

A CORRECTIVE MORALITY: NODDINGS' "FEMININE ETHIC
OF CARE" IN A TIME TO BE BORN,
HUCKLEBERRY FINN AND JAZZ

by

Verva L. Densmore, M.A.

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APPROVED BY


Gretchen Mieszkowski, Ph.D., Chair


Candice Goad, Ph.D., Committee Member


John Gorman, Ph.D., Committee Member


Ellin Grossman, Ed.D., Associate Dean


Shirley Paolini, Ph.D., Dean

I DEDICATE MY WORK
TO THE MEMORY OF MY SISTER NANCY
AND
FOR THEIR LOVE AND CARE
TO MY HUSBAND BOB,
MY DAUGHTERS KATY AND SARAH
AND MY MOTHER LEILA BARNES

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caring and tender moments" (Caring 104). My deepest appreciation goes to these four for providing me with a wealth of such moments.

ABSTRACT

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Verva L. Densmore, M.A.
The University of Houston Clear Lake, 1996

Thesis Chair: Gretchen Mieszkowski, Ph.D.

Ethical theory based in masculine experience has long held sway over moral understanding in Western cultures. Nel Noddings' "Ethic of Care" finds its roots in traditional female ethical response to moral quandaries that are "much more tenaciously imbedded in relationships with others" (Gilligan 342). Selected works of Mark Twain, Dawn Powell and Toni Morrison confirm Noddings' argument that female experience "...produces genuine moral insight and that failure to consider such experience and virtues associated with it may condemn all of us to a state of moral dullness and incompleteness" ("Ethics" 383). The works of these authors evoke life in all its complexity and challenge the western philosophical tradition of rejecting connection and

care, long considered "female" values, in favor of abstraction and separation. No longer understood as antithetical to moral judgment, the care-based ethic becomes the heart of moral judgment.

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INTRODUCTION

The history of western philosophy is replete with examples of theories of knowledge and ethics that insist on the separation of sensual and rational perception. This dualistic view forms the foundation for many rule-based ethical theories which argue for an ontology of individuation and a moral understanding based in separation from sensual influences. Moral decisions, using this guide, are found by referring to universal principles and are made by autonomous individual moral agents. The exemplar for this way of organizing moral decision making is Emanuel Kant through whom "this highly influential picture of morality" finds its fullest expression, and for whom "this realm of universal principles was seen as the proper locus of moral consciousness" (Lloyd 490). For Kant, and many others from this tradition, the underlying assumption is that humans are rational, autonomous, and individual. Each individual is a singular moral agent and is capable of moral consideration on his own.

In Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education, however, Nel Noddings suggests a new interpretation of morality and new ways of organizing reality. Moral acts, she argues, are founded in connection

and are mutual and reciprocal; the other is part of the moral decision in a fundamental way. Her philosophical study of morality offers an alternative to the hierarchically structured, traditional, rule-based morality that she sees as "ambiguous and unstable" (5). Hers is a moral theory grounded not in abstract values, but in a relationship of care between people. An ethic of care, unlike traditional, western moral systems, is focused on personal tendencies and attitudes of responsiveness and attentiveness rather than on justification of actions based on rules. For Noddings, traditional rule-based morality presents "a real danger" when the values provide excuses that separate us from one another and from the caring relation (Caring 85). She argues that human connection and care are more valuable guides to ethical living than the rule-centered, Judeo-Christian and rationalist ethics that have so long held sway over moral thinking in western cultures.

The philosophical ethical theory of Noddings is illuminated by many diverse and seemingly unrelated works of modern literature. Jazz by Toni Morrison, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain and A Time to be Born by Dawn Powell are three such works. The works of these authors evoke life in all its complexity and challenge the western philosophical tradition of rejecting connection and care, long considered "female" values, in favor of abstraction and separation. Though these writers are men and women from

vastly different personal situations and life experiences, and are writing in distinctly different times, each finds value in relying on care and connection as guides when deciding moral quandaries. Further, like Noddings, these authors mistrust ethical and social systems that value separation, individuation, and opposition of self and other; their works, instead, offer models in which care and connection prove necessary elements of ethical living.

For Noddings, connection is not only necessary, it is ontologically basic and care is ethically basic. Caroline Whitbeck argues in "A Different Reality: Feminist Ontology" that an ontology of connection "has at its core a conception of self-other relation that is significantly different from the self-other opposition that underlines much of so-called 'western thought'" (51). As it applies to Noddings' ethical theory, "Taking relation as ontologically basic simply means that we recognize human encounter and affective response as a basic fact of human existence" (Caring 4). It is from this base of connection that all of Noddings' arguments grow. An ethic of caring "does not separate self and other in caring . . ." (Caring 99). Because of this, her focus is on the "uniqueness of human encounters" and she rejects principles and rules as the major guide to ethical behavior (Caring 5).

William James writes, "The world of concrete personal experiences to which the street belongs is multitudinous beyond imagination, tangled, muddy, painful and perplexed.

The world to which your philosophy-professor introduces you is simple, clean and noble. The contradictions of real life are absent from it" (14). Because Noddings centers her discussion in the uniqueness of human encounters, hers is a philosophical theory that resists the charge of being oversimplified; rather, it fully considers the "tangled, muddy, painful and perplexed" realities of "the street." Further, far from avoiding "the contradictions of real life," Noddings points to them frequently as she develops and explains an ethic of care.

This same close attention to complex, contradictory, painful and unique human encounters informs the writings of Twain, Morrison and Powell. Further, despite the assertions of post-structuralist commentators, if one reads the words of these authors it seems that the tie between literature and morality is indisputable. In an interview, Bill Moyers once said to Morrison, "The artist is supposed to carry our moral imagination," but he then alleged that American authors often fail to do so ("Conversation" 263). Morrison disagreed, saying in effect that it is impossible not to address ethical issues though they are often addressed as sub-text, or in the form of silences rather than only in what is written. She added, "Writers are informed by the major currents of the world" (264). Mark Twain shared Morrison's interest in morality and often expressed his concern about the moral health of his day, once saying, "now we have no real morals, but only artificial ones--morals

created and preserved by the forced suppression of natural & healthy instincts" (Twain qtd. in Martin 182). Though Dawn Powell's interest was more centered in social institutions than in traditional ethical or rule-based systems, she was equally skeptical about the moral health of her time. She wrote with wit and wisdom about morally confused human characters who acted "according to their own mistaken lights" (Diaries 200). Her humor's edge slices through hypocrisy, and although accused of writing without a "sense of outrage" (qtd. in Vidal), she argues in her diaries that her wit demonstrates her outrage: "true wit should break a good man's heart" (157).

The concern these authors share about the issue of morality is inextricably part of the work each creates. These authors illustrate the weakness and inconsistency each sees in traditional ethical and social systems. Their judgments fall on values that separate people, allow abdication of responsibility for ethical behavior, fail to include the disenfranchised in ethical definitions, and are inconsistent in application. Like Noddings, these authors often point to where abstraction fails and show how connection succeeds in finding ethical solutions to moral and ethical puzzlement.

Each of the works examined here illuminates Noddings' ethical theory in a distinctly different way. Further, though an ethic based in connection and care finds its roots in traditionally female experience, the characters of Jim

(Huckleberry Finn), Joe (Jazz), Julian (A Time to be Born), and others show clearly that this is not a gender specific theory or simply a "female solution" to moral puzzlement. Rather, the western philosophical tradition of rejecting the "female" values of connection and care in favor of abstraction and separation ignores the "contradictions of real life." Noddings argues that care-based experience, rooted as it is in female experience, "produces genuine moral insight and that a failure to consider such experience and the virtues associated with it may condemn all of us to a state of moral dullness and incompleteness" (Ethics" 383). Further, through these works, the impulse that has long been called "women's need" to place moral quandaries in context and to decide moral actions based in care is validated. No longer understood as antithetical to moral judgment, the care-based ethic becomes the heart of moral judgment.

Chapter One

A TIME "TO BANISH CARE FROM THE LAND"

The seductiveness of money, power, fame and self-perpetuation in A Time to be Born pulls people away from human connection and love. Early in the novel Powell writes that this was a time to "banish care from the land" (1). Far from grounding their actions in care and connection, the characters in Powell's novel are often greedy, self-centered, and unresponsive to the care they receive. The ethical ideal as Noddings develops it "contains at its heart a component that is universal: Maintenance of the caring relation" (Caring 85). Powell's characters, however, often resist maintaining the caring relation; instead they turn away from openness to care and from the reciprocity receiving care requires. Through these people we see clearly Noddings' point that "How good I can be is partly a function of how you--the other--receive and respond to me. Whatever virtue I exercise is completed, fulfilled, in you" (Caring 6).

Powell's novel examines unrecognized but generally held non-traditional values like acquisitiveness and ambition, constitutive of a capitalist ideology. Some argue that

traditional rule-based ethical systems that support individuation and separation from feeling "...make a virtue of qualities that lead to economic success--self-reliance, frugality, and industry" (Cannon 402). To the extent that this hypothesis is correct, Powell's mistrust of the values inherent in attaining and maintaining economic success is much like the mistrust that Noddings expresses for rule-based ethical systems that separate us from each other and from the ethical ideal.

Dawn Powell wrote from 1925 to 1962 and published fourteen novels, dozens of short stories, several plays and numerous articles and book reviews. Gore Vidal, in 1987, called her "our best comic novelist" (242); Ernest Hemingway, in a letter to Powell in 1944, called her "his favorite living writer" (Diaries 226). She wrote with wit, insight and intelligence about greed, ambition and isolation. Powell received little popular recognition, however, possibly due in part to what Richard Halliday and others call the "unpleasant, dreadful people" who inhabit her novels (qtd. in Diaries 112). Powell herself believed this was observed most often when she had "congratulated [herself] on capturing people who need no dressing up or prettifying to be real" (Diaries 112).

Arguably readers have trouble identifying with many of Powell's "real" characters who use other people selfishly, judge world events ignorantly, and confidently justify immoral behavior. These are not people we want to be; they

do not inspire, do not motivate. Powell, however, believed her characters were a "historical necessity" because they had been so long avoided in fiction (Diaries 151). She was interested in "confused human characters instead of standard fiction black and white types--good, bad, strong, weak" (Diaries 151).

The complex characters in A Time to be Born reflect Powell's interest. Powell wrote in her diary, "Even the bad ones [are] not really bad but acting according to their own mistaken lights" (200). When the "mistaken lights" of these confused human characters are viewed through the lens of an ethic of care, we see clearly the forces and values of a modern world that deny connection and confuse ethical decision making. Perhaps more than anything else Powell creates a collection of characters who do not care for others and who are focused, instead, on wealth, status, power and self-perpetuation. She balances them against some few who do care and shows the difficulty of maintaining an ethical self when societal values push against care and permit the receiver of care to avoid acknowledging connection as a two-way, or circular, relationship.

Amanda and Julian Evans are in many ways illustrative of the time of the novel; it is their "time to be born." It is a time when world events eclipse personal triumphs and tragedies; "one broken heart" means nothing. Cynically Powell writes, "this was the time for ideals and quick profits on them before the world returned to reality and the

drabber opportunities" (A Time 2-3). Powell takes the powerful, upper-crust characters that Amanda and Julian represent and removes their disguises in order to reveal her "confused human characters."

Hypocrisy and pretension prevail as Powell sets up a world where "ideals" expressed publicly are diametrically opposed to ethical living. She wrote in her diary in 1939 about her disgust with the hypocrisy of a value system that proclaims care and concern for others but fails to guide behavior in close personal relationships. Although her comments are specifically about the clash between theory and practice in communism, her thoughts are relevant to all value systems that shelter unethical behavior and fail to consider connection and care. She wrote that the "Communists' rigid belief in paper theories and a love of masses excuses them from making personal loans or any emotional duty to a wife or friend; their uncompromising belief in theory excuses their startlingly variant lives, their greed, egotism, callousness and personal brutality" (156). This argument parallels Noddings' argument that value systems based in rules and abstractions often fail to guide ethical decision making. It also delineates the difference between "caring for" and "caring about" others. We can "care about" the masses, or, as in the case of Julian Evans the "Little Man," but such generalized and non-connecting forms of "care" do not equate with the ethical ideal of "caring for" as discussed by Noddings. Julian's

self-righteous attitude about his care toward the "little man" clearly shows the hypocrisy that can result when caring is limited to caring about others.

