Modernism's Critique du Coeur: The Novelist as Critic, 1885-1925

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Dedication

To Lizzy

Abstract

Modernism's Critique du Coeur: The Novelist as Critic, 1885-1925 provides a new account of the modernist novel's famous inward turn toward subjectivity and language. This turn makes the novel of modernism not politically quietist, as prior scholars have assumed, but rather a unique resource for the robust criticism of ideologies that manifest themselves in language and consciousness. My thesis on the critical power of modernist novels promises to renew the theory that aesthetic autonomy is the keynote of modernist innovation. In this, I join the current re-examination of literary aesthetics' potential to do more than serve as an ideological pretext for vested social interests, as post-structuralist and Marxist theory had argued. I claim instead that the aesthetic has the potential to make its adherents critical and self-critical subjects of modernity. In two theoretical chapters, I survey the theory of the novel as it has addressed two primary issues: the cognitive power of novels to encapsulate a society's self-conception and the affective power of novels to move their readers toward social reform. In chapters that treat the writings of Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf, I show how the modernist novel, by withholding obvious political referents and inhabiting the subjectivity of a central character, forces its readers into the position of textual critics. My approach to the texts of modernism is also meta-critical, examining not only their works but the body of criticism their works have generated in support of my argument that modernist fiction calls for its own critique. These theoretical and critical approaches allow me finally to make a literary-historical argument: by emphasizing aesthetic autonomy as the modernist novel's mode of radical critique, I am able to identify the under-analyzed novels of British Aestheticism's founders, Pater and Wilde, as the key Anglo novels of the late Victorian period. Their fictions of Aestheticism inaugurated the novelistic project of modernism.

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INTRODUCTION

Strangeness to Beauty

A particular novel takes place over the course of one day in London. Relatively plotless, concerned with mind and memory, it is set mostly among the upper classes, both professional and aristocratic. It also introduces characters from the lower class, however, including one, psychologically unstable and potentially dangerous to others or to himself, who forces the novel's protagonist to weigh the real meaning and worth of life. Finally, this novel addresses itself to contemporary politics, particularly those of war, empire, genocide, and trauma, foregrounding debates about how to manage the anxieties generated by mass violence and how to prevent such violence in the future.

The novel in question is not Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*—though, as my summary indicates, it is remarkably similar to it in form and theme. Rather, it is Ian McEwan's *Saturday*, published in 2005 to wide acclaim as a narrative unafraid to braid together, supposedly in the manner of Woolf, the exquisite involutions of individual subjectivity with brutally immediate social and political concerns (in McEwan's case, the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the Bush administration and its allies' 2003 assault on Iraq). Taking up the day-in-the-life-of-an-ordinary-person motif canonized by *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Ulysses*, as well as the restricted viewpoint technique—all of *Saturday* is focalized through its hero, distinguished neurosurgeon Dr. Henry Perowne—that was the hallmark of modernist narrative from Henry James through Saul Bellow (whose *Herzog* is quoted in *Saturday*'s epigraph), McEwan's novel

ostensibly offers itself as a neo-modernist response to the demands of the early twenty-first century. For this reason, I want to consider *Saturday* at the outset of this study of modernist fiction for what it can tell us about the legacy of this almost century-old movement in the arts.

Saturday's modernist ornamentation conceals an ideological agenda, one notably at odds with the modernists' moral and political attitudes. *Saturday*'s title refers to Saturday, 15 February 2003, the date of the massive anti-war protests launched worldwide in advance of the U. S.'s March invasion of Iraq. Unlike Woolf and Joyce, McEwan has not chosen an ordinary day for his novel of consciousness, but one with obvious historical significance. Neither the novel's hero nor anyone in his family goes on the march, however. Instead, Dr. Perowne, uncertain as to whether or not the imminent war is just, criticizes the demonstration from its margins for its not being party to his complex inner deliberations: "Perowne can't feel, as the marchers themselves probably can, that they have an exclusive hold on moral discernment" (73).[1] Moreover, Perowne, in his capacity as surgeon, has treated a victim of Saddam Hussein's torture regime. With this deft narrative manipulation (why not, after all, a victim of U. S.-funded Nicaraguan death squads?), McEwan ensures that Perowne will remain ambivalent about the war, torn between skepticism of the Anglo-American allies' motives and a desire to endorse a humanitarian crusade against the Iraqi dictator. This hesitation evokes "the liberal imagination," fabled since Lionel Trilling's mid-century book of that title to be indigenous to the form of the novel, and here portrayed in all its refinement, a refinement

[1] Compare this high-handed condescension toward the London masses to Woolf's rapid switching between the perspectives of varied Londoners at the opening of *Mrs. Dalloway*.

too delicate to underwrite anything so blunt as a political stand for or against imperial warfare.[2] But McEwan does not proceed in the mode of overt authorial self-congratulation. His protagonist is an agnostic, an empiricist, and a Darwinist, a believer in science and in incremental, evolutionary progress; he consequently disdains the literary and the aesthetic as so much childish frivolity. When his bookish daughter gives him classic novels to read, he demurs: "At the cost of slowing his mental processes and many hours of his valuable time, he committed himself to the shifting intricacies of these sophisticated fairy stories" (65). A neurosurgeon's time is better spent on the facts than on fictions, however intricate, presumably including McEwan's.

Saturday is too canny to mean its self-mockery in earnest, however. Perowne's daughter, Daisy, is a promising young poet, the protégé of her maternal grandfather, the eminent John Grammaticus. Daisy is also the focus of the novel's suspenseful climax. For the anti-war demonstration of this particular Saturday causes Perowne to take a disastrous traffic detour that brings him into conflict with a gang led by a man named Baxter. Perowne initially avoids Baxter's menace by deploying expert medical knowledge to diagnose him on the spot as suffering from Huntington's disease. By the end of the novel, however, Baxter has tracked Perowne to his home, where a family gathering that includes both of Perowne's children, his wife, and his father-in-law is taking place. Baxter quickly knocks down the ineffectual old poet and then threatens Daisy with rape. Daisy is able to fend off Baxter's assault by two means. First, when Baxter forces her to strip naked, it is revealed that she is pregnant, which cools his

[2] Contrast Woolf's direct narratorial condemnation of the principle of Conversion, which she identifies with the British empire, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, or Joyce's savage mockery of the English throughout his corpus.

aggression. Then, ordered by Baxter to read out one of her poems, and prompted by her grandfather to declaim one she had memorized for him, she recites Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach." This puts Baxter into a state of wonder (lacking the education to know that it is Arnold's poem and not Daisy's, he marvels: "'It's beautiful. You know that, don't you. It's beautiful. And you wrote it'"), which eventually allows him to be overwhelmed by Perowne and his son (231).[3] Baxter suffers a serious head injury in the final confrontation, which requires a delicate surgical procedure. This, at the novel's conclusion, is carried out by none other than Dr. Perowne, displaying the pre-eminence of his consciousness via its ability to intervene magnanimously in the very brain of his antagonist and inferior.

The implications of this narrative arc and its tense climax are not difficult to tease out. The anti-war demonstration's endangering Perowne indicates, in the novel's political allegory, that the peace movement's naïveté and time-wasting excesses result in more violence, and particularly threaten the professional and upper middle classes who are the bearers of such civilizational wonders as neuroscience and Darwinism. Perowne's confrontation with Baxter and his gang also allegorizes street criminals as dictators and terrorists, since the novel here collapses the 2003 geopolitical map onto the micro-world of London's neighborhoods by figuring Perowne as the Anglo-American alliance detained by the demonstrators. In other words, Baxter is the enemy of

[3] McEwan is careful to show that Perowne also fails to recognize Arnold's poem. While this would seem to unite him with Baxter, the reasons for their ignorance are too dissimilar to allow for a simple doubling across class lines. Perowne, brain surgeon and mechanical materialist, is master of the mind and is accordingly *above* the knowledge of poetry shared by his dissolute father-in-law and over-educated daughter. Perowne is poetry's superior, while Baxter, object of Perowne's scientific gaze, is its inferior. One way we know this is that the novel primarily acclaims "Dover Beach" on utilitarian grounds—it is a weapon of self-defense.

civilization, akin to Saddam Hussein or al-Qaeda. Baxter's neurological motivation for his delinquency further tells us that criminality, violence, dictatorship, and terrorism are caused in *Saturday*'s world not by social or political conditions, or by individual moral choice, but by innate biological flaws carried by some unfortunates.[4] When Baxter violates the sanctity of the home and attempts further to violate Perowne's daughter, we learn, by way of a time-honored imperialist trope, that the genetically-deficient, biologically-inferior criminal or terrorist is a sexual menace who will ravish "our" women. McEwan ensures that Daisy is regarded by the reader as a possession of the male-headed family by reducing her stature as a poet to that of a loyal legatee of her male forebears, i.e., Arnold and her grandfather.[5] Daisy, finally, is more valuable to the novel for her biological capacity to reproduce this bourgeois family than for her art. Her pregnancy makes her poetry redundant: the only poetry that matters in a crisis is not that of some belated daughter but rather that of Arnold. "Dover Beach" both provides a secular reassurance for the threatened bourgeois absent religious supports *and* quells, by its civilized rhythms, the savagery of the terrorist interloper. Finally, Dr. Perowne demonstrates his superiority over all poets by his technical mastery of the brain. Real authority in this novel lies in the surgeon's grasp of the wholly biological basis of consciousness—as well as in the novelist's concomitant ability to limn that mechanistic determinism in a narrative that pits scientific civilization against the barbarians of

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[4] See Marco Roth's "Rise of the Neuronovel" for a powerful argument against such neuroscientific reductionism in recent fiction, including *Saturday*, which Roth aptly captions as a text that becomes "a defense of post-Thatcherite Britain's class system as well as the global imbalance of power by substituting the medical for the social" (n. pag.).

[5] This is in clear contrast to Woolf, who famously rebelled against no less a forebear than Milton and was thus disloyal to the poetic fathers.

empire's back streets. The task of social criticism is superfluous when all that will change minds is surgical lancets—or surgical air strikes.

It is almost impossible to overstate the distance between *Saturday* and the politics of Woolf and Joyce. Whereas Woolf made her upper-class protagonist's lower-class foil a common soldier, victimized by the British Empire (as well as its ideological correlates in the literary canon) and victimized again by the imperial ethos as manifested in the medical profession, McEwan makes Perowne's foil a criminal who has no one to blame but his genes and who needs only the mind-doctor's firm scalpel. In essence, McEwan has re-written *Mrs. Dalloway* with Bradshaw as its hero. As for Joyce, McEwan alludes to him directly in the final sentence of *Saturday*, when Perowne drifts off to sleep: "And at last, faintly, falling: this day's over" (289). This, of course, references the snow "faintly falling" at the conclusion of "The Dead" (*Dubliners* 194). But note the difference: in Joyce's novella, Gabriel Conroy's epiphany of the faintly falling snow occurs only after his possessive erotic hunger for his wife has been frustrated by a forced encounter with her inner life, which, he must learn, is independent of his own desires. In McEwan's novel, however, Perowne accomplishes intercourse with his wife (for the second time that day, in fact) before finally falling into the sleep of self-satisfaction. In Joyce's narrative, male desire is called into question, made available for criticism, while female desire is given a voice. McEwan, by contrast, allows his hero to remain master of all he surveys, ambivalent about the war, but, far more importantly, secure in all the advantages that his social position grants him.[6] His ambivalence is, in fact, the mark of

[6] Elaine Hadley questions McEwan's text in terms similar to my own; as she wittily notes, McEwan, fending off subversions of his "fantasies of liberal mastery," sets himself up as "the Homeland Security

his superiority to the Baxters and the peace protestors of the world, which legitimates his imperial command over them whether or not it lends support to any particular military action.

