

a glossary / *Exsules Filii Evae*

minor seminary - a seminary at the college level.

major seminary - a seminary at the graduate level, also referred to as theology, or theology school.

formation - a program of community living, shared liturgy, coursework, and spiritual direction leading eventually to ordination to the priesthood.

sacristan - the person responsible for care of the vestments, books, and ceremonial equipment in the sacristy of a church.

prayer cards - cards, usually with pictures of saints and scripted prayers printed on them, used in the devotional practice of prayer to saints for intercession with God on behalf of the believer; frequently distributed to the sick in hospitals to ask relief from their suffering and ailments.

pectoral cross - a cross worn on the chest by members of the clergy and religious orders.

confiteor - literally, "I confess;" a prayer included in the Mass, in which sinfulness is acknowledged and God's mercy is asked.

Apostolic See - a papal office; in this usage, one with jurisdiction over religious communities and their membership.

clerics - the daily black dress with white collar worn by a priest when not saying Mass, and worn under liturgical vestments.

refectory - a dining hall

schola cantorum - literally, school of singers; the choir of a monastery, seminary, or cathedral

rosary and benediction - two Catholic devotional practices, the first consisting of meditation on five sacred mysteries during recitation of five decades of Hail Marys; the second involving the exposition of the eucharistic Host and blessing of the congregation with it.

albs and chasubles; maniple - vestments of the priesthood; respectively, a full-length white linen robe gathered at the waist with a cincture, a sleeveless outer vestment, and a long narrow strip of silk worn over the left arm.

chancery - the office in which the business of a Roman Catholic diocese is transacted and recorded.

novena - a period of prayer lasting nine consecutive days, said as a devotion.

spiritual works of mercy - counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish the sinner, comfort the sorrowful, forgive injuries, bear wrongs patiently, pray for the living and the dead.

corporal works of mercy - feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, bury the dead.

eschatological future - the period of the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and Last Judgment; the end times

Oedipal complex - Defined by Merriam Webster as "the positive libidinal feelings of a child toward the parent of the opposite sex and hostile or jealous feelings toward the parent of the same sex that may be a source of psychological conflict if unresolved." In actual experience, sometimes takes the form of positive libidinal feelings of a child toward the parent of the same sex and hostile or jealous feelings toward the parent of the opposite sex, or, as pejoratively labelled by writers with a heterosexist bias, a "negative Oedipal complex." (Positive libidinal feelings of a child for a grandparent, sibling, or other figure, and hostile or jealous feelings toward perceived rivals don't seem to merit a name; for a child experiencing them, they are for all practical purposes "Oedipal.")

religion / in *Exsules Filii Evae*

With the exception of Burgess Lichter, everyone who appears in *Exsules Filii Evae* is Roman Catholic. Although Professor Coughlin jokes about seeking refugee status among the Episcopalians, none of the Catholics in the novel, whatever their feelings about Rome's policies or doctrines, gives serious consideration to leaving the faith. This is attributable in part to the principle of *universality* espoused by the Church--the belief that there is one faith for all of human experience, for all time. Leaving is never really presented to Catholics as an option.

It stems partly, too, from a teaching voiced by Father Keenan, that the individual conscience is considered to be bedrock, whatever the hierarchy teaches. Keenan is saying nothing radical when he voices this belief, and in fact he's saying nothing unfamiliar to anyone schooled in the Roman catechism. A Catholic who decides to pick and choose among Church teachings in order to accommodate him- or herself into the faith can give at least these two reasons for doing so.

The disparities between the Catholics in the novel, rather than lying in any familiar distinction between liberals and conservatives, stem more from diverging views of the value and relative importance of *authority* to faith. While Burgess' glib division of humanity into *pick-me-up children* and *put-me-down children* might be seen by religious

persons of every viewpoint as trivializing the issues at stake, there nevertheless is a certain incisiveness in her observation. Catholics, even liberal ones, are less likely to detest the papacy *per se* than to decry its use by a particular pope to put an authoritarian stamp on his decisions and opinions.

Adrian and Eileen are equally Catholic, yet have opposite feelings about the meaning of authority. Eileen is less enamoured of religious life since her order loosened the hold of central authority over its members; while Adrian finds that freedom to entertain ambiguity in meaning fuels his faith. Adrian feels more connected to a Church with humble claims to knowing clear answers, while Eileen feels disappointed.

Q: What does the novel suggest the reasons might be that Eileen would feel a loss when the order liberalized its structures, and became less paternalistic?