Noddings argues that "The object of moral life...is to create, maintain, and enhance caring relations, not to construct a virtuous self" (Alleged 97). Julian constructs a virtuous self-image in spite of unrecognized but blatant contradictions. He condescendingly manipulates his Little Man public for profit, but simultaneously pats himself on the back for his virtue in providing "spiritual guidance" for this "cherished" Little Man (A Time 197-98). Julian is aware of similar dichotomous behavior in others, but fails to recognize it in himself. For example, Julian "saw at once how fatal was this discrepancy between Amanda's public good works and her private selfishness" but was unable to see the same discrepancy in his own behavior (A Time 159). Julian feels virtuous. However, he is separate from, and in his mind superior to, the Little Man he prides himself on "helping" so more dichotomous behavior is inevitable.

Unfortunately for Julian, few men identify themselves as "little" and none react with the gratitude Julian believes he so justly deserves. He is particularly troubled by "the irritating habit some little men had of not admitting they were little men, of acting and even proclaiming that they were big men, on their way up out of Julian's jurisdiction" (A Time 198). He self-righteously convinces himself that he is leading "the Little Man out of

darkness" (A Time 198) and from his position of physical and emotional isolation decides what the little man needs and congratulates himself on his wisdom and generosity in providing for those needs. Julian's self-delusion continues and he sees no contradiction of attitude when he tries to "dictate an editorial on the general idea of the brotherhood of man...and nothing being too good for him" but is disgusted "with soldiers jostling him on every side and Little Men and their Little Women" interrupting his train of thought (A Time 306). Julian's cool disengagement permits his unethical manipulation of the people he claims to "cherish." His imaginative construction of the people he pretends to help has no basis in reality.

Some of Noddings' critics charge her with creating a theory that is too narrow because she does not include "caring about" in her construction of "caring for" ("Alleged" 96). Noddings, however, warns that such an interpretation would be dangerous:

Most important we must remember that a relation constructed in the imagination is not a genuine relation. There is no living other speaking to us directly--informing us, persuading us, getting us to change our minds. The process can lead us into a dangerous inauthenticity. ("Alleged" 98)

Noddings' argument finds support in Powell's characterization of Julian. Julian's condescending and patronizing attitude toward his "little man" provides a

model that demonstrates this inauthenticity and validates the truth of Noddings' warning. Though his behavior is presented with humor, we see the dangers in his lack of connection.

Noddings further responds to these allegations of parochialism that arise from her refusal to extend caring to include a more universal understanding by arguing that true caring, based in receptivity and connection, cannot function without completion in the cared for. "In situations where a cared for cannot...respond or where it is impossible for the carer to observe or receive any reaction, the relation itself cannot be called caring" ("Alleged" 97). This is not to say that Noddings believes "caring about" others is always inappropriate. Though dangers exist, Noddings still believes we should "occasionally" care about others, "but we should not suppose that in doing so we are caring for. Caring requires engrossment, commitment, displacement of motivation" (Caring 112). Julian Evans' care about his "Little Man" shows clearly how "caring about" lacks these qualities.

Another danger that Noddings sees in "caring about" groups, strangers, etc. is that such caring can come to replace "caring for" those closest to us. Problem solving at arm's length with imaginary groups is a game for Julian but Amanda demands more than intellectual engrossment from him. Julian, however, fails to understand this and, as with the little man, decides what is best for her welfare without

listening. He "creates" Amanda when he hires a ghost writer and markets her as a product and wonders why she is not appreciative of his efforts. From Amanda's point of view, "Everything [is] spoiled by having it bought or bribed.... And he couldn't understand, since the results were just the same either bought or freely given, why she should make any fuss about it" (A Time 67-8). Julian arguably acts with care for Amanda but angrily reacts to "being rejected by the woman he could swear he had created" (A Time 311-12), and thereby reflects the extent to which he fails to listen; care requires receptivity. Receptivity requires that "I am totally with the other.... I am not thinking the other as object" (Caring 32). Julian clearly thinks of Amanda as an object, a problem, and a product.

Powell, like Noddings, understood that any one-sided relationship is unhealthy, and that people can only maintain an ethical self to a certain point, beyond which they withdraw care. Caring is a mutually dependent relationship in which "each of us is dependent upon the other" (Caring 48). Reciprocity is necessary to the fulfillment of the mutually dependent care relationship. Although Noddings often focuses on ethical decision making from the point of view of the one caring, she does not fail to consider the responsibilities of the "cared-for." Reciprocity does not mean that the receiver of care-based action must necessarily acknowledge the actions as gifts given and received, but she must respond to it. Noddings argues:

What the cared-for gives to the relation either in direct response to the one-caring or in personal delight or in happy growth before her eyes is genuine reciprocity. It contributes to the maintenance of the relation and serves to prevent the caring from turning back on the one-caring in the form of anguish and concern for self. (74)

Because of his powerful position as editor of an influential newspaper, Julian takes all care given to him as his due. He not only fails to respond with "personal delight" but responds with anger and vengeance when the care is not forthcoming.

Julian views himself as a "man meant to lead people" (A Time 311); because of this, he reduces life to issues of control and power. As Judith Pett says, "Julian wants the power of world influence--of having the world consider him a great man. He will sacrifice personal convenience--especially someone else's convenience--to get it" (270). Julian seeks control and this control extends to his relationships with his professional subordinates, his first and second wives, the writers who contribute to the strength and prestige of his publications, and all others with whom he has contact. His ego feeds on the public perception of his power and he refuses to relinquish this public persona for any reason. If Julian perceives that someone is threatening to tarnish his image through a public display of rebellion, he focuses his forces to break that person. When

the immorality of his behavior penetrates even his own tough shell, he consoles himself with the thought that, "Never mind, it had to be" (A Time 309).

"It had to be" becomes his ethical refuge. Any behavior that seems necessary to maintain and promote his position of power can be excused with this mantra. The implication exists that Julian will support and care about (not for) those close to him if they will only acquiesce to his will and support his image. The safety implied by this assumption, however, is negated when we examine the relationship Julian has with his first wife, Margaret. Before and after their divorce Margaret cares for Julian; she openly listens to his needs and attempts to respond as one caring. Julian, for his part, both fails to respond with genuine reciprocity and expects continual and martyr-like care from Margaret. Noddings argues, "If the demands of the cared-for become too great or if they are delivered ungraciously, the one-caring may become resentful and, pushed hard enough, may withdraw her caring" (Caring 48). Margaret is pushed hard enough.

Julian leans on Margaret for emotional and ego support; he continues to visit her, though they are no longer married, and continues to take her responsiveness as his due. "If Mrs. Evans seemed troubled about these visits, finding this demand on her sympathy a painful reminder of other days, it was too bad, but then some one had to suffer for the good of others" (A Time 205). But, as Cheever tells

Julian, "Sometimes circumstances are too much for one human being to handle" (A Time 313). The anguish Noddings anticipates in the one-caring when she is pushed to abandon care is expressed when Margaret is "taken to a sanitarium in a strait jacket" because she becomes "obsessed with the desire to kill Julian" (A Time 313). Significantly, Julian takes no responsibility for his role in her anguish but is instead "shocked [by] this failure of Margaret's to support him in his own misfortunes" (A Time 313). Julian finds himself in a situation over which he has no control but his understanding of his own superiority does not allow him to admit culpability in triggering her madness. Still, her madness must be explained and when Julian yells at Amanda that she is responsible for "Driving [his] poor wife mad!" (A Time 323), he takes one more step away from assuming responsibility for his own actions (or lack thereof) and from connection with the outcome of those actions. Because an ethic of care centers in relationships and situations, it resists such abdication of responsibility. Noddings is interested in "how to meet the other morally" (Caring 95). In an ethic of care, "we are obligated--to do what is required to maintain and enhance caring" (Caring 95). Julian's behavior is the antithesis of moral behavior using Noddings' guide.

However, Julian Evans does not stand alone as one who behaves unscrupulously. Amanda Keeler Evans also fails to acknowledge care and the conjoint benefits of caring. As

another of Powell's primary "cared-for" characters in the novel, Amanda offers further examples of the possible consequences of failing to understand the mutual responsibilities in a care-based relationship. Far from reacting with "personal delight" or "happy growth," Amanda interprets the care she receives from others as vulnerability to be exploited. When she is reunited with Ken Saunders, the one person who seems to have penetrated her emotional shell, she feels startled by the "fluttering of the heart on her own part" (A Time 29) but decides this reaction can be neutralized once she is able to subjugate him "...and so restore her lost complacency" (A Time 261). When she saw Vicky Haven for the first time in ten years, "She was glad to see her, she was surprised to find, but even before Vicky had caught her eye Amanda was beginning to wonder how much would be expected of her" (A Time 77). Significantly, Amanda understands that through connection there is obligation: an obligation to respond as one caring. Though an ethic of care seeks to enhance such connection, Amanda strenuously resists it. Friendship requires commitment, "...but no one need think her time or friendship would be commanded. No matter to what use she might put others, they would soon find Amanda Keeler as not to be used" (A Time 78). The feelings of friendship Ken and Vicky have for Amanda become the fuel for her power over them.

Because of her rejection of care, Amanda, like Julian, is guilty of failing to fulfill what Noddings calls her

"vital role in the caring relation" (Caring 73). Her failure to provide genuine reciprocity causes Ken, Amanda, Miss Bemel, Julian (though these last two are more obviously self-serving in their actions) to turn from care for Amanda to concern for themselves. Miss Bemel's loyalty changes to sedition (A Time 263) and her tolerance for Amanda's idiosyncrasies ends as Miss Bemel begins to feel "spiteful" (A Time 266). Julian's attraction, which arguably could have grown into love had it received any nourishment, changes to repugnance, fury and desire for revenge (A Time 317). Ken's love changes to cynicism and resentment (A Time 332, 130). Vicky's change, however, most clearly shows how caring can turn back on the one caring in the form of "anguish and concern for self" (Caring 74). Though her feelings of respect and friendship were genuine, by the end of the novel she realizes "with a sick ache" that "Amanda would use her to the end of her days, stepping into her life whenever she chose, taking what she liked" (A Time 291). In a move toward self-preservation, even Vicky eventually withdraws care.

Edmund Wilson once criticized Powell saying she "does nothing to stimulate feminine daydreams" because "the women who appear in her stories are likely to be as sordid and absurd as the men" (233). He adds, "These beings shift and cling and twitch in their antic liaisons and ambitions, on their way to some undetermined limbo out of reach of any moral law" (237). Though Amanda could easily be the object

of feminine daydreams (she is rich, famous, beautiful, sought after, etc.), she is repugnant because she cares so little for others yet receives such abundant care in return. Robert van Gelder agrees saying that Powell's stories "are very witty satires that, perhaps unfortunately, satirize those people who, to the bulk of the public, must seem the stuff that dreams are made of" (132). But Powell understood satire to mean creating "people as they are" rather than the romantic notion of "people as they would like to be" (Diaries 119). Powell's satire intentionally turns the dream woman into the absurd and sordid woman, but it also makes her real.

Many critics suggest that Amanda is modeled on Clare Boothe Luce. Although Powell often denied the comparison, she comes close to admitting an unconscious pattern may have formed the basis for her character. In 1956 Powell found a 1939 forgotten memo she had written to herself in which she questioned, "Why not do a novel on Clare Luce?" Still Powell said in her diary, "I insist it was a composite (or compost) but...Who can I believe--me or myself?" (356). Indeed, why not do a novel on Luce? As Michael Feingold says in "New York Stories: Dawn Powell's Acid Texts," Luce must have been an "irresistible target...[for] Powell's ...hard-working satirist's heart" but he also expresses his admiration for Powell's integrity because, though she thoroughly shreds Luce through the character of Amanda, "she does it almost tenderly, with a minimum of

schadenfreude"(14). If Amanda is based on Luce, and if Feingold is right that Powell treats her subject "almost tenderly," Powell's diary entry in 1943 in which she calls Luce "evil" and says "The lashing of such evil can only be done by satire" becomes significant (Diaries 213).