I introduce this study of the modernist novel with an extended consideration of Ian McEwan's *Saturday* because it reveals the perhaps surprising fact that the meaning of Joyce and Woolf's work is not merely an academic or historical question. When a twenty-first-century English author wants to write a novel defending his upper-middle-class prerogatives and making a case for renewed Anglo imperialism, he feels the need to appropriate and, by ideological revision, to *neutralize* the central novelists of British modernism. It is remarkable that McEwan so construed Joyce and Woolf as live threats to his conservative agenda that he went to the lengths of re-writing their books to excise their anti-imperialism, their feminism, and their critique of instrumental reason—such literary malpractice being perhaps the real surgery performed in *Saturday*.[7] This would almost seem to settle the question, once and for all, of whether or not the modernist revision of the novel form renders novels politically quietist.

But there *is* a case to be made for *Saturday*, and Peggy L. Knapp makes it compellingly in her essay, "Ian McEwan's *Saturday* and the Aesthetics of Prose." For

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Chief of the Novel" (97). However, I dissent from her analysis in that she too-quickly arrogates the modernist novel to McEwan's project of renovating Arnoldian liberalism. As I will show, especially in chapter II.2 below on Pater, the Aestheticists and modernists contested Arnold's politics of an elite cultural bourgeoisie.

[7] The third precursor propping up *Saturday*'s narrative is, as its epigraph indicates, Bellow's *Herzog* of 1964, a stream-of-consciousness novel akin to those of Joyce and Woolf in its close exploration of an authorial surrogate's subjectivity. Bellow is a likelier candidate for McEwan's imitation, given the American writer's notoriously fraught portrayals of female characters and his apparent later-life embrace of neoconservate politics. But Bellow would surely balk at McEwan's materialist reductionism; his novels rather emphasize, even sacralize, the single person's ability to make moral decisions as the basis of a fully human life—an essentially religious credo ruled out by McEwan's biologism.

Knapp, McEwan excels at portraying through disinterestedly beautiful sentences "a protagonist who thinks about thinking," which involves readers in exploring images of thought best regarded as saturated self-contained worlds rather than as propositions (125). Knapp states at the outset that her essay "is an attempt to acknowledge both the conceptual nature of sentences (and the plots to which they contribute) and the Kantian notion of beauty's irreducibility to concepts" (121). She concludes that *Saturday* is best read as a complex engagement by a contemporary writer with how our contemporary scientific and medical understanding of thought (what she terms Enlightenment) can be synthesized with a Romantic creation of aesthetic forms characterized by organic inner harmony and resonances: "*Saturday*, in my view, produces aesthetic effects by creating images of Henry Perowne's thoughts for playful contemplation 'on the hither side' of abstraction into concepts, both in the shapes and rhythms of sentences and the shape and rhythm of the novel" (141). *Saturday*, on this view, produces a dense, saturated, and pleasingly organized image of how knowledge comes into the world through the subject's apperception of experience. Knapp moreover directs her argument against ideology-critics of the modern novel. While she acknowledges their contributions to criticism, she challenges their works' "often-implied conclusion that its analysis has fully accounted for its object, that aesthetic delight plays no part, or only a socially misleading part, in the effects a work produces" (122). With this move, Knapp, as she acknowledges, joins a large company of recent scholars who worry that the strains of intensely skeptical and interrogative political criticism that dominated literary and cultural studies from the 1970s on have effectively destroyed the rationale for paying attention to aesthetic objects

in the first place, namely, their enlivening claim on our senses and our feelings.[8]

Knapp's case for *Saturday* is superficially very close to the thesis of my own study, which also speaks up for the aesthetic against its ideological crtitics, so let me now spell out an important difference that opens the way to the subject of the modernist novel and its growth from Aestheticism. Knapp, and by extension McEwan, premises her neo-Aestheticism on a Kantian distinction between delight/pleasure and thought/critique. Indeed, Knapp relies on what she describes as a temporality of the encounter with beauty that Kant elaborates, in which the beholder proceeds through "moments" of engagement with the object, progressing from "delight, apart from interests" to "delight apart from concepts," until the beholder apprehends, in the third and fourth moments, the object's purposiveness and necessity (122). For Knapp, this means that we can revel in Perowne's sensibility as it is manifested in McEwan's beautiful sentences (the first and second moments), before we notice that they are embedded in an allegorically-manipulative story whose conceptual dimension—civilization vs. barbarism—is stark and didactic. The beauty of McEwan's prose, Knapp then argues, effectively redeems the story by wedding its overt advocacy of scientific reductionism to a radiant artistic show of that reductionism's object of investigation, i.e., consciousness. But the writers I discuss in this project, Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf reject outright this distinction between beauty and concept, insisting rather on the production of thought-images whose seductive power is nothing less than a simultaneously-occurring curiosity-arousing complexity that solicits both admiration and

[8] For this "return to the aesthetic" see the following among others, and also consult Knapp's bibliography: Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence* and *Atmosphere, Mood Stimmung*; Waters; Scarry; Isobel Armstrong.

skepticism, a response at once affective and conceptual. Their view of art's autonomy is premised on the irreducibility of experience. McEwan's Aestheticism is therefore ersatz, a feint, precisely to the extent that it counsels the reader to accept the beauty of Perowne's thought-images as corroborating the narrative, which they primarily do (Perowne's distaste for the anti-war march is confirmed, for instance, by its disruptive effect on his life, just as his diagnosis of Baxter's condition is unerring). The Aestheticist novels I am concerned with produce thought-images whose veracity they invite the reader freely to judge, often by creating a narrative contrary to the protagonists' sensations—this is Joyce's tactic in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, for instance. McEwan repels critique; Aestheticism demands it.

But this assertion—that Aestheticism, or an advocacy of disinterested beauty in the arts, emboldens the novel form's capacity for criticism—is not what canonical theories of the novel would lead one to expect. The novel, after all, has more often been seen as a form notably at odds with the perceived preciousness of the merely beautiful, concerned instead with the macro-structures of human society. The first European thinker to propose a theory of the novel, notes Jonathan Arac, was the German Romantic writer Friedrich Schlegel (Arac 46). Moreover, most of the grand claims made for the novel—that it is the signal literary form of modernity, uniquely inclusive and responsive to historical change, an aesthetic form virtually synonymous with human progress—originate in Schlegel's writings on the topic at the turn of the nineteenth century, wherein the German philosopher extols the power of "romantic poetry" to mirror the age by portraying both the writer, in all his particularity, and the writer's own total social

context. As Arac explains, "For Schlegel the tautological nexus of the novel (in German *Roman*, and likewise in Russian) and the romantic is powerfully productive. Schlegel's most famous critical statement, '*Athenaeum* Fragment #116,' concerns *romantische Poesie* (*Kritische Schriften* 38–39). This German phrase, usually translated as 'romantic poetry' (46–47), is also 'novelistic poesis'" (191). Though Schlegel seems in English to refer to "romantic poetry," he perceives no distinction between the romantic and the novelistic, and the essence of the romantic/novelistic is the potential to create literary forms that supersede, by incorporation, all prior forms, so that the novel is at once as personal as a lyric or confession and as objective as an epic or drama. The novel can think the particular and the general, the individual and society, at once. Because it raises reflection to higher and higher powers, it is also a reflexive form, capable of generating criticism autonomously out of itself via its ability to juxtapose and synthesize a variety of competing discourses. It took almost a century for Schlegel's theory of the novel to begin to find self-conscious reflection in novelistic practice. As J. M. Bernstein writes, Schlegel's essay on Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* provides "a prescient account of artistic modernism; not waiting upon Flaubert, James, Joyce, Proust, or Mann, it unnervingly anticipates some of the burdens the novel would be required to undertake," namely, that of being, Bernstein says earlier, "riven with a critical self-consciousness of themselves as works of art in relation to indeterminate ideals from which they remain forever separate" (Bernstein xxxi, xxviii). It is therefore in the modernist novel that Schlegel's conception of the radically auto-critical, self-conscious work comes to fruition.[9]

[9] A brief note on technical terminology. Throughout this project, I will refer to "the novel" (and likewise to "epic" or "lyric" or "drama") as a *form*, which is to say a fundamental (albeit, of course, historical)

Because of this connection between the novel's potential and modernism's development thereof, the theory of the novel—as a critical genre—has developed across the twentieth century in tandem with modernism and its own theorizations. But, as Susan Stanford Friedman concedes, confusion seems to reign in discussions of the terms *modernism*, *modernity* and *modern*: they appear to make up "a cacophony of categories that become more meaningless the more insistently they are used" (497). It will therefore be necessary to clarify the meaning of modernism before making an approach to the novel. Freidman establishes that these confused terms have come to signify not only different things, but actually *opposed* things: both hierarchy and anarchy, state planning and political de-centralization, the apotheosis of the Cartesian subject and the dissolution of that subject, and so on. She concludes that a "relational" approach might best capture what is unique and intelligible about modernity as a historical concept while still doing justice to the specificity of each particular instance of the modern: instead of relying on a positive description of the epoch that seems inevitably to lead to internal contradiction, Friedman posits contradiction itself as modernity's defining element. Inspired by psychoanalysis, Friedman makes a point that I will pursue in this project: "The terminological quagmire of modernist studies may be the result of a transferential process in which people become caught in a repetition of the unresolved contradictions present and largely repressed in modernity itself" (499). The contradictions, then, lie not in the

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aesthetic category distinguished by certain phenomenal (formal) features, as for instance in the novel, a narrative generated through storytelling, description, and dialogue meant to be read individually. Sub-categories of forms characterized by particular traditions of narrative structure or formal features I will call *genres* (e.g., *Bildungsroman*, picaresque, Gothic, etc.). Finally, supra-categories marked by certain ideological approaches to mimesis or semiosis that cut across formal and generic boundaries I will label *modes*, such as realism, romance, sentimentalism, Aestheticism, etc.

terms but in ourselves: unable to solve the problems posed by all of the social, economic and political aspects of the Post-Renaissance period—e.g., the separation of state and civil society, the disenchantments of a scientific worldview, the emancipation of previously suppressed social classes along with the related emergence of new elites, the reconfiguration of sexual relations and gendered identities attendant upon urbanization and a consumer economy—intellectuals, scholars and artists evade modernity's antinomies by nominating only one of the many concepts in contention as the essence of the modern—or, in the arts, of the modernist. Thus, for instance, some cultural critics would see in Surrealism or psychoanalysis or stream-of-consciousness narration the keys to modernism, with their shared emphasis on the de-centering discontinuities of the subject, while others would conversely elevate powerfully rationalizing discourses like Marxism or International Style architecture as fundamentally modernist. Friedman's important argument is that the modern, as a total and ongoing social process, contains all of these potentialities in a dialectical tension.

