

Your Paper 2, which we discussed at some length in workshop, was also high quality overall, but had one important weakness that is reflected in the grade (A-). You did a nice job of exploring Pieper's philosophical treatise on the theological virtue of love, but that part of your paper unnecessarily overshadowed direct analysis of PD James's novel, which should have been your primary focus. As I noted in class, the novel is full to overflowing with specific evidence that you could have used to excellent effect in illustrating and fleshing out Pieper's conceptual framework.

Lastly, I want to note a couple of other problem areas. Given that the novel is in many ways an explicitly theological exploration of a fictional "what if" narrative scenario, it would have made good sense to emphasize the specifically Christian themes of the novel. In other words, these themes are given a bold emphasis by the author herself, which means your analysis can and should be bold enough, in turn, to recognize that and analyze it in concrete, specific terms. As we strive to analyze literary texts with great accuracy and precision, we note what is really there; we don't have to agree with it, nor do we have to apologize for it if it is despised in our own cultural moment and climate. PD James points us, as readers, straight to the ancient Christian tradition of praying to God through the Psalms, and our first hint of that is the title of the novel, which is taken from Psalm 90, but which also echoes numerous other psalms in the Book of Common Prayer, which is in turn an important part of the narrative. That's just one example of the quite explicit ways the novelist points toward God, specifically the God of Christian faith, as the solution not only to universal infertility, but also to all other human problems. So, for example, when I read the following on your page 7, I get the sense that you're missing or setting aside a lot of important textual detail:

"Also, while it was never **explicitly explained** in the book, the main thing Julian and Luke have in common that is different from the rest of the characters is that they are devoutly religious." (See, however, Miriam's comments on p. 56, which are quite explicit and note also that Rolf vocally despises their Christian faith and later betrays all of the 5 fishes; note also that Luke and Julian are not generically "religious", but rather specifically Christian -- as Miriam says.)

Similarly, I note that your concluding assertion misses the mark as an interpretation of the novel. You wrote as follows:

"In *The Children of Men*, the rebirth of the population served as a reminder to have faith in humanity and that love will overcome madness."

The problem, of course, is that the theological and imaginative framework of the novel as a whole is explicitly and implicitly Christian, so it points to faith in God, not faith in humanity, as the sane, wise and ultimately successful path to all the solutions we need for all our vexing problems, be they infertility, coldness of heart, injustice, or what have you. Again -- as an interpreter of the work of art, you don't have to share the artist's perspective, but you do have to strive to represent that perspective as accurately and precisely as possible, to whatever extent the work of art reveals it to us. Given the topic you chose for the paper, and the overall emphasis of your paper, my point is simply this: fuller, more explicitly detailed analysis of the evidence in terms of the Christian ethos of the artist, would have yielded a more compelling essay -- one which I am confident you have the gifts and skills to write.