Gerasim cares for his ill master joyfully, and Ivan notices this difference: «on videl, chto nikto ne pozhaleet ego, potomu chto nikto ne khochet dazhe ponimat' ego polozheniia. Odin tol'ko Gerasim nohimal eto nolozhenie i zhalel ego» (he saw that no one would feel sorry for him, because no one even wanted to understand his situation. Only Gerasim understood that situation and pitied him *PSS* 26:98). Ivan is tormented by the others' refusal to acknowledge the seriousness of his condition, and he reaches out to Gerasim because of that man's singular honesty, which includes an easy acknowledgment of the inevitability of death as part of life. As Gary Jahn's assessment shows,

> Ivan Ilich's steady movement away from people, and theirs away from him, is here countered by the movement of Ivan Ilich and Gerasim toward one another and by their touching one another, by Gerasim's genuine sympathy for Ivan Ilich and by Ivan Ilich's acknowledging his need for this sympathy (60).

[5] Steward Justman affirms that Ivan himself is as indifferent as the doctors and Praskovya Fedorovna: "He himself at one time turned his back on the ailments of his child and the possibly real ailments of his wife, indifferent to both as they would later prove toward him" (106).

Ivan's concession of *need* is already a step away from his independent, self-sufficient attitude of earlier.

Through his interactions with Gerasim, Ivan begins to distance himself from the destructive "exclusion" of the doctors' and his wife's dissimulation, creating space in his identity for Gerasim's inclusive sincerity. In these moments Ivan begins the process of embrace prescribed by Volf; Ivan's act of reaching out to Gerasim is "a sign of discontent with [his] own self-enclosed identity, a code of *desire* for the other…a herald of nonself-sufficiency and nonself-enclosure" (141). For the first time in his life, Ivan has denied the "saturating hegemonic system" of his social identity by making room in himself for the "Other" but also by moving out of himself towards the "Other."

Ivan's increasing disgust with members of his own class illustrate that Gerasim's "otherness" is having a profound impact on him. Much to his displeasure, however, Ivan cannot shake his own falsity, even after he has recognized an alternative to it in Gerasim. Tolstoy writes, «Eta lozh' vokrug nego i v nem samom bolee vsego otravliala poslednie dni zhizni Ivana Il'icha» (This lie around and within him poisoned most of all the last days of Ivan Ilyich's life *PSS* 26:99). As Volf insists, it would be a futile task for Ivan to attempt to replace directly his falseness with Gerasim's integrity, for "both distance and belonging are essential" (50). Were Ivan to continue solely to *belong* to his culture, as previously, his encounter with Gerasim would force him either to assimilate Gerasim into his milieu or else eliminate him entirely from his purview (which would be the more probable scenario, since Gerasim is a mere peasant). If he simply *distanced* himself from

his society and subsumed his identity under Gerasim's worldview, however, Ivan would only manage to shift his paradigm of exclusion from one group to another.[6]

Yet although Ivan cannot simply assimilate Gerasim's honesty, he nevertheless begins to look on the doctors and his wife as "Others." His identity has begun to shift so acutely that he no longer feels an affinity with these people, and his former attraction turns to hatred. While they undoubtedly have mistreated him through their dissimulation and indifference, Ivan allows his feelings of victimization to control him. During one of his numerous visits with the doctor, Ivan studies his wife, observing «beliznu, i pukhlost', i chistotu ee ruk, shei, gliznets ee volos i blesk ee polnykh zhizni glaz» (her whiteness, and plumpness, and the cleanness of her hands, her neck, the glossiness of her hair, and the sparkle of her eyes, so full of life *PSS* 26:102) – indeed, the very things that first attracted him to her – and now «on vsemi silami dushi nenavidit ee» (he hates her with all the forces of his soul *PSS* 26:102). As Volf writes,

> Though victims may not be able to prevent hate from springing to life, for their own sake they can and must refuse to give it nourishment and strive to weed it out. If victims do not repent today they will become perpetrators tomorrow who, in their self-deceit, will seek to exculpate their misdeeds on account of their own victimization (117).

Volf's call for the repentance even of victims is based fully on the teachings of Christianity, and it "has to do with *creation of the kind of social agents that are shaped by the values of God's kingdom and therefore capable of participating in the project of*

[6] Volf uses himself as an example: "Belonging without distance destroys: I affirm my exclusive identity as Croatian and want either to shape everyone in my own image or eliminate them from my world. But distance without belonging isolates: I deny my identity as a Croatian and draw back from my own culture" (Volf 50).

authentic social transformation" (118). Ivan cannot therefore become a cosmopolitan citizen – or a "social agent" who is "capable of participating in the project of authentic social transformation" – as long as he is consumed by this hatred for his wife and the doctors who are now "Others" to him. Tolstoy, even with his idiosyncratic Christianity, sees alienation from God and from others as the highest evil and would therefore agree with Volf. Ivan's hate fragments his identity, blinds him to his own wrongdoing, and hinders his growth. As feminist scholar and activist Gloria Anzaldúa puts it, "Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the 'real' world unless it first happens in the images in our heads" (109). Ivan cannot erase the images of hatred without true acknowledgment of his own guilt, followed by true repentance.