For Freud, repetition was the essence of neurotic compulsion: an unhealthy individual endlessly re-enacts, usually through somatically-displaced behaviors, his or her moment of psychic trauma. The analyst's goal, on the other hand, is to bring the originary trauma to consciousness, where it can be assessed—and superseded—rationally.[10] By invoking this psychoanalytic language, Friedman implies that critics themselves compulsively repeat, without consciously working-through, modernity's dislocating traumas when they attend to only one side of the modern dialectic. Accordingly, she concludes her essay with a call to further investigation aimed at an

[10] See Freud, "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through."

explicit accounting of modern antinomies: "Definitional excursions into the meanings of *modern*, *modernity*, and *modernism* begin and end in reading the specificities of these contradictions" (510). I hope to answer this charge through a method that, given the sophisticated meta-theoretical recursions of Friedman and the thinkers she cites, may at first appear naïve: instead of continuing to limn the many complexities and irresolutions of the term "modernism" itself as it is applied to an extensive body of artistic practices, I propose to clarify the object of study by simply supplementing with a modifier the particular strain of modernism that characterizes the writers I discuss. If the problem is that scholars call opposed phenomena by a single name, then the introduction of a more specific name for one set of those phenomena will make the contradictory elements themselves, which had been obscured by the pall of a single term, more visible.

The modifier of modernism as practiced by Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf is, as I have said, "Aestheticism," that cultural movement of *fin-de-siècle* artists and writers in which the contempt for so-called realism and didacticism in the novel first emerged.[11] I am going to begin with a minimal definition of Aestheticism as a theory of *l'art pour l'art*, or art for its own sake—the theory, that is, that art should be ungrounded by moral or political determinations. Aestheticism was of course a cross-channel and trans-Atlantic phenomenon, beginning in France—with Gautier, Baudelaire, Flaubert, and Mallarmé—as early as the 1830s, when *l'art pour l'art* was first denominated and theorized. Andrew McNeillie, in tracing the influence of Aestheticism on Virginia Woolf, confesses that the genealogy of the term and concept

[11] For broader histories of Aestheticism and the *fin de siècle* across the arts, see Felski, Freedman, Djikstra, Showalter. For *l'art pour l'art*'s complex genealogies, see Hauser and Wilcox.

l'art pour l'art is almost hopelessly confused (which, again, is why I will develop it from primary sources rather than restricting its meaning in advance). But he proposes an interesting starting point for the concept of art's autonomy in the nineteenth century: "Generally associated with Gautier, Baudelaire, de Banville and Flaubert, the term *l'art pour l'art* in fact has an earlier...provenance. For it occurs, perhaps for the first time in print, in connection with Schelling and Kant, in an 1804 essay in Benjamin Constant's *Journal intime*" (22n.4). McNeillie then quotes Constant: "'L'art pour l'art, sans but, car tout but denature l'art. Mais l'art atteint au but qu'il n'as pas,'" translated as "Art for art's sake, without purpose; any purpose adulterates art. But art achieves a purpose which is not its own" (qtd. in McNeillie 22n.4, his translation). Constant's phrase in French is more paradoxical, though, than McNeillie's traditional translation suggests, because the first clause is pure tautology: *art for art.* That is, the art contains its own immanent plenum of significance, in comparison with which any definition would be not only redundant but also an active imposition. This imposition on art, the requirement that it attain a goal, is to be avoided because, in Constant's winding logic, it will prevent art from attaining its goal.[12]

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[12] Théophile Gautier's Preface to his 1834 novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* is often said to be the founding manifesto of Aestheticism in literature. The Preface, though, is far from the dense philosophical discourse that Pater and Wilde will later produce on the subject. It is rather a pugnacious polemic, by and large devoted to standing up for sex and violence in the media against three imagined interlocutors (a religious moralist, a utilitarian progressive, and a young in-the-know cynic). What is surprising in the Preface is that Gautier grounds aesthetic autonomy paradoxically on his claim that art is shaped by, rather than shaping, its social environment. From this, he deduces that it is futile for moralists or progressives to rail against art, when the object of their criticism should rather be society. In this sense, Gautier remains a realist, at the level of his theory of textual practice. Pater will make the same claim about society's supervening upon art, though with more nuance, in his criticism, but crucially *not* in his novelistic practice. Gautier's major influence on Wilde stems from his denigration of utility. Anticipating not only the Aesthetes but also several major elements of twentieth-century critical theory, Gautier states that utilitarianism reifies humanity as a creature constrained by necessity, which re-confirms our subjection to nature and denies the transformative capacity of imaginative practice. As he famously quips, "The most useful place in the house

Art can only rise toward an end beyond itself if it is not subjected in advance to the requirements of attaining an end beyond itself. This is the paradox I aim to trace, especially through its refraction through that most purposeful of literary forms, the novel, because I believe it is in that alien territory—one of mimesis and of pedagogy—that the question will be tested most severely. More specific meanings of the Aestheticist concept will therefore be extruded from the writings of Pater and Wilde in the chapters I devote to them, since they, as I will make clear, saw Aestheticism as a problematic rather than a program, a field of discourse wherein the complexities of art's relation to society could be freely explored. For this reason, it would be counter-productive to begin with too restrictive a definition. As I will go on to demonstrate, the figurehead novelists of British modernism, Joyce and Woolf, were steeped in Aestheticism's mandate that the artist be undetermined by extrinsic social considerations, even as they adapted this claim to their own undeniably political agendas. Their particular modernism, therefore, I will treat as at one with Aestheticism.[13]

The story I will tell is not, however, that of how a quietist apolitics of content

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is the lavatory," thus implying that utilitarian' disrespect for beauty reduces men and women to ordure and the imagination to an excrescence (23). This defense of the aesthetic capacity of the subject to transcend necessity will influence Wilde's position, but Wilde will deploy it to reverse Gautier's claim that society is the agent shaping art instead of the reverse.

[13] As implied, I am in sympathy with the recent pluralization of the movement in scholarship: *modernisms*. Other modernisms were notably at odds with the Aestheticist strain. The neo-classical modernists rejected Aestheticism due its Romantic legacies of individualism in politics and subjectivism in poetics; I include in this company T. E. Hulme, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and Hugh Kenner. On the other hand, the historical avant-garde, with its project to dissolve art by disseminating it as utopia via socio-political revolution, scorned the seeming quiescence of Aestheticism, which works *through* existing artistic and social institutions, rather than imagining that they can be liquidated in one gesture. Particular points of difference between these modernisms will be examined in the course of my argument. I will say here that I think the modernist novel in general tends to be an Aestheticist legacy as I have defined it; thus, many novelists not covered in this project, extending to the present, are encompassed by its argument: Henry James, William Faulkner, Samuel Beckett, Jean Toomer, Djuna Barnes, Nella Larsen, Elizabeth Bowen, Vladimir Nabokov, Malcolm Lowry, Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, Don DeLillo, Kazuo Ishiguro, and more.

encodes a resistant politics of form—we can call this common approach the Adornian option, for a sophisticated elaboration of which see Adorno's compelling polemic against Georg Lukács, "Extorted Reconciliation." Rather, in my story, it is content that is political through and through, from Wilde and Pater's queer heroes to Joyce's occupied city to Woolf's heart of empire, while form arranges that content into mute tableaux, as silent in its judgments as the Victorian novelists were loud about theirs. I grant that this is, at first blush, a mere commonplace: modern novels teach you how to read them, requiring an active effort to decode their encryptions. But from this, I derive a more substantial thesis: if the novel in the nineteenth century directly engaged in the criticism of society, through devices from blunt satire (e.g., Dickens naming a lethally unimaginative pedagogue M'Choakumchild) to narrative editorializing or even sermonizing, the modern novel objectivizes social forms through the presentation of characters' subjectivities.[14] The reader, encountering these social forms as offered up by the silent novelist, steps into the role of critic by interpreting and assessing these rhetorical constructions of the inner life. This procedure was implicit in Aestheticism from the beginning, as I will show in my readings of Pater's and Wilde's theoretical statements. But in chapters I.1 and II.1 below, I will need to demonstrate why this

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[14] I borrow the concept of "objectivization" from Bakhtin, who uses it to indicate the novel's way of making the languages it organizes problematic for the reader by presenting them as the words of another, as if everything in a novel were in quotation marks: "Under conditions of the novel every direct word—epic, lyric, strictly dramatic—is to a greater or lesser degree made into an object" (50). But while Bakhtin speaks of "conditions of the novel," I prefer to historicize this capacity of novels: objectivization waned, for instance, with the interventionist narrator of the nineteenth century, and operates very differently in novels that present their languages as composites of written or oral sources—e.g., *Frankenstein*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Lord Jim*, *Dracula*—from those of Joyce or Woolf (or, for that matter, James or Lawrence or Forster or Faulkner) whose source is, however ambiguously, the psyches of the characters. More of this below, when I consider free indirect discourse as a feature of the Joycean and Woolfian text.

approach to writing novels has so far gone unaccounted for by the dominant traditions in the theory of the novel. The introduction to my chapters on Wilde and Joyce—focusing on the novel's ability to promote thought—will provide a survey of approaches to the novel as a literary mode uniquely capable of modeling a society's self-understanding, whether to enable or to prevent social change. This will lead to an understanding of how Wilde and Joyce's innovations in the novel anticipated theories of subject-formation and skepticism toward narrative that would later come to prominence in theoretical discourse. Introducing Pater and Woolf, on the other hand, I will emphasize the tradition on novel-theory of focusing on the form's ability to produce sentimental emotion as a way of protesting the suffering created by social inequality. I will first account for the recent history, especially in feminist criticism, of sentimental fiction before examining the "affective turn" in literary and cultural studies that, I argue, makes intelligible Pater and Woolf's revision of the sentimental topos.

Let me return a final time to Ian McEwan before beginning my argument proper. His evasion of the criticism endemic to Aestheticism comes early in *Saturday*, on the novel's second page, in fact, when Henry Perowne emerges fully from sleep: "And he's entirely himself, he is certain of it, and he knows that sleep is behind him: to know the difference between it and waking, to know the boundaries, is the essence of sanity" (2). To know the boundaries: these are just what the heroes and heroines of the novels discussed below do not know. Their story is their growing awareness of what binds them and others, an awareness that includes what is foreign to the postivist-reductivist McEwan, namely, a sense of how boundaries may be crossed or transcended. To be

entirely oneself: this is what they cannot be. To define their selves in advance would rob the reader of the right to interpret actively. It falls to the reader to explore their disunities and becomings, rather than to apprehend them as whole and entire and finished forever. And if these writers tend to write essentially about themselves, it is to put themselves and their practice of art into the reader's line of vision. Walter Pater writes, "It is the addition of strangeness to beauty that constitutes the romantic character in art, and the desire of beauty being a fixed element in every artistic organisation, it is the addition of curiosity to this desire of beauty, that constitutes the romantic temper" ("Postscript to *Appreciations*" 57). Pater identifies the Aesthetic with the romantic in a common pursuit of open-endedness, which is just what Schlegel saw as the essence of the novel: its processual character of *becoming*. The estranging element in these novels' portrayals of their characters transform their readers into critics of the social as it is incarnated in the aesthetic. This is what it means to add strangeness to beauty.