Noddings argues, "When one intentionally rejects the impulse to care and deliberately turns her back on the ethical, she is evil . . ." (Caring 115). Arguably, this is the evil of which Amanda is guilty. When guests come into her home she does not open herself to care but is much more interested in manipulating the list of guests to maximize "what [she] expect[s] to get out of them" (A Time 79). When she and Ken Saunders were lovers, she turned her back on ethical behavior by rejecting Ken and care for him because Julian represented power and influence. Amanda continues resisting the impulse to care for Ken and justifies her unethical behavior by believing "she had to be [a bitch] in order to get anywhere" (A Time 29). Although Amanda often behaves more decently toward Vicky and fellow home-town friend Ethel Cary, it is not an uncharacteristic turn toward "the ethical" but rather reflects a completely characteristic concern with what is best for Amanda. She firmly and consistently turns away from any feeling of warmth or caring. Noddings argues that "evil is chosen by the evil one as good is chosen by the good. One cannot be rescued from evil...one must choose its opposite" (Caring 115-16). But Amanda does not, perhaps cannot, choose the

opposite. For Amanda, caring means vulnerability (Noddings would agree) and strength means "never risking an inch of her advantage" (A Time 29). Her choices reflect these values.

Powell provides a history for her characters that suggests an understanding of the basis for an ethic of care. For Noddings, the ethical ideal based in receptivity and relation springs from two sentiments: "The natural sympathy human beings feel for each other and the longing to maintain, recapture, or enhance our most caring and tender moments" (104). Amanda and Julian do not have memories of being cared for, or if they do have such memories they are distorted, rejected. Amanda's memories of her childhood are not of care and connection, but of "detaching her feelings from her body" and of the resulting "sense of magic power" this gave her (A Time 36). To be "cared-for" was weakness to Amanda and childhood meant experiencing "the shame of dependence" (A Time 38). Amanda's childhood memories are devoid of "natural sympathy" for others and reject memories of caring moments. Her values reside instead in memories of the "magic power" of her separation from feeling and caring. Interestingly, Amanda's arguably "mistaken lights" are values that fit precisely the values of a materialistic world where care has been banished from the land.

Amanda frequently expresses her need to be separate from entanglements that might interfere with her ability to be in control or that undercut her values of fame and power.

We are not talking about traditional moral values here, nothing abstract or historical, but values grounded in our modern understanding of success and personal fulfillment. Amanda consistently turns away from connection and receptivity but feels the void such a life brings. Though she resists it tenaciously, Amanda has "the desire to be loved for herself alone" (A Time 59). She begins to see fame as a "cage" in which she has been denied the "simpler rights of an average woman" yet still wants to "conquer the established world rather than rebel against it" (A Time 59). She remains hungry for that side of herself that she rejected but, more importantly, she remains entangled in the realities of life no matter how hard she strives to stay above them.

Amanda "knew exactly what she wanted from life, which was, in a word, everything" (A Time 24). In many ways Amanda represents the American success story, or the "American dream;" but the dream, based in notions of superiority and power, becomes a value that is used to alienate her from the world. Powell's diary reveals her understanding of the allure of fame and recognition. Like her character, she believes success is "a flair for knowing who's who, for using these people" (Diaries 98). However, Powell does not live her life this way and in her diary laments the need to market herself; she expresses "contempt for [herself] for trying to attain any celebrity by sheer hard work and a sincere desire to tell a story that the

country annals need for social history" (73). She talks of fellow writer Dwight Fiske whom she says she cannot envy because "he worked far too hard, maneuvered, fought, and it is not as a writer but as a personality that he seeks a unique recognition" (73). She faced a suicidal period in 1942, shortly before A Time to be Born was published, and wrote, "I must pay forever for not being commercially opportunistic...with result [a] grinning reminder that the money gods are right--grab the money and you win artistic success and everything else" (Diaries 198-99).

Perhaps her deep understanding of the temptations of fame and her ambiguous feelings about maneuvering for success are the underpinnings of her "tender" ripping of Amanda. In some way, Powell may have wished she were more like Amanda: a bit less caring and a bit less ethical. Caring makes one vulnerable to manipulation as Powell shows through Vicky who is manipulated by her brother's family, Margaret who is manipulated by Julian, Ken by Amanda, and so on. Powell also understood the courage caring requires, once saying she was "physically worn out by people--they leave you so little of yourself that you must hide it before the birds pick that final grain, too" (Diaries 71). Always willing to share herself and her time with others, Powell created an alter ego in Amanda and Julian who can express an abhorrence for "This wanton waste of their time by other people" (A Time 79).

Like "trained philosopher" Rockman Elroy, Amanda is accustomed to making her choices in life first and justifying them afterward (A Time 329). Like him, she is also "naively astonished to find [herself] subject to the ordinary rules for human behavior" (A Time 329). Finally, money, fame and power fail Amanda when she becomes pregnant. No longer can she retreat to the safety of her position; she must take responsibility for her actions and must reveal her vulnerability to Vicky. Amanda cries, "Here I am--all the money in the world--thirty-two years old--and as helpless as some farm girl in trouble" (A Time 286).

Noddings' ethical response in caring requires "stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the other's. When we care, we consider the other's point of view, his objective needs, and what he expects of us" (Caring 24). Vicky responds to Amanda's needs as one caring. But, Vicky's help only proves to Amanda that "she [can] still will things to come out smoothly, at no matter what cost to others" (A Time 288). Soon, "Vicky could feel her withdrawing now that she had revealed herself so dangerously to another human being" (A Time 289). Though Amanda's world is crumbling around her, she remains "indestructible" (A Time 299). After all, Amanda is not "just any woman" (A Time 165).

Powell's sympathy for her character comes through here with Vicky's realization that she cannot hate Amanda because it would be "like hating a hurricane or the sea" (A Time

295). This image of Amanda as a fact of nature is extended through the image of her as a flower that is nourished in a man-made garden: "Amanda was the finest flower in the garden because she took the nourishment from all the other flowers, it was as natural and blameless as that" (A Time 291). How can Amanda help being who she is when all around her, even the most caring of characters, express a need to see Amanda "triumphant, indestructible, selfish, perhaps, but anything rather than the frightened, broken creature" who needs caring and connection so desperately (A Time 299)? Amanda is self-serving, ambitious, and almost amoral. Yet others admire her, perhaps even idolize her. She gets her strength from the other flowers in the garden, but they allow her to take this strength because they want to admire her. Her standards are fed by this adoring public and if Amanda believes that her conduct is exempt from the restrictions placed on "ordinary" people, she is not alone in the belief. To the extent that Amanda is the representative of the American dream, the novel suggests her behavior is a logical reflection of the values inherent in that dream. Powell seems to be saying we are all contributors to the "mistaken lights" under which Amanda operates.

Powell did not apologize for creating characters like Amanda and Julian who were "sordid" or "unpleasant." Conversely, she often lost patience with "the shaking of heads over writing about 'nice people'" (Diaries 271).

Rather she argues, "The artist who really loves people loves them so well the way they are he sees no need to disguise their characteristics" (Diaries 273). Powell's love of people shows in her tenderness toward all, even those who might be called "evil." But critics like Frederick Morton understand her tenderness as evidence of a "fundamentally lacking...sense of outrage" (qtd in Vidal 244). Powell's outrage, however, expresses itself as wit. She believed, "Wit is the cry of pain, the true word that pierces the heart. If it does not pierce, then it is not true wit. True wit should break a good man's heart" (Diaries 157). To the extent that Amanda and Julian represent the product of a society that places heroes on pedestals and excuses them from the moral expectations that exist for others, Powell's wit works as it should.

More difficult than the outrage expressed through her wit is the courage expressed through the love story woven into the novel. At the time of publication, Diana Trilling criticized A Time to be Born saying, "Miss Powell...loses heart and dubs in, as a backdrop to her satire, the kind of love story--nice little small-town girl wins away the great big tough newspaperman from the glamorous big-time beauty--that she would be the first to ridicule" (613). Terry Teachout, in "Rediscovered Once More," however, comments that Powell, "like her heroines, believes in love, even though she knows better" (9). Further, Powell wrote in her diary the month she began the novel: "I want the heroine

simpler than any of my others, not jaded. Realistic, yes, but not soured, still subject to pain and joy and sentimentality" (188). Vicky Haven is this heroine. She is the "nice little small-town girl" who is not "jaded" and who believes in love even though she knows better. But Trilling missed the point when she suggested that Powell stepped away from her satire to "dub in" Vicky and Ken's love story. Rather, their story shines a light on the backdrop values of money and power that overshadow the events of the novel.

The narrator tells us, "This was a time when writers dared not write of Vicky Haven or of simple young women like her" (A Time 3). Courageously Powell weaves Vicky's story with Amanda's; she parallels the pressures of modern New York life and home-town memories for both women. However, Vicky does not reject care as does Amanda. Vicky, though far from idealized, is arguably the healthiest of the novel's characters. In her we see what Powell believed was the important thing in a novel: "the message that anything done for love is in itself enough reward and nothing is too much to do" (Diaries 264). Love and connection eclipse world events for Vicky and Ken and, for all her skepticism, Powell holds out for the possibility of love. The author of her New York Times obituary suggested that Powell's credo might well be this quote from her 1948 novel, The Locusts Have No King: "In a world of destruction, one must hold fast to whatever fragments of love that are left" (47). Also, contrary to Trilling's assessment that the love story in A

Time to be Born represents a loss of heart, Tim Page argues that Powell "rejects the easy, sweeping nihilism of many 20th-century writers" (x). In his introduction to Dawn Powell at her Best, Page calls Powell a "worldly, determinedly clear-sighted, deeply skeptical romantic" for whom love and joy "are well worth fighting for, at virtually any cost this side of self-delusion" (x). The character of Vicky seems to provide support for his observation.

Vicky is a foil for Amanda and brings the clear message that love and connection are healthier and, though replete with the dangers caring brings, more likely to fulfill and satisfy than is monetary success. Powell writes in her Diaries about the "prostitution of minds and bodies that success seems to demand" and criticizes Georgette Carneal's book The Great Day because, though it presents this materialistic side of life, the book suggests "no possibility of human nobility--no striving, even foolish, except for money" (70). Powell believes such a view is "not [only] cynical, but stupid" (Diaries 70). Without the character of Vicky, A Time to be Born might also present a world in which money seemed the only motivational force for its characters. However, though Vicky admires Amanda's wealth, she finds friendship, love and connection are more valuable assets and she directs her energy toward these values. Vicky embodies Noddings' ethical ideal because she recognizes her longing for relatedness, accepts it, and commits herself to the openness that permits her to receive

others (Noddings 104). She does, however, withdraw from Amanda who uses her and from her brother's family who do the same. Noddings would understand her actions. "To go on sacrificing bitterly, grudgingly, is not to be one-caring and, when she finds this happening, she properly but considerately withdraws for repairs" (Noddings 105).

Vicky's withdrawal is portrayed in the novel as a much more painful experience than Noddings here suggests, but what is most important is that Vicky courageously withdraws when these relationships become destructive yet does not close off her desire to be receptive. Vicky continues to fight for love or for what Powell calls "whatever fragments of love that are left."

