PERSUASIVE MIRRORS?

INTERPRETATIONS OF COLLABORATION

IN

ITALY AND FRANCE DURING WORLD WAR TWO

by

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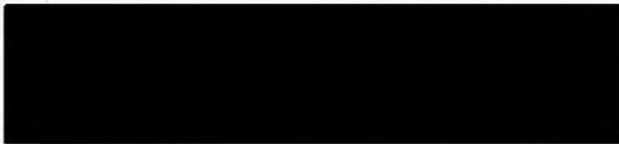
APPROVED: 

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INTRODUCTION

For many years, I have been fascinated with mass psychology and its various social, religious, and political manifestations. Whether studying mob violence, cults, or political demagogues, I find that the same questions always haunt me: why do people subordinate their personalities and ethics to the demands of other people, organizations, or ideologies? What makes a person want to belong to a group, even if that group is violent, repressive, authoritarian and its belief system conflicts with that of the individual? These questions are particularly compelling when trying to understand the mass appeal of facism.

Facism is a system of government, as well as an ideology, that is characterized by militant nationalism, dictatorship, ethnocentrism, and a hatred of communism. It originated in Italy during the 1920's under the leadership of Benito Mussolini and later spread to Germany, where Adolf Hitler combined the basic tenets of Italian Facism and his own virulent brand of racism to form the National Socialist, or Nazi, party. In this thesis, I will seek to better understand why millions of people collaborated with the fascist governments of Hitler and Mussolini during the Second World War. In trying to define what the motivations to collaborate might have been, however, I am well aware that there is no one

answer that can adequately explain the mass phenomenon of collaboration. Moreover, no one, to my knowledge, has ever tried to explain _why_ people collaborated; in Europe, where collaboration with the Nazis and the Italian facists occurred on a large scale, people are still unwilling to discuss a politically compromising subject such as this. My thesis, therefore, must be considered to be a kind of intellectual journey; it is a highly speculative search for greater understanding about an essentially unexplored subject.

In Chapter One, I propose several of my own explanations of collaboration, based upon various theories and experiments which I have culled from the social sciences. These explanations, I believe, offer solid insights into many individuals' motivations to collaborate. My social science-based hypotheses, however, are abstract; they attempt to explain collaboration in terms of certain universal human tendencies, and do not account for the more nuanced, individual dimensions of collaboration. In order to address these "human" aspects, then, one may turn to less academic, more creative explanations of collaboration which have their own validity; these interpretations tap common archetypal and cultural perceptions that reflect, to a certain degree, what actually occurred during the war. I have chosen to examine two creative narratives, _Il Conformista_ and _Lacombe Lucien_, in Chapters Two and Three; both offer insights into the dynamics of collaboration in terms of a few individuals'

lives. I will show that while Il Conformista has a very restricted narrative explanation, Lacombe Lucien contains representations of individuals' desire to collaborate which can be extrapolated to a more universal interpretation of that phenomenon. I emphasize, however, that I am not looking for a definitive explanation of collaboration in my examination of these narratives or in my scientific hypotheses; rather, I am merely seeking greater understanding. Indeed, I believe that it remains--and will remain--beyond human ability to adequately identify and understand the millions of individual motivations that comprise the mass phenomenon of collaboration.

CHAPTER ONE

Collaboration, in its broadest sense, suggests two or more individuals working together towards a common goal. In situations of war, however, the term 'collaboration' possesses more ethically and politically loaded connotations; it commonly refers to the act of aiding and abetting the political objectives of the "enemy". The "enemy"--if it turns out to be one's own government--may only be identifiable in retrospect, however. In reference to the Second World War, collaboration with the enemy signifies active, individual complicity with the Axis powers of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

Within a six week period in May and June of 1940, France fell under the onslaught of the German armies. In panic, more than five million people walked and rode to the southwest, across the Loire river, towards the city of Bordeaux. More than two million people left Paris alone between June 10 and June 14. This great exodus, or "Exode", as it came to be called, lasted only until June 22, when the armistice was signed between France and Germany. Nonetheless, this mass exodus was, and still is, one of the most painful and poignant events of France's wartime experience. Families were split up, children were irretrievably lost, and the number of casualties rose as Germans planes bombed the roads on which millions travelled. To add to the general confusion, the

French government, under the leadership of Marshal Pétain, fled Paris on June 10 and set up temporary headquarters in the southern spa town of Vichy.

Following the signing of the armistice on June 22, Petain's government hurriedly attempted to restore law and order; indeed, Pétain and his followers went out of their way to satisfy the provisons of the armistice, which, among other things, ordered them to "conform to the decisions of the German authorities and collaborate faithfully with them".[1] Robert Paxton, in his classic analysis of Vichy France, writes that large-scale collaboration with the Nazis ultimately resulted from Petain's eagerness to fulfill the demands of the armistice and return France to a state of peace:

> The most elementary promptings of normalcy in the summer of 1940, the urge to return to home and job, started many Frenchman down a path of everyday complicity that led gradually and eventually to active assistance to German measures undreamed of in 1940.[2]

What began as passive, sometimes inadvertent collaboration for many ultimately resulted in the active participation of hundreds of thousands of French citizens in the "maintenance" of order. This often included setting up concentration camps for foreigners, purging socialists, freemasons, and communists, and deporting Jews to death camps

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[1]. Robert O. Paxton, Vichy France, New York, 1972, p. 19.

[2]. Ibid.

elsewhere in Europe.[3] In their exuberant collaboration for the sake of France, many French implemented these morally questionable measures, often without prompting from the occupying German forces. Paxton writes that:

> Even Frenchman of the best intentions, faced with the harsh alternative of doing one's job, whose risks were moral and abstract, or practicing civil disobedience, whose risks were material and immediate, went on doing the job.[4]

Active oppostion to the Vichy regime and the German occupiers, therefore, called for civil disobedience and lawlessness. Such alternatives largely appealed to the young and to individuals already on the fringe of French society. As a result, according to Paxton, "the Resistance in France contained a disproportionate share of the young, Communists, and old streetfighters from the prewar protofascist leagues."[5] In total, around two percent of French citizens are estimated to have actively participated in the Resistance.

The résistants began to disturb public order in August 1941, with acts of sabotage and several assassinations. Significant numbers of French, however, did not join the Resistance until the end of 1942, when Hitler pressured Vichy to mobilize young men to work in German factories. Paxton describes how

> Young men faced the choice of taking the train to

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[3]. Ibid., p. 170-175.

[4]. Ibid., p. 383.

[5]. Ibid., p. 292.

> Germany or the path to the mountains. Thousands who could get to remote areas chose the mountains, and encampments of young men, the maquis, sprang up in the Alps, the Massif central, and the Pyreness.[6]

The masquisards, as they were called, would emerge from hiding to raid banks and government offices. The Vichy regime fought the Resistance by backing anti-Resistance groups like the Milice, a paramilitary organization comprised of around 45,000 thugs and fascist fanatics. Ultimately, attempts to suppress the Resistance and maintain "law and order" served only to tighten the web of complicity between Vichy and the Germans.

In Italy, collaboration took a different form. Fascism was the reigning political institution, whereas in France Nazism had been more or less imposed upon the population; since Benito Mussolini's ascension to power on October 28, 1922, millions of Italians had embraced Fascism's militant, ultranationalistic ideology, partly in reaction to the humiliating loss of territory Italy had suffered during World War One. Collaboration in Italy involved active affirmation of one's allegiance to Mussolini and the expression of one's devotion to "la patria", the fatherland. Thus, the decision to collaborate with the fascists in Italy during the war was, in every sense, a different one; it was the politically correct thing to do.

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[6]. Ibid.

In Italy, then, who was a collaborator? One way to determine this would be to practice the Italian Resistance's methods of "appraisal" at the end of the war: compare the wartime activities of suspected or known Fascists to those of Resistance members. During Mussolini's reign there were hundreds of thousands of Italian socialists and communists, persecuted mercilessly by the Fascist party, who chose to fight against the status quo. These _partigiani_, similar to the French _maquisards_, formed small guerrilla bands and hid in the hills, emerging only to ambush German or Fascist troops or to blow up trains or roads.[7]
Following the Allied liberation of Italy from the Nazi-puppet government of Salò in the spring of 1945, the partisan-led Committee for National Liberation attempted to round up known Fascist officials and their sympathizers in a legal, organized manner. Mob justice, however, often prevailed; perhaps as many as two million suspected Fascists were murdered in the year following the Allied liberation.[8] For the purposes of this thesis, I am considering Fascist collaborators to be those individuals who were members of the Italian Fascist party during the war, who opposed the Resistance, and who worked actively to realize the political objectives of fascism.

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[7]. Henry Adams, _Italy at War_, Alexandria, Va., 1982, p. 188-193.

[8]. Ibid.

While studying collaboration, I found that several academic fields offered me the theoretical means to try to explain why people collaborate. The hypotheses which I will offer here, based upon my own interpretations of decision science theory, sociological case studies, and psychological research are intriguing; each sheds some light upon the dynamics of collaboration and the potential socio-economic, as well as psychological, impact that the act of collaborating may have on an individual. The discussion of each hypothesis will be brief; I present them primarily as frames of reference for the two fictional interpretations of collaboration which follow in Chapters Two and Three. I can claim no greater intrinsic value for my hypotheses than Moravia and Modiano can for theirs, since my expertise in the areas of social science and psychology is limited to my experience as an occasional student in those fields. Moreover, the explanations for collaboration I posit here are the result of my own intuition and extrapolation; to my knowledge, very little theoretical research in academics has been devoted to the study of collaboration. Nonetheless, I believe that it is important to be aware of the explanatory potential that the following hypotheses possess; each contains some valuable insight about the dynamic of collaboration that our understanding of this complex phenomenon.

The Rational Actor Model

In the philosophical arena of the decision sciences (the study of decision making), the "rational actor paradigm" is a well-known theoretical model that attempts to explain why a single actor, whether an individual, an organization, or a government, makes decisions in a certain manner. Specifically, the rational actor model suggests that an actor will make decisions which will be the most beneficial to him or her, decision which will be "value-maximizing" (the term 'value' refers to the personal benefit that some action will generate).[9] Graham T. Allison, in explaining the basic concepts of rational decision making, states that "Rationality refers to consistent, value-maximizing choice within specified constraints".[10] In the context of this model, therefore, rationality does not refer to a psychological state, but rather represents an economically efficient strategy of action.

