



IRAQI  
Academic Scientific Journals



العراقية  
المجلات الأكاديمية العلمية



ISSN: 2663-9033 (Online) | ISSN: 2616-6224 (Print)

**Journal of Language Studies**

Contents available at: <https://jls.tu.edu.iq/index.php/JLS>

## Moral Reasoning in Ann Cleaves' *Raven Black*

Zahraa Jalal Kadhim\_\*

University of Baghdad

[zahraa.jalal2203m@coeduw.uobaghdad.iq](mailto:zahraa.jalal2203m@coeduw.uobaghdad.iq)

&

Maha Qahtan Sulaiman

University of Baghdad

[maha.qahtan@coeduw.uobaghdad.edu.iq](mailto:maha.qahtan@coeduw.uobaghdad.edu.iq)

Received: 10\11\2024, Accepted: 1\12\2024, Online Published: 31 / 3/2025

### Abstract

This paper delves into the ethical tensions present in Ann Cleaves' *Raven Black* through the lens of David Ross' *The Right and the Good*, focusing specifically on the character of Magnus Tait and his relationship with his mother. Ross' theory of *prima facie* duties—obligations that are morally binding unless outweighed by a more pressing duty—serves as a framework to explore Magnus' moral conflict. Magnus Tait, an isolated figure within the Shetland community, is deeply influenced by his duty to his mother that shapes his actions and perceptions. Ross' philosophy emphasizes that individuals often face conflicting duties, requiring careful moral reasoning to determine which duty takes precedence. In *Raven Black*, Magnus' sense of obligation to his mother—rooted in loyalty, care, and obedience—conflicts with his own needs and the expectations of the broader community. This paper explores how Magnus' duty to his mother becomes a source of internal conflict, particularly as it intersects with his loneliness and the suspicions cast upon him by the community. His sense of duty is further complicated by the harsh judgment of the society around him, which exacerbates his isolation and

\* **Corresponding Author:** Zahraa Jalal Kadhim, **Email:** [zahraa.jalal2203m@coeduw.uobaghdad.iq](mailto:zahraa.jalal2203m@coeduw.uobaghdad.iq)

**Affiliation:** University of Baghdad - Iraq

© This is an open access article under the CC by licenses <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>



highlights the moral ambiguities in his character. Through the lens of Ross' ethical theory, Magnus' struggles are portrayed not merely as personal dilemmas but as reflections of broader moral challenges, where duty and the concept of right are constantly in tension. By examining Magnus Tait's moral conflict in *Raven Black* through the principles outlined in Ross' principle of *prima facie* duties, this paper offers a nuanced understanding of how a *prima facie* duty can both bind and burden individuals, especially within the complex fabric of human relationships.

**Keywords:** autonomy, duty proper, intuitionism, keeping promises, moral compass, Right

## التفكير الاخلاقي في رواية آن كليفز "اسود كالغراب"

زهراء جلال كاظم

جامعة بغداد

و

ا.م.د. مها قحطان سليمان

جامعة بغداد

### المستخلص

تتناول هذه الورقة التورات الأخلاقية الموجودة في رواية "اسود كالغراب" للكاتبة آن كليفس من خلال كتاب ديفيد روس "الصحيح والخير"، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على شخصية ماغنوس تايت وعلاقته بوالدته. يُستخدم مفهوم روس عن الواجبات الأولية—الواجبات التي تكون مؤمة أخلاقياً إلا إذا تم تجاوزها من قبل واجب أكثر إلحاحاً—كإطار لاستكشاف الصراع الأخلاقي لدى ماغنوس تايت، الشخصية المعزولة داخل مجتمع شيتلاند، المتأثر بعمق بواجبه تجاه والدته والتي تقولب أفعاله وإيراداته. يؤكد فلسفة روس على أن الأواد غالباً ما يواجهون واجبات متعلضة، مما يتطلب التفكير الأخلاقي العميق لتحديد أي واجب له الأسبقية. في "اسود كالغراب"، يتعرض إحساس ماغنوس بالالتزام تجاه والدته—المتجذر في الولاء والرعاية والطاعة—مع احتياجاته الشخصية وتوقعات المجتمع الأوسع. يستكشف هذا البحث كيف أن واجب ماغنوس تجاه والدته يصبح مصوراً للصراع الداخلي، خصوصاً عندما يتقاطع مع وحدته والشكوك التي تحوم حوله من قبل المجتمع. يعتقد إحساس ماغنوس بالواجب أكثر بسبب الأحكام القاسية من المجتمع المحيط به، مما يزيد من عزله ويسلط الضوء على الغموض الأخلاقي في شخصيته. من خلال نظرية روس الأخلاقية، يتم