The scenes with the doctor and Praskovya Fedorovna in which Ivan's hatred is most palpable are enacted almost without words, allowing Ivan to project onto the others his own fabrication of their personalities. False looks, fake smiles, and meaningless remarks are the primary modes of communication among Ivan, the doctor, and Praskovya Fedorovna. As just one example of many, Tolstoy writes, «Doktor ulybnulsia prezritel'no-laskovo: - Chto zh, mol, delat', eti bol'nye vydumyvaiut inogda takie gluposti; no mozhno prostit'» (The doctor smiled with kindly disdain, meaning: 'No help for it, these sick people sometimes think up such foolishness; but it's forgivable *PSS* 26:102). Like a colonist who either anathemizes or exoticizes the colonized, so Ivan feeds his hatred by reading into the doctor's and his wife's movements and glances only

patronizing reproach and falsity[7]. Ivan is *creating* what he hates in those outside of himself. This projection of guilt recalls the eponymous heroine of *Anna Karenina*: Richard Gustafson writes, "Anna is the prisoner of her projections. She cannot find forgiveness because she will not clarify her guilt, and she is compelled to displace her guilt because she fears the failure of forgiveness" (125). Instead of owning her guilt before her husband, Anna tries to prove that he is the perpetrator and she the victim. By focusing only on her own reading of the situation, Anna ignores the truth and therefore hinders reconciliation. Gustafson writes, "The absence of truth precludes the possibility of reconciliation. Without truth guilt cannot be clarified nor forgiveness fostered. Rather, in Anna's failed relatedness the guilt is suppressed by projection, and forgiveness is replaced by resentment" (125). Based on the story she has created through her displacements and projections, Anna comes to despise her husband, just as Ivan hates his wife and the doctor. This hatred is later transferred to Vronsky when Anna doubts his love for her. But as Gloria Anzaldúa points out, "To rage and look upon [others] with contempt is to rage and be contemptuous of ourselves" (110). *Anna Karenina*, therefore, is "a moral tragedy of self-enclosure" (Gustafson 132). Anna, far from embracing the "Other," sabotages her relationships through jealousy and hatred, and even her suicide is an act of hate meant to punish Vronsky. Ivan must deepen his self-reflection and face the reality of his life (including his guilt) in order to avoid suffering the same fate; Volf's

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[7] Edward Said cogently argues in his introduction to *Orientalism* that the Western examination of Orientalism "was based more or less exclusively upon a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an Oriental world emerged, first according to general ideas about who or what was an Oriental, then according to a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections" (1996).

theory of embrace indicates that Ivan must eventually conquer this hatred and move out of self-enclosure towards forgiveness.

Tolstoy symbolizes Ivan's intensifying self-examination with the image of the black sack. Ivan's struggle with it begins one miserable night as he lies awake, suffering: «Emy kazalos', chto ego s bol'iu suiut kuda-to v uzkii chernyi meshok i glubokii, i vse dal'she prosobyvaiut i ne mogut prosunut'. I eto uzhasnoe dlia nego delo sovershaetsia s stradaniem. I on i boitsia, i khochet provalit'sia tuda, i boretsia, i pomogaet» (It seemed to him that they were pushing him painfully into some narrow and deep black sack, and kept pushing him further, and could not push him through. And this thing, which is terrible for him, is being accomplished with suffering. And his is afraid, and yet he wants to fall thorough, and he struggles, and he helps *PSS* 26:105). For the first time since embracing Gerasim's unselfish care, Ivan sends Gerasim away and proceeds to wrestle internally with God and with himself. As he prays to a seemingly cruel and absent God, Ivan begins to review his life before his illness, trying to recall the moments when he lived "well and pleasantly." When he cannot remember any truly happy moments since childhood, Ivan suddenly wonders if he perhaps has not lived his life as he ought to have done. He immediately dismisses this thought, however, saying «No kak zhe ne tak, kogda ia delal vse, kak sleduet?» (But how not, if I did everything one ought to? *PSS* 26:107). Volf shows how such denial of sin and emphasis on propriety "encourages self-righteousness and the demonization of others," for in order to "make the rules stick, one must reduce moral ambiguity and the complexity of social agents and their interaction" (162-163). Using quotations from Tolstoy's diaries, Gustafon writes, "People who have 'no

conception of sin' and do not guide their actions by their 'fear of sin,' and this includes 'all so-called enlightened people,' do not lead a human life" (145). Ivan's enlightened, "morally ambiguous" life, when compared to the lives of others like him, seems to him perfectly proper; it is only those outside of his milieu who are perhaps not living rightly, but Ivan is so self-consumed that he does not even pause to consider them.

Ivan clearly does suffer from self-righteousness and a black-or-white mentality with regards to the correctness of his own life, and he proceeds in this belief for several more weeks as his mental sufferings begin to rival his physical ones. As he sits facing the good-natured Gerasim one night, Ivan for the first time relinquishes his self-righteous attitude and begins to recognize his own guilt. Tolstoy writes, «Emu prishlo v golovu, chto to, chto emu predstavlialos' prezhde sovershennoi nevozmozhnost'iu, to, chto on prozhil svoiu zhizn' ne tak, kak dolzhno bylo, chto eto moglo byt' pravda» (It occurred to him that what had formerly appeared completely impossible to him, that he had not lived his life as he should have, might be true…He tried to defend it all to himself. And he suddenly felt all the weakness of what he was defending. And there was nothing to defend *PSS* 26:110). Ivan has finally discovered the doctrine of original sin, or at least the doctrine of human imperfection[8], realizing that, as Volf writes, "Pristine purity is irretrievable; it can be re-gained neither by going back to the beginnings, nor by plunging into the depths, nor by leaping forward into the future" (84). Ivan tries to recapture this "pristine purity" when he recalls that his childhood was the only "good" period of his