Though love and joy might be worth fighting for, Vicky's move from a love-relationship with the alcoholic Tom Turner to a love-relationship with the alcoholic Ken Saunders does not seem like a positive one. Arguably Ken appreciates Vicky more than Tom did, but is this enough? Vicky was a door-mat for Tom, and Powell gives little evidence that things will be very different with Ken. There is, however, a significant difference in these relationships: Vicky is different. Vicky entered into her relationship with Tom starry-eyed and innocent; she was sure he would change. With Ken, she knows he loves her less than she loves him, and though he insists in the end that "there will never be any Amanda in my life, now that I know about you," she neither knows nor cares if he is telling the truth

(A Time 334). She knows he drinks too much but unlike in her previous relationship, she does not see it as her job to change him. Significantly, Ken often expresses his affection for her, and though readers might react to his expression with some skepticism, Vicky takes his words at face value. She says, "So long as he was glad to see her and called her darling, she was not going to inquire into the reasons" (A Time 241). The cost of fighting for love may be high for Vicky, but it will not be as the expense of self-delusion.

One argument that many feminist writers express about an ethic of care is that it will "perpetuate the subordinate condition of women" ("Ethics" 383). Vicky's story might seem to support this argument. Noddings, however, consistently emphasizes the mutual nature of any relationship that is based in care. "An ethic of caring is a tough ethic. It does not separate self and other in caring Caring is, thus, both self-serving and other serving" (99). The ethical ideal is a picture of self that embodies an understanding of self both as one-caring and one who longs to be received, understood, and accepted. "I see that when I am as I need the other to be toward me, I am the way I want to be" (Caring 49). But such an ideal requires maintenance of self, "If caring is to be maintained, clearly, the one-caring must be maintained" (Caring 100). Vicky's growth after leaving Lakeville shows that she can maintain her openness to care even if such maintenance

requires painful movement away from self-destructive relationships. For Noddings, "Pursuit of the ethical ideal demands impassioned and realistic commitment" (Caring 100, emphasis added). More than Ken's desire to return Vicky's love, it is this realistic commitment by Vicky that allows the reader to view her clear-eyed love for Ken as hopeful in spite of his arguably pitiful nature.

Powell does not preach against monetary values; her writing is skeptical but devoid of moralizing. Her characters who achieve the greatest economic success do so at the expense of personal relationships and by turning away from caring involvement with others. They excuse behavior injurious to others by appealing to values based on individuation and separation: personal success, personal power and self-reliance. Though created in 1941, the characters, as Katherine Dieckmann suggests, are "more vivid than the commodified version we happen to be stuck with [today], but also amusingly familiar...noble and phony, and a pre-yuppie class" (29). The powerful pull of the values that banish care is as strong today as when Powell wrote her novel, and one could argue that this too is a time when many people admire "the bold compulsions of...avarice [as] a glorious virtue" (A Time 3). Noddings understands multitudinous experiences of the street; she knows that people have other memories than memories of being cared for and other desires than desires to be moral. It is, however, "precisely because the tendency to treat each other well is

so fragile that we must strive so consistently to care"
(Caring 99). Powell might agree, and perhaps as Feingold
suggests, "her work isn't so much a sentimental paean as a
sardonic warning" (14).

Chapter Two

THE FEMINIST ETHIC OF HUCK

Mark Twain is often described as the quintessential American author and he wrote from a decidedly male perspective. Many might question his inclusion in any exploration of literature designed to illuminate feminist theory. Noddings, however, resists classifying her ethical theory as a gender-specific or "female" solution to moral questions. Rather, she explains, "When I speak of ethics from the standpoint of women, I do not mean that men should be excluded from either its descriptive or its prescriptive contents. Instead the ethic should frankly be developed from the experience of women" ("Ethics" 382-83). Noddings believes that because men have so often turned away from feeling and caring, a care-based ethics is "characteristically and essentially feminine" (Caring 8), but she emphasizes that this does not mean that men are incapable of embracing an ethical system that is based in caring. Rather, just as the traditional logical (i.e. Kantian) approach to ethical problems "arises more obviously from masculine experience, "an ethic of care is a system grounded in the feminine experience" (8). Noddings argues that her theory provides for the possibility that such an

ethic "might also grow out of some forms of male experience" ("Ethics" 383).

Twain wrote during a time in history when the American Civil War and Darwin's theories of evolution caused many scholars and authors to re-evaluate ideological assumptions, ethical systems and social institutions. In Harvest of Change, Jay Martin writes, "perhaps more than any contemporary but Henry Adams[,] Twain was conscious of the push of history against human ideals" (176). The push of history often reveals cracks and weaknesses in these ideals and, in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Twain shows the cracks and imagines corrective values based in care. These care based values in Huckleberry Finn are much like those of Noddings. Twain and Noddings understand the realistic complexities of moral decision-making and the dangers of moral systems that fail to consider this complexity.

Like Noddings, Twain saw problems with ethical behavior based in abstract values that separate people. Such values are especially dangerous when coupled with the high tolerance of violence inherent in the chivalric code. Charles H. Nilon says, "Twain believed the persistence of the chivalric code in the South conditioned to some extent the South's social and political behavior, including its tolerance for lynching . . ." (63). If Nilon is right, Twain's concern about a system of values that can be used to support unethical behavior may be much like that of Noddings.

Like Noddings, Twain appears aware of the dangers of rule-centered values. He uses Huck, with his adolescent longing for consistency, as the lens through which to examine them. Huck, a morally innocent boy, is searching for clues to moral behavior by referring to the romantic notions found in the chivalric code and to the traditional values of his community, friends and family. These guides are insufficient, as they provide only abstract values that do not seem to apply in the situations in which he finds himself. Through Huck's searching, Twain reveals weaknesses and inconsistencies in these traditional ethical, often romantic, codes. It is when Huck relies on connection, care, and situational examples that he makes his best moral decisions.

In contrast to Huck, Tom Sawyer embraces the chivalric ideals of romance, adventure and heroism. His imaginative game with the robber gang is designed to prove each gang member's loyalty, courage and readiness to obey orders. Each gang member is reminded that if he fails to maintain secrecy and follow the rules he "must be killed...must have his throat cut...have his carcass burnt up and the ashes scattered all around" and so on (Twain 17). This language is a melodramatic recreation of the way kids talk, but for Tom these punishments seem perfectly reasonable within the boundaries of, or as extensions of, the chivalric code. Also, through these far-fetched adventures, we see Tom's

tolerance for violence and disregard for the members of his gang as well as a disregard for reality.

Although Huck joins in the excitement of the robber gang, with its spies and "A-rabs," he cannot go along with the fantasy when it fails to conform to reality. Proving to the reader that he is far from being the "perfect sap-head" that Tom calls him, he says, "I reckoned he believed in the A-rabs and the elephants, but as for me I think different" (Twain 23). Huck tries to ground even this child-play in reality. When he questions Tom about the discrepancies he sees between the "Sunday-school picnic" and the "camels and elephants and A-rabs," he demonstrates his need to find consistency between abstractions and real-life events (22). Huck is pragmatic when he measures the "truth" of Tom's romantic story against the "truth" of his own observations. The two truths cannot coexist and he decides in favor of reality and practicality. Likewise, when presumably ethical chivalric rules fail to fit with the reality of his relationship with Jim, his insistence on reality and practicality causes him to examine the rules. Noddings argues that within an ethic of care one must rely on a process of concretization that is the inverse of abstraction; the first move for a person when deciding on moral action is a move "to concretization where [his] feeling can be modified by the introduction of facts, the feelings of others, and personal histories" (Caring 37).

Huck shows through his reaction to the childhood game that he finds such a move natural.

Huck's insistence on concretization is also reflected when he appeals to superstition for behavioral guidance. It is important to understand here that Noddings would not suggest that superstition should guide our moral lives, but Huck's need to ground his actions in experience is a step toward an ethic of care. Superstition does not conflict with reality for Huck as Tom's romantic adventures and chivalric codes do. He holds his superstitious "beliefs" to the same standards of pragmatic logic and common sense, but, perhaps because they neither separate him from those about whom he cares nor conflict with experience, he finds them sound. For example, when Jim is bitten by a snake, Huck takes full responsibility because he touched a snake skin and now vows he won't "ever take ahold of a snake-skin again with my hands, now that I see what had come of it" (Twain 59). The connection between Huck's touching the snake skin and Jim's snake bite makes sense to Huck. He makes his decision not to do it again because he cares about Jim and sees his own behavior as potentially harming him.

Huck's situational, complex decision making reflects Twain's view of post-Civil War America. The world had changed and inconsistencies in previously held "moral truths" seemed too obvious to ignore. These are many of the same "moral truths" that Noddings sees as rooted in traditional masculine experience. However, as stated

previously, Noddings believes an ethic of care, though essentially feminine "might also grow out of some forms of male experience. Twain's "male experience" during this troubled time caused him to look for moral systems that consider and resolve the contradictions of real life; through Huck he explores alternative systems that are grounded, not in masculinist separation and individuation, but in connection and care.

Just as romantic adventures fail to satisfy Huck's need for observable truth, so broad rule-based ethics fail to provide guidance for Huck's behavior. Twain uses a mixture of romance, superstition, moral searching, pragmatism and connection to show the moral floundering he observed in America. According to Twain:

Necessarily we started equipped with perfect and blemishless morals; now we are wholly destitute; we have no real morals, but only artificial ones--morals created and preserved by the forced suppression of natural & healthy instincts. Yes, we are sufficiently comical inventions, we humans.
(Twain, qtd. in Martin 182)

Huck, in contrast, relies heavily on "natural & healthy instincts." He also shows how human connection contends with social mores, especially when those mores are abstract values that are ambiguous and serve to separate people.

Noddings says, "It has been traditional in moral philosophy to insist that moral principles must be, by their

very nature as moral principles, universifiable" (Caring 84). If this traditional view were correct, universal rules and values could guide moral action, and moral action based on these principles would infallibly be "right." However, Noddings argues, such values are too often ambiguous and inconsistent for this to be true. Abstract values like honor and duty, for example, can conflict with other values like honesty and courage. Duty, an especially separating value according to Noddings, is one of the high-sounding ideals that people often used to justify the legality of slavery and, later, the subjugation of blacks. Many Southerners believed that slavery was "right, righteous, sacred, the particular pet of the Deity, and a condition which the slave himself ought to daily and nightly be thankful for" (Rubin 67). Given this belief, it is easy to understand how they might use "duty," an abstract chivalric value, to defend this institution's "legal" continuation and any force necessary to protect it.

The men in Huckleberry Finn who re-imprison Jim at the end of the book demonstrate the inconsistencies often inherent in the abstract values of the chivalric code. The doctor who treats Tom's injuries admires Jim's kindness, concern and courage as he shows when he says: "I never seen a nigger that was a better nuss or faithfuller, and yet he was risking his freedom to do it" (Twain 274). However, though the doctor admires Jim, his admiration exists only within the system of slavery. He is not surprised and does

not protest when the most that the men will do for Jim is promise not to "cuss him no more" (Twain 274). He understands that overshadowing Jim's "goodness" is the example he sets for other slaves who might want to escape. These men do not have to treat Jim as a human being because it is within their code of "honor" and "duty" to chain him up and hold him for his owner. They do not have to look past these obligations to questions about the right or wrong nature of enslaving a kind, gentle, honest, brave man. The inconsistencies of a moral code that honors honesty and courage, yet allows the enslavement of people with these qualities, result in untenable ambiguities.

As mentioned above, when Huck relies on connection, care, and situational examples, he makes his best moral decisions. The ambiguity within the traditional values and mores of his community prevents Huck from being able to use them as guides when he faces moral dilemmas. Life is more complex than these systems allow. Noddings' argument that rules can be ambiguous finds support here, but more importantly, Noddings believes that rules can allow people to turn away from care: "I may come to rely almost completely on external rules and, if I do, I become detached from the very heart of morality: the sensibility that calls forth caring" (Caring 47). Far from being universal, abstract rule-centered systems, to use the words of William James, ignore "the world of concrete personal experiences

...[which] is multitudinous beyond imagination, tangled, muddy, painful and perplexed" (James 14).

Like James and Noddings, Twain understands the multitudinous nature of life. He complicates Huck's moral decision making by creating situations for him in which traditional values fail to guide because of their lack of applicability. If he had been "brung up right," Huck thinks, he would know the rules and be able to behave according to those rules. The rules, by this logic, should be universifiable and would apply in all situations, relieving Huck of the responsibility of deciphering right from wrong.

