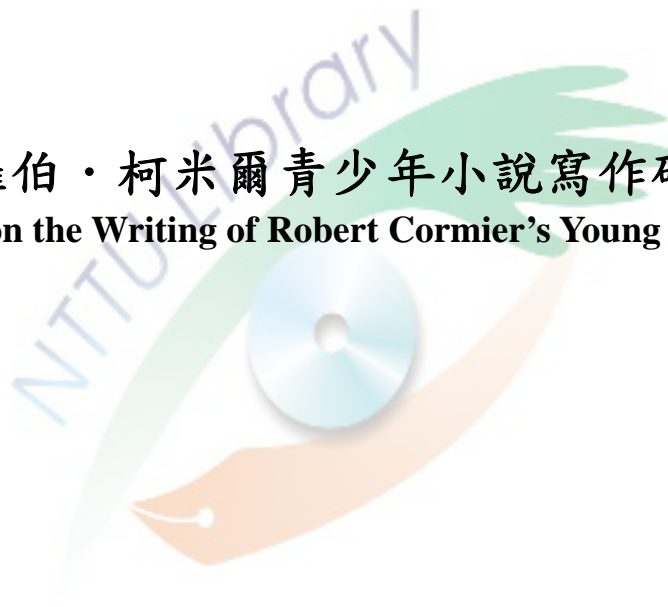


國立台東大學兒童文學研究所  
博士論文

羅伯·柯米爾青少年小說寫作研究  
A Study on the Writing of Robert Cormier's Young Adult Fiction



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## 誌謝辭

打開了電腦，我對眼前的戰友說：「來吧，讓我們為這本論文寫下最重要的一頁：我的誌謝辭。」說誌謝辭最重要，也許稍嫌誇張（論文的每頁不都很重要？），但寫它的時機，肯定是全本論文已完成，而且通過學位考之後。透過誌謝辭的書寫，我重新回顧了我的博士班生涯：從修課、發表研討會論文、翻譯一整本理論書、考學科考、發表論文計畫，到寫完博士論文。每一關都有其辛苦處，也有快樂的地方。而更重要的是，透過這篇短短的誌謝，我可以用文字表達出我對許多人滿滿的謝意。謝謝他們在我攻讀博士時，給了我莫大的幫助和鼓勵。

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此外我也非常感謝，兒文所人稱阿寶老師的林文寶教授與永遠不失赤子之心的楊茂秀教授，不論課內或課外，我都很喜歡和他們「聊天」，因為從中可以學到很多東西，而且過程超愉快。還有游珮芸教授與郭建華教授，她們在兒童文化與圖畫書方面的學識，也是我要學習的目標。再來我要謝謝兒文所這個大家庭的每個成員，尤其是一起上課上最多的學姐、同學與學弟妹，我真的很懷念我們課堂上的愉快時光。我還要感謝全方位的彥芬姐和曉琪，她們化繁為簡的辦事能力，讓我好生佩服，有她們優秀的行政能力作後盾，兒文所的師生才得以安心的教學、讀書與作研究。我也要感謝我在高雄的父母，以及在台東像我父母一般疼愛我的羅叔叔與羅媽媽，一路走來，因為他們的支持與愛，我才能不悔且無懼地走下去。真的很謝謝你們！我愛你們！最後我要感謝羅伯·柯米爾先生，他是一位非常棒的小說家，謝謝他給了我動力寫出這本論文，也感謝他留給這世界這麼多優秀的青少年小說。

# 羅伯·柯米爾青少年小說寫作研究

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## 摘 要

羅伯·柯米爾 (Robert Cormier) 是美國知名的青少年小說家，但是台灣的讀者對他知之甚少，關於他的研究也付之闕如。基於如此，本研究者欲對柯米爾的青少年文學作品作一詳盡探討，希望能讓更多的台灣讀者透過此一研究，對柯米爾的小說有更進一步的認識。本研究除了提供全面性的觀照以外，也針對柯米爾作品中的主題、人物、敘述與風格作系統性的分析。

本研究採作品精讀與文本分析法，研究範圍是柯米爾的十五本青少年文學作品，其中包括一本短篇故事集、三本中篇小說，十本長篇小說以及一本以無韻詩形式寫就的半自傳體小說。每個文本被詳細解構，而且不同文本之間彼此對照比較，以期找出相似與相異之處。此外，柯米爾在不同時期，其關注主題與寫作風格的發展與轉變，也在探討之列。

本論文共分七章：第一章是緒論，包含研究動機與目的、研究問題、本研究之重要性、研究方法與全文架構，以及本研究的限制。第二章是關於柯米爾其人與作品的文獻探討，除了其人其作的個人歷史外，也列出美國學者或評論家對柯米爾作品相關的批評與研究。第三章是主題論，就柯米爾作品中常出現的主題，分三個面向來探討，這三個面向是：「善與惡」、「體制與個人」以及「罪愆與寬恕」。第四章是角色論，用兩節分析，分別是：「角色類型」和「角色刻劃」兩大範疇。第五章是敘述論，計有「敘述順序」、「敘述觀點 / 視角」以及「敘事者」三節。第六章是風格論，探討柯米爾作品裡的語言修辭

手法，計有三節，分別是：「隱喻」、「明喻」與「用典」。最後一章為結論。

研究者分析發現：柯米爾的青少年小說，描述了真實世界與體制的黑暗面，也揭露一個事實：好人不一定必勝，但重點是站出來和邪惡對抗，讓別人看見。還有，人不免犯錯，但貴在能改過，才能獲得原諒。柯米爾小說的主題強調了「做些什麼」的重要性。

在角色方面，柯米爾青少年小說的圓形角色，以主角與反主角居多，而且在早期作品裡，圓形角色的比重較晚期作品裡為多。柯米爾的小說角色，不論在外觀、語言和動作上，都恰如其分。而柯米爾對邪惡角色或病態角色的著墨尤深，使人難忘。

在敘述順序上，柯米爾多用順敘與倒敘手法，偶有預敘；敘述觀點或視角上，柯米爾視小說效果而定，採不同的聚焦方式，尤以內聚焦最多；在敘事者方面，柯米爾的短篇故事，全部都是第一人稱敘事者，但中長篇小說，就有較多不同的變化——有幾部小說甚至有不同敘事者在同一文本中，例如《溫柔殺機》(*Tenderness*) 就是第一人稱與全知敘事者兩者交互使用。總之，柯米爾的中長篇小說（尤其長篇）展現了較複雜的敘述方式。

在語言修辭風格上，柯米爾喜歡用隱喻和明喻手法來增加文本的文學性，尤其在早期作品裡最多，如《巧克力戰爭》(*The Chocolate War*)；到了後面的作品，隱喻的使用有減少的趨勢。在用典方面，柯米爾會在作品裡引述聖經的句子，也喜歡借前人的詩句或童謠來當作書名，使文本的涵義更豐富。惟對不熟悉聖經或西方文學的讀者來說，會加深理解上的困難；不過相對來說，也增加了解讀的挑戰與樂趣。

**關鍵詞：**角色刻劃、敘述順序、敘述觀點、視角、聚焦、敘事者、隱喻、明喻、用典。



# **A Study on the Writing of Robert Cormier's Young Adult Fiction**

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## **Abstract**

In the United States, Robert Cormier is considered one of significant writer in the history of young adult literature. However, there is little research on the writer himself or his literary works in Taiwan. Therefore the researcher would like to do more research on Robert Cormier in order to have a thorough understanding of the writer and his works for young adults. The researcher hopes that more readers in Taiwan would understand Cormier and his young adult fiction better via this study. The purpose of this study is to provide panoramic overview and systematic analysis of Cormier's books for young adults in terms of theme, character, narrative and style.

This study uses close-reading and the method of textual analysis to examine the data, which means taking all of Cormier's fiction for young adults as a textual object for analysis. Fifteen books written by Cormier will be examined, including one short-story collection, three novellas, ten novels, and a semi-autobiography in the form of lyrical free verse. Every single text will be read, reread and analyzed, and then various texts will be compared and contrasted. The development and the change of Cormier's writing, as well as the similarities and differences of his works, will be discussed, too.

This dissertation consists of seven chapters. Chapter one is the introduction that contains the rationale and purpose, researcher questions, significance, methodology, organization, and delimitation of the study.



Chapter two is the literature review of Robert Cormier and his Young Adult Fiction, including his personal history, the body of literary works, and the related criticism and research. Chapter three, Theme, is divided into three facets: good vs. evil, system vs. individual, and guilt vs. forgiveness. The fourth chapter, Character, consists of two main categories: types of characters, as well as characterization by appearance, by discourses and by actions. Chapter five, Narrative, covers narrative order, point of view/perspective and narrator. Chapter six, Style, discusses three devices: metaphor, simile and allusion. Chapter seven is the conclusions.

Via analyzing, this study finds that Cormier's novels do not guarantee that good will prevail, but the most important thing for ordinary people is standing up to confront the evil and evil system(s). With respect to the theme of guilt vs. forgiveness, Cormier's books imply that those who make a mistake must do something to make up for the guilt, and then there will be a possibility to gain forgiveness.

In terms of characters, there are more round characters in Cormier's early YA novels, whereas there are more flat and static characters in Cormier's later novels. In Cormier's novels the wicked characters and psychopaths are more unforgettable because their characterization is very successful. Moreover, with respect to narrative, Cormier prefers to employ chronological order and flashback, and likes to use internal focalizations. And in terms of style, Cormier likes to use metaphors and similes, especially in his early works. Using biblical allusions and literary allusions is also a trend in Cormier's writing.

**Keywords:**

**Characterization, narrative order, point of view, perspective, focalization, narrator, metaphor, simile, allusion**

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1. Rationale and Purpose of the Study

In the United States, Robert Cormier is considered one of significant writers in the whole history of young adult literature. However, there is little research on Robert Cormier or his works in Taiwan except one M.A. thesis written by Hu. The scarcity of the study of Cormier is probably due to the lack of introduction and translation of his fiction; nevertheless, two novels of Cormier's were translated in Taiwan, one is *I Am the Cheese*, and the other is *After the First Death* (the Chinese title is *The General and the Son*). The researcher began to read Cormier's books in 2004, and has been intrigued and moved by his writing. As a result, the researcher would like to do more research on Cormier in order to have a thorough understanding of the writer himself and his literary works for young adults, including novels, novellas, short stories, and one free-verse style semi-autobiography. The researcher hopes that more readers in Taiwan will know about and understand Cormier and his works better via this study. The purpose of the study is to provide a panoramic overview and systematic analysis of Cormier's writing for young adults in terms of theme, character, narrative and style.

### 1.2. Research Questions of the Study

Based on the purpose of the study, the researcher sets five research questions as follows:

1. What are Cormier's favorite themes in his literary works for young adults?



2. Which types of characters in Cormier's fiction are employed frequently? Are there any differences between main characters and supporting characters in terms of types of characters (e.g., round vs. flat)?
3. How does Cormier reveal his characters in his fiction by appearance, by discourses and by actions?
4. With respect to narrative skills, how does Cormier use narrative order, point of view/ perspective, and the narrator to arrange and recount his stories?
5. What is Cormier's writing style? Which literary devices does he like to use? Does he have a trend of using these devices?

### 1.3. Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the study will make some contribution to readers, writers, teachers and further researchers. For readers, they can have a better understanding of Cormier's young adult fiction. For writers, the study provides a good resource of one distinguished writer's writing skills, including characterization, narrative skills like narrative order, point of view/perspective and narrator as well as language devices such as the use of metaphor, simile and symbol.

Moreover, for teachers, since the themes in Cormier's novels are universal, such as good vs. evil, teachers can use Cormier's books in class, along with this study which gives systematic overview of Cormier's young adult fiction, to enhance students' view of the world and life. Moreover, the problems happening to fictional characters in Cormier's books parallel those that happen to real people, so teachers can employ Cormier's novellas and novels to teach students how to deal with those problems. As a result, the study may become a guide to Cormier's books.

Finally, for the sake of researchers in Taiwan, the study is the first dissertation

of Cormier's fifteen young adult books, so it may be a good reference for further researchers in terms of the methodologies, the analytical interpretations, and the bibliography. Of course, it is inevitable to have the researcher's personal viewpoint and opinions in this dissertation; however, it is a pioneering study in the area of children's literature in Taiwan.

#### 1.4. Methodology of the Study

The study uses close-reading and the method of textual analysis to examine the data, which means taking all of Cormier's fiction for young adults as a textual object for analysis. Because the study deals with the whole body of Cormier's literary works for young adults, the differences and similarities of different works will be discussed as well as the development and the change of Cormier's writing style. Fifteen books written by Cormier will be examined, including one short-story collection, three novellas, ten novels, and a semi-autobiography in the form of lyrical free verse. Every single text category will be read, reread and analyzed, and then various texts will be compared and contrasted. The development and the change of Cormier's writing, as well as the similarities and differences of his works, will be discussed, too.

There are main theoretical references as follows: Percy's Lubbock's *The Craft of Fiction*, E. M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*, Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Cleanth Brooks' and Robert Penn Warren's *Understanding Fiction*, and I. A. Richards' *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*.

And more recently, Gerard Genette's *Narrative Discourse* and David Lodge's *The Art of Fiction*.

In the area of children's literature, there are three main references, they are: David Russell's *Literature for Children: A Short Introduction*, Rebecca Lukens' and Ruth Cline's A

*Critical Handbook of Literature for Young Adults*, and Alleen Pace Nilsen's and Kenneth L. Donelson's *Literature for Today's Young Adults*.

### 1.5. Organization of the Study

The dissertation consists of seven chapters. Chapter one is the introduction that contains the rationale and purpose, researcher questions, significance, methodology, organization, and delimitation of the study. Chapter two is the literature review of Robert Cormier and his Young Adult Fiction, including his personal history, the body of literary works, and the related criticism and research. Chapter three, Theme, is divided into three facets: good vs. evil, system vs. individual, and guilt vs. forgiveness. The fourth chapter, Character, consists of two main categories: types of characters, as well as characterization by appearance, by discourses and by actions. Chapter five, Narrative, covers narrative order, point of view/perspective and narrator. Chapter six, Style, discusses three devices: metaphor, simile and allusion. Chapter seven is the conclusions.

### 1.6. Delimitation of the Study

This study is limited to Robert Cormier's young adult fiction, namely, one short-story collection: *8 plus 1* (1980); three novellas: *Other Bells for Us to Ring* (1990), *Tunes for Bears to Dance To* (1992), and *Heroes* (1998); ten novels: *The Chocolate War* (1974), *I Am the Cheese* (1977), *After the First Death* (1979), *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway* (1983), *Beyond the Chocolate War* (1985), *Fade* (1988), *We All Fall Down* (1991), *In the Middle of the Night* (1995), *Tenderness* (1997), and *The Rag and Bone Shop* (2001), in addition to one semi-autobiographical fiction written in

free verse form: *Frenchtown Summer* (1999). These fifteen books will be examined and discussed in this dissertation.





## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of Literature**

This chapter presents a literature review of Robert Cormier's works, including a personal history in section one, his literary works in section two, and the related criticism and research in section three. The aim of this chapter is to provide readers an overview of Robert Cormier's young adult fiction as well as the writer himself.

#### **2.1. Personal History of Robert Cormier**

Robert Edmund Cormier was born on January 17, 1925, to a French-Canadian father and an Irish-American mother. He was the second of eight children in a close-knit family that was part of the community of Leominster, Massachusetts, a small city about forty miles west of Boston.

Cormier's father worked in the comb factory in Leominster for over forty years. When Cormier was four years old, he experienced the Great Depression of 1929; he remembered that his father had to struggle to make a living at a time of extreme poverty. When Cormier grew older, he attended a catholic school, St. Cecilia's Parochial Grammar School. There, he considered himself an outsider, and felt threatened by an older boy. Although Cormier was never bullied by that boy, he saw that boy picking on his victims, usually younger, smaller, and rather quiet kids.

Cormier was a quiet boy who was not good at sports, but enjoyed going to the library to read. His favorite writers were Graham Greene, J. D. Salinger and Thomas Wolfe. He also enjoyed writing. In seventh grade, he was encouraged by one of his teachers, Sister Catherine. She praised a poem which Cormier had written, and called

him a writer. That was very important to Cormier, even years later, he still remembered Sister Catherine for her encouragement.

After he graduated from St. Cecilia's he entered a junior high school in downtown Leominster. Cormier's adolescence was not quite happy, but he continued to enjoy reading and going to the movies. Actually, the movies he had watched influenced his writing. For example, the 1933 film *The Invisible Man* later inspired Cormier to write his fiction *Fade*. Cormier graduated from high school in 1942, and then went to work at a comb factory in French Hill, just like his father did. He worked on the night shift, and took daytime classes at the State Teachers College at Fitchburg.

After his first year of college, Cormier dropped out and began to work at a radio station, WTAG, in Worcester, Massachusetts, writing radio commercials. He wrote radio commercials for two years, and during this time he continued to write freelance articles. In 1948, he was hired as a reporter for the newspaper's Fitchburg Bureau. In the same year, on November 16, Cormier married Constance Senay at St. Cecilia's Church. The marriage lasted fifty-two years until Cormier passed away. In 1955, Cormier took a job as a reporter for the *Fitchburg Sentinel*, a newspaper that later became the *Fitchburg Leominster Sentinel and Enterprise*.

In 1960, based on the experience of his father's cancer disease and death, Cormier wrote and published his first book, *Now and at the Hour*, which deals with the mind of a former industrial worker. This novel earned critical admiration but not financial success. Afterwards, Cormier published his second novel *A Little Raw on Monday Morning* in 1963 and third novel *Take Me Where the Good Times Are* in 1965. Both Books received favorable reviews, but still small sales.

By then Cormier was a father of four children. One day Cormier learned about a "Chocolate Sale" event from his son Peter, when Peter told him the school asked students to sell chocolate for the school foundation. Although there was nothing



terrible that happened after Peter did not sell any chocolate, Cormier used this idea to develop a story about a loner who refuses to sell chocolate in a catholic high school and then suffers from the peer pressure and physical attack. This story was *The Chocolate War*. After seven publishers' rejections, this novel was finally published as a young adult novel in April 1974. *The Chocolate War* brought instant attention and controversy to Cormier. Three years later, Cormier published *I Am the Cheese* in 1977. These first two young adult novels gave Cormier financial and critical achievement, and Cormier resigned from his job at the *Fitchburg Sentinel*, where he had worked for twenty-three years. In the same year, Cormier received an honorary doctorate from Fitchburg State College. In 1978, Cormier became a full-time writer, and published fourteen books in later years. He has been regarded as a leading young adult writer, and has received several important awards, including the ALAN Award from the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English in 1982, an International Reading Association Commendation in 1985, and the Margaret A. Edwards Award for his early young adult novels: *The Chocolate War*, *I Am the Cheese*, and *After the First Death* in 1991. In contrast to his recognized achievements, some of Cormier's books have been censored and banned by conservative teachers and parents; for instance, *The Chocolate War*, *Fade*, and *We All Fall Down* made the list of the 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-2000. Not only did Cormier spend his time on writing, reading and talking to young readers, but also he fought against the censorship. Robert Cormier died on November 2, 2000, at the age of seventy-five. His last book, *The Rag and Bone Shop*, was published posthumously in 2001.

## 2.2. Body of Literary Works

As a writer, Robert Cormier published in total twenty books (including the posthumous novel, *The Rag and the Bone Shop*). The following is a chronological list of Cormier's works.

- 
- 1960 *Now and at the Hour*
- 1963 *A Little Raw on Monday Mornings*
- 1965 *Take Me Where the Good Times Are*
- 1974 *The Chocolate War*
- 1977 *I Am the Cheese*
- 1979 *After the First Death*
- 1980 *8 Plus 1*
- 1983 *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*
- 1985 *Beyond the Chocolate War*
- 1988 *Fade*
- 1990 *Other Bells for Us to Ring*
- 1991 *I Have Words to Spend: Reflections of a Small-Town Editor*
- 1991 *We All Fall Down*
- 1992 *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*
- 1995 *In the Middle of the Night*
- 1997 *Tenderness*
- 1998 *Heroes*
- 1999 *Frenchtown Summer*
- 2000 *Portrait of a Parish*
- 2001 *The Rag and Bone Shop*

The first three published books in the 1960s are all adult novels. *The Chocolate War* is regarded as Cormier's first novel for young adults. From 1974 to 2001, Cormier published fifteen works of young adult fiction (including his semi-autobiographical story in free verse form, *Frenchtown Summer*) and two works of non-fiction. These two works of non-fiction are *I Have Words to Spend*, which is a collection of articles from a newspaper column, and *Portrait of a Parish*, a gift to St. Cecilia's Church about the history of Cormier's parish.

Among Cormier's fifteen books for young adults, it is worthy to note that *8 plus 1* is a collection of his early short stories from 1965 to 1975, at that time Cormier still worked as a journalist in the *Fitchburg Sentinel*. As a result, the researcher regards *8 plus 1* as the first book in Robert Cormier's writing for young adults.

Via analyzing Cormier's fifteen young adult books, the researcher divides these works into seven periods, mainly based on the year of publication; however, the distinctive features and narrative forms of these books are considered. The following are the seven periods of Robert Cormier's young adult fiction.

#### Period I: Short Stories (1965-1975)

The works of Period I are in *8 plus 1*. They are:

"The Moustache"

"Mine on Thursdays"

"Another of Mike's Girls"

"President Cleveland, Where Are You?"

"A Bad Time for Fathers"

“Protestants Cry, Too”

“Guess What? I Almost Kissed My Father Goodnight ”

“My First Negro”

“Bunny Berigan—Wasn’t He a Musician or Something? ”

The Synopses of Period I Stories:

1. “The Moustache”

Seventeen-year-old Mike goes to nursing home to visit his grandmother. Mike had grown a moustache recently, so his grandmother mistakes him for his grandfather. She tells Mike that she feels so sorry about the car accident which killed Mike’s grandfather after an argument that she doubted her husband had another woman. Mike’s grandmother asks Mike to forgive her, and Mike says it. After Mike arrives home, he shaves his moustache off.

2. “Mine on Thursdays”

A middle-aged father Howie regularly meets his daughter Holly on Thursdays since his wife divorced him because of his affair. This day he takes Holly to a playground, and lets her go on the Rocket Ride alone. As Howie sees Holly’s weak smile while rolling, he feels regretful for letting her alone, and more regretful that he will be moving to another State after their time together.

### 3. “Another of Mike’s Girls”

Mike’s father Jerry sees his son’s girlfriends coming and going into his house several times, and he thinks that they are all the same. However, he still worries if this one Jane will jeopardize Mike’s academic performance. But soon Jerry learns that his son has broken up with Jane, and Jerry feels sad for Jane.

### 4. “President Cleveland, Where Are You?”

This story is set in the period of the Great Depression: eleven-year-old Jerry and his friends collect a set of President Cards via buying candy in order to gain a Major League baseball glove. But they always get the same cards; the card of President Cleveland never appears. They are all desperate for this card. In the meantime, Jerry’s older brother, fourteen-year-old Armand falls in love with a rich girl Sally, and Armand needs money to take Sally to a fancy dance but he does not have enough money. Jerry wants to help Armand but he didn’t have money either. One day Jerry gets the President Cleveland Card, he decides to sell it to a rich boy, and gives the money to Armand.

### 5. “A Bad Time for Fathers”

Mr. Croft’s daughter Jane is about to depart for college. Mr. Croft and Mrs. Croft hold a party for Jane. Mr. Croft is sentimental during the party and has a talk with Jane’s boyfriend Sam, who is not going to college with her. Mr. Croft remarks that “this is a bad time in her life for either one of us—lover or father.”

## 6. “Protestants Cry, Too”

This story is similar to “President Cleveland, Where Are You?” Even the characters share the same name: the narrator, younger brother Jerry and his older brother Armand. It is also set in the same period: the 1930s Depression. However, Jerry in this story is twelve years old, but Armand is already nineteen years old while in the other story he is fourteen. The name of Armand’s girlfriend in this story is Jessica, which is also different. The plot is different, too: nineteen-year-old Armand had a girlfriend named Jessica, and she is a Protestant. Armand’s father disapproves of Jessica because Armand’s family is Catholic. Nevertheless, as Armand decides to join the Army after Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, it seems that the problem of his romance is temporarily solved. When the departure day arrives, Armand’s father and younger brother Jerry go to bid Armand good-bye. Both of them see Jessica come and cry. Finally Jerry tells his father that his father is wrong in saying that Protestants don’t cry, and Jerry’s father admits that he may be a fool. They run and catch Jessica, and Jerry’s father gives Jessica an embrace.

## 7. “Guess What? I Almost Kissed My Father Goodnight”

Teenager Mike has a normal family: middle-aged father James working as an office manager, mother Ellen, older sister Annie and younger sister Debbie. One day when Mike walks across a park, he sees his father sitting on a bench alone and pondering. Mike does not call his father’s attention but wonders why his father is sitting here during the office time. Afterwards, Mike is suspicious about his father; he doubts if his father has an affair. It finally turns out to be nothing, so Mike thinks that fathers are also people, and his father sometimes gets lonesome. One night Mike

wants to kiss his father goodnight, but he withdraws because of his embarrassment.

#### 8. “My First Negro”

This story is the third one which describes the days of the Great Depression. The narrator “I” (who has no name in this story) lives in Frenchtown, a French-Canadian Immigrant neighborhood, surrounded by an Irish immigrant neighborhood, and Yankee area. They are all poor. But the poorest area is at the end of Frenchtown called Alphabet Soup, where the black live. One day “I” wanders over to Alphabet Soup, he meets his first Negro in his life, Jefferson, and they become friends. In the meantime, “I” and his friends plan to steal vegetables for an adventure, and “I” decides to give these vegetables to Jefferson’s family. Yet they make a stir while stealing, and then Jefferson’s family mistakes this act for an attack because “I” and his friends throw vegetables to their house. After this turmoil, “I” dares not go to Alphabet Soup until several days have passed. But when “I” arrives at Jefferson’s house, “I” finds an empty one; they have moved. “I” feels sorry and weeps, hoping Jefferson will come back someday.

#### 9. “Bunny Berigan—Wasn’t He a Musician or Something? ”

Precisely speaking, this one is not a young adult story—it has neither teen characters nor young readership. The story tells about two middle-aged men who have a small talk in a bar. The narrator Jerry asks his best friend Walt about Walt’s affair with a model. They talk about their friendship, both families, and the divorce. Then Jerry sees Walt’s girl friend Jennifer coming in. Jerry soon realizes why Walt divorced his wife for Jennifer. She is very beautiful and young. And Walt seems so happy that



Jerry cannot blame him anymore. However, as they talk about a trumpet player from their earlier days, Bunny Berigan, Jennifer knows little about him. That makes Jerry realize that they belong to different generations. When Jerry is finally going home, he feels sentimental about the missing opportunities in his life, and envious of Walt as a rule-breaker.

The Period I stories give readers a glimpse of daily life. Although there is hardly a climax or suspense in each story, readers may find a connection with their own life. Of those nine short stories, however, the protagonists of four are fathers. It is uncertain whether some of them are young adult stories or not, especially the last one. Campbell argues that Cormier writes short introductions for each story because he tries to fill the gap between the young readership and the middle-aged point of view (Campbell 2: 113). By telling the young readers how he actually creates a story, Cormier gives them a lesson in writing.

Period II: Early Young Adult Novels, including *The Chocolate War* (1974), *I Am the Cheese* (1977), *After the First Death* (1979), *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway* (1983), *Beyond the Chocolate War* (1985)

The Synopses of Period II Stories:

*The Chocolate War* (1974)

Trinity High seems like a normal high school, but under the surface there is a powerful organization called The Vigils keeping the school rolling in their way. When the school begins its chocolate sale, The Vigils' assigner and real leader Archie

chooses a new student Jerry to challenge the assistant headmaster Brother Leon by not selling chocolate for ten days. After the ten days have passed, Jerry still doesn't want to sell any chocolate for some reason that even Jerry doesn't know very well. Brother Leon and Archie both are angry, and many school students feel that this is unfair. As a result, Jerry suffers from peer pressure and hostility, even harassment. Only Jerry's best friend the Goober supports him quietly. Eventually Jerry and a school bully named Emile have a fight by the design of Archie, and many students pay to watch this fight. At last Jerry is beaten and tells the Goober: "Don't disturb the universe."

#### *I Am the Cheese (1977)*

Three narrations are interwoven in this novel: a bicycle journey that begins with the narrator "I", tape transcriptions between a psychotherapist and a patient, and a narrative that always follows the tape transcription, which tells Adam's story: Adam's father used to be a reporter and is protected by the government because he has revealed something illegal. However, Adam has no idea until he finds a fake birth certificate. When Adam's family starts a second runaway, they are murdered by unknown people. However, Adam survives but suffers from amnesia. At last it turns out that the narrator "I" is Adam, who is in a nursing home, and his journey is all imaginary. And that is the reason why the psychiatrist/interrogator Brint tries to ask the patient Adam for more details, to make sure that Adam forgets everything and he is harmless.

#### *After the First Death (1979)*

Terrorists Artkin, Miro and two other people hijack a school bus to force the

U.S.A. government to release political prisoners and to demolish a secret anti-terrorist organization called Inner Delta. A teen girl named Kate is the driver of this bus, who substitutes for her uncle this morning. Kate tries to save the passengers, who are all kindergarten kids, and herself by seducing the only teenager terrorist Miro, but it does not work out. In the meantime, the leader of Inner Delta, General Marcus sends his son Ben to the bus as a hostage. After Ben arrives at the bus, he is tortured by the terrorists. Ben cannot help telling them when the U.S.A. special troops will attack them. Yet Ben does not know that the time he told is wrong and this is his father's plan. Special troops make an attack one hour earlier, and kill the terrorists except Miro. Miro manages to escape after he killed Kate. Later, Ben commits suicide after he has learned his father's scheme. And Ben's father regrets what he has done to Ben.

*The Bumblebee Flies Anyway* (1983)

There are many very sick even dying children and teens in a hospital called the Complex, including Mazzo, Ronson, Billy and Barney. But Barney thinks he is not one of them; he is the control subject. One day Barney sees an abandoned car made of wood in a junkyard; he is intrigued by it, and calls it the Bumblebee. Later, as Barney meets Mazzo's twin sister Cassie, he immediately falls in love with her. Cassie asks Barney to watch over Mazzo and to tell her what happens every time they meet. After Barney has learned that Mazzo likes cars, he decides to steal the Bumblebee for Mazzo. Meanwhile, Barney finds himself a dying patient too, yet he is in remission. He finally steals the Bumblebee, takes it to the roof, and pushes it off the roof. Barney, Mazzo and Billy all see the Bumblebee flying in the sky.

### *Beyond the Chocolate War* (1985)

The sequel to *The Chocolate War*, this novel gives readers the further development of Trinity High. In the very beginning another newcomer named Ray appears. Ray is transferred to Trinity High, and he does not like it at all. Ray likes handiwork, especially magician's stuff. In the meantime, The Vigils have a change: the new-blood comes in; Archie's right-hand Obie falls in love with a girl named Jill, and the "official" leader Carter loses his stage of football and boxing. Jerry returns to the U.S.A. from Canada, but does not go to school. His best friend the Goober feels very sorry for not standing up for Jerry. The third subplot is about a student David who always has good grades. He would like to kill the headmaster Brother Leon because Brother Leon flunks him, but finally David fails and later commits suicide. Now the story returns to The Vigils: one day Obie meets Ray, and learns that Ray is building a guillotine; he suggests that the guillotine can be a big part of Skit Night. Ray agrees, but he does not know that Obie and Carter, who both hate Archie, will use it to kill Archie by substituting a real blade for a fake one. However, nothing terrible happens at Skit Night because Ray checks out the details in advance. At last Archie and Obie have a small talk, and Archie tells Obie that he is not the evil one; actually he hasn't forced anyone to do anything. Everybody has free choice. And Archie leaves, parting ways with Obie.

These five novels demonstrate Cormier's sophisticated writing skills and humanitarian concern. From his first young adult fiction, *The Chocolate War*, Cormier always puts emphasis upon the persecution which the system or the institution imposes on the individual. In *The Chocolate War* and *Beyond the Chocolate War*, the institution is a high school, Trinity High. In *The Bumblebee Files Anyway*, the

institution is a hospital or a nursing home, the Complex. A nursing home also appears in *I Am the Cheese*, but even worse, the biggest system which oppresses both protagonists in *I Am the Cheese* and *After the First Death* is the Nation. Cormier uses a grim way to describe the miserable fate of most characters in these five books, even though they try to fight back. However, the last novel in this period, *Beyond the Chocolate War*, the reader does see a light of hope.

With respect to Cormier's writing skill, these five books have many layers of narrations with plenty of metaphors and similes. In fact, it is thought that complicated narratives and colorful metaphors are the distinguishing features of Cormier's writing. The dissertation will discuss both characteristics in chapter five and chapter six.

### Period III: Quasi Science Fiction: *Fade* (1988)

#### The Synopsis of Period III Story: *Fade* (1988)

Paul is a famous writer, and he writes a novel about a teenager with an ability to fade. This novel has never been published, and the manuscript is read by Paul's friend Meredith and his distant relative Susan after Paul dies. Since the facts revealed in the manuscript are very real, they both think it might be Paul's autobiography. Susan even begins to believe that Paul has the ability to be invisible. Paul writes that this ability emerged when he was a teen, and it passes from uncle to nephew. As Paul was young, he once used this ability to kill a man. After Paul becomes a grownup, he tries to find who has inherited this evil power among his nephews. He cannot find anybody until he discovers that his youngest sister has an illegitimate child. Paul eventually finds that boy named Ozzie, and kills him because Ozzie uses his ability to kill people too. After Susan finishes reading this novel, she feels chilly and terrified.

Inspired by the 1933 movie *The Invisible Man*, *Fade* is the only science fiction Cormier writes. However, since there is little scientific knowledge in this book, it is better classified as “Quasi Science Fiction”. Compared to other books, *Fade* and *Frenchtown Summer* are the two books full of Cormier’s childhood memory and description, so both novels can be regarded as Cormier’s autobiography-like works.

*Fade* consists of three parts: Paul’s manuscript related to Paul’s adolescence and the following manuscript telling the story of Ozzie and Paul as well as Susan’s commentary and reaction after she finishes reading the manuscript. This design makes this novel a work of meta-fiction, which means “the plays with the nature and process of fiction” (*The Harper Handbook to Literature* 290), in some degree. The complexity and the length (310 pages) of this novel may indicate that Cormier wanted to enlarge the domain of his writing or to return to the category of adult novelist. However, Campbell argues that “after the critical, if not the popular, success of *Fade* in the adult literary world, devotees speculated that Cormier would go on to write other novels in that larger sphere. But his work was never predictable” (Campbell 1: 169).

After *Fade*, Cormier writes a story *Other Bells for Us to Ring*, the first book of his three novellas, to bring him back to the members of young adult writers. These three novellas will be discussed in the following section.

Period IV: Novellas, including *Other Bells for Us to Ring* (1990), *Tunes for Bears to Dance To* (1992), *Heroes* (1998)

The Synopses of Period IV Stories:

*Other Bells for Us to Ring* (1990)

Darcy, a lonely, timid, eleven-year-old girl, meets her best friend Kathleen Mary O'Hara after her family moved to Frenchtown because her father joined the Army. Opposite from Darcy, Kathleen Mary is very out-going, and she is a Catholic who Darcy is unfamiliar with. One day as they go into a convent, Darcy is touched by the atmosphere and the story of Sister Angela. Later, Darcy's father disappears during the war, so Darcy and her mother are very worried. Moreover, another bad thing happens, Kathleen Mary and her family leave one night without any notice, and Darcy feels so sad even angry. Darcy goes to the convent to talk with Sister Angela and is told that she must believe and pray. Several months later, Darcy's father comes home, all family members reunite. But Darcy later learns the terrible fact from Kathleen Mary's brother that Kathleen Mary was hit and killed by a car the day before they moved.