life: Tolstoy writes, «Tam, v detstve, bylo chto-to takoe deistvitel'no priiatnoe, s chem mozhno by bylo zhit', esli by ono vernulos'» (There, in childhood, there had been something really pleasant, which one could live with if it came back *PSS* 26: 106). Ivan realizes that this moment has passed forever, though, and «togo cheloveka, kotoryi ispytyval eto priiatnoe, uzhe ne bylo» (the man who had experienced that pleasure was no more *PSS* 26:106). As long as Ivan can focus only on his previous behavior (first regarded as "good" and now as "bad"), he will still feel nothing but hatred for his family and the doctor because they remind him of his newfound guilt. In order to forgo his monochrome view of the world and achieve the Christian cosmopolitanism Volf advocates, Ivan must relinquish his persistent belief in propriety as a way to gauge the as-yet-unrecognized polyphonic world, embrace its ambiguities, and accept undeserved grace.

As Ivan's physical and mental suffering increases, Praskovya Fedorovna urges Ivan to take communion and summons the priest to the house. Ivan reluctantly agrees, and after offering his confession and receiving the sacrament, his hope for life is momentarily renewed. Yet Tolstoy, opposed as he was to institutionalized religion and what he saw as the hypocrisy of the Russian Orthodox Church, does not allow even this sacred ritual to hold its implied meaning, and Ivan's feelings of suffering and hatred well up once again. Volf would argue, however, against Tolstoy, that there is real power here, and maybe even power that confounds the author. He writes,

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[8] Tolstoy did not believe in the doctrine of original sin as something inherited from Adam. As Gustafson writes, "It is understood that like Adam we all sin, but this sin is our individual act and our responsibility:

> Having been embraced by God, we must make space for others in ourselves and invite them in – even our enemies. This is what we enact as we celebrate the Eucharist. In receiving Christ's broken body and spilled blood, we, in a sense, receive all those whom Christ received by suffering (129).

Although Ivan's hatred returns even after participating in the Eucharistic supper (Tolstoy's implication that the sacrament meant nothing), it is immediately following this event that Ivan's most intense suffering and eventual redemption begin. It cannot be pure coincidence that Ivan's final agony lasts for exactly three days, a precise replication of Christ's passion on the cross. Ivan is clearly not Christ, though, and his suffering is prolonged and sustained by his resurfaced conviction of the "goodness" of his life.

"The practice of 'embrace,' with its concomitant struggle against deception, injustice, and violence," writes Volf,

> is intelligible only against the backdrop of a powerful, contagious, and destructive evil I call 'exclusion' and is for Christians possible only if, in the name of God's crucified Messiah, we distance ourselves from ourselves and our cultures in order to create a space for the other (30).

Ivan accomplishes this distancing of himself from himself when, in the midst of his most intense suffering, he silently acknowledges the society of exclusion in which he has lived and definitively declares that his life could not have been the "right" thing. At this very moment, Ivan's young son enters the room, approaches his father's deathbed, and tearfully kisses his father's hand. "The final acceptance of the wrongness of his life is sparked by compassionate contact with another human, Ivan's own son[9]" writes Danaher

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like Adam *possimus non peccare*" (148).

[9] Danaher is right to note the concomitant nature of these two events, but he confuses the order. Ivan has already asked, "But what *is* the right thing?" and fallen silent before he notices his son kissing his hand (Tolstoy 301). The timeline is easily confused, however, because of Tolstoy's repetition of Ivan's question both before and after the entrance of the son.

(236). Vasya's movement of embrace retriggers in Ivan the lesson Gerasim had begun to teach him, and Ivan feels *pity*, that most holy of Russian emotions[10], for his son. Precocious Vasya, perceptive beyond his years, has "attend[ed] to the shifts in the *identity*" of his father and now moves toward him to offer him grace (Volf 154). Ivan has felt all along that only Vasya, along with Gerasim, truly understood him, and it is clear in this moment that Vasya has loved his father unconditionally throughout his illness. This picture of grace, along with Ivan's true confession and repentance, allows him to turn finally to his wife with love instead of hatred.

According to Tolstoy, Ivan's confession of the truth is absolutely necessary before he can achieve any kind of harmony with his wife. In his diaries Tolstoy writes, "Unity is achieved only when you seek, not unity, but truth" (qtd. in Gustafson 400). The acknowledgement of his own complicity in the falsity of the "saturating hegemonic system" that controls his group identity finally guides Ivan towards a fellow member of that group, his wife. "Recognizing that his own life was the fraud he can now perceive so clearly in others," writes Justman, "he is set free by the truth, and as compassion even for his wife overcomes him (she is not so much worse than himself, after all), he dies to ease his family's sufferings as well as his own" (94). But even before his death, Ivan moves toward his wife to complete the embrace begun with Gerasim. Lest he end his embrace of the "Other" with closed arms and thus "pervert it from an act of love to an act of oppression, and, paradoxically, exclusion," Ivan opens his arms once again and turns