تصوير صواعات ماغنوس ليس فقط كمعضلات شخصية ولكن أيضاً كانعكاسات لتحديات أخلاقية أوسع، حيث تكون الواجبات ومفهوم الصحيح في توتر دائم. من خلال بواسطة الصواع الأخلاقي لماغنوس تاييت في "اسود كالغراب" من خلال المبادئ الموضحة في كتاب روس "الصحيح والخير"، يقدم هذا البحث فهماً دقيقاً لكيفية أن الواجب يمكن أن يقيد ويثقل الأقدام، خاصة داخل النسيج المعقد للعلاقات البشرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصحيح، الحدس، البوصلة الأخلاقية، الوفاء بالوعود، الاستقلالية، الواجب الصحيح

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ann Cleeves' *Raven Black* is more than just a murder mystery; it's a haunting exploration of the human condition set against the stark, unforgiving backdrop of the Shetland Islands. The novel masterfully intertwines the insular nature of island life with the complexities of human relationships, creating a chilling atmosphere that permeates every page (Dinh 2018). Cleeves introduces us to Detective Inspector Jimmy Perez, a character as rugged and resilient as the Shetland landscape. His quiet determination and deep-rooted connection to the island are essential to the novel's appeal. As he delves into the murder of young Catherine Ross, Perez is forced to confront the dark side of his community, a place where secrets are as prevalent as the windswept moors. The novel's true strength lies in its character development (Tina 2018). From the enigmatic Magnus Tait, a solitary figure with a troubled past, to the tight-knit community grappling with the loss of one of their own, Cleeves creates a cast of complex and believable individuals. Their struggles and vulnerabilities are mirrored in the unforgiving Shetland environment, where the elements and the past seem to converge in a relentless cycle. *Raven Black* is a chilling blend of mystery, character study, and atmospheric storytelling. Cleeves' prose is both evocative and precise, painting a vivid picture of the Shetland Islands and the people who call it home. The novel's conclusion is both satisfying and thought-provoking, leaving readers with a lasting impression of this remote and captivating world.

Cleeves' writing style is often described as "cozy crime" with a darker edge. She blends traditional mystery elements with a contemporary sensibility, creating a unique and captivating reading experience. She avoids stereotypical characters, instead presenting individuals with multifaceted personalities. These characters are often haunted by past experiences, which significantly influence their actions and decisions. Many of her characters grapple with the aftermath of traumatic events, such as loss, abuse, or betrayal. Cleeves skillfully explores how these experiences shape the worldview of individuals and relationships (Atkinson 2019). The isolated settings of her novels often mirror the emotional isolation experienced by her characters such as

Magnus Tait. Cleaves delves into the psychological impact of loneliness and its consequences. She often explores characters who are struggling to find their place in the world. They may question their identity, values, and relationships. She avoids simplistic portrayals of good and evil. Her characters often find themselves in morally ambiguous situations, forcing them to make difficult choices. By delving into the complexities of human behavior, Cleaves offers thought-provoking insights into the motivations behind actions. Her ability to delve into the psychological depths of her characters is one of the key reasons for her enduring popularity. By exploring themes of identity, trauma, and isolation, she creates compelling and relatable characters that resonate with readers on a deep emotional level.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This research adopts a qualitative methodology aimed to explore the themes of duty, morality, and societal judgment in *Raven Black*. The method is textual analysis, focusing on key scenes and character interactions.

## **3. THEORY**

W.D. Ross' theory of *prima facie* duties forms the backbone of the analysis. This ethical theory posits that individuals have several morally significant duties, which may conflict in real-life situations. In *Raven Black*, Ross' concept will be used to dissect how Magnus Tait navigates competing obligations, particularly his loyalty to his mot versus his societal standing.

The paper uses Ross' list of *prima facie* duties to interpret the moral dilemmas Magnus faces. These include:

- Fidelity: His duty to keep promises and be loyal, especially to his mother.
- Reparation: How Magnus makes amends to the family of the deceased child, Catriona Bruce, who was killed by his mother and he was obligated to keep his mother's secret.