*Tunes for Bears to Dance To* (1992)

Henry and his parents move to Wickburg from Frenchtown because his brother Eddie died several months ago. Henry's father is too sad to work, so he works at Mr. Hairston's store after school. Henry meets an old man named Mr. Levine who is a handyman and a survivor of the Holocaust. Henry makes friends with Mr. Levine and



knows that the old man is carving a replica of his hometown. As Mr. Hairston receives this information, he tries to bribe Henry to destroy the model. At first Henry refuses, and then Mr. Hairston threatens Henry with firing him. Finally Henry goes into the craft center where the replica of the village is displayed, and smashes it by accident. When Mr. Hairston offers Henry some money, Henry rejects it and asks Mr. Hairston why. Mr. Hairston says that he hates the Jews. Afterwards, Henry and his family move back to Frenchtown, and he gladly knows that Mr. Levine starts to rebuild the model of the village.

#### *Heroes* (1998)

Eighteen-year-old Francis is a war hero, who saves his comrade's life but has his face badly injured. He returns to his hometown without a complete face nor a real identity. But he must return to finish his mission—to kill another hero named Larry, who has been adored, admired and respected by many teens for several years. However, Larry betrays Francis and almost rapes Francis' girlfriend Nicole. Finally Francis finds where Larry lives, but he does not kill Larry. Instead, Larry kills himself after Francis leaves.

In his writing career, Cormier writes three novellas for younger readers: *Other Bells for Us to Ring*, *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*, and *Hero*. Although they are not published in the continuous years, these books have been included as a part of this study for several reasons: first of all, these three books are shorter and simpler than any novels Cormier writes before. Second, the settings in these three novellas are all set in Frenchtown or a nearby city Wickburg. Third, the period of these three books is set during and/or after World War II. And last, the endings of these books are rather

optimistic.

Period V: Psychological Thrillers including *We All Fall Down* (1991), *In the Middle of the Night* (1995), *Tenderness* (1997)

The Synopses of Period V Stories:

*We All Fall Down* (1991)

Four teenagers break into a house and trash it. Furthermore, they hurt a girl named Karen who came home earlier than they expected. Karen was pushed down into the cellar and later found unconscious. Karen's older sister, sixteen-year-old Jane feels guilty because she had a fight with Karen earlier that morning. In contrast to Jane, those teenagers do not have any sense of guilt except a boy named Buddy. Buddy's parents are recently separated and he is in pain. He begins to drink alcohol; that eases the pain; however, it jeopardizes the judgment too. One day Buddy meets Jane in a shopping mall, and he falls in love with her. After they date each other, Buddy begins to worry that someday Jane might learn he is one of the people who trashed her house. Buddy's fear comes to pass when his secret is revealed by a psychopath called the Avenger, who had seen what the boys did that day. The Avenger has killed two people before, and now he has a crush on Jane. Finally he kidnaps Jane and tries to kill her because he thinks that Jane should not go with Buddy. Jane saves herself by telling the Avenger the truth that he is not eleven years old any more (the Avenger always considers himself a teen). And then Jane tells the Avenger that he killed his grandfather many years ago. At last the Avenger commits suicide, and Jane is out of danger, but she breaks up with Buddy, and Buddy drinks alcohol again.

*In the Middle of the Night* (1995)

Denny seems to have a normal family—a quiet father and an affectionate mother except he is not allowed to answer the phone. For a long time his family has moved around quite often, and there have been lots of telephone calls in the middle of the night. When Denny is sixteen years old, he decides to do something. One day he answers the phone and talks with a female named Lulu. Gradually Denny falls in love with her, although he is attracted by another girl at bus stop before. But Lulu is a survivor from a fire and a collapse of a theater balcony twenty years ago, and she blames the accident which killed twenty-two children on Denny's father John Paul, who was working at that theater as a head usher. Although it turns out that John Paul was not guilty but many people wanted a scapegoat. Finally Denny meets Lulu in her house, and Lulu tries to kill him. However, Lulu's younger brother Dave saves Denny's life and ignites a fire after Denny runs away. Denny calls the police after he is out of Lulu's house.

*Tenderness* (1997)

Eric is a good-looking teenager but a cold-blooded murderer who kills his step-father, biological mother, and three girls. He confesses his sins of killing his parents because he claims they have abused him. Eric is sent to a facility and spends three years there. However, a police lieutenant Jake does not trust Eric; Jake believes Eric must have committed more crimes, and he wants to nail Eric down. In addition, a beautiful teen girl named Lori, who is a run-away, has a crush on Eric while watching him on TV by accident. Lori decides to stalk Eric after he is released. As Eric meets

Lori, he realizes that Lori has witnessed a murder he committed three years ago, although Lori seems innocent. Eric and Lori start their journey; unfortunately, there is an accident where Lori drowns in a lake. The police arrest Eric and accuse him of killing her on purpose. At last Eric is sent to prison.

Some main characters of these three novels are so-called psychopaths such as Harry and the Avenger in *We all Fall Down*; Lulu in *In the Middle of the Night*, and Eric in *Tenderness*. They are all teenagers (except Lulu, but her mind seems to stop maturing after she is badly injured); they hurt other people without any feelings, and never feel guilty. In these three books, a lot of details of committing a crime are described along with suspense and a final climax. All three books are movie-like and have a high-speed pace. These psychological thrillers are very entertaining for adolescents. However, the descriptions of these novels are in accordance with the behaviors of modern teenagers, who Cart called “a generation at risk” (164).

#### Period VI: Semi-Autobiographical Free Verse: *Frenchtown Summer* (1999)

##### The Synopsis of Period VI Story: *Frenchtown Summer* (1999)

This book contains thirty sections, and each section is regarded as a lyrical free verse. The main character and narrator Eugene is a shy boy, who lives in Frenchtown. This book describes Eugene’s daily life such as his newspaper delivering, the relationship between his father and him, a secret love for Sister Angela, and a mysterious murder of a poor girl named Marielle LeMoyné. This semi-autobiographical verse novel ends up with a poem: “The Airplane”, which narrates how Eugene claims he saw a World War Airplane in a Frenchtown backyard,

but nobody believes him until his father says that he had seen an airplane that morning too. And Eugene earns respect and assures himself that his father loves him.

*Frenchtown Summer* is Cormier's only novel in poetry. This book reveals Cormier's childhood and his father's love for him. Since this book is semi-autobiographical, it is not as dark as Cormier's previous novels. Yet there is also a murder involved, and Cormier implies the killer may be one of his uncles. Why does Cormier like writing about the murder so much? Cormier used to say that "there are no taboos. Every topic is open, however shocking. It is the way that the topics are handled that's important, and that applies whether it is a 15-year-old who is reading your book or someone who is 55" (Angel 75).

#### Period VII: Final Duet: *The Rag and Bone Shop* (2001)

##### The Synopsis of Period VII Story: *The Rag and Bone Shop*

There are two equally important protagonists playing this duel: twelve-year-old boy Jason and middle-aged interrogator Trent. When seven-year-old girl Alicia has been found murdered, the police suspect that if Jason is the killer because he is the last one who saw Alicia alive. Trent is called in for doing the interrogation. First Jason has no idea that he is a suspect, and then he feels trapped during the interrogation. Finally Jason makes a fake confession of the killing. Yet it turns out that the true murderer is Alicia's older brother Brad. Jason is released, but he feels like committing a real homicide—to kill a bully named Bobo.

This book is published in 2001, one year after Cormier's death. The structure of

this novel is quite simple, almost like a “two-person show” (Campbell 1: 244). The process of the interrogation between Trent and Jason reminds the readers of the type-recording transcriptions of Brint and Adam in *I Am the Cheese*, yet this time Jason walks out free. However, this terrible experience makes Jason have a desire to kill people. Again, Cormier accuses the system that it persecutes innocent individuals. In this case, even the persecutor Trent is a victim because he is also under pressure from a politician. It seems that the largest persecutor is the state apparatus.

### 2.3. Related Criticism and Research

Cormier’s first three novels for adults were critically acclaimed but did not cause much of a stir until his first young adult novel *The Chocolate War* was published in 1974. This book full of violence, sex and coarse language with an unhappy ending brought it critical attacks. Many critics, teachers, and librarians felt uncomfortable with the content that Cormier had given. *Publishers Weekly* warned that this novel was “bound to cause controversy and no little resentment, especially among Catholics....Its impact is weakened by the author’s excess bitterness” (qtd. in Campbell 2: 53). Also, the English children’s book review magazine, *Junior Bookshelf*, delivered the most biting opinion:

This may be brilliantly written tour de force but despite the publisher’s claim it is no more a children’s book than is *The Exorcist*....*The Chocolate War* depicts a life without hope in which boys prey upon each other like prohibition gangsters, masturbate in the lavatory and drool over girlie magazines. It presents in one neat package all the most repellent aspects of the American way of life. Here in embryo are the forces of

commercialism, of corruption, of sadism and the triumph of the beast. If you are an adult and an American it may shock you out of your complacency but English children will at the best be confused and at the worst enjoy it as a sadistic spectacle.... (53)

In addition, the *New Statesman* gave up on a serious verdict and settled for translating the plot into current British slang: “Brother Leon, most greasy of eminences, in dead shtuck unless he off-loads his whole consignment of chockies....” (qtd. in Campbell 2: 53).

Moreover, in her article “The Absence of Moral Agency in Robert Cormier’s *The Chocolate War*”, Tarr argued that the protagonist in this novel, Jerry, was not a rebel hero, but “the prototype of a popular kind of protagonist in young adult literature, one who is paralyzed by postmodern society’s anxieties” (113).

However, there were different voices. For example, Peter Hunt of the *Times Literary Supplement*, the publication that is the pinnacle of world literary opinion, recognized this novel’s stature immediately. “A tour de force of realism....If you must judge a rather remarkable achievement..., read the whole” (qtd. in Campbell 2: 53). Moreover, the *New York Times Book Review* awarded *The Chocolate War* a place on its annual list of Outstanding Books, and the Young Adult Services Division of the American Library Association chose it as one of their Best Books for Young Adults for 1974. In 1975 *The Chocolate War* was firstly published in paperback, and it went through three printings quickly. “Young people devoured it, completely untroubled by the controversy” (qtd. in Campbell 2: 54). In 2000, Breen et al. selected the twentieth century’s most significant books for children and young adults in *School Library Journal*, and *The Chocolate War* was one of those books. They remarked that “The author’s commitment to portraying his characters realistically, even if that involves



violence and despair, blazed a trail for other writers” (53).

Cormier’s second novel for young adults, *I Am the Cheese*, also received controversial reviews. For example, some critics appreciated the complexity of the narrative structure in the novel. Bushman and Bushman admired this book as well as other novels written by Cormier: “Most, if not all, of Robert Cormier’s novels reflect this [high] quality of writing. *The Chocolate War* (1974), *I Am the Cheese* (1977), *After the First Death* (1979), *Fade* (1988), and *We All Fall Down* (1991) offer complicated, sophisticated plot structure, fully developed characters, settings that complement the plot and characters, a variety of literary devices, and complex, universal themes” (230). Several journals and periodicals also put a high value on *I Am the Cheese*—for example, a compliment from *The Horn Book Magazine*: “a magnificent accomplishment”; “a masterpiece” from *West Coast Review of Books*; the secret, revealed at the end, explodes like an H-bomb” from *Publishers Weekly*, and so forth. One publisher even said that “as I was getting my books signed, I felt compelled to tell him [Cormier] about my reaction to *I Am the Cheese*...I felt that the top of my head was going to come off” (“A Bouquet for Bob” 393).

However, some reviewers worried about the darkness of this novel and an unhappy—even hopeless—ending. For instance, Audrey Laski argued that “[this book] could do real harm to a disturbed adolescent, since it communicates all too effectively the paranoid fear that a psychiatric questioner may be an enemy—and then shows that it is true” (qtd. in Keeley: 33). Some parents even asked their schools to ban this novel.

After the success and the debates of Cormier’s early young adult novels, the publisher collected his very early works from 1965 to 1975 to publish a collection of short stories, “8 *Plus I*” (1980). The selection contained nine short stories, and four of them were written in the point of view of a middle-aged man (usually a father too).



This book did not receive high reviews, compared to his other books. For example, the *Kirkus Review* said that “fans ...will be disappointed with these nine tepidly sentimental stories”; *New York Times* criticized that this collection was “an ill-written cliché-infested book awash in self-pity” (qtd. in Campbell 2: 113). And *School Library Journal* noted that “none of the tales are as dramatic as Cormier’s brilliant and imaginative novels” (qtd. in Campbell 2: 114).

Nevertheless, some critics still gave this book credit. For example, in the *YOVA Reader* Gallo wrote that “his [Cormier’s] own short stories in *Eight Plus One*...provide exactly the kind of sensitive, heart-warming contrast many librarians and teachers prefer” (160).

In 1985, Cormier published *Beyond the Chocolate War*, which was the sequel of *The Chocolate War*. For eleven years, readers anticipated the sequel’s coming. But this novel did not receive as high an evaluation as *The Chocolate War*. Campbell summarized many critics’ reviews in her *Robert Cormier: Daring to Disturb the University*. Campbell mentioned that:

Roger Sutton, however, writing for *School Library Journal*, felt that “individually, many scenes are vividly horrific, but as a whole this is less compelling as fiction than it is a commentary on *The Chocolate War*—Cormier here intensifies and explicates what was powerfully implicit in the first book.” Hazel Rochman made a similar comment in the *New York Times Books Review*: “With its complexity, *Beyond the Chocolate War* is not as starkly dramatic as its predecessor. It relies too much on Mr. Cormier’s explication, and there is less action and more emphasis on the internal lives of many characters.” (96)

With respect to Cormier's more recent novels, *We All Fall Down*, different critics had different evaluations. For example, Campbell regarded this book as a middle book. She argued that *We All Fall Down* (and his another novel *In the Middle of the Night*) "have not achieved the highest places in the ranks of his work, although they are respected and admired. They are regarded rather as middle books that fill out the Cormier panoply of ideas and genres" (195). Nevertheless, critic and reviewer Michael Cart had a different opinion. He spent a lot of pages to describe and review Cormier's *We All Fall Down* in his own book, *From Romance To Realism: 50 Years of Growth and Change in Young Adult Literature*, and he argued that "As [Graham] Greene was, so is Cormier a Roman Catholic whose beliefs, guilts, and questionings enrich all his themes and all his fictions. It's obviously manifested in *We All Fall Down*, where polarity after polarity visits the book's theme: good and evil, guilt and innocence....as for me—I think of Cormier, and I am equally grateful that *he* lives among us too" (186-187).

Cormier's last two books for young adults are *Frenchtown Summer* and *The Rag and Bone Shop*, the former was published in 1999, and the latter was published in 2001 after Cormier died. *Frenchtown Summer* was Cormier's semi-autobiography written in a free-verse form. Containing thirty poems, each poem had an event or an observation of the protagonist Eugene, who might be a disguise of the author Cormier. This small book revealed Cormier's childhood and his father's love for him. Because this poetry was semi-autobiographical, it was not as dark as Cormier's previous works. After this book was published, reviewers and critics highly recommended it at once. In addition, *Frenchtown Summer* won an honorable award, Los Angeles Times Book Prize for the Best Young Adult Fiction in 1999.

*The Rag and Bone Shop* was published posthumously, so some observers assumed that Cormier had not finished it before he died. Joel Shoemaker in the *School*

*Library Journal* claimed that “Cormier revisits familiar psychological and temporal territory in this memorable novella that was finished, but unpolished, at the time of his death” (qtd. in Campbell 1: 244).

Campbell argued that this book was indeed finished before Cormier’s death, but maybe he had not made it more perfect yet. Campbell also acknowledged that “He [Cormier] had an almost superstitious fear of talking away a book, so I learned never to ask about a work in progress” (“The Last Cormier” 623). However, she quoted a passage from “A Personal Remembrance” written by Cormier’s wife, Connie Cormier, to give the readers an explanation: “This is Bob’s last book. He always hated to see his books end, and he loved to tinker with them after they were finished—to ponder, to search for the perfect word, the perfect phrase. Tragically, he died...before he was able to do that with *The Rag and Bone Shop*....” (qtd. in Campbell 1: 245).

Critic and writer Michael Cart regarded Robert Cormier as “the single most important writer in the field that is made distinguished by his contributions to it” (qtd. in Hyde: 29). In *From Romance To Realism: 50 Years of Growth and Change in Young Adult Literature*, Cart wrote that:

Cormier had the courage to write a novel of thematic weight and substance that actually suggested that there might be no happy endings in young adult lives; that conventional morality might not prevail; the evil might be real and even institutionalized; and that there are powerful, faceless forces that will destroy us if we disturb them. This may not be a revolutionary concept in the history of deterministic philosophy, but in the 1970s it *was* evolutionary as a view of the world upon which to construct a young novel. And it opened enormous areas of thematic possibility for writers who would come after Cormier.... (84)

Indeed, Cormier can be regarded as a ground-breaking and distinguished writer, especially in the area of young adult literature. This is understood or assumed by anyone who needs this study.



## Chapter 3

### Theme

What is theme? According to *The Harper Handbook to Literature*, theme is defined as “(1) A central idea. (2) A topic for discussion. (3) An expository essay written for class” (461). The first definition is used in this chapter. All writers have their favorite theme or themes in their writings, including Robert Cormier. Many critics and reviewers such as Campbell, Cart, Angel and Hyde have discussed that Cormier’s favorite theme is good vs. evil, which is many novelists’ preferred one. In addition, Cormier likes to write the stories about the individual against the system, particularly in his early works like *The Chocolate War*, *I Am the Cheese*, *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*. The third theme that Cormier prefers to conduct is guilt vs. forgiveness, for he is a Catholic as well as influenced by a famous novelist Graham Greene. These three themes, good vs. evil, system vs. individual, and guilt vs. forgiveness, will be discussed in the following sections.

#### 3.1. Good vs. Evil

Since Cormier’s first young adult fiction *The Chocolate War* was published in 1974, many reviewers had already noticed Cormier’s favorite theme in his novels: good vs. evil. Cormier creates several vicious teen characters in this novel: Archie and his stooges constitute an underground society named the Vigils, which controls the school in secret. Archie is extremely clever, indifferent, and manipulative. He used to say that “life is a shit” (*The Chocolate War* 16). Another “bad guy” is Emile, who likes power and fighting. Different from Archie, Emile is eager to win other’s

attention, and his way is to annoy people. In the end of this novel, Emile and the “good guy” Jerry have a fight, and he beats Jerry fiercely. But the most terrifying scene is where many students are watching and “shouting from the bleachers for more action now. The noise chilled Jerry. ‘Action, action,’ came the shouts from the audience” (252).

The description above reminds the reader of one scene in William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*, when the lost boys mistake a boy Simon for a beast, these boys chase him and want to kill him:

*“Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood! Do him in!”*

The sticks fell and the mouth of the new circle crunched and screamed.

The beast was on its knees in the center, its arms folded over its face. It was crying out against the abominable noise something about a body on the hill. The beast struggled forward, broke the ring and fell over the steep edge of the rock to the sand by the water. At once the crowd surged after it, poured down the rock, leapt on to the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws. (136)

Although the boys on *The Chocolate War* do not beat Jerry on their own, they are similar to the boys on *The Lord of the Flies*, eager to taste the blood. Archie and Emile may be evil, but the boys who watch this fight in excitement and never ever try to stop it seem evil too. Among the audience, only the Goober tries to stop it; however, he is the only one who suffers a guilty conscious because he thinks he has done nothing to protect Jerry. This part will be discussed in section three in this chapter. Why do most of the boys seem so violent? Cart points out that the young generation

in America is the most-at-risk-ever; many young adults have been involved in suicide, drugs, sexual harassment and guns. Cart argues that “youth gangs have become almost as ubiquitous as violence it self in schools....It’s all based on anger and hatred, of self and others” (274). Cart’s book was published in 1996, and the situation is still getting worse twelve years later. In the case of the boys in *The Chocolate War*, it may be argued that violence is part of their life, and what Archie has done is only push the button. However, the readers never know what Archie really thinks and why he has done these things because the author Cormier does not show any reason at all.

Another critic Campbell argues that Archie is a symbol of pure evil, and this concept is deeply Catholic. Even the name of Archie has its religious root: Archie refers to “the Archangel, who fell from Heaven to be the Fallen Angel, or Lucifer himself” (Campbell 1: 58). Campbell provides an intriguing conception: the Implacable, which means cannot be appeased, in other words, relentless. Campbell points out that Cormier’s theme of good vs. evil is theological, not psychological; that is why there is no psychological explanation or motivation of Archie’s manipulative behaviors as well as no interior monologue from Archie in this novel.

In Campbell’s opinion, evil in *The Chocolate War* is the unholy trinity: Archie, Emile and Brother Leon. Different from Archie and Emile, Brother Leon is an adult, and ironically a religious member who owns the authority of the school. Cormier describes Brother Leon: “the mustache of moistness on Brother Leon’s upper lip, the watery eyes and the dampness on his forehead” (22). And his behavior in class: “the pointer he used either like a conductor’s baton or a musketeer’s sword. He’d use the tip to push around a book on a desk or to flick a kid’s necktie, scratching gently down some guy’s back, poking the pointer as if he were a rubbish collector picking his way through the debris of the classroom” (39). Cormier gives the readers a more specific image of Brother Leon than that of Archie. It seems that Brother Leon is less symbolic



than Archie. If Archie is a symbol of pure evil, then there must be human agents to do the will of the Evil. Brother Leon is one of them, in addition to the members of the Vigils and even the most boys at Trinity High.

Nevertheless, there is a heroic loner at the school, namely Jerry. As Jerry stands up to confront the evil, he becomes a symbol of good. Jerry dares to disturb the universe because he does not know any better. Just like a Cervantes' Don Quixote, Jerry fights for his idealism: "this morning, he had stood his ground and fired a level and positive *No* at Brother Leon. For the first time, the word brought exultancy to him, a lifting of the spirit" (177). From then on, Jerry tells himself several times that his name is Jerry Renault and he's not going to sell the chocolates. Jerry later learns the price he must pay for it: being ignored, harassed, and finally beaten fiercely. Eventually he tells his friend the Goober not to disturb the universe.

This ending makes many critics and reviewers uncomfortable; for example, John Rowe Townsend has criticized Cormier books: "In Robert Cormier novels, violence takes complex and alarming shapes....It can be strongly argued that fiction for young people should not present an unduly rosy view of the world, but Cormier's novels seem to me to err the other way—to suggest that decency is a loser, that evil is great and will prevail...." (qtd. in Cart: 184). However, Cormier was once interviewed and said that "we know life isn't always fair and happy. There are enough books with happy endings. I think there is room for the realistic novel about things that really go on in the world. I try to write a warning about what's waiting out there" (qtd. in Hunt: 51). In another interview Cormier also said that "many people think teenagers live in a kind of vacuum. They don't. And when they read about the dark side of life in books, it gives an affirmation to what they see and hear every day..." (<http://www.teensreads.com/authors/au-cormier-robert.asp>).

Indeed, life is not always sweet and smooth, and a happy ending only exists in a



romance. Cormier is a pioneer who begins to write about the real world, and the real world does not guarantee a rose garden. More importantly, Jerry's action is not regarded as failure. Jerry is the only one who forces this rotten world, Trinity High, to emerge and be exposed in front of the readers. His behavior of confronting the evil makes the readers think about their own surroundings and situations, just like Campbell argues that "when the agents of evil are other human beings, perhaps good can win if enough people have the courage to take a stand together" (Campbell 1: 64). Cormier uses Jerry to convey this meaning.

Another representative character of evil is Mr. Hairston in *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*. This story describes how a grocery owner Mr. Hairston manipulates a teenager Henry to destroy an old Jew Mr. Levine's hand-made replica of his hometown. There is little explanation of Mr. Hairston's reason, only "He's a Jew" as Henry asks Mr. Hairston and the grocer answers so. It indicates that the racism is an irrational hatred and it is evil. Mr. Hairston, like Archie, is a symbol of evil. And this time he chooses Henry to be his agent. This novella is more allegoric and religious. In the front page the second epigraph, Cormier quotes "Deliver us from evil" from the Bible. Campbell argues that Mr. Hairston is the most purely evil villain, and in the last part of the book, Mr. Hairston has "almost ceased to be human and has become a metaphor for the Dark Presence" (Campbell 1: 176).

Cormier's *Tunes for Bears to Dance To* reminds the readers of one of Graham Greene's short story, 'The Hint of an Explanation', which presents a story of how a little boy refuses to take a bribe for giving Wafer to a non-Catholic Blacker (the name is metaphorical) and eventually grew up to be a priest. Not surprisingly, Greene is also a catholic writer, and Cormier acknowledges that he has been influenced by Greene a lot. The stories of Cormier and Greene are religious, especially concerning evil and the test of life. Both evil representatives show no motivations to be evil since they are

evil. And both good representatives have defeated the seducers, yet the process is difficult even painful.

However, in Cormier's books, evil does not always need a human agent, sometimes it is a pure power itself. In *Fade*, Cormier creates an Ultimate Evil called the Fade, and this power is hereditary from an uncle to a nephew. When the protagonist Paul discovered that he has an ability to be invisible, he thought he was blessed. Using his ability, Paul stalks into a bedroom belonging to a girl he is fond of, and he finds out that the girl has a sexual relationship with her twin brother. Moreover, Paul employs this fading ability to kill a bully on purpose, but later his beloved younger brother dies without any cause. By now Paul realizes that this ability or power to fade is a curse, and he swears he will never use it again. Until Paul finds that his unwedded nephew Ozzie has the same power and this boy begins to kill people via the Fade, Paul kills Ozzie. To the readers, Paul's killing is a necessary evil because Ozzie is trying to kill the nun who raised him, and trying to kill Paul. To Paul, this killing is also an impact of the evil power: the Fade. But to Ozzie, he is a victim of an affair beyond marriage, a victim of a miserable and abused childhood and a victim of having such evil power. The final scene of the fight between Paul and Ozzie makes the reader empathize and sympathize:

His [Ozzie's] body was limp in that final fatal way of bodies after breath has gone, face slack and loose, something almost sweet in the face, in repose, as if untouched by time or pain or injury, the abused nose not repulsive now, still bruised and broken but noble somehow, like an old battle wound.

"Oh, Ozzie," I [Paul] said, tasting my tears as I spoke, aware of lights coming on in the convent. (298)

In this novel, both Paul and Ozzie is rather a victim of the evil than an agent. But if there is no human agent, how can the ordinary people discover it, confront it and defeat it? Cormier does not give the readers any answer. At the very end of this novel, the second narrator Susan feels chilly after she has finished reading Paul's manuscript called *Fade*, she wonders whether Paul wants her to read this unpublished books because of the emergence of a new fader, and this is a warning or a message. And Susan finally writes that "I sit here and I think of the fade and that clipping on the bulletin board and I wonder if I am safe and snug after all. If any of us are. And I don't know what to do about it. God, I don't know what to do" (310). Susan's question is the reader's question, too. Cormier gives the readers a warning but not a solution. The important thing is to be aware of evil and do something instead of being a victim or an agent of it. That is what Jerry has done, and the author believes human beings have free will to do anything they want.

### 3.2. System vs. Individual

In addition to the theme of good vs. evil, Cormier also likes to write stories about system vs. individual, particularly in his early novels. His two famous novels in this subject are *The Chocolate War* and *I Am the Cheese*. Critic David Peck in his *Novels of Initiation* mentions that "the major theme of the novel [*The Chocolate War*] is, generally, the relation of the individual to society. More specifically, the novel is about the price one pays for *conformity* and—the other side of this theme—the greater price one must pay to achieve one's individuality" (34). Conformity and individuality are contradictory; the more conformity, the less individuality, and vice versa. How an individual in a group conforms to the rules of this group but also maintains his/her

individuality is not easy. In the case of Trinity High in *The Chocolate War*, the loner Jerry challenges the school and the Vigils. For Brother Leon, Jerry's behavior jeopardizes his management of the school, and more importantly, Jerry might give other students a role model by saying no to selling chocolate. Brother Leon cannot afford this consequence because he needs money to fill the gap in the school fund. For the Vigils' real leader Archie, he cannot tolerate someone who is out of his manipulation. Even the school students do not like Jerry either because it seems Jerry has a privilege and this is unfair. Originally the system is balanced, but Jerry's actions break this balance. That is the reason why Jerry is "punished" by many people, not only by Brother Leon and by Archie, but also by many school boys. The balance must be maintained, and the breaker must be eliminated.

The pursuit of conformity in a system is particularly obvious in most teenagers' groups, including schools. There is so-called peer pressure among teenagers: they like to be the same as others, and can not bear some people who dare to be different from them. Adolescents also like to be regarded as unique, and they think their individuality is very important. Cart once writes that "adolescents are perfect solipsists in their inner-directed conviction that they are the center of the universe" (38). As an individual—especially a teen—comes into conflict with the system, s/he must fight for their individuality, and the system must suppress her/him by all means. Ironically, since individuals are parts of the system, sometimes they are both suppressors and suppressed, just like the students of Trinity High.

Cormier's second young adult novel, *I Am the Cheese*, also discusses and describes the story about system vs. individual. In Jennifer Keeley's *Understanding I Am the Cheese*, she quotes Robbie March-Penny's observation from the article "From Hardback to Paperback": "Even though organized crime and the government are two very different, independent systems, Cormier shows that they are alike in a very

important way—“ultimately the total system is completely ruthless” and will do anything to maintain its own supremacy” (qtd. in Keeley: 71). The system involved in this novel is the government. The protagonist Adam Farmer’s father was a reporter and revealed something illegal. Therefore, Adam’s parents and Adam are given new identities and protected by the government because their safety is in danger. But Adam does not know this fact until he finds a fake birth certificate. After Adam’s family has doubts about the government’s agents and began a second runaway, they are killed by unknown people in gray, except for Adam—he survives but suffers from memory loss.

Cormier describes vividly the process of manipulation by the government, including a so-called psychiatrist Brint who interrogates Adam many times in order to assure the government that Adam has forgotten everything and is harmless. Such a story makes the readers feel terrified. The government is supposed to protect its people; however, if its advantage is incompatible with people’s advantage, the government will get rid of its obstacle with no mercy. The ruthlessness of the government is similar to the implacability of evil, but the former is concerned with its own interests while the latter is based on nature. However, the government (or other systems) has an inclination to be an agent of evil, and it has larger power than the single human agent does.

Moreover, sometimes individuals can be partners of the system, too. Take the example of Trinity High in *The Chocolate War*, the school students are both suppressors and suppressed, even the quiet students are afraid to be part of complicity of silence. Keeley argues that “Cormier presents an evil that comes about only as a collaborative act between individuals and political systems, an evil that starts when individuals stop making moral choices for themselves and instead allow a system—governmental or otherwise—to make these choices for them”(69).

The second system or institution involved in *I Am the Cheese* is a hospital, or a nursing home. Like the government, a hospital is a quite closed system, and who it deals with are patients. That makes a hospital have more authority than other systems or institutions do. Patients often feel that the information has only one-way direction—from a doctor to a patient but not vice versa. For example, Adam in *I Am the Cheese* has no idea about what the psychiatrist Brint really wants him to do nor what Brint is going to do. Brint always asks Adam questions but never tells Adam anything about the procedure of the treatment, not to mention any information about Brint himself. This “professional” performance also happens in Cormier’s fourth young adult novel *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*, which describes how dying teens live in a nursing home, the Complex, and struggle against their illness. In the very beginning, Cormier describes how medical merchandise has a side effect on a patient as well as the protagonist Barney Snow:

It had made him dizzy—more than dizzy: nauseous, his stomach spinning as fast as the whirling room, the walls slanting toward each other, shimmering and willowy, giving the room a strange surrealistic dimension. He had clung desperately to the bed as if it were a raft on stormy seas, riding it out, waiting, clinging to the collapsed sails that were the bed sheets. His temperature, however, remained stable, and so did his blood pressure. Which made the Handyman happy. And when the Handyman was happy, everybody was happy, although happy probably wasn’t the right word. (3)

“Handyman” is the nickname that Barney calls Dr. Harriman, who is in charge of the Complex. The patients in the Complex have little idea about the medicines or

medical procedures used on them, just like Adam has no idea about what the government and the psychiatrist Brint (hired by the government) have done and will do to him. This is the characteristic of the system: it overpowers the individual, hides some information for the sake of protection, and manipulates the individual if necessary (or regarded as necessary). Many science fiction books like to demonstrate and discuss this issue; for example, in Aldous Huxley's famous Sci-Fiction novel *Brave New World*, there is one passage:

“Just to give you a general idea,” he [the Director of Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre] would explain to them [the students]. For of course some sort of general idea they must have, if they were to be good and happy members of society, as possible. For particulars, as every one knows, make for virtue and happiness; generalities are intellectually necessary evils. No philosophers but fretsawyers and stamp collectors compose the backbone of society. (4)

The authority fears that people might gain too much knowledge—too much power; since knowledge is power, so it deprives people of sources of knowledge. The system decides which knowledge or information the individuals should learn and which they should not. Furthermore, the system usually monitors the individuals in order to check their behaviors. Not surprisingly, George Orwell's “Big Brother is Watching You” in *1984* also occurs in the Complex in Robert Cormier's *The Bumblebee Files Anyway*. Because the Complex is actually a hospital, there is a monitor in each room to keep every patient's condition checked. The monitor becomes a metaphor of the system's eye.

Nevertheless, many individuals still try to do something to rebel against the



system. Adam Farmer starts a journey of finding his father, and Barney Snow steals a mock car and pushes it from the roof down to the earth, watching it fly. Although their efforts eventually seem to be fruitless, their accusation against the system is seen, and their gestures impress many readers. The readers may begin to think about the nature of the systems and to question their own. Cormier writes down such dark stories to remind us and to inspire us to examine our own systems.

### 3.3. Guilt vs. Forgiveness

The third theme that Cormier likes to write about is guilt vs. forgiveness. Cormier was born in a Roman Catholic family, and he became a Catholic too. One of his favorite novelists is Graham Greene, who was a famous Catholic writer. As a result, the theme of good vs. evil and the theme of guilt vs. forgiveness in Cormier's works often appear, though the former is more obvious. Cart argues that "Good and evil are *the* essential considerations of every Cormier novel....it is surely another 'adult' writer, Graham Greene, to whom he is most clearly indebted. As Greene was, so is Cormier a Roman Catholic whose beliefs, guilts, and questionings enrich all his themes and all his fictions" (186).

The types of guilt in Cormier's young adult novels can be divided into two: one is real guilt, and the other is the consciousness of guilt. For example, what Archie, Emile and Brother Leon in *The Chocolate War* have done is real guilt, while Jerry's best friend the Goober always feels guilty because he thinks he has not protected his friend—this is a guilt conscience. Ironically, people who are really guilty often suffer no pain, but people with a guilt conscience have to endure this feeling all the time.

This happens in real life as well as Cormier's novels. Archie, Emile and Brother Leon have never felt sorry at all. In the sequel *Beyond the Chocolate War*, Emile even



threatens Jerry and finally beats him again; Brother Leon makes a student David Caroni commit suicide. And at the end when Archie's right hand Obie asks Archie why he has done all these evil things to the school and everyone, Archie's answer is: "Oh, I am an easy scapegoat, Obie. For you and everybody else at Trinity. Always have been. But you had free choice, buddy. Just like Brother Andrew always says in Religion. Free choice, Obie, and you did the choosing...." (264). And then Obie asks Archie "what the hell are you?" Archie replies that "I am Archie Costello, and I'll always be there, Obie. You'll always have me wherever you go and whatever you do. Tomorrow, ten years from now. Know why, Obie? Because I'm you. I'm all the things you hide inside you. That's me—" (264). This uncomfortable statement from Archie demonstrates the nature of Archie: an agent of evil, if not evil itself. Since evil is implacable, it is expected that Archie never feels guilty, and he (and other evils) never requires and receives any forgiveness.