PART I

Critical Cognition: A Mirror of the Age

I.1. The Novel as Thinking Form

[Romantic poetry] can so lose itself in what it describes that that one might believe it exists only to characterize poetical individuals of all sorts; and yet there is still no form so fit for expressing the entire spirit of an author: so that many artists who started out to write only a novel ended up by providing us with a portrait of themselves. It alone can become, like the epic, a mirror the whole circumambient world, a mirror of the age. And it can also—more than any other form—hover at the midpoint between the portrayed and the portrayer, free of all real and ideal self-interest, on the wings of poetic reflection, and can raise that reflection again and again to a higher power, can multiply it in an endless succession of mirrors.

—Freidrich Schlegel, "*Athenaeum* Fragments"

Politically-minded critics from Georg Lukács to Jane Tompkins have mourned the loss, after Aestheticism, of the novel's historical mission to criticize society in the name of a holistic humanism. The development of modernism, considered as art's autonomy, was often narrated, especially in Marxist cultural historiography, as an almost Biblical Fall into absolute reification, the fragmentation of the social order, the absence of a knowable totality, the triumph of individualism, and the derogation of collective political agency. The *locus classicus* here remains Lukács's polemical essay, "The Ideology of Modernism," wherein the Marxist philosopher argues that modernist art abandoned objectivity in favor of a capricious particularity unequal to the task of describing reality as a coherent totality, or structure of human relations organized according to a single logic—in the case of modernity, the logic of the commodity form and the exploitation and reification this entails.[15] For Lukács, even at the pre-Marxist beginning of his career,

[15] For another particularly vivid Marxist example of the rise of modernism from the ashes of humanism, see Moretti, "The Long Good-Bye: *Ulysses* and the End of Liberal Capitalism," discussed more fully in chapter I.3 below. In brief, Moretti understands *Ulysses* to be a dystopic picture of the universal leveling effected by the commodity form and the consequent decomposition of the nineteenth-century liberal fantasy that

followed Schlegel in seeing the novel as the modern artistic form *par excellence*, the successor to the epic in its ability to project an extensive image of its social context. But the younger Lukács was an early devotee of the very argument that Theodor Adorno would later turn against him, namely, that the novel existed in conditions of such ideological mystification that its inherent inability to cohere as a total epic picture of humanity, society, and nature was its own way of testifying to the broken world it sought to represent.[16] After Lukács adopted Marxism-Leninism—after, that is, he concluded in *History and Class Consciousness* that the so-called "viewpoint of the proletariat," as inhabited by the Party, provided the privileged vantage from which to assess and thence to revolutionize the social order—he abandoned his earlier advocacy of resistant form and began to understand the realist novel of the nineteenth century, with its panoramic sweep across characters and classes, the only viable novelistic mode.

On Lukács's theory, aesthetic modernism is merely symptomatic: novels that abandon the sociological ambition to reflect social types and represent social conflict become akin to mass-produced objects that no longer bear the mark of the laborer's hand, which is to say that they no longer manifest the relations that brought them into being. While there is some justice in this argument, it nevertheless rests on untenable assumptions. For instance, Lukács claims that modernist writing practices are "carried *ad absurdum* where the stream of consciousness is that of an abnormal subject or of an idiot—consider the first part of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* or, a still more

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capitalism could sustain a viable culture. Also, Tompkins's influential "Sentimental Power," discussed below at II.1, criticizes the mid-twentieth century academic establishment's modernist bias against the situated political and spiritual power of such comprehensive social fictions as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

[16] See *The Theory of the Novel*, especially chapters 1-5.

extreme case, Beckett's *Molloy*" ("Ideology of Modernism" 194). My point in introducing this quotation is not that Lukács is insensitive or offensive, but that his late understanding of the novel, as a form that exists to condense and generalize images of society as it stands by encoding them in "typical" characters, practically ensures the premature definition of the normal subject. The novel of "types" can only lend stability to existing discourses. In contrast, the practice of the novelists I treat below is often to make precisely the most abnormal subjects their social exemplars, from the marginal intellectuals of Pater and Joyce to Woolf's hallucinating infantryman.[17]

Keeping within the Marxist tradition, we encounter more subtle elaborations of the theory that the novel represents society in Mikhail Bakhtin and Fredric Jameson. Bakhtin, indeed, makes an argument close to the one I will be mounting about the novel's mode of social cognition. In accord with Lukács that the novel is the epic's successor, Bakhtin instead extols the latter form over the former. The epic, he argues, is a settled form, patriarchal, nationalistic, and backward-looking, concerned with the establishment of origins and the ideal distanciation of its heroic epoch from the lives of common people. The novel, by contrast, destroys the heroic distance of the epic by harnessing the laughter of the everyday, which "began to investigate man freely and familiarly, to turn him inside out, expose the disparity between his surface and his center, between his potential and his reality" (35). A form that objectivizes the near-at-hand rather than idealizing the faraway, the novel makes social reality available in the very languages it quotes from society's lexicon. It could be said that Bakhtin sees "the novel" as occurring

[17] I reserve another crucial aspect of Lukács's theory, his definition of the historical novel, for chapter II.2 where it is relevant to my reading of Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*.

not between covers but rather wherever particular uses of language are made relative by juxtaposition so that their social sources and ideological codes come to the fore: "Language in the novel not only represents, but itself serves as the object of representation" (49). In consequence, "When the novel becomes the dominant genre, epistemology becomes the dominant discipline" (15). The novel, turning away from the ontological question of what we essentially *are*, raises instead the question of how we know what we know, and, implicitly, how we could know otherwise to *become* otherwise.

While Bakhtin, again, comes close to my own understanding of the novel as a uniquely self-questioning mode, I have two reservations. For one thing, Bakhtin's Schlegelian emphasis on the futurity of the novel, its ability to project a horizon in which "the surplus inhering in the human condition" could be fulfilled, presupposes without argument a progressive temporality at odds with his exaltation of cold-eyed objectivity elsewhere (37). The intense skepticism toward progressivism evinced by such figures as Wilde and Joyce, who, we should not forget, were citizens of a country brutally plundered under cover of an imperial ideology of progress, needs to be heard. On a more technical note, the writers Bakhtin prefers tend to objectivize language through what they represent in their texts as the spoken or written word—recall, for instance, the proliferation of theatrical monologues and manic letters and diaries in Bakhtin's beloved Dostoevsky. The use of focalization, covert narration, free indirect discourse, and/or stream of consciousness, in which the text's plurality of languages are sourced to the ineffable psyches of the characters instead of to their speech or writing, requires a

different line of approach and implies a different relation between humanity and language. In brief, free indirect discourse et al. suggests the linguistic constitution of the subject *in toto*. This concept in turn supports the novel's refusal of extrinsic social determination: if the subject is identical to his or her discourse, then the social is in no way extrinsic in the first place. Bakhtin's understanding of both language and the novel are in general too "externalized"—in speech or writing—to deal with this aspect of the Aestheticist revision of the form.

Fredric Jameson's theory of the novel as bearing, like all other modes and genres, a "political unconscious," is more abstract than Bakhtin's. It follows from Lukács's argument that the novel is a form of social self-understanding, but shares Bakhtin's attention to language. Rather than grasping language as concrete, intentional social expression, as Bakhtin does, Jameson sees language as an emanation of the social conflict that characterizes the regnant mode of production. As with Freudian dream-work, literary language at any given time resolves in fantasy the conflicts it organizes; this makes it ideological in something like the old sense of "false consciousness," since it turns compensatorily from concrete conflicts of interest, resolvable only through material battle on the actual social and political plane, to plenitudes of the imagination. For Jameson, then, every literary form is a way of reaching Utopia—or humanity's collective transcendence of necessity—without passing through the needful revolution that would bring this about by dispossessing the dispossessors. This is another variant of the Adornian option—the theory of form as political, irrespective of content—with the glum corollary that form is usually an ideological mystification of the real conflicts blocking

the road to Utopia.

The modernist novel, typified in *The Political Unconscious* by Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, is Jameson's prime example of how literary form both looks forward to Utopia and stalls on the road there, detained by imaginary solutions. Jameson sees Conrad's autonomous form, especially its richly textured and involuted sensory descriptions, as "a Utopian compensation for everything reification brings with it" (*Political Unconscious* 236). In other words, Jameson adumbrates a critique of modernity inherited from his predecessors, Lukács as well as Horkheimer and Adorno: the capitalist metropole is increasingly fragmented by processes such as imperialism (which relocates essential aspects of social reproduction to areas of the globe inaccessible for most to travel and thus to thought), rationalization (which arrogates all aspects of life to the regularizing processes of equivalence and exchange, from Taylorized factory workers to the market-aimed productions of mass culture) and consumerism (which encloses the consumer in a sphere of commodification whose source and exterior—labor, for instance, now taking place in the colonies—is no longer visible). To this loss of a world that can be thought as a totality of relations, modernist fiction responds by valorizing the pure perception of sense data and its representation in a recursively textured language. These socially-unmarked discourses offer a haven for aspects of life left behind by capitalist development, which privileges the rationalized and the calculable while disarticulating the modes of thought necessary to conceptualize the world beyond its reification.

That there is more than a grain of truth in this theory of aesthetic autonomy can be seen by perusing Wilde's critical writings, which are reasonably explicit about how

sensory delectations compensate for the social ugliness of the industrialized world. But Jameson's Utopia, like Bakhtin's futurity, assumes too much about a horizon of collective fulfillment. For all the materialist grounding of such concepts, they are ultimately abstractions and idealizations, to which the Aestheticist and post-Aestheticist writers (with the partial exception of Wilde) are indifferent, preferring to emphasize the present Utopia of that which now exists. Moreover, Jameson under-emphasizes the reader's role as interpreter of the sense-data recorded in Aestheticist writing, as well as the specificity of the perceptual viewpoints in the narrative. My argument, by contrast, will be that autonomous form does more than merely compensate for reification; it helps to correct it by making the reader the active agent of the textual totality by forcing him or her to join the sense-data of the text to the social data of the context.[18]

Before taking on theorists ostensibly more sympathetic to the autonomy of art, a last example from the Marxist tradition of a theory of the novel's conceptual power will suggest the difference in my own approach. Pierre Bourdieu, unlike the theorists previously considered, was an empirical sociologist of art rather than an art critic; consequently, he could be expected, as an analyst of art's production and reception, to deny outright that the interior of a literary work could be undetermined by what he would call the social field. Thus, his analysis of an autonomous artist—in this instance, Gustave Flaubert, an important source for the four writers I discuss—is worth commenting on. Unlike Jameson, Bourdieu lacks a theory of ideology per se; rather, his privileged concept is *habitus*, which may be defined as the material, somatic and practical

[18] As with Lukács , this is a preparatory explication to a fuller consideration of Jameson in chapters I.2 and II.3 below.

inscription of ideas upon individual bodies and behaviors. One possesses and enacts a habitus not only in one's outlook or expectations, but also in one's clothing, posture, and, as the term implies, habits.[19] In *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu seeks to turn his analysis upon the field of art itself. He begins his preface by defending the social sciences' approach to art against "the Heideggerian-Holderlinian[s]," who espouse the de-centering potential of literature in a climate of instrumental reason with which they see the social sciences as being complicit (xv). According to Bourdieu, the defense is misguided because it destroys what it wishes to preserve: the social field imposes form on the expressive impulse, but in so doing renders the impulse itself unrecognizable. Any particular work of literature's historical and transhistorical value inheres not in its form, but in this initial expressive impulse. The work itself is "an intentional sign haunted and regulated by something else, of which it is also a symptom" (xx).