Ross' theory will guide the analysis of moral conflict in the novel. This framework emphasizes the conditional nature of duties, meaning Magnus' sense of obligation to his mother may conflict with societal or personal needs. By applying this theory, the paper aims to highlight how these duties manifest as sources of tension within the narrative. Through a close reading of *Raven Black*, the paper will identify and analyze scenes where moral conflicts are most evident. Special attention will be given to scenes involving Magnus' relationship with his mother. This relationship is central to Magnus' sense of duty and isolation. His actions, driven by loyalty and distorted sense of right, will be examined in the light of Ross' duties of fidelity and reparation. Ross' concept of keeping promises will be used to assess whether Magnus

is morally right in prioritizing his mother's needs over his own or the community's expectations.

## DISCUSSION

From a young age, Mary Tait abuses her son Magnus verbally and emotionally. The most vulnerable victims of bullying and societal discrimination are those who are different from the norm, especially those who are physically different, and often those with weak personalities are easy victims of bullying (Khalifa). She constantly belittles him, calling him "slow", "daft" and treating him as if he is a burden. Magnus, who deeply loves his mother, grows up in a household where he feels unwanted and rejected. Even after Agnes, Magnus' younger sister, dies at a young age, Mary continues to show more love and attention to her memory than she ever does to her living son. She keeps Agnes' belongings, particularly her toys, as sacred objects and refuses to let go of her grief. In Mary's eyes, Agnes remains the ideal child, forever frozen in her memory as perfect and untouchable, while Magnus is the flawed and unwanted child.

Catriona Bruce, a local girl, occasionally visited Magnus' home. She plays innocently, unaware of the emotional scars within the family. Catriona starts playing with Agnes' old toys, which still holds deep significance for Mary. This playful action by Catriona triggered something deep within Mary, who views it as a violation of Agnes' memory. Mary, already consumed by grief and anger over Agnes' death, cannot tolerate the sight of another child playing with her daughter's toys. Her rage builds up, fueled by unresolved grief and her bitterness toward Magnus. In a moment of fury, she lashes out and kills Catriona, unable to control her anger over what she saw as an unforgivable act of disrespect.

After the murder, Mary imposes silence on Magnus. He witnesses the killing but, out of fear and loyalty, obeyed his mother's demand to keep quiet. Mary uses her control over him to ensure the truth never comes out. Even good people's morals are badly affected by other people's distorted sense of morality (Sagheer). Magnus, already emotionally scarred from years of abuse, carries the weight of that dark secret for many years, isolated and misunderstood by the community.

Ross mentions that the basis of the right act must rely on intuitionism. An individual can lean on intuition only when there are emotional maturity and logical reasoning based on experience. And what makes an act right is linked to *prima facie* duties. These duties must conflict. There has to be two duties conflicting in a particular situation. Once it is decided which duty holds most urgency, is "right" and the duty proper is accomplished. Throughout the novel, Magnus is in a continuous struggle with his moral compass. In *Raven Black*, the narrative intricately weaves two murders with the concept of *prima*

*facie* duty. Years ago, Mary Tait, Magnus' mother, kills eight-year-old Catriona Bruce and coerces Magnus into a promise to keep the crime a secret. This promise, a *prima facie* duty to uphold familial loyalty and silence, casts a long shadow over Magnus's life, tainting his reputation with unresolved suspicion. The story shifts to the recent murder of Catherine Ross, who is found dead near Magnus's home. The investigation reveals the buried truth about Catriona's murder and the moral burden Magnus has carried. When Mary murders Catriona, Magnus is up against the conflict which is either "What should they do? They had no telephone but he could run to the Bruce house (Cleeves 335)", or stay at home, protecting his mother and containing the catastrophe. He must choose between committing to the *prima facie* duty of reparation, which entails making amends or providing restitution for wrongs committed, thereby acknowledging the responsibility to rectify harm caused to others through actions or omissions<sup>1</sup> (Ross, *ibid*), or committing to the *prima facie* duty of fidelity, which imposes a moral obligation to keep promises. In practical terms, making a promise creates a binding moral obligation to be fulfilled. This obligation arises from the nature of the promise itself (Ross 28), especially if the promisee is a mother.