However, has an ordinary man like the Goober been forgiven? In *Beyond the Chocolate War*, there is a possibility: when the Goober asks Jerry for the forgiveness, Jerry invites the Goober to go jogging; while jogging they both talk about the events happening last semester, and Jerry says to the Goober that "I hope you're not feeling guilty" (158); even earlier as Jerry told his father, he mentioned that "I should tell the Goober that he didn't double-cross me last year. Cripes, he acts like he was a traitor or something. And he wasn't" (109). Jerry's kind behavior makes the Goober feel much better, but he still cannot forget the terrible time he and Jerry got through, so the Goober decides to transfer to another high school after this semester. However, he eventually receives forgiveness from Jerry, while it must take a longer time to let himself go in peace.

In Cormier's novellas *Tunes for Bears to Dance To* and *Heroes*, both protagonists Henry Cassavant and Francis Cassavant face a similar situation. They are

not evil, but they do commit the sins of omission: For Henry, he knew Mr. Hairston's intention to hurt the old man Mr. Levine by ruining his hometown model. Although Henry did not mean to destroy that model, he accidentally did. Henry feels very guilty, and urges his family to move back to Frenchtown where they originally lived. Nevertheless, Henry is eager to have information about Mr. Levine and his work. Several weeks passing, Henry steps into this town again, meets an acquaintance George, and learns that Mr. Levine starts to rebuild the replica. Finally George hands a little figure to Henry, which is a figure of Henry made by Mr. Levine. This is a touching scene, reminding the reader of the Bible's "and now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians, Ch.13). Henry is forgiven by God, not Mr. Levine because he does not know what Henry has done. At the very end of this novella, Henry knelt and prayed for his parents, his dead brother, Mr. Levine, George, himself, and finally Mr. Hairston:

When he whispered "Deliver us from evil" at the end of the Our Father, he thought of Mr. Hairston. Then he did something he had never done before. He prayed for Mr. Hairston. "Forgive him," he whispered.

*Forgive me too. (101)*

Just like the Bible says: "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one" (The Gospel According to Luke, Ch. 11).

Not coincidentally, in *Heroes*, the protagonist's last name is Cassavant, the same last name of Henry in *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*. *Tunes for Bears to Dance To* was published in 1992, and *Heroes* was published in 1998. The latter is not a sequel of the

former; they both have independent plots and characters, although both settings are in the same regions, Frenchtown and Wickburg.

These two stories, however, share some features in common. First of all, they both are novellas, and the readership is regarded as early teenagers, which is younger than Cormier's usual readers. Second, both novellas deal with the theme of guilt vs. forgiveness, especially the sins of omission. And there is a scene of praying in both books. Third, they both have more optimistic endings, different from Cormier's other books. The story of *Heroes* is about an eighteen-year-old boy Francis who saves his comrade's life at war but his face was badly injured. He returns to his hometown in order to finish his mission—to kill another hero named Larry, who has been adored, admired and respected by many teens for several years. However, Larry betrays Francis and almost rapes Francis' girlfriend Nicole. At the time Francis was there but did not stop Larry, so Francis feels very guilty about Nicole. Finally Francis finds where Larry lives, but he does not kill Larry. Instead, Larry kills himself after Francis leaves. After Larry dies, Francis goes to a convent to ask for Nicole's whereabouts, and he finally finds Nicole in a college. Nicole tells Francis that she has a new life, and wishes him a new life too. Francis decides to leave this town, and have plastic surgery to rebuild his face. It seems that Francis is eventually forgiven by Nicole, by himself and by God.

Nevertheless, why does Francis (or other ordinary people) have to make such painful journey to seek forgiveness? Campbell argues that “in Francis the tendency to passive observation from concealment become a fatal flaw that leads to terrible sins of omission, a facet of spiritual trespass that Cormier always found more blameworthy than active sins of commission” (Campbell 1: 189). As a result, characters in Cormier's novels committing the sins of omission undertake more agony than people who really have the sins of commission. Fortunately, at least both protagonists in

*Tunes for Bears to Dance To* and *Heroes* received forgiveness.

In contrast, that is not the case of the protagonist of *We all Fall Down*, Buddy, who also has the sins of omission. As four teenagers break into one house and trash it, Buddy is one of them. Buddy has actually done nothing—neither hurt the girl named Karen, nor stopped the other three fellows. But he is the only one who feels guilty. Buddy is condemned after he meets Karen's sister Jane and falls in love with her. Buddy begins to worry that someday Jane might learn he is one of those people who trashed her house. At last Buddy's secret is revealed by a psychopath called the Avenger, who also has a crush on Jane and later kidnaps her. After Jane is out of danger, she breaks up with Buddy. In this story, Buddy receives no mercy and no forgiveness probably because he really did nothing to redeem himself from his fault, not even kneeling down in prayer. All he has done is worry, tell lies, and drink alcohol. Cart states that "in the case of Buddy and Jane, this inevitability leads, naturally, to the destruction to their relationship and the loss of any hope of Buddy redemption" (183). That is true. Buddy's condition is a mirror which alerts us that although "to err is human, to forgive divine" may be right, we ordinary people must do something to make up for our guilt, then there will be a possibility to gain forgiveness.

# Chapter 4

## Character

In his famous book *The Art of Fiction*, David Lodge argues that “CHARACTER is arguably the most important single component of the novel” (67). The characters of a story tell and show the readers what has happened and is about to happen. If a writer creates vivid characters, the story with these characters will be believable. Brooks and Penn Warren also argue that “we could not discuss these stories without going into the problems of character. We had constantly to ask whether the actions performed were “in character”; that is, whether they were psychologically credible” (107). Many critics and writers pay a lot of attention to characters. Even Robert Cormier used to speak of “the method I have applied throughout the years, showing how a strong emotion caused me to use real people and situations to produce a short story that is entirely fiction” (8 plus 13). Real people are usually the prototypes of characters in a story.

### 4.1. Types of Characters

The soul of a story is the characters, which play under the plot to make readers laugh or cry. There are various types of characters, such as protagonist vs. antagonist, flat vs. round characters, and static vs. dynamic characters. A protagonist and an antagonist, according to *The Children’s Literature Dictionary*, are “the principal characters in a literary work. The term originated in ancient Greek drama when the *pro* (*first*) actor led the chorus in the *agon* (*contest*) and, thus, opposed the antagonist” (137). In another words, “the protagonist” means “the main character”, while “the

antagonist” means “the character who acts against the protagonist”. For example, in *The Chocolate War*, the protagonist is Jerry, and the antagonists are Archie and Emile.

The other two kinds of characters are flat vs. round characters, and static vs. dynamic characters. The former attaches importance to whether the characters receive a detailed description or not, whereas the latter stresses if the characters have changed or not by the end of the story.

#### 4.1.1. Flat vs. Round

E. M. Forster argues that “we may divide characters into flat and round (73)”. He may be the first one who brings up this division. He later writes that “flat characters were called ‘humours’ in the seventeenth century, and are sometimes called types, and sometimes caricatures....the really flat character can be expressed in one sentence” (73). Some literary theorists using Forster’s concept provide more recent and more specific examples for young readers. For example, David L. Russell suggests that “flat characters have no depth—we see but one side or aspect of them” (39). Or Lukens and Cline argue that “a flat character is one readers do not know well, who has fewer traits” (16).

In contrast to flat characters, round characters have more descriptions, more information, and more specific detailed traits. Usually the protagonist (also called the main character) is a round character.

Since young adult novels usually have fewer pages than adult novels do, young adult novels often have flat characters without longer, more detailed descriptions and information. For instance, in *The Chocolate War*, except the protagonist Jerry and the antagonist Archie, most characters can be regarded as flat characters. Some are

“in-between”, having more traits than a typical flat character, but not as many as a round character. These still can be considered “flat”. Archie’s right-hand man Obie is one of these. He is described in some detail, but not as much as Archie and Jerry. It seems that the division of flat characters and round characters in a story is not a dichotomy, but rather a continuum. One reader (or critic) may regard a character as a flat character, whereas another may regard this character as a round one, particularly for those characters who are not protagonists, but not background characters either.

After comparing Cormier’s books for young adult readers, the researcher finds that Cormier’s first five young adult novels, *The Chocolate War*, *I Am the Cheese*, *After the First Death*, *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway* and *Beyond the Chocolate War*, seem to have more round characters than the others. This may be because these five books have more pages than the others, or because there are more important characters in these five novels. For example, in *The Chocolate War* and its sequel *Beyond the Chocolate War*, there are at least eight important characters (Jerry, Archie, Obie, the Goober, Emile, Brother Leon, Carter, and Ray), while Cormier’s later novels have fewer round characters such as *Tenderness* or *The Rag and Bone Shop* which have only three and two key characters respectively (in *Tenderness*: Eric, Lori and Lieutenant Jake; in *The Rag and Bone Shop*: Trent and Jason).

In terms of flat characters, according to Lukens and Cline, a special kind of flat character is a foil, which means “a minor character with few traits, but useful as a contrast to highlight the traits of the more fully developed central character” (16-17). They take the Goober in *The Chocolate War* as an example: the Goober can be considered a foil because he hates to sell chocolate too, but chooses not to say no like his friend Jerry does. The Goober serves as a foil to Jerry, making the latter more heroic, but more tragic too.



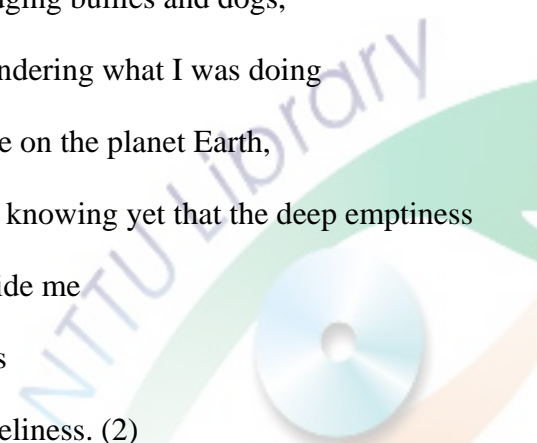
Interestingly, the researcher observes that many novels for youngsters have the protagonist's best friend as a foil. To take Cormier's fiction as an example, at least seven books use this device (in one book the protagonist's foil is his younger sister). These seven books are *The Chocolate War* and *Beyond the Chocolate War* (protagonist Jerry and his best friend the Goober), *I Am the Cheese* (Adam and Amy), *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway* (Barney and Billy), *Fade* (Paul and Jules), *Other Bells for Us to Ring* (Darcy and Kathleen Mary), and *We All Fall Down* (protagonist Buddy and his sister Addy). Even in Cormier's collection of short stories *8 Plus 1*, among nine stories there are four using such a device. Why? The researcher argues that the closest person, even most important person, for a teenager is her/his best friend, not her/his parent(s). A writer for young adults cannot omit describing the relationships between teens and their friends. Since the protagonist's friend must show up, it seems reasonable that this friend serves as a foil to highlight the main character.

Another special type of flat characters is the stereotype. *The Children's Literature Dictionary* gives a definition of stereotype as "a flat character lacking individual traits and representing an uncritical assessment of the attributes of a social, cultural or other group" (156). Donelson and Nilsen argue that it is necessary for writers to have some stereotyped characters to save their descriptions; it is impossible to develop every character in each story. In Cormier's fiction for young adults, the researcher finds that there indeed exists one special kind of stereotyped characters: bullies. Cormier once had an interview and he said to the journalist that "I was never a schoolyard hero. I was never athletic. And I did have 'the bully'. The only consolation I get from that Graham Greene had a bully and seventy years later he was still writing about him...I had my bully, and it was excruciating...I was always introspective, reading...."(<http://www.achuka.co.uk/special/cormier/cormier01.htm>).



Not surprisingly, there is always a shadow of the bully in Cormier's books. For example, in his autobiographic verse novel *Frenchtown Summer*, Cormier writes down such sentences as the following:

That was the summer of my first paper route,  
and I walked the tenement canyons  
of Frenchtown  
delivering *The Monument Times*,  
dodging bullies and dogs,  
wondering what I was doing  
here on the planet Earth,  
not knowing yet that the deep emptiness  
inside me  
was  
loneliness. (2)



#### 4.1.2. Static vs. Dynamic

In addition to flat vs. round characters, there is another common classification of characters: static vs. dynamic characters. Different from flat vs. round type, static vs. dynamic type stresses whether the character finally changes or not. If a character remains the same from beginning to end, this character is called static. In contrast, if a character changes after s/he has met some incidents, this character is called dynamic. Since many stories (if not all) for youngsters are about how the main character turns into a better one, the protagonist in children's books and young adult novels tends to

be dynamic. On the other hand, most supporting characters and background characters are more likely to be static.

However, the classification of static vs. dynamic characters is not parallel with that of flat vs. round characters. That is to say, a round character, which has more detailed descriptions, does not necessarily change by the end of a story. As protagonists, always round characters, most of them indeed change by the end of a story. For example, Jerry in *The Chocolate War* told his friend the Goober not to disturb the universe; he has really changed himself, from confrontational to submissive. But Jerry changes again. In the second half of *Beyond the Chocolate War*, he decides to stay in Trinity High, and he becomes braver than ever. Other protagonists, such as Henry in *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*, Darcy in *Other Bells for Us to Ring*, Paul in *Fade* and Francis in *Heroes* also change. They are all protagonists, round characters and dynamic characters. One exception is Buddy, the protagonist in *We All Fall Down*: at first he did not stop his companions from committing the crime of trashing a house, and then he dared not tell the truth to his new girlfriend Jane, who is a daughter of the owners of that house. As a result, Jane breaks up with him. This is the price of not changing, since as a protagonist, he is supposed to become better.

On the other hand, the antagonist of a story, even though a round character, tends to remain the same. To take one antagonist, Archie in *The Chocolate War*, as an example: in the very beginning he was cool, powerful, and manipulative, especially as he assigned tasks to newcomers. At the end of this novel, he still remains cool, powerful and manipulative. Even by the end of the sequel, *Beyond the Chocolate War*, Archie has still never changed. In an earlier section (chapter 3.1) the researcher has argued that Archie is a symbol of Evil, so that he keeps the same traits from beginning to end, even though Archie is indeed a round character.

Similar to Archie, Emile and Brother Leon in *The Chocolate War* and *Beyond the Chocolate War*, Mr. Hairston in *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*, Lulu in *In the Middle of the Night*, and Harry in *We all Fall Down* are all evil, and they remain wicked throughout the whole novel. But different from Archie, these characters are all flat (or in-between). Cormier does not give too much information about these characters, nor does he have them change. Lukens and Clines suggest that “flat characters do not change: readers do not know them well enough to perceive their evolution from one kind of person into another kind...flat characters cannot change because readers know little of what they were like in the first place” (20). No matter what kinds of flat characters, such as supporting characters, background characters, foil characters, stereotyped characters, they are all static; that is to say, they never change throughout the story.

Flat characters must be static, but static characters are not necessarily flat. Sometimes round characters are static too; as the researcher mentions above, the antagonist tends to remain the same. Here is an intriguing example: in *The Chocolate War*, one of Archie’s stooges is Obie. He seems to be flat because Cormier has not provided too much information about him. Obie is static too, for he seems not to change from beginning to end. However, in *Beyond the Chocolate War*, Obie leaps forward to become one of the main characters, who tries to kill Archie. Because Obie, in this sequel, turns into a protagonist, there is more room for him to change: he loses his patience with Archie, gradually comes to resent Archie, and finally attempts to murder Archie. By this time Obie is no longer static; he is dynamic instead. In Obie’s case, he is not dynamic until he becomes a round character.

In conclusion, most protagonists and antagonists are round characters, while supporting characters and background characters are flat. In Cormier’s young adult novels, some of the protagonist’s best friends play the role of foils, which highlight

the protagonists. In terms of static vs. dynamic characters, like other books for youngsters, the protagonists tend to change by the end of the story, which makes them dynamic. In contrast, the antagonists usually remain the same from beginning to end, so they are more static, even though many antagonists are round characters. And finally, all flat characters are static, including those in Cormier's young adult fiction.

## 4.2. Characterization

Characters are not real people. E. M. Forster calls them "a number of word-masses" (55) made by the novelist, so how does the writer make characters seem real? The answer is "characterization", which means the way that the writer presents the characters in a story. Lukens and Cline, in their *A Critical Handbook of Literature for Young Adults*, call the characterization "revelation of character", and they argue that there are five facets in revelation of character. These are by actions, by speech, by appearance, by others' comments and by the author's comments. However, the researcher puts "by speech" and "by comments" into one category, "by discourses"; therefore, the following discussions will focus on the characterization by appearance, by discourses and by actions.

### 4.2.1. By Appearance

In the real world, as people meet a stranger, their first impression is what s/he looks like, including her/his face, figure, clothing and so on. This is similar to how an author tries to introduce the characters to the readers, particularly for the first time. Lodge takes George Eliot's *Middlemarch* as an example, illustrating how older fiction introduces a character by giving a physical description:

Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters; and her profiles as well as her stature and bearing seemed to gain the more dignity from her plain garments....(68)

However, in modern novels, such long descriptions of a character's appearance become fewer and fewer. Nowadays the readers are not as patient as before, so some writers skip the static description in order to give the story a faster pace. Especially due to the readership and the length of the story, many writers for young adult novels omit any description of appearance at all, but write down more actions and dialogues instead. With respect to Cormier's books, it is found that in his first novel for young adults, *The Chocolate War*, there are still a lot of descriptions of characters' appearance, particularly of the main characters—usually the round characters. For instance, Cormier describes Archie as “Archie's voice was soft with concern, his eyes gentle with compassion” (10) to contrast with his real manipulative personality. And Emile is “a brute which was kind of funny because he didn't look like a brute. He wasn't big or overly strong. In fact, he was small for a tackle on the football team. But he was an animal and he didn't play by the rules” (49). Such description gives the readers an image of this character, and implies what he is going to do in the future.

Although there are plenty of descriptions of characters' appearance in *The Chocolate War*, readers find much less description in Cormier's second young adult novel *I Am the Cheese*. In this novel Cormier uses more narrative devices than static statements. There are three narrative layers in *I Am the Cheese*: a first-person narrator

“I” who begins a bicycle journey, the tape transcriptions of a psychotherapist using an objective point of view, and the narration following a tape transcription with a third-person narrator named Adam. Not surprisingly, “I” as a teen narrator in this case does not describe other people because “I” has been preoccupied with finding his father. In addition, a teenager “I” may not have much patience for or pay much attention to other people. In the second layer, the objective transcriptions, it is reasonable to have dialogues (or so-called “interrogations”) between the psychotherapist Brint and the patient without any description or only a little. However, as Brint asks about “the gray man”, the patient replies that “there was something—gray about him. His hair was gray. But more than that: to me, gray is nothing color and that’s how Mr. Grey seemed to me. Like nothing” (109). The description of this mysterious person indicates the importance of “the gray man”, who is beyond “nothing” and even related to everything of the patient’s past. Here is a powerful irony.

On the contrary, only in the third-person narrator Adam’s section, the readers can find some descriptions of others, especially of a girl Amy whom Adam is fond of. Adam describes Amy as “she was short and robust and freckled, and one of her front teeth was crooked, but her eyes were beautiful, blue, like the blue of his mother’s best china” (46). This description also has the significance: for Adam, Amy’s existence is not only as a girl, but as the light of his life. And it is the same to the readers for the readers; as the readers read the passages about Amy, they rest themselves a little bit during the reading.

Descriptions of people’s appearance are less used by modern authors of young adult novels. When a writer describes a character deliberately, it is assumed that this character must be extraordinary or abnormal, or at least special, in terms of characterization. Brooks and Penn Warren argue that “every character in fiction must

resemble ourselves; that is, he or she must be recognizable human even as we are. But some characters are obviously much more special than others, and require much fuller characterization” (107). To Take Cormier’s *Tenderness* as an example, the readers read of the protagonist, a vicious serial murderer Eric, “he had an innocent face. His face was also beautiful. Innocence and beauty, always confirmed when he looked into a mirror, which he often did” (30). This description of Eric’s appearance contrasts with the appearance of the police lieutenant Jake, who tries his best to put Eric into prison: “he was an old man, crevices in his face, sorrowful blue eyes, wispy gray hair. He smoked endless cigarettes, the ashes falling indiscriminately on his shirt or tie. His jacket never matched his trousers” (36). They are very different in both appearance and personality. However, the good-looking one is a real criminal whereas the sloppy one is a law-defender. This is an ironic effect in this novel just as in *I Am the Cheese*. So Cormier gives the readers examples of “do not judge a book by its cover”.

Characterization by appearance usually has its specific purpose. In Cormier’s 1995 psychological thriller *In the Middle of the Night*, the protagonist Denny has a connection with a female Lulu by phone, and he is attracted by Lulu’s smoky but sexy voice. Denny later falls in love with Lulu, or more precisely, with her voice, with “someone he had never seen, did not know at all, someone who might be a girl or a woman. Loved someone who was completely unknown to him, like some one in a dream” (149). Denny’s dream continued until he meets Lulu in her house, and “he saw a woman entering the room, leaning on an aluminium walker as she made her way painfully toward him, one deliberate step at a time” (169). Denny hears Lulu’s greeting; he recognizes this voice, but denies the voice belonging to Lulu:

That voice. Lulu’s voice. But this could not be Lulu, this woman with legs in steel braces, old, not old like a grandmother, but not young, skin



tight on her cheeks, gaunt, disheveled black hair tumbling over her forehead in untidy bangs.

“Sorry to disappoint you, Denny,” she said, the voice still husky but tinged with sarcasm now. (169)

Such appearance not only disappoints Denny, but also astonishes him. Cormier gives a more detailed description of Lulu’s looks in order to express Denny’s shock and Lulu’s deep resentment against Denny’s father because Lulu thought that Denny’s father caused a theater fire, destroying her appearance and her identity. For many people, how they look is very relevant to what they are; that is to say, the appearance is related to the identity. In *Heroes*, the very first paragraph describes the protagonist Francis: “My name is Francis Joseph Cassavant and I have just returned to Frenchtown in Monument and the war is over and I have no face” (1). Afterwards, a specific description of Francis’s “no face” is given:

I keep a bandage on the space where my nose used to be. The bandage reaches the back of my head and is kept in place with a safety pin.

There are problems, of course.

My nose, or I should say my caves, run a lot. I don’t know why this should happen and even the doctors can’t figure it out but it’s like I have a cold that never goes away. The bandage gets wet and I have to change it often and it’s hard closing the safety pin at the back of my head. (3)

The opening soon catches the readers’ attention, and gives them an image of the protagonist Francis. In terms of Francis’s “no face”, Campbell argues that “he



[Cormier] has created a character in whom an inherent compulsion to hide is made visible in his facelessness and his concealing bandages". Campbell also quotes an interview with Cormier: "he [Francis] is in disguise for two reasons: because he is going to commit this act of revenge and doesn't want people to know who he is. But he is also hiding from his real identity, too, and from something that he did in his past" (Campbell 1:189). This case of "no face" indicates that the appearance, particularly the face, seems to be a symbol of the identity. Another example is Ozzie in *Fade*, who had been abused in his childhood; his nose had been broken and was always running. Ozzie hates everything, including his surroundings and himself: "he hated the convent itself. Hated the rest of the world too. Hated himself as well, especially the parts of himself he could do nothing about, the headaches and the sniveling. Never could get rid of it, the running nose" (227). Ozzie's injured nose symbolizes his damaged personality, and later he commits several crimes including a homicide. However, after he dies on his uncle Paul, Ozzie's nose has a different image: "something almost sweet in the face, in repose, as if untouched by time or pain or injury, the abused nose not repulsive now, still bruised and broken but noble somehow, like an old battle wound" (298). Ozzie's nose is a symbol in this novel too, just like Francis's "no face" in *Heroes*. These two examples show that the characterization by the appearance not only gives the character a vivid image, but also has a symbolic meaning.

#### 4.2.2. By Discourses

Usually the first impression is people's appearance, and the next is their speech if they have a chance to talk. Unlike appearance, speech is rather dynamic including the intonation, the gestures and the facial expressions. Brooks and Penn Warren argue

that “the use of speech is a rich resource of dramatic presentation” (109). According to Lodge, there are two kinds of discourses in fiction: showing and telling, although showing can indicate the actions that characters make as well. Lodge points out that:

FICTIONAL DISCOURSE constantly alternates between *showing* us what happened and *telling* us what happened. The purest form of showing is the quoted speech of characters, in which language exactly mirrors the event (because the event is linguistic). The purest form of telling is authorial summary, in which the conciseness and abstraction of narrator’s language effaces the particularity and individuality of the characters and their actions. (122)

Lodge’s division of showing and telling means the ways in which the author presents a character directly or indirectly. These two ways are both used in fiction: “showing” is more lively and memorable but length-consuming, whereas “telling” is quicker but less vivid. Usually a writer applies the telling technique more often to “flat characters”, as they are called by E. M. Forster, particularly the less important ones. On the other hand, “round characters” often have more room to show what they say and what they do since they are the protagonists or at least significant characters. Of course, the discussion above is a tendency, but not an iron rule; it all depends on the purpose and the effect a writer wants to have.

As mentioned earlier, Lukens and Cline suggest that the ways of characterization can be by appearance, by speech, by other characters’ comments, by the author’s comments and by actions. In this study, “by speech” and “by comments” are put into one category, “by discourses”. The characterization that Forster describes as “people whose secret lives are visible or might be visible” (70) due to the author’s

comments will be discussed in this section first. Lukens and Cline take *The Chocolate War* as an example, illustrating how Cormier comments on the protagonist Jerry—as Brother Leon starts his harassment of a student, Bailey, in class, the author Cormier tells the readers about Jerry, that “Jerry’s neck began to hurt. And his lungs burned. He realized he’d been holding his breath. He gulped air, carefully, not wanting to move a muscle. He wished he was invisible. He wished he wasn’t here in the classroom” (44). This passage about Jerry is introduced by the author Cormier, not Jerry himself. Lukens and Cline call this device “revelation of character by author’s comments”; they argue that “characters, then, come to be known....when the author chooses to be omniscient, by what the author says about them” (12). It is reasonable to assume that the author’s comments occur in a story using the omniscient point of view, like *The Chocolate War*.

On the other hand, if a story employs the first-person point of view, there will be no author’s comments. In Cormier’s novella *Other Bells for Us to Ring*, the story is told by the first-person narrator “I”, an eleven-year-old girl Darcy, and uses her point of view to watch the world. The text is examined and it is found that there are hardly any author’s comments. However, some comments indeed seem to belong to the author Cormier, but not the narrator “I”. For example, in the last scene, Darcy’s father finally arrives home from a hospital, and Darcy, the narrator “I” says that “Everyone laughed and I laughed, too, finding out for the first time how close laughing could be to weeping” (149). This philosophical statement is more like the author Cormier’s comment, but it is still possible to be said by a mature teenage girl Darcy. A story with the omniscient point of view seems to allow the author to use more sophisticated words, even more complicated expressions, to describe the characters and the surroundings. In contrast, a story told by the first-person narrator is likely to have simpler vocabulary and more straightforward statements, especially if the narrator is a

child or a teenager. Cart argues that the first-person adolescent voice as narrator is the conventional form in young adult literature. And this device “encourages the colloquial, the declarative, the conversational, and discourages adventurous diction or syntax, imagery, figurative language, rhythmic or aesthetic expression” (252). The impact of different points of view and narrators will be discussed in chapter five.

With respect to characterization by others’ comments, the researcher again takes Jerry in *The Chocolate War* as an example to make a contrast with the author’s comments. Not only does Cormier give the readers what Jerry thinks and how he feels, other people around Jerry also provide their comments on him. For instance, one day as Jerry waits for a bus at a bus stop, he confronts several strangers. Those strangers call Jerry “sub-human” and “square boy”. They call Jerry “middle-aged at fourteen, fifteen. Already caught in a routine. Wow” (20). Moreover, the first time when Archie heard of Jerry from Obie, he thought of Jerry being a “poor kid, mother’s dead” (14). But gradually Archie changes his comments on Jerry. Finally he considers Jerry “touched off the fireworks” (232). It shows that different characters’ comments can be varied, even on the same person; the comments from the same character are also changeable as time passes. Other characters’ comments are less authoritative than the author’s comments. The readers hardly doubt the truth of the author’s words, whereas they seldom give full credit to other characters’ comments because they are so different, even contradictory sometimes. However, other characters’ comments make a story more unpredictable and more ambiguous, and more fun, of course.

The researcher argues that the author’s comments belong to “telling” category, and other characters’ comments should belong to “showing” category because they “exactly mirror the event”. Lodge mentions that “showing is the quoted speech of characters” (122). Another showing technique in fiction is using “conversation”, or “speech” as it is called by Lukens and Cline. Different people in fiction have different

vocabulary, intonation, tones and so on. Brooks and Penn Warren argue that “the laconic soldier, the querulous charwoman, the shy convent-school girl....all have their own vocabularies and their ways of putting words together. An author, in order to be convincing, must have his characters speak ‘in character,’ and his normal way of presenting an unusual character is to give us the flavour of his dialect and idiom” (109). Lodge also claims that “at the simplest level there is the alternation of the narrator’s voice with the voices of the characters, rendered in their own specific accents and idioms of class, region, occupation, gender, etc” (128).

Among these different characters, it is regarded that speaking like a psychopath is quite challenging. In *We all Fall Down*, there is a madman named the Avenger (his real name is Mickey). When he kidnaps sixteen-year-old Jane, Jane tells him:

“You were eleven a long time ago, Mickey. When you killed that bully. That was bad. But you are not eleven anymore. And I am not a bully. I’m Jane Jerome and you’re Mickey Stallings....”

“I’m...” He was at a loss now for words, frowning, his mouth open, pink tongue fluttering against his lips, his eyes flickering to her chest and away.

“*You* killed your grandfather,” she said. “The Avenger didn’t do it. You did. Mickey Stallings. What would your mother say if she knew? Your mother would be mad at you, would punish you.”

“No,” he cried. “No.”

“Yes.” Straining against the ropes that held her, cheeks stiff with caked vomit, hair falling across her eyes, wrist chafed, eyes searing. “Yes, yes, yes.” Each syllable erupting out of her fear and her determination and her

desperation. “You killed your grandfather...your grandfather who loved you.”

“No,” he cried again. Anguished, the word like a howling in the air...nooooooooooooo...drawn out...echoing in the dusty shed...terror and tears in the word...nooooooooo...and pain and futility...nooooooooo....(178-179)

The conversation above not only demonstrates the female protagonist Jane’s courage and intelligence, but also shows how sick the Avenger is. For a writer, to reveal an abnormal character’s personality by conversation is more powerful than by direct comments on such a character. However, if an author wants the readers to believe in such a character in fiction, s/he must give the character a credible performance; in this case, a convincing dialogue. As a result, a writer must observe more different people in the real world, listening to and imitating their speech, and transforming it into her/his own words. There is another example to show how a conversation presents a character’s personality and keeps the story going. In Cormier’s final fiction *The Rag and Bone Shop*, which is full of dialogues between two protagonists, a boy Jason and an interrogator Trent, and has been called a “two-person show” by Campbell, one conversation reveals how Trent tries to influence and even manipulate Jason to admit to the crime Jason did not commit:

“She was a pretty little thing, wasn’t she?” Trent asked. Purposely suggestive.

“Kind of.”

“Did you ever think of showing her some affection?”

“Like what?”

“Touching her, perhaps. Kissing her.”

The boy’s eyes widened in surprise, his mouth twisting in revulsion.

Hands feet, body, all spasmodic in protest. Not defensive in anyway.

Everything asserting his innocence.

Which Trent had to be quick to acknowledge. (117)

. . . . .

“Look, it’s understandable. You didn’t want to hurt her, did you?”

“No, I—”

“Those things happen. You lose your temper, you get upset, things happen fast, you didn’t mean to do it but things got out of hand. There was a rock nearby—”.... (125)

The interrogation is twenty-nine pages long, almost one-fifth of this book. In this conversation, the readers see the vulnerability of Jason and the craftiness of Trent. Via dialogues, the story reaches the climax in which Jason finally makes a false confession of killing that girl, as well as the characterization of both protagonists (or Jason the protagonist, and Trent the antagonist).

#### 4.2.3. By Actions

Lodge’s division of “telling” and “showing” is discussed earlier; to sum up, the author’s comments are telling whereas other characters’ comments as well as conversation are showing. They are all in one category: characterization by discourses. In this section, another showing technique in fiction will be discussed; that is, characterization by actions. Although making conversation can also be regarded as an action, the focus here will be free of any dialogues.



Perhaps a character's actions in fiction are the most attractive part to the readers, particularly to the young ones. The actions make a story more interesting and fast-paced. And the actions are interwoven with the characters and the plot: characters bring out the actions, and these actions constitute the whole plot. Brooks and Penn Warren mention that “ ‘action’ serves as a rough equivalent of what we commonly think of a ‘plot’ ” (33). However, Brooks and Penn Warren give the definition of “action” and “plot” to clarify that they are different: action indicates that “a series of events having unity and significance” (509), while plot means “the structure of action *as presented* in fiction or drama; it is one aspect of the total design of a story” (514). Here we focus on the relationship between the characters and their actions. How do the characters in fiction reveal their personalities by actions?

Taking one of three vicious characters in *The Chocolate War*, Emile, as an example, Lukens and Cline illustrate how the characterization by Emile's actions works:

When first the reader meets Emile, “he was siphoning gas from a car, watching it flow into a gas jug. Emile giggled.” He is getting his “gas for the week.” Cormier tells us Emile is “an animal, and he doesn't play [football] by the rules.” He “reaches” people by “whistling softly so that it got on the teacher's nerves, a barely perceptible whistle that could drive a teacher up the wall. That's why Emile Janza reversed the usual process.... (10)

By now, the readers have a vivid image of Emile, and his wicked personality appears during these descriptions of his actions. Not only Emile, another evil character Brother Leon also has his own word-pictures. For example, in both *The*



*Chocolate War* and *Beyond the Chocolate War*, Brother Leon uses his position as a teacher to manipulate students by giving them a pass or fail grade:

Brother Leon and his evil pass-fail tests. The kinds of tests that kept students on edge. Questions with ambiguous answers, answers that called for the educated guesses. As a result, Leon in complete command of the results. Could pass or fail students at will. No other teacher did this. Worst of all, Leon used the tests for his own purposes. Brought students into his classroom for discussions of the probable results. (235)

The readers might think that Brother Leon is worse than Emile because he is a teacher and priest. And his evil characteristics are established and revealed by the author Cormier. The author gives the readers a reason to learn which one(s) should be admired and which one(s) should be disdained.

Interestingly, among Cormier's fifteen young adult novels, the vicious or wicked characters are more unforgettable than the good ones. The wicked ones act strangely, abnormally and terrifyingly. A noticeable example is Eric in *Tenderness*, who is the protagonist but an evil one—a serial killer. When Eric was a boy, he found fun in killing small animals, such as birds, and received a sense of tenderness. After he grew up to be a teen, he murdered his mother and step-father, and then three teenage girls. Cormier describes how Eric kills a mouse while in the facility:

He reached out and snatched the tiny rodent, not surprised that it was so easy. It was as if the mouse knew its fate and was sacrificing itself. The pulse of the small body beat softly against the flesh of Eric's palm. The nose twittered, the body twitched. Despite the loneliness that he knew

would be the result of his actions, he gently, lovingly squeezed, seeking the tenderness. (71)

Such a scene of Eric's cruelty sends a chill up the readers' spines. But Eric has changed gradually after he meets Lori and began a journey. When he learns that Lori might know his secret, he decides to kill her one night: "He held the pillow in front of him like a shield. He had done his mother this way. Seemed like the kindest way to do it—you did not see the face during the struggle" (188). Lori suddenly wakes up; at first she is scared then she gives up: "closing her eyes, she sighed. 'Go ahead, then. Do it.' He lowered the pillow, stood uncertainly beside her bed....he let the pillow drop to the floor" (189).