In constructing a hypothesis which explains individual collaboration during World War Two, I would broaden the purely economic paradigm described by Allison to extrapolate a rational actor model of collaboration. Intuitively, one can understand how the value-maximizing tendencies of an

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[9]. Irving L. Janis and Leon Mann, Decision Making, New York, 1977, p. 21.

[10]. Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision, Glenview, Ill., 1971, p. 30.

economically-oriented rational actor, such as a business firm, may be logically applied to individuals. During World War Two, collaboration with one of the Axis powers appeared to some people a sure means to realizing personal socio-economic goals.

According to Allison, the rational actor model of decison making consists of goals, alternatives, consequences, and choices. First, the actor must first be able to identify what his or her goals are and then be able to rank them in order of importance. A rational actor might, for example, rank heightened social prestige, greater personal wealth, or greater political power at the top of his or her list of objectives. Secondly, the rational actor must examine the alternative courses of action that are available. In the context I am studying, then, a rational actor might seriously consider collaborating with the Nazi occupying forces in France or the Fascists in Italy, because that alternative might appear to be more economically lucrative and politically safe than the alternative of resistance. Thirdly, the rational actor must consider the possible outcomes, or consequences, of choosing a particular alternative. In a model of collaboration, therefore, he or she would consider all the foreseeable consequences of collaborating with the Axis powers. If such deliberation occured during a period in which the Axis powers were on the offensive and appeared to be victorious, a rational actor might visualize only positive

consequences resulting from the decision to collaborate. Lastly, the actor must choose the alternative which promises the greatest personal payoff. Thus, in a model of collaboration, the actor might choose to collaborate because such a decision would facilitate the realization of personal goals, goals such as greater prestige, wealth, and power.[11]

Intuitively, we know that this rational actor model of collaboration is a persuasive explanation of this phenomenon. This intuition, however, is reinforced by specific case studies that provide us with more empirical evidence that the rational actor hypothesis explains collaboratation. In Eichmann in Jerusalem, Hannah Arendt desribes Adolf Eichmann, the SS officer in charge of the "Final Solution", as a man whose primary objective in life was to scale the heights of German society. To realize this goal, Eichmann decided early on that he would have to work within the system and entered the lowered echelons of Nazi Germany's bureacracy. After years of consistent, productive bureaucratic service, Eichmann was put in charge of orchestrating the "Final Solution", the extermination of the Jews. In her study of Eichmann, Arendt concluded that, unlike the vast majority of high-ranking Nazi officials, Eichmann was not a Nazi whose work ethic was fueled by anti-semitism; ultimately, he was not a brilliant, obsessed architect of genocide, but merely an uneducated, uncreative bureaucrat. He was a man who was "evil" insofar as he

[11]. Ibid., p. 29-30.

collaborated with the Nazi war machine. An exemplary rational actor, Eichmann dutifully followed orders in order to maximize his personal socio-economic gains.[11]

Asch, Milgram, and Zimbardo

Several seminal social psychological experiments have been conducted in the years since World War Two which attempt to explain how ordinary individuals commit morally reprehensible acts. Ironically, these experiments, inspired by a desire to understand the atrocities committed by the Nazis, have been themselves heavily criticized for crossing the ethical line between legitimate scientific research and psychological and physical abuse. The experiments of Solomon Asch, Stanley Milgram, Phillip Zimbardo are of particular interest to my examination of collaboration; their studies examine certain psychological dynamics of conformity and obedience to authority which also appear to operate in collaboration. In a 1952 study, Solomom Asch examined the influence that a group's opinion can exercize on an individual's judgement. Asch placed seven students in a room and told the group that they would be shown a series of twelve posters, each exhibiting three lines of varying length and a standard line. He asked the students to compare the three lines to the standard and then call out, one at a time, which

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[11]. Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem, New York, 1964.

line matched the standard in length. Six of the students were in fact actors, and had been instructed to give incorrect answers at certain times. The seventh student was the true subject, and had received no instructions. This student was always the last to respond. In seven of the twelve instances, the subject student found that the other six students' perceptions conflicted sharply with his own: for example, all the other students would confidently call out line 2, when the correct answer was obviously line 1. In such instances, the subject became deeply disturbed and consumed with anxiety and self-doubt. Asch found that one third of the subjects he tested answered the way the majority did--despite the fact that the answer was clearly incorrect--on at least three of the seven instances, while two subjects concurred with the majority in all seven instances.[13] With this experiment Asch demonstrated how powerful the urge to conform can be; he illustrated how the desire to belong to and to affiliate oneself with a group can influence the actions of an individual, even if the individual knows the group is incorrect. Applied to the phenomenon of collaboration, Asch's experiment, in my opinion, explains how individuals can be manipulated to act in certain ways by societal norms and expectations. Thus, the institutionalized Fascism of Italy under Mussolini might have compelled many Italians to

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[13]. Solomon E. Asch, Social Psychology, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1952.

collaborate because it imposed on them a sense of patriotic duty to protect "la patria". Likewise, when Petain called for French citizens to help maintain "law and order", it is likely that he pressured many French into collaborating with the German forces.

In a series of famous, controversial experiments conducted in 1963 and 1965, Stanley Milgram demonstrated how easily ordinary, healthy individuals can be induced to harm others under orders from a "legitimate" authority figure. Milgram recruited forty subjects with a newspaper ad, pretending to conduct an experiment on the effectiveness of punishment in reinforcing the learning process. An official-looking experimenter assigned, apparently at random, the role of "teacher" to the actual subject, while an actor posing as another subject was "chosen" to be the "learner". The experimenter then instructed the teacher that he was to teach word pairs to the learner, who would be in another room. If the learner made a mistake, the teacher was to administer an electric shock as punishment. The shock apparatus was labelled with voltages ranging from 15 to 450 volts and with words reading "slight shock", "strong shock", "Danger: severe shock", and "XXX". The teacher was to raise the voltage 15 volts after every error.

During these experiments the learner would make many errors, forcing the teacher to administer shocks frequently. After a certain voltage had been reached, shouts and protests

would emanate from the learner's room. The experimenter would say to the teacher "You must go on" if the teacher showed signs of hesitation or anxiety. If a teacher refused to take any responsibility for harming the learner, the experimenter would firmly respond "It is the experimenter's responsibility". When the shocks reached 300 volts, the learner ceased to respond. Teachers were then instructed to treat the learner's lack of responsiveness as an error and to punish the learner accordingly.

When Milgram initially designed this experiment, he predicted that most of the subjects would refuse to continue the experiment as soon as the learner began to protest. To his surprise, only fourteen subjects stopped before the shocks reached 390 volts, while the remaining twenty-six subjects (or, 65%) continued to obey the experimenter's instructions up to the highest possible shock level of 450 volts. Milgram noted that these twenty-six subjects were not sadistic, vicious individuals; on the contrary, nearly all seemed on the verge of hysteria or mental breakdown at the conclusion of the experiment.[14]

This experiment graphically demonstrated how easily ordinary individuals can be led to harm other individuals. Milgram found that people will continue to perform acts which they themselves find disturbing if someone else assumes moral

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[14]. Stanley Milgram, "Some conditions of obedience and disobedience to authority", Human Relations, Vol. 18, p. 57-76.

responsibility; this displacement of responsibility seems to ease the subjects' feelings of guilt and anxiety, allowing them to distance themselves psychologically froman uncomfortable situation.

Extrapolated to the phenomenon of collaboration, Milgram's findings suggest to me that authority figures such as Mussolini, Hitler, and Pétain were able to drive their followers to perform morally reprehensible acts in part because they had assumed an "omnipotent" postion of authority and claimed that they alone understood and knew how to articulate "the will of the people". Leni Riefenstahl's classic Nazi propaganda film "The Triumph of the Will", documenting the Nuremberg rallies of 1934, is but one unforgettable example of how hundreds of thousands of people allowed themselves to be manipulated by a self-appointed leader.

In 1971, Phillip Zimbardo administered the Stanford Prison experiment, and obtained results similar to Milgram's. With the intention of running a two-week experiment designed to simulate degrading conditions in a maximum-security prison, Zimbardo recruited male college students through an ad in a newspaper; he selected those who passed a battery of psychologically tests and were judged to be "mentally healthy". The subjects were then divided into two groups, the guards and prisoners. The guards were dressed in appropriate attire: mirrored sunglasses, boots, and uniforms. Their

appearance was consistent with modern archetypes of authority. The prisoners, on the other hand were made to shave their heads and wear shapeless gowns, and each was assigned an identifying number by which he was to be addressed; the prisoners' appearance was calculated to maximize anonymity, humility, and dehumanization, much like that of inmates in concentration camps during World War Two. The "prison" in this experiment was a remodelled laboratory in the basement of the Stanford Psychology Department and the guards were allowed to run it as they wished. From the start of the experiment, when the prisoners were surprised at their homes by "police" with warrants, arrested, and driven in police cars to "jail", to the simulated parole hearings and the half-hour visits with concerned, uninformed relatives, the Stanford Prsion experiment faithfully simulated the humilating experience of incarceration.