Magnus decides to protect his mother. His duty proper is to commit to *prima facie* duty of fidelity. Hence, he takes Catriona's body and buries it away with great care which indicates a sign of remorse.

When it was dark, he unwrapped the rug so Catriona was lying on her back in the middle of it, he untied her ribbons and spread out her hair. Then he carried her up the hill. It was a cloudy night. No moon. The men still searching for her were on the headland and along the clifftops. He could see the flashes of their torches but nobody saw him. They were at the coast and he went inland. Then he left the girl there on the heather, her face turned to the rain and went back to the house for a spade, a good sharp spade. He went up the hill again and he buried her in the peat bank and covered the spot with loose rocks.(Cleeves 339)

After hiding Catriona's murder, Magnus was the prime suspect for her disappearance. Leading to the ostracism imposed upon him by his community.

Ross suggests that when individuals mature and develop the ability to think abstractly, they understand that fulfilling promises generally creates a moral obligation. This inherent rightness associated with keeping promises stems from the nature of

---

<sup>1</sup> In ethics, "omission" refers to the act of intentionally or unintentionally failing to perform an action that one has a moral duty or obligation to carry out.

promises themselves. In Magnus 'case, the nature of his promise stems from his moral beliefs which his mother formulates. That is to say, he has a moral obligation to keep his promise to his mother regardless of the consequences. "Our certainty that is a prima facie right depends on not its consequences but on its being the fulfillment of a promise" (Ross 36). The book is sealed, Magnus accomplishes a duty proper by choosing to keep his promise.

Following his mother's death, Magnus is left to confront a community that ostracizes him due to his decision to keep his promise, an ostracism that is evident even at his mother's funeral "He'd heard the whispers come up spoken just loud enough to be sure he would hear. He was the death of her. she couldn't stand the shame. Mary was always a proud woman" (Cleeves 227). The claim that he is "the death of her" is a heavy accusation, implying that his actions or omissions led to her demise. This suggests a deep-seated sense of responsibility which strengthens his duty to keep his promise to Mary as he senses his failure to her.

Magnus is a man of conscience. His mother's constant emotional abuse does not dehumanize him, instead he always tries to bond with his community in spite of the outcasting imposed upon him in the simplest situations, especially when he is outcasted on the bus: "But Magnus chose a seat on his own and none of them spoke to him or even acknowledged his presence. That how it always was. Habit. They probably didn't even see him" (Cleeves 21). It's a form of social ostracism where Magnus is deliberately made to feel unwelcome or marginalized by others. His community harshly rejects him as a form of punishment, a repercussion of keeping his promise.

After being ostracized by his community, Magnus spends his time in his home alone, observing people as a form of communication. And then someone knocks on his door at Christmas eve " He wanted to keep out of the cold and he was frightened that they might escape. He couldn't believe that such Beautiful Creatures had turned up on his doorstep" (Cleeves 8). The arrival of these "beautiful creatures" , Catherine Ross and Sally Henry, undoubtedly disrupts Magnus' carefully constructed world. Their presence introduces elements of life and vitality, which are antithetical to his solitary existence. Initially, fear and suspicion likely predominates. . However, beneath this surface, a flicker of human connection emerges. Perhaps, in the depths of his isolation, Magnus cultivates a longing for companionship and a sense of belonging. The sight of these young women might awaken this dormant yearning. Their youth and vitality represent a stark contrast to his own world-weariness, offering a glimpse of a life he once knew or perhaps always desires. After Magnus 'encounter with Cathrine for the first time, he forms an emotional connection with her. This bond resorts to restoring his autonomy and developing his moral reasoning. After their encounter, Magnus, sitting alone on the bus, longs to see

Catherine again. Catherine boards the bus but doesn't notice Magnus, who watches her with admiration. He hopes for a chance to talk to her, drawn to her kindness and politeness towards older people like himself.

She got out at his stop. He stood back to let her out first and still, it seemed, she wouldn't recognize him. How could he blame her? All old men would look alike to her, just as all tourists did to him. But she stood at the bottom of the steps and turned and saw him. She smiled slowly and held out her hand to help him down. She was wearing woollen gloves so he couldn't feel her skin against his but the contact gave him a thrill all the same. He was surprised by his body's response to her, hoped she didn't sense his excitement. (Cleeves 23,24)

Cathrine bears a special significance to Magnus as she makes him feel like he belongs in spite of the fact that she's an outsider who moved in from London a while ago. He feels a sense of belonging to her since they are both outsiders. He is friendly and polite. He keeps his manners and displays his true self .