Bourdieu chooses Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* to exemplify this theory of art as intention-plus-symptom (which, of course, recalls Jameson's Utopia-plus-ideology). Bourdieu calculatedly scants form: his analysis of Flaubert mostly takes place as content analysis, anatomizing the social allegory of the novel (Frederic Moreau is the legatee who does not wish to inherit, Deslauriers is the eager, resentful petit-bourgeois, etc.) before dwelling on the novel's structure or language. When he finally mentions it, he mediates his own reading through that of previous critics, and notes that the formal features they analyze stem from Flaubert's ambivalence toward the social field (an ambivalence he objectifies in his protagonist, who remains suspended between the worlds of art and of

[19] This is of course similar to the Althusserean definition of ideology, which will be discussed extensively in relation to James Joyce, who, I will argue, anticipates it.

business). For the objectification to work as such, Flaubert must distance his equivalence, which dictates his formal innovations (the use of hypotheticals, ambiguous citation, the variable imperfect and simple past tenses). Literary form *dissimulates*. If Flaubert did not mediate his feelings and thoughts through form, he would have to express his attitude directly, which would be destructive to art considered as the antithesis of the direct expression of attitudes. Bourdieu here pays literature a perhaps backhanded compliment:

> The sensitive translation [of the social into form] conceals the [social] structure, in the very form in which it presents it, and thanks to which it succeeds in producing a belief effect (more than a reality effect). And it is probably this which means that the literary work can sometimes say more, even about the social realm, than many writings with scientific pretensions (especially when, as here, the difficulties that must be overcome acceding to knowledge are not so much intellectual obstacles as the resistances of the will). But it says it only in a mode such that it does not truly say it. The unveiling finds its limit in the fact that the writer somehow keeps control of the return of the repressed. The putting-into-form operated by the writer functions like a generalized euphemism, and the reality de-realized and neutralized by literature that he offers allows him to satisfy a desire for knowledge ready to be satisfied by the sublimation offered him by literary alchemy. (32)

Bourdieu attends to how what he calls "the belief effect" is produced, but he also seems to believe in the text himself. It unveils the social better than most sociologists, he avers, but it only does so by employing a form which disavows the content as such. That is, in Flaubert, who famously desired to write a book about nothing, a book as blankly beautiful as the white wall of the Parthenon, form is supposed to be autonomous and content correspondingly irrelevant. The form thus re-conceals what the content reveals: the social field. It is the habitus of the social under cover of art. Literature (literature after Flaubert: autonomous, *l'art pour l'art*) mystifies; according to Bourdieu, form is

ideological, and opposed to ideology is the truth, attainable by scientific consciousness.

The Marxist tradition of novel-theory, then, tends to ground the autonomy of art in a form that refuses to acknowledge its ties to the social field. Theorists in this tradition accordingly tend to regard autonomous form as a kind of highly sophisticated lie, either a lie we tell others to hide our complicity with the social order (as in Lukács and Bourdieu) or a lie we tell ourselves to conceal how much the social order is making us suffer (as in Jameson). Only Bakhtin allows us to conceive of autonomous form per se as conducive to social critique, rather than to social self-justification, because he sees it as the bearer of relative discourses accessible as such, without authorial flagging, to the critical reader. There is, however, another way of narrating the story of how the novel becomes autonomous. This second variant of novel-theory, which can be called post-structuralist, is a tale of emancipation in which the novel escapes its capture by ordered discourses that suppress its disruptive energies. Here autonomous form is the truth—the truth of language's alienness, of desire's energies—while social form, with all its claims of access to the real world, is the falsehood.

In this narrative—perhaps most stunningly theorized in Roland Barthes's influential 1972 essay *S/Z*—the transition from "classical realism" to modernism in fiction marks a shift from readable (*lisible*) to writeable (*scriptible*) prose.[20] Readable texts obscure their own ideological designs on the reader by attempting to present a

[20] Richard Miller's translation of *S/Z*, which I otherwise employ here, is somewhat misleading when it renders *lisible* and *scriptible* as "readerly" and "writerly." The translation implies that readerly prose is appealing to readers and writerly prose appealing to writers, whereas Barthes instead claims that even writers remain readers, i.e., bound to ideology, when writing is only readable. Writeable writing, on the other hand, can be written by anyone—including, and especially, readers. For this reason, Barthes devotes almost the entirety of *S/Z* to a demonstration that an ostensibly classical realist text like Balzac's *Sarrassine*, designed to be readable, is instead susceptible to being re-written. This theory is an example of Barthes's famous declaration that the death of the author is the birth of the reader—as a writer.

seamless representation of the way things "really" are, in effect naturalizing the socially-constructed, to use the formulation that has been so ubiquitous in criticism. Writeable texts, on the other hand, make no attempt to seal their own fissures and contradictions, nor do they create the kinds of sense-making hierarchies that classic realist texts rely on to generate the illusion of their own referential power. An open network of signifiers, writeable prose empowers readers to forego the illusion of mimesis and instead join the text in remaking the world anew in writing. This theory, the exact inverse of Lukács's critique that modernist prose abandons the real, makes a virtue of what Lukács mourned: the loss of objectivity as an ideal in imaginative writing.

Barthes's critique of realism was developed by Leo Bersani from a psychological perspective and by Paul de Man from a linguistic perspective, before being adapted to a posture of radical political skepticism by Nancy Armstrong, D. A. Miller, and others. For Bersani, the flaw of realism is its promotion of the ideology of the stable self, a unified substance that is not disrupted by desire (glossed as "an area of human projection going beyond the limits of a centered, socially defined, time-bound self, and also beyond the recognized resources of language and confines of literary form"): "Desire is a threat to the form of realistic fiction. Desire can subvert social order; it can also disrupt novelistic order. The nineteenth-century novel is haunted by the possibility of these subversive moments, and it suppresses them with a brutality both shocking and eminently logical" (ix, 66). Bersani accuses nineteenth-century novelists, such as Austen, Balzac, and Hawthorne, of containing the self-dissolving force of desire by endorsing chastity and an ethics of inaction, or what he calls "stillness," while embedding the self in a continuous,

chronological narrative that stabilizes its coherence. Bersani finds an alternate tradition of literature and art that allows desire to emerge in the poetics of Rimbaud, the fiction of Emily Brontë, and theater of Artaud and Robert Wilson. It is important to note that Bersani's critique of realism is not specifically predicated on its complicity with capitalism or the bourgeoisie; he finds the fear of desire also in French neo-classicism and understands desire's suppression to underlie many existing political systems, even those that seem committed to opposing worldviews: "Indeed, the monotonously similar fates, in modern history, of political systems which apparently reflect the most diverse ideologies may be due to a certain politics of the self common to all these ideologies" (57). Political systems from seventeenth-century absolutism to twentieth-century capitalism deploy, in art, a fiction of the coherent self to regulate their subjects' potentially subversive desire.

For Paul de Man, a belief in language's referential capacity, upon which realism among other literary modes depends, amounts to what he calls in a related context "ontological bad faith" ("Rhetoric of Temporality" 211). De Man challenges the critical tradition of privileging the symbolic image in the lyric poem and the realist description in the novel. Both the symbolic image and the realist description suggest an alignment or fit between subject/object and signifier/referent, when in fact, according to de Man, there is an inevitable slippage between the terms that prevents the attainment of unity. Both poems and novels, de Man argues in his influential essay "The Rhetoric of Temporality," are more precisely regarded as producing not symbols but allegories, and not realism but irony. Received wisdom says that Romantic writers privileged the symbol because,

unlike the allegory which gestured to one extra-material meaning for the material sign, the symbol made immanent the spiritual and eternal in and through the temporal. However, through a reading of the medieval allegorical tropes used by such modern proto-Romantic and Romantic writers as Defoe, Rousseau and Wordsworth, de Man shows that these writers rediscover a mode of allegory that precisely reveals the inability of the subject to escape its own temporality and identify with nature. Precisely because its referential function is multiply determined, the allegorical trope is always a repetition of a prior discourse, and repetition is always for de Man repetition with a difference. Allegory emphasizes the limitation and materiality of language itself rather than the spiritual truth it ostensibly names; it is the trope that demystifies the non-identity of the subject with the object and indeed with itself.

De Man goes on to connect allegory with irony, two modes which are similar in that each involves consciousness's reflection upon its own infinite distance from its object, even if that object is itself: "In both cases, the sign points to something that differs from its literal meaning and has for its function the thematization of difference" (209). Hence, in Schlegel's phrase, irony is "permanent parabasis," or, etymologically, permanently digressing, perpetually moving aside from one's subject ("subject" in all senses) (228). This irony is at the heart of the novel as a literary form: "This problem [of the distinction between fact and fiction] is familiar to students of point of view in a fictional narrative, in the distinction they have learned to make between the persona of the author and the persona of the fictional narrator. The moment when this difference is asserted is the precisely the moment when the author does not return to the world," which

is to say that the enabling characteristic of fictional rhetoric—the separation of the utterance from the "true" experience or beliefs of the utterer—is inherently ironic and disturbing to the referential function of language itself (219). De Man does not privilege modernist fiction or poetry, preferring to see allegory and irony at work in authors he believes have been mistakenly arrogated to the Romantic and realist traditions, but his theory of the inevitable failure of reference has a formalist bias that would seem to favor texts, such as those of Wilde or Joyce, that foreground their own organization. As I will show by juxtaposing Wilde and de Man, however, the cleavage of subject/object and signifier/referent may be destructive of any conception of narrative at all, as well as ethical and political norms.

With D. A. Miller's influential book, *The Novel and the Police*, we begin to approach what I take to be the current consensus in novel-theory, which is at bottom a synthesis of the Marxist distrust of autonomous form and the post-structuralist hostility to realism. For Miller, the novel is not properly an artistic form at all, but rather a mode of social discipline that tailors subjects to society. Indeed, Miller is so interested in the disciplinary structures of modern society at large that he feels compelled in his preface to offer an *apologia* for concerning himself narrowly with aesthetic objects at all:

> The use of a fictional representation might seem to trivialize a disciplinary function that would be better illustrated in discourses whose practical orientation is immediately consequential…The "death of the novel" (or of that [Victorian] novel, at any rate) has really meant the explosion everywhere of the novelistic, no longer bound in three-deckers, but freely scattered across a far greater range of cultural experience. To speak of the relation of the Victorian novel to the age of which it was, *faute de mieux*, the mass culture, is thus to recognize a central episode in the genealogy of our present. (ix, x)

The novel, on this account, is not the name for a coherent tradition of aesthetic production requiring a understanding of its intrinsic characteristics as developed through time by its practitioners, but simply another name for ideology (in the Althusserean sense of the solicitation of subjects to enact and reproduce the status quo through material practices). As in Bakhtin, the novel is a force unbounded by books or by the category of the aesthetic, but, unlike in Bakhtin, this force is not emancipatory. Rather, all its socially-productive powers go to creating obedient subjects of the state/capital apparatus. Novels have agency for Miller, but little to no *critical* agency. Their relation to their culture is one of the creation and enforcement of its oppressive norms. The urgency of criticizing novels is for Miller merely the convenient or heuristic one of having a locus for those norms so that we may contest them—if, that is, we are Althusserean "bad subjects," in which case we will not be taken in by either the realist fiction of mimesis or the modernist fiction of autonomous form.