10 Gustafson writes, "In the language of the people 'to take pity on [zhalet'] means 'to love' [ljubit']. This is a correct definition of that kind of love which more than anything else unites people and evokes their

from Gerasim to his wife, whose very presence has evoked patently unchristian hatred in him in the past (Volf 141). Pity has now replaced this hatred, and Ivan's attempt to forgive Praskovya Fedorovna allows him to repeat and complete his embrace of Gerasim. As Gustafson writes, "Once you have 'taken pity on' the other in this sense, then what follows is to forgive yourself your past acts, which separated you from others, your failure to see God in them, which resulted from your failure to love them" (188). In recognizing the undeniable, physical signs of her sorrow, Ivan can finally see his wife's *humanity*, which had previously been hidden by his own feelings of hatred. "*The will to give ourselves to others and 'welcome' them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity*," writes Volf (29). This new knowledge allows Ivan to remain unperturbed when his request for forgiveness becomes jumbled; instead of saying "Forgive me" (*prosti*), as he has intended, Ivan says, "Let me pass" (*propusti*, translation mine). Volf echoes this "Let me pass" when he writes, "the other must be *let go* so that her alterity – her genuine dynamic identity – may be preserved, and the self must take itself back into itself so that its own identity, enriched by the traces the other has left, may be preserved" (Volf 144-145, italics mine). Ivan, if he is truly to forego an attitude of exclusion, cannot concern himself with whether or not his words have affected his wife in any tangible way – that is not for him to decide, and if he were to force a change in her, he would only be surrendering yet again to the "carceral mechanisms" of power and exclusion. He knows only that *he* has been *profoundly* affected by the encounter, and «chto poimet tot, komu

loving activity" (187).

nado» (that the one who had to would understand *PSS* 26:113). Praskovya Fedorovna's response is irrelevant also because, "At the core of the Christian faith lies the persuasion that the 'others' need not be perceived as innocent in order to be loved, but ought to be embraced *even when they are perceived as wrongdoers*" (Volf 85). It would not matter to Ivan now even if his wife responded in the same way as Pozdnyshev's wife in *The Kreutzer Sonata* who, when Pozdnyshev says, "Forgive me" responds, "Forgive! That's all nonsense!...I hate you!"[11] (162). For his wife's sake Ivan can only hope that she, like he, will not leave the embrace unchanged.

Ivan's final act is one of self-sacrifice; he has recognized the futility of his former way of life, accepted Gerasim's life-transforming view of death, and begun to pity his family. He realizes that «zhalko ikh, nado sdelat', chtoby im ne bol'no bylo. Izbavit' ikh i samomu izbavit'sia ot etikh stradannii» (he was sorry for them, he had to act so that it was not painful for them. To deliver them and deliver himself from these sufferings *PSS* 26:113). Volf affirms the appropriateness of this final self donation, writing, "The equality and reciprocity that are at the heart of embrace can be reached only through self-sacrifice (Mark 10:41-45)[12], even if self-sacrifice is not a positive good, but a necessary

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[11] A comparison between the two stories certainly bears further examination. Pozdnyshev, a man as equally concerned with propriety as Ivan Il'ich, goes to his dying wife after he has stabbed her, thinking, "it's probably always done that way, that when a husband kills his wife, as I [have] done, he's obliged to go to her" (161). He approaches her full of hatred, wholly expecting a confession and request for forgiveness from her for her alleged affair. When he reaches her, however, he is overcome by his own guilt: "I looked at the children, at her bruised, swollen face, and for the first time I forgot myself, my rights, my pride, and for the first time *I saw in her a human being*. And all that had offended me, all my jealousy, seemed so insignificant to me, and so significant what I had done, *that I wanted to press my face to her hand and say: 'Forgive me,'* – but I didn't dare" (160, italics mine). Pozdnyshev's full enlightenment also comes "on the third day" (160).

[12] The interplay of power, identity, and self-sacrifice in these verses from Mark is significant: "**41** And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. **42** And Jesus called them to him and

via dolorosa in a world of enmity and indifference toward the joy of reciprocal embrace" (146-147). When Ivan seeks to forfeit his life to ease the sufferings of his family, his fear of death is replaced with joy: « – Tak vot chto! – vdrug vslukh progovoril on. – Kakaia radost'!» ('So that's it!' he suddenly said aloud. 'What joy!' *PSS* 26:113). "Rigidity means death," says Gloria Anzaldúa (101), and Volf and Tolstoy would agree. Through self-giving embrace, Ivan forgoes his former, rigid identity for a new, fluid one characterized by "giving of the self to the other" and acknowledging the "presence of the other in the self" (Volf 178). Although a part of his former identity necessarily dies in the process, Ivan's self "by no means perishes, but is renewed as the truly communal self, fashioned in the image of the triune God who will not be without the other" (Volf 155). Moments before his death, Ivan awakens to new life.

Some critics have questioned whether or not Ivan's transformation is perforce a religious one, but Tolstoy's repeated connections between Ivan and Christ imply that it *must* be religious. As discussed above, Ivan's final suffering, like Christ's, lasts for three days; like Christ, Ivan sacrifices himself so that others might live. In the moments of Ivan's last death rattle, someone near him announces, « – Koncheno!» (It's finished! *PSS* 26:113) evoking Christ's last words on the cross.[13] Finally, Ivan's own last words, which he repeats to himself, are « – Konchena smert' Ee net bol'she» (Death is finished. It is no

said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. **43** But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, **44** and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. **45** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

[13] See John 19:30, "When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

more *PSS* 26:113). These words recall Saint John's vision in the book of Revelation of the new heavens and the new earth. It is written,

> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and *death shall be no more*, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4-5, italics mine).

It is significant that Volf calls readers' attention to these very same verses when he writes,

> There is a reality that is more important than the culture to which we belong. It is God and the new world that God is creating, a world in which people from every nation and every tribe, with their cultural goods, will gather around the triune God, a world in which every tear will be wiped away and 'pain will be no more' (Revelation 21:3) (50-51).