Won't you come in? He asked. Take a dram with me to keep out the cold. Or some tea? He didn't for a minute think she would agree. She was a well brought up child. That was obvious. She would have been taught not to go alone into the house of a stranger. She looked at him, weighing up the idea. It's a bit early for a dram, she said. Then tea? He felt his mouth spread into that daft grin which had always annoyed his mother. We'll have some tea and chocolate biscuits! (Cleeves 25)

For a minute, he doesn't think that Catherine will accept his invitation. He smiles spontaneously but he is afraid of being belittled for his smile due to his mother's intolerance of it. His mother's impressions of him created a scarred emotional character with low self esteem and lower entitlement. He does not see himself worthy of Catherine's time or attention. After Catherine accepts Magnus' invitation and accompanies him to the house, she sits in his mother's chair and this is the moment when he regains his autonomy. His loyalty changes from his mother to Catherine.

After Catherine left Magnus' house that day, no one sees her again until the following morning when she is found murdered near his home. Given that Magnus had previously been a suspect in the disappearance of Catriona Bruce, the discovery of Catherine's body near his residence reinforces the suspicions that has already surrounded him within his community, especially his neighbours. Not long after that gathering, Catherine is found murdered, with whispers spreading like wildfire that Magnus's house was the last place she had been seen alive. As suspicion mounted, Magnus found himself



increasingly shunned by his community, their eyes cold and judgmental whenever he passes by. He becomes like the raven he is raising, sick and imprisoned in a cage. Isolated and desperate for human connection, he longs to reach out, to explain himself, to clear his name, but finds only silence and closed doors. Every creak of the floorboard makes him jump, fearing the day when Sally's mother may storm up to his door, demanding answers, or worse, accusing him outright. His anxiety festered, feeding on the darkness of his guilt and fear, as the walls of his home seem to close in around him, imprisoning him in his own solitude.

Like a woman who didn't care what she looked like, at least. She was very small and moved in a busy way, scuttling as if time was important to her. Watching her, he was suddenly scared that she intended to come to him. He thought she had found out that Sally had been in the house at new year. He imagined her making a scene, shouting, her face thrust so close to his that he'd smell her breath, feel the spit as she screamed at him. *Don't you dare go near my daughter.* For a moment he was confused. Was that scene imagination or memory? But she didn't come up the hill towards his house. She walked away. (Cleeves 19)

This passage reflects Magnus' anxiety and confusion, blending his imagination with reality. The woman, who is described as small and hurried, seems to embody a sense of urgency that unnerves him. His sudden fear that she might confront him reveals a deep-seated guilt or worry, particularly regarding Sally's presence in his house. The vivid imagery of the mother's potential outburst—so intense that he imagines feeling her spit—highlights his dread of confrontation. The confusion between what is imagined and what is remembered suggests that Magnus is grappling with unresolved tension or guilt, blurring the lines between his fears and past experiences.

Suspicion and evidence are building up against Magnus, making it clear that the time has come for his arrest. The police escorts Magnus to the police station in order to question him about Catherine's murder, accusing him of murdering her.

Did you take anything from Catherine Ross, after you'd killed her? He was bewildered and for a moment he didn't know who they were talking about. Then he realized.. I didn't kill her, he said, rising in his seat to make them believe him. The idea was so shocking that he stopped thinking about his face and he could feel the grin sliding back. She was my friend. Why would I kill her? (Cleeves 231)