What Zimbardo did not predict, however, was the extreme physical and psychological brutality that some of the guards displayed. Prisoners were made to do pushups at any time of the day or night, to clean the toilets with their bare hands, and to go without food. Often they were arbitrarily thrown into solitary confinement. Unlike the terms of Milgram's experiment, the guards were under no orders to hurt anyone, yet some became so caught up in their roles that they entirely forgot they were participating in an experiment. Zimbardo also did not predict the subservience that the prisoners

exhibited; with the exception of two "rebels", the prisoners obeyed the guards' orders without complaint. On the sixth day of the experiment, Zimbardo was forced to end the simulation because several of the prisoners had begun to exhibit signs of severe depression and despair. Two other prisoners had already been excused, after experiencing severe mental anguish.[15]

Zimbardo's experiment, like Milgram's, illustrated how easy it is for individuals to inflict injury on others. Moreover, the Stanford Prison experiment demonstrated how individuals can become caught up role-playing and be carried away by situations that such role-playing generates. Applied to the phenomenon of collaboration, I believe that Zimbardo's findings suggest that individuals during the war collaborated in part because they were psychologically seduced by an emotionally charged situation, by a leader's cult of personality, or by an inspirational political ideology. As I alluded to briefly before, Hitler's well orchestrated mass rallies, parades of synchronized goose-stepping soldiers, and rousing, fiery speeches impressed and overwhelmed many people; undoubtedly, many Germans were inspired to affiliate themselves with the Nazi party so that they could vicariously bask in some of Hitler's glory and partake in some of the power that collaboration with the Nazis afforded. Moreover, many Italians were unquestionably drawn into the almost mythic

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[15]. Phillip Zimbardo, "The Stanford Prison Experiment", 1971.

cult of personality that developed around Mussolini and such Fascist personalities as Gabriele D'Annunzio, a famed writer and aviator.[16]

Although my hypotheses are largely speculative, they do offer certain insights into the phenomenon of collaboration, insights which may be applied specifically to the study of collaboration in Vichy France and Fascist Italy. The rational actor paradigm, in my opinion, postulates that individuals may have collaborated because collaboration seemed to promise them the greatest socio-economic payoffs. As I discussed, Hannah Arendt's portrait of Adolf Eichmann lends credence to this hypothesis. Solomon Asch's psychological study of the power of a group over an individual can be interpreted to suggest that people were driven to collaborate by political and social pressures. Stanley Milgram and Phillip Zimbardo, in experiments which demonstrated the ability of ordinary individuals to harm others, found evidence that indicates to me that people may have collaborated after surrendering moral responsibilty to some authority or after embracing some new identity imposed upon them by an ideology, an event, or an individual.

Such insights on collaboration are intriguing and, I believe, worth considering in greater depth. In the next two chapters, however, I would like to examine creative

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[16]. Adams, Italy at War, 44-51.

interpretations of the phenomenon of collaboration that possess more nuance-filled humanistic insights than my social science-based hypotheses do. To this end, I have chosen to examine two narratives, a novel and a screenplay, which portray collaboration in Italy and France during the Second World War. The first, Il Conformista, is an Italian novel by Alberto Moravia, one of Italy's most important modern writers. The second, Lacombe Lucien, is a screenplay written by Patrick Modiano, a highly regarded contemporary French writer.

CHAPTER TWO

In my analysis of Alberto Moravia's Il Conformista, I will briefly summarize the plot and then address the characterization of Marcello Clerici as a conformist, concentrating particularly on the text's portrayal of his childhood. I will subsequently discuss how Marcello demonstrates several behavioral characteristics that psychoanalyst Erich Fromm would term as "conformist" in nature and then delineate how Moravia's narrative style nontheless undermines the persuasiveness of Marcello's character as a conformist. Lastly, I will briefly explore several other characters' motivations to conform.

Il Conformista is divided into four parts: a prologue, "la parte prima", "la parte seconda", and an epilogue. These sections describe, in sequence, four important periods in the the life of Marcello Clerici, the protagonist and "Conformist" of the title, as well as several crucial stages in his psychological development; also, they span the years from the early Fascist regime to the fall of Benito Mussolini.

The prologue introduces the reader to Marcello as a young boy. His parents neglect him, distracted by the violent deterioration of their marriage and by his father's failing mental faculties. Tutored at home, Marcello spends a large portion of his time inordinately interested in firearms and cruel, violent games. As the text describes, Marcello was

cruel because the excitement he derived from violence gave him pleasure.[1] These games start out as imaginary duels with the bushes, evolve into hunts for lizards, and finally escalate into the killing of a cat, while he fantasizes about murdering a playmate who has disapproved of such games. Once he enters public school, however, Marcello happily slips into a daily regimen dominated by scholastic rules, regulations, and routines. Despite this conformity, however, Marcello is "abnormal"; after exhibiting "feminine" characteristics in the classroom, he is socially ostracized and teased mercilessly by his peers. The prologue concludes with Marcello's encounter with Lino, a pedophile, who courts the boy and then abducts him and attempts to molest him. Marcello shoots Lino and escapes, believing that he has killed him.

"La parte prima", or, first part, paints a portrait of Marcello as a young man obsessed with appearing as normal as possible to everyone around him. In order to achieve a "normal" appearance, he occupies an unspecified middle-level bureaucratic postion in Benito Mussolini's government. He becomes engaged to Giulia, whom he does not love, yet whose unremarkableness and apparent normalcy makes her, in his eyes, an ideal wife. Despite his own outward "normalcy", however, Marcello continues to be consumed with guilt about the death of Lino, and eaten away by doubts of his normalcy.

In "la parte seconda", Marcello takes Giulia to Paris on

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[1]. Alberto Moravia, Il Conformista, Milan, 1951, p. 8.

the pretext of celebrating their honeymoon abroad. There, under orders from his superiors, Marcello finds Professor Quadri, an anti-fascist organizer, and tries to ingratiate himself with him. In an unexpected turn of events, however, Marcello falls in love with Quadri's lesbian wife, Lina. Lina, enamored of Giulia, rejects Marcello's advances. Marcello nonetheless entertains fantasies of running off with Lina until fascist agents, with Marcello's collusion, kill her and Quadri.

In the epilogue, we find Marcello several years after the Quadris' murder, on the eve of the fascists' fall from power. Amidst the general confusion, he finds Lino alive and well and accuses him of destroying his boyhood innocence. Lino replies calmly replies that "...tutti la perdiamo la nostra innocenza, in un modo o nell'altro...è la normalità."[1] Hearing this, Marcello realizes the absurdity of his lifelong quest for "normalcy". This realization puts his mind at rest and, figuratively, closes the lid on the Pandora's Box of anxieties that was opened in his childhood.

At the conclusion of Il Conformista, Marcello, Giulia, and their daughter flee to the country to avoid the unstable political situation in the city. Ironically, their flight is in vain; all three are killed on the highway during an Allied air raid.

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[1]. Ibid., p. 281. "...we all lose our innocence, one way or another...it's normal."

Having summarized this work, I would like to examine the narrative's characterization of Marcello more closely. In Il Conformista, the motivations to support Mussolini's government, rather than rebel and fight against it, are many and varied. As the title of the book would clearly have us believe before we even pick it up, Marcello Clerici, our protagonist, is motivated by an obsessive need for social acceptance and "normalcy". In order to achieve "normalcy", Marcello attempts to conform to the status quo of wartime Italy by joining the fascist Secret Service. In the prologue, Marcello's desire to be "normal" is described as:

> ...una volontà di adeguazione ad una regola riconosciuta e generale; una voglia di essere simile a tutti gli altri dal momento che essere diverso voleva dire essere colpevole.[3]

The prologue emphasizes, however, how far from normal Marcello's formative years were; his was a distinctly atypical childhood. He is portrayed as a child with violent, sadistic tendencies, a child who, one summer, precociously realizes that his actions and thoughts are abnormal for his age. It is here in the prologue that many of the incidents occur which--the narrative suggests--drives Marcello to conform to the status quo.

One day Marcello sets about killing several lizards in his family's garden, and surprises himself with the great

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[3]. Ibid., p. 29. "...a will to adapt to a recognize and general rule; a desire to be like all the others since being different meant being guilty."

pleasure he derives from the destruction he wreaks. Afterwards, however, he feels shame and disgust at what he has done, not because he feels that what he has done is wrong, but because he enjoyed it so much. This realization represents Marcello's loss of innocence; it is the first time he has ever questioned his own actions and experienced profound guilt and fear that he may be perverted, evil and, abnormal. This fear comes to dominate his entire life:

> ...insieme con la vergogna e il rimorso provava un confuso senso di spavento. Come a scoprire in se stesso un carratere del tutto anormale, di cui dovesse vergognarsi che dovesse mantenere segreto per non vergognarsi...Non c'era dubbio, egli era diverso dai ragazzi della sua età.[4]

When his playmate Roberto declines to join in on future lizard hunts because he thinks that killing is evil, Marcello's anxiety that he may be abnormal intensifies and turns into resentment towards Roberto. Several weeks later, Marcello kills a cat with a slingshot while fantasizing about killing Roberto and is, again, overwhelmed by guilt. The deteriorating relationship between his parents during this time contributes even more to the general atmosphere of fear and violence that permeates Marcello's summer. His mother, characterized in the text as a little girl both morally and physically, neglects him, as does his father, a violently

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[4]. Ibid., p. 10. "...along with the shame and the remorse he felt a confusing sense of fear. As if discovering within himself a totally abnormal character, of which he should be ashamed, that he had to keep a secret in order to not embarrass himself...There was no doubt, he was different from children his age..."

tempermental man of increasingly dubious sanity. One evening, Marcello watches his mother flee from the dinner table following a violent quarrel with his father, who chases her upstairs. Marcello, following them to their bedroom, sees his parents struggling and thinks that he is witnessing his father killing his mother, not fully understanding that he has caught them in the act of making love. This blatant, Freudian scene is typical of Moravia; in order to explain actions of his characters, he frequently will place a psychosexual trauma at the roots of their psychological motivations.[5]

In the fall, Marcello enters school, after years of private tutoring. Despite his mediocre performance as a student, Marcello is described as taking great pleasure in following the precise, strict, and formal scholastic regimen of classes:

> Gli piaceva, alla mattina, alzarsi a tempo di orologio... Gli piaceva sopratutto il rituale delle lezioni...Ciò che amava a scuola non era tanto lo studio quanto un modo tutto nouvo di vita, più conforme ai suoi gusti di quello tenuto sinora. Ancora una volta era la normalità che l'attraeva...[6]

In spite of the trappings of normalcy that school seems to provide, however, Marcello is unable to assimilate; his

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[5]. Ferdinando Alfonsi, Alberto Moravia in America: un quarantennio di critica (1929-1969), Catanzaro, Italy, 1984, p. 121-130.