This vision is one of true cosmopolitanism, where "otherness" is celebrated above one's own insular cultural identity, and embrace is extolled over exclusion. Through his forgiveness and subsequent death, Ivan erases his family's tears and pain and finds salvation on earth, for as Gustafson deftly summarizes, "in our forgiveness we experience reconciliation, and in our reconciliation we are redeemed" (189). Ivan has avoided Anna Karenina's "moral tragedy of self-enclosure," by foregoing his former, closed identity and making room in himself for the "Other." Without shifting his practice of exclusion back onto his own society, he has become a catholic cosmopolitan,[14] "a personality enriched by otherness" (Volf 51). Recall Tolstoy's final description of Ivan: «On vtianul v sebia vozdukh, ostanovilsia na polovine vzdokha, potianulsia i umer» (He drew in air,

[14] "A catholic personality," writes Volf, "is a personality enriched by otherness, a personality which is what it is only because multiple others have been reflected in it in a particular way. The distance from my

stopped at mid-breath, stretched out, and died *PSS* 26:113). Ivan dies with his arms outstretched in an eternal invitation to embrace.

own culture that results from being born by the Spirit creates a fissure in me through which others can come in" (51).

O'Connor

O'Connor, though she claims in her letters not to have really started to read until she went to graduate school, undoubtedly made up for lost time and by the time she began publishing her work, she was extremely familiar with all the great world writers, including Tolstoy (though she preferred Dostoevsky and Gogol)[15]. Her short stories are frequently anthologized alongside Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich and Other Stories*, giving us as good a reason as any for analyzing her work alongside his. Turning to O'Connor's story "Greenleaf" (though many of her stories might have served our same purpose, since many of them deal with identity formation in light of encounters with "Others"), we see that Mrs. May's situated identity revolves around her role as proprietor of her farm. Unlike Ivan's Petersburg home, however, this farm is not Mrs. May's "dream home"; as O'Connor writes, Mrs. May "was a country woman only by persuasion" (319). Following her husband's death, Mrs. May moves to the farm from the city, O'Connor's ironic suggestion that Mrs. May is probably the most typically "cosmopolitan" figure in her milieu. The farm is all her husband left to her in his will, and Mrs. May makes do with it as best she can. "Making do" includes learning just how to manage Mr. Greenleaf, her tenant farmer, so that he will do what she asks, and

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[15] Writing to her close college friend, Betty Boyd Love, O'Connor writes, "Do you like the novel *Dead Souls*? I like Tolstoy too but Gogol is necessary along with the light" (*The Habit of Being* 44). Later, writing to her friend "A," O'Connor lists all the great writers she has read since graduate school. Of the great Russian writers, O'Connor writes, "Read the Russians, not Tolstoy so much but Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Chekhov and Gogol" (*The Habit of Being* 98-99). Despite her lukewarm feelings for Tolstoy, we can be certain that O'Connor was familiar with his work.

supporting her two grown sons who, despite their constant criticism of Mrs. May and the farm, refuse to move out. Mrs. May wishes for nothing more than for her boys to marry "nice" girls, and we are reminded of Ivan Il'ich's desire to live "well and pleasantly." Mrs. May considers herself, not an "institutional product" of her society, but a self-made woman who must perpetually overcome obstacles erected by others. As she imagines talking with her city friends, Mrs. May says, "Everything is against you, the weather is against you and the dirt is against you and the help is against you. They're all in league against you" (321). Supposing herself a hardworking, upright citizen laboring against the laziness and vulgarity of everyone around her, Mrs. May is unwittingly affected by the same system of exclusion and power of normalization that affects Ivan Il'ich; like Ivan, Mrs. May has taken herself "out of the pattern of interdependence and [placed herself] in a position of sovereign independence" (Volf 67). Instead of overcoming obstacles set up by others, Mrs. May is actually the one who constructs barriers. By separating herself so definitively from those around her, Mrs. May has solidified her identity as a "self-enclosed, isolated, and self-identical being" (Volf 65). As we see in Volf's reading of Nietzsche and Foucault, Mrs. May's exclusive tendencies rely on a belief in her own morality: Volf writes, "the 'moral' and 'civilized' self all too often rests on the exclusion of what it construes as the 'immoral' and 'barbarous' other" (62). Mrs. May is a group of one, a civilized "lady" among shiftless, hateful provincials.

The story opens with an abrupt intrusion into Mrs. May's situated opposition to all those around her. The bull, the "latest of many nuisances in her weary life," as Giannone writes, disrupts Mrs. May's sleep on the opening night of the story by chewing

cud just beneath her bedroom window (422). Although the bull approaches Mrs. May on friendly terms, "like some patient god come down to woo her," Mrs. May immediately tries to send him away (O'Connor 311). She sets up multiple boundaries between herself and the bull: first, she speaks to him "as if address[ing] a dog," a clear indication that she regards him as a beast and not as a wooing god; second, she categorizes the bull as a racialized "Other" from her own lily-white self, calling him "Some *nigger's* scrub bull" (italics mine); finally, she closes the blinds of her window, erecting a very physical division between herself and the bull to discourage him from approaching any closer (O'Connor 311). Mrs. May assigns the bull "the status of inferior being," hoping that by the multiple boundaries she erects, he will stay in "the place [she has] assigned for [him]" (Volf 75). The bull emerges for Mrs. May "as an enemy that must be pushed away from the self and driven out of its space" (Volf 67). Yet the bull continues to break down these boundaries, and in doing so he serves as a catalyst whereby Mrs. May can begin to examine realistically her own life.