Miller's celebrated reading of Dickens's *Bleak House* provides more evidence for how his theory of the novel works and why it runs counter to the positive or emancipatory moments of both Marxist and post-structuralist novel-theory while retaining their corrosive skepticism toward autonomy and mimesis. In brief, Miller views Dickens's novel as a productively contradictory text that mobilizes forces of social order ("the police," both literally and figuratively) to combat the disorder it more or less dishonestly attributes to the injustice of the law in its present state. To perform this sleight of hand, Miller argues, the novel first deceptively appeals to the cloistered realm of the domestic and the aesthetic: "Since the novel counts among the conditions for [its]

consumption the consumer's leisured withdrawal to the private, domestic sphere, then every novel-reading subject is constituted—willy-nilly, and almost before he has read a word—within the categories of the individual, the inward, the domestic" (82). In other words, the novel poses as an aesthetic artifact of private life, as a force not fully regulated by the dominant culture because not one of its "official" organs.[21] But this posture proves, on Miller's account, to be highly misleading:

> What the form really secures is a close *imbrication* of individual and social, domestic and institutional, private and public, leisure and work. A drill in the rhythms of bourgeois industrial culture, the novel generates a nostalgic desire to get home (where the novel can be resumed) in the same degree as it inures its readers to the necessity of periodically renouncing home (for the world where the novel finds its justification and its truth). (83, original emphasis)

Thus, the novel is an emanation into the private sphere of institutional culture—a police emissary in the drawing room and, perforce, in the psyche. This destroys at base both the realist and the modernist positions: there is no autonomous space for the novel to withdraw to, as the modernists imagine, nor is the novel a trustworthy, disinterested guide to social truth, as the realists argue. The menacing phrase "a drill in the rhythms" tells us that the novel is essentially disciplinary, an agent of the state, and of the state's coercive arm at that. A critic who wishes to be radical, who wishes to be a "bad subject," will of necessity be the enemy of the novel. This is, needless to say, a complete reversal of the hopeful position associated with Lukács's and Bakhtin's appraisal of realist representation and Barthes's and Bersani's hopes for modernist form.

To come nearer the present, Nancy Armstrong has lately expanded both Miller's

[21] Of the too-little acknowledged slippage between "domestic" and "artistic" autonomy that underwrites the continuity of nineteenth-century realism with twentieth-century modernism and that is moreover mediated by *fin-de-siècle* Aestheticism, I will have far more to say in chapters I.2 and II.2.

thesis and her own earlier one in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (to be discussed in detail in chapter II.1) to offer a conspective account of Anglophone fiction from the eighteenth century to the present. In *How Novels Think*, she writes, "the history of the novel and the history of the modern subject are, quite literally, one and the same" (3). Armstrong takes as her starting point the Althusserean thesis that the subject is constituted through language, and that "bad subjects" are those that contest the discourses that would subjectivize them to a particular social order. In Armstrong's book, the novel begins in the eighteenth century as an account of such bad subjects—Defoe's adventuresome heroes and heroines are her main example—before becoming far more disciplinary as the nineteenth century wore on, creating in its protagonists and, implicitly, in its readers well-behaved citizens of the liberal state. Armstrong acerbically summarizes the issue with Victorian examples:

> As it slowly but surely exiles or kills off those characters who dare to exist in alternative living arrangements, *Jane Eyre* universalizes a radically restricted notion of kinship based on the married couple and their biological offspring. In this respect, the novel offers a prolepsis of the formal development of nineteenth-century British fiction itself. After Austen, the exemplary protagonist rarely grows up to become a member of civil society. The Dickensian hero, for example, enters a household that displaces any semblance of the complex and fraught social world he has successfully negotiated. At this point, the limits that the novel has set on his happiness miraculously vanish, along with the fact that such happiness is an exception to the social rule. It is by means of this move, when repeated countless times over, that one class established its own ethnic practices as the national norm and ensured their reproduction in future generations. (144)

The British novel, then, becomes pro-family, pro-bourgeois, and pro-nation as the class that produced it goes from being an upstart underdog in the manner of plucky Moll Flanders to a conformist parvenu like priggish Jane Eyre. Similarly to Miller, Armstrong

exposes the impostures of realism while also denouncing modernism's assumption that the text can be free of extrinsic social constraint. The novel, again, *is* the police.

Armstrong does suggest a way out of this impasse, but it is not the one advocated by Barthes, Bersani, and de Man, namely, the modernist deployment of self-conscious literary form to undermine the ideological function of literature. Instead, Armstrong upholds the Gothic as a bearer of what Bersani called "desire," or all those forms of life and modes of affect excluded from the normative realm of realism: "Where such a novel as *Jane Eyre* allowed the family to eclipse civil society as the symbolic means of resolving social contradictions, *Dracula* turns the tables and allows a radically inclusive community to render the family obsolete, along with the liberal individual" (150). Contra Barthes et al., it is the radically heterogeneous content of the Gothic genre, rather than the self-critical form of Aestheticism or modernism, that allow desire to speak unconstrained by the disciplinary and normalizing force of realism. On this account, modernism, with its journey ever further into the psyche, can only replicate the ideology of realism, while the Gothic destroys realism's fantasy of the autonomous individual.[22] The realist and modernist novels are again domestic drill-sergeants, agents of various policing forces, and we are better off siding with their villainous madwomen and vampires and monsters in the name of countering the norms the novel upholds.

In short, Miller, Armstrong, and their peers develop the post-structuralist critique of realism into a devastating criticism of the novel *tout court*, including the fictions of modernism, which rely, as much as does realism, on the notion of aesthetic autonomy

[22] As my analysis of Wilde will prove, I wholly agree with Armstrong on the heretofore-neglected importance of the late-Victorian Gothic to the history of the novel, but in my view it is the mediator of realism's transition to modernism rather than the opposite of these modes.

from the public sphere. The novel is less a thinking form, according to this way of seeing things, than a curtailment of thinking. But why focus on these theories and not others? It is not that such conceptions as Armstrong's and Miller's dominate novel-*criticism* at large; in fact, it might even be the case that the majority of individual studies of particular novels today are basically unrelated to these exemplary exercises in the hermeneutics of suspicion. But I would argue that they have tremendous visibility in novel-*theory*.

Consider the landmark anthology *The Novel*, released in 2006 to wide acclaim in the popular press as well as in scholarly journals for its encyclopedic ambitions. *The Novel*'s contents are undeniably diverse in their theoretical and ideological approaches, as is its very editorial board (which includes, for instance, the Nobel laureate Mario Vargas Llosa, a neoconservative humanist to whom Marxist and post-structural theory would be anathema). Nevertheless, *The Novel* is presided over by Franco Moretti, the current maven of novel-studies. Moretti is a scholar whose view of fiction, and of art at large, is, if anything, far darker than that of Armstrong or Miller. He has made a career of countering the always-tempting notion that art is a disruptive and insurgent force, asking instead if works of art resign, pacify, and misdirect our energies, rendering us inert in the face of brutal reality. Nowhere is this more powerfully stated than in his early essay, "The Soul and the Harpy": "Literature is the 'middle term' par excellence, and its 'educational', 'realistic' function consists precisely in training us without our being aware of it for an unending task of mediation and conciliation" (40). Again we find literature—and not just the novel—charged with an essential conservatism. For Moretti, art is the answer to the question that has perennially bedeviled radical politics: why do most people

most of the time *not revolt*, even or especially those most victimized by whatever system is currently in power? Moretti answers that the aesthetic reconciles us to "reality"—really the façade of the powers that be—by effecting a closure that models the *modus vivendi* on which power thrives. The many possible rejoinders to Moretti, all to the effect that literature stages the rebellion of what power can never systematize, come quickly to mind—one can list them metonymically: Adorno, Bakhtin, Cixous, Derrida, and on down the alphabet to Žižek, and this is without mentioning the vicissitudes of Romanticism from Blake to Breton—but let us at least grant Moretti the correlation he seeks to explain: when literature thrives, most people do not revolt, and when people do revolt, literature and sometimes its creators are often enough put to the torch, as the history of the twentieth century amply attests.

Moretti accuses modernism in particular of quiescence, entrancing us with a "spell of indecision," a skepticism of narrative and history, to which conceptual pairing mass literature, he suggests, might be a better guide:

> Novels, of course, can stop stories but not history, and the forms with which we picture historical movement to ourselves are crucial for the fashioning of our identity. Once avant-garde literature abandoned plot, the void was inevitably filled by a parallel system—mass literature—which, just as inevitably, has acquired an ever increasing relevance. The appeal of mass literature is that 'it tells stories', and we all need stories: if instead of *Buddenbrooks* we get *The Carpetbaggers*, then Harold Robbins it is. ("Spell of Indecision" 32-3)

In other words, the most prominent name in novel-studies today remains committed to a congeries of ideas beginning with the late work of Lukács and coming to fruition in the post-Barthes criticism of the last three decades. This matrix of ideas essentially holds that the novel's primary mission is to narrate society's self-conception. Whereas for

Lukács, this narration was one of progress, for the later critics it was rather one of seductive dissimulation: Moretti's titular image of the (male) soul ensorcelled and carried away by the (female) harpy encapsulates his and Armstrong's and Miller's approach to the seductions of aesthetic form.[23] As for the modernist novel, on the terms of present theory, it can only be either what Lukács said it was—a fall from progressive grace—or what the later critics imply it is—the same old ideological state apparatus called realism dressed in a rather elaborate disguise.

The wager of this study is that such novel-theory has, in my view, mistaken its own genealogy. I particularly want to engage the skeptical tradition of novel-theory because I hope to substantiate the claim that its own posture of suspicion toward subjectivity is first articulated in and by the novel of Aestheticism, which will become the modernist novel proper. How, after all, can critics so astutely observe the operations of ideology if they do not claim some distance from its demands, just as Pater and Wilde did when they declared art autonomous from social claims? My argument about the Aestheticist novel as thinking form can be summarized as follows: by declaring its distance from apparatuses of state, church, and market, the novel under Aestheticism claims for itself a privileged vantage from which to produce critical knowledge about these institutions using its own procedures rather than relying tautologically on those of the hegemonic forces it contests. Furthermore, in developing those procedures, it reflects critically upon them too, becoming a recursive form of criticism that examines its own

[23] The cultural and psychological origins of Moretti's extraordinarily gendered image—the rational male mind in thrall to deceptive female wiles—are comprehensively theorized by Joyce in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, as I will amply demonstrate in chapter I.3 below. Moretti's current stance against close reading may stem from a resistance to a text's potential to closely read its reader, as I propose that Joyce might read Moretti.

entanglement in the relations it criticizes. Because of this reflexivity, autonomous literature may be complicit with ideology but can never be fully identical to it. In short, the modern novel looks more like the kinds of bold, agential theory written by critics such as Miller and Armstrong than one would guess from reading their works.