[6]. Moravia, Il Conformista, p. 30. "In the morning he liked to get up by the alarm clock..he liked especially liked the ritual of lessons...What he liked at school wasn't so much the studying as the totally new lifestyle, which suited his tastes more than the one he had had up until then. Once again, normalcy attracted him..."

feminine physical characteristics and "girlish" behavior towards his teachers renders him an object of ridicule. This "abnormal" effeminacy is described as instinctual, irrepressible, and undeniable, implying that Marcello himself is in fact abnormal:

> Questi tratti erano nativi in Marcello eppero inconsapevoli; quando si rese conto che lo rendevano ridicolo agli occhi dei ragazzi, era ormai troppo tardi; anche se avesse potuto contollarli, se non sopprimerli, la sua reputazione di femminuccia in calzoni era ormai stabilità.[7]

Marcello's encounter with Lino is a none-too-subtle psychological and textual synthesis of Marcello's "abnormalities". In his flirtatious interaction with Lino in the car, he displays manipulative traits we have also seen in his Oedipal relationship with his mother. His foolhardy desire to go home with Lino in order to get a real gun echoes his earlier obsession with firearms and violence. His coquettish, effeminate behavior in this episode parallels his "undeniable" effeminacy in the classroom. These distinct parallels, as well as the location of this particular encounter at the conclusion of the prologue, suggest that we should consider this episode to be the traumatic climax of Marcello's childhood. Moreover, the text suggests that the psychological impact of this incident should explain

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[7]. Ibid., p. 31. "These traits were native, yet unconcious, in Marcello; when he realized that they made him look ridiculous to the children it was already too late: even if he had been able to control them, if not suppress them, his reputation as a little girl in trousers had already been confirmed."

Marcello's subsequent desire to hide in the anonymous shadows of the status quo.

The problem with this episode is that it pretends to offer a persuasive psychological explanation for Marcello's adulthood motivation to conform by embracing the Fascist regime. Moreover, it attempts to excuse Marcello from much of the moral responsibility for his adult actions--the Quadris' murder in particular--by providing the reader with "persuasive" evidence that Marcello was a victim of circumstances beyond his control. Granted, the tendency to conform and collaborate in order to gain greater security and acceptance is a recognized sociological phenomenon. Moravia's attempt to excuse Marcello's Fascist allegiance and activities as an adult, however, is tenuous and unconvincing. Although Marcello's desire to be normal is heavily emphasized in the text, the lack of descriptive nuance and the absence of a persuasive transition from troubled child to model fascist ultimately render Marcello implausible as a character.

In his classic analysis of the desire to conform, Escape From Freedom, psychoanalyst Erich Fromm affirms that true freedom is wholehearted acceptance of one's own individuality.[1] Fromm goes on to suggest that many people cannot manage the social stress of being free in this manner, of being different from everyone else. In order to escape such freedom, therefore, these individuals strive to conform

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[1]. Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom, New York, 1969, p. 161.

to some generally accepted norm of behavior, or to identify themselves with someone or something more powerful than themselves.[9] As one may recall, Solomon Asch, in his 1952 experiment, demonstrated how people will even adopt obviously incorrect opinions as their own in order to "belong" to a group of their peers. To Marcello, clearly, the prospect of living his life as a unique human being is terrifying; he wants desperately to be considered normal and unremarkable, to belong to the status quo, to conform to society's demands successfully. In doing so, however, Marcello exhibits the rigid, compulsive behavior one would expect of an individual who tries to repress every facet of his or her individuality. Fromm defines the psychological effects of this self-imposed repression thus:

> This course of escape...is characterized by its compulsive character, like every escape from threatening panic; it is also characterized by the more or less complete surrender of individuality and the integrity of the self. Thus it is not a situation which leads to happiness and postive freedom; it is, in principle, a solution which is to be found in all neurotic phenomena.[10]

Predictably, the outward effects of conformity on an individual are such that

> ...the individual ceases to be himself: he adopts entirely the kind of personality offered by cultural patterns and he therefore becomes exactly as all others and as they expect him to be. The discrepency between "I" and the world disappears and with it the

[9]. Ibid., p. 163.

[10]. Ibid., p. 162.

conscious fear of aloneness.[11]

Fromm's analysis is consistent with Moravia's characterization of Marcello as an adult; in Il Conformista, Marcello determinedly attempts to create a socially acceptable persona for himself. In doing so, he represses the impressionable, effeminate, wildly imaginative boy that he used to be, and replaces him with

> ...un uomo per nulla timido anzi perfettamente sicuro di se, del tutto maschile nei gusti e negli atteggiamenti, calmo, ordinato fino all'eccesso, quasi privo di immaginazione, controllato, freddo...tutto in lui era chiaro sebbene, forse, un poco spento e la povertà e rigidezza di poche idee e convinzioni avevano preso il posto di quella generosa e confusa abbondanza.[12]

In his relationship with Giulia before their marriage, Marcello discourages her sexual advances and rigidly attempts to maintain the "proper" and "traditional" non-sexual relationship between them that Italian society demanded of unmarried couples.[13] He imagines, with satisfaction, that their church-sanctioned wedding will be

> ...un anello di più, come pensò, nella catena di normalità con la quale egli cercava di ancorarsi delle sabbie infide della vita; e, per giunta, quest'anello era fatto di un metallo più nobile e resistente degli

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[11]. Ibid., p. 208-209.

[12]. Moravia, Il Conformista, p. 67. "...a man free of timidity--on the contrary, perfectly sure of himself--completely masculine in his taste and comportment, calm, tidy even to excess, almost void of imagination, controlled, cold...everything in him was clear, maybe even a little extinguished and the poverty and rigidity of few ideas and convictions had taken the place of that former plentiful and confused abundance."

[13]. Ibid., p. 85.

altri: la religione.[14]

Marcello also visualizes the conception and birth of his and Giulia's children not so much as a joyful act in and of itself, but rather as the point of departure from which he will really appear to be normal.[15] Whether "normal" in this instance means being heterosexual and masculine, or fulfilling the procreative expectations of Italian society, is debatable. I will discuss Moravia's characterization of homosexuality in this novel later on.

Fromm also discusses other psychological aspects of a conformist personality that parallel Moravia's characterization of Marcello. For example, Fromm describes at some length how mental supression of individuality is reflected in moral rigidity and emotional repression.[16] Throughout Il Conformista, we encounter several examples of Marcello's "austere" character, physical rigidity, and mental conservatism. One of the more revealing instances occurs one day in Paris, when Professor Quadri tells Giulia that her husband is "malato di austerità...O meglio l'austerità non e

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[14]. Ibid., p. 89. "...one more link, as he thought, in the chain of normalcy with which he sought to anchor himself in the treacherous sands of life; and, in addition, this link was forged in a more noble and resistant metal than the others: religion."

[15]. Ibid., p. 141.

[16]. Fromm, Escape From Freedom, p. 269.

che un sintomo."[17] On another occasion, after Quadri chides Marcello for his puritan dislike of fine food, good wine, and public displays of affection, Marcello replies forcefully that he was not born with a taste for such things.[18] Marcello's stiffness and utter lack of sensuality is emphasized by its juxtaposition to the overt sensuality of Giulia and the physical aggressiveness of Lina. While the woman in Il Conformista laugh, cry, drink, dance, and exhibit sexual desire, Marcello remains cold, serious, and sober; he consistently demonstrates the repressed characteristics that Fromm attributes to the conformist.

Fromm also describes how a conformist convinces himself that "life is determined by forces outside of man's own self, his interest, his wishes."[19] Marcello's frequent belief that forces more powerful than he are controlling his life is consistent with this psychological portrait of a conformist. His fatalistic, passive point of view indicates a wish to be morally relieved of responsibility for what happens to him or for what he does:

> ...udì per la terza volta il solito servitore chiamare ad alta voce il suo nome e questa volta si meraviglia veramente. Gli venne quasi la speranza di un intervento sovraumano, come se servendosi del corno di ebanite nera del telefono, la voce di un oracola fosse per dirgli una

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[17]. Moravia, Il Conformista, p. 222. "sick with austerity...or rather, austerity is only a symptom."

[18]. Ibid., p. 221.

[19]. Fromm, Escape From Freedom, p. 194.

parola decisiva sulla sua vita.[20]

Marcello's wish, intriguingly, echoes the desire of the "teachers" in Stanley Milgram's experiment to be relieved of moral responsibility for their actions and their "students" well-being.

Marcello also considers seemingly innocuous events to be "un segno fausto", a fortuitous sign.[21] Moreover, he draws parallels between his own life and the lives of influential, diabolical characters in the Bible, such as Cain and Judas Iscariot. This pattern of thinking reveals Marcello's inflated sense of self-importance and power; it also reveals a terrifying sense of personal guilt for his role in the deaths of Lino and Professor Quadri, a guilt which, try as he might, he is unable to alleviate. In one instance, after reading the parable of God's curse on Cain for having killed Abel, Marcello reflects on Lino's death:

> Questi versetti, quel giorno, gli erano sembrati addirittura scritti per lui, maledetto per il suo involontario delitto ma al tempo stesso reso sacro e intangibile proprio da quella maledizione.[22]

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[20]. Moravia, Il Conformista, p. 171. "...for the third time he heard the same operator call his name loudly and this time he was really amazed. He almost hoped for supernatural intervention, as if by using the black ebony earpiece the voice of an oracle could tell him a decisive word about his life."

[21]. Ibid., p. 210.

[22]. Ibid., p. 140. "These little verses, that day, seemed written exclusively for him, cursed for his involuntary crime but at the same time made sacred and untouchable by that very curse."

When Marcello indicates to Orlando who Quadri is by shaking Quadri's hand, he thinks:

> "Probabilemente Giuda fece quello che fece per gli stessi motivi per cui lo faccio io," pensò, "e anche lui dovette farlo sebbene non amasse farlo perche era necessario, dopo tutto, che qualcuno lo facesse...ma perche spaventarsi? Ammettiamo senz'altro che io abbia scelto la parte di Giuda..."[13]

Thus, Marcello believes that he is merely an actor in a preordained ritual, that, in spite of his ethical misgivings, he is fulfilling his destiny. Again, such ideas are consistent with Fromm's analysis of a conformist's beliefs. Interestingly, Marcello's perceptions of himself as an actor also echo Zimbardo's findings in the Stanford Prison experiment: that individuals can get caught up in role-playing and forget that they are independent individuals who are responsible for their actions and in control of their own lives.