Rule-based traditional values are not universifiable for Huck, however. When Huck uses Jim for his amusement on the raft, for example, he is not behaving any differently than he and Tom behaved in the widow's garden. At that time Tom and Huck convinced Jim that he couldn't believe his senses and further that "witches bewitched him and put him in a trance" (Twain 15). In both instances Jim becomes the victim of over-active and creative imaginations; but the lies the boys tell are brushed aside for the sake of the romantic adventure. The boys are simply creating an opportunity to prove their "valor." However, when they appeal to the "universal" values of courage and valor to excuse any harm they do to Jim, they ignore the demands of care. As Huck's connection with Jim grows, his understanding of Jim's goodness grows, and he is no longer

able to decide his behavior by using these supposedly universal values.

Huck's friendship with Jim especially complicates the societal mores that support the notion that black people are inferior, are property, and are to be used as such. It is this friendship that leads Huck to an ethic of relation and caring. After Huck makes a fool of Jim on the raft he understands for the first time that Jim is not inferior to other men, he is not an object to "own" and he cannot be used as if these things were true. Jim is a man with courage, intelligence, and feeling. Huck regrets what he has done. He finally apologizes and says, "I warn't ever sorry for it afterwards, neither. I didn't do him no more mean tricks . . ." (Twain 90). This is a giant moral step for Huck. Notice, though, that it is a moral decision based in connection, not in an abstract value of honor that might allow him to feel self-righteous in his treatment of an "inferior" person while avoiding the potentially demeaning act of apologizing. It is a moral decision that does not allow him to hide in the abstract values he and Tom had used in the garden.

Twain's Huck is a young boy who often questions the ambiguities and hypocrisy of the mores of his community. Noddings would understand Huck's need for an ethical system that is unambiguous and avoids hypocrisy. For her, an ethic of care is such a system. She says, "the process of moral decision making that is founded on caring requires a process

of concretization rather than one of abstraction" (Noddings 8). An ethic of care does not allow one to approach moral problems through an abstract system of values; its foundation instead is in situations. It is exactly this process of concretization that Huck used on the raft and that he uses each time he protects Jim and rejects the values that would allow him to treat Jim as a piece of property.

Soon after Huck's apology for his trickery on the raft he tries to use the value of "duty" for his guide as he struggles with the problem of whether or not to help Jim escape. In simple terms, his duty is to Miss Watson. Jim is worth \$800. Helping him escape is like stealing. Noddings argues that one danger of an abstract value system is that it reduces individual responsibility to act ethically by transferring that responsibility to an "ethical" elite: "If they are ethical, the one obeying is judged 'ethical' by a sort of ethical transitivity. But this is not ethicality; it is merely obedience" (116). Huck believes Miss Watson is ethical, as are the other adults who would require him to return Jim. Returning escaped slaves, even a friend like Jim, is thus justified by the abstract value "duty." A southern white man has a duty to return that slave even if he is outraged by the institution of slavery and the practice of treating a man like a piece of property. Huck, however, again grounds his moral behavior not in abstract values but in a relationship of care between

himself and Jim. The scene when Huck tears up his letter to Miss Watson exemplifies this ethic of care and so is worth a close look.

It begins with Huck's concern that Jim will be sold to strangers, a fear grounded in his care for Jim as a person. Huck tries to refer to values instilled by church lessons that, had he gone to classes, would "a learnt [him], there, that people that acts as I'd been acting about that nigger goes to everlasting fire" (Twain 207). These lessons, however, would make him disregard Jim as a friend, break the close connection with him, and refer instead to his "duty" as a moral guide. Huck, though, remembers how Jim stood watch so Huck could sleep, how glad Jim was when Huck came back to the raft after being lost in the fog, and "how good he always was" (Twain 208). In other words, he recognizes the relationship of care between himself and his friend and ultimately finds guidance for his moral action by referring to this relationship of care. Noddings argues that this base is a more valuable guide than the abstract rules more traditionally used in such situations. Though Huck fails to understand or acknowledge the morality of his action, Noddings' argument finds support as the reader sees Huck's care-based actions are superior to those required by the rules of his culture. Connection and feeling prove essential to Huck's clearly ethical decision.

Huck is the metaphorical boy of the streets, the one James understood to be immersed in the multiplicity of life.

He is Twain's creation and has "natural and healthy instincts" for dealing with this complexity. His conscience is tied to the simple, clear rules of society, but real-world experience and connection complicate his ability to decide right from wrong. If Huck had sent the letter and returned Jim to slavery, his conscience might have been satisfied, but, in a deeper way, perhaps instinctively, he would have known his actions were wrong. His conscience is a poor guide and he says, "it don't make no difference whether you do right or wrong, a person's conscience ain't got no sense, and just goes for him anyway. If I had a yaller dog that didn't know no more than a person's conscience does, I would pison him" (Twain 224). Huck cannot rely on his conscience, nor on abstract rule-based morality, and so instead he relies on his instincts and experience, both of which are centered in care.

Huck knows he has made an important break with conventional thinking when he decides to help Jim rather than betray him. He has made a decision "for ever, betwix two things" (Twain 208). He doesn't name the "two" things but it seems clear they are value systems: one abstract and premised on separation, the other situational and based in connection. An ethic that is based on the caring relationship with others is a courageous ethic. It requires that a person take full responsibility for his or her actions; such a requirement does not allow one to refer to an abstract rule or value for justification for unethical

behavior. Huck's acceptance of the possibility that he will "go to hell" (Twain 208) rather than conform to society's requirement that he return Jim to slavery is a dramatic demonstration of the fullness of that responsibility (Twain 208).

Unfortunately, Huck does not have confidence in his ability to make ethical choices, and so he continues to defer to others, especially Tom Sawyer, with unfortunate results. Nilon argues that Twain uses Tom Sawyer to represent "the Southerner who continued to accept the chivalric code and to be influenced by the mythologies of Dumas and Scott" (Nilon 64). The romantic tales of these writers are filled with examples of courage that should guide the brave, honorable, and adventurous. Their heroes, however, often pursue glory with little regard for those who inadvertently fall in their way. According to Nilon, it is "Tom's devotion to this romanticism and to what may be called the southern mystique [that] appears to dull his sensitivity to violence and to illustrate perhaps one source of the South's tolerance of the Klan and of lynching" (Nilon 65). An ethic of care would not allow this because, as Noddings says, "when we must use violence ...on the other, we are already diminished ethically" (5). Tom Sawyer, however, does not see violence as morally diminishing; rather he shows a tolerance for violence which he sees as a necessary element of his courage-proving adventures.

When Huck follows Tom's lead, he demeans his own clear-sighted, straight-forward, non-chivalric ideas: "I see in a minute [Tom's plan] was worth fifteen of mine, for style, and would make Jim just as free a man as mine would, and maybe get us all killed besides" (Twain 226). But Jim is not just as free. The boys treat him like a play-thing, put him in danger, almost get him lynched. All this time, Tom is aware that Jim is already "free." Tom talks about Jim's freedom but first uses him in his plot designed for selfish pleasure.

According to Noddings, as mentioned before, an abstract-value based ethical system allows one to transfer responsibility for his or her actions to an "ethical elite" as Huck transfers his responsibility to Tom (116). Tom justifies his behavior within the value of courage and Huck relies on Tom's values rather than his own instincts; in doing so he rejects the care and connection-based ethics that he has been using successfully. What the boys do is not ethical if they care for Jim as they claim. Huck, however, admires Tom Sawyer, looks up to him, and believes him to have high moral standards. It was an "adventure" and he "waded neck-deep in blood" to free the already free Jim in the manner he did (Twain 277). When he does so, his actions demonstrate the truth of Noddings' concern that traditional value-based morality can provide excuses that separate us from one another and from the caring relation.

As a consequence of the boys' actions, Jim remains imprisoned and is subjected to indignities and severe danger. He is saved from lynching only because "his owner would turn up and make [them] pay for him, sure" (Twain 273). The abstract ethics of the chivalric code once again fail to provide reliable guidance. A care-based ethical system, which states that "feeling, thinking, and behaving" in a caring way mark ethical behavior, would not allow Huck's abdication of responsibility (Caring 114). The chivalric ideal that troubled Twain because of its tolerance for violence and disregard for the individual is clearly a system of values that is incompatible with an ethic of care.

Huck, like post-Civil War America, seems to flounder in a moral quagmire. He looks to superstition, chivalry, Christianity, and experience to guide his decision-making. He laments that he was "brung up wicked, and so ...warn't so much to blame" for choosing behavior inconsistent with the mores of his community (Twain 207). His crises are resolved through inaction--literally he does not turn Jim in to the authorities--but this inaction is not like paralysis: it is rather a refusal to submit to simple rules in a complex world. More interesting than his inaction is the reasoning behind it, the connection and care that he remembers in those moments of his best, most courageous moral reasoning.

If Huck was indeed "brung up wicked," where does his reasoning, based as it is in connection and an ethic of care, come from? Where does Huck Finn learn to make moral

decisions that go beyond the abstract values and rules of the society in which he is raised? Like Twain, Huck was not brought up to object to slavery. Rubin quotes Twain on the subject of his mother's belief in the rightness of slavery:

She had never heard it assailed in any pulpit,. . . but she had heard it defended and sanctified in a thousand; her ears were familiar with Bible texts that approved it, but if there were any that disapproved it they had not been quoted by her pastors. . . . (67)

Huck's community values were exactly the same. Where, how, did he learn to object to Jim's enslavement?

Noddings argues that "the ethical ideal springs from two sentiments: the natural sympathy human beings feel for each other and the longing to maintain, recapture, or enhance our most caring and tender moments" (104). Huck's "most caring and tender moments," as he showed when he tore up the letter to Miss Watson, are with Jim. Jim is his teacher, his first nurturing father-figure, and his moral base. Jim teaches Huck what caring means. Noddings believes that when we learn what it means to be cared for, as Huck learns from Jim, "a picture of goodness begins to form. I see that when I am as I need the other to be toward me, I am the way I want to be" (49). Twain did not name an alternative ethic to the chivalric code but he created Jim as a model set in opposition to Tom: Jim embodies the ethic of care while Tom embodies the chivalric code.

As the victim of a system in which care is repressed or avoided, Jim is important. When he tells Huck stories of the love he feels for his family, and talks about freedom as allowing him to take care of others, he is teaching Huck what it means to be caring. Each time he stands watch, or shelters and protects Huck, he is enhancing Huck's understanding of goodness. When he faces the conflicting values of freedom and responsibility, as when he responds to the doctor's plea for help with Tom, his choice is based in an ethic of care. For Jim, freedom is within, connected with others, and his choices provide important moral models for Huck.

In his critical essay "Morality and Huckleberry Finn," Julius Lester says, "Twain's notion of freedom is the simplistic one of freedom from restraint and responsibility. It is an adolescent vision of life" (206). Justin Kaplan, in his defense of the novel in "Selling 'Huck Finn' Down the River," also notes that "Mark Twain's characterization of Jim allegedly stereotypes black people as ignorant, superstitious, passive, indiscriminately affectionate and infantile" (27). These typical objections to Huckleberry Finn, however, ignore Jim as moral model and adult protector for Huck. Also, since no freedom is more important in the novel than Jim's, and since Jim sees freedom as central to his ability to assume responsibility--not avoid it--Twain's notion may not be as "simplistic" as Lester suggests, or as "stereotypic" as Kaplan reports. Jim's understanding of

freedom is based in care; it is centered in acceptance of responsibility and asks for the adult privilege of assuming that responsibility.