Why does Eric change his mind, even his attitude, toward Lori? Cormier spends more than one hundred pages to present their journey, mainly by actions and dialogues, to tell the readers how they develop their dangerous liaison. At last Eric takes a boating trip with Lori, but it ends in an accident in which Lori drowns in a lake. The police arrest Eric and accuse him of killing her on purpose. Eric is sent to prison. In the last scene, the readers read this passage: "the worse image of all, the one he dreaded but could not prevent: the way she clung to him at the last moment in the waters of the lake: *Love me, Eric*. Eric touched his cheek, finding moisture there—was this what crying was like? Later, in the deepest heart of the night, the monster also cried" (229).

Eric's personality is displayed by his actions; so is his change. This character gives the readers a very impressive image because Cormier makes Eric act like a cold-blooded monster. Nevertheless, his last action, crying in the middle of the night, seems reasonable and more human. Lukens and Cline argue that "we have come to expect that an experience—action—may cause change....Character, or who and what

the person is, influences action. And once involved in the action, the person may either experience change or remain unchanged” (13-14). In this case, Eric’s journey with Lori does change him, and this change makes the readers feel more comfortable, for the reason that they know that people can change for the better.





## Chapter 5

### Narrative

The focus of this chapter is how a story, also called a narrative, is told and organized by an author. The study of a narrative is called narratology, which some researchers regard as a branch of structuralism. *A Glossary of Literary Terms* defines narrative as “[A] **narrative** is a story, whether told in prose or verse, involving events, characters, and what the characters say and do” (181). And narratology “denotes a concern, which became prominent in the mid-twentieth century, with the general theory and practice of narrative in all literary forms” (181). This chapter will discuss three aspects of a narrative: narrative order, point of view/ perspective and narrator.

#### 5.1. Narrative Order

A narrative usually involves the reference of time. However, not every story is told straightforwardly corresponding with the actual time at which every event really happens. Many writers organize their stories by the causality of events, not by the sequence of time. E. M. Forster mentions that “a story as a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence. A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality” (87). For the sake of causality, a writer usually arranges some events in a flashback or a flash forward order. There are three narrative orders discussed below, including chronological order, flashback and flash forward.

### 5.1.1. Chronological Order

Chronological order is a narrative arranged in order of time. Even if not all events of a whole story are told strictly in order of time, this kind of order is still a main feature of a narrative. Lukens and Cline argue that many stories are arranged in a strict chronological order, including Sollace Hotze's *A Circle Unbroken*, Tessa Duder's *In Lane Three*, *Alex Archer*, and so forth (32). Lukens and Cline also argue that even though there may be two events happening at the same time, to demonstrate one event after another does not disturb the time order, these two events are still regarded as chronological.

Via analyzing Cormier's young adult fiction, the researcher finds that in *The Chocolate War* and the sequel *Beyond the Chocolate War*, Cormier mainly follows the time order, confirming Lukens and Cline's argument that "the touchstones chosen for close examination in this text, *The Chocolate War*...move in chronological order, showing one event following another" (32). Indeed, in these two novels, Cormier has every chapter move by the time sequence and from different points of view. For example, the first chapter is about the protagonist Jerry who is playing football at school. The time sequence is chronological and the point of view belongs to Jerry. In chapter two, the point of view turns to Obie, who is a right-hand man of the antagonist Archie. However, in the very first line of this novel, Cormier writes: "THEY MUDERED HIM.", which makes the whole story more like a flashback, or so-called "analeptic" ("back-take") because Cormier writes the final result first, then goes back to narrate and explain it.

A similar case is the time order in *Beyond the Chocolate War*. Since this novel is the sequel to *The Chocolate War*, it is inevitable that it will recall much of the plot from the first novel. For example, as Jerry and his friend, the Goober, talk on the

phone before Jerry returns to Trinity High, they talk about that terrible fight that happened at the end of the first novel, *The Chocolate War*. The Goober says, "...let me tell you that I know that I betrayed you last fall. Stayed home as if I was sick when you were going through hell because of the chocolates, that beating from Janza..." (150). Then Cormier lets Jerry answer, " 'But you were there, Goob. I saw you. You helped me....' He almost said: You held me in your arms when I was all broken inside and out" (150).

This makes the story flow not only in chronological order, but also in a flashback order too. Sometimes a flashback is put in a dialogue between characters or a memory of certain character, and sometimes in a comment or a description by the author.

With respect to the narrative skills, the researcher argues that among Cormier's fifteen works for young adults, at least two books have a relatively complicated narrative structure in terms of the narrative order. They are *I Am the Cheese*, and *After the First Death*. Both of them are among Cormier's early works. In *I Am the Cheese*, Cormier arranges three levels of narratives in one story, involving the narrative order of flash forward, which will be discussed in section 5.1.3. On the other hand, the narrative order of *After the First Death* is flashback, which will be discussed in the next section.

Compared to Cormier's early works, the researcher finds that there is a clear chronological order in this three novellas, *Other Bells for us to Ring*, *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*, and *Heroes*, in which Campbell claims that "the style...much more straightforward than previous Cormier's works" (Campbell 1: 175). These three books are written for younger adolescents, so they contain fewer characters, more explicit themes (e.g., guilt vs. forgiveness), and more linear narrative structures. The same situation happens in Cormier's three psychological thrillers published in the



1990s, *We All Fall Down*, *In the Middle of the Night* and *Tenderness*. Although these three novels have more pages, they all have a faster pace and a more straightforward narrative order than Cormier's early young adult novels such as *I Am the Cheese* or *After the First Death*. Why? The researcher argues that Cormier did not regard himself as a writer for young adults in the first place even though the publisher put his works into the YA category. However, as he gradually recognized that many teenagers loved his books, perhaps he changed his style slightly. For example, he started using fewer metaphors and similes, and giving his novels a more straightforward structure.

The advantages of using a chronological order are as follows: 1) this narrative order corresponds with the human concept of time, since for people time always flows in a chronological order. And 2) it is easier for the writer to recount the events in a narrative. Nevertheless, there is the disadvantage of using a chronological order that it is possible to provide the reader with a direct but relatively dull story.

#### 5.1.2. Flashback

David Lodge argues that “through time-shift, narrative avoids presenting life as just one damn thing after another, and allows us to make connections of causality and irony between widely separated events. A shift of narrative focus back in time may change our interpretation of something which happened much later in the chronology of the story, but which we have already experienced as readers of the text. This is a familiar device of cinema, the flashback” (75). According to Gerard Genette, flashback, also called analepsis, has two categories: 1) completing flashback (return), which comprises the retrospective sections that fill in, after the event, an early gap in a narrative (51), and 2) repeating flashback (recall), which means this part of a

narrative goes back to retrace its own path (54). In Cormier's *After the First Death*, the first section is the protagonist Ben's monologue about his body, which was wounded last summer but has now healed. Ben tells the readers that "I am typing this in the room at Castle and it's beautiful here as I write this. Through the window, I can see the quadrangle and the guys indulging in a snow ball fight...and then I thought of the kids on the bus, strewn around like broken toys while the guns went off...." (4-5)

The story begins with the protagonist Ben's present time, but soon he returns to the event he encountered, the school bus hijacking. In part two of this novel, this central event is demonstrated to the readers. Part two is a flashback of the entire event, and this kind of flashback is regarded as a completing flashback, also called a return—the story "returns" to the time of the main plot (the bus hijacking), and its function is to add the details that the story has not mentioned before in order to complete the whole story.

This novel has two levels of narratives, which are Ben's present story and the bus hijacking. Campbell concludes that "the second level, the Kate-Miro [the bus driver and one of the hijackers] narrative, takes up three times as many pages as the Ben-general [Ben's father] sections and is the main device for telling the story" (Campbell 1: 122). Based on this, the researcher assumes that the completing flashback can be a central part of a narrative, and can even take its own stand; that is to say, an entire story can be a completing flashback. If this narrative goes along with a present-time plot line (like the Ben-general sections in *After the First Death*), it can be regarded as a completing flashback; if not, this narrative will be a complete story in chronological order.

Different from the completing flashback (return), the second kind of flashback, the repeating flashback (recall), happens more frequently. For example, in Cormier's collection of short stories *8 Plus 1*, each story has one or more repeating flashback

scenes as recalls. For instance, in the first story, “The Moustache”, the protagonist seventeen-year-old, Mike, recalls his relationship with his grandmother while driving to a nursing home to visit her. Mike also thinks about his girlfriend Cindy as he drives. Each recall is only a few lines, not like the completing flashback in *After the First Death* which is almost two hundred pages. Moreover, these recalls cannot be another complete story; they are in the same plot line as the main one (i.e., Mike’s visit). In the second story, “Mine on Thursdays”, a divorced father Howie takes his daughter Holly to a playground one day, and he recalls that he had an affair with a model, so his wife divorced him. Now he can meet his daughter only on Thursdays. Such flashbacks give the readers some background details, but are not a central part of a whole story.

Even in Cormier’s longer novellas or novels, there are many repeating flashbacks, even though these stories are in chronological order. For example, the protagonist Francis in *Heroes* constantly recalls the war (World War II) he went through; sometimes he dreams about it:

I find myself in a narrow alley, groping through rising dust, and two German soldiers in white uniforms appear like grim ghosts, rifles coming up, but my automatic is too quick and the head of one of the soldiers explodes like a ripe tomato and the other cries *Mama* as my gunfire cuts him in half, both halves of him tumbling to the ground.... (29)

Another example is that the protagonist Eric, in *Tenderness*, recalls those girls whom he killed as he stays in the facility:

Although he never dreamed, he spent sweet moments in his bed, curled up as if in his mother's womb, eyes half closed, summoning from the past certain moments with his girls—Laura and Betty Ann and Alicia. Moments of intimacy and ecstasy and a piercing tenderness that became an ache within him. But a sweet ache, which he could not resist inviting into the pale thing his life became.... (66)

The paragraphs above are very terrifying. Their point that is to “trace their own path” in order to provide the readers with vivid images and more specific information about the characters. After we read these passages, we may sympathize with Francis or resent Eric. The researcher argues that the function of repeating flashbacks, or recalls, is to make a story more reasonable and colorful, whereas the main function of completing flashbacks, or returns, is to uncover a story happening in the past, but related to the present.

### 5.1.3. Flash Forward

Genette calls a flash forward a “temporal prolepsis”, which means “a disruption in chronology that anticipates or prefigures the future” (*The Harper Handbook to Literature* 377). Compared to flashbacks, flash forwards are less frequently used in both novels and films. Genette argues that “anticipation, or temporal prolepsis, is clearly much less frequent than the inverse figure, at least in the Western narrative tradition” (67). David Lodge also claims that “film has more difficulty in accommodating the effect of ‘flashforward’—the anticipatory glimpse of what is going to happen in the future of the narrative, known to classical rhetoricians as ‘prolepsis’ ” (75).

However, some kinds of stories are more suitable for the employment of flash forwards than other kinds. According to Genette, “the ‘first-person’ narrative lends itself better than any other to anticipation, by the very fact of its avowedly retrospective character, which authorizes the narrator to allude to the future and in particular to his present situation, for these to some extent from part of his role” (67). To take Cormier’s *I Am the Cheese* as an example, the time sequence in this novel is relatively ambiguous. There are three narratives: the journey begins with the narrator “I”, the tape transcriptions between a psychotherapist and a patient, and the narrative always follows a tape transcription, which tells Adam’s story. Hence, the tape transcriptions become the flash forwards of Adam’s narrative. In these tape transcriptions there is always a glimpse of what is going to happen in Adam’s story. For example, in Tape OZK005, the psychiatrist, Brint, and the patient (later the readers learn that he is Adam, the protagonist of this novel) talk about the patient’s friend, Amy Hertz:

T: Shall we discuss Amy Hertz?

A: If you want to.

(5-second interval.)

T: Would you describe her as your best friend? Or more?

.....

A: More than a friend.

T: Tell me about her.... (44)

And then the section about Amy Hertz is next to this transcription: “Amy. Amy Hertz. Who loved mischief and was always on the prowl for mischief. Amy said that

everybody took life too seriously” (44-45). Each tape transcription is just a flash forward of the following narrative.

Lukens and Cline comment on *I Am the Cheese* that “the intricate plot is skillfully written; readers are intrigued, puzzled, and kept in breathless suspense by a master storyteller who leads them through time sequences that collide, mingle, and separate in complex narrative order” (35). Indeed, Cormier employs various narrative orders in his short stories, novellas and novels to make his YA works more difficult than other writers’ books; however, they are more interesting and more valuable to discover, too.

## 5.2. Point of View and Perspective: Who Sees?

The discussion in this section is related to the problem of “who sees” in a story; that is to say, the point of view (a traditional term) or the perspective (a term in narratology).

### 5.2.1. Point of View

Point of view, according to *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, signifies “the way a story gets told—the mode or (modes) established by an author by means of which the reader is presented with the characters, dialogue, actions, setting, and events which constitute the narrative in a work of fiction” (240). The first literary critic who pays a lot of attention to the issue of point of view may be Percy Lubbock. Many western writers, particularly novelists, such as E. M. Forster and Graham Greene, are influenced by him. In Lubbock’s famous *The Craft of Fiction*, he takes *Madame Bovary*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Ambassadors* and some novels as examples to illustrate the

importance of point of view. Some of the following literary critics and reviewers, like Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, are also concerned with the issue of the point of view. In their notable *Understanding Fiction*, Brooks and Penn Warren employ the term “focus of narration” as an equivalent to the term “point of view”, giving a definition as follows:

FOCUS OF NARRATION (POINT OF VIEW): The focus of narration has to do with who tells the story. We may make four basic distinctions: (1) a character may tell his own story in the first person; (2) a character may tell, in the first person, a story which he has observed; (3) the author may tell what happens in the purely objective sense—deeds, words, gestures—without going into the minds of the characters and without giving his own comment; (4) the author may tell what happens with full liberty to go into the minds of the characters and to give his own comment. These four types of narration may be called: (1) first-person, (2) first-person observer, (3) author-observer, and (4) omniscient author. Combinations of these methods are, of course, possible. (511)

In short, these traditional distinctions of point of view are: 1) & 2) first-person point of view, 3) objective / dramatic point of view, and 4) omniscient point of view, including limited omniscient point of view, in which the story is in the third person. But these distinctions are inevitably involved in “who tells the story”; that is, the issue of narrator. According to the distinctions above, type 1 and type 2 both belong to the category of first-person point of view, and the difference between them is that in the former is the narrator who is a main character in the story, whereas in the latter s/he is only an observer.



The distinctions above mix “point of view” with “narrator”. Sometimes it is confusing. Hence, Genette suggests a new classification in narratology: mode and voice. Mode deals with the issue of “who sees” in the story; voice deals with the problem of “who speaks” in the story. Genette argues that:

To my mind most of the theoretical works on this subject (which are mainly classifications) suffer from a regrettable confusion between what I call here *mood* and *voice*, a confusion between the question *who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective?* and the very different question *who is the narrator?*—or, more simply, the question *who sees?* And the question *who speaks?* (186)

The issue of “who speaks”, called “narrator” or, in Genette’s term, “voice”, will be discussed in section 5.3. In the next section, the concept of Genette’s “mode”, which involves “perspective” and “focalizations”, is employed to analyze some texts of Cormier’s fiction.

#### 5.2.2. Perspective and Focalizations

The definition of perspective in *The Harper Handbook to Literature* is “the lens, or eye (and by extension the mind behind the eye), through which a story is presented. It is sometimes called *point of view*, a term useful to focus attention on the mental processes of the narrator rather than on the physical relation to the story” (309). In Genette’s term, “perspective” is related to the question of “mode” (who sees?) in a narrative. And then he uses a term “focalizations” to correspond to Brooks and Penn Warren’s “focus of narration”.

Focalizations, according to Genette, are divided into three main categories: 1) zero focalization (also called non-focalization), which corresponds to the traditional “omniscient point of view”, 2) internal focalization, which parallels “first-person point of view and “third-person single point of view” (i.e., a special case of limited omniscient point of view), and 3) external focalization, which is similar to the classic “objective/dramatic point of view. It is noteworthy that there are three sub-categories in the category of internal focalization; they are: a) fixed internal focalization, like Henry James’ *The Ambassadors*; b) variable internal focalization with different foci of narration in different sections or chapters in one story, such as Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, and c) multiple internal focalization, indicating one event with different foci of narration so producing different narratives about the same event; a famous example is the movie *Rashomon*.

Genette also suggests that “focalization is not necessarily steady over the whole length of a narrative...Any single formula of focalization does not, therefore, always bear on an entire work, but rather on a definite narrative section, which can be very short” (191). Based on Genette’s observations, the researcher argues that a narrative using the internal focalization with first-person point of view is steadier than those narratives using other types of focalizations. Because an “I” story is more obvious and more natural for a story teller to recount her/his events, it is easier to maintain constancy using this kind of point of view (and it must be internal focalization) from beginning to end. In addition, a story using a pure external focalization throughout the whole narrative is very rare, because it is very difficult for a writer to develop events via the character’s mind, while the readers may also feel confused because there is no clue to learn any character’s thoughts or feelings. A famous example using the external focalization throughout the entire story is Hemingway’s “The Killers”.

The researcher puts Cormier's fifteen books—one collection of nine short stories and fourteen novellas and novels—into the categories above, and then brings out the table below:

Table 1

Types of Focalization in Cormier's Nine Short Stories

Focalizations	
Zero	None
Internal (Fixed)	All nine short stories / all using first-person point of view
Internal (Variable)	None
Internal (Multiple)	None

Table 2

Types of Focalizations in Cormier's Fourteen Novellas and Novels

Focalizations	
Zero	<i>After the First Death, The Bumblebee Flies Anyway, In the Middle of the Night</i>
Internal (Fixed)	<i>I Am the Cheese</i> (using first-person point of view / third-person point of view), <i>After the First Death</i> (partly), <i>Fade</i> (using first-person point of view / third-person point of view), <i>Other Bells for Us to Ring, Tunes for Bears to Dance To, In the Middle of the Night</i> (in relatively small part), <i>Tenderness</i> (in half part), <i>Heroes, Frenchtown Summer</i>

Internal (Variable)	<i>The Chocolate War</i> , <i>Beyond the Chocolate War</i> , <i>We All Fall Down</i> , <i>Tenderness</i> (in half part), <i>The Rag and Bone Shop</i>
Internal (Multiple)	<i>Fade</i> (partly)
External	<i>I Am the Cheese</i> (tape transcriptions), <i>Fade</i> (reports of investigation), <i>We All Fall Down</i> (the opening)

Via Table 1 and Table 2, the researcher finds that: firstly, Cormier likes to use fixed internal focalizations with first-person perspective in his early short stories. In fact, all of these nine short stories are told in the first-person internal focalization.

Secondly, among these nine short stories, only five stories use the teenager protagonist's "eyes", they are: "The Moustache", "President Cleveland, Where Are You?", "Guess What? I Almost Kissed My Father Goodnight", "My First Negro" and "Protestants Cry, Too", while the other four employs the eyes of a middle-aged father (they are not the same character): "Mine on Thursdays", "Another of Mike's Girls", "A Bad Time for Fathers" and "Bunny Berigan—Wasn't He a Musician or Something?" Nearly half of this collection of short stories has "borrowed" an adult's eyes. This outcome does not correspond to the definition of young adult fiction, which is related to a young adult's life and the main character is a teenager. No wonder a review in *Hornbook* magazine writes that "it may be a refreshing experience for teenagers to read about adolescence, frankly recollected by a sympathetic middle-aged man" (Campbell 2: 113). The researcher also wonders whether any teenager will like these kinds of stories.

Thirdly, in terms of Cormier's novellas and novels, the researcher finds that Cormier prefers to use internal focalizations, including fixed and variable ones, in his longer stories. He uses zero focalizations, but less often than internal focalizations.

Zero focalizations correspond to the traditional omniscient point of view, while internal focalizations parallel first-person point of view and third-person single point of view as a kind of limited omniscient point of view. This result demonstrates that Cormier may like to lessen his authority over his narrative, particularly on his characters, trying not to tell the readers too much from the author's eyes. Instead, Cormier may want his characters to tell their stories to the readers on their own.

Fourthly, it is difficult to utilize a purely objective/dramatic point of view throughout an entire story. This is the case with Cormier's young adult fiction. However, some paragraphs in Cormier's books are relatively attractive as he uses an objective point of view, also called an external focalization. For instance, the tape transcriptions in *I Am the Cheese* give the readers an impression of the coldness, even cruelty, of the Institution (i.e., the Government). Moreover, the opening of *We All Fall Down*, also makes the readers uncomfortable, watching a house-trashing themselves via a video camera. Here is the very first paragraph in *We All Fall Down*:

They entered the house at 9:02 p.m. on the evening of April Fools' Day. In the next forty-nine minutes, they shit on the floors and pissed on the walls and trashed their way through the seven-room Cape Cod cottage. They overturned furniture, smashed the picture tubes in three television sets, tore two VCRs from their sockets and crashed them on the floor. They spray-painted the wall orange. They flooded the bathrooms, both upstairs and down, and flushed face towels down the toilet bowls. They broke every mirror in the place and toppled a magnificent hutch to the floor, sending china cups and saucers and plates and assorted crystal through the air.... (3)

The dispassionate description above presents a striking contrast to the violence of this misdeed, catches the readers' eyes, makes the readers read through it, and forces the readers to think about serious problems of adolescent crimes.

### 5.3. Narrator: Who Speaks?

According to *The Harper Handbook to Literature*, the narrator is the teller of a story, and the narrator "may stand within the story or outside it, narrating as it occurs, shortly after, or much later, providing in each instance a different narrative perspective in space and time" (309). In terms of narrator, Todorov also claims that "all the categories of the verbal aspect hitherto examined might be considered from a different perspective, in which the discourse would no longer be put in relation with the fiction it creates, but the sum of the two would be put in relation with someone who assumes this discourse, the 'subject of the speech-act' or, as we habitually say in literature, the *narrator*" (38).

Genette summarizes Brooks and Penn Warren's concept of "focus of narration" and gives the readers a table of kinds of narrators, shown below:

Table 3

Brooks and Penn Warren's Types of Narrators

	Internal analysis of events	Outside observation of events
Narrator as a character in the story	1. Main character tells his story	2. Minor character tells main character's story

Narrator not a character in the story	4. Analytic or omniscient author tells story	3. Author tells story as observer
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Source: From Gerard Genette's *Narrative Discourse* 186

However, Genette argues that “only the vertical demarcation relates to ‘point of view’ (inner or outer), while the horizontal bears on the voice (the identity of the narrator), with no real difference in point of view between 1 and 4, and between 2 and 3” (187).

As a result, the researcher selects three types of narrators with respect to whether the narrator is within the story or not, and if yes, then the researcher categorizes “narrator as character” in the story into two sub-areas, “narrator as a main character” and “narrator as an observer”. Hence, three types of narrators as follows:

Table 4

Types of Narrators in Cormier's Nine Short Stories

Types of Narrators	Cormier's Short Stories
Narrator as a character in the story (main character)	“The Moustache”, “Mine on Thursdays”, “Another of Mike's Girls”, “President Cleveland, Where Are You?” (in half part), “A Bad Time for Fathers”, “Guess What? I Almost Kissed My Father Goodnight”, “My First Negro”
Narrator as a character in the story (minor character as observer)	“President Cleveland, Where Are You?” (in half part), “Protestants Cry, Too”, “Bunny Berigan—Wasn't He a Musician or Something?”



Narrator not a character in the story (all-powerful narrator)	None
Multiple/mixed narrator	None

Table 5

Types of Narrators in Cormier's Fourteen Novellas and Novels

<b>Types of Narrators</b>	<b>Cormier's Novellas and Novels</b>
Narrator as a character in the story (main character)	<i>I Am the Cheese</i> , <i>Fade</i> (the narrator Paul), <i>Other Bells for Us to Ring</i> , <i>Tenderness</i> , <i>Heroes</i> , <i>Frenchtown Summer</i> (the narrator Eugene's stories)
Narrator as a character in the story (minor character as observer)	<i>Fade</i> , <i>In the Middle of the Night</i> (in small part), <i>Frenchtown Summer</i> (the narrator Eugene tells his father's events)
Narrator not a character in the story (all-powerful narrator)	<i>The Chocolate War</i> , <i>Beyond the Chocolate War</i> , <i>I Am the Cheese</i> (partly), <i>The Bumblebee Flies Anyway</i> , <i>Fade</i> (Ozzie's section), <i>We All Fall Down</i> , <i>Tunes for Bears to Dance To</i> , <i>In the Middle of the Night</i> (central part), <i>Tenderness</i> (in half part), <i>The Rag and Bone Shop</i>
Multiple/mixed narrator	<i>I Am the Cheese</i> , <i>Fade</i> , <i>In the Middle of the Night</i> , <i>Tenderness</i> , <i>Frenchtown Summer</i>

Based on the results above, the researcher will discuss these types of narrators in the following section.

### 5.3.1. Narrator as a Character in the Story

This kind of narrator has two sub-categories: narrator as a main character, and narrator as a minor character who observes and tells the story of the protagonist. Critic Norman Friedman calls the former “I-protagonist”, and the latter “I-witness” (*Narrative Discourse* 187). Obviously, this type of narrator is always employed in the first-person point of view, which Lukens and Cline suggest that “the reader lives, acts, thinks, and feels the experience with the narrator (“I”) as it happens or is told. Occasionally the first-person narrator is not the protagonist but someone close enough to the narrator to observe” (102).

To take Cormier’s short stories as examples, seven of nine stories have narrators as main characters, or more precisely, six and a half stories have their protagonist as narrators, because the fourteen-year-old protagonist Jerry in the story “President Cleveland, Where Are You?” recounts his own experience of collecting baseball cards and tells the story of his older brother. It seems that Cormier likes to use the protagonist as the narrator in a story, not only in short stories, but also in longer novellas and novels.

Examining Cormier’s novellas and novels, the researcher finds that all narrators in this category are teenagers, even the main character Paul in *Fade*, was a teenager too (he tells his story about his adolescence). However, if the narrator serves as an observer, the story s/he tells is always about her/his elder, like Susan in *Fade* talking about the story (written in an unpublished manuscript) of her distant elder relative Paul; Dave in *In the Middle of the Night* recounting the events that happened to his elder sister Lulu, and Eugene in *Frenchtown Summer* writing down some observations of his father. Why? The researcher argues that the narrator as a younger observer gives the writer plenty of room to hide the information which s/he does not want the

readers to learn too early. It parallels the situation that parents (or elders) sometimes choose not to tell their children too much in order to protect them. In terms of writing, the writer chooses not to reveal everything at the same time because s/he would like to give the readers the suspense and the pleasure of uncovering the secret in a story.

### 5.3.2. Narrator not a Character in the Story

If a narrator in the story is not in the first-person, there must be a higher-level narrator beyond the story. Because the third-person protagonist serves only as the “eyes” of the narrative, it is impossible for her/him to tell her/his story in the third-person. Genette also argues that “this presence (of the person) is invariant because the narrator can be in his narrative (like every subject of an enunciating in his enunciated statement) *only* in the ‘first person’ ” (244).

With respect to Cormier’s nine short stories, since every single story is in the first-person voice, none of them belongs to the category of “narrator not a character in the story”. In contrast with his short stories, Cormier’s novellas and novels have many narrators not in the story. The researcher argues that the use of “narrator not a character in the story” (i.e., all-powerful narrator) is much easier than first-person narrator for developing longer stories. The narrator within the story, either as a protagonist or as an observer, must be limited as to what this narrator (“I”) sees, hears, feels and thinks. For a writer, the strictness of “I” narrator can provide a good tool to deepen this narrator’s inside world (if this “I” narrator is a protagonist), or enhance the innocence and simplicity of the narrator as an observer (because s/he has no idea what is in others’ minds). However, it is difficult to write longer narratives because the writer has only one representative to see and tell the whole story. That is the reason that fewer novels employ the narrator as a character in the story (i.e.,

“I”-protagonist and/or “I”-witness) than short stories do. Cormier’s novellas and novels follow this rule as well.

### 5.3.3. Multiple/Mixed Narrator

As Genette claims that “any single formula of focalization does not, therefore, always bear on an entire work, but rather on a definite narrative section, which can be very short” (191), the use of narrators in a story is not necessarily fixed. He additionally argues that “the contemporary novel has passed that limit, as it has so many others, and does not hesitate to establish between narrator and character(s) a variable or floating relationship, a pronominal vertigo in tune with a freer logic and a more complex conception of ‘personality’ ” (246).

However, the change of focalizations in a narrative occurs more often than the change of narrator. Or we may argue that the change of focalization is less appreciable than the switch of narrator.

In terms of Cormier’s young adult fiction, some of his works use multiple or mixed narrators, in which Cormier switches the narrators in a book on purpose. These books are *I Am the Cheese*, *Fade*, *In the Middle of the Night*, *Tenderness* and *Frenchtown Summer*. *I Am the Cheese* is Cormier’s second YA novel and it was published in 1977, while *Frenchtown Summer* is his last fiction published in 1999 at the time he was still living (*The Rag and Bone Shop* was published posthumously). Cormier was a writer who liked to use different narrative skills, particularly the employment of point of view and narrators, from beginning to end.

Here the researcher will take Cormier’s two novels, *Fade* and *Tenderness*, as illustrations. In Cormier’s *Fade*, there are two kinds of narrators: the first-person narrators belonging to different narratives (Paul and Susan), and the third-person

narrator in Paul's story (Ozzie). Paul Moreaux is the protagonist of the main story in the first person, which is written in an unpublished manuscript by a famous writer named Paul Roget (which makes this manuscript autobiographical). Ozzie is the antagonist of Paul Moreaux's second-part story, and he is one of Paul Moreaux's nephews. Susan Roget is Paul Roget's younger distant relative and a reader who reads the manuscript after the writer Paul Roget has died. This two-layered novel has complicated narrative devices, particularly in terms of perspectives and narrators. Reviewer Campbell writes that "these divisions [of Paul, Susan and Ozzie] are useful, however, in getting a grip on the construction of the novel. There are three separate and distinct parts, connected by the plot but each with its own form, style, characters, rhythm, and intention" (Campbell 1: 162). In addition, Zena Sutherland in the *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* also argues that "*Fade* is brilliant in conception, intricate in structure" (qtd. in Campbell 1: 162).

In *Tenderness*, there are also two types of narrators: one of the protagonists, Eric, is in the third-person, while another protagonist, Lori, is in the first- person. In the opening of the story, Lori tells the readers of her obsession with getting a kiss:

Me, I get fixated on something and I can't help myself. Sometimes it's nice and I let myself drift to see what will happen. Like with Throb. Sometimes it's not so nice, but I still have to go with it and can do nothing to stop. That's the scary part, when it's not so nice at all. But even when it's nice, it's scary. Anything that takes over your life is scary, although there can be pleasure in it. (1)

In contrast, the first appearance of another protagonist, Eric, is in the section next to Lori's. Cormier uses an all-powerful narrator and a calm tone to introduce Eric:

Eric Poole began with cats. Or, to be more exact, kittens. Liked to hold them, and stroke them, feel the brittle bones beneath the fur. Fragile bones, as if they'd snap and break if you pressed too hard, caressed too hard. Which he did, of course, impossible to resist. Later, he didn't just caress them but found that it was easier to fold them into his arms and place his hands over their faces and feel them go beautifully limp. He likes this way best, because it was so tender. (29)

The combination of narrators in this novel really reveals Cormier's writing skills. He uses different voices to write about these two main characters: for Lori, Cormier employs a sweet, relatively innocent voice to tell her story in the first-person, whereas for Eric, Cormier becomes an omniscient and all-powerful narrator to show Eric's cold-bloodedness in a calm, even dispassionate, tone to the readers.

To sum up, Cormier likes to use various types of focalizations and narrators in his stories, especially in his novels. In his short stories, finished from 1965 to 1975, the researcher does not observe this tendency. In these very early works, Cormier uses the first-person narrators in all of his short stories. However, from his first YA novel, *The Chocolate War*, to his last book, *The Rag and Bone Shop*, Cormier has abandoned simple and linear narrative skills including the narrative order, point of view/perspective (focalizations) and narrator to target his literary works at young adults. The researcher regards three of his young adult books as most complicated in terms of narrative skills, and they are *I Am the Cheese*, *After the First Death*, and

*Fade*. All of them are part of his early works. On the other hand, Cormier's more recent novels and novellas are easier for teenagers to understand. The researcher argues the reason that Cormier gradually recognized his main readership; that is, the adolescents. As he said in a 1983 interview: "I always had in my mind an intelligent reader who likes me and forgives me my trespasses and errors and goes along with me. And thank goodness, that intelligent person often turns out to be 14 years old" (qtd in Cart: 185).





# Chapter 6

## Style

Style, according to *The Children's Literature Dictionary*, is defined as “manner of expression” (158). Different writers have different manners of expressions while constructing their literary works, and so does Robert Cormier. There are many different literary devices of style, such as metaphor, simile, allusion, wordplay, and rhythm. This chapter will discuss three devices of style in Cormier's young adult fiction, including metaphor, simile and allusion.

### 6.1. Metaphor

Metaphor means “a word or expression that in literal usage denotes one kind of thing is applied to a distinctly different kind of thing, without asserting a comparison” (*A Glossary of Literary Terms* 102). From Aristotle, there have been plenty of theories of metaphor developed by rhetoricians, literary theorists, even linguistic theorists. Aristotle argues that “it is a great matter to observe propriety in these several modes of expression...But the greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor. This alone cannot be imparted by another; it is the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances” (*Aristotle's Poetics* 103-104).

I. A. Richards is the first person who introduces the term “tenor” (the subject) and “vehicle” (the metaphoric term). Wellek and Warren in their *Theory of Literature* argue that “Richards has protested vehemently against treating metaphor as deviation from normal linguistic practice instead of its characteristic and indispensable resource” (195-196). That is to say, Richards distinguishes the metaphors for the

literary use from those for the linguistic use in daily life, which are “dead”, or “faded” metaphors (like “the leg of the chair”).

Unlike Aristotle’s stress on the similarity, Richards focuses on the interaction between the tenor and the vehicle. He points out that “the vehicle is not normally a mere embellishment of a tenor which is otherwise unchanged by it but that vehicle and tenor in co-operation give a meaning of more varied powers than can be ascribed to either” (100). Therefore, the researcher will pay attention to the similarity and the interaction of the tenor and the vehicle in Cormier’s metaphors (including similes).

According to *The Harper Handbook to Literature*, there are four levels of metaphors: 1) simile, 2) plain metaphor, 3) implied metaphor, and 4) dead metaphor. The researcher will exclude the dead metaphor, because it is the kind of metaphor that has been used for a long time and has become too common for the users to be conscious of its original meaning unless they study its etymology. The other three kinds of metaphors will be discussed in the following sections. The researcher will examine the use of metaphors and similes in Cormier’s young adult works, and then discuss the impact of metaphors and similes.

#### 6.1.1. Plain Metaphors in Cormier’s Works

In a plain metaphor there exist both the tenor and the vehicle. The example given by *The Harper Handbook to Literature* is “He was a peacock” (290). In this sentence, “he” is the tenor, and “a peacock” is the vehicle. Plain metaphors are more straightforward than implied metaphors, which will be discussed in the next section. The researcher finds that Cormier uses a lot of plain metaphors in his books. For example, in *The Chocolate War*, as Jerry thinks of his father, whose wife (i.e., Jerry’s mother) died recently, Cormier writes that: “His father was a stranger during those

terrible days, like a sleepwalker going through the motions, like a puppet being maneuvered by invisible strings” (59). This passage is a combination of a plain metaphor, “his father was a stranger”, as well as two similes using the word “like”. This kind of combination is quite often used in Cormier’s books.

In *Beyond the Chocolate War*, we can also find some examples of plain metaphors; for instance, on page 153, Cormier describes the school life in Trinity High with the expression “Tests were daily battles in the larger war of school” (153). Sometimes an appositive is used in a plain metaphor; for example, in page 236, a student Caroni thinks of his F grade, “The F had stood. A mark of shame as well as corruption” (236).