As I have discussed, then, there are several facets of Marcello's character which are credibly that of a conformist; Erich Fromm's analysis of the desire to conform to the status quo mentions several behavioral characteristics which Marcello exhibits consistently. Moreover, Marcello exhibits the urge to belong to the status quo that Solomon Asch observed in

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[13]. Ibid., p. 178. ""Judas probably did what he did for the same reasons I am doing it," he thought, "and he also had to do it even if he didn't like it, because, after all, it was necessary for someone to do it...but why am I frightening myself? Let's admit that I've chosen the role of Judas..""

1952. In addition, Marcello also expresses a desire to be relieved of moral responsibility for his actions that Stanley Milgram observed in his "teachers", as well as a role-playing mentality that Phillip Zimbardo's guards and prisoners adopted. Nonetheless, before we can judge the sum persuasiveness and power of Moravia's portrait of Marcello and of his metamorphosis from naive, apolitical boy into fascist automaton, we must first scrutinize Moravia's stylistic strategies of persuasion. Specifically, the reader should consider Moravia's use of verbal repetition, foreshadowing, and coincidence in Il Conformista, as well as the text's suspicious representation of homosexuality.

One of the most striking characteristics of this novel is its relentless use of lexical repetition. Moravia seems to want to impress indelibly upon the reader certain messages. Namely, "abnormality" and "normalcy", evoked in reference to Marcello's desire to escape his "abnormality" and become normal, are repeated gratuitously throughout the psychologically pivotal prologue--for example, fifteen times in five pages. Thereafter, they recur so often that we cannot possibly forget the message: whereas being different from everyone else is abnormal, conforming to the status quo in Italy by becoming an active fascist is normal. While this contention is, arguably, persuasive, the use of reiteration ad nauseam in order to persuade us of its veracity is not. In order to explain a complex psychologically phenomenon such

as conformity and the repression of self, mere constative statements ("Marcello felt utterly abnormal") do not suffice, for they explain nothing at all. The text ingenuosly assumes--or, disengenuously, hopes that the reader will assume--that emotions and feelings are faithful reflections of reality, that "feeling abnormal" is sufficient proof of one's abnormality. Such literary tactics are unsophisticated; they do not answer the complex question why people will collaborate with a militaristic, totalitarian regime. Consequently, the verbal repetition in Il Conformista fails to persuade the discriminating reader that Marcello is abnormal, and, consequently, that his desire to become a fascist is justified. Rather, such repetition only imbues this novel with a caricatural, superficial quality that ultimately alienates this reader.

Like the use of verbal repetition in Il Conformista, the use of foreshadowing ultimately detracts from the book's persuasiveness. There are several examples of ponderous foreshadowing in the text. One of the more blatant instances, stretched over several pages, occurs in the epilogue, foreshadowing the Clericis' deaths in an air raid: Marcello's daughter recites the Ave Maria before bedtime, praying that the Virgin Mary will seek absolution for the Clericis' (i.e., Marcello's) sins then and on the day of their deaths; the little girl asks if "the airplanes" will come to their summer house, to which Giulia replies "no"; the girl asks Marcello

what will happen if they do not return from summer vacation; Marcello suggests that Giulia meet him in the country, because anti-fascists are looking for him.[24] The overemphasis here and elsewhere on the sense of impending doom destroys the potential for suspense and, instead, suffuses the foreshadowed episodes with predictability and bathos. Moreover, by using foreshadowing as an emotional hook to fix the reader's sympathies, Moravia actually dilutes the text's dramatic impact and persuasive power; such overt foreshadowing seems meant to convince the reader that Marcello really has a destiny, and that he cannot escape the inexorable pull of Fate. This passive characterization of Marcello is weak and unconvincing, because it simplistically explains, as well as tries to excuse Marcello's actions as a collaborator and conformist. Like Moravia's exaggerated lexical repetition, the characterization of Marcello as "fated" is a sophmoric literary strategy that avoids the more difficult--but ultimately more valuable--task of developing a psychologically nuanced, <u>credible</u> character.

In <u>Il Conformista</u>, Moravia draws several parallels between different individuals, apparently in order to accentuate certain dramatic and emotional continuities that he believes are central. The comparison between Marcello's betrayal of Professor Quadri and Judas' betrayal of Jesus, and between Marcello's murder of Lino and Cain's murder of Abel,

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[24]. Ibid., p. 263-268.

noted above, are two examples of this. A third example is the comparison Moravia draws between Lino, the homosexual pedophile, and Lina, the lesbian with whom Marcello falls in love. Besides the clear similarity of their names and their sexual orientation, Lino and Lina are also characterized in the same manner: sexually aggressive, manipulative, and unsympathetic. Lino lures Marcello into his car and into his house with the promise of a revolver, and then tries to molest him. Lina attempts to convince Marcello that she might love him, in order to keep him and Giulia close at hand so that she can seduce her. Both characters use Marcello to satisfy their own whims, both characters scar him emotionally, both characters are shot--Lino by Marcello himself, and Lina through his agency.

The parallels between the two are overt and purposeful, but to what end? The novel itself suggests, before Lino is found is alive, that the deaths of Lino and Lina marked the beginning and the end of Marcello's flight from abnormality,[25] that the price Marcello had to pay for "normalcy" was the murder of the Quadris.[26] As one Moravia critic has observed, Moravia consistently offers his readers "the sexual view, the view of human relations and of everything that arises in or impinges upon human realtions as beginning and ending in

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[25]. Ibid., p. 243.

[26]. Ibid., p. 261.

sexual encounter...".[27] If one cares to characterize Marcello's encounters with Lino and Lina as sexual, this observation sheds some light on why such blatant parallels are drawn between these two characters in the novel. The disturbing manner in which Moravia draws these parallels, however, cannot be ignored in evaluating Il Conformista. The essentially negative characterizations of both Lino and Lina, coupled with the text's representation of Marcello's childhood effeminacy as abnormal, reveal a disquieting homophobia on the part of the author. As I noted before, Lino and Lina are characterized as sexually predatory individuals. The text posits that Lino's death was elemental in driving Marcello to conform to the status quo and join the Fascist party, while Lina's and Professor Quadri's deaths were the incidents which confirmed, in Marcello's mind, that he was finally "normal". In other words, Lino and Lina are represented as sexually charged, unpleasant, yet unavoidable "rungs" in the ladder that Marcello must climb towards Being Normal. Perhaps the author, by characterizing Lino and Lina as threatening homosexuals, hopes that we will easily forgive Marcello for "doing what he needs to do". Besides the fact that the parallels between Lino and Lina are too numerous to be coincidental or realistic, the author's narrow treatment of these individuals ultimately renders this text superficial, for it assumes that the reader will accept biased

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[27]. Alfonsi, Moravia in America, p. 127.

characterizations as accurate portrayals of individual homosexual characters.

Despite the fact that there are several psychological elements in Il Conformista which enhance the realism and dramatic impact of Marcello's search for normalcy within the confines of a Fascist state, serious narrative weaknesses ultimately undermine the text. We have seen that the psychological motivation for collaboration that Moravia proposes is in keeping with a psychoanalysis of the same phenomenon: namely, that people who are uncomfortable with their personal individuality will tend to search for social and mental security through some alignment of self with some more powerful, larger entity, whether it be an individual, an organization, or an ideology. In describing the circumstances which cause Marcello to have such motivations, however, Moravia utilizes superficial, caricatural narrative strategies at the expense of more nuanced character development which accomodates the complexity of human nature. As a result, there is no persuasive evolution of Marcello, from the boy overwhelmed by his heavily-emphasized abnormalities to the normal, rigid adult Fascist in "la parte prima".[11] In fact,

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[11]. Cottrell, Jane E., Alberto Moravia, New York, 1974, p. 91. Cottrell, a leading American critic of Moravia, writes of Moravia's treatment of Marcello, "Far from being an effective allegory of the evil of fascism, it appears to be a case study of a mentally disturbed individual so unbelievable that it reveals little about human tendencies or the human condition. The social criticism is lost, as is the tragic dimension."

the reader receives no information whatsoever about what occured in the fifteen years that elapse between the prologue and the first part of Il Conformista. In order to render Marcello credible to the reader, Moravia, in my opinion, should have delineated Marcello's metamorphisis from child to adult Fascist much more carefully. As I have discussed previously, experiments by Fromm, Asch, Milgram, and Zimbardo explain how individuals conform, and, by extrapolation, why individuals decide to collaborate. It is, however, within the artistic realm of authors such as Moravia to explore more deeply a person's motivations to collaborate. Moravia, nonetheless, appears to have chosen not to do this.

What motivates the other characters in Il Conformista to conform? In the case of Orlando, the only other "special agent" working for the Fascist regime whose character is at all developed, nationalistic fervor appears to be the driving force behind his collaboration. A man whose credo is "Tutto per la famiglia e per la patria" (All for the family and the fatherland), Orlando is a stereotypical Italian Fascist; he is unsophisticated, uneducated, anti-intellectual, and hails from the conservative south of Italy. Although he is evidently a compassionate person, Orlando is a man who nevertheless feels that it is his patriotic duty to obey orders, no matter how unsavory. This mentality echoes the dutiful obedience to authority that Milgram and Zimbardo observed in their experiments.

The other fascists in Il Conformista remain in the shadows; the reader gets little more than a few, albeit unpleasant, insights into their characters. The colonel of Mussolini's Secret Service who sends Marcello to Paris to Quadri, and Gabrio, a fascist who serves as a messenger between Rome and the fascist agents stationed in Paris, are both hard-core bureaucratic conformists. They are motivated to collaborate with the regime for personal socio-economic reasons and out of a desire to climb the ladder of power in Italy by docilely obeying orders from above. This motivation to collaborate in order to gain personal socio-economic benefits clearly parallels the hypothesis based on the rational actor model that I offered in Chapter One. There are also fascists like the assassin Cirrincione, who horrifies Orlando by licking the blood off his hand after killing the Quadris. His personal motivations are unknown, yet the description of his actions seems to suggest that some collaborators were innately brutal individuals who took pleasure in violence (Mussolini's Black Shirts were often described in this manner).