Though different from Gerasim in obvious ways, the bull serves the same role for Mrs. May that Gerasim plays for Ivan, eventually causing her to question her self-righteous identity. The bull's carefree attitude contrasts sharply to Mrs. May's rigid temperament: he is "patient" but "uncouth" whereas she is impatient yet refined; he is pleased to mooch off the hard work others, while Mrs. May has made her own way in the world. Instead of emerging in opposition to those around her (as Gerasim does for Ivan), however, the bull appears as the embodiment of everything Mrs. May hates in the countless "Others" surrounding her. We see his insouciance in Mr. Greenleaf, his

unseemliness in Mrs. Greenleaf, and his parasitism in Mrs. May's own sons. "The animal combines his social, sexual, and religious identities in a way that allows him to represent everything that Mrs. May rejects, everything unrestrained or lacking in taste," writes Kathleen Rout (233). It is not surprising to Mrs. May, therefore, to discover that the bull is a *Greenleaf* bull[16]. As Giannone writes, "Her incessant grievances crystallize in the name *Greenleaf*. Greenleaf stands for all the last straws piled on her back" (424). Just as Gerasim's kindness forces Ivan to acknowledge the illusion of his self-sufficiency and his need for other people, so the bull's presence challenges Mrs. May's view of herself as the iron-fisted proprietress in complete control of those around her. Mrs. May fights this realization, however, by continually trying to control and contain the bull – more than half a dozen times she asks Mr. Greenleaf to pen up the bull where he can't get out. Volf offers us a potential explanation for Mrs. May's continuing exclusion of the bull's prophetic message: "We exclude also because we are uncomfortable with anything that blurs accepted boundaries, disturbs our identities, and disarranges our symbolic cultural maps" (78). Finding the bull beneath her bedroom window feels like an unforgivable violation of boundaries to Mrs. May, in whose "symbolic cultural map" the bull exists only behind the enclosure of a fence on someone else's property.

The bull's flagrant transgression of boundaries exemplifies the chaos of multiple boundary crossings Mrs. May desires to control in those around her. When she first notices the bull beneath her window, Mrs. May guesses that Mr. Greenleaf "left the lane

[16] Mrs. May, in her frustration with her two sons, imagines that even *they* are Greenleafs: "'O.T. and E.T. [Greenleaf] are fine boys,' she said. 'They ought to have been my sons…you two should have belonged to

gate open," implying the openness of Mr. Greenleaf's character as opposed to the rigidity of her own (O'Connor 312). Despite his openness, however, Mr. Greenleaf has been forced to the perimeter of Mrs. May's existence; instead of walking freely from place to place, Mr. Greenleaf "walked on the perimeter of some invisible circle and if you wanted to look him in the face, you had to move and get in front of him" (O'Connor 313). Mrs. May has literally pushed Mr. Greenleaf to the margins, setting up an invisible barrier around herself that he cannot penetrate. Furthering this point, Mr. Greenleaf frequently appears situated below Mrs. May, first "standing at the bottom of the three back steps" while she looks down on him to give him his orders, then in the trench silo with "the top of his hat on a level with her feet" (O'Connor 313, 328). Mrs. May continually denies Volf's "fluidity of identities" by fighting the boundless chaos of living in community with her well-ordered inequity. This demarcated exclusion extends to her own sons: sitting with them at the breakfast table, Mrs. May sits "on the edge of her chair at the head of the table," symbolically placing herself in a position of authority over them (O'Connor 314). Mrs. May excludes her sons by disapproving of her their chosen professions – she wishes Scofield sold a "nicer" kind of insurance and she blames Wesley's intellectual career on his childhood illness. Mrs. May even excludes her sons' (non-existent) future wives by literally writing them out of her will. Mrs. May further extends her supremacy over her sons by locating them in eternal childhood: "I am the only *adult* on this place," she says (O'Connor 320). Twice Mrs. May figuratively disowns her sons, first when she tells them they should have belonged to Mrs. Greenleaf, and

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that woman!'" (O'Connor 321).

second when the Greenleaf's black farm worker recognizes her as his insurance-salesman's mother and she denies even knowing her son.

Through the exclusionary boundaries Mrs. May erects, her hatred of others and her feelings of victimization intensify. "I'm the victim," she tells her sons, when she is unable to get the Greenleaf boys to remove their bull from her property; "I've always been the victim" (O'Connor 327). Claiming this title for herself, Mrs. May stands in direct contrast to Mrs. Greenleaf, who by her "prayer-healing" offers herself in place of true victims; as Giannone writes, Mrs. Greenleaf "abandons herself to personal sacrifice for the anonymous hordes of victims in train wrecks, plane crashes, and rapes" (427). As Mrs. Greenleaf prays over the stories of tragedy she clips from the newspaper, calling on Jesus to "stab [her] in the heart," the reader sees that Mrs. May's egocentric feelings of victimization pale in comparison and in fact are yet another form of exclusion, allowing Mrs. May to project onto others her own desire for control (O'Connor 317). In calling herself the victim, Mrs. May imagines that the various "others" are the perpetrators, exercising their limitless control over her. Like Ivan, Mrs. May is "a prisoner of her own projections," and she is stifled by the tragedy of her self-enclosure.