Sometimes a be-verb can be replaced by the word “become” in a plain metaphor. To take *In the Middle of the Night* as an example, on page 77, Cormier describes sleeplessness: “Sleep which had somehow become a sweet and cherished friend” (77).

Moreover, the example of the combination of a plain metaphor and a simile is found in the protagonist Denny who has just transferred to a new school. He feels himself like an outsider: “He was a shadow without substance, gliding through his hours in the corridors and classrooms like a ghost, unseen and unheralded” (29).

There are still a lot of examples of plain metaphors. However, because of the limited space of the research, we will move into the next section, where the implied metaphors will be discussed.

Cormier makes ample use of plain metaphors in his work. As well, he also makes ample use of implied metaphors, which differ from plain metaphors in that the tenor is not directly stated.

### 6.1.2. Implied Metaphors in Cormier's Works

An implied metaphor, also called an implicit metaphor, is a kind of metaphor in which “the tenor is not itself specified, but only implied” (*A Glossary of Literary Terms* 102). In contrast with a plain metaphor, where the tenor is explicitly stated, *The Harper Handbook to Literature* provides examples of the implied metaphor as “he swelled and displayed his finery” and “he swelled and ruffled his plumage” (290). In these cases, both sentences lack the obvious tenor, a peacock, but use the quality or behavior of a peacock instead.

With respect to the implied metaphors in Cormier's works, the researcher finds that he uses implied metaphors quite often too. In *The Chocolate War*, where Brother Leon accuses student Bailey of cheating, Cormier describes how the other students keep silent: “They say the hydrogen bomb makes no noise: there's only a blinding white flash that strikes cities dead. The noise comes after the flash, after the silence. That's the kind of silence that blazed in the classroom now” (42). This case is an implied metaphor because Cormier uses “the hydrogen bomb” to parallel Brother Leon's behavior, but he does not clearly point out the tenor: Brother Leon's accusation. In this case, the hydrogen bomb and Brother Leon's accusation share something in common: they both bring a dead silence, and after that, a disaster.

However, because the tenor of an implied metaphor is implicit, sometimes it is difficult for the readers to catch the writer's true meaning. For example, on page 121 of the same book, as Jerry thinks of Brother Leon, Cormier describes that: “His [Brother Leon's] face was always under control but his eyes showed his vulnerability, gave Jerry a glimpse into the hell that was burning inside the teacher” (121). In this sentence Cormier puts “Brother Leon” and “the fire of the hell” together, which gives the readers an association, implying that Brother Leon is evil. Such a metaphor leaves

the reader wondering, in Cormier's original intention, whether Brother Leon is a *symbol* of evil, like the fire of the hell, or a *victim* suffering from the fire of the hell. The ambiguity that exists may cause the readers to misinterpret the texts; however, it is fun for the readers to read such texts and to develop their own interpretations.

In *Beyond the Chocolate War*, page 123, Cormier contrasts the beauty of spring with Obie's depressed feelings because his girl friend wants to break up with him: "The merriment of the spring day mocked him. Brilliant sun, whiff of lilac in the air, all of it empty somehow" (123). This kind of metaphor can be regarded as "personification", which indicates that "an inanimate object or an abstract concept is spoken of as though it were endowed with life or with human attributes or feeling" (*A Glossary of Literary Terms* 103). It was a very common expression in eighteenth-century poetry. In terms of Cormier's works, there exist some (but not many) examples in his books.

## 6.2. Simile

The definition of simile is that "a comparison between two distinctly different things is explicitly indicated by the word 'like' or 'as'" (*A Glossary of Literary Terms* 102). That is the difference between simile and metaphor. Aristotle argues that "the simile is longer and less attractive, while the metaphor is a sign of genius" (qtd. in *The Harper Handbook to Literature*: 290). Although similes are longer and more direct than metaphors, similes are more understandable. It is easier for young readers (and young writers) to catch the writer's meaning, and good for them to learn the literary use of relatively ordinary words, and then they may create other new similes on their own. Bushman and Bushman suggest that "the important point for young writers is

that they should make every effort to use new comparisons rather than trite and overused ones” (33).

#### 6.2.1. Similes in Cormier’s Works

Like metaphors, Cormier also employs a lot of similes in his books. In fact, it seems that he uses more similes than metaphors. For instance, Cormier describes the football field: “The shadows of the goal posts definitely resembled a network of crosses, empty crucifixes” (16). The word “resembled” makes this sentence a simile.

Moreover, on page 39 in *The Chocolate War*, Cormier describes how Brother Leon uses his pointer in class:

...the pointer he [Brother Leon] used either like a conductor’s baton or a musketeer’s sword. He’d use the tip to push around a book on a desk or to flick a kid’s necktie, scratching gently down some guy’s back, poking the pointer as if he were a rubbish collector picking his way through the debris of the classroom. One day, the pointer had rested on Jerry’s head for a moment, and then passed on. Unaccountably, Jerry had shivered, as if he had just escaped some terrible fate [underlines added]. (39)

In the short passage above, Cormier uses similes three times. And the use of these similes impresses the pointer in the reader’s mind—or we can say that this pointer is the disguised and extended power of Brother Leon. Cormier employs an object (a pointer) and similes to characterize Brother Leon successfully.

Another example in the same novel on page 224, when Jerry goes to school after he has refused to sell chocolate for more than ten days, his schoolmates start to neglect him:

Jerry's progress through the corridor was like the parting of the Red Sea. Nobody brushed against him. Guys stepped out of his path, giving him passage, as if reacting to some secret signal. Jerry felt as though he could walk through a wall and emerge untouched on the other side.

.....  
He opened his locker—the mess was gone. The desecrated poster had been removed and the wall desecrated poster had been removed and the wall scrubbed clean....Staring at the inside of the locker, like looking into an upright coffin, he felt as though someone was trying to obliterate him, remove all traces of his existence, his presence in the school....  
[underlines added] (224).

Interestingly, Cormier likes to employ similes and metaphors with certain words. The word “coffin” is an example. On page 14 of the same book, after Archie has selected Jerry to fulfill an assignment, Archie's right-hand Obie feels pity for Jerry but he says nothing: “Obie closed the notebook as if he were lowering a coffin lid” (14). The word “coffin” here is ominous of Jerry's future. In addition, in *Beyond the Chocolate War*, page 139, Caroni is in his own house with the hatred of Brother Leon; he goes to the piano: “He lifted the lid now, like opening a coffin, looked at the grinning keyboard, hideous grin, yellowing teeth” (139). The word “coffin” also implies Caroni's fate—he finally commits a suicide after he fails to assassinate



Brother Leon. This case is a combination of similes and implied metaphors too—the keyboard of the piano is a metaphor, or more precisely, a personification.

Similes are used in Cormier's books quite often, even in his later novellas and novels, as these examples from *In the Middle of the Night* demonstrate: "A sigh escaped me, like a ghost abandoning my body" (17), "Dropped the words on the table, like stones striking a surface" (20), "That knowledge was lodged within him like a block of ice that would never melt" (90), and "The apartment still, like a museum after hours" (137).

Taking *Heroes* as another example, many similes can be found in this small novella too: "The scarf is white and silk like the aviators wore in their airplanes during the First World War over the battlefields and trenches of Europe" (3), "She seemed to exist in a world of her own, like a rare specimen, birdlike and graceful as she danced, separate from the rest of the dancers" (45), "My eyes sought Nicole, found her joyous face, hands joined together as if in prayer, eyes half closed as if making herself an offering to me" (68), "The gun is like a tumor on my thigh as I walk through the morning streets against the wind that never dies down" (108).

For the researcher, it seems that there are more similes than metaphors in Cormier's books. The researcher argues that the use of similes is more natural, more like an ordinary language, whereas the use of metaphors, in spite of the dead metaphors, seems too "literary" sometimes.

#### 6.2.2. Trend of Metaphors and Similes that Cormier Uses

Richards claims that "the mind is a connecting organ, it works only by connecting and it can connect any two things in an indefinitely large number of different ways" (125). Indeed, this is the way that metaphors and similes work, for

both writers and readers. In terms of the metaphors and similes, Cormier's works show that:

1) A simile is more recognizable than a metaphor, since the former must have the word "like", "as if", or "as though" to display a comparison.

2) A simile is more understandable than a metaphor, for there are the tenor and the vehicle in a simile but it is not necessary in a metaphor.

3) In Cormier's earlier works, like *The Chocolate War*, Cormier has an inclination to employ similes and metaphors very often. On this point Campbell argues that "sometimes it seems that Cormier is merely exercising his virtuosity for the reader...But most of the time his images are precisely calculated to carry the weight of the emotion he is projecting" (Campbell 1: 57). However, in Cormier's later works, this inclination fades in terms of the use of metaphors. Nevertheless, there are still lots of similes in his later books, including novellas and novels.

4) The combinations of similes and metaphors, implied metaphors and personifications also are found in Cormier's books—they make the language of the story more colorful and ambiguous. For the readers, to have their own interpretations of the texts is important and amusing.

5) I. A. Richards stresses the interaction of the tenor and the vehicle; he suggests that "a modern theory would go on to point out that with different metaphors the relative importance of the contributions of vehicle and tenor to this resultant meaning varies immensely" (100). This interaction view of theories of metaphors can also be employed to analyze Cormier's applications of metaphors. For example, as mentioned before, on page 42 of *The Chocolate War*, Cormier writes that "they say the hydrogen bomb makes no noise: there's only a blinding white flash that strikes cities dead. The noise comes after the flash, after the silence. That's the kind of silence that blazed in the classroom now" (42). Such an effective metaphor

demonstrates how terrifying Brother Leon's accusation is, just like a hydrogen bomb. The horrific essence of the vehicle, a hydrogen bomb, deepens the power of the tenor (Brother Leon's accusation); hence, it strengthens the impact of this metaphor.

6) Last but not least, for a writer, although similes and metaphors are more impressive than direct statements or descriptions while in a text, one must be careful not to overuse them. While Cormier's works are made more expressive through the use of metaphor, he does not overindulge himself in their use, a similar tack taken by Graham Greene. Greene in his autobiography *The Sort of Life* mentions that he used to love employing similes and metaphors very much, but his wife usually suggested getting rid of them. Even after many years passed, Greene admits that he still sees those leopards, which are Greene's metaphorical terms for similes and metaphors, growling at him. Greene claims that "discrimination in one's words is certainly required, but not love of one's words—that is a form of self-love, a fatal love which leads a young writer to the excesses of Charles Morgan and Lawrence Durrell, and, looking back to this period of my life, I can see that I was in danger of taking *their* road. I was only saved by failure" (145).

Greene might take his admiration for similes and metaphors too negatively; however, an indulgence in similes and metaphors is not quite a good propensity, especially for novelists, either adult writers or writers for younger readers. A good novelist pays attention to each aspect of a story, such as themes, characterization, narrative skills, and manners of expressions.

Robert Cormier is a good writer not only because he uses many similes and metaphors effectively, but also because he creates vivid characters as well as he employs various narrative skills. Of course, using a lot of allusions, from the Bible and from other literary works, is one distinctive feature in Cormier's writing style, too.

In the following section, we will discuss the biblical allusion and the literary allusion in Cormier's works.

### 6.3. Allusion

Allusion means “an implied or indirect reference in a literary work that asks the reader to make an association with a familiar or famous person, historic event, place, or another piece of literature or a work of art. When using allusion, a writer implies that there is a common body of knowledge that the reader will know about and understand” (*The Children's Literature Dictionary* 7). Allusion is the third literary device that the researcher will focus attention on. There are two kinds of allusions which Cormier likes to use in his works of fiction: one is biblical allusion, and the other is literary allusion.

#### 6.3.1. Biblical Allusions

Biblical allusion refers to the passage that alludes to the Bible. Cormier was a catholic writer like Graham Greene, so some of Cormier's books are set in a religious background. For example, the setting in *The Chocolate War* and *Beyond the Chocolate War* is a catholic junior and senior high school, where Cormier builds up a rotten world in contrast to the name of the school: Trinity High. In addition, there are many descriptions of praying in some of his books, like Francis in *Heroes*, Darcy in *Other Bells for Us to Ring*, Henry in *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*, and so forth. Moreover, one of Cormier's favorite themes is guilt vs. forgiveness, which is already discussed in section 3.3. As a religious writer, Cormier employs passages or lines from the Bible quite constantly.

Examining all book contents word by word reveals that there is no biblical allusion in his collection of short stories, whereas his novellas and novels indeed have some biblical allusions. The table below illustrates the biblical allusions in Cormier's young adult novellas and novels:

Table 6

Biblical Allusions in Cormier's Books

Book Title	Allusive Lines	Biblical Source
<i>The Chocolate War</i> (1974)	(p.3): he had been Peter a thousand times and a thousand cocks had crowed in his lifetime.	Matthew 26; Mark 14: Before the rooster crows, Peter disowns Jesus Christ three times.
	(p.118): Cities Fell. Earth opened. Planets tilted. Stars plummeted. And the awful silence.	Mark 13; Revelation 6-9: The revelation of false Christ
	(p.123): his chin resting on the Volkswagen like some grotesque John the Baptist?	Matthew 14; Luke 1, 3: The story of John the Baptist
	(p.224): Jerry's progress through the corridor was like the parting of the Red Sea.	Exodus 14: Moses divides the Red Sea while leading Israelites across the Red Sea

<i>Beyond the Chocolate War</i> (1985)	(p.4): Ray had built the boat himself (implying that Ray is good at the carpentry).	Matthew 1: Birth of the carpenter's son, Jesus Christ
	(p.62): Like the psalm they recited at mass sometimes: I offer up myself as an evening sacrifice.	Mark 10: Jesus Christ tells his disciples, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
<i>In the Middle of the Night</i> (1995)	(p.48): I'm not Lazarus, she said...Admitting, at last, that she was Lazarus, after all.	John 11: After Lazarus dies, Jesus Christ makes him revive.
	(p.159): "I offer myself up to them."	Same as the second allusion in <i>Beyond the Chocolate War</i>
<i>The Rag and Bone Shop</i> (2001)	(p.144): He looked broken, as if just lifted down from the cross.	Mark 15: Joseph of Arimathea takes down the body of Jesus Christ from the cross

Based on the observations, the results indicate that: 1) a story having a religious theme or atmosphere does not necessarily allude to the exact words from the Bible. For example, the most religious book among Cormier's works is *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*, which is a story about Temptation. However, this book does not have any allusions to the Bible, just like one of Graham Greene's short story, "The Hint of an Explanation" without any biblical allusions in the whole story. 2) Even when using biblical allusion, the author sometimes changes the exact words from the Bible, but it is still recognizable for the readers (especially for those who are familiar with the Bible). In *The Chocolate War*, when the protagonist Jerry refused to sell chocolate, Cormier puts such words, "Cities Fell. Earth opened. Planets tilted. Stars plummeted. And the awful silence", as an ending of that chapter. This passage is not the same lines as the Bible writes:

So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

But in those days, following that distress, 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' (Mark 13)

Like the Bible foretells the coming of disasters, this chapter with such an ending is ominous of the misfortune of Jerry.

Unfortunately, however, if the reader is unfamiliar with the Bible, this approach creates a gap of knowledge between the author's and the reader's. For instance, the reader may have no idea of who "Lazarus" is while reading *In the Middle of the Night* unless s/he makes reference to the Bible. In this case, the gap between the author's and the reader's knowledge is not only cultural, but also religious. And there are more



kinds of gaps between the author and the reader, such as different genders, different educational backgrounds, or different social status, which all make these gaps deeper.

In addition to the biblical allusion, Cormier likes to employ another type of allusion—the literary allusion, too. In the next section, we will discuss literary allusions in Cormier’s books.

### 6.3.2. Literary Allusions

In addition to the biblical allusion, Cormier likes to make reference to other literary works, including poems, nursery songs and novels, to give his books their titles. The following table is a summary of Cormier’s literary allusions:

Table 7

Literary Allusions in Cormier’s Books

Book Title	Source of Allusion	Title of Referent
<i>I Am the Cheese</i> (1977)	Traditional children’s song and game	“The Farmer in the Dell”
<i>After the First Death</i> (1979)	Dylan Thomas	“A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London”
<i>The Bumblebee Flies Anyway</i> (1983)	Old myth based on the laws of aerodynamics	
<i>Fade</i> (1988)	H. G. Wells	<i>The Invisible Man</i>
<i>We All Fall Down</i> (1991)	<i>Mother Goose</i>	“Ring-a-Ring o’ Roses ”

<i>Tunes for Bear to Dance To</i> (1992)	Gustave Flaubert	Madame Bovary
<i>Tenderness</i> (1997)	Kahlil Gibran	“On Love” in <i>The Prophet</i>
<i>The Rag and Bone Shop</i> (2001)	William Butler Yeats	“The Circus Animal’s Desertion ”

Table 7 shows that among Cormier’s fourteen novellas and novels, there are eight books in which Cormier makes a literary allusion to other writers’ works. Cormier has an inclination to “borrow” some words or lines from former works, and then transfer them into his book titles. Cormier particularly prefers to use poems or nursery songs, since he read and wrote many poems when he was young. In fact, the reason why Cormier wanted to be a writer is that one of his teachers admired a poem he wrote when he was a teenager. In Cormier’s first novel for young adults, *The Chocolate War*, although he does not use any line from former literary works as the book title, he really makes a famous allusion in this book: “Do I dare disturb the universe?” which alludes to one of T. S. Eliot’s poems, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”.

As the protagonist of this novel, Jerry, saw this line on his locker’s poster, he decided to refuse to sell chocolate—for an unknown reason, and his decision finally brought him to a brutal fight with Emile. After *The Chocolate War* became famous, this line became famous, too.

In Cormier’s next novel, *I Am the Cheese*, Cormier uses a children’s song, “The Farmer in the Dell”, as the book title. This novel describes a terrifying manipulation by the system/government. The entire book has a heavy atmosphere, and is written with complicated narrative skills. However, the title gives the readers a contrast to the content, since this title is from a children’s song while playing a game. But if we think

of this song more deeply, we will find the scary reality: Everyone takes one thing away, and finally leaves the cheese alone, “the cheese stands alone, the cheese stands alone, hi-ho, the derry-o, the cheese stands alone”. This is just like the fate of the protagonist of *I Am the Cheese*, Adam Farmer. Cormier borrows this title from a common children’s song very cleverly.

*We All Fall Down* is another example. This book title is originally from a nursery rhyme: “Ring-a-Ring o’ Roses”, collected in *Mother Goose*. Like *I Am the Cheese*, this novel deals with some serious issues in a modern society, such as adolescent crimes, alcoholism, divorce, and stalking. The song that this novel borrows from is about the plague. On page 61, these two boys, the protagonist Buddy and his bad friend Harry, are sitting in the car and watching some little girls playing a game with a nursery rhyme “Ring-a-Ring o’ Roses”, then Harry snorts and says “Stupid”, and adds that “those little girls don’t know what they’re doing...It’s what kids sang back in the olden days when the Black Plague was killing millions of people. People would get a rosy kind of rash and rubbed themselves with herbs and posies. Then they fell down and died....” (62). Cormier tells the readers the source of this book title by his character.

Critic Michael Cart highly recommends Cormier’s works, particular *We All Fall Down*. He argues that “what makes him [Cormier] such a significant writer, I think, is that all his work is informed by an overarching, personal vision; it is summarized by the very title of the book we have been discussing: ‘We All Fall Down’ (185). Cart continues: “the plague [that Harry mentions], thus, provides the symbolic underpinning for this book about the death—not of the body but of the spirit. The plague could also symbolize evil, which, to Cormier, is equally contagious, contaminating human existence and, if untreated, causing death” (186).

Cormier uses the connotation of this famous nursery rhyme to enclose his whole story. This is a main function of allusion—either biblical allusion or literary allusion—to make a new story a connection with an old (usually famous) work (or part of work). David Lodge in his essay “The Title” in *The Art of Fiction* discusses the importance of the book titles, and talks about the trend of the titles of English novels in the different periods:

The titles of the earliest English novels were invariably the names of the central characters, *Moll Flanders*, *Tom Jones*, *Clarissa*. Fiction was modeling itself on, and sometimes disguising itself as, biography and autobiography. Later novelists realized that the titles could indicate a theme (*Sense and Sensibility*), suggest an intriguing mystery (*The Woman in White*), or promise a certain kind of setting and atmosphere (*Wuthering Heights*). At some point in the nineteenth century they began to hitch their stories to resonant literary quotations (*Far From the Madding Crowd*), a practice that persists throughout the twentieth (*Where Angels Fear To Tread*, *A Handful of Dust*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*), though it is now perhaps regarded as a little corny.... (193-194)

The nineteenth century examples which Lodge mentions above are right similar to the case of one title of Cormier’s three novellas, *Tunes for Bear to Dance To*, which is a literary quotation from *Madam Bovary* written by Flaubert. However, for the readers who are not familiar with Western Literature, this title is puzzling. In the title page, the author Cormier writes down two quotations: the first one is the source of this book title: “Human language is like a cracked kettle on which we beat out tunes for bears to dance to, when all the time we are longing to move the stars to

pity.—Gustave Flaubert”, with the second quotation (from a prayer) under the first one: Deliver us from evil.—Our Father”. The first quotation reveals a literary allusion to where this book title comes from, and the second quotation points out the religious theme of this book.

Nevertheless, both quotations are difficult for the readers who have a “gap” between themselves and the author. Campbell mentions that she once asked Cormier about the title of this novella, and Cormier turned out a little regretful for using this “odd title”. But he e-mailed and explained to Campbell why he chose this quotation as the title: “what the quotation expresses, for me, is the frequent inability of people to reach out and touch each other, the inability to communicate our longings and our heartbreaks when that is really what being human is all about, this yearning to connect” (qtd. Campbell 1:176). However, because of the difficulty of the title, this book title *Tunes for Bear to Dance To* is changed to *The Voice from the Darkness of My Heart* in the Japanese edition of this novella.

In conclusion, the researcher argues that using biblical allusions and literary allusions is a trend in Cormier’s writing. Particularly in terms of his book titles, Cormier likes to make a reference to other former literary works, including a children’s song, a nursery rhyme, some novels and several poems. The impact of allusions may be positive, (like the case of *We All Fall Down*), but sometimes not so effective (like *Tunes for Bear to Dance To*) because there is indeed a gap between the writer’s and the reader’s knowledge and background.



# Chapter 7

## Conclusions

### 7.1. Summary and Discussions

In chapter one, the researcher sets five research questions to be examined and answered. Via analyzing the texts of Cormier's fifteen books for young adults, these questions will be discussed in this chapter.

#### 1. What are Cormier's favorite themes in his literary works for young adults?

Cormier's favorite themes are, according to the analysis of this study, good vs. evil, system vs. individual, and guilt vs. forgiveness.

In terms of good vs. evil, the most representative work of Cormier's books is *The Chocolate War*. Cormier creates several vicious teen characters in this novel: Archie and his stooges constitute an underground society named the Vigils, which controls the school in secret. Archie is extremely clever, indifferent, and manipulative. He used to say that "life is a shit" (16). Another "bad guy" is Emile, who likes power and fighting. Different from Archie, Emile is eager to win other's attention, and his way is to annoy people. In the end of this novel, Emile and the "good guy" Jerry have a fight, and he beats Jerry fiercely. But the most terrifying part of the scene is that many students are watching and "shouting from the bleachers for more action now. The noise chilled Jerry. 'Action, action,' came the shouts from the audience" (252).

Even though the boys in *The Chocolate War* do not beat Jerry on their own, they are also eager to taste the blood. Archie and Emile may be evil, but the boys who



watch this fight in excitement and never ever try to stop it seem evil too. Among the audience, only the Goober tries to stop it; however, he is the only one who suffers a guilty conscious because he thinks he has done nothing to protect Jerry. This part will be discussed in section three in this chapter. Why do most of the boys seem so violent? Cart points out that the young generation in America is the most-at-risk-ever; many young adults have been involved in suicide, drugs, sexual harassment and guns. Cart argues that “youth gangs have become almost as ubiquitous as violence itself in schools....It’s all based on anger and hatred, of self and others” (274). Cart’s book was published in 1996, and the situation is still getting worse twelve years later. In the case of the boys in *The Chocolate War*, it may be argued that violence is part of their life, and what Archie has done is only push the button. However, the readers never know what Archie really thinks and why he has done these things because the author Cormier does not show any reason at all.

Campbell argues that Archie is a symbol of pure evil, and this concept is deeply Catholic. Even the name of Archie has its religious root: Archie refers to “the Archangel, who fell from Heaven to be the Fallen Angel, or Lucifer himself” (Campbell 1: 58). Campbell provides an intriguing conception: the Implacable, which means cannot be appeased, in other words, relentless. Campbell points out that Cormier’s theme of good vs. evil is theological, not psychological; that is why there is no psychological explanation or motivation of Archie’s manipulative behaviors as well as no interior monologue from Archie in this novel.

In Campbell’s opinion, evil in *The Chocolate War* is the unholy trinity: Archie, Emile and Brother Leon. Different from Archie and Emile, Brother Leon is an adult, and ironically a religious member who owns the authority of the school. Cormier describes Brother Leon: “the mustache of moistness on Brother Leon’s upper lip, the watery eyes and the dampness on his forehead” (22). And his behavior in class: “the

pointer he used either like a conductor's baton or a musketeer's sword. He'd use the tip to push around a book on a desk or to flick a kid's necktie, scratching gently down some guy's back, poking the pointer as if he were a rubbish collector picking his way through the debris of the classroom" (39). Cormier gives the readers a more specific image of Brother Leon than that of Archie. It seems that Brother Leon is less symbolic than Archie. If Archie is a symbol of pure evil, then there must be human agents to do the will of the Evil. Brother Leon is one of them, in addition to the members of the Vigils and even the most boys at Trinity High.

Nevertheless, there is a heroic loner at the school, namely Jerry. As Jerry stands up to confront the evil, he becomes a symbol of good. Jerry dares to disturb the universe because he does not know very well. Just like a Cervantes' Don Quixote, Jerry fights for his idealism: "this morning, he had stood his ground and fired a level and positive *No* at Brother Leon. For the first time, the word brought exultancy to him, a lifting of the spirit" (177). From then on, Jerry tells himself several times that his name is Jerry Renault and he's not going to sell the chocolates. Jerry later learns the price he must pay for it: being ignored, harassed, and finally beaten fiercely. Eventually he tells his friend the Goober that not to disturb the universe.

Cormier is a pioneer who begins to write about the real world, and the real world does not guarantee a rose garden. More importantly, Jerry's action is not regarded as failure. Jerry is the only one who forces this rotten world, Trinity High, to emerge and be exposed in front of the readers. His behavior of confronting the evil makes the readers think about their own surroundings and situations, just like Campbell argues that "when the agents of evil are other human beings, perhaps good can win if enough people have the courage to take a stand together" (Campbell 1: 64). The researcher thinks that this may be the author Cormier's real meaning.

Another typical character of evil is Mr. Hairston in *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*. This story describes how a grocery owner Mr. Hairston manipulates a teenager Henry to destroy an old Jew Mr. Levine's hand-made replica of his hometown. There is little explanation of Mr. Hairston's reason, only "He's a Jew" as Henry asks Mr. Hairston and the grocer answers so. It indicates that racism is an irrational hatred and it is evil. Mr. Hairston, like Archie, is a symbol of evil. And this time he chooses Henry to be his agent. This novella is more allegoric and religious. In the front page the second epigraph, Cormier quotes "Deliver us from evil" from the Bible. Campbell argues that Mr. Hairston is the most purely evil villain, and in the last part of the book, Mr. Hairston has "almost ceased to be human and has become a metaphor for the Dark Presence" (Campbell 1: 176).

Cormier's *Tunes for Bears to Dance To* reminds the readers of one of Graham Greene's short story, 'The Hint of an Explanation', which presents a story of how a little boy refuses to take a bribe for giving Wafer to a non-Catholic Blacker and eventually grew up to be a priest. Not surprisingly, Greene is also a catholic writer, and Cormier acknowledges that he has been influenced by Greene a lot. The stories of Cormier and Greene are religious, especially concerning the evil and the test of life. Both evil representatives show no motivations to be evil since they are evil. And both good representatives have defeated the seducers, yet the process is difficult even painful.

In Cormier's books, evil does not always need a human agent, sometimes it is a pure power itself. In *Fade*, Cormier creates an Ultimate Evil called the Fade, and this power is hereditary from an uncle to a nephew. When the protagonist Paul discovered that he has an ability to be invisible, he thought he was blessed. Using his ability, Paul stalks into a bedroom belonging to a girl he is fond of, and he finds out that the girl has a sexual relationship with her twin brother. Moreover, Paul employs this fading

ability to kill a bully on purpose, but later his beloved younger brother dies without any cause. By now Paul realizes that this ability or power to fade is a curse, and he swears he will never use it again. Until Paul finds that his unwedded nephew Ozzie has the same power and this boy begins to kill people via the Fade, Paul kills Ozzie. To the readers, Paul's killing is a necessary evil because Ozzie is trying to kill the nun who raised him, and trying to kill Paul. To Paul, this killing is also an impact of the evil power: the Fade. But to Ozzie, he is a victim of an affair beyond marriage, a victim of a miserable and abused childhood and a victim of having such evil power.

In this novel, both Paul and Ozzie are rather victims of the evil than agents. But if there is no human agent, how the ordinary people can discover it, confront it and defeat it? Cormier does not give the readers any answer. At the very end of this novel, the second narrator Susan feels chilly after she has finished reading Paul's manuscript called *Fade*, she wonders whether Paul wants her to read this unpublished book because of the emergence of a new fader, and this is a warning or a message. Cormier gives the readers a warning but not a solution. The important thing is to be aware of the evil and do something instead of being a victim or an agent of it. That is what Jerry has done, and the author believes human beings have free will to do anything they want.

With respect to the second theme, system vs. individual, there are three books for the discussion in the study: *The Chocolate War*, *I Am the Cheese*, and *The Bumblebees Flies Anyway*. Conformity and individuality is the main issue that *The Chocolate War* deals with. Conformity and individuality are contradictory; the more conformity, the less individuality, and vice versa. How an individual in a group conforms to the rules of this group but also maintains his / her individuality is not easy. In the case of Trinity High in *The Chocolate War*, the loner Jerry challenges the school and the Vigils. For Brother Leon, Jerry's behavior jeopardizes his management

of the school, and more importantly, Jerry might give other students a role model by saying no to selling chocolate. Brother Leon cannot afford this consequence because he needs money to fill the gap in the school fund. For the Vigils' real leader Archie, he cannot tolerate someone who is out of his manipulation. Even the school students do not like Jerry either because it seems Jerry has a privilege and this is unfair. Originally the system is balanced, but Jerry's actions break this balance. That is the reason why Jerry is "punished" by many people, not only by Brother Leon and by Archie, but also by many school boys. The balance must be maintained, and the breaker must be eliminated.

The pursuit of conformity in a system is particularly obvious in most teenagers' groups, including schools. There is so-called peer pressure among teenagers: they like to be the same as others, and can not bear some people who dare to be different from them, just like the students of Trinity High.

Cormier's second young adult novel, *I Am the Cheese*, also discusses and describes the story about system vs. individual. The system involved in this novel is the government. The protagonist Adam Farmer's father was a reporter and revealed something illegal. Therefore, Adam's parents and Adam are given new identities and protected by the government because their safety is in danger. But Adam does not know this fact until he finds a fake birth certificate. After Adam's family has doubts about the government's agents and began a second runaway, they are killed by unknown people in gray, except for Adam—he survived but suffered from memory loss.

Cormier describes vividly the process of manipulation by the government, including a so-called psychiatrist Brint who interrogates Adam many times in order to assure the government that Adam has forgotten everything and is harmless. Such a story makes the readers feel terrified. The government is supposed to protect its

people; however, if its advantage is incompatible with people's advantage, the government will get rid of its obstacle with no mercy. The ruthlessness of government is similar to the Implacable of evil, but the former is concerned with its own interests while the latter is based on nature. However, the government/the system has an inclination to be an agent of evil, and it has larger power than the single human agent does.

The second system or institution involved in *I Am the Cheese* is a hospital, or a nursing home. Like the government, a hospital is a quite closed system, and who it deals with are patients. That makes a hospital have more authority than other systems or institutions do. Patients often feel that the information has only one-way direction—from a doctor to a patient but not vice versa. For example, Adam in *I Am the Cheese* has no idea about what the psychiatrist Brint really wants him to do nor what Brint is going to do. Brint always asks Adam questions but never tells Adam anything about the procedure of the treatment, not to mention any information about Brint himself. This “professional” performance also happens in Cormier's fourth young adult novel *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*, which describes how dying teens live in a nursing home the Complex and struggle against their illness. This is the characteristic of the system: it overpowers the individual, hides some information for the sake of protection, and manipulates the individual if necessary.

The authority fears that people might gain too much knowledge—too much power; since knowledge is power, it deprives people of sources of knowledge. The system decides which knowledge or information the individuals should learn and which they should not. Furthermore, the system usually monitors the individuals in order to check their behaviors. Not surprisingly, George Orwell's “Big Brother is Watching You” in *1984* also occurs in the Complex in Robert Cormier's *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*. Because the Complex is actually a hospital, there is a



monitor in each room to keep every patient's condition checked. The monitor becomes a metaphor of the system's eye.

Nevertheless, many individuals still try to do something to rebel against the system. Adam Farmer starts a journey of finding his father, and Barney Snow steals a mock car and pushes it from the roof down to the earth, watching it fly. Although their efforts eventually seem to be fruitless, their accusation against the system is seen, and their gestures impress many readers. The readers may begin to think about the nature of the systems and to question their own. I think that is why Cormier writes down such dark stories to remind us.

The third theme that Cormier likes to deal with is guilt vs. forgiveness. The kinds of guilt in Cormier's young adult novels can be divided into two: one is real guilt, and the other is the consciousness of guilt. For example, what Archie, Emile and Brother Leon in *The Chocolate War* have done is real guilt, while Jerry's best friend the Goober always feels guilty because he thinks he has not protected his friend—this is a guilt conscience. Ironically, people who are really guilty often suffer no pain, but people with a guilt conscience have to endure this feeling all the time.

This happens in real life as well as Cormier's novels. Archie, Emile and Brother Leon have never felt sorry at all. In the sequel *Beyond the Chocolate War*, Emile even threatens Jerry and finally beats him again; Brother Leon makes a student David Caroni commit suicide. And at the end when Archie's right hand Obie asks Archie why he has done all these evil things to the school and everyone, Archie's answer is: "Oh, I am an easy scapegoat, Obie. For you and everybody else at Trinity. Always have been. But you had free choice, buddy. Just like Brother Andrew always says in Religion. Free choice, Obie, and you did the choosing...." (264). And then Obie asks Archie "what the hell are you?" Archie replies that "I am Archie Costello, and I'll always be there, Obie. You'll always have me wherever you go and whatever you do.



Tomorrow, ten years from now. Know why, Obie? Because I'm you. I'm all the things you hide inside you. That's me—"(264). This uncomfortable statement from Archie demonstrates the nature of Archie: an agent of evil, if not evil itself. Since evil is the implacable, it is expected that Archie never feels guilty, and he (and other evils) never requires and receives any forgiveness.

However, has an ordinary man like the Goober been forgiven? In *Beyond the Chocolate War*, there is a possibility: when the Goober asks Jerry for forgiveness, Jerry invites the Goober to go jogging; on the way of jogging, they both talk about the events that happened last semester, and Jerry says to the Goober that "I hope you're not feeling guilty" (158); even earlier as Jerry told his father, he mentioned that "I should tell the Goober that he didn't double-cross me last year. Cripes, he acts like he was a traitor or something. And he wasn't." (109). Jerry's kind behavior makes the Goober feel much better, but he still cannot forget the terrible time he and Jerry got through, so the Goober decides to transfer to another high school after this semester. However, he eventually receives forgiveness from Jerry, while it must take a longer time to let himself go in peace.