Ultimately, in Il Conformista, Moravia only briefly describes the other Fascist collaborators; as a result it is difficult to evaluate the persuasiveness of these characters' motivations critically. As we have already seen, the circumstances that Moravia does use to explain Marcello's motivations and actions are so unusual that they cannot be

considered representative of many other people who did collaborate with the fascists during World War Two. Moreover, Moravia's characterization of Marcello is facile and caricatured, rendering Marcello the individual wholly unbelievable to the reader, despite the fact that his motivations are somewhat credible. Consequently, the text as a whole cannot be considered a very persuasive, much less definitive, treatment of the dynamic of collaboration.

CHAPTER THREE

In my study of Lacombe Lucien, by Patrick Modiano, I will begin with a summary of the plot and briefly discuss the narrative style of his screenplay. I will then analyze the character of Lucien, the protagonist, placing special emphasis on the sociological motivations that drive him to collaborate with the Milice. Subsequently, I will address the text's characterization of several other collaborators, as well as that of France, the Jewish girl with whom Lucien becomes romantically involved. In conclusion, I will comment on the persuasiveness of Modiano's portrayal of Lucien and Lucien's motivations to collaborate.

Modiano wrote the screenplay Lacombe Lucien for the 1974 film directed by Louis Malle with the same name. It comprises fifty-five scenes, described in the detached, observational tone characteristic of the "Nouveaux Romanciers".[1] Specifically, Modiano's text contains dialogue and concise, simple descriptions of his characters' actions and gestures; the reader receives no explicit psychological information about any of the characters by way of monologues or help from a narrator (e.g. "Lucien felt angry"). This narrative style contrasts sharply with the psychological stream of

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[1]. Bruno Vercier and Jacques Lecarme, La Littérature en France depuis 1968, Paris, 1982. For a thorough discussion of the best-known "Nouveaux Romanciers", read about Nathalie Sarraute, Alain Robbes-Grillet, Michel Butor, and Claude Simone.

conciousness common in Moravia's text. In Lacombe Lucien, therefore, the reader must keep in mind that my assessments of the characters' motivations to collaborate are interpretive, not definitive.

Lacombe Lucien begins in June 1944 and spans several months in the life of Lucien, a 17 year-old peasant from the village of Souleillac, in the southwest of France. When the story begins, Lucien is a menial laborer at a home for the elderly. He goes home on Sundays, in order to give his mother his wages and go to church. His relationship with her appears to be tense; since Lucien's father was taken prisoner by the Nazis during the invasion of France, Therese has taken a lover, Laborit, who lives with her, much to Lucien's chagrin. Disgusted with his job or, perhaps, discouraged by the scant promise that peasant life holds for him, Lucien approaches Peyssac, the village schoolteacher and leader of the local cell of the French Resistance. Lucien announces to Peyssac discourages him, saying that Lucien is too young for such dangerous work.

Returning to the town where he works, Lucien catches sight of a man and two girls entering the Hotel-Restaurant des Grottes and a couple on one of the verandas. Absorbed, Lucien sneaks up to the building for a better view when, suddenly, an armed guard ambushes him and drags him inside the hotel. In this manner Lucien is introduced to Jean-Bernard de

Voisins, Aubert, Tonin, Faure, Mademoiselle Georges, Lucienne, Hippolyte, and Betty Beaulieu. Jean-Bernard, Aubert, Tonin, and Faure are collaborators with the Nazi occupiers; they are members of the Milice, the French branch of the German military police.[2]

In order to get information out of Lucien, the men get him drunk; he reveals to them that Peyssac is involved in the Resistance and then blacks out. In the days that follow, Lucien remains at the hotel and earns the confidence of the collaborators who live there. He observes, with fascination, the comings and goings on about him: meetings with German officers; brutal interrogations; the daily delivery of denunciatory letters accusing individuals of complicity with le maquis, the Resistance. Nonetheless, he remains politically uncommitted; when pressed about his ideological leanings, he replies "Je ne sais pas" (I don't know). One day, however, Jean-Bernard takes Lucien along on a mission to capture and interrogate Vaugeois, a bourgeois doctor with ties to the Resistance; during this incident, Lucien explicity exhibits some sympathy for the collaborationist cause when he imitates Jean-Bernard's bullying mannerisms and expresses his newly-realized hatred for the bourgeoisie. In the days that follow, Lucien's behavior changes: he becomes more aggressive, confident, and arrogant, and openly identifies

[2]. Bertram M. Gordon, Collaborationism in France during the Second World War, Ithaca, NY, 1980, p. 166-197.

himself as a member of the Milice.

> Lucien se lève tres lentement, sort son revolver et le braque sur l'homme.
> LUCIEN: Police allemande.
> L'homme se tourne vers Horn, l'air stupéfait.
> L'HOMME: Qu'est-ce que c'est que cette histoire?
> Horn le regarde gravement, avec un geste fataliste.
> HORN: Eh oui, ce jeune homme est effectivement dans la police allemande.
> Lucien tend le bras gauche en direction du proprietaire et claque du doigt.
> LUCIEN: Papiers!...[3]

He awkwardly, brusquely courts France, the daughter of Jean-Bernard's Jewish tailor, Albert Horn, and they soon become lovers, much to her father's dismay.

Lucien now works with the Milice, although his job is never specified. One day Albert Horn daringly comes to the hotel in order to speak to Lucien about France. When Lucien angrily tries to take Horn back to the safety of his home, Faure appears and detains Horn. No one sees Albert Horn ever again. Lucien goes to tell France the bad news and she is overwhelmed with anger. They fight violently and Lucien leaves. Back at the hotel, Lucien tries to comfort a drunken, disillusioned Aubert. Faure comes and spirits Aubert away to

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[3]. Patrick Modiano, Lacombe Lucien, Paris, 1974, p. 84.
"Lucien gets up very slowly, takes out his revolver, and points it at the man.
LUCIEN: German police.
The man turns to Horn, stupified.
MAN: What's going on?
Horn looks at him gravely, with a fatalistic gesture.
HORN: Oh yes, this young man really is in the German police.
Lucien moves his left arm in the direction of the landlord and snaps his fingers.
LUCIEN: Papers!..."

an interrogation of a prisoner. Later that evening, Lucien finds the prisoner, who tries to convince Lucien to free him so that they can escape together. Lucien gags the man but remains in the room, fascinated by him for reasons which remain unclear to the reader. Suddenly, shots ring out: resistance fighters storm the hotel and kill everyone, except Faure, who is seriously wounded, and Lucien, who escapes. Lucien goes to France's home with a German soldier, who orders France and her grandmother to pack their bags; they are being deported. As they all leave the house, Lucien kills the soldier and escapes with France and her grandmother to the countryside. The final scenes of Lacombe Lucien take place in a ruined house, in the middle of an isolated, unspecified place near a forest. Time stops; Lucien and France pass their days exploring the area, killing animals for food, and playing together like children. The screenplay ends with this epilogue: "Lucien Lacombe fut arreté le 12 octobre 1944. Jugé par un tribunal militaire de la Résistance, il fut condamné à mort et executé.".[4]

In order to better understand what leads Lucien to ally himself with the Milice and, ultimately, collaborate with them, we must examine the events which precede his encounter

[4]. Modiano, Lacombe Lucien, p. 144. "Lucien Lacombe was arrested on October 12, 1944. Tried by a military tribunal of the Resistance, he was condemned to death and executed."

with the residents of the Hotel-Restaurant des Grottes. When we first meet him, Lucien is a 17 year-old peasant and, thus, a member of one of the lowest social classes in France. Early in the text we are given several indications of his social status; we learn that he is from a village, Souleillac, in the countryside in the south of France[5] and that he works as a janitor in a larger town, in order to help support his mother.

> Lucien sort quelques billets de sa poche et les lui tend.
> LUCIEN: Tiens, ils m'ont augmenté de vingt francs...
> Therese vient prendre l'argent, le compte rapidement et le met dans la poche de son tablier.
> THERESE (machinalement): C'est bien...[6]

In addition, we are told that Lucien dresses poorly and speaks in the vulgar manner of the lower classes[7] and that his family lives and eats very simply.[8] A comment by Peyssac to one of his students also indicates to us that the children in Lucien's village have no higher aspirations than to become shepherds or farmers, like their parents:

> PEYSSAC (redondant): Maurice, décidément...Ton cas est désespéré...Tu vois ce que tu as fait?...Non, je ne te parle pas des traces de doigts...Tu m'as ecrit "orageux", pour garder les mutons, l'orthographe n'est pas necessaire. (Il jette la copie d'un geste

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[5]. Ibid., p. 7.

[6]. Ibid., p. 12.
"Lucien takes out some bills from his pocket and gives them to her.
LUCIEN: Here, they gave me a raise, twenty francs...
Therese takes the money, counts it quickly, and puts it in the pocket of her apron.
THERESE (mechanically): That's good..."

[7]. Ibid., p. 9.

[8]. Ibid., p. 11.

las.)[9]

From the start, Modiano characterizes Lucien as a discontented, resentful young man who seems to find a release from the tedium and poverty of his life in acts of violence; on three occasions, he kills animals.[10] On two occasions, with a bird in the garden of the hospice and with a chicken at his mother's house, we sense that his actions are the restless, mischievious ones of a child (which, arguably, Lucien still is). When he goes out hunting for rabbits, however, "On sent qu'il prend un plaisir physique intense à ce qu'il fait...Lucien semble épuisé, mais heureux."[11] This brief description suggests that Lucien derives great pleasure from the passion, vitality, and control he experiences whe he hunts. Such pleasure echoes, to a certain extent, the pleasure Marcello derived from being cruel in Il Conformista. Yet whereas Marcello's violence reflected a childish mischieviousness, Lucien's cruelty here seems to indicate a more adolescent restlessness, a yearning for a passionate, more vital life. Several other scenes in Lacombe Lucien seem

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[9]. Ibid., p. 17.
"PEYSSAC: Maurice, really...Your case is desperate... See what you've done? No, I'm not talking about fingerprints...You wrote "orageux" H.A.U.R...Well.. (he shrugs his shoulders). It's true that writing isn't necessary in order to herd sheep...(he throws the paper away with a weary gesture)."