In pursuing this theme—it could be called "The Birth of Critical Theory from the Spirit of Aestheticism"—I will first turn to Oscar Wilde. While not primarily known as a novelist, Wilde provides a key innovation in the novel form with *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. This narrative deploys the Gothic trope of the enchanted portrait to immobilize what would, in traditional hands, have been the eponymous hero's *Bildungsroman*. By so arresting the progressive temporality of the *Bildungsroman*, Wilde enables the novel to investigate the subjectivity of its protagonist in a synchronic, topographic way, thus inviting the reader to similarly examine his or her own subjective constitution. Along the way, I will closely read some of Wilde's own powerful theories, putting them in dialogue with thinkers from Hegel to Paul de Man, to show that the ostensibly cheerful Aesthete was in fact anxious about his work's abandonment of the novel's traditional commitment to historical development. From Wilde I move on to Joyce, whose *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* radicalizes *Dorian Gray*'s abandonment of progressive temporality by presenting a subject—who is also an authorial surrogate—literally constituted by the textual discourses of his milieu. The text can thus not be read unless the reader becomes a critic of the social text, which shifts the burden of criticism from the novelist to the reader. I will in connection with my reading of Joyce's novel also closely read a number of Joycean critics in the interests of finding empirical evidence for how the novel solicits

a meta-textual response from its readers. These chapters should show that the autonomous novel, far from abandoning the social, deepens realism's critical perspective on the social order. Similarly, the modern novel shows itself to be not a policeman hailing the subject into a docile state of being, but rather a fellow citizen inviting the reader to join in a conversation about the state of society with an eye toward ameliorating it. To recur to my epigraph from Schlegel, the modern novel provides a series of mirrors for both author and reader, implicating each in turn, never letting us take our eye off the subject of our subjection.

I.2. Almost Modern Romance: Oscar Wilde's Aestheticist Antinomies

> *"I am afraid you don't quite see the moral of the story," remarked the Linnet.*
> *"The what?" screamed the Water-rat.*
> *"The moral."*
> *"Do you mean to say that the story has a moral?"*
> *"Certainly," said the Linnet.*
>
> —Wilde, "The Devoted Friend"

> *...if he could not answer his own problems, he could at least put problems forth, and what more should an artist do?*
>
> —Wilde, "The Critic as Artist"

I begin, in defiance of chronology, with Oscar Wilde because his works—both of criticism and of fiction—eloquently and thoroughly pose the questions that the other novelists in this study sought to answer. In this, Wilde remains the most famously, fascinatingly ambiguous of literary icons: "Saint Oscar, the Irish outsider, the queer martyr, the spiritual Oscar, the subversive Oscar; Oscar the canonical, Oscar the imposter, the one and only original, the pasticheur, plagiarist, or postmodernist"—so Lawrence Danson catalogues the mounting contradictions evident in Wilde's life and work (1). The particular Wildean contradiction that concerns this chapter is between the aesthetic—which I follow Walter Pater in defining as the sensible and perceptible dimension of experience—and its beyond, whether ethical, political, or metaphysical. This division will be called by many names throughout the chapter as it appears in different guises: fact/truth, appearance/essence, sign/referent, stasis/historicity, content/form, art/meaning. In terms of Wilde's oeuvre and its significance for the Aestheticist genealogy of the modernist novel, the problem manifests itself this way: Wilde's criticism, largely through a seductive progressive-historicist rhetoric, effects the recuperation of the Aesthetic by ethics and politics by arguing that sensible and perceptible appearances incarnate essential truths for the critical intellect to apprehend;

but Wilde's 1891 novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, does *not* tell this story but instead narrates, via a plot heavy with Gothic mystique, a seemingly irrecoverable and pragmatically disastrous cleavage between art and truth. Since progressive historicism is the critical rhetoric of the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman* as of Wilde's Aestheticist criticism, it should come as a surprise that his Aestheticist *Bildungsroman* abandons such a strategy. Knowing what Wilde puts in place of teleological temporality will allow us to grasp his influence on subsequent writers' conduct of criticism in their fiction. It will also provide an answer to the question of why perhaps the most famous and influential Aestheticist *Bildungsroman* should rely so heavily on Gothic fantasy when neither its predecessors (such as *Marius the Epicurean*) nor its successors (e.g., *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*) deploy such tropes.

The Picture of Dorian Gray famously weaves another of its precursors into its fictional texture: Joris-Karl Huysmans's *À Rebours* of 1884.[24] Huysmans's novel, a founding text of British and French Aestheticism, conforms to the structure of no established novelistic genre. Like the naturalist novels of its immediate literary milieu, it is a relatively static character study rather than a straightforward or even an ironic *Bildungsroman*; with Zola and Maupassant, Huysmans follows the downward spiral of a character doomed by determinations of heredity and circumstance. But *À Rebours* also anticipates the modernist novel in its almost exclusive concern with the movement of consciousness, as well as in its proto-Joycean attempt to include all the arts within its

[24] See Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* 252-3 and 311 for the importance of Huysmans's book to Wilde. Raby notes that in the original *Lippincott's* typescript the poisonous book was called "'*Le Secret de Raoul* par Catulle Sarrazin' and it would seem that Wilde at one stage planned to create an imaginary book" (75). But, Raby goes on to say, Wilde settled on using an unnamed book bearing unmistakable resemblance to Huysmans's.

cyclopedic ambit. Alongside Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, it may be considered a hinge text between Late Victorian styles of Aestheticism, Naturalism and Decadence and modernism proper.

À Rebours, no doubt inadvertently, supplies a kind of allegorical pre-history of the novel useful for placing *Dorian Gray* in context. Huysmans narrates a phase in the life of Duc Jean des Esseintes, the gaunt, feminized and neurasthenic terminus of an aristocratic line that began with medieval knights but has, by the logic of "degeneration," decayed into a frail and inbred androgyny.[25] Indeed, the only family member that des Esseintes resembles, according to the novel's opening survey of the family portrait gallery, is "the mignon of Princes," a distant ancestor with an "ambiguous look of the eyes, at once languid and energetic in expression" (2). In beginning with this genealogy, Huysmans charts the descent and consequent character not only of his protagonist, but also of the kind of novel he helps to inaugurate. With its origins in the knightly tales of quest romance, the European novel first demystifies romance in *Don Quixote*, then abandons it altogether in the Enlightenment with the invention and, later, hegemony of domestic realist fiction, which sought to extend the tender feelings of the inner life into a cold market society.[26] While the novel overturns romance by introducing objectivity—

[25] "Degeneration" is Max Nordau's term for the physiological and cultural decline of European civilization from the "healthy" heights of symmetry, order, balance, and progress to the effeminacy and decadence of post-Baudelaire art and artists. Like Huysmans, Nordau follows the racialist science of his time—*Degeneration*'s dedicatee is Cesare Lombroso—in indexing moral decline by physical appearance.

[26] The concept that became a commonplace in the study of lyric poetry with Harold Bloom and his feminist revisers could apply with equal accuracy to the novel: *the internalization of quest romance*. On this theory, the outward journey of the courtly lover become the poet's journey through his own subjectivity in quest of truth, love, or freedom; a feminist counter-tradition calls this teleology into question while taking it as a given of masculinist poetics. For a set of very different scholarly approaches that nevertheless testify to the novel's development out of ancient and medieval romance, see Frye chapter 2, Deleuze and Guattari 173-174, Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* chapter 4, and Doody *passim*.

Quixote's giants are objectively windmills—it also emphasizes the force of subjectivity to intervene in reality—Quixote nevertheless charges the windmills, with serious consequences. The novel testifies to the importance of the inner world even as it embeds it in real externalities, and it tends to gender the division between subject and object. A mode as much the creation of men (Richardson, Rousseau, Dickens) as of women (Austen, the Brontës, Eliot), the domestic represents that phase of the novel's history in which, to quote Huysmans's account of the des Esseintes' degeneration, "the progressive effemination of the men had gone on continuously from bad to worse" (1).

Elaine Showalter's account of *fin-de-siècle* literary history clarifies the consequences of this effemination. She argues that the death of George Eliot in 1880 marked a cultural change in the form of the novel. Many male novelists, such as Wells, Stevenson, Kipling, Stoker, Doyle, and Conrad, wished to throw off the dead hand of female-identified domestic realism. Accordingly, they resurrected the genre of quest romance in order to appeal to new literate publics and to a political atmosphere colored by the imperialist cult of masculinity—hence, the emergence of popular genres, such as the imperial romance, science fiction, and detective fiction.[27] The domestic sensibility that they wished to overthrow, argues Nancy Armstrong, is a literary mode that creates for its characters an inner life cognate to the home's hearth, a female-dominated sphere of private feeling and experience from which to survey, contest, efface and redeem the public world where men openly jostle for power.[28]

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[27] See Showalter chapter 5.

[28] Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* chapter 4 discusses domestic realism as dissimulated politics in the English novel. Chapter 3 of Armstrong's later account, *How Novels Think*, offers a study of romantic

The context that Showalter and Armstrong provide help to revise our standard account of the other dominant literary movement of the late nineteenth century, Aestheticism. The Aesthetes separated the public sphere from culture, which Pater defined as a commitment to sensation, perception, and the distinction to be won from their connoisseurship. Wilde's notorious declaration is paradigmatic: "All art is quite useless" (*Complete Works* 17).[29] Such amoralism at first appears to flout the ethical norms to which mainstream Victorian novelists, even ones as far apart as Dickens and Eliot, would have adhered. Seen from a different angle, however, Wilde's declaration of artistic freedom may represent an extension, rather than an overcoming, of the domestic/sentimental project. Pater, Wilde, and other Aestheticist writers of the *fin de siècle* resist the drift back to quest romance and its tendency toward fables of unfettered masculinity.[30] The novel of Aestheticism creates an inner world of sensation and perception in opposition to the social, but not out of a solely anti-social tendency. The Aestheticization of interiority, and its consequent de-emphasis of useful action, defies the re-masculinization of letters that came at the end of the nineteenth century. As Regenia

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individualism as it gives way to social concord and conformism in the transition from eighteenth- to nineteenth-century novels.

[29] Unless otherwise indicated, all citations from Wilde come from the *Complete Works*. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has a complicated textual history: it appeared first as an 1890 novella serialized in *Lippincott's* magazine, before appearing as a novel in 1891. A manuscript and a typescript are both extant, and the latter has recently been published by Harvard University Press (2010). I will quote for the most part from the 1891 novel version, but I will discuss both the novella and the revised typescript below for evidence of Wilde's changing sense of his project.

[30] See Showalter chapter 4, though, for an account of New Women's writing as a female response to George Eliot's domestic wake. New Woman novelists had more in common with the naturalists than with either the Aesthetes or the male romancers in their drive to expose gender injustice and plead for greater equality. One New Woman response to the ideals of Aestheticism, taking the form of a historical dramatic monologue, can be found in Amy Levy's poem "Xantippe." The speaker, Socrates's much-maligned wife, refuses the domestic-sentimental tears of her servant women, while excoriating her husband and his Hellenic circle of idealist philosophers for their misogyny. To balance the sexism of Aestheticism, however, we should not neglect the unmistakable homophobia in Levy's satire on the Greek philosopher's youthful cohort of male admirers.

Gagnier argues, Aestheticism responds to a crisis in Victorian masculinity, wherein the Aesthetic dandy "showed the [respectable] gentleman what he had sacrificed: eccentricity, beauty, camaraderie, a natural aristocracy" (98). By destabilizing the masculine role expected of a Victorian gentleman, the Aesthetes preserve in another form values that had earlier rested with the authors of domestic fiction.