In Cormier's novellas *Tunes for Bears to Dance To* and *Heroes*, both protagonists Henry Cassavant and Francis Cassavant face a similar situation. They are not evil, but they do commit the sins of omission: For Henry, he knew Mr. Hairston's intention to hurt the old man Mr. Levine by ruining his hometown model. Although Henry did not mean to destroy that model, he accidentally did. Henry feels very guilty, and urges his family to move back to Frenchtown where they originally lived. Nevertheless, Henry is eager to have information about Mr. Levine and his work. Several weeks passing, Henry steps into this town again, meets an acquaintance George, and learns that Mr. Levine starts to rebuild the replica. Finally George hands a little figure to Henry, which is a figure of Henry made by Mr. Levine. This is a

touching scene, reminding the reader of the Bible's "and now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians, Ch.13). Henry is forgiven by God, not Mr. Levine because he does not know what Henry has done. At the very end of this novella, Henry knelt and prayed for his parents, his dead brother, Mr. Levine, George, himself, and finally Mr. Hairston: "when he whispered 'Deliver us from evil' at the end of Our Father, he thought of Mr. Hairston. Then he did something he had never done before. He prayed for Mr. Hairston. 'Forgive him,' he whispered. *Forgive me too*" (101).

Just like the Bible says: "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one" (The Gospel According to Luke, Ch. 11).

On the other hand, the protagonist Buddy in *We all Fall Down* also has the sins of omission. As four teenagers break into one house and trash it, Buddy is one of them. Buddy has actually done nothing—neither hurt the girl named Karen, nor stopped the other three fellows. But he is the only one who feels guilty. Buddy is condemned after he meets Karen's sister Jane and falls in love with her. Buddy begins to worry if someday Jane would learn he is one of the people who trashed her house. Finally Buddy's secret is revealed by a psychopath called the Avenger, who also has a crush on Jane and later kidnaps her. After Jane is out of danger, she breaks up with Buddy. In this story, Buddy receives no mercy and no forgiveness probably because he really did nothing to redeem himself, not even kneeling down in prayer. All he has done is worry, tell lies, and drink alcohol. Cart states that "in the case of Buddy and Jane, this evitability leads, naturally, to the destruction to their relationship and the loss of any hope of Buddy redemption" (183). That is true. Buddy's condition is a mirror which alerts us that the maxim "to err is human, to forgive divine" may be right, but we

ordinary people must do something to make up for our guilt, then there will be a possibility to gain forgiveness.

2. Which types of characters in Cormier's fiction are employed frequently? Are there any differences between main characters and supporting characters in terms of types of characters (e.g., round vs. flat)?

The researcher finds that Cormier's first five young adult novels, *The Chocolate War*, *I Am the Cheese*, *After the First Death*, *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway* and *Beyond the Chocolate War*, seem to have more round characters. It may be assumed that because these five books have more pages than others, or because there are more important characters in these five novels. For example, in *The Chocolate War* and its sequel *Beyond the Chocolate War*, there are at least eight important characters (Jerry, Archie, Obie, the Goober, Emile, Brother Leon, Carter, and Ray), while in Cormier's late novels such as *Tenderness* or *The Rag and Bone Shop* have only three or two key characters (in *Tenderness*: Eric, Lori and Lieutenant Jake; in *The Rag and Bone Shop*: Trent and Jason).

Cormier's seven books have a supporting character as a foil (i.e., one kind of flat characters): *The Chocolate War* and *Beyond the Chocolate War* (protagonist Jerry and his best friend the Goober), *I Am the Cheese* (Adam and Amy), *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway* (Barney and Billy), *Fade* (Paul and Jules), *Other Bells for Us to Ring* (Darcy and Kathleen Mary), and *We All Fall Down* (protagonist Buddy and his sister Addy). The researcher argues that the closest person, even the most important person, for a teenager is her/his friend, not the parent(s). A young adult writer cannot omit describing the relationships between teens and their friends. Since the protagonist's

friend must show up, it seems reasonable that this friend serves as a foil to highlight the main character.

Another special type of flat characters is the stereotype. *The Children's Literature Dictionary* gives a definition of stereotype as “a flat character lacking individual traits and representing an uncritical assessment of the attributes of a social, cultural or other group” (156). Donelson and Nilsen also argue that it is necessary for writers to have some stereotyped characters to save their descriptions; it is impossible to develop every character in each story. The common stereotypes are blacks, parents, bad guys, and so forth. In Cormier's fiction for young adult, the researcher finds that there indeed exists one special kind of stereotyped characters: bullies.

In addition to the type of flat vs. round characters, there is another common kind of characters: static vs. dynamic characters. Different from flat vs. round type, static vs. dynamic type stresses on whether the character finally changes or not. If a character remains the same from beginning to end, this character is called static. In contrast, if a character changes after s/he has met some incidents, this character is called dynamic.

However, the type of static vs. dynamic characters is not parallel with that of flat vs. round characters. That is to say, a round character, which has more detailed descriptions, does not necessarily change by the end of a story. For protagonists, always round characters, most of them indeed change by the end of a story. Like Jerry in *The Chocolate War*, telling his friend the Goober not to disturb the universe, has really changed himself, from confrontation to submission. But Jerry changes again, as he is in the second half of *Beyond the Chocolate War*, he decides to stay in Trinity High—he becomes braver than ever. Other protagonists such as Henry in *Tunes for Bears to Dance to*, Darcy in *Other Bells for Us to Ring*, Paul in *Fade* and Francis in *Heroes* also change herself or himself. They are all protagonists, round

characters and dynamic characters. One exception is Buddy, the protagonist in *We All Fall Down*, who never changed and eventually paid for that.

On the other hand, the antagonist of a story, even though a round character, s/he tends to remain the same. To take one antagonist Archie in *The Chocolate War* as an example, in the very beginning he was cool, powerful, and manipulative, especially as he assigned the task to newcomers. At the end of this novel, he still remains cool, powerful and manipulative. Even in the sequel *Beyond the Chocolate War*, Archie has still never changed. Similar to Archie, Emile and Brother Leon in *The Chocolate War* and *Beyond the Chocolate War*, Mr. Hairston in *Tunes for Bears to Dance to Dance To*, Lulu in *In the Middle of the Night*, and Harry in *We all Fall Down* are all evil, and they remain their wickedness throughout the whole novel. But different from Archie, these characters are all flat (or in-between). Cormier does not give too much information about these characters, neither has them change.

Flat characters must be static, but static characters are not necessarily flat. Sometimes round characters are static too, like the researcher mentions above: the antagonist tends to remain the same. Here is an intriguing example: in *The Chocolate War*, one of Archie's stooges is Obie. He seems to be flat because Cormier has not provided too much information about him. Obie is static too, for he seems not to change from beginning to end. However, in *Beyond the Chocolate War*, Obie leaps forward to one of the main characters, who tries to kill Archie. Because Obie in this sequel turns into a protagonist, there is more room for his changing: he loses his patience with Archie, resents Archie gradually, and finally attempts to murder Archie. By this time Obie is no longer static; he is dynamic instead. In Obie's case, he is not dynamic until he becomes a round character.

In conclusion, most protagonists and antagonists are round characters, whereas supporting characters and background characters are flat. In Cormier's young adult

novels, some of the protagonist's best friends play a role of a foil, which highlight the protagonists. In terms of static vs. dynamic characters, like other books for youngsters, the protagonists tend to change themselves at the end of the story, which makes them dynamic. By contrast, the antagonists usually remain the same from beginning to end, so they are more like static, even though many antagonists are round characters. And finally, all flat characters are static, and this rule can also apply to Cormier's young adult fiction.

### 3. How does Cormier reveal his characters in his fiction by appearance, by discourses and by actions?

First of all, Cormier reveals his characters by appearance: it is found that in his first novel for young adults, *The Chocolate War*, there are still a lot of descriptions of characters' appearance, particularly of the main characters—usually the round characters. For instance, Cormier describes Archie as that “Archie's voice was soft with concern, his eyes gentle with compassion” (10) to contrast with his real manipulative personality. And Emile is “a brute which was kind of funny because he didn't look like a brute. He wasn't big or overly strong. In fact, he was small for a tackle on the football team. But he was an animal and he didn't play by the rules” (49). Such description gives the readers an image of this character, and implies what he is going to do in the future.

Although there are some descriptions of characters' appearance in *The Chocolate War*, the readers have found much fewer descriptions in Cormier's second young adult novel *I Am the Cheese*. It seems that Cormier uses more narrative devices than static statements.



The descriptions of people's appearance are used less by modern young adult novelists. When a writer describes a character deliberately, it is assumed that this character must be extraordinary or abnormal, at least special, for the sake of characterization.

Secondly, in terms of the characterization by discourses, the researcher divides discourses into two categories: by comments and by speech. First, with respect to characterization by comments, the researcher also takes Jerry in *The Chocolate War* as an example to make a contrast with the author's comments. Not only does Cormier give the readers what Jerry thinks and how he feels, other people around Jerry also provide their comments on him. For instance, one day as Jerry waits for a bus at a bus stop, he confronts several strangers. Those strangers call Jerry "sub-human" and "square boy". They say to Jerry that "middle-aged at fourteen, fifteen. Already caught in a routine. Wow" (20).

Other character's comments are less authoritative than the author's comments. The readers hardly doubt the truth of the author's words, whereas they seldom give full credit to other characters' comments because they are so different even contradictory sometimes. From this perspective, the author's comments belong to the "telling" category, and other characters' comments belong to the "showing" category because they "exactly mirrors the event", like Lodge mentions that "showing is the quoted speech of characters" (122). Secondly, another showing technique in fiction is using "conversation", or "speech" as called by Lukens and Cline. Different people in fiction have different vocabulary, intonation, tones and so on. Brooks and Penn Warren argue that "the laconic soldier, the querulous charwoman, the shy convent-school girl....all have their own vocabularies and their ways of putting words together. An author, in order to be convincing, must have his characters speak 'in character,' and his normal way of presenting an unusual character is to give us the



flavour of his dialect and idiom” (109). Lodge also claims that “at the simplest level there is the alternation of the narrator’s voice with the voices of the characters, rendered in their own specific accents and idioms of class, region, occupation, gender etc” (128).

Finally, with respect to the characterization by actions, among Cormier’s fifteen young adult novels, the vicious or wicked characters are more unforgettable than the good ones. These characters act strangely, abnormally and terrifyingly. A notable example is Eric in *Tenderness*, who is the protagonist but an evil one—a serial killer. As Eric was a boy, he found fun in killing small animals such as birds and received a sense of tenderness. After he grew up to be a teen, he murders his mother and step-father, and then three teenager girls. Cormier describes how Eric killed a mouse while in the facility:

He reached out and snatched the tiny rodent, not surprised that it was so easy. It was as if the mouse knew its fate and was sacrificing itself. The pulse of the small body beat softly against the flesh of Eric’s palm. The nose twittered, the body twitched. Despite the loneliness that he knew would be the result of his actions, he gently, lovingly squeezed, seeking the tenderness. (71)

Such scene makes the readers feel chilly, especially for Eric’s cruelty. But Eric has changed gradually after he meets Lori and begins a journey. When he learns that Lori might know his secret, he decides to kill her one night: “he held the pillow in front of him like a shield. He had done his mother this way. Seemed like the kindest way to do it—you did not see the face during the struggle” (188). Lori suddenly wakes up; at first she is scared then she gives up: “closing her eyes, she sighed. ‘Go

ahead, then. Do it.' He lowered the pillow, stood uncertainly beside her bed....he let the pillow drop to the floor" (189).

Why does Eric change his mind, even his attitude toward Lori? Cormier spends more than one hundred pages to present their journey, mainly by actions and dialogues, to tell the readers how they develop their dangerous liaison. At last Eric takes a trip to go boating with Lori, but it ends up an accident that Lori gets drowned in a lake. The police arrest Eric and accuse him of killing her on purpose. Eric is sent to prison. In the last scene, the readers read this passage: "the worse image of all, the one he dreaded but could not prevent: the way she clung to him at the last moment in the waters of the lake: *Love me, Eric*. Eric touched his cheek, finding moisture there—was this what crying was like? Later, in the deepest heart of the night, the monster also cried" (229).

Eric's personality is displayed by his actions, so is his change. This character gives the readers a very impressive image because Cormier makes Eric act like a cold-blooded monster. Nevertheless, his last action, crying in the middle of the night, seems reasonable and more human. Lukens and Cline argue that "we have come to expect that an experience—action—may cause change....Character, or who and what the person is, influences action. And once involved in the action, the person may either experience change or remain unchanged" (13-14). In this case, Eric's journey with Lori does change him, and this change makes the readers more released because it demonstrates that people can change into the better mankind.

4. With respect to narrative skills, how does Cormier use narrative order, point of view/ perspective, and the narrator to arrange and recount his stories?

1) Narrative order: via analyzing Cormier's young adult fiction, this study finds that in *The Chocolate War* and the sequel *Beyond the Chocolate War*, Cormier mainly lays out the story along a straight timeline. Lukens and Cline argue that "the touchstones chosen for close examination in this text, *The Chocolate War*...move in chronological order, showing one event following another" (32). Indeed, in these two novels, Cormier has every chapter move by the time sequence and from different points of view. For example, the first chapter is about the protagonist Jerry who is playing football at school. The time sequence is chronological and the point of view belongs to Jerry. In chapter two, the point of view turns to Obie, who is the right-hand man of the antagonist Archie. However, for the very first line of this novel, Cormier writes down: "THEY MUDERED HIM.", which makes the whole story more like a flashback, or so-called "analeptic" ("back-take") because Cormier writes the final result first, then goes back to narrate and explain it. Except for this, the story then proceeds chronologically.

A similar case is the time order in *Beyond the Chocolate War*. Since this novel is the sequel of *The Chocolate War*, it is inevitable that it will have many recalling plots from the first novel. For example, as Jerry and his friend the Goober have a phone call before Jerry returns to Trinity High, both boys talk about the terrible fight that happened at the end of the first novel *The Chocolate War*. The Goober says "...let me tell you that I know that I betrayed you last fall. Stayed home as if I was sick when you were going through hell because of the chocolates, that beating from Janza..." (150). Then Cormier let Jerry answer that " 'But you were there, Goob. I saw you. You helped me....' He almost said: You held me in you arms when I was all broken inside and out" (150).

This makes the story flow not only in chronological order, but also in a flashback order too. Sometimes a flashback is put in a dialogue between characters or

a memory of a certain character, while sometimes in a comment or a description of the author. There are two kinds of flashback, the completing flashback and the repeating flashback. The researcher argues that the completing flashback can be a central part of a narrative, and can even take its own stand; that is to say, that an entire story can be a completing flashback. Moreover, the researcher also argues that the function of repeating flashbacks or recalls is to make a story more reasonable and colorful, whereas the main function of completing flashbacks or returns is to uncover a story happening in the past but related to the present.

2) Point of view/perspective and focalizations: the researcher puts Cormier's fifteen books—one collection of nine short stories and fourteen novellas and novels—into this category, and then brings out the tables below:

Table 8

Types of Focalizations in Cormier's Nine Short Stories

(Originally Table 1 in Chapter 5)

Focalizations	
Zero	None
Internal (Fixed)	All nine short stories / all using first-person point of view
Internal (Variable)	None
Internal (Multiple)	None
External	None

Table 9

## Types of Focalizations in Cormier's Fourteen Novellas and Novels

(Originally Table 2 in Chapter 5)

Focalizations	
Zero	<i>After the First Death, The Bumblebee Flies Anyway, In the Middle of the Night</i>
Internal (Fixed)	<i>I Am the Cheese</i> (using first-person point of view / third-person point of view), <i>After the First Death</i> (partly), <i>Fade</i> (using first-person point of view / third-person point of view), <i>Other Bells for Us to Ring, Tunes for Bears to Dance To, In the Middle of the Night</i> (in relatively small part), <i>Tenderness</i> (in half part), <i>Heroes, Frenchtown Summer</i>
Internal (Variable)	<i>The Chocolate War, Beyond the Chocolate War, We All Fall Down, Tenderness</i> (in half part), <i>The Rag and Bone Shop</i>
Internal (Multiple)	<i>Fade</i> (partly)
External	<i>I Am the Cheese</i> (tape transcriptions), <i>Fade</i> (reports of investigation), <i>We All Fall Down</i> (the opening)

Via Table 8 and Table 9, the researcher finds that Cormier likes to use fixed internal focalizations with first-person perspective in his early short stories; in fact, all of these nine short stories are told in the first-person internal focalization. Secondly, among these nine short stories, only five stories use the teenager protagonist's "eyes", they are: "The Moustache", "President Cleveland, Where Are You?", "Guess What? I

Almost Kissed My Father Goodnight”, “My First Negro”, and “Protestants Cry, Too”, while the other five employs the eyes of a middle-aged father (they are not the same character): “Mine on Thursdays”, “Another of Mike’s Girls”, “A Bad Time for Fathers”, and “Bunny Berigan—Wasn’t He a Musician or Something?” Nearly half of this collection of short stories has “borrowed” an adult’s eyes. This outcome does not correspond to the definition of young adult fiction, which is related to a young adult’s life and where the main character is a teenager. No wonder a review in *Hornbook* magazine writes that “it may be a refreshing experience for teenagers to read about adolescence, frankly recollected by a sympathetic middle-aged man” (Campbell 2: 113). The researcher also wonders whether any teenager will like these kinds of stories.

In addition, in terms of Cormier’s novellas and novels, the researcher finds that Cormier prefers to use internal focalizations, including fixed and variable ones, to his longer stories. But he uses the zero focalizations less often than internal focalizations. Zero focalizations correspond to traditional omniscient point of view, while internal focalizations parallel first-person point of view and third-person single point of view as a kind of limited omniscient point of view. This result demonstrates that Cormier may like to lessen his authority over his narrative, particularly on his characters, trying not to tell the readers too much from the author’s eyes. Instead, Cormier may want to tell his stories to the readers on his characters’ own.

Moreover, it is difficult to utilize a purely objective/dramatic point of view throughout an entire story. It is the same case with Cormier’s young adult fiction. However, some paragraphs in Cormier’s books are relatively attractive as he uses an objective point of view, also called an external focalization. For instance, the tape transcriptions in *I Am the Cheese* give the readers an impression of the coolness, even cruelty, of the Institution (i.e., the Government). Moreover, the opening of *We All*

*Fall Down* also makes the readers uncomfortable, for watching a house-trashing themselves via a video camera. Here is the very first paragraph in *We All Fall Down*:

They entered the house at 9:02 p.m. on the evening of April Fools' Day. In the next forty-nine minutes, they shit on the floors and pissed on the walls and trashed their way through the seven-room Cape Cod cottage. They overturned furniture, smashed the picture tubes in three television sets, tore two VCRs from their sockets and crashed them on the floor. They spray-painted the wall orange. They flooded the bathrooms, both upstairs and down, and flushed face towels down the toilet bowls. They broke every mirror in the place and toppled a magnificent hutch to the floor, sending china cups and saucers and plates and assorted crystal through the air.... (3)

The dispassionate description above presents a striking contrast to the violence of this misdeed, catches the readers' eyes, makes the readers to read through it, and forces the readers to think about the serious problems of adolescent crimes.

3) Narrators: concerning Cormier's works, there are three types of narrators with respect to whether the narrator is within the story or not; if within, then they can be further categorized into two sub-areas: narrator as a main character in the story, and narrator as an observer in the story. Hence, the three types of narrators are as follows:



Table 10

Types of Narrators in Cormier's Nine Short Stories

(Originally Table 4 in Chapter 5)

Types of Narrators	Cormier's Short Stories
Narrator as a character in the story (main character)	"The Moustache", "Mine on Thursdays", "Another of Mike's Girls", "President Cleveland, Where Are You?" (in half part), "A Bad Time for Fathers", "Guess What? I Almost Kissed My Father Goodnight", "My First Negro"
Narrator as a character in the story (minor character as observer)	"President Cleveland, Where Are You?" (in half part), "Protestants Cry, Too", "Bunny Berigan—Wasn't He a Musician or Something?"
Narrator not a character in the story (all-powerful narrator)	None
Multiple/mixed narrator	None

Table 11

Types of Narrators in Cormier's Fourteen Novellas and Novels

(Originally Table 5 in Chapter 5)

Types of Narrators	Cormier's Novellas and Novels
Narrator as a character in the story (main character)	<i>I Am the Cheese</i> , <i>Fade</i> (the narrator Paul), <i>Other Bells for Us to Ring</i> , <i>Tenderness</i> , <i>Heroes</i> , <i>Frenchtown Summer</i> (the narrator Eugene's stories)

Narrator as a character in the story (minor character as observer)	<i>Fade</i> , <i>In the Middle of the Night</i> (in small part), <i>Frenchtown Summer</i> (the narrator Eugene tells his father's events)
Narrator not a character in the story (all-powerful narrator)	<i>The Chocolate War</i> , <i>Beyond the Chocolate War</i> , <i>I Am the Cheese</i> (partly), <i>The Bumblebee Flies Anyway</i> , <i>Fade</i> (Ozzie's section), <i>We All Fall Down</i> , <i>Tunes for Bears to Dance To</i> , <i>In the Middle of the Night</i> (central part), <i>Tenderness</i> (in half part), <i>The Rag and Bone Shop</i>
Multiple/mixed narrator	<i>I Am the Cheese</i> , <i>Fade</i> , <i>In the Middle of the Night</i> , <i>Tenderness</i> , <i>Frenchtown Summer</i>

In terms of the narrator as a character in the story, the researcher finds that all narrators in this category are teenagers, even the main character Paul in *Fade*, was a teenager too (he tells his story about his adolescence). However, if the narrator serves as an observer, the story s/he tells is always about her/his elder, like Susan in *Fade* talking about the story (written in an unpublished manuscript) of her distant elder relative Paul, Dave in *In the Middle of the Night* recounting the events of his elder sister Lulu, and Eugene in *Frenchtown Summer* writing down some observations of his father. Using the narrator as a younger observer gives Cormier plenty of room to hide the information which he does not want the readers to learn too early. It parallels the situation that parents (or elders) sometimes choose not to tell their children too much in order to protect them. In terms of writing, a writer chooses not to reveal everything at the same time because s/he would like to give the readers the suspense and the pleasure of uncovering the secret in a story.

On the other hand, when the narrator is not a character in the story, every short story is in first-person voice, so all of them do not belong to the category of “narrator not a character in the story”. And compared to his short stories, Cormier’s novellas and novels have more narrators not in the story. The researcher argues that the use of “narrator not a character in the story” (i.e., all-powerful narrator) is much easier than the first-person narrator to develop longer stories. The narrator within the story, either as a protagonist or an observer, must be limited to the extent of what this narrator (“I”) sees, hears, feels and thinks. For a writer, the strictness of “I” narrator can provide a good tool to deepen this narrator’s inside world (if this “I” narrator is a protagonist), or enhance the innocence and simplicity of the narrator as an observer (because s/he has no idea of others’ mind). However, it is difficult to write longer narratives because the writer has only one representative to see and tell the whole story. That is the reason that fewer novels employ the narrator as a character in the story (i.e., “I”-protagonist and/or “I”-witness) than short stories do. Cormier’s novellas and novels follow this rule as well.

To sum up, Cormier likes to use various types of focalizations and narrators in his stories, especially in his novels. In his short stories, finished from 1965 to 1975, the researcher does not observe this tendency. In these very early works, Cormier uses first-person narrators for all of his short stories. However, from his first YA novel, *The Chocolate War*, to his last book, *The Rag and Bone Shop*, Cormier has abandoned simple and liner narrative skills including the narrative order, point of view/perspective (focalization) and narrator to conduct his literary works for young adults. Three of his young adult books in particular are complicated in terms of narrative skills, and they are *I Am the Cheese*, *After the First Death*, and *Fade*. All of them are his early works. On the other hand, Cormier’s more recent novels and

novellas are easier for teenagers to understand. It seems that Cormier's writing style is gradually towards his main readership, the adolescents.

5. What is Cormier's writing style? Which literary devices does he like to use? Does he have a trend of using these devices?

Cormier likes to employ metaphors, similes and allusions in his stories. In terms of metaphors, there are two kinds of metaphors which are discussed: plain metaphors and implied metaphors. Cormier uses a lot of plain metaphors in his books. For example, in *The Chocolate War*, as Jerry thinks of his father, whose wife (i.e., Jerry's mother) died recently, Cormier writes that: "His father was a stranger during those terrible days, like a sleepwalker going through the motions, like a puppet being maneuvered by invisible strings" (59). This passage is a combination of a plain metaphor, "his father was a stranger", as well as two similes using the word "like". This kind of combination is quite often used in Cormier's books as well.

In *Beyond the Chocolate War*, we can also find some examples of plain metaphors; for instance, on page 153, Cormier describes the school life in Trinity High as follows: "Tests were daily battles in the larger war of school" (153). Sometimes an appositive is used in a plain metaphor; for example, on page 236, a student Caroni thinks of his F grade, "The F had stood. A mark of shame as well as corruption" (236).

Sometimes a be-verb can be replaced by the word "become" in a plain metaphor. Taking *In the Middle of the Nigh* as an example, on page 77, Cormier describes sleeplessness: "Sleep which had somehow become a sweet and cherished friend" (77).

On the other hand, an implied metaphor, also called an implicit metaphor, is a kind of metaphor where “the tenor is not itself specified, but only implied” (*A Glossary of Literary Terms* 102). In contrast with a plain metaphor, *The Harper Handbook to Literature* provides examples of the implied metaphor as “he swelled and displayed his finery” and “he swelled and ruffled his plumage” (290). In these cases, both sentences lack the obvious tenor, a peacock, but use the quality or behavior of a peacock instead.

With respect to Cormier’s works, he uses implied metaphors quite often too. In *The Chocolate War*, Cormier describes how as Brother Leon accuses a student Bailey of cheating, other students keep silent: “They say the hydrogen bomb makes no noise: there’s only a blinding white flash that strikes cities dead. The noise comes after the flash, after the silence. That’s the kind of silence that blazed in the classroom now” (42). This case is an implied metaphor because Cormier uses “the hydrogen bomb” to parallel Brother Leon’s behavior, but he does not clearly point out the tenor: Brother Leon’s accusation. In this case, the hydrogen bomb and Brother Leon’s accusation share something in common: they both bring a dead silence, and after that, a disaster.

However, because the tenor of an implied metaphor is implicit, sometimes it is difficult for the readers to catch the writer’s true meaning. For example, on page 121 of the same book, as Jerry thinks of Brother Leon, Cormier describes that: “His [Brother Leon’s] face was always under control but his eyes showed his vulnerability, gave Jerry a glimpse into the hell that was burning inside the teacher” (121). In this sentence Cormier puts “Brother Leon” and “the fire of the hell” together, gives the readers an association, and implies that Brother Leon is evil. But the researcher really wonders whether Brother Leon is a *symbol* of evil, like the fire of the hell, or he is a *victim* suffering from the fire of the hell. Such ambiguity might cause the readers to

misinterpret the texts; however, developing their own interpretations makes reading more interesting.

In terms of similes, the researcher argues that similes are longer and more direct than metaphors, and they are more understandable. It is easier for young readers to catch the writer's meaning, and is better for them to learn the literary use of relatively ordinary words. And then the readers might create other new similes on their own, like Bushman and Bushman suggest that "the important point for young writers is that they should make every effort to use new comparisons rather than trite and overused ones" (33). Cormier also employs a lot of similes in his books. In fact, it seems that he uses more similes than metaphors. For instance, Cormier describes the football field: "The shadows of the goal posts definitely resembled a network of crosses, empty crucifixes" (16). The word "resembled" makes this sentence become a simile.

Moreover, on page 39 in *The Chocolate War*, Cormier describes how Brother Leon uses his pointer in class, "the pointer he [Brother Leon] used either like a conductor's baton or a musketeer's sword. He'd use the tip to push around a book on a desk or to flick a kid's necktie, scratching gently down some guy's back, poking the pointer as if he were a rubbish collector picking his way through the debris of the classroom. One day, the pointer had rested on Jerry's head for a moment, and then passed on. Unaccountably, Jerry had shivered, as if he had just escaped some terrible fate [underlines added]" (39). In the short passage above, Cormier uses similes three times. And the use of these similes makes the readers unforgettable for this pointer—or we can say that this pointer is the disguised and extended power of Brother Leon. Cormier employs a pointer and similes to characterize Brother Leon successfully.

Similes are used in Cormier's books quite often, even in his later novellas and novels. For example, a passage from *In the Middle of the Night*, "A sigh escaped me,

like a ghost abandoning my body” (17), “Dropped the words on the table, like stones striking a surface” (20), “That knowledge was lodged within him like a block of ice that would never melt” (90), “The apartment still, like a museum after hours” (137).

Taking *Heroes* as another example, many similes can also be found in this small novella: “The scarf is white and silk like the aviators wore in their airplanes during the First World War over the battlefields and trenches of Europe” (3), “She seemed to exist in a world of her own, like a rare specimen, birdlike and graceful as she danced, separate from the rest of the dancers” (45), “My eyes sought Nicole, found her joyous face, hands joined together as if in prayer, eyes half closed as if making herself an offering to me” (68), “The gun is like a tumor on my thigh as I walk through the morning streets against the wind that never dies down” (108).

There are more similes than metaphors in Cormier’s books. The researcher argues that the use of similes is more natural, more like an ordinary language, whereas the use of metaphors, in spite of the dead metaphors, seems too “literary”.

Finally, the last literary devices are discussed as follows: allusions—including biblical and literary allusions. The following tables illustrate these two allusions in Cormier’s works:

Here is the table of the allusions from the Bible; namely, the biblical allusions, in Cormier’s books:



Table 12

## Biblical Allusions in Cormier's Books

(Originally Table 6 in Chapter 6)

Book Title	Allusive Lines	Biblical Source
<i>The Chocolate War</i> (1974)	(p.3): he had been Peter a thousand times and a thousand cocks had crowed in his lifetime.	Matthew 26; Mark 14: Before the rooster crows, Peter disowns Jesus Christ three times.
	(p.118): Cities Fell. Earth opened. Planets tilted. Stars plummeted. And the awful silence.	Mark 13; Revelation 6-9: The revelation of false Christ
	(p.123): his chin resting on the Volkswagen like some grotesque John the Baptist?	Matthew 14; Luke 1, 3: The story of John the Baptist
	(p.224): Jerry's progress through the corridor was like the parting of the Red Sea.	Exodus 14: Moses divides the Red Sea while leading Israelites across the Red Sea
<i>Beyond the Chocolate War</i> (1985)	(p.4): Ray had built the boat himself (implying that Ray is good at the carpentry).	Matthew 1: Birth of the carpenter's son, Jesus Christ

<i>Beyond the Chocolate War</i> (1985)	(p.62): Like the psalm they recited at mass sometimes: I offer up myself as an evening sacrifice.	Mark 10: Jesus Christ tells his disciples, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
<i>In the Middle of the Night</i> (1995)	(p.48): I’m not Lazarus, she said...Admitting, at last, that she was Lazarus, after all.	John 11: After Lazarus dies, Jesus Christ makes him revive.
	(p.159): “I offer myself up to them.”	Same as the second allusion in <i>Beyond the Chocolate War</i>
<i>The Rag and Bone Shop</i> (2001)	(p.144): He looked broken, as if just lifted down from the cross.	Mark 15: Joseph of Arimathea takes down the body of Jesus Christ from the cross

Based on the observations, this study finds that: 1) a story having a religious theme or atmosphere does not necessarily allude to the exact words from the Bible. For example, the researcher considers that the most religious book among Cormier’s works is *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*, which is a story about Temptation. However, this book does not have any allusions to the Bible, just like one of Graham Greene’s short story, “The Hint of an Explanation” without any biblical allusion in the whole story.

2) When using any biblical allusion, the writer sometimes changes the exact words from the Bible, but it is still recognizable for the readers (especially for those who are familiar with the Bible). In *The Chocolate War*, when the protagonist Jerry refused to sell chocolate, Cormier put such words, “Cities Fell. Earth opened. Planets tilted. Stars plummeted. And the awful silence”, as an ending of that chapter. This passage is not the same lines as the Bible writes:

So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

But in those days, following that distress, ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ (Mark 13)

Like the Bible foretells the coming of disasters, this chapter with such an ending is ominous of the misfortune of Jerry.

And 3) there exists a gap of knowledge between the author’s and the reader’s. For example, the researcher has no idea of “Lazarus” while reading *In the Middle of the Night* until made a reference to the Bible. In this case, the gap between the writer’s and the reader’s knowledge is cultural and religious. And there are more different kinds of gaps between the author and the reader, such as different genders, different educational backgrounds, or different social status, which all deepen these gaps.

In addition to biblical allusion, Cormier likes to employ another type of allusion—literary allusion, too. In the next section, we will discuss the literary allusions in Cormier’s books.

Table 13

## Literary Allusions in Cormier's Books

(Originally Table 7 in Chapter 6)

Book Title	Source of Allusion	Title of Referent
<i>I Am the Cheese</i> (1977)	Traditional children's song and game	"The Farmer in the Dell"
<i>After the First Death</i> (1979)	Dylan Thomas	"A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London"
<i>The Bumblebee Flies Anyway</i> (1983)	Old myth based on the laws of aerodynamics	
<i>Fade</i> (1988)	H. G. Wells	<i>The Invisible Man</i>
<i>We All Fall Down</i> (1991)	<i>Mother Goose</i>	"Ring-a-Ring o' Roses "
<i>Tunes for Bear to Dance To</i> (1992)	Gustave Flaubert	Madame Bovary
<i>Tenderness</i> (1997)	Kahlil Gibran	"On Love" in <i>The Prophet</i>
<i>The Rag and Bone Shop</i> (2001)	William Butler Yeats	"The Circus Animal's Desertion "

Table 13 shows that among Cormier's fourteen novellas and novels, there are eight books in which Cormier makes literary allusions to other writers' works. It seems that Cormier has an inclination to "borrow" some words or lines from former works, and then transfer them into his book titles. Cormier particularly prefers to use poems or nursery songs, since he read and wrote many poems as he was young. In fact, the reason why Cormier wanted to be a writer is that one of his teachers admired

a poem he wrote when he was a teenager. In Cormier's first novel for young adults, *The Chocolate War*, although he does not use any line from former literary works as the book title, he really makes a famous allusion in this book: "Do I dare disturb the universe?" alluding to one of T. S. Eliot's poems, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock".

As the protagonist of this novel, Jerry, saw this line on his locker's poster, he decided to refuse to sell chocolate—for an unknown reason, and his decision finally brought him to a brutal fight with Emile. After *The Chocolate War* has been popular, this line is also well-known to the readers.

Moreover, in Cormier's second young adult novel, *I Am the Cheese*, Cormier uses a children's song, "The Farmer in the Dell", as the book title. This novel describes a terrifying manipulation by the system/the government. The entire book has a heavy atmosphere, and is written with complicated narrative skills. However, the title gives the readers a contrast to the content, since this title is from a children's song while playing a game. But if we think of this song more deeply, we will find the scary reality: Everyone takes one thing away, and finally leaves the cheese alone, "the cheese stands alone, the cheese stands alone, hi-ho, the derry-o, the cheese stands alone". This is just like the fate of the protagonist of *I Am the Cheese*, Adam Farmer. Cormier borrows this title from a common children's song very ingeniously.

In terms of *We All Fall Down*, this book title is originally from a nursery rhyme: "Ring-a-Ring o' Roses", collected in *Mother Goose*. Like *I Am the Cheese*, this novel deals with some serious issues in a modern society, such as adolescent crimes, alcoholism, divorce, and stalking. The song that this novel borrows from is about the plague. On page 61, these two boys, the protagonist Buddy and his bad friend Harry, are sitting in the car and watching some little girls playing a game with a nursery rhyme "Ring-a-Ring o' Roses", then Harry snorts and says "Stupid", and adds that

“those little girls don’t know what they’re doing...It’s what kids sang back in the olden days when the Black Plague was killing millions of people. People would get a rosy kind of rash and rubbed themselves with herbs and posies. Then they fell down and died....” (62). Cormier tells the readers the source of this book title by his character.