Although he keeps his promise, but his conscience never rests. After his mother's death, he breaks free from coercing her moral code. He feels kind of free to

think for himself without anyone imposing morality or beliefs. He starts to see the ghost of his past. His dearest little friend Catriona . This imagery is a sign of guilt. A sense of guilt indicates that he feels responsible for this negative outcome. It's a normal human emotion that can motivate an individual to make amends and repair any damage they may have caused. Magnus is a helpless figure. Morality, imposed upon him by his mother, does not put his mind at ease or rest his conscience. After burying Catriona, he takes a souvenir to remember her by. He takes her hair ribbons. "They belonged to Catriona: he said. I took them from her. I thought her hair was prettier loose. Finer that way, I thought!" (Cleeves 228). He keeps those ribbons to remind him of who she was. He does not want to diminish her memory as his mother did to his younger sister Agnes. He holds tight to the ribbons after seven years of Catriona's death because he does not want to forget what he did to her and how he failed her by keeping a promise over making amends to her and her family. Those ribbons are the motive for his moral compass. Keeping them is an indicator for existing moral values. The suppression of his moral compass has to be activated. Ross claims that intuition relies upon emotional maturity and logical reasoning which comes through experience and inherent knowledge of right (Ross 33). To be precise, Magnus knows what he should do regarding Catriona's murder which is confessing to the police (duty of reparation), but his allegiance to the promise he gave to his mother prevents him.

For a long period of time, Magnus suffers from the imposition of moral values on him by his narcissistic mother, using methods of psychological manipulation and emotional exploitation. This led to a loss of intellectual self-guidance, which makes the concept of right confusing for him, and he does what is in his mother's best interests only at the expense of himself. In this case, the following question arises: Are his actions the result of his nature or nurture ? The obvious answer is nurture. Mary puts him in a specific moral and intellectual position in order to impose dominance. Magnus's surrounding environment gives him no other choice but to act as his mother regulates his feelings and thoughts. Therefore, his actions stem from the control of a narcissistic mother with a self-focused personality.

The death of Catherine is the wake up call for Magnus to finally do the right. Her death activates his moral compass. He realises that his mother's absence from his actual world gives him the opportunity to think for himself instead of completely relying on her. Significantly his mother's clock is mentioned repeatedly in the novel. Whenever he experiences the premonition that he will be arrested and that the police will burst through the door at any moment, he looks directly at his mother's clock. "Magnus knew the time because of the fat clock, his mother's clock, which squatted

on the shelf over the fire” (Cleeves 3). “It was still dark when the policeman came for him, but it was morning. The clock said seven thirty-eight” (Cleeves 227) . This is a veiled indication that the time to confess his mother’s guilt has come.

When detective Perez and few policemen come in to arrest Magnus, the latter displays his manners and full cooperation. “Come in he said, and warm yourself through. You will be chilled out there on the hill all night, even though it's not freezing anymore!” (Cleeves 228). Magnus ’cooperation with detective Perez is an indication that he is not afraid to go with them because he did not do anything. “You have done nothing, tell them nothing” (Cleeves 50), as his mother said—but this time he is telling them everything.

Magnus does not hide his souvenir from Catriona, but rather shows it to the police. “Turning , he saw that the policeman had seen the ribbons. ‘They belonged to Catriona ’he said I took them from her” (Cleeves 228). This memorial represents the secret that burdens him throughout the years, and that the arrival of the police is not a bad thing, but it is the salvation that he is waiting for. When Magnus arrives to the police station, he sits calmly in his cell waiting for the officer who interrogates him. Detective Perez comes in his cell and asks him “Did you kill her, Magnus? If you did and you tell me that would help us” (Cleeves 335). Magnus is a victim of toxic parenting. Breaking such a pattern is not easy for him as he was nurtured by a manipulative parent. “Magnus slid from the bed, so he was standing. He felt he couldn't breathe. I promised, he said”(Cleeves 335). Meanwhile, Magnus is still confused about what is right. “ You shouldn’t speak against your mother” (Cleeves 335), Magnus had suffered loss several times, been abused physically, psychologically, and emotionally by his mother and society; he seeks to regain his autonomy. “He decides not to tell the detective, but when he opened his mouth it all came out” (Cleeves 336). Hence he cannot restrain himself from confessing.

Then he is taken to a room where detective Perez starts questioning him. He starts telling how the crime really happened. Breaking his promise to his mother by telling everything. According to Ross, a promise is a promise and must be kept “our certainty that is a *prima facie* right depends on not its consequences but on its being the fulfilment of a promise” (Ross 36). In this case, Magnus’ act is controversial because Ross stresses on keeping a promise is a *prima facie* priority due to many factors rely on the duty of fidelity, especially when it comes to a member of family. So, according to Ross, Magnus does not do the right due to his non-obligation to the duty of fidelity (keeping promises). A promise to hide a little child’s murderer, is that right? Does it mean that crimes can be justified if there is a promise involved?