On the other hand, Wilde's Aestheticism has a romance dimension of its own. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* refuses the realism of the domestic novel and instead promotes its subjectivism through the Gothic device of Dorian Gray's magical portrait, which prevents Dorian himself from developing, like the well-rounded heroes and heroines of the nineteenth-century novel, who change as they grow. Other Aestheticist writers, such as Huysmans and Pater, emphasize subjectivity without mediating it through the Gothic. Yet Wilde's romance remains the most well-known and popular of Aestheticist novels, and the one likeliest to be considered alongside its relatively non-romantic successors by Joyce or Woolf. Wilde understood that this option was available to him, as his narrator's description of Huysmans's unnamed book attests in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

> It was a novel without a plot and with only one character, being, indeed, simply a psychological study of a certain young Parisian who spent his life trying to realize in the nineteenth century all the passions and modes of thought that belonged to every century except his own, and to sum up, as it were, in himself the various moods through which the world-spirit had ever passed, loving for their mere artificiality those renunciations that men have unwisely called virtue, as much as those natural rebellions that wise men still call sin. The style in which it was written was that curious jewelled style, vivid and obscure at once, full of argot and of archaisms, of technical expressions and of elaborate paraphrases, that characterizes the work of some of the finest artists of the French school of Symbolistes. There were in it metaphors as monstrous as orchids and as subtle in

> colour. The life of the senses was described in the terms of mystical philosophy. One hardly knew at times whether one was reading the spiritual ecstasies of some mediaeval saint or the morbid confessions of a modern sinner. It was a poisonous book. (96)

Wilde's description of Huysmans's style doubles perfectly as a characterization of his own: both authors use a lyrical, metaphor-rich, anti-mimetic prose that seems to evoke a self-sufficient dreamworld rather than the gritty realities emphasized by the realists and naturalists. This still leaves the question of why Wilde uses Huysmans's (or Pater's) style but not their simply psychological content—why, that is, he succeeds in innovating modernist subjectivity through the use of Gothic fantasy. Terry Castle, in her study of how both the fantastical as a distinct literary mode *and* modern psychoanalysis develop in reaction to modernity, provides a potent hint: "The problem with displacing the supernatural 'back' into the realm of psychology...is that it remains precisely that: only a displacement. The unearthliness, the charisma, the devastating *noumenon* of the supernatural is conserved. One cannot speak in the end, it seems to me, of a 'decline in magic' in post-Enlightenment Western culture, only perhaps its relocation within the new empire of subjectivity itself" (qtd. in Nelson vi).[31] The increasing exploration of psychic interiority, which reaches its simultaneous apogee in psychoanalysis and the modernist novel, is in other words a quest for what escapes the schematics of modern culture's investment in the regular, the observable, and the iterable. Thus, the domestic novel, its near-relation the realist *Bildungsroman,* and its seeming challengers—the Gothic romance, Aestheticist subjectivist fiction, and modernist stream-of-consciousness

[31] I have been unable to locate the original source of Castle's quotation; Nelson cites no specific text to go with her attribution (perhaps it was an item of personal correspondence). In any case, this passage serves as an apt digest of Castle's important book *The Female Thermometer: 18th-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny*.

fiction—all have a common investment in an aesthetic of inwardness. By the end of this chapter, the continuity among these modes will become clear as it is established in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Before arriving there, however, it is necessary to explore Wilde's sense of what Aestheticism means, for his arguments on the topic in his criticism gives little hint that he seeks any common ground with either domestic realism or its Gothic adversary. For one thing, any attempt to mount an argument for the continuity of domestic and Aestheticist fiction will meet considerable resistance around the related questions of gender and ethics. Domestic fiction promoted values gendered female from a cultural standpoint understood as female, whereas Aestheticist fiction often seems not to restrict the feminine to a separate sphere of culture, but instead to banish it from the cultural realm altogether, naturalizing it as biological facticity with all of the baleful suggestions of decay and mortality that biological cycles necessarily entail. But the feminine, in the novels of Dickens and Stowe or the poems of Barrett Browning, stood for the ethical itself: domestic values, emanating into the public sphere from the hearth and signified through the tears of social suffering's witnesses, ameliorate the oppressive conditions of industrial capitalism, urban poverty, and even chattel slavery. Ejecting the feminine from the sphere of culture to that of nature, male Aesthetes forego their society's extant ethical lexicon.

Rita Felski, for one, construes *Dorian Gray*, and its chief antecedent, *À Rebours*, as irredeemably misogynist. Responding to arguments similar to Regenia Gagnier's, namely that Wilde's refusal of masculinity fiction amounts to a solidarity with women

against patriarchal strictures, Felski concludes that "to assume male identification with the feminine is *necessarily* subversive of patriarchal privilege may be to assume too much" (93). One must grant Felski's point: there is certainly no mistaking Huysmans for a feminist, given his novel's reliance on the trope of the *vagina dentata*, female nature's devouring maw, which always defeats the cultural aspirations of man.[32] Wilde's case, I would argue, however, is a more complex one, and it illuminates the continuities, as well as the discontinuities, that obtain from the sentimental to the Aesthetic novel.

Take the example of Dorian Gray's fiancée, the actress Sybil Vane, who eventually commits suicide after being spurned by Dorian. For Felski, Sybil's role is simply to demonstrate that (female) nature is inferior to (male) art: "Dorian Gray and Henry Wotton's textualization of the actress Sybil Vane takes the form of reducing her to a collection of dramatic performances, as series of roles acknowledged to be more real than the performer herself" (110). In other words, Sybil, the woman willing to give up her love for Dorian, should matter more to us than Sybil, the artist extinguishing her own personality in the performance of her role. Felski here reproduces the logic subtending the Protestant middle-class practices that Wilde means to subvert, and in preferring Sybil

[32] Huysmans uses the misogynist trope to ironize and lampoon the supposed aesthetic autonomy of Des Esseintes. The affective culmination of the novel's demonstration that Des Esseintes enjoys a severely circumscribed liberty comes with the dream that concludes chapter eight. After having devoted the chapter to his quest for ever-rarer breeds of flower to enjoy as purely objectified spectacle, Des Esseintes falls into a terrifying dream. A woman, florally perfumed, opens her arms to him in her reverie, but the Aesthetic dream becomes natural nightmare: "with an irresistible gesture she seized and held him, and haggard with horror, he saw the savage Nidularium blossom under her meagre thighs, with its sword blades gaping in blood-red hollows" (93). The dream shows the folly of Des Esseintes's attempts to neutralize nature by turning natural objects into aesthetic curios. But the supposed "naturalist" demystification of Aesthetic autonomy here relies on a set of cultural protocols whereby man (sic) cannot escape an oppressively female nature. To press the argument further, the dream-image of the serrated vagina should be understood as the logic that organizes all of Des Esseintes's falls from aesthetic splendor to natural degradation, from the harrowing toothache that concludes the chapter on his appreciation of perfume to the disorder of the bowels that brings an end to his experiment in Aesthetic autonomy. The gender politics of *Dorian Gray* are thus far less clear than in Huysmans's novel.

the wife to Sybil the actress, arguably manages to speak less for the agency of a woman artist than Gray or Wotton do.[33] When Sybil gives up her art for Dorian, she declares, "I have grown sick of shadows," alluding to Plato's cave by way of Tennyson's "Lady of Shallot" (71). Tennyson's imprisoned Lady, forced to portray life as she sees it in a mirror that reflects the daily life passing by the window behind her, eventually decides—impelled, like Sybil, by desire for a man—to escape her life of passing shadows and experience instead real passion and desire in a Camelot that is Tennyson's allegory for the techno-scientific and political power of mid-Victorian Britain. Like the domestic woman, the Lady—artist and keeper of affects expelled from the public world—is remanded to the inner room of a technocratic, phallocratic civilization and, as Tennyson's poem narrates, she cannot exist in the world of power and knowledge. That even so conservative a poet as Tennyson figures the artist in Victorian society as essentially a woman should suggest that Wilde, from a much later vantage in the same history of scientism and empire, is not merely looking down upon Sybil. But Wilde is also less ambivalent than Tennyson—he never, for instance, could have written "Locksley Hall," Tennyson's hymn to masculine, muscular, and explicitly European "progress."[34] Wilde

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[33] For corroboration from a female witness that Aestheticism encouraged modes of women's power different from, and often an affront to, those urged by Victorian domesticity and twentieth-century Anglo feminism alike, see Vernon Lee's tale "Amour Dure." In it, the male narrator—a Polish scholar of the Renaissance schooled in German historicism on an Italian sojourn—becomes an ecstatically willing captive to the spirit of a murderous fifteenth-century aristocratic woman. Lee's story, redolent of authorial desire, offers the spectacle of its ghostly anti-heroine's erotic and political force as a delectation to the northern reader suffering from the enervations of modernity.

[34] "Locksley Hall," interestingly enough, was the favorite Tennyson poem of Wilde's mother, the feminist and Irish nationalist poet who styled herself Speranza (see Wright 33). Despite Wilde's devotion to his mother, this small fact implies the large gap between their values and between the epochs they typified. Wife to a pioneering man of science and a nationalist woman of letters in Whitman's expansive American mold, Lady Wilde belonged to that earlier moment of Romantic post-Enlightenment that includes such figures as Wollstonecraft, Shelley, and Emerson, for whom there was not yet any existential conflict between political, scientific, and artistic progress. Increasing materialism and scientism, growing class

instead strives to expose as contingent and limiting the Victorian domestic ideology of love and marriage, but he does so by insisting on the competing claims—even or especially for women—of Aesthetic affect. That Sybil would have been better off as an artist than as Dorian's lover intimates not Wilde's misogyny, but his openness to female achievement in the arts.

Wilde's depiction of Sybil's family and their theatrical milieu will clarify the point. While the novel might seem to suggest that the aesthetic, considered as a commitment to sensation and perception above all, is effectively an aristocratic preserve, a reading of Wilde's portrayal of the Vanes suggests otherwise. Before undertaking such an analysis, however, a defense of thinking about the Vanes at all may be necessary. After all, extrinsic considerations likely compelled Wilde to add them to his story: the early version of the novel published in *Lippincott's* magazine in 1890, as well as the redacted typescript on which it was based, excludes Chapter 5, which focuses on the theatrical family. No part of Wilde's original design, the Vanes were included to expand the narrative to novel-length for standalone publication. The recent vogue for including the *Lippincott's* text, as Norton does in their critical edition, or for publishing the unexpurgated version of the pre-*Lippincott's* typescript, as Harvard University Press has done in two separate editions in 2010 and 2012, hints at a lingering sense among critics and readers that the Vane family and their milieu are detachable and perhaps even offensive encrustations on *Dorian Gray*'s queer body.

Following the lead of Lee Edelman, who argues that "reproductive futurism" and

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struggle, and the shrinking role of the arts are only a few of the factors that made such a union impossible by the end of the century and led to the separation of art from society that characterizes Aestheticism as against Romanticism, "The Lady of Shallot" as against "Locksley Hall," and Oscar as against Lady Wilde.

its attendant concern with the figure of the child is the basis of homophobia, we might lament that Wilde felt the need to lavish yet more attention on biological families, as if there were not enough novels concerned with them in existence already.[35] Walter Pater would seem inclined to agree with Edelman. In his review of *Dorian Gray