Critic Michael Cart highly recommends Cormier’s works, particular *We All Fall Down*. He argues that “what makes him [Cormier] such a significant writer, I think, is that all his work is informed by an overarching, personal vision; it is summarized by the very title of the book we have been discussing: ‘We All Fall Down’ (185). Cart continues: “the plague [that Harry mentions], thus, provides the symbolic underpinning for this book about the death—not of the body but of the spirit. The plague could also symbolize evil, which, to Cormier, is equally contagious, contaminating human existence and, if untreated, causing death” (186).

Cormier uses the connotation of this famous nursery rhyme to enclose his whole story. This is a main function of allusion—either biblical allusion or literary allusion—to make a new story a connection with a famous work (or part of work). David Lodge in his essay “The Title” in *The Art of Fiction* discusses the importance of the book titles, and talks about the trend of the titles of English novels in the different periods:

The titles of the earliest English novels were invariably the names of the central characters, *Moll Flanders*, *Tom Jones*, *Clarissa*. Fiction was modeling itself on, and sometimes disguising itself as, biography and autobiography. Later novelists realized that the titles could indicate a theme (*Sense and Sensibility*), suggest an intriguing mystery (*The Woman in White*), or promise a certain kind of setting and atmosphere (*Wuthering*

*Heights*). At some point in the nineteenth century they began to hitch their stories to resonant literary quotations (*Far From the Madding Crowd*), a practice that persists throughout the twentieth (*Where Angels Fear To Tread*, *A Handful of Dust*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*), though it is now perhaps regarded as a little corny.... (193-194)

The nineteenth century examples which Lodge mentions above are right similar to the case of one title of Cormier's three novellas, *Tunes for Bear to Dance To*, which is a literary quotation from *Madam Bovary* written by Flaubert. However, for the readers who are not familiar with Western Literature, this title is difficult. In the title page, the author Cormier writes down two quotations: the first one is the source of this book title: "Human language is like a cracked kettle on which we beat out tunes for bears to dance to, when all the time we are longing to move the stars to pity.—Gustave Flaubert", with the second quotation from a prayer under the first one: Deliver us from evil.—Our Father". The first quotation reveals a literary allusion where this book title comes from, and the second quotation points out the religious theme and/or the spirit of this book.

Nevertheless, both quotations are difficult for the readers who have a "gap" between themselves and the author. Campbell mentions that she once asked Cormier about the title of this novella, and Cormier turned out a little regretful for using this "odd title". But he e-mailed and explained to Campbell why he chose this quotation as the title: "what the quotation expresses, for me, is the frequent inability of people to reach out and touch each other, the inability to communicate our longings and our heartbreaks when that is really what being human is all about, this yearning to connect" (qtd. Campbell 1:176). However, because of the difficulty of the title, this



book title *Tunes for Bear to Dance To* is changed to *The Voice from the Darkness of My Heart* in the Japanese edition of this novella.

This study suggests that using biblical allusions and literary allusions is a trend in Cormier's writing. Particularly with respect to his book titles, Cormier likes to make reference to other former literary works, including a children's song, a nursery rhyme, some novels and several poems. The impact of allusions may be positive, (like *We All Fall Down*), but sometimes not so effective (like *Tunes for Bear to Dance To*) because there is indeed a gap between the writer's and the reader's knowledge and background.

At last, the final question is: does Cormier have any trend of using these devices? In addition to the observations above, this study shows that:

1) A simile is more recognizable than a metaphor, since the former must have the word "like", "as if", or "as though" to display a comparison.

2) A simile is more understandable than a metaphor, for there are the tenor and the vehicle in a simile but it is not necessary in a metaphor.

3) Among Cormier's earlier works, like *The Chocolate War*, Cormier has an inclination to employ similes and metaphors very often. On this point Campbell argues that "sometimes it seems that Cormier is merely exercising his virtuosity for the reader...But most of the time his images are precisely calculated to carry the weight of the emotion he is projecting" (Campbell 1: 57). However, in Cormier's later works, this inclination seems faded with respect to the use of metaphors. Nevertheless, there are still lots of similes in his later books, including novellas and novels.

4) The combinations of similes and metaphors, implied metaphors and personifications also are found in Cormier's books—they make the language of the story more colorful and ambiguous. For the readers, to have their own interpretations of the texts is important and amusing.

5) I. A. Richards emphasizes the interaction of the tenor and the vehicle, and he suggests that “a modern theory would go on to point out that with different metaphors the relative importance of the contributions of vehicle and tenor to this resultant meaning varies immensely” (100). This interaction view of theories of metaphors can also be employed to analyze Cormier’s applications of metaphors. For example, a case mentioned before, on page 42 of *The Chocolate War*, Cormier writes that “they say the hydrogen bomb makes no noise: there’s only a blinding white flash that strikes cities dead. The noise comes after the flash, after the silence. That’s the kind of silence that blazed in the classroom now” (42). The metaphor above shows how terrifying Brother Leon’s accusation is, just like a hydrogen bomb. The horrific essence of the vehicle, a hydrogen bomb, deepens the power of the tenor (Brother Leon’s accusation); therefore, it enhances the strength of the metaphor.

6) Even though metaphors and similes are more impressive than direct statements or descriptions while in a text, it must be careful for a writer not to overuse them. Otherwise, it might hinder the readers in comprehension.

## 7.2. Implications

According to the discussions above, there are some implications that this study points out. First of all, for educators, Cormier’s works provide an authentic resource for teaching some challenging issues. For instance, teachers can teach students the issue of peer pressure in *The Chocolate War* and *Beyond the Chocolate War*. Via these two novels, students may have empathy upon the main character Jerry, try to understand his situation and have a glimpse of the real world. Like a reviewer David Peck argues that “The question is not whether a work is depressing but whether it is

realistic, true to human nature and human interaction, and here Cormier must be recognized as a master of psychological realism” (38).

Taking *After the First Death* as another example, in this novel Cormier deals with another important issue: terrorism, even though this book was published in 1979; this issue is still relevant to today’s world. Teachers may have students read this book, and then have them discuss the severity of this issue. A senior editor and educator Virginia R. Monseau points out that “Though the terrorists’ methods in this novel may seem rather tame compared with today’s bombings and beheadings, the young protagonists in *After the First Death* struggle with the same doubts, fears, and uncertainties as the young adult readers who find the book so compelling” (1). Indeed, human nature is universal, regardless of time or race; the readers in this generation can have the same feelings as the readers one or two decades before did. Other important themes or issues that teachers can teach in Cormier’s works are good vs. evil in *Fade*, *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*, *Tenderness*, system vs. individual in *I Am the Cheese*, *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*, *The Rag and the Bone Shop*, and the theme of guilt vs. forgiveness in *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*, *We All Fall Down*, *Heroes*.

Secondly, for writers, Cormier’s books demonstrate certain excellent writing skills, particularly in fiction, such as characterization, the choices of narrative orders, point of view/perspective, focalizations and the selections of narrators, and word expressions like the uses of metaphors, similes and allusions. A good writer has to learn how to write via reading other writers’ works, so Cormier’s books offer them a good resource. In addition, in his collection of short stories *8 Plus 1*, Cormier gives the readers a detailed explanation of how he creates characters, where his writing ideas come from, and so on. The meta-analytical introduction to every short story is truly a benefit to people who want to write. For example, a writer or a “would-be” writer may learn how to choose the protagonist’s best friend as a foil to contrast with

the protagonist, or learn how to select different types of focalizations and narrators for the best effects of the fiction, not to mention the use of word expressions such as plain metaphors, implied metaphors, similes and allusions, and so on. Like Bushman and Bushman argue that: “Most, if not all, of Robert Cormier’s novels reflect this [good] quality of writing. *The Chocolate War* (1974), *I am the Cheese* (1977)...offer complicated, sophisticated plot structure, fully developed characters, settings that complement the plot and characters, a variety of literary devices, and complex, universal themes” (230).

Indeed, Cormier’s young adult short stories, novellas and novels are not only for teenagers, but also for adult readers, teachers and writers. It is hoped that this study can give readers a better understanding of Robert Cormier’s young adult fiction, and then motivate them to read more of his works. Hopefully, this study can also lead to more translations and studies of Cormier’s books in Taiwan.

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## Appendix

附錄:中文節錄版



## 壹、前言

羅伯·柯米爾 (Robert Cormier) 是美國知名的青少年小說家，但是台灣的讀者對他知之甚少，關於他的研究也付之闕如。基於如此，本研究欲對柯米爾的青少年文學作品作一詳盡探討，希望能讓更多的台灣讀者透過此一研究，對柯米爾的小說有更進一步的認識。本研究除了提供全面性的觀照以外，也針對柯米爾作品中的主題、人物、敘述與風格作系統性的分析。

本研究採作品精讀與文本分析法，研究範圍是柯米爾的十五本青少年文學作品，其中包括一本短篇故事集、三本中篇小說，十本長篇小說以及一本以無韻詩形式寫就的半自傳體小說。每個文本被詳細解構，而且不同文本之間彼此對照比較，以期找出相似與相異之處。此外，柯米爾在不同時期，其關注主題與寫作風格的發展與轉變，也在探討之列。

本論文共分七章：第一章是緒論，包含研究動機與目的、研究問題、本研究之重要性、研究方法與全文架構，以及本研究的限制。第二章是關於柯米爾其人與作品的文獻探討，除了其人其作的個人歷史外，也列出美國學者或評論家對柯米爾作品相關的批評與研究。第三章是主題論，就柯米爾作品中常出現的主題，分三個面向來探討，這三個面向是：「善與惡」、「體制與個人」以及「罪愆與寬恕」。第四章是角色論，用兩節分析，分別是：「角色類型」和「角色刻劃」兩大範疇。第五章是敘述論，計有「敘述順序」、「敘述觀點 / 視角」以及「敘事者」三節。第六章是風格論，探討柯米爾作品裡的語言修辭手法，計有三節，分別是：「隱喻」、「明喻」與「用典」。最後一章為結論。

## 貳、作家與作品

### 一、作家生平

羅伯·艾德蒙·柯米爾 (Robert Edmund Cormier)，生於西元 1925 年 1 月 17 日，父親是法裔加拿大人，移民至美國，母親是愛爾蘭裔的美國人，柯米爾是八個孩子裡的老二。他生在麻薩諸塞州，一個叫萊姆斯塔 (Leominster) 的小鎮上。柯米爾終其一生，都住在該鎮上，而他的小說場景，也常以此地為藍圖，刻劃出屬於他自己的小說地圖。

柯米爾自小就喜愛閱讀，又不善運動，兼有近視眼，於是上圖書館閱讀就成了他的習慣，到老仍是如此。他最喜歡的作家是葛林 (Graham Greene)、沙林傑 (J. D. Salinger) 和伍爾夫 (Thomas Wolfe)。他也喜歡寫作，在七年級的時候，他寫的一首詩，受到一位老師——凱撒琳修女——的讚揚，大大鼓勵了他。到柯米爾頗有文名時，他仍記得這位老師的鼓勵。

柯米爾讀的是天主教學校，高中畢業後，他到法丘 (French Hill) 的梳子工廠工作，就像他父親一樣。不過他晚上在梳子工廠工作，白天卻在菲奇堡 (Fitchburg) 的州立師範學院 (State Teachers College) 修課。第一年課程結束後，柯米爾到麻州伍斯特 (Worcester) 的 WTAG 電台工作，負責撰寫廣告文案。1948 年，他被聘為《菲奇堡報》的記者，同年與康斯坦絲 (Constance Senay) 結為連理。

1960 年，當柯米爾還在報社工作時，出版了他的第一本小說，《此時與彼時》(*Now and At the Hour*)。這本小說贏得評論家的讚賞，不過卻沒帶來財務上的成功。1963 年，柯米爾出版了第二本小說《星期一早晨的小小不快》(*A Little Raw on Monday Mornings*)；1965 年又出版他的第三本小說《帶我去尋好時光》(*Take Me Where the Good Times Are*)，三本成人小說均叫好不叫座。

1974 年，柯米爾以他兒子彼得在學校拒賣巧克力的事件為藍本，出版了《巧克力戰爭》(*The Chocolate War*)，小說甫一出版，就造成爭議。因為當時沒有青少年作家處



理這樣的校園暴力議題，尤有甚者，結局還是「不平明的結尾」(an unhappy ending)。評論家有著兩極化的意見，許多家長更是要求學校禁掉這本小說，但年輕人很喜歡這本小說，《巧克力戰爭》銷路大好，至此柯米爾成為暢銷書作家，但也是最受爭議的青少年小說家之一。

1977 年，柯米爾的第二本青少年小說《我是乳酪》(*I Am the Cheese*) 出版。這本小說同樣造成轟動與爭議，銷路亦相當好。這兩本小說的成功，使柯米爾得以安心辭去報社的工作，成為職業作家。之後柯米爾又出版了十四本書。2000 年 11 月 2 日，柯米爾病逝，享年 76 歲。柯米爾去世第二年，他的遺作《破布殘骨之鋪》(*The Rag and Bone Shop*) 在 2001 年出版。

## 二、作家作品

柯米爾一生共出版了二十本書，包括他去世一年後才出版的《破布殘骨之鋪》(*The Rag and Bone Shop*, 2001)。以下是他作品出版年表：

- 1960 《此時與彼時》(*Now and at the Hour*)
- 1963 《星期一早晨的小小不快》(*A Little Raw on Monday Mornings*)
- 1965 《帶我去尋好時光》(*Take Me Where the Good Times Are*)
- 1974 《巧克力戰爭》(*The Chocolate War*)
- 1977 《我是乳酪》(*I Am the Cheese*)
- 1979 《將軍與兒子》(*After the First Death*)
- 1980 《八加一》(*8 Plus 1*)
- 1983 《黃蜂終究也能飛》(*The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*)
- 1985 《巧克力戰爭之後》(*Beyond the Chocolate War*)
- 1988 《隱身》(*Fade*)
- 1990 《另一場鐘聲》(*Other Bells for Us to Ring*)

- 1991 《我有話要說：一位小鎮編輯的反思》(*I Have Words to Spend: Reflections of a Small-Town Editor*，柯米爾報紙的專欄結集)
- 1991 《我們全都倒下》(*We All Fall Down*)
- 1992 《熊跳之調》(*Tunes for Bears to Dance To*)
- 1995 《在午夜》(*In the Middle of the Night*)
- 1997 《溫柔殺機》(*Tenderness*)
- 1998 《英雄》(*Heroes*)
- 1999 《法瑞屈小鎮的夏天》(*Frenchtown Summer*)
- 2000 《一位教徒的肖像》(*Portrait of a Parish*，柯米爾成為天主教徒的心路歷程)
- 2001 《破布殘骨之鋪》(*The Rag and Bone Shop*)

其中前三本為成人小說，第四本《巧克力戰爭》開始，柯米爾總共寫了十五本青少年小說，本研究就他不同時期的作品，區分成七個時期：

#### 時期I：短篇故事 (1965-1975)

這時期的故事皆發表於 1965 年至 1975 年間，後來收錄在 1980 年出版的短篇故事集《八加一》上，計有九篇故事：〈鬍子〉(“The Moustache”)、〈我的星期四〉(“Mine on Thursdays”)、〈邁可的另一個女朋友〉(“Another of Mike’s Girls”)、〈克里夫蘭總統，你在哪裡？〉(“President Cleveland, Where Are You?”)、〈父親的難受時刻〉(“A Bad Time for Fathers”)、〈新教徒也會哭〉(“Protestants Cry, Too”)、〈你猜怎麼著？我差點對我爸來個睡前之吻〉(“Guess What? I Almost Kissed My Father Goodnight”)、〈我的第一個黑人朋友〉(“My First Nrgro”)、〈邦尼·貝利根——他不是音樂家什麼的嗎？〉(“Bunny Berigan—Wasn’t He a Musician or Something?”)。九篇故事全以第一人稱「我」來敘述，而且裡頭有四篇是以中年父親的觀點與敘事者來開展整個故事。

時期II：早期長篇小說，含《巧克力戰爭》(1974)、《我是乳酪》(1977)、《將軍與兒子》(1979)、《黃蜂終究也能飛》(1983)、《巧克力戰爭之後》(1985)、

這時期的作品強調機構或系統對個人的迫害，這個機構或系統可能是學校、政府或醫院，甚至整個國家；個人試圖反抗，但無法獲得正義，最後遭受悲慘的命運。

時期III：類科幻小說：《隱身》(1988)

這本作品的靈感來自威爾斯 (H. G. Wells) 的《隱形人》(*The invisible Man*)。有科幻小說的味道，但因並未交代科學成因（保羅會隱身是神秘的家族遺傳力量），所以本研究把它稱之為「類科幻小說」。《隱身》是柯米爾篇幅最長的青少年小說，和前一時期的《我是乳酪》一樣，故事涉及家族 / 家庭的重大秘密，這祕密又和死亡有關，秘密揭露的過程與揭露後的結果是小說重心。

時期IV：中篇小說：含《另一場鐘聲》(1990)、《熊跳之調》(1992)、《英雄》(1998)

這三本是為年紀較小的讀者寫的作品，篇幅較短，用字較淺，故事也不那麼黑暗，有較好的結局。另一個共通處是三本中篇小說皆有強烈的宗教意味（尤其是前兩本）。

時期V：心理恐怖小說：含《我們全都倒下》(1991)、《在午夜》(1995)、《溫柔殺機》(1997)

這時期的三本作品，節奏明快，氣氛緊張，且均涉及某些暴力事件，甚至謀殺。柯米爾在處理這三本小說時，用了許多懸疑手法，加上題材的關係，使得這三本小說讀起來有恐怖電影與推理小說的感覺。

#### 時期VI：自由詩形式的半自傳體小說：《法瑞屈小鎮的夏天》(1999)

這本小說是半自傳半虛構的作品，甚至可以視為作者的回憶錄；以「無韻的抒情詩」(lyrical free verse) 文體寫成，小說的調性比柯米爾之前的作品溫馨，且有父子親情的一面。

#### 時期VII：最後的二重奏：《破布殘骨之鋪》(2001)

對大環境或系統運作——司法系統的有效與否，以及警察執法的濫用權力——作了一番質疑與反思；全篇故事（篇幅不長，算是中篇的長度）絕大部分由兩個主角——嫌疑犯傑森與詢問者特倫特——的對話構成。

柯米爾的青少年小說，已經翻譯成多國語言，在不同的國家出版。台灣有三本柯米爾作品的中譯本，分別是：《將軍與兒子》，原名 *After the First Death*，中譯本由中唐出版社在 1997 年出版，譯者是廖世德；《我是乳酪》(*I Am the Cheese*)，中譯本在 2002 年由小魯出版，譯者是麥倩宜。而柯米爾第一本青少年小說，《巧克力戰爭》(*The Chocolate War*)，1974 年在美國出版，但在台灣，直到三十四年後的 2008 年，才由遠流出版社出版，譯者是周惠玲。

## 參、主題論

### 一、善與惡

善與惡是許多小說家關注的主題之一，柯米爾自也不例外。從《巧克力戰爭》以降，許多評論家就注意到，「善與惡」是柯米爾青少年小說中最常出現的主題之一。柯米爾在《巧克力戰爭》裡頭創造出許多邪惡的人物，最有名的是「三一中學」的地下社團：「守夜會」<sup>1</sup> (the Vigils) 的任務指派人亞奇。愛操縱人的亞奇與緊捉住權力不放的代理校長雷恩修士，以及崇尚暴力的學生愛彌兒，共同組成了這部小說的「邪惡的三位一體」(the unholy trinity)。文評家坎貝爾 (Patty Campbell) 認為，亞奇是純粹的邪惡的象徵，所以柯米爾並沒有針對他的惡行多作解釋。而本研究者也注意到，雷恩修士的邪惡形象(或說嘴臉) 比亞奇來得鮮明，試看這一段：

首先，雷恩會給他們一份閱讀作業。然後他就會開始在教室裡走來走去，來回踱步，一副焦躁不安的樣子。他會邊走邊嘆氣，手中緊握著教鞭，巡過每一排座位。他使用的教鞭有點像樂隊的指揮棒，又類似步兵的刺刀。他不時用教鞭的頂尖推開學生桌上的書本、拍打學生的領帶，或者順著學生的脊背輕刮下來；他耍弄教鞭的樣子，很像一個收破爛的人，正沿著教室每一排座位，把所有垃圾撥過來翻過去。曾有一次，雷恩修士的教鞭停在傑瑞的頭頂，停了好一會，然後跳過去。不知道為何，傑瑞當場打了個寒顫，彷彿自己剛剛逃過一場可怕的劫難。(中譯本，頁 56)

本研究者認為，若說亞奇是邪惡的象徵，則雷恩修士就是邪惡的代理人；諷刺的是，雷恩的修士身分，正是世間服事與讚頌主的人，這種反差，加深了雷恩修士的邪惡性。

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<sup>1</sup>. 《巧克力戰爭》裡的角色名字與其他專有名詞譯名，參照周惠玲的中文譯本《巧克力戰爭》(遠流，2008)。

和惡相抗衡的是善，《巧克力戰爭》以不久前喪母的新生傑瑞，傑瑞跳出來對抗邪惡，成為善的象徵。但是他的理由卻很薄弱，只因他在置物櫃裡放著的那張海報，印著詩人艾略特的一行詩：「我敢不敢撼動這宇宙？」像唐璜一樣，傑瑞也是為了某種理想主義（或可視為一種浪漫主義）去奮鬥；而最終的結局是：和愛彌兒的一場打鬥，傑瑞被打得很慘，最後他對前來救他的好友羅花生說：「千萬不要去撼動整個宇宙。」這個「正不勝邪」的結局讓很多家長和評論者不快，但後來柯米爾在接受訪問時說，世間上很多事並非有個快樂的結局，他只是要告訴青少年讀者，外面的世界如何。而傑瑞的行為之所以重要，並不在他打贏與否，而是他站出來對抗邪惡。本研究認為這才是柯米爾的本意。

另一個邪惡的代表人物是《熊跳之調》的亥爾斯冬先生。亥先生操弄本書的男主角亨利，用威脅利誘的方式，使亨利去破壞一位猶太老人的手造城鎮模型，原因無他，只因他恨猶太人。柯米爾同樣沒有賦予亥先生心理層面的解釋，好讓讀者了解他為何這樣邪惡。因之本研究者同樣將亥先生視為邪惡的象徵，因為邪惡是毋需解釋的，邪惡就是邪惡。《熊跳之調》讓人聯想起小說家葛林（Graham Greene）《偷窺——葛林短篇小說選》的一篇短篇故事〈一句話的暗示〉（“A Hint of an Explanation”），文中亦有個「黑森先生」教唆小男孩去偷彌撒的聖體，和亥先生一樣，黑先生也沒有什麼具體的理由，最後小男孩非但沒有偷，長大後還成了神父。《熊跳之調》裡的亨利，雖然失手破壞了模型，但他拒絕拿亥先生給的酬勞，和家人搬離那個小鎮，最後還為亥先生祈禱，這就牽涉到本章探討的第三個主題：「罪愆與寬恕」

## 二、體制與個人

除了「善與惡」的主題外，「體制與個人」也是柯米爾喜歡書寫的主題之一，尤其在他早期（時期 II）的青少年小說，如《巧克力戰爭》、《我是乳酪》、《黃蜂終究也能飛》等。文評家佩克（David Peck）曾說過柯米爾的《巧克力戰爭》，處理的是「個別性對一致性」（individuality vs. conformity）的問題。凡生活在群體的個人，若太特立



獨行，剛開始只是引人側目，到後來可能會招致責罰。像是《巧克力戰爭》裡的傑瑞，剛開始拒絕賣巧克力時，許多同學還佩服他，但是到了後面，越來越多人覺得不公平，為何只有他不需要推銷巧克力，因此同儕壓力就來了，大家開始有意無意的「迫害」傑瑞，加上亞奇與雷恩修士的推波助瀾，終於有了最後一場「他們宰了他」的拳擊賽。

除了學校以外，另一個容易淪於壓迫個人的體制或機構是政府。文評家馬區潘尼 (Robbie March-Penny) 提到，政府和犯罪組織相似的地方，就是它們均能無情地剷除任何危害到組織主體性的個人。在《我是乳酪》裡，主角亞當因父親報導不法情事而改變身分，遠走他鄉；但最後也因政府害怕亞當一家身分曝光，危害到政府而設計殺了全家，只剩亞當倖存。但由於亞當失憶，政府安排療養機構與所謂的心理醫生來「保護」——其實是「監控」——亞當。體制的冷血如同邪惡的「毫不容情」(the Implacable of the evil) 一般：只不過，體制之冷血是為了維持自身利益與權力運作；而邪惡的無情乃出自於天性。

但體制從何而來，說穿了，體制也是一群個體運作下的產物。因此不單是體制壓迫個人，個人也可以成為壓迫其他個體的幫凶。像《巧克力戰爭》裡，三一高中的學生們不但欺侮傑瑞，甚至在最後傑瑞與愛彌兒的拳擊賽中，他們買票進場觀賞及賭彩，還大嚷「宰了他」、「幹掉他」。在《我是乳酪》裡，也有個所謂心理醫生「布林特」及「灰衣人」幫政府做事，當然，他們本身就是體制的一份子。研究者凱萊 (Jennifer Keeley) 在《解讀我是乳酪》(*Understanding I Am the Cheese*) 提到：柯米爾將邪惡與政治系統視為一種集體行為，而這種惡是由於個人的選擇——當他們沒有選擇道德時，就允許邪惡或政治系統來迫害個人了。

另一個容易產生體制與個人對立的機構是醫院（或療養單位）。在《黃蜂終究也能飛》當中，一群重病的青少年自願成為醫院的白老鼠，嘗試新的療法。但這些青少年並不知這些新療法或新藥物是什麼，只是被動地接受治療（或實驗）。體制內的當權者往往害怕個人擁有知識——如果知識即力量——因而隱瞞（或不主動告知）許多資訊。醫院是很好的例子，大部分的醫病資訊都是單方向居多。《黃蜂終究也能飛》裡的院長，雖然不像《我是乳酪》的所謂心理醫生布林特一樣為政府工作，但他仍刻意（且自認善



意)地隱瞞主角巴尼重病之事，直到巴尼緩解期已過，院長才告訴巴尼他也即將邁入死亡。體制往往決定什麼是個人「應該」知道的，什麼是「不應該」知道的。這是體制的特點之一。

然而，身在體制內的個人，就該默默承受體制加諸於自身的一切嗎？如果個人反抗體制，會招來怎樣的後果？《巧克力戰爭》的傑瑞，被愛彌兒打得半死；《我是乳酪》的亞當，父母被車撞死，而自己也失憶瘋狂；到了《黃蜂終究也能飛》一書中，巴尼爲了朋友，也爲了自己，偷了輛木製的模型車(巴尼叫它「黃蜂」)，把它拖到屋頂上，讓它從屋頂上「飛」下去：

比利大叫：「嘿，我們什麼時候起飛？」

難道比利不明白，他們不需要飛，只要黃蜂為他們飛就好了……

「我們來了，」他對著背後的人叫嚷著。他聽見自己響亮又清楚的聲音，穿越夜空，直達月亮與星星上頭。那聲音充滿勝利、勇氣與美麗。

然後，黃蜂終於飛了起來。(頁 235)

這樣的姿勢教人難忘。或許柯米爾是想對讀者說：結果不是最重要的，重要的是，敢於站出來對抗邪惡與體制。一個人站出來的姿勢，可能會使更多人站出來。只要越來越多的個人站出來對抗體制的權威，慢慢地，就能看到體制的改變。

### 三、罪愆與寬恕

柯米爾和葛林一樣爲天主教小說家，他也像葛林一樣，對天主教從懷疑到認同，其間也經過許多質疑與掙扎。柯米爾的第一部青少年小說《巧克力戰爭》，將故事場景設定在天主教學校，而最該服事主的修士卻成爲壓迫別人的主事者，種種可見對宗教的諷刺性。但是到了 1992 年的《熊跳之調》，這種諷刺已不復見，取而代之的是其中的宗教情操。《熊跳之調》的亥先生，和《巧克力戰爭》的亞奇一樣，是個邪惡的象徵，他

們從頭邪惡到底，沒有改變過，而且讀者也不知他們為何如此邪惡？但兩本小說所不同的是，《熊跳之調》的主角亨利，最後不但原諒了亥先生（其實最重要的是亨利自己原諒了自己），還為他祈禱；而無論是《巧克力戰爭》，或是續集《巧克力戰爭之後》，讀者都看不見亞奇或雷恩修士或愛彌兒的改變，這些角色自也談不上獲得什麼原宥了（也沒人為他們祈禱）。

本研究將柯米爾青少年小說裡的罪愆分為兩種：一種是真正的罪，另一種是罪惡意識。前者如《巧克力戰爭》的「邪惡三位一體」：亞奇、雷恩修士與愛彌兒，或是《熊跳之調》的亥爾斯冬先生；後者如《巧克力戰爭》主角傑瑞的好友羅花生，《熊跳之調》的亨利，《我們全都倒下》的主角巴迪，《英雄》的主角法蘭西斯等。前者不必多加討論，因為不管這些角色是邪惡的象徵（即邪惡本身），或是邪惡的代理人，都不可能獲得救贖。而後者——這些心懷罪惡感的平常人——則有兩種結果，一是獲得原諒，一是沒有獲得原諒。為何會有不同結果？本研究認為主要是「做」與「不做」的差別。

拿《熊跳之調》的亨利和《英雄》的法蘭西斯來說，這兩人犯的都是「不作為之罪」（the sins of omission）。亨利明知亥先生要他搗毀猶太老人的模型，但他不敢說不，也未警告他人，最後終究失手打壞模型（槌子不小心掉下去）；而《英雄》裡的主角法蘭西斯，明明已經聽到桌球教練性侵自己的女朋友妮可，卻因不敢（或不願意相信）而未出手相救，以致他後來自願從軍，希望在戰場上一死了之。這兩人都因自己的不作為，使自己內心充滿罪惡感，但兩人最終獲得原諒了。何故？因為他們都為自己的罪，「做」了某些重要的事：亨利最後拒絕亥先生的酬勞，並明確告訴亥先生，他是無心之過；之後他又勸亥先生的女兒要勇敢走出來；而最後他不但祈求神原諒他的罪，也祈禱神原諒亥先生。這已經是聖經上所說：「赦免我們的罪，因為我們也赦免凡虧欠我們的人。不教我們遇見試探；教我們脫離凶惡。」（路加福音第十一章）。

至於《英雄》裡的法蘭西斯，他後來找到了當年的桌球教練，發現教練已因戰爭成了殘廢，法蘭西斯本想殺他，但後來發現他已無殺他的欲望了。法蘭西斯離開後，聽到一聲槍響，他知道教練自殺了。之後法蘭西斯輾轉找到妮可，向她說出心中的歉意，妮

可接受了；最後法蘭西斯決定去找整型醫生，把他在戰爭中被手榴彈炸壞的臉修補好，重新開始新的人生。

亨利與法蘭西斯這兩個主角，都「做」了一些事，平息自己的罪惡感，讓自己獲得原諒。相反地，《我們全都倒下》的主角巴迪，卻因什麼事也沒做，而深陷罪惡感的泥淖，無法自拔。巴迪和損友哈利等人，去破壞郊區的一棟房屋，巴迪雖覺不妥，但也未阻止——這又是犯了不作爲之罪。之後巴迪因爲罪惡感，刻意結識該屋主的大女兒珍，並且墜入愛河，兩人成爲男女朋友。但是巴迪完全不敢告訴珍，他那天也參與了破壞她家的行動。直到珍從另一人的口中聽到這件事，兩人於是分手。原本已經慢慢戒酒的巴迪又開始酗酒，小說最後寫到兩人在最初相識的賣場，再次不期而遇：

「家裡一切都好，」他對珍說：「我是說，我爸和我媽確定要離婚了，不過是不傷和氣的離婚。艾迪很好、我媽也很好……我不再喝酒了。我現在專心在我的課業上……」

「這樣很好，」她說。他明顯在說謊。

她站在電扶梯上，電扶梯緩慢上升，她頭也不回，留他一個人在底下。(頁 198)

評論家卡特 (Michael Cart) 寫道：「把『底下』說成是巴迪的個人地獄，一點也不爲過；另一方面，珍的上升，並非上天堂，而是通往快樂未來的可能性。對珍而言，至少小說給了她審慎的樂觀結尾。但對巴迪而言……哎，巴迪有著致命的缺點，無能作出正確的道德選擇，所以他毀了。這對青少年小說來說，真是難以承受的重擔。」(頁 184)

無法獲得原諒，這正是柯米爾對犯下「不作爲之罪」的角色，最嚴厲的懲罰。

## 肆、角色論

本章探討的是小說創作最重要的部分：角色（或稱人物），分兩大面向探討：一是角色類型，又細分為「扁平與圓形」角色（flat vs. round characters），以及「靜態與動態」角色（static vs. dynamic characters）兩類。另一個面向是角色刻劃（characterization），或稱人物塑造，分三方面探討，分別是：以外貌刻劃角色（by appearance）、用言語塑造角色（by discourses），以及以動作（by actions）呈現角色。

### 一、角色類型

E. M. 佛斯特 (E. M. Forster) 將角色分成扁平與圓形兩種。《小說面面觀》(*Aspects of the Novel*) 提到：「扁平人物.....在最純粹的形式中，他們依循著一個單純的理念或性質而被創造出來.....真正的扁平人物可以用一個句子描述殆盡。」(中譯本，頁 59)。換言之，扁平角色的資訊甚少，也就是莒肯絲與克萊恩 (Lukens and Cline) 所說的「扁平角色，讀者對其所知不多，本身特質甚少。」(頁 16)。相對地，圓形角色就擁有較多且較詳盡的背景資料。一般而言，故事裡的主角 (protagonist) 多半為圓形角色，而配角則多為扁平角色。

扁平角色裡，有個特殊類型叫「陪襯」角色 (foil)，張子樟在《少年小說大家讀》的〈典型的塑造——少年小說人物研究〉一章提到：「平面人物 (即扁平角色) 像綠葉扮演陪襯 (foil) 角色，與主角並列，襯托主角的特色。它雖是只有少數特色的次要角色，擁有的個性特徵與另一人物正好相反，但有助於主角特色的充分發展。」(頁 78)。

另一方面，角色類型也可用「角色的心態或行為有無改變」來分類：若角色從頭到尾沒有改變，為「靜態角色」；若角色後面有改變，則該角色為「動態角色」。一般而言，青少年小說的主角通常是動態角色，因為青少年小說強調的是主角的啓蒙與成長，既然成長了，自然有所改變。而反主角 (antagonist) 不見得是動態角色，他們可能從頭

到尾都是一個樣，即便他們是背景資料頗多的圓形角色。像是《巧克力戰爭》裡的反主角亞奇，他雖然是圓形角色，但因沒有改變，所以是靜態人物。至於作為配角的扁平人物，肯定是靜態的，因為作者對他們著墨甚少，不可能再花篇幅寫他們的轉變，讀者也並不期待這樣的寫法。

本研究分析柯米爾的小說角色，發現幾個有趣的現象，分述如下：

1) 在柯米爾早期的長篇青少年小說（《巧克力戰爭》、《我是乳酪》、《將軍與兒子》、《黃蜂終究也能飛》、《巧克力戰爭之後》）裡頭，似乎找得到較多的圓形角色。這五本小說，不但篇幅較長，而且結構也比較複雜。篇幅長容易容納較多資訊，結構複雜意味著，柯米爾早期並未將自己設定為「青少年小說家」，而是「成人小說家」。這從他早期的題材偏重政治性（如《我是乳酪》、《將軍與兒子》等）也可窺出端倪。柯米爾後期的作品，如《溫柔殺機》，只有三個主要人物；《破布殘骨之鋪》僅有兩個主要人物，相較之下，他早期青少年小說的角色，不論在數量上或細節鋪陳上，都比後期的複雜很多。