[10]. Ibid., p. 8, 14, 15.

[11]. Ibid., p. 14. "One senses that he takes intense physical pleasure in what he does...Lucien seems exhausted, but happy."

to express this hunger for "something else", scenes in which Lucien stands, silently fixated, staring at some object that symbolizes grandeur; in one scene, for example, Lucien stares with fascination at the sun, utterly unaware of anything around him. [12]

When Lucien tells his mother that he does not want to return to his job at the hospice, she answers that he must be content with what he has, that--as an uneducated peasant--he cannot realistically hope to find anything better. Therese then informs Lucien that Laborit refuses to let him stay with them any longer.[13] At this point Lucien realizes that he must leave Souleillac and go somewhere else. But where? Perhaps because he wants to offend the patriotic Laborit, Lucien approaches Peyssac, who has ties to the French Resistance, and announces that he wishes to enter le maquis. This sequence of events indicates that Lucien considers joining the Resistance not out of political motivations, but rather out of boredom, familial frustration, and vague aspirations toward a more materially rewarding life. Clearly, Lucien's apolitical motivations mirror those of Allison's rational actor in Chapter One; like the rational actor, Lucien chooses to join the Resistance because he believes that such a decision would facilitate the realization of his aspirations to escape the peasant way of life. Ultimately, Lucien's

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[12]. Ibid., p. 19.

[13]. Ibid., p. 16.

motivations to become a resistance fighter are more sociological than anything else; they are rooted in a deep-seated restlessness and dissatisfaction with his lot in life. When Peyssac tells Lucien that he is too young to join the Resistance, however, Lucien is compelled to return to his job.

Before he is detained by the collaborators at the hotel on his way back to the hospice, we may assume that Lucien is in a highly dissatisfied state of mind; he has made it clear that he does not want to return to his job and we know that he has just been rejected by Peyssac. Entranced by tantalizing glimpses of the "beau monde" who frequent the hotel, Lucien does not realize that these people are <u>collabos</u> (collaborators). Flattered by the attention he receives from Lucienne, Tonin, and Aubert, who ply him with alcohol, Lucien drunkenly reveals Peyssac's <u>resistant</u> identity to them.[14] The text gives us no indication, however, that Lucien betrays Peyssac out of malice; indeed, when Lucien later sees Peyssac brought to the Hotel in handcuffs, his surprise and confusion suggest to us that he had no idea what the consequences of his betrayal would be. The following day, the <u>collabos</u>, whose identities remain a mystery to Lucien, put him to work opening letters of denuciation.[15] This trivial use of Lucien, along with narrative descriptions of Jean-Bernard and Betty playing tennis indoors and Tonin being shaved by a servant, gives the

[14]. Ibid., p. 26-27.

[15]. Ibid., p. 34.

reader an absurd initial impression of the Miliciens; as the reader learns, this group indeed turns out to be as absurd and pathetic as it initially seems.

In contrast to the dissatisfied personality we saw in Souleillac, Lucien's demeanor during this early period at the hotel is that of a docile, curious, ingenuous child. Interestingly enough, his behavior is child-like as well, and it emphasizes his relative naivete and innocence in comparison to the others: he plays with Jean-Bernard's sunglasses and lighter while Jean-Bernard commissions Albert Horn to tailor a suit for Lucien; he listens to a wordly discussion between the actress Betty and the intellectual Faure, "avec curiosité, comme s'il était au spectacle."[16]; he spies on Jean-Bernard and Faure torturing Peyssac with "les yeux fixés", staring eyes. It seems apparent that Lucien is intrigued by the collaborators and fascinated by the life that they lead. Nonetheless, the text gives no indication that Lucien understands who these people really are.

During the interrogation of Vaugeois at Vaugeois' home, Lucien takes the first steps towards active, conscious collaboration with Jean-Bernard and the other Miliciens. The sight of "l'opulence bourgeoise", bourgeois opulence, coupled with the sight of Jean-Bernard taking various artworks for himself, rekindles his desire for a more vital, materially richer life. Although he himself says nothing during this

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[16]. Ibid., p. 5 "with curiosity, as if he were at the circus."

episode, Lucien's miming of Jean-Bernard's actions indicates that a certain unmistakable chain of complicity has been forged between them. At one point, when Jean-Bernard questions Vaugeois' son while examining a sailboat that the boy has painstakingly constructed:

> Jean-Bernard passe son doigt sur un mat, qu'il casse d'un coup sec. Le fils Vaugeois regarde, fasciné. Lucien s'avance, enfonce son doigt par un hublot et tire lentement, arrachant un morceau du pont, avec un craquement sinistre qui provoque un rictus douloureux sur le visage du fils Vaugeois.[17]

While Marcello in Il Conformista exhibits a sadistic cruelty similar to Lucien's here, Lucien's behavior betrays a more complex, sociological dimension. He is motivated, in essence, by social jealousy, by a newly-awakened hatred for the bourgeoisie, by a desire to destroy those who have more than he. This social resentment surfaces again when Lucien tries to pretend to France that he is a student and, thus, better educated than he really is:

> FRANCE (insolente, a Lucien): Et qu'est-ce vous faisiez, avant d'être dans la police?
> LUCIEN: Be...j'étais...étudiant...
> FRANCE: Etudiant en quoi?
> Lucien se lève, furieux.
> LUCIEN (ménaçant): Vous savez que moi (il se designe),

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[17]. Ibid., p. 66. "Jean-Bernard passes his finger over a mast, which he breaks with a neat tap. Vaugeois's son watches, facsinated. Lucien approaches, drives his finger into a port-hole and pulls slowly, tearing away a piece of the deck, with a sinister crack that provokes a painful wince on Vaugeois's son's face."

je peux tous vous faire arrêter..."[18]

From the moment he begins to work with the Milice, Lucien seems to believe that his dreams of leading a better life have been realized. This thought intoxicates him and, almost overnight, his personality metamorphosizes from that of passive, wide-eyed observer to that of an arrogant, aggressive member of the "police allemande". This sudden transformation echoes Phillip Zimbardo's observations in the Stanford Prison experiment: individuals become more violent, confident, and aggressive after assuming the role of an authority figure. In his interaction with the Horns in the scene immediately after the Vaugeois episode, Lucien is characterized as demanding and menacing: he treats Albert with arrogance and disdain and pursues France awkwardly, yet determinedly. The scene in which Lucien tries to exercise his influence and escort France, whom he hardly knows, to the head of a long food line is a striking example of Lucien's new-found bravado.[19]

Ironically, in spite of these illusions of power, Lucien remains as powerless as he had been as a simple peasant.

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[18]. Ibid., p. 82.

"FRANCE (insolent, to Lucien): And what did you used to do, before being in the police?
LUCIEN: Well...I was...a student..
FRANCE: A student in what?
Lucien gets up, furious.
LUCIEN (menacingly): You know I (pointing to himself) can have all you arrested..."

[19]. Ibid., p. 73-74.

Although his job is never specified in the screenplay, Lucien is never seen participating in the abductions and interrogations that occur daily. In fact, the text leads the reader to believe that Lucien remains in the dark about most of the activities that Jean-Bernard, Faure, Tonin, and Aubert participate in; for example, a discussion between Mademoiselle Georges and Aubert early on reveals the collaborators' involvement in some sort of black market activity[20], but Lucien is never enlightened about the particulars. This seems to indicate that the other Miliciens do not take Lucien seriously, perhaps because he is young, naive, and from a very low social class; indeed, they treat him like a child, implying a certain disdain and lack of respect. Moreover, the Miliciens do not bother to instruct Lucien about their politics or their plans. His ignorance during the period of his collaboration is illustrated by his repetition of cliches he has heard the others use ("M. Faure dit que les Juifs sont les ennemis de la France")[21] and by his rote regurgitation of Nazi propaganda (equating the French Resistance with the Bolsheviks, for example).

When the collaborators at the hotel are killed by resistance fighters, Lucien is suddenly stripped of his role as Milicien and forced to flee to the countrside with France

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[20]. Ibid., p. 53-55.

[21]. Ibid., p. 70. "Mr. Faure says that the Jews are the enemies of France."

and her grandmother. The final scenes in Lacombe Lucien poignantly illustrate the uselessness of Lucien's former aspirations to lead a life of material wealth and power. His return to the country is highly symbolic; it represents Lucien's moral return to his simple peasant roots, to the timelessness of a way of life relatively unaltered by historical events. Modiano describes the atmosphere of these last scenes thus:

> Dans cette campagne ecrasée de soleil, sans aucune presence humaine, on aura l'impression d'être hors du temps, de l'histoire (plus aucune allusion a la guerre), dans une sorte d'eternite où les activités les plus essentielles de la vie se répètent de maniere monotone. Ce final, serein, melancolique, sera comme un point d'orgue, une note prolongée.[11]

This scene, in my opinion, represents a figurative return to Paradise, to a state of nature where the "evils" of civilization do not exist. Lucien and France's playful interaction in these last scenes further emphasizes the sense of moral rebirth and the reestablishment of innocence which permeate the conclusion.