At the end of the novel, Huck still sees moral behavior and freedom from his adolescent perspective. However, the reader can draw hope from the relationship he has had with Jim that he will grow beyond this notion. In her article, "The Alleged Parochialism of Caring," Noddings argues that the ethic of care is not merely a woman's ethic but could be considered "corrective to dominant theories" (97). Twain is writing from the perspective of masculine experience but he is also imagining a set of ethical choices that avoid the pitfalls of traditional abstract values. He, like Noddings, is imagining corrective values based in care. If the "push of history" has revealed ambiguities and dangers in the traditional and romantic system of the chivalric code, an ethic of care may mend the breaks.

Mark Twain explores traditional and non-traditional ethical systems through the eyes of the adolescent Huckleberry Finn who searches for consistency and insists on concretization of ethical actions. Dawn Powell lays out a world where ethical systems that support individuation and separation also come to support qualities that lead to economic success and personal power. Through the characters created by these vastly different authors, Noddings' ethical theory is revealed to be capable of embracing multitudinous, concrete personal experiences. Consistently the ethic of

care provides moral insights when social and ethical systems based in abstraction and separation are unable to do so.

Chapter Three

"IT'S MORE MORALLY DEMANDING TO LOVE SOMEBODY"

Morrison's ethical and moral exploration in Jazz often parallels Noddings' philosophical study of morality. Both Noddings and Morrison find inconsistency and danger in abstract rule-based ethical systems which can be used to justify immoral behavior, and both turn to connection and care as more reliable guides to ethical living. Noddings explains that the ethic of care "is rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness" (Caring 2). She, like Morrison, understands the contradictory moral choices that often arise from turning away from feeling and connection when dealing with personal moral issues. An ethic of care requires a commitment to "the openness that permits us to receive the other" (104). Morrison's characters in Jazz exhibit this commitment, and in so doing show the courage that such a commitment often requires. Unlike Powell and Twain, Morrison's interest is focused on the victims of rule-centered value-ethics when such ethics are used to shelter unethical behavior and to separate people from each other. Like Noddings, Morrison shows how connection and care are more valuable guides to ethical living than the

dualistic and rule-based systems that have so long held sway over moral thinking in Western cultures.

In her 1987 article for Commentary, "Toni Morrison's Career," Carol Iannone accuses Toni Morrison of lacking "moral imagination" and of not resolving the moral issues raised in her novels (61). Also, Diane Johnson argues, in The New York Review of Books, that Morrison's characters are lacking "the complicating features of meaning [and] moral commitment" (qtd in Dowling 57). Johnson further believes Morrison's novels "concern black people who violate, victimize, and kill each other. . . . No relationships endure, and all are founded on exploitation" (qtd in Dowling 57). Conversely, Terry Otten argues, "Morrison defies all attempts to resolve the duality and moral uncertainty of character or action" (651), suggesting abundant moral imagination but no moral resolution. These arguments are supported by Morrison's narrative which resists simplistic conclusions and does not turn away from the ambiguities of immoral behavior in her characters. Her novels, however, are less an attempt to resolve duality and moral uncertainty than to explore them, in often horrific ways. Johnson's argument that the novels lack moral commitment might find support if one understands commitment in terms of traditional rule-based ethical systems. Iannone's and Otten's argument that Morrison's works defy moral resolutions might be correct if one insists that resolutions be neat or simple. However, these commentators are not

looking at Morrison's intense focus on moral issues; a focus that clearly demonstrates a strong moral commitment. Nor are they seeing Morrison's resolutions, which are based not in tidy abstractions, but in care and connection.

Jazz is a novel of love and hate, passion and remorse, racism and survival. The initial tale of the novel tells of the murder and attempted corpse-mutilation of a young girl; the violence of this beginning provides the backdrop for all action, reminiscence and introspection that follows. In a 1989 interview with Bill Moyers, Morrison says of her characters that she places them on a cliff. She says, "I push them as far as I can to see what they are made of.... What is interesting to me is that under the circumstances in which the people in my books live there is this press toward love" ("A Conversation" 268). The cliff on which she places them is one where people "violate, victimize and kill each other" and would seem to support Johnson's argument that Morrison's characters lack meaning and moral commitment. However, the "press toward love" despite the horrific circumstances of this novel shows heroic commitment and moral resilience.

The circumstances in Jazz show us relationships that break down, deny connection and care, and turn away from feeling. But Morrison's narrative also reconnects and empowers the men and women who people the pages of her novel. In a 1983 interview with Nellie McKay, Morrison remarks that her fictional characters embody "--the

combinations of virtue and flaw, of good intentions gone awry, of wickedness cleansed and people made whole again" ("An Interview" 148). The characters on the first page of Jazz reflect this combination. We have no simple explanation for Joe who loves with a "deepdown, spooky" love and feels both happy and sad with feelings so intense that he murders to keep his feelings alive. Nor is there a simple box in which to place Violet who tries to mutilate the girl's corpse but is made intensely human as she runs through the snow and releases her birds, one of whom can say "I love you" (Jazz 3). We want to turn the page, find some explanation, simplify these complex people and maybe understand the forces that twisted them into this state of polarized goodness and flaw, love and evil.

There is, however, no simple explanation because for Morrison it is precisely the complexity she finds interesting, the ambiguities and paradoxes that engage her imagination. Rather than simplify or explain her characters, she is interested in "--who survives and who does not, and why--and [she] would like to chart a course that suggests where the dangers are and where the safety might be . . ." ("An Interview" 145). For her characters in Jazz, the safety is found in receptivity, relatedness and responsiveness (where the roots of Noddings' Ethic of Care find nourishment) and the dangers exist when objectification, separation and abstraction work against the caring relation.

In contrast to her vision of a safe haven in connection, Morrison shows us a mirror in which we see a system of morality that is based in abstraction and separation. The roots of this system run deep and Morrison, like Mark Twain before her, is fully aware of the contradictions and dangers that arise from such a system. Only within an abstract system of values could we become "a nation of people who decided that their world view would combine agendas for individual freedom and mechanisms for devastating racial oppression" (Playing xiii). Individuality and racial oppression require separation from others, a self-definition in opposition to rather than connection with others.

Morrison has a clear understanding of the motivations behind such an ambiguous, almost oxymoronic set of values. In Playing In The Dark she tells of an educated, ambitious, presumably moral man (he is described as interested in how one lives a "virtuous and happy life") named William Dunbar. Dunbar was a Mississippi planter and slave owner who relished the freedom of this country and felt "within himself a sense of authority and autonomy he had not known before, a force that flowed from his absolute control over the lives of others . . ." (Playing 42). As Morrison notes, Dunbar could not find this sense of power and freedom through his high-quality education, his position of wealth and respect in his community, nor in his search for a virtuous life. It was only through "absolute control" over

others that Dunbar was raised to such feelings of superiority. It was through his absolute separation from and control over others that he fully sees his "privileged differences" (Playing 45). It was also this separation in the context of what Dunbar would surely describe as a virtuous life that permitted the contradictions of slavery and oppression in a free country. The characters in Jazz are victims and survivors of the immoral behavior which is spawned and supported by this polarized set of values.

In Jazz, as well as in this story about William Dunbar, we see that when connection is absent, when caring is avoided, rejected or denied, abstract rules of traditional ethics can be used as excuses to absolve unethical behavior. This danger is clear when Rose Dear is tossed from her chair "like the way you get the cat off the seat if you don't want to touch it or pick it up in your arms" by men who are taking "what [is] theirs, they said . . . " (Jazz 98). Like a cat you don't want to touch, a woman you do not want touching back is easy to ignore. Actions have no meaning if there is no connection and "No harm is done if it's a cat . . ." (Jazz 98). Four years later, Rose Dear jumped in a well and killed herself. Violet wonders why, imagining unbearable pain from the horrors inflicted on black men and women throughout the black community. "Or was it that chair they tipped her out of? Did she fall on the floor and lie there deciding right then that she would do it. Someday. Delaying it for four years . . ." (Jazz 101).

Was it the overwhelming "mewing hurt" that finally was too much to bear? The men who tipped her like a cat from her chair killed her as surely as Joe Trace killed Dorcas, but Joe "cried all day" (Jazz 4) while these men were disconnected and acted "as though nobody was there but themselves . . ." (Jazz 98).

What did these men use as justification for their actions? Were they so confident of their "superiority" and their rights to take "what was theirs" that no pang of guilt crossed their hearts? Terms like duty, fairness and justice are often ambiguous and have been used to shelter unethical behavior. For example, Morrison suggests with the term "take what is theirs" that these men could justify their actions; they are confident that their actions are justified by "duty" to take what is theirs and are "fair" because the black family is somehow wrong to be using what is more rightfully property of the white community. There is no sense that they feel guilty. These men take shelter in the protection of the arguably "universal values" of fairness and duty much the same way as the men who admire but enslave Jim do in Huckleberry Finn. Such examples support the validity of Noddings' warning that traditional rule-based morality presents "a real danger" when the values provide excuses that separate us from one another and from the caring relation.

Perhaps in an attempt to create a haven of safety, Morrison uses her narrative to reconnect these men to the

lives they push away. She uses ambiguous pronouns as her glue and almost makes them part of the family. She uses "they wanted . . . they said . . . they came inside . . . they took . . . they shook . . ." throughout the paragraph in which she talks about the men (98). The next paragraph begins, "There were five of them . . .," and the immediate assumption is that there were five men, until we read further and find out Violet was the third and we realize we are now learning about Rose Dear's children. The men talked low as if they were alone, as if the family Morrison has placed them in did not exist. They shook Rose Dear from her chair because they did not want to touch her and it was necessary to objectify her before they could take her plow, scythe, mule, sow, churn and butter press and finally her table and chair.

Vivid scenes such as this of Rose Dear's assault open Morrison to the criticism that she "luridly evoke[s] the horrors of slavery to summon up the specter of white guilt" (Iannone 62). An alternate interpretation, however, might understand Morrison's message as one that forces the acceptance of responsibility for unethical actions. The actions of the white men who leave Rose Dear a broken woman are clearly immoral actions. They are not necessarily immoral by traditional standards of morality; the standards of "duty" and "property rights" might excuse them. But, in an ethic of caring, their actions could not be excused. It is far easier to "escape to the world of principles and

abstractions" than to accept responsibility and guilt for actions that damage others (Caring 39) and these men demonstrate Noddings' concern for systems that exempt individuals from guilt through such abstractions:

To spare ourselves guilt, we may prefer to define our caring in terms of conformity and/or regard to principle. . . . We are righteous. We act in obedience to some great principle--I must defend my country! I must execute the law! I must be fair!--and from the potential cared-for we avert our eyes. We do not care. (Caring 40)

These men who take "what is theirs" and avert their eyes and act as if they are alone must certainly feel "righteous" when they throw Rose Dear to the floor. When Morrison connects them with the family by using the ambiguous "they," she is imagining the one way this family might have been spared, and perhaps charting a course that suggests "where the safety might be . . ." ("An Interview" 145).

The laws, power and tradition of this Vienna, Virginia community support the men who take property from the black families and subsequently force them to work for substandard wages in the now free south. There are no laws to protect the families who are forced from their homes and left without property. But, one might argue, this is a story from the turn of the century and things have changed, there is no moral lesson here. The laws are now enforced, the weak are now protected, and freedom is now a reality.

Morrison does not agree. In a 1992 essay she asserts that all freedom, all justice, all theological discourse in our country is still appreciated more deeply when juxtaposed with examples of the unfree, the oppressed and the marginalized. She argues:

The ideological dependence on racism is intact and, like its metaphysical existence, offers in historical, political, and literary discourse a safe route into meditations on morality and ethics; a way of examining the mind-body dichotomy; a way of thinking about justice; a way of contemplating the modern world. (Playing 64)

In other words, racism and the institutions that support racism exist in a self-definition of separation, a "me and other" view of the world. Our "way of contemplating the modern world" continues to find its base in a mind-body dichotomy and this base provides a way of thinking about justice that is abstract and disconnected from the caring relation.