Q: What might the reasons be that Adrian's attitude toward authority, in contrast to Eileen's, is instinctively skeptical?

Q: Adrian says he is nostalgic for his childhood, which was lived in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. Why are Vatican II, and Pope John XXIII--the pope who convened it--an enduring source of disagreement among Catholics?

psychology / in *Exsules Filii Evae*

The Banished Sons of Eve charts the intersecting journeys of its two main characters, Adrian Underwood and Eileen O'Rourke. While the forward march of events in the world around them propels the novel to some degree (particularly the actions taken by Rome toward local archdioceses and Church theologians), it is largely the psychological and spiritual evolution of Adrian and Eileen that occupies center stage.

Eileen's crisis of identity begins two years prior to the action of the novel, when the effective abandonment by her mother she experienced in childhood is compounded by the loss of her mother through death. For reasons that aren't clear to her, Eileen is more tempted than ever to see herself as like her mother, and fears being swallowed up by grief and bitterness the way Brigid was. She finds it impossible to maintain the hope she once had for her life, hope built largely on the identification she had with her sister, Helen. She comes home to La Crosse in an attempt to make whatever reparations she can, albeit symbolically, to these family relationships, and to attempt to lay them to rest.

In *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), Sigmund Freud theorized about what differentiates normal mourning from arrested mourning, or what he termed melancholia. He describes normal mourning as a process in which attachment is withdrawn gradually over time from a lost love, and eventually can be invested again in a new relationship--in which the loving faculty, as it were, remains intact. He speculates that grief becomes an arrested process when disappointment in the loved person or the loving relationship results in self-criticism, an accusation deflected from the loved person onto the self, leaving one ambivalently tied to the first object of affection and too full of self-doubt to freely love

another. Freud's speculation is that identification is a means here to protect an attachment that is already threatened because of disappointment from the further threat that criticism of the loved one might entail. It involves seeing one's self from a point of view sympathetic to the other, but unsympathetic to the self. The self blame ultimately undermines one's confidence in ever loving another. Freud's thoughts about withdrawing love and investing it in another apply interchangeably to loss of love (disappointment) and to loss of a loved one (death), and he relates the two to each other. He gives us a way to speculate how Eileen's way of coping with her mother's depression laid a foundation for how she copes with her mother's death.

There are perhaps more ways to think about the role played by identification with those we have loved and lost. Although it is a magical solution, the fantasy that the dead live on in us, if we become more like them and adopt their traits, can serve to attenuate the desperate feelings of loss or guilt we have when they die. This might illuminate Eileen's choice to study science in college, in accord with Helen's enthusiasm for the names of plant species on Barron's Island, and her fear of becoming like her mother after Brigid's death.

It is Eileen's old friend, Teresa, and her partner Shirley, who eventually speak directly to Eileen about the enormous significance there is in the troubled nature of her relationship with her mother. Teresa thinks Eileen's belief that she is like her mother is a recent invention, that Eileen spent all of the years Teresa knew her pointedly distancing herself from Brigid's attitudes and behaviors. Eileen is open to hearing these comments partly because of the relationship that has taken hold between herself and Adrian.

Eileen was a bit surprised when she met Adrian to discover that the prospect of a new relationship could make her feel hopeful again. She eventually becomes aware that similarities between Helen and Adrian are what lead her to look forward to the future. In opening her life to Adrian, she lets herself truly feel what Helen's death meant to her, and not just what it meant to her mother. Adrian's explicit desire to have her in his life, regardless of his religious vocation or hers, sets Eileen firmly on a new trajectory--one in which the weight of damnation feels truly lifted from her shoulders, because she begins to believe it's possible to have a relationship that doesn't end in tragedy or unhappiness.

When Adrian heads off to Creighton Law School after graduation from Assisi College, he hasn't detached himself entirely from his wish to become a priest. If this is an indication that some important work is left unfinished, the prospect that he could become a sexually active man presents him with work that has hardly begun. He has enough insight to know, heading back to Holy Name, that he needs to come to some peace with his sexuality, even if he ends up a celibate priest.

In the middle of the novel, Adrian realizes that learning his friend Terry had AIDS was an enormous psychological setback for him. Lacking further understanding of his conflicts, he worries that nothing about a year back at the seminary is going to help him come to greater resolution. The Ratzinger Letter helps clear up Adrian's ambivalence about serving a church in which he is at best a second-class citizen--but other events in

the novel have a more decisive impact on his ability to imagine himself as gay lay person in his church community.