Mrs. May's juxtaposition with Mrs. Greenleaf highlights yet another aspect of the former's exclusive tendencies: just as Ivan and his wife practiced exclusion by "fending off" their shabby friends, so Mrs. May "strives to guard the integrity of [her] territory" by simply avoiding Mrs. Greenleaf. O'Connor writes that Mrs. May "had put up with Mr. Greenleaf for fifteen years, but the only way she had endured his wife had been by keeping entirely out of her sight" (315). By ignoring Mrs. Greenleaf, by pretending she

does not exist, Mrs. May denies that woman's humanity. As Volf writes, "Others are dehumanized in order that they can be discriminated against, dominated, driven out, or destroyed" (76). By distancing herself from Mrs. Greenleaf's large and loose charisma, Mrs. May believes she is maintaining the decorum of her own form of religion: as O'Connor writes of Mrs. May, "She was a good Christian woman with a large respect for religion, though she did not, of course, believe any of it was true" (316). According to Giannone, Mrs. May "thinks that she is increasing order when in actuality she divides and isolates herself from others, and separates others from their dignity" (427). Mrs. May cannot respect the slovenly, overt nature of Mrs. Greenleaf's faith, wanting instead to relegate religion to the strict boundaries of the church building[17]; as such, instead of increasing order as she supposes she is doing, Mrs. May succeeds only in isolating herself and dehumanizing others.

In place of Tolstoy's black sack, O'Connor offers the image of the sun to illustrate the progress of Mrs. May's self-reflection. The sun first appears in the story over Mrs. May's milk herd, illuminating the bull who is grazing among them. O'Connor writes, "The sun, moving over the black and white grazing cows, was just a little brighter than the rest of the sky. Looking down, she saw a darker shape that might have been its shadow cast at an angle, moving among them" (322). Later, when Mrs. May drives over to O.T. and E.T. Greenleaf's farm and looks into their milking parlor, O'Connor writes, "The light outside was not so bright but she was conscious that the sun was directly on

[17] Mrs. May, wanting to control even when and where religion should be practiced, "thought the word, Jesus, should be kept inside the church building like other words inside the bedroom" (O'Connor 316).

top of her head, like a silver bullet ready to drop into her brain" (325). The sun then appears in her dreams:

> Half the night in her sleep she heard a sound as if some large stone were grinding a hole on the outside wall of her brain…She became aware after a time that the noise was the sun trying to burn through the tree line…Then suddenly it burst through the tree line and raced down the hill toward her (O'Connor 329).

Finally, moments before her death, Mrs. May leans back against her car and, closing her eyes, "she could feel the sun, red-hot overhead" (O'Connor 332). In these passages, the sun threatens to cross the boundaries Mrs. May has worked to hard to erect – first the boundary of her property, then the wall of her very brain. As Sarah Gordon writes, "The wall of her brain is likened to the wall of her property, inside which Mrs. May evidently feels safe and where beauty and tranquility reign" (196). The final dream of the sun impels Mrs. May to action; when she wakes up to find the bull outside her window yet again, she drives Mr. Greenleaf out into the pasture with his gun and inaugurates the denouement of the story.

Mrs. May, unlike Ivan, does not move gradually out of her exclusive tendencies towards embrace. Until the very end, she continues to uphold the decorum of her own life and to deny the humanity of those around her. As Volf writes, "In a significant sense we are our cultures and we find it therefore difficult to distance ourselves from the culture we inhabit in order to evaluate its various elements" (36). As she leans against her car and waits for Mr. Greenleaf to shoot the bull, she closes her eyes and thinks of time as divided into "past" and "future":

> She decided she was tired because she had been working continuously for fifteen years. She decided she had every right to be tired, and to rest for a few minutes

> before she began working again. Before any kind of judgment seat, she would be able to say: I've worked, I have not wallowed (O'Connor 332).

In contrast to her vision of industry, she pictures Mr. Greenleaf "loitering in the woods" and Mrs. Greenleaf "flat on the ground, asleep over her holeful of clippings" (O'Connor 332). She smiles as she imagines Mrs. Greenleaf as "demented" and Mr. Greenleaf as being gored by the bull. The problem with Mrs. May's self-adulation, as Volf would see it, is that the kind of purity she is pursuing "wants the world cleansed of the other rather than the heart cleansed of the evil that drives people out by calling those who are clean 'unclean' and refusing to help make clean those who are unclean" (74). Mrs. May is content to exclude the Greenleafs as "shiftless" and "demented," rather than question whether or not they actually deserve to be excluded. They strike her as "objects that are 'out of place,' like 'dirt' that needs to be removed in order to restore the sense of propriety to [her] world" (Volf 78). As Giannone deftly phrases it, Mrs. May "must unlearn her disdain" (423). It is this lesson that the bull finally thrusts into her.

Although Mrs. May is not ill like Ivan, her death nevertheless has been foreshadowed throughout the story. When Mrs. May pesters her son Scofield to marry a "nice" girl, he answers by saying, "Why Mamma, I'm not going to marry until you're *dead and gone* and then I'm going to marry me some nice fat farm girl that can take over this place!" (O'Connor 315, italics mine). When Scofield once suggests that this "nice fat farm girl" should be someone like Mrs. Greenleaf, O'Connor writes, "The idea that one of them might marry a woman even remotely like Mrs. Greenleaf was enough to make [Mrs. May] ill" (315). Later Mrs. May notices that the Greenleafs do not seem to have

aged at all over the years, and she imagines that “when she was *dead and gone* from overwork and worry, the Greenleafs, healthy and thriving, would be just ready to begin draining Scofield and Wesley” (O’Connor 319, italics mine). Mrs. May tells her son, Wesley, however, that he needn’t think she’ll die anytime soon – “I’ll die when I get good and ready” (O’Connor 321). Death is yet another “Other” for Mrs. May, who believes that she is proprietor of even her own demise. Like the sun, like the bull, like all the “Others,” Mrs. May imagines that death also must respect the boundaries she has constructed.