In Lacombe Lucien, the other characters' motivations to collaborate vary from one to the next; in the case of Jean-Bernard, Tonin, and Aubert, we sense that they collaborate in order to compensate for earlier failures and to overcome their

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[11]. Ibid., p. 13. "In this countryside scorched by the sun, without any human presence, one has the feeling of being outside of time, of history (there is no more indication of the war), in a sort of eternity where the most essential activities of life repeat themselves in monotonous fashion. This ending, serene, melacholy, will be like an organ note, prolonged."

status as social outcasts. Faure's motivations, however, are less clear. Jean-Bernard de Voisins is an elegant, materialistic young man who apparently wrote enough bad checks ("cheques sans provisions") in Paris to make it impossible for him to ever return there. Morever, he confides to Lucien, he was thrown out of high school ("ils m'ont mis à la porte")---a socially humilating experience. Jean-Bernard's markedly aristocratic mannerisms and elegant material possessions suggest a strong attachment to a way of life that is anachronistic; he seems to desire the power and influence that aristocrats once enjoyed, before the pre-war Third Republic abolished the rights of the French aristocracy. One could plausibly attribute Jean-Bernard's collaboration with the Germans to vague, anti-social motivations, or to political resentment towards the Third Republic and the financial and educational institutions which have "excluded" him. In the case of Tonin, the leader of these Miliciens and "un homme corpulent d'une cinquantaine d'années, au visage gonflé d'alcoolique"[13], it appears that political resentment towards the socialists, in power in 1936, might have motivated him to join the anti-socialist, anti-communist Milice. As we learn from Lucienne, Tonin had been "Un policier exceptionnel...Ils

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[13]. Ibid., p. 23. "a corpulent man of fifty years, with a face swollen by alcohol."

l'ont revoqué, en 36, comme un malpropre!".[24] Henri Aubert, "un bel homme di trente-cinq ans", is a failed cycling champion in a country where cycling champions are considered national heroes. One night, in a bout of drunken depression, Aubert tells Lucien how he had once qualified for the Tour de France but then suffered a fall that ended his career. Apparently, Aubert is haunted by his failure to fulfill his, as well as others', expectations ("Quand j'ai gagné le criterium, en 35, ma mère croyait que j'allais devenir célèbre").[25] The text suggests that Aubert might have been motivated to collaborate with the occupying forces by a desire to compensate for his personal career disappointments. Stephane Faure, on the other hand, is "un'intellectual, insinuant et fouineur".[26] The most outspoken of the group, Faure possesses a virulent hatred for the "bolshevik", anti-patriotic Resistance, as well as a deep disdain for the British and all educators. Morever, several scenes in Lacombe Lucien suggest that Faure has a sadistic streak in him; he enjoys torturing captured resistance fighters. These characteristics make him, unquestionably, the most horrific member of the group. Conceivably, he might have been motivated to join the Milice because, as I discussed in

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[24]. Ibid., p. 37. "An exceptional policeman...They fired him, in'36, for being undesirable!"

[25]. Ibid., p. 128. "When I won the 'criterium', in '35, my mother thought I was going to become famous."

[26]. Ibid., p. 32. "an intellectual, ingratiating and nosey."

Chapter One, it was the only political organization that deliberately welcomed marginal fascistic individuals into its ranks. Altogether, the collaborators at the hotel, including Lucien, represent diverse social classes and occupations; in creating this diversity, Modiano acknowledges the pervasiveness of collaboration and illustrates how this phenomenon touched every level of French society. Furthermore, in assembling such a ragtag group of social outcasts, Modiano faithfully reflects the actual membership of the Milice organization.

It is important when considering the motivations to collaborate in a work such as Lacombe Lucien not to overlook less overt instances of collaboration. The character of France Horn, the Jewish girl who falls in love with Lucien, is a case in point: her decision to become romantically, and, thus, emotionally involved with a member of the Milice was considered, after the war, to be an act of collaboration with the occupying forces.[17] In light of the brusque treatment she receives from him, what motivates France, a Jew, to become Lucien's lover? From the beginning of their acquaintance, Lucien and France's relationship is awkward and antagonistic. She clearly resents the way he imposes himself upon her, yet at the same time she seems intrigued and attracted by the

[17]. John Campbell (ed.), The Experience of World War Two, New York, 1989, p. 193.

prospect of a non-Jewish suitor, someone with higher social status than herself. Lucien, on the other hand, is a peasant with few social graces who pursues France determinedly, in part because she is beautiful and, perhaps, because he senses that she is as much a social outcast as he. When France breaks down in Lucien's arms after being insulted viciously for being a Jew, her words betray one motivation to become involved with him: "Lucien...j'en marre...J'en ai marre d'être juive...".[28] As psychoanalyst Erich Fromm has suggested, people in subordinate, oppressed states of being will sometimes try to "repress the feeling of hatred and sometimes even to replace it by a feeling of blind admiration. This had two functions: 1) to remove the painful and dangerous feelings of hatred, and 2) to soften the feeling of humilation."[29] When France sleeps with Lucien, her act of collaboration might be partly motivated by a desire to lessen the psychological torment she experiences daily because she is Jewish. Her collaboration might also be the realization of an adolescent yearning for love and intimacy with a man, in a city where nearly all the men are collaborators. It is interesting to note that France's collaboration with Lucien is very symbolic of Vichy France's collaboration with the Germans; both the girl and her namesake seek to gain greater inner peace and

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[28]. Modiano, Lacombe Lucien, p. 101. "Lucien..I'm sick of it...I'm sick of being Jewish..."

[29]. Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom, New York, 1969, p. 187.

stability by sleeping with the enemy.

In contrast to Moravia's caricatural characterization of Marcello in Il Conformista, Modiano's characterization of Lucien was persuasive. One element of the plot in Lacombe Lucien, however, was unclear: the other collaborators' acceptance of Lucien into their fold. Except for Tonin's arguably nostalgic remark to Lucienne at the beginning that Lucien strongly ressembles "Paul", a former comrade, there is no narrative explanation why the Miliciens allowed a simple peasant to join their ranks. the reader is required, therefore, to interpret from the text what the reason might be. Must we conclude that the other collaborators needed more manpower and, therefore, accepted Lucien willingly? Such an assumption would be historically accurate, for, as one study states, "of 23,000 Miliciens called up in June 1944, only 14,000 appeared and of those nearly 5,000 were over-age".[30] Young men like Lucien, therefore, were clearly in demand at the time Lacombe Lucien takes place, during the summer of 1944. Should we assume that the other collaborators instinctively know that Lucien is trustworthy? Clearly, when Lucien accompanies the Miliciens on an armed assault on some resistance fighters[31], we are led to believe that the others trust him to a certain extent. As I have mentioned before,

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[30]. Gordon, Collaborationism in France, p. 87-88.

[31]. Modiano, Lacombe Lucien, p. 87-88.

however, the Miliciens' "trust" in Lucien is most certainly tempered by bourgeois disdain for him; it is probable that they simply do not believe that Lucien is intelligent enough to pose them any risk. Why isn't Lucien ever given a specific job? Again, it is conveivable that the others do not feel he is capable of such responsibility. Moreover, since the war is drawing to a close and the Milice organization itself is disintegrating, it is likely that the Miliciens at the Hotel are more concerned with survival than with assigning bureaucratic positions.

Ultimately, Modiano's characterization of Lucien is a persuasive interpretation of the sociological motivations to collaborate during World War Two. Although Lucien's own character is not particularly well-developed in and of itself, we see enough of him to be able to imagine the facets of his character that Modiano leaves ambiguous. Such character interpretation, however, is not possible with Il Conformista; with narrative strategies like verbal repetition and ponderous foreshadowing, Moravia hammers Marcello's character into the reader's head in a manner that is more alienating than persuasive. In Lacombe Lucien, Lucien's desire for greater socio-economic power, echoing the rational actor model of Chapter One, is also persuasive; it plausibly explains why many individuals might have been motivated to collaborate during the war. The circumstances which "drive" Marcello in Il Conformista to collaborate, on the other hand, are tenuous

and unique; as a result, we cannot derive an interpretation of the motivation to collaborate that may be considered representative of anyone other than Marcello. Consequently, after analyzing these two creative interpretations of collaboration, one can conclude that Il Conformista is very restricted in its narrative explanation, while Lacombe Lucien contains interpretations of the motivation to collaborate which can be extrapolate to a more global interpretation of that phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have attempted to enhance our understanding about why individuals subordinate their wills and their ethics to other people, organizations, and ideologies. Specifically, I have examined the phenomenon of collaboration through discussions of a few of my own social science-based hypotheses and analyses of two creative interpretations of this phenomenon. In Chapter One, I analyzed the highly theoretical rational actor model, as proposed by Graham Allison. This model suggests that people make decisions in order to facilitate the realization of their own goals and aspirations. As the case study of Adolf Eichmann and the narrative characterzation of Lucien in _Lacombe Lucien_ imply, the rational actor model is, intuitively, a very persuasive, powerful explanation for many individuals' decision to collaborate with the Axis powers during the Second World War; it suggests that people collaborated because it was socio-economically beneficial for them to do so.

In the same chapter, I also examined the psychological experiments of Solomon Asch, Stanley Milgram, and Phillip Zimbardo. Their laboratory observations revealed that individuals will conform to "societal" opinions, to orders from a "legitimate" authority figure, and to roles imposed by a situation, even if the opinions, orders, and roles differ

sharply from the subjects' perceptions, beliefs and normal behavior. Extrapolated to the real phenomenon of collaboration, these findings offer, in my opinion, several plausible explanations for why people collaborated with the Fascists and the Nazis. First of all, people were motivated to collaborate because they felt a powerful urge to belong to the status quo and, thus, enhance their personal sense of security and social acceptance. This sentiment is clearly representative of Marcello, the protagonist in Il Conformsita, and has been well explored by Erich Fromm in Escape from Freedom. Secondly, individuals collaborated because they believed that some authority would take responsiblity for their actions, no matter how heinous. This belief was expressed at the Nuremberg war crimes trials, as well as at the more recent Iran-Contra hearings. Thirdly, people collaborated because they were psychologically "seduced" by an individual, an organization, or an ideology. This seduction has been chronicled by Robert Paxton in his analysis of France's unplanned collaboration with the Germans, as well as by Patrick Modiano, in his artful portrayal of Lucien's gradual, naive involvement with the Milice.

Although I believe that the motivations behind collaboration can never be comprehensively defined, I do believe that the scientific theories and the more nuanced, creative interpretations I have examined here offer many valuable insights into the dynamics of this phenomenon. It

is important to remember, however, that collaboration is not limited to periods of war, although the word itself received its derogatory connotations during wartime. People suppress their individuality and renounce their independence not only in situations like Vichy France and Fascist Italy, but in modern day religious cults, the collegiate Greek system in the United States, the armed forces, and the American white supremacist movement. Clearly, the dynamics I have examined here can be found in many strata of society and merit careful and serious study.

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