Adrian is hardly conscious that disapproval from his mother, Eleanor, and his guilty complicity with his father's infidelity toward her stand as significant obstacles to his own expression of sexuality. He is a neurotic wreck, and like most people who are neurotic wrecks due to Oedipal issues, has no awareness of the nature of his problem. (For more on the Oedipal complex, see glossary, study guide page one.) Unfortunately, our cultural mythology of male homosexuality is pervaded by traditional psychoanalytic speculation that male homosexuals have failed to work out their frustrated sexual ambitions toward their mothers. The alternate possibility, that they've had a difficult time displacing their sexual ambitions toward their fathers onto an acceptable male substitute, seems not to have occurred as readily to the imaginations of heterosexual analysts. Two ideas helpful in gaining a psychological perspective on Adrian are an understanding of Oedipal conflict in personality development and in conflicts over adult sexuality, and an understanding of how heterosexist bias can lead us away from accurate thinking about the psychological life of a homosexual.

Adrian perhaps attaches to Eileen looking for a mother figure, but it is not a mother for dependence or nurturance or libidinal gratification. Instead, he's looking for a mother of satisfactory Oedipal resolution, a mother who accepts his preference for his father and grandfather (and by extension other males), and looks with approval on his substitution of another man as his object of affection, rather than insisting that his choice be a woman. Adrian sees in Eileen the potential that someone approximating his mother will be able to acknowledge his sexual orientation and not withdraw her attachment to him. He says to Eileen that he isn't asking for her approval, and he isn't, except to the extent that abandonment of the relationship implies disapproval and continuing it implies acceptance. In seeking a relationship with Eileen, Adrian summons from Eileen her best self, a version of herself able to put aside her insecurities and her tragic past, and open herself to Adrian as an enduring object of love, and of empathy.

the upper midwest / in *Exsules Filii Evae*

Echoes of history still resound in the part of the United States where *Exsules Filii Evae* takes place. If one of the distinguishing facts about the upper midwest is the expansiveness of the prairie and the difficulty in populating it with any density, a related one is that its frontier history is closer than that of much of the rest of America. Between 1850 and 1880 the European population of what is now the state of Minnesota rose from 5,300 to 780,000. During this period, Yankee kings of industry, notably the owners of the railroads, sent agents to northern Europe to sell the virtues of the area to prospective immigrants. It was in 1876 that the first archbishop of St. Paul, John Ireland, founded the Catholic Colonization Bureau, and as a land agent for the railroads, drew thousands of

European Catholic immigrants to colonies he established in southwestern Minnesota. Adrian's grandfather, Jude Heaney, came to America at Archbishop Ireland's urging and lived in one of these colonies.

For Adrian's family, therefore, Catholicism was more than just religion--it was the vehicle that brought them out of England to the U.S.

Adrian's response to his mother not wanting ever to belong in her adopted town of Ryder, Iowa, seems to be twofold: feeling identified with her, he imagines himself an alien in Ryder; yet he longs for an identity he can hold onto as well, and finds one in his imagination, as the grandson of a church builder, and great grandson and great great grandson of church builders.

It was not until 1881 the last of the Sioux surrendered with Sitting Bull at Fort Buford, in what would become in 1889 the state of North Dakota. After two years of confinement, Sitting Bull and his immediate followers were sent to live on the Standing Rock reservation. Although the Chippewa of North Dakota were evangelized by Roman Catholics starting in the 1830s by Father Belcourt, and the Mandan in 1840 by Father DeSmet, the Sioux of that area were not evangelized until the Father Genin established a mission at Ft. Totten in 1865. The Grey Nuns opened a school on the Fort Totten Reservation in 1874, and Benedictine priests and nuns opened a school on the Standing Rock Reservation in 1877. When Eileen goes to teach on the Standing Rock Reservation, she is following a tradition that is approximately a century old, and a living remnant of the frontier era.

The frontier lives on as well, in *Exsules Filii Evae*, not only in the antique shops that Adrian frequents, but in the cultural institutions and practices that appear in the novel. Although Adrian was a town kid, he was socialized in childhood by means of the local 4-H club, and Eileen notes that the principal cultural alternative she has to the altar society at Fort Yates is the local Homemaker's Club. Elsie Seaman, at the age of 80-something, persists in gathering wild gooseberries for jam, stocking up for winter with home-grown root vegetables, and assisting the ladies at the old age home in procuring scraps of fabric for their quilting groups. As there is in every small town in America, there is assuredly a 7-11 down the street, but it coexists with these throwbacks, as it were, to a time when Manifest Destiny was not quite a fait accompli.