The first moment when Mrs. May relinquishes the belief in her own propriety (and proprietorship) comes only when the bull is joyfully bounding towards her. Instead of constructing yet another boundary between herself and the bull by getting back into the car, this time Mrs. May remains perfectly still, “not in fright,” writes O’Connor, “but in a freezing unbelief” (333). What Mrs. May finally “unbelieves” is the rightness of her own life. As Giannone writes, “The bull plunges Mrs. May into a starker desolation than any poverty she imagined. She is pierced by her own wretchedness and transience. Her heart feels her essential insufficiency” (429). Although Mrs. May has feared death for the loss of control it will bring, she now accepts it since counterpart to “death-bringing natural rape” is the “life-giving penetration of supernatural grace” (Ruth Vande Kieft 348). Mrs. May has toiled endlessly to preserve the sanctity of her good name, and it is this “good name” that the Greenleafs, the bull, and death have threatened to undo. As Vande Kieft deftly summarizes,

Mrs. May’s fear that [the bull] will ‘ruin her herds’ by impregnating her cows off-

> schedule and introducing a wild, alien, and, she assumes, inferior strain into the breed, suggests both her sense of threat to her well-regulated, decent, and respectable way of life, and her fear that her son Scofield will marry a Greenleaf daughter as he threatens to do (348).

Volf writes, "The power of sin rests less on the insuppressible urge of an effect than on the persuasiveness of the good reasons, generated by a perverted self in order to maintain its own false identity" (96). It is these "good reasons" of maintaining purity (in her herd as well as her family) that perpetuate Mrs. May's "false identity," and it is therefore her "good name" that Mrs. May must finally "unbelieve." In this moment of "unbelief," Mrs. May no longer desires to erect boundaries between herself and the bull; she stares at him "as if she had no sense of distance" between the bull and herself (O'Connor 333). Instead of excluding him once again, Mrs. May waits for the embrace of the wooing god, the country suitor, the tormented lover[18]. The bull embraces Mrs. May with his horns, plunging one through her heart and wrapping the other around her side.

Mrs. May's final act, therefore, like Ivan's, is one of self-sacrifice. And like Ivan, Mrs. May's death recalls Christ's passion. As Giannone shows, Mrs. May literalizes the psalmist's cry from Psalm 22: "Save me from the mouth of the lion! You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!" (Psalms 22:21). Christ evokes another verse from this same psalm in the hour of his death: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?" (Psalm 22:1). Both Mrs. May's death and Christ's death, writes Giannone, offer "a presentation of the

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[18] Mrs. May's waiting for the bull could even be read as a "gesture of invitation": As Volf writes, "The waiting self" implies "the power of signaled desire, of created space, and opened boundary of the self" (143).

biblical precedent of the suffering servant" (428). Volf writes, "At the heart of the cross is Christ's stance of not letting the other remain an enemy and of creating space in himself for the offender to come in" (126). Mrs. May finally accepts the bull (and her sons, and the Greenleafs) not as an enemy, but as a lover, a friend, a part of her own dynamic identity. Mrs. May, who has been described as near-sighted throughout the story, overcomes her myopia by finally relinquishing her self-centered life. "The violent lover-destroyer brings revelation," writes Vande Kieft (350). Mrs. May's death recalls also Mrs. Greenleaf's earlier cries: "Oh Jesus, stab me in the heart!" Giannone writes that Mrs. Greenleaf "believes that only a pierced heart communicates the strength of her mission, so she asks to be pierced by a love that admits the world's disasters and that is pleased to conquer only in death" (427). Likewise, Mrs. May can only exhibit strength through admitting her weakness, and she can only embrace others by forgoing her exclusive nature. Mrs. May dies, "bent over whispering some last discovery into the animal's ear" (O'Connor 334). We can imagine that it is the discovery of Christian cosmopolitanism that she is sharing in this final image of embrace.

Conclusion

The fact that both Ivan and Mrs. May die only moments after they have learned to embrace the "Other" implies not that cosmopolitan embrace is impossible on earth, but that it is not complete. As Volf writes, "We must engage in the struggle against oppression, but renounce all attempts at the final reconciliation" (109). Ivan's and Mrs. May's reconciliations with the "Others," therefore, would undoubtedly fall apart were they to live longer. Since they are not God, who is the only one capable of completing a final reconciliation[19] (based on the vision of a "new heavens and a new earth" discussed above), we can imagine that Ivan and Mrs. May would repeatedly fall back into patterns of exclusion of which they would need to repent once again as they continually moved towards embrace. With God's final reconciliation as a goal, Christian cosmopolitans must nurture a perpetual attitude of embrace. This attitude involves recognizing that "life in community means sharing a common social space and taking responsibility for the other" (Volf 96). As Appiah writes,

> Cosmopolitanism shouldn't be seen as some exalted attainment: it begins with the simple idea that in the human community, as in national communities, we need to develop habits of coexistence: conversation in its older meaning, of living together, association" (xix).

Whether it is called "conversation" or "embrace," cosmopolitanism is indeed compatible with Christianity.

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[19] Volf writes, "Final reconciliation is not a work of human beings but of the triune God…it is not an apocalyptic end of the world but the eschatological new beginning of this world" (110).

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This report was typed by the author.