2) 柯米爾在使用「陪襯」角色上，似乎有用主角好友作主角陪襯的傾向。例如《巧克力戰爭》裡，主角傑瑞的好友羅花生，就是用以陪襯傑瑞「不賣巧克力」的反例。羅花生完全不敢「撼動宇宙」，亞奇交代他破壞尤金修士的教室，他照作（然後事後罪惡感纏身）；雷恩修士要求學生推銷巧克力，他照賣。羅花生不像亞奇那樣，屬於和主角傑瑞作對的「反主角」(antagonist)，他是和主角成對比，藉以襯托傑瑞英雄主義的陪襯角色 (foil)。類似的例子還有，《我是乳酪》的主角亞當與好友艾咪；《黃蜂終究也能飛》的主角巴尼和好友比利；《隱身》的主角保羅和朱爾（兩人青少年時期）；《另一場鐘聲》的達希與凱薩琳瑪麗等。本研究認為，因為青少年最重視的人即是朋友，加上青少年小說的篇幅畢竟有其限度，在選擇陪襯角色上，自然選擇既可襯托主角，又可稍加描摹主角交友狀況的好友擔綱了。

3) 另外一種扁平角色的特殊例子是「定型人物」(stereotyped characters)，這種角色，「具有某一群人的典型特徵，以具體表現一群人的特色來代表一群人。」（《少年小說大家讀》，頁 87）。在柯米爾的青少年小說裡，最常看到的定型人物，就是惡霸 (Bully)



了，像是《巧克力戰爭》的愛彌兒；《我是乳酪》裡追「我」的幾個惡霸；《法瑞屈小鎮的夏天》裡，敘事者尤金自承送報時，最怕碰到惡霸與狗；以及《破布殘骨之鋪》裡主角傑森最後想殺的惡霸波波。這應與柯米爾小時候不愉快的經驗有關。寫作者常常將幼時經驗轉化成寫作的材料，不論在題材選擇或是人物塑造方面，柯米爾提供了絕佳的例證。

## 二、角色刻劃

所謂角色刻劃，就是作者如何透過角色的外貌、言談及動作，來形塑筆下的角色。這一節的重點即在柯米爾青少年小說的角色刻劃上。在角色外貌方面，由於外貌描述是比較靜態的寫法，所以近代小說比較不傾向大篇幅的外貌描述。而青少年小說，又因篇幅較短，而且考量到讀者群的耐心與專注力，所以外貌描述也不至於「大塊文章」。就柯米爾的作品而言，他早期的作品在外貌描述上，似乎比後期的作品為多，拿《巧克力戰爭》和《破布殘骨之鋪》相比，會發現後者幾乎是對話與心理層面的描述。此外，外貌描述在以第一人稱敘事者所寫的故事，肯定比第三人稱（不管是單一或全知）敘事者的故事要來得少。例如《我是乳酪》的「我」的敘事，和第三人稱「亞當」的敘事，前者的外貌描繪似乎少很多；而後者，不管是亞當的父母，或好友艾咪，全知全能的敘事者均給這些角色較多的描摹。本研究認為，因為第一人稱敘事者，在青少年小說裡，通常也是青少年，而青少年的辭彙能力或對他人的專注力，應該比第三人稱全知全能敘事者（通常是作者的化身）來得低，以致於用第一人稱口吻開展的青少年小說，會比較少有靜態的，需要大量形容辭彙的外貌描述。

不過，倘使某角色是個「異常」者，而且這種異常和故事的推動有關的話，作者必會花費一番筆墨來形容該角色，包括其外貌、言語和舉止。例如柯米爾的心理恐怖小說《在午夜》，主角丹尼被經常在午夜打電話到他家的露露的聲音所迷惑，丹尼認為露露必然是個美女，因為她有一副沙啞的迷人嗓音，這印象直到他見到露露本人才破滅：

那聲音。露露的聲音。但是這人不可能是露露，這個腿上有著鋼製拐杖的女人，真老，雖然還沒到祖母的年紀，但也不年輕了，她的兩頰皮膚緊繃，乾枯散亂的黑髮，在她的前額零亂地翻出幾道瀏海。

「抱歉讓你失望了，丹尼。」她開口道。聲音仍然沙啞，只不過現在聽起來，充滿了諷刺。(頁 169)。

其他比較特別的外貌描述，像是《英雄》裡的主角法蘭西斯，因戰事毀去臉的下半部；《隱身》裡常被繼父打的私生子奧仔，鼻子總是傷上加傷，都是柯米爾青少年小說裡，以外貌刻劃角色的例子。

至於以言語塑造小說人物方面，本研究將角色間的對話、作者（或者該說敘事者）的評論，以及小說角色對其他角色的評論，皆放在此一範疇討論。本研究者在分析柯米爾的小說人物，其對話與評論後發現：

1) 角色所說的話，必須符合該角色的年齡、社經地位、知識背景等等的設定。如果不符，就失去以言語形塑角色的作用了。讀者也會覺得該名小說人物不大可信。在以第一人稱敘事者開展的故事裡，更要特別小心，因為作者的評論隱藏在敘事者的評論裡頭，如果作者不小心以自己的背景，跳出來評論的話，讀者可能會發現犯規（至少不自然）。舉例來說，柯米爾的中篇小說《另一場鐘聲》，說故事的人是第一人稱「我」：十一歲女孩達希的故事。柯米爾通篇皆以十一歲女孩的口吻敘說故事，不過有些地方，顯得太過老成，像是最後達希的爸爸自戰場負傷歸來，達希說：「每個人都在笑，我也笑了，我第一次發現，原來笑與淚只是一線之隔。」(頁 149)。這種哲學式的話語，比較像是出自作者柯米爾之口，而非十一歲的達希。當然，本研究者也不排除十一歲的孩子可以說出富哲思的話，尤其在成長之後。只不過相較於達希前面較天真的話語，這句話略顯不自然。

2) 雖然角色對角色的評論，與作者對角色的評論有重疊之處（作者常藉小說角色之口來發表意見），不過兩者的性質不大相同。本研究將作者的評論，放在小說家與評論家大衛·洛吉 (David Lodge) 所謂的「講述」(telling) 範疇裡；而角色間的評論則



放在「顯示」(showing) 範疇裡。由於顯示比講述需要篇幅，因此本研究假定，圓形角色會有比較多顯示的技巧——也就是說，比較多對話，以及比較多角色間的評論。相對地，扁平角色可能以作者的一句話帶過，畢竟如洛吉所言，講述（洛吉尤指純粹的講述形式：摘要）可讓故事節奏加快，讀者可以快速通過無趣（或太有趣）的情節，到下一個事件。

3) 如同上述，異常角色易獲外貌描述，因為有其作用。在以言語形塑角色上，也有類似的功能。作者在刻劃小說裡的異常人物時，也常透過對話（含獨白）來表現該角色的不正常之處。在《我們全都倒下》裡，柯米爾塑造了一個精神病患：「復仇者」的角色。「復仇者」在他十一歲時殺了兩個人，一個是欺負他的惡霸（又是惡霸！），另一個是相當疼愛他，卻開始懷疑他殺人的祖父。「復仇者」殺了人後，一直停留在十一歲，直到四十幾歲，他還是認為自己只有十一歲。「復仇者」喜歡珍，常常跟蹤她，當他發現珍竟然和破壞她房子的巴迪成為男女朋友（當然那時珍並不知情），「復仇者」怒不可遏，他綁架了珍，告訴珍巴迪的事，然後想殺了珍。珍鎮定地自救，也告訴「復仇者」一些他不想記起的事：

「你殺了你祖父，」珍說，「復仇者沒做過那些事。米奇·史塔齡，是你做的。如果你媽知道了會說什麼，她一定會很生氣，會處罰你。」

「不。」他哭叫，「不。」

．．．．．

「你殺了你祖父，你祖父那麼疼你……」

「不！」他再次哭喊，「不……」這個字充滿痛楚，嚎叫般迴盪在空中，「不……」整間灰濛濛的小屋充滿回音，「不……」，字裡盡是驚怖與眼淚、痛苦與無望……「不……」（頁 178-179）。

柯米爾用許多刪節號與綿延的字母 o (noooooooooo)，代表復仇者痛苦的嚎叫，不正常的拼字，表示不正常的話語；而不正常的話語，正是刻劃不正常角色的一種表現方式。

最後一種角色刻劃的方式是透過動作。對青少年讀者來說，也許動作是最吸引他們的部分。而動作也能加快故事的節奏，使故事更有看頭。在角色刻劃方面，動作和言語同樣可以深化角色，有時一個動作勝過千言萬語。試看在《巧克力戰爭》中，柯米爾用動作來形塑愛彌兒個性的一幕：

「親近人群」是愛彌兒·詹達自己的說法，意思包括在課堂上吹口哨，讓老師神經緊繃（一聲幾不可聞的口哨就可以搞得教師們灰頭土臉）。這就是愛彌兒·詹達之所以能顛覆常規的原因。聰明的學生通常都喜歡坐在教室後面，但愛彌兒不是，他喜歡挑最前面的座位坐，這樣他才方便騷擾教師。他會吹口哨、學豬叫、故意打嗝、用腳打拍子、不停的動來動去，以及打噴嚏。說真格的，如果你坐在教室後面搞這些小動作，老師還真注意不到。（中譯本，頁 65）

讀者讀到這兒，肯定對愛彌兒留下強烈的印象。其他如《巧克力戰爭》的雷恩修士、《在午夜》中滿懷恨意的露露、《溫柔殺機》裡殺人成癖的愛瑞克等，柯米爾也都在這些角色上多所著墨。有趣的是，這些角色多為負面角色，但作者卻賦予他們鮮明的形象，以外貌、言語和動作刻劃他們，讀者記得住他們，甚至更勝於那些正面角色。何故？本研究認為，就像連續劇一般，推動劇情前進的，往往不是正面的角色，反而是那些負面角色——因為他們製造衝突，而衝突正是推動情節的力量。加上柯米爾的作品一向黑暗，負面角色的呈現，正好凸顯了問題點，也無怪乎本研究者在閱畢柯米爾的所有青少年小說後，腦海裡浮現的盡是那些形象鮮活，讓人害怕或生氣的角色了，這是柯米爾角色刻劃的成功之處。

## 伍、敘述論

本章探討如何說故事的方式——屬於敘事學 (narratology) 的範圍——共分成三部分探討，一是敘述順序，二是敘述觀點 / 視角，三是敘事者的問題。

### 一、敘述順序 (narrative order)

敘述順序和小說事件的發生時間，以及作者如何安排這些事件的順序有關。故事的敘述順序通常有三類：即順敘 (chronological order)、倒敘 (flashback)，以及預敘 (flash forward)。現分敘如下：

1) 順敘：小說事件完全依照發生時間的先後作安排，這是一般小說的主要敘述方式。即使作者會應用倒敘、插敘或預敘等技巧在小說文本內，但一般來說，小說主體還是以順敘為主。莒肯絲與克萊恩認為，柯米爾的《巧克力戰爭》及其續集《巧克力戰爭之後》，基本上是順敘的很好例子：「《巧克力戰爭》，依循著時間先後順序，把事件一件接著一件地呈現出來。」(頁 32)。例如《巧克力戰爭》第一章描述的是主角傑瑞打美式足球，第二章是之後歐比和亞奇的對話，時間剛好在傑瑞打球之後。後一章的時間都發生在前一章之後（雖然中間偶有回憶的場面），而且每一章均使用不同角色作為主要聚焦者，如第一章為傑瑞、第二章為歐比，諸如此類。這種聚焦方式，敘事學理論家簡奈特 (Gerald Genette) 稱之為「不定式聚焦」(variable focalization)，我們將在「敘述觀點 / 視角」那一節討論。

雖然《巧克力戰爭》與《巧克力戰爭之後》主要依循時間先後順序開展故事，但本研究發現，其實柯米爾早期的長篇青少年小說，如《我是乳酪》、《將軍與兒子》和《隱身》等文本，反而有比較奇突的敘述技巧，包括敘述順序與敘事者的選擇。舉例來說，《將軍與兒子》運用到倒敘的技巧，我們接下來就會討論到；《我是乳酪》有三種

敘事（「我」的敘述、錄音帶內容，以及亞當的故事）；而《隱身》則有點後設書寫的意味。

相較於柯米爾早期的長篇作品，他的三個中篇小說《另一場鐘聲》、《熊跳之調》與《英雄》有著清楚的順敘時間（尤其前兩本）。因為這三本小說，設定的讀者年齡比較輕，因之它們篇幅較短、角色較少、主題非常明確（均與宗教性的「罪愆與寬恕」有關），還有，相當線形的時間線——即清楚的順敘技巧。有趣的是，在柯米爾時期 V 的心理恐怖小說《我們全都倒下》、《在午夜》與《溫柔殺機》的敘述技巧——包括敘述順序、觀點 / 視角、敘事者——也比他早期的作品（時期 II）來得單純。何故？本研究推測，可能因為早期柯米爾並未把自己定位成「青少年小說家」（《巧克力戰爭》定位成青少年小說，是出版社的策略），因之小說技巧和一般成人小說無異；但是到了後期，柯米爾也在青少年小說領域佔有一席之地了，所以會使用較單純的技巧來說故事——因為柯米爾心中，大概也清楚他的主力讀者群是青少年。

2) 倒敘：根據簡奈特的分類，倒敘可分為：補充型的倒敘（*completing flashback*）與重覆型的倒敘（*repeating flashback*）兩種。前者在之前敘述故事時並未提及，但後來敘事者為了補充說明才放進去；而後者是之前就提過，後來是回憶時再度提及。在《將軍與兒子》裡頭，第一部分就是主角班的獨白——班提及之前的恐怖事件，但未詳細說明——而過去的那個事件（第二部分）為全書的主體，即恐怖份子挾持校車的整個過程。因此可以說，《將軍與兒子》的絕大部份（整個挾車事件）都是補充型倒敘。相較於補充型倒敘，重覆型倒敘（回憶）也許多些：例如短篇故事集《八加一》裡的〈鬍子〉，主角十七歲的邁可在探訪住在安養院的奶奶時，途中對奶奶的回憶；或是《英雄》裡面，主角法蘭西斯回憶起自己在戰場上的光景等等。本研究認為，這兩種倒敘各有不同的功能：重覆型倒敘（回憶）增添了故事的枝節，使其更生動；而補充型的倒敘，補足了之前敘事特意空白的部分，讓讀者知道過去發生的事到底是什麼。

3) 預敘：基本上，預敘是個比較少用的敘述順序。在《我是乳酪》裡，心理醫師與病患對話的錄音帶內容一出現後，後面會緊跟著一段和錄音帶內容相關的，亞當一家

的故事。由於錄音帶事先透露亞當一家的遭遇（接著是以亞當為聚焦者的詳細故事），所以本研究認為，錄音帶內容也算是亞當故事的預敘。

## 二、敘述觀點 / 視角 (point of view / perspective)

本節探討的是敘事裡的觀點 / 視角部份，牽涉到的是：故事「透過誰的眼睛看」的問題。傳統的敘述觀點理論，將敘述觀點分為 1) 第一人稱觀點 (first-person point of view)：故事敘述者以「我」來講述故事，讀者知道敘述者「我」的生活、行動、思考與感受。「我」可以是故事的主人翁，也可以是和主人翁關係密切的旁觀者。2) 全知全能觀點 (omniscient point of view)：敘述者透過第三人稱角色（可以很多人，甚至所有人的眼睛來開展故事，作者知道筆下所有角色的所有事，包括他們的夢與希望，過去與未來，能向讀者揭露任何細節。3) 有限制的全知觀點 (limited omniscient point of view)：敘述者透過一個或者少數的第三人稱角色的眼睛來開展故事。4) 客觀或戲劇觀點 (objective or dramatic point of view)：敘述者不進入任何角色的內心世界，只呈現外在的行為、外觀、言談、他人的評論等。(A Critical Handbook of Literature for Young Adults. 頁 102)，這是傳統敘述觀點的看法。至於視角 (perspective)，胡亞敏定義為「視角指敘述者或人物與敘事文中的事件相對應的位置或狀態，或者說，敘述者或人物從什麼角度觀察故事。」(《敘事學》，頁 19)。

簡奈特用聚焦 (focalizations) 一詞，用以指稱傳統的敘述觀點，或是敘述焦點 (focus of narration)。他將聚焦分為 1) 零聚焦 (zero focalizations)，即上述的全知全能敘述觀點。2) 內聚焦 (internal focalizations)，分為固定式 (fixed)，即單一觀點（第一或第三人稱）；不定式 (variable)，即一篇故事不停變換聚焦者，和零聚焦不同之處在於，當一段敘事透過一名聚焦者觀看時，則該段敘事就固定在這名聚焦者眼裡，之後再換到其他聚焦者眼裡；多重式 (multiple)，同一事件，透過不同的聚焦者來看，會有不同的結果，近代最有名的例子是電影《羅生門》。3) 外聚焦 (external focalizations)，即上述的客觀或戲劇觀點。



本研究列出這柯米爾作品裡的聚焦方式，分成短篇故事與中長篇小說兩類，列表如下：

表一：柯米爾九篇短篇故事之聚焦方式

聚焦方式	
零聚焦	無
內聚焦 (固定式)	九篇短篇皆採用此一聚焦方式 (而且均為第一人稱觀點)
內聚焦 (不定式)	無
內聚焦 (多重式)	無
外聚焦	無

表二：柯米爾十四本中長篇小說之聚焦方式

聚焦方式	
零聚焦	《將軍與兒子》、《黃蜂終究也能飛》、《在午夜》

內聚焦 (固定式)	《我是乳酪》(「我」的敘事用第一人稱觀點；亞當的敘事用第三人稱單一觀點)、《將軍與兒子》(部分)、《隱身》(保羅及蘇珊的敘事用第一人稱觀點；奧仔的敘事用第三人稱單一觀點)、《另一場鐘聲》、《熊跳之調》、《在午夜》(一小部分)、《溫柔殺機》(羅莉的敘事用第一人稱觀點)、《英雄》、《法瑞屈小鎮的夏天》
內聚焦 (不定式)	《巧克力戰爭》、《巧克力戰爭之後》、《我們全都倒下》、《溫柔殺機》(愛瑞克的敘事用第三人稱觀點)、《破布殘骨之鋪》
內聚焦 (多重式)	《隱身》(部分)
外聚焦	《我是乳酪》(錄音帶內容)、《隱身》(一份調查報告)、《我們全都倒下》(開場)

分析結果發現：1) 在柯米爾的九篇短篇故事裡，每一篇都使用第一人稱的固定式內聚焦；2) 在他的中長篇小說裡，本研究發現，柯米爾使用內聚焦（不管是固定式或不定式）的比例，比使用零聚焦的比例高。這似乎意味著，柯米爾不想讓作者的權力過大（零聚焦=全知全能觀點），而寧可將聚焦放在一個或少數幾個角色身上，集中書寫；3) 通篇故事使用外聚焦是非常困難的，最有名的例子是海明威 (Ernest Hemingway) 的短篇故事〈殺人者〉(“The Killers”)。柯米爾的作品，由於以中長篇居多，更加不可能通篇使用外聚焦；不過偶而使用的外聚焦，卻能帶來強烈的效果，例如《我們全都倒下》，一開頭就以外聚焦的方式，像攝影機一般，不帶感情地描述四個青少年破壞他人房屋的過程，不但吸引讀者注意，更凸顯了青少年犯罪的嚴重性。



### 三、敘事者

敘事者指的是故事裡敘述故事的人。本研究將敘事者分為四類來檢視柯米爾小說裡的敘事者類型。這四類是：1) 故事內的敘事者 (主角)；2) 故事內的敘事者 (充當觀察者的配角)；3) 故事外的敘事者 (全知全能的敘事者)，以及 4) 混合型敘事者。結果列表如下：

表三：柯米爾九篇短篇故事之敘事者類型

敘事者類型	九篇短篇故事
故事內敘事者 (主角)	〈鬍子〉、〈我的星期四〉、〈邁可的另一個女朋友〉、〈克里夫蘭總統，你在哪裡？〉(一半的故事是敘事者的故事)、〈父親的難受時刻〉、〈你猜怎麼著？我差點對我爸來個睡前之吻〉、〈我的第一個黑人朋友〉
故事內敘事者 (充當觀察者的配角)	〈克里夫蘭總統，你在哪裡？〉(另一半則是敘事者哥哥的故事)、〈新教徒也會哭〉、〈邦尼·貝利根——他不是音樂家什麼的嗎？〉
故事外敘事者	無
混合型敘事者	無

表四：柯米爾十四本中長篇小說之敘事者類型

敘事者類型	十四本中長篇小說
故事內敘事者 (主角)	《我是乳酪》、《隱身》(敘事者保羅的故事)、《另一場鐘聲》、《溫柔殺機》(敘事者羅莉的故事)、《英雄》、《法瑞屈小鎮的夏天》(敘事者尤金自己的故事)
故事內敘事者 (充當觀察者的配角)	《隱身》(敘事者蘇珊的敘述)、《在午夜》(一小部分)、《法瑞屈小鎮的夏天》(敘事者尤金敘述其父的故事)
故事外敘事者 (全知全能的敘事者)	《巧克力戰爭》、《我是乳酪》(亞當的故事)、《將軍與兒子》、《黃蜂終究也能飛》、《巧克力戰爭之後》、《隱身》(奧仔的故事)、《我們全都倒下》、
故事外敘事者 (全知全能的敘事者)	《熊跳之調》、《在午夜》、《溫柔殺機》(愛瑞克的故事)、《破布殘骨之鋪》
混合型敘事者	《我是乳酪》、《隱身》、《在午夜》、《溫柔殺機》、《法瑞屈小鎮的夏天》

分析結果如下：1) 九篇短篇故事，有六個半的敘事者是故事內主角，但有趣的是，這六個半故事，竟有三個主角是中年父親（〈我的星期四〉、〈邁可的另一個女朋友〉、〈父親的難受時刻〉），這不大符合傳統裡青少年小說的敘事者，多由青少年擔綱的慣例。2) 如果敘事者為配角，通常他們觀察與敘述的故事，大多是比他們年長的兄姐或長輩。像是《隱身》裡，蘇珊講述遠房堂叔保羅之事；《在午夜》，戴夫敘述姐姐露露的遭遇；以及《法瑞屈小鎮的夏天》裡，尤金述說自己對父親的觀察等。為何都是「由小看大」居多？本研究認為，透過較年輕的旁觀者（通常是兒童或青少年）不解事的眼光來看事件，會使得故事更戲劇化，也讓讀者隨著兒童 / 青少年旁觀者的角色，一

起揭密，一起成長。3) 綜合來看，柯米爾早期的短篇作品，在敘事者與聚焦者的選擇上，非常固定；但到了時期 II 的早期長篇小說，柯米爾就展現了他多樣的敘事技巧，可見寫作需要學習與練習，如柯米爾這樣有名的小說家也不例外；而且就他敘述技巧的複雜性來看，柯米爾的長篇小說最複雜，中篇次之，短篇則沒什麼技巧。本研究者認為，柯米爾的確是比較適合寫長篇的小說家。



## 陸、風格論

本章探討柯米爾小說裡的風格呈現，分兩節探討：一是隱喻 (metaphor) 與明喻 (simile)；另一個是聖經用典 (biblical allusion) 和文學用典 (literary allusion)。

### 一、隱喻與明喻

隱喻，是文學作品裡常見的表現手法，是把兩種事物放在一起，用一物指涉另一物。而明喻和隱喻類似，但是多了明確的连接詞，如「似、如」(like, as) 來連接這兩個事物。隱喻的概念，雖然自亞里斯多德就存在，但第一個提出「喻旨」(tenor) 和「喻依」(vehicle) 觀念的人是文學理論家里察斯 (I. A. Richards)。「喻旨」指的是要表達的主題或目標；而「喻依」則是表達喻旨的媒介或載體。

大量使用隱喻和明喻，是柯米爾的作品風格之一，尤其在他早期的長篇青少年小說，如《巧克力戰爭》、《我是乳酪》裡，隱喻和明喻的例子俯拾皆是，試看這一段：

「貝利，」雷恩說，但他沒有看著貝利，而是轉頭注視全班學生，好像他正和大家分享著一個貝利不知道的笑話。好像雷恩正和其他學生共同密謀著某項計畫。

「是，雷恩修士？」貝利問，他的眼瞳被鏡片放大。

靜默。

「貝利，」雷恩修士說，「你為什麼要作弊？」

據說氫彈爆炸的時候是沒有聲響的：它只會發出讓人眼睛瞎掉的白色閃光，瞬間殺人無數。聲響是在閃光之後才會有的，在靜默之後。而此刻，就是這種靜默，它的熊熊烈燄正照耀著整個教室。(中譯本，頁 58-59)。

這裡的隱喻用得相當巧妙，將雷恩修士的蓄意指控和氫彈放在一起，這兩樣東西有個共通之處：它們都會帶來一段可怕的靜默，而在靜默之後，是大災難。用氫彈這個喻依，更加深了雷恩修士指控的毀滅性與恐怖感。

而明喻的例子也比比皆是，例如在《我是乳酪》<sup>2</sup>裡，亞當提到有時他覺得他的父親很不真實，「爸爸就像個剪紙人物，上面的標題寫著『爸爸』兩個字。」(中譯本，頁 49)。用「剪紙人物」比喻自己的爸爸，強調其不真實、平板虛假的一面。這個比喻帶來鮮明的意象，也暗示日後亞當知道他父親現在的身分果然是假造的。

又在《巧克力戰爭》裡，主角傑瑞在拒賣巧克力後，受到大家排擠孤立的一幕：

傑瑞通過走廊的時候，好像摩西劈開紅海般。學生們自動閃開，好像被某種秘密暗號啟動，把通道讓給他。傑瑞感覺他可以穿透一面牆，沒有任何阻擋，隱沒入牆的另噴一邊。(中譯本，頁 224)

這裡不但用到明喻，也用到「摩西劈開紅海」的聖經用典。隱喻、明喻和用典不但可以單獨使用，也可合併運用。例如《我是乳酪》裡的這一段，明喻和隱喻交替使用，充滿詩意：

他從睡夢中驚醒，猶如從一尊大砲裡射出來，從各處射到此地，此時。這房間，這床，這冷冷的月光使房間寒意更深。他躺在床上，感覺出床單的冰冷，但又好像浮在半空中，孤立隔絕，置身在一處不知名的地方，一個不可知的世界，而他自己也身分不明。被困在停頓的時間裡。

.....

虛無在他身前身後張大口吞噬，沒有永恆不變的引導。(中譯本，頁 99)

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<sup>2</sup> 以下《我是乳酪》裡的譯文，參照麥倩宜的中文譯本《我是乳酪》(小魯，2002)。

隱喻和明喻如果運用得宜，的確會產生不同層次的豐富意涵。但仍需當心運用，若使用過多，不但易使文本晦澀，讀者不易接受；也可能以文害意，阻滯了故事的發展。因此，使用隱喻及明喻這類文學表現手法時，不可不慎。

## 二、聖經用典與文學用典

用典 (allusion)，或稱引喻或借喻，指的是「借歷史人物事件或文學典故，比喻詩文中要呈現的意境。」(《西洋文學術語手冊》，頁 10)。在西洋文學中，常見對《聖經》(不論是舊約還是新約) 的用典，柯米爾自也不例外。加上柯米爾又是天主教徒，對聖經的經文想必耳熟能詳；而柯米爾自小就喜愛閱讀文學作品，因此他的作品，也有不少文學用典的部分。本研究將柯米爾青少年小說裡，聖經用典與文學用典的部分找出，列表如下：

表五：柯米爾作品裡的聖經用典

書名	含典故的文句	聖經出處
《巧克力戰爭》(1974)	(頁 3): 他已經當了彼得幾千遍了，也聽了幾千次雞鳴。	馬太福音 26；馬可福音 14：在雞鳴之前，彼得三次不認主。
	(頁 118): 城市陷落。地面崩裂。行星傾斜。星星墜落。然後是恐怖的寂靜。	馬可福音 13；啓示錄 6-9：預示假基督到來的景象。
	(頁 123): 他那靠在福斯汽車的下頰顫抖不已，有幾分像怪異的施洗者約翰	馬太福音 14 & 路加福音 1, 3：施洗者約翰的故事。

《巧克力戰爭》(1974)	(頁 224): 傑瑞通過走廊的時候, 好像摩西劈開紅海般	出埃及記 14: 摩西分紅海的故事。
《巧克力戰爭之後》(1985)	(頁 4): 雷親手打造這條船 (暗指雷是個手巧的木匠)。	馬太福音 1: 耶穌基督在人間的父是木匠。
	(頁 62): 就像他們在彌撒中背誦過的讚美詩裡曾說: 「我奉獻自己, 作為傍晚的祭品。」	馬可福音 10: 耶穌對門徒說: 「因為人子來, 並不是要受人的服事, 乃是要服事人, 並且要捨命, 作多人的贖價。」
《在午夜》(1995)	(頁 48): 我不是拉撒路。她這麼說... 可她最後終於承認, 她就是拉撒路。	約翰福音 11: 在伯大尼, 有個名叫拉撒路的人死了, 耶穌基督使其復活。
	(頁 159): 「我將自己奉獻給他們。」	同《巧克力戰爭之後》的第二條 (馬可福音 10)。
《破布殘骨之鋪》(2001)	(頁 144): 他看起來像死了一般, 就好像剛被人從十字架上抬下來。	馬可福音 15: 亞利馬太的約瑟將耶穌自十字架取下。



表六：柯米爾作品裡的文學用典

書名	用典出處或作者	用典來源
《我是乳酪》(1977)	兒童遊戲歌曲	〈溪谷裡的農夫〉(“The Farmer in the Dell”)
《將軍與兒子》(1979)	湯瑪斯 (Dylan Thomas)	〈拒絕哀悼在倫敦大火裡死去的孩童〉(“A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London”)
《黃蜂終究也能飛》(1983)	流體力學的迷思	
《隱身》(1988)	威爾斯 (H. G. Wells)	《隱形人》( <i>The Invisible Man</i> )
《我們全都倒下》(1991)	《鵝媽媽童謠》( <i>Mother Goose</i> )	〈圍著玫瑰花轉圈圈〉(“Ring-a-Ring o’ Roses”)
《熊跳之調》(1992)	福樓拜 (Gustave Flaubert)	《波法利夫人》( <i>Madame Bovary</i> )
《溫柔殺機》(1997)	紀伯倫 (Kahlil Gibran)	〈論愛〉(“On Love”) 在《先知》( <i>The Prophet</i> )一書
《破布殘骨之鋪》(2001)	葉慈 (William Butler Yeats)	〈馴獸的逃逸〉(“The Circus Animal’s Desertion ”)

結果分析發現：1) 在柯米爾作品裡，聖經用典的部分，沒有研究者原先預設的多；而有些充滿宗教意味的作品，像是《熊跳之調》，並沒有引用《聖經》文句。不過，這本書的精神，卻和《新約聖經》裡「曠野的試探」(Temptation) 非常雷同，因之充滿宗教意涵與象徵。2) 柯米爾喜用詩人或童謠的一句詩（或者歌謠）作為書名，像《我是乳酪》、《熊跳之調》、《破布殘骨之鋪》等。這些文句，對熟知西方文學作品的讀者來說，可能沒有問題；但是對其他文化下的讀者，可能就有點捉摸不到作者書名的由來與真意。由於柯米爾的小說已經翻成許多語言，因此有些國家會把某些小說改個書名，一方面符合國情（例如台灣的青少年小說，不喜歡太長的書名）；另一方面，也不那麼隔閡。像是 *After the First Death*，直譯是《第一次死亡以後》，台灣的出版社把它改名為《將軍與兒子》，算是一目瞭然，不過少了柯米爾文學用典的韻味。3) 和文學用典類似，對不熟悉聖經的讀者來說，聖經的用典也會有閱讀上的隔閡。這條作者與讀者的知識背景的溝是無法避免的。不過，也毋需刻意避免，因為讀者本來就有誤讀的權利（或者說，所有閱讀都是一種誤讀）。文化或宗教的差異，一方面可使讀者試著了解不同文化、不同宗教下的文本；另一方面，也可增加讀者閱讀 / 誤讀的樂趣。

## 柒、結語

研究者分析發現：柯米爾的青少年小說，描述了真實世界與體制的黑暗面，也揭露一個事實：好人不一定必勝，但重點是站出來和邪惡對抗，讓別人看見。還有，人不免犯錯，但貴在能改過，才能獲得原諒。柯米爾小說的主題強調了「做些什麼」的重要性。

在角色方面，柯米爾青少年小說的圓形角色，以主角與反主角居多，而且在早期作品裡，圓形角色的比重較晚期作品裡為多。柯米爾的小說角色，不論在外觀、語言和動作上，都恰如其分。而柯米爾對病態角色或邪惡角色的著墨尤深，使人難忘。

在敘述順序上，柯米爾多用順敘與倒敘手法，偶有預敘；敘述觀點或視角上，柯米爾視小說效果而定，採不同的聚焦方式，尤以內聚焦最多；在敘事者方面，柯米爾的短篇故事，全部都是第一人稱敘事者，但中長篇小說，就有較多不同的變化——有幾部小說甚至有不同敘事者在同一文本中，例如《溫柔殺機》就是第一人稱與全知敘述者兩者交互使用。總之，柯米爾的中長篇小說（尤其長篇）展現了較複雜的敘述方式。

在語言修辭風格上，柯米爾喜歡用隱喻和明喻手法來增加文本的文學性，尤其在早期作品裡最多，如《巧克力戰爭》；到了後面的作品，隱喻的使用有減少的趨勢。在用典方面，柯米爾會在作品裡引述聖經的句子，也喜歡借前人的詩句或童謠來當作書名，使文本的涵義更豐富。對不熟悉聖經或西方文學的讀者來說，加深了閱讀上理解的困難；不過也增加了解讀的挑戰與樂趣。

柯米爾在美國青少年小說界的地位是無庸置疑的：他開創了之前青少年作家沒寫過的「正不勝邪」的題材，寫出許多部受人爭議也讓人驚歎的小說。但是柯米爾的本意不是要歌頌邪惡，相反地，他認為惟有點出問題所在，才能去面對問題。對於教師與家長而言，將柯米爾的青少年小說應用到生活教學上，有助於學生了解社會上存在的某些問題——有的甚至是在他們周遭就常遇見的難題，例如同儕壓力等。老師可將柯米爾小說

的某些議題帶入課堂討論，也可讓學生寫出讀後心得，將自身環境與柯米爾小說角色的處境，做一番連結。

對於英語非母語的師生而言，柯米爾小說裡個性鮮明而道地的對白，還有文字修辭的功力，都可以作為英文的補充教材。此外，柯米爾小說中的許多議題是古今皆然，中外相通的，所以也很適合作為情意教學的來源，例如《將軍與兒子》就很適合拿來做恐怖主義的探討。但要注意的是，柯米爾某些青少年小說的議題，可能太過黑暗（例如《溫柔殺機》裡的連續殺人犯），所以教師們要有適讀性的考量。

對於寫作者，或是想寫作的人而言，柯米爾小說裡複雜多樣的敘述方式，以及富含文學氣息的隱喻與明喻手法，都是可以學習的對象。還有他對於取書名的用心，也值得效法。最重要的是，柯米爾對青少年的關心，以及不畏提出社會問題的勇氣，還有孜孜不倦、一直寫下去的堅持，都是寫作人的身教。筆者希望，透過本研究的拋磚引玉，能引來更多讀者對柯米爾作品的注意，也希望日後台灣能出版更多柯米爾青少年小說的中譯本，以及更多有關他作品的評論與研究出現。

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