The issue of how we think about justice in the context of a mind-body dichotomy is an important one in Jazz. The repercussions from the immoral actions of the men who threw Rose Dear to the floor, and later evicted Joe and Violet, resonate through the story. Other, equally horrific examples remind us that these are not isolated events. We hear about "the four-day hangings in Rocky Mount: the men on Tuesday, the women two days later" (Jazz 101). Years later

in the narrative, Felice tells a story about reading in the newspaper that a white police officer has been arrested for the murder of a black man. She thinks it is about time. When she says so, her father becomes angry because she has misunderstood an important reality of black life. The reality is that the story is in the paper because it is "news, girl, news!" Her grandmother must explain "that for the everyday killings cops did of Negroes, nobody was arrested at all" (Jazz 199). Everyday killings sometimes take the form of neglect and failure to respond to extreme need. When Dorcas lies on the bed bleeding, the ambulance takes until the next morning to respond to the calls for help. This was "because it was colored people calling" (Jazz 210). There is no comment on how outrageous this lack of response is; it seems quite normal to the story teller. These instances of injustice support Morrison's argument that racism is intact in this country. Each of the stories brings us closer to current times, each is horrifyingly believable, and each denies us the luxury of believing Morrison's concerns are somehow dated or irrelevant.

The "legal" actions of the white community clearly support Noddings' argument that "Laws, manifestos, and proclamations are not...either empty or useless; but they are limited, and they may support immoral as well as moral actions" (Caring 103). When the power and laws of a community are based in abstraction that justifies the

disenfranchisement of selected members of that community, immorality on a social scale becomes possible. Immorality on a social scale affects not only individuals within a community, but the community as a whole. Community and family are extremely important to Morrison and disruption of the bonds within them is particularly odious to her. Like her, the characters she creates are from small communities where everyone knows everyone else. Neighbors bring food to Rose Dear, take responsibility for the behavior of the children, watch over hunting houses when owners are away, and reach out with concern when a member is harmed. Ripping Joe and Violet from this foundation of connection is another of the immoralities that is possible when caring fails. They are forced to leave for New York and we see in them the same ambiguity of both belonging and not belonging that Morrison remembers when she talks about her personal experience. Her home-town world is an inextricable part of her, yet she is "both held by that world--cradled in it--and at the same time alien to it" ("The Song" 59). In the same way, Joe, Violet, and the other disenfranchised characters in Jazz are both held by and alien to their home communities since being uprooted and forced away from what was familiar. Violet tells Felice, "Before I came North I made sense and so did the world. We didn't have nothing but we didn't miss it" (Jazz 207).

Perhaps the world is now senseless to Alice Manfred, too. Perhaps her decision not to turn Joe in to the police

is an attempt to make some sense out of it. She lives in New York, but makes moral decisions that reflect standards more often associated with smaller, closer communities, like Vienna. She must feel much of the same sense of ambiguity of belonging and not belonging when she decides that she will not call the police after Dorcas is murdered. Joe is already sad enough, she thinks, but more importantly she does not want to "throw money to helpless lawyers or laughing cops . . ." (Jazz 4). To the civic-minded reader this seems a strange decision for Alice to make. Her eighteen-year-old niece has been murdered. The niece she protected and cared for since the age of eight is now gone because of Joe Trace. He betrayed Alice in her own home. He took Dorcas to his bed though he knew it was "her first time . . ." and though he was "doing wrong by [his] wife" and though he was fifty and the girl was "not out of high school yet" (Jazz 133-35). He did all of this because she was the forbidden fruit and he would do anything "to bite down hard, chew up the core and have the taste of red apple skin to carry around for the rest of my life" (Jazz 134). When he could no longer have her, he murdered her, just "to keep the feeling going" (Jazz 3).

The civic-minded reader might justifiably be puzzled by Alice's failure to exact "justice." However, when we learn about the laws that fail to include this community, it becomes easier to understand. Joe and Violet were "legally" thrown from their home. The stealing from Rose Dear was

tacitly sanctioned by authorities who would not dream of protesting the actions of the white men who took her possessions. The hangings in Rocky Mount went unchallenged by any law as did the every-day murders by the police. Civil action denies protection to Joe Trace, Violet, and the black families of Venice and Rocky Mount and New York. Alice Manfred does not want to throw her money to laughing cops.

Are Alice's actions ethical? Does she have an obligation to turn Joe over to the authorities because it is the law? The answers to these questions are clearer under a system of abstraction than they are in an ethic of care. Traditional morality would not only allow us to turn to a principle to expose the dilemma of where Alice's obligations lay, but would require Alice to show loyalty to the authorities of her community. Noddings, however, believes we often find ourselves in conflict between conflicting interests and the solutions cannot be simplified; she argues "that rules cannot guide us infallibly in situations of conflict" (55). She does not suggest that crimes go unreported when they involve people we care for, but she also does not believe that there is a binding obligation to cooperate with law or government "when it attempts to involve us in unethical procedures" (55). Alice Manfred's life experience with legal authority, such as the every day murders by the police, would suggest a great probability

that legal procedures would be unethical. Because of this, her cooperation is not required under an ethic of care.

Although she has no obligation to this authority, what about her obligation to Dorcas? Dorcas' death should require revenge, justice, retribution and punishment. But Dorcas is gone, and Alice knows this will not be changed by throwing her money at the laughing cops. Further, she knows Joe, she might even care for him, and Joe is crying all day which for him "is as bad as jail" (Jazz 4). Alice makes her decision based in care, and Noddings would argue that it is clearly an ethical decision.

Alice's decision, however, is peripheral to the important moral issue of Joe's murder of Dorcas. Joe could be used as an example of Johnson's black man who violates, victimizes and kills another. The murder of Dorcas could also be understood as an act of displaced love which Morrison asks us not to forgive but to understand, insisting on its frightening ambivalence. Joe's duality, as Otten suggests, defies simple resolution. Certainly Morrison is not suggesting that there is a way to absolve Joe of responsibility for his action. Rather she is exploring the forces that brought Joe to this place, and she is suggesting that the important thing about this murder is how her characters respond to it. She says about her characters that "It's the complexity of how people behave under duress that is of interest to me--the qualities they show at the

end of an event when their backs are up against the wall" ("An Interview" 145).

Morrison's interest in "the complexity of how people behave" reflects what Noddings says women have traditionally been interested in when facing moral dilemmas. Noddings says, "Faced with a hypothetical moral dilemma, women often ask for more information. We want to know more, I think, in order to form a picture more nearly resembling real moral situations" (2). We are interested in the complexity of how people behave, we want more information. Noddings argues, "It is not the case, certainly, that women cannot arrange principles hierarchically and derive conclusions logically" (2). Certainly we can judge Joe guilty and insist on traditional punishment for him. But knowledge about the complexity of how people behave provides us with the information we need to make a moral judgment in a way that abstract principles cannot. "Moral decisions are, after all, made in situations; they are qualitatively different from the solution of geometry problems" (Caring 96).

Moving from this base of care we can begin to go toward an understanding of the murder that shadows us throughout Jazz. We know from the first page of the novel that Joe murdered Dorcas. Later, the image of Joe as a hunter in the jungle-like city is one of startling violence and separation. He thinks of Dorcas as prey, clever but unable to fool him. He becomes a hunter's hunter, like the man who raised him. He hunts Dorcas the same way that he hunted the

mother who left him. Joe has been trained for this job, trained for separation and isolation. Some critics assume "the individual, alone and isolated, making his or her own way, is a triumphant thing," Morrison says ("An Interview" 151). But for Morrison, and she believes for the black community, the true triumph is in making one's way back to the connection and care of others. As Joe makes his way from the completely isolating action of stalking and murdering Dorcas to the connection and safety of Violet, Felice, and his community, we are invited to share in his triumph.

One way to understand the structure of Jazz is as an exploration of separation followed by a map back to connection. Throughout the novel there are many examples of separation and abstraction in the white community. However, Morrison acknowledges that a self-definition of separation is far from unique to the white community. The unknown, omnipresent (though not omniscient) narrator tells us: "I see them all over the place: wealthy whites, and plain ones too, pile into mansions decorated and redecorated by black women richer than they are, and both are pleased with the spectacle of the other. I've seen the eyes of black Jews brimful of pity for everyone not themselves . . ." (8). This inventory of separate realities is given by a narrator who admits her own separation from the people of the city, the people she observes but does not join. She has lived, perhaps too long, in her own mind, she says. But it is

safer there than running the risk of being left standing or of loving too much.

Violet, too, seeks safety in isolation. In her home, she retreats into silence, speaking mainly to her birds, the birds she releases because connection is too dangerous. She releases them, even the one who says I love you. She "set them out the window to freeze or fly . . ." (Jazz 3). Her "public craziness" with its deep isolation seems to provide brief moments of safety. Her private craziness, too, allows her to find separation and isolation even from herself as she observes the "other Violet" and sips a malt, alone in the corner (Jazz 114). She also chooses the safety of isolation from her own unborn children by deciding she will never risk giving birth. Motherhood is the strongest of the care-based relationships and as such makes us the most vulnerable. The violence that was done to her mother taught Violet that the possibility was more than she was willing to risk. "The important thing, the biggest thing Violet got out of that was to never never have children. Whatever happened, no small dark foot would rest on another while a hungry mouth said, Mama?" (Jazz 102). The narrator tells us that "the children of suicides are hard to please and quick to believe no one loves them because they are not really here" (Jazz 4). So Violet hides, she thinks, in her solitude; hides by separating herself from her community, from Joe, even from herself.

Unlike Violet, Joe seems to be always looking for connection but having isolation imposed on him. His mother leaves him when he is an infant. She never nurses him, never holds him, never acknowledges him. Joe looks for her with deeply ambiguous feelings. He looks for her many times and we are told that "Wild was always on his mind" (Jazz 176). He wants to touch her, just feel her hand (Jazz 178). At the same time, he is obsessed with her insanity and would choose anything, given the opportunity, over having a mother with "indecent speechless lurking insanity" (Jazz 179). Joe expresses the need for connection and the desire for an identity that is separate as he painfully seeks to touch the hand of the woman he wants to deny. It is these two conflicting needs that cause his intensely ambiguous feelings. Perhaps, as Otten suggests, "the murder marks the culmination of Joe's struggle to touch his mother's hand" (662). Certainly, the images we see in his search for Wild are echoed when he reaches for connection with Dorcas, and the hunting instinct with which he searched in order to touch Wild's hand, he now uses to hunt Dorcas and kill her.

Like Joe's mother, Dorcas deserted him. When he sets out to hunt for her, he believes he just wants to see her. He takes his gun only because he is hunting and it is natural to take a gun when hunting. "And she is not prey," he thinks (Jazz 181). But hunting is by its very nature a "me and other" activity; a hunter and prey activity. Also, his mind sees her as "wild" and hunting for her he remembers

hibiscus and deer, dung and fur. He wants her to "hold out her hand" in the same way he wanted Wild to hold out hers (Jazz 183). He is again acting in complete separation while desperately searching for connection. The search for love and connection represent the best impulses in this character; the murder quite obviously represents the worst. Morrison says of her fictional characters that, "If you judge them all by the best that they have done, they are wonderful. If you judge them all by the worst that they have done, they are terrible" ("An Interview" 148). It is not possible to judge Joe Trace without acknowledging how the good and evil within him coexist, reflect each other, and resist simple solutions.

Judgment in an ethic of care requires concretization rather than abstraction. We cannot, therefore, judge Joe based solely on some high principle. To do so would suggest the existence of a universal rule or principle and Noddings emphatically rejects "the notion of universalizability" (5). Surely this does not include the rule "thou shalt not kill." For Noddings, it does. She argues that when we say it is wrong to kill, we also imply its exceptions and "we may too easily act on authorized exceptions" (93). Rather, we must always consider "the act in full context" (93). Morrison shows us numerous acts of murder in Jazz that are committed by the authorities of society who surely see their actions as "authorized exceptions" to the supposedly universal edict against killing. She also shows us Joe who murders because

of a distorted understanding of love but is not able to hide in the shelter of an abstraction as the authorities have done. Most importantly, she shows us Violet, Alice, Felice and the New York community, all of whom judge Joe's actions in context, rather than according to an abstract rule.