Ross argues that an act of promise-keeping has the property of not necessarily being right but of being something that is right. If the act has no other moral significance characteristic such as causing pain to another person (Ross 155) For instance, if keeping a promise would cause significant harm to another person, then one might be justified in breaking it. The key point is that a person cannot make this decision based solely on the consequences of actions (like a utilitarian would). Instead, they have to weigh the importance of keeping a promise against the potential harm of doing so. Magnus weighs his options for years. His decision to confess roots back to his sense of guilt towards Catriona. In this situation, Catriona's parents are in pain. They do not know where their daughter's body is or why she was killed. Their continuous agony is a cornerstone of *prima facie* conflict inside Magnus. He is up against two choices and only one decision. Either he keeps his promise to his late mother or make amends to the Bruce family. Magnus fails Catriona everyday by keeping his promise to his mother. Magnus' mother takes the best out of him, what keeps him alive and human, devoid of any other independent thoughts or feelings, pouring his focus into his mother's will. "Somehow he didn't care anymore about his mother's instruction to tell them nothing" (Cleeves 340). He is finally free from her dominance. Magnus regains his moral compass.

In conclusion, the *prima facie* duty of reparation is a moral principle that suggests one has an obligation to rectify or make amends for any wrongdoing committed. This wrongdoing could arise intentionally or unintentionally, causing harm to another person or their property. Reparation, in this context, not only serves to restore balance but also to uphold the moral integrity of the individual, fostering a sense of justice and accountability within society.

For Magnus, this principle is deeply personal and intertwined with his internal struggles. His moral compass, actively guided by intuition and a profound sense of guilt, fuels his need to make amends. The guilt and helplessness that stem from his conscience reflect the weight of unaddressed wrongs in his past, especially in relation to Catherine's death—a pivotal moment that left him burdened with unshakable remorse. This experience shapes his actions, as he has endured the isolation and alienation that came with his previous silence. Magnus's journey illustrates the transformative power of reparation. It is not merely about alleviating guilt but about striving to right the moral scales, even when doing so requires courage and sacrifice. The decision to speak the truth, to take a stand, and to ensure that justice is served demonstrates his growth. By confronting his past mistakes and the consequences of his silence, Magnus seeks to

reclaim his sense of self and reassert his moral standing. In this way, his actions not only serve to repair the wrongs of the present but also to mend the fractures within his own soul. Ultimately, Magnus is driven by the need to finally be “right,” to reconcile his conscience with his actions, and to find peace through accountability and honesty.

## SOURCES

1. Ann Cleeves. “Shatland.” *anncleeves.com*, <https://www.anncleeves.com/sitemap.htm>.
2. Cleeves, Ann. *Raven Black*. Pantheon Books, 2006.
3. Cleeves, Ann. “Raven Black by Ann Cleeves: A review.” *The Nature of Things*, 11 Nov. 2021, <https://www.thenatureofthings.blog/2021/11/raven-black-by-ann-cleeves-review>.
4. Encyclopedia Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/free-will-and-moral-responsibility>.
5. Khalifa, Majeed. “Reflections of Bullying on Children’s Personality in R.J. Palacio’s *Wonder* Novel: Psychologically and Socially.” University of Tikrit, 2023.
6. McDaniel, CJ. “About Ann Cleeves: A Profile of The Acclaimed Mystery Writer.” *A Dazzling Life*, 20 Jan. 2023, <https://www.adazing.com/about-ann-cleeves-a-profile-of-the-acclaimed-mystery-writer/>.
7. Prichard, Melissa S. “W.D. Ross.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP)*, Meta Metaphysics Lab, 2019.
8. Ross, Sir David. *The Right and The Good*. Edited by Philip Stratton-Lake, Clarendon Press, 2002.
9. Sagheer, Abu Obaydah. “A Study of Physical and Figurative Death in *Hamlet*.” University of Tikrit, 2021.
10. Smith, Ken. “The Life and Loves of Shetland Creator Ann Cleeves.” *Scottish Field*, 10 Aug. 2019, <https://www.scottishfield.co.uk/books/the-life-and-loves-of-shetland-creator-ann-cleeves/>.
11. The Book Trail. “Raven Black (Shetland 1) – Ann Cleeves.”