Morrison and Noddings are interested in a deeper understanding of morality than simple judgments. Noddings points out that her "attention is not on judgment and not on the particular acts we perform but on how we meet the other morally" (5). She would never, nor would Morrison, argue that Joe's murder of Dorcas was in any way a moral act. However, she, like Morrison, would be interested in how a person can recover from this act, how he or she responds to it, the qualities "they show at the end of an event," after the violence.

Likewise, Joe's act of murder is of interest more because of the reactions to it, by Joe and the other characters, than for any judgment we might have about the act itself. Violet's initial reaction to Dorcas's murder and Joe's betrayal is to hide in the safety of isolation. Still, while this argues for the apparent safety of separation, the novel more forcefully argues for unity and connection. Early in the novel we get quick glimpses of people who are acting with care. Alice's decision not to call the police is one, the Salem Women's Club decision to help a burned out family is another. The narrator's telling

of Violet's "public madness" is yet another, and is worth a closer look.

Violet works hard; she just wants to rest, she thinks. But rest would do her more harm than good, says the narrator. Violet is like the other women of the community who "fill their mind and hands with soap and repair and dicey confrontations because what is waiting for them, in a suddenly idle moment, is the seep of rage" (Jazz 16). Her life, even before Joe met Dorcas, is a hard life. The "seep of rage" threatens her, and the members of her community understand this threat. When she sits down in the middle of the street people do not judge her, do not call her crazy; instead, they bring her water. They understand the forces operating on her life, the work, the exhaustion. The policeman would have taken her in, but the people will not let him. The crowd murmurs, "Aw, she's tired. Let her rest" (Jazz 17). Then they carry her from the street, set her on the nearest steps until she comes around.

The contrast here between the policeman who would have taken her in, and the crowd who lifted her gently and put her onto the steps is a clear example of the difference between a care-based response and an abstract rule-based response. The policeman's impulse to lock her away, follow some rules about public nuisances or some such, is an impulse to objectify the individual. He has his rules and, in fairness, the demands of the public are too complex to treat each person differently. However, when we rely too

heavily on rules to simplify complex demands, Noddings believes we "become detached from the very heart of morality: the sensibility that calls for caring" (47). The crowd, however, saw Violet as an individual. "Aw, she's tired," they said. The crowd's response reflects the sensibility of receptivity to Violet's unexpressed needs and is therefore care-based. Coming as it does so early in the novel, the crowd's reaction provides a contrast and reference point for the many unethical, abstractly justified, white community acts that follow.

Yet, there is danger in caring. We see this in the devastation of the man who has killed, the woman who has mutilated in her heart if not with the knife. Separation, images of loneliness, cold, solitude, and dark nights fill their existence. Morrison seems to suggest with these images that caring and connection are difficult to maintain, are frightening in their possible consequences, and are not necessarily the safe havens we might wish them to be. Noddings, too, asks how we deal with caring when something terrible has happened. She knows that when we care, we can be hurt through and by those for whom we care and because of this, caring requires courage. It also requires courage, she believes, to accept the guilt for our actions but not to let the guilt cripple us. She argues, "There is a double requirement of courage in caring: I must have the courage to accept that which I have had a hand in, and I must have the courage to go on caring" (39). Morrison illustrates,

through Violet and Joe, the extent of the courage that caring requires.

Violet's retreat into isolation is an expression of, and natural reaction to, the pain of caring for those who disappoint us, reject us, or injure us. We see her fear of suffering when she cuts herself free of Joe, her community, and her unborn child. However, when Violet frees herself from the pain of caring, her isolation seems even more painful. Noddings knows that caring is a choice, but she argues that though we are free to decide we will not care, to do so is intensely painful. "When I am alone, either because I have detached myself or because circumstances have wrenched me free," Noddings believes, "I seek first and most naturally to reestablish my relatedness. My very individuality is defined in a set of relations. This is my basic reality" (51). Violet struggles to reestablish her relatedness throughout the novel .

Violet's early attempts to reconnect with Joe fail. She tries to reconnect through inciting jealousy, but "Joe does not pay Violet or her friend any notice" (Jazz 4). Next, she tries to fall back in love with Joe, but the simple actions of "Washing his handkerchiefs and putting food on the table before him was the most she could manage" (Jazz 5). In desperation, she tries to reestablish relatedness by understanding Dorcas, loving her as Joe did. It is essential for Violet to understand Joe's attraction to Dorcas, and maybe through understanding, get him to love

her, Violet, again. Despite her fear of the pain from caring, the pain of isolation is greater and she presses toward love. She tells Alice, "We don't have children. He's what I got. He's what I got" (Jazz 111). When she and Joe and Felice become a family of sorts, we rejoice with them all.

The pain for Joe is equally intense. His guilt and loneliness cripple him. He cannot sleep, does not eat, and thinks of little besides Dorcas. He remembers her, that he loved her, and he remembers that he "was scared to death" (Jazz 29). The fear is unexplained until Felice asks him why he killed Dorcas if he loved her so much. He was scared, he says, because he "Didn't know how to love anybody" (Jazz 213). In fear he kills, and in fear he pulls away from Violet and from everyone who cares for him. Noddings understands the desire to break free of the fear, the guilt and the pain. However, "As I chop away at the chains that bind me to loved others, asserting my freedom," she says, "I move into a wilderness of strangers and loneliness, leaving behind all who cared for me and even, perhaps, my own self" (51). Joe cried for three months and "wasn't good for a thing" in his self-created wilderness of loneliness (Jazz 205). Joe's triumph is in finding his way back to the care and comfort of Violet and his community.

An ethic of care requires that we "recognize our longing for relatedness and accept it, and we must commit ourselves to the openness that permits us to receive the

other" (Noddings, 104). This seems to be Morrison's moral imperative, too. It is her place of safety for the characters in her novel. As Joe and Violet open themselves to receive the other, they find peace and safety. The narrator who defines herself in separation is proven wrong. Connection, care and receptivity bring a very different result than the narrator predicted in the beginning. She watched Joe and Violet, from outside, and was sure that in the end one would kill the other, "That the past was an abused record with no choice but to repeat itself at the crack and no power on earth could lift the arm that held the needle" (Jazz 220). But she was "confused in [her] solitude . . .," and the powers of connection and care went unrecognized.

Felice (whose name means happiness) facilitates the final healing in Joe and Violet. She begins this healing when she decides Joe has suffered too much. After three months, when she heard "he was still at it, crying and so on . . .," she decided she must try to help him (Jazz 205). Felice's actions are very close to what Noddings recommends. Noddings asks what we do when one commits an evil act and argues that we do "not turn the other cheek in meek submission" but act to prevent a second blow. This is done, she argues, when the one-caring refrains from harsh judgment, yet does not try to prove his or her "own superiority in accepting evil while giving good" (116). An ethic of care requires, instead, that one seeks to preserve

and enhance caring. The one-caring must always consider "the possibility that the one-appearing-to-do-evil is actually in a deteriorated state, that he is acting under intolerable pressure or in error. She retains a responsibility, then, to relieve the pressure and to inform the error . . ." (Noddings 116). Morrison shows us, through Felice, how this ethical response works. Felice's decision to see Joe is based in care, and Morrison presents it as a moral, healing, and pattern changing action.

It is almost as if Felice's actions are modeled on Noddings' ideal ethical response. Dorcas was her friend, but she knows that Dorcas was ugly "Outside and in" as Violet said, and that Joe must not understand this truth. She says she knows he "Cried all day and all night. Left his job and wasn't good for a thing. I suppose he misses Dorcas, and thinks about how he is her murderer. But he must not have known about her. How she liked to push people, men" (Jazz 205). He must have been "acting under intolerable pressure or in error" as Noddings says. He also must not know that Dorcas died because she was black; she bled to death from racism when the ambulance failed to respond to Felice's calls. Further, the bullet went through Dorcas's shoulder. She could have let them take her to the hospital and would not do so. The woman giving the party and the other partiers could have called the police, could have picked Dorcas up and driven her to a doctor, could have responded with care instead of self-protection. Joe's act

of distorted love is only one reason Dorcas died. He was not alone in his failure to "know how to love" (Jazz 213).

When Felice goes to Joe and Violet's house, she does more than inform Joe about Dorcas's death and her way with men. She receives Joe and Violet as one-caring and in doing so fulfills the most important requirement in an ethic of care: she nourishes their ability to care, their ethical ideal. "Our aim" says Noddings, "is to nurture the ethical ideal, and the ethical ideal strives to maintain and enhance caring" (182). The "ethical ideal" as defined by Noddings is a complete picture of oneself as a caring, good person and springs from two sentiments: "the natural sympathy human beings feel for each other and the longing to maintain, recapture, or enhance our most caring and tender moments" (104). Joe and Violet have far too few memories of "caring and tender moments," but they hunger for more.

When Felice steps out of her pain over the loss of her best friend and reaches out tenderly to help Joe, she provides Joe and Violet with one such memory. She also reflects back to Violet her beauty and truthfulness, both of which are so quickly obvious to Felice. Felice's awareness of Joe's special qualities helps him find the goodness in himself, too. She does not take long to see why Dorcas was attracted to him because she so quickly sees Joe's inner goodness. After only two visits, she sees Joe smile, and "That's why [she] went back" (Jazz 207). But, most importantly, she tells Joe and Violet the details of the

night Dorcas died, tells them and cries so much that the pocket handkerchief Joe gives her is soaked through. This is the first time Felice has cried over Dorcas, and Violet now knows Felice understands suffering, loss and confusion. Violet also knows that Felice is courageous when she reaches out to Joe and her courage inspires Violet to reach back: "Come to supper, why don't you. Friday evening" (Jazz 211).

The hopeful ending of Jazz comes about because isolated, troubled, desperate people have survived and have grown to a point where they can reach for love. They have grown from a beginning where they seemed unable to find a reason for living, to a point where life has meaning again. Morrison believes, "We have to do something nurturing that we respect before we go. We must. It is more interesting, more complicated, more intellectually demanding and more morally demanding to love somebody. To take care of somebody. To make one other person feel good" ("A Conversation" 267-68). Like Noddings, Twain, and Powell, Morrison refuses to simplify the morally demanding lives she examines, but all of these writers find connection and care a good beginning.

CONCLUSION

Mark Twain, Dawn Powell and Toni Morrison evoke through their novels some of the "contradictions of real life" that William James believed were ignored by "simple, clean and noble" philosophical theories. The "clean and noble" theories James refers to are, in part, ethical theories that propose "universal principles" as guides to moral behavior. These three novelists show clearly that the ethical theory developed by Noddings, on the other hand, fully considers such contradictions.

Much like Noddings, these authors point to separation and a failure to care when they examine the weaknesses, inconsistencies and hypocrisies found in several standards. The standards they examine are varied. For example, Powell is not interested in ethical issues in the same way as Twain and Morrison; rather she is interested in standards and practices found in the American capitalist system. Twain's interest is centered in an examination of the Chivalric Code which finds its ideal in the warrior who unflinchingly defends "justice" and country, and in how this code perpetuates the tolerance for the violence that Twain sees in the South. Morrison's focus is on ethical systems that

allow racism and violence toward black people while simultaneously claiming ethicality. These varied interests, however, share common ground; each of the social and moral value systems is governed by the same assumptions: humans are rational, autonomous and individual. Such assumptions, coupled with the accompanying appeal to principles and rules as behavioral guides, become the foundation for the unethical behavior of many of the characters in these novels.

Noddings argues for an ontology of connection, or of self-other relation, that is very different from that of self-other opposition found in traditional rules-based ethical systems. The ethical ideal "strives to maintain and enhance caring" (182). Behavior that fails to do this is simply not ethical. Remember, in an ethic of care connection is ontologically basic and care is ethically basic. Her focus is not on justification for moral judgments but on "how to meet each other morally" (Caring 95). Over and over again, characters in the novels here discussed found an appeal to connection and care a more valuable guide to ethical behavior than "universal principles" could provide. An ethic of care, therefore, is shown to be at the heart of moral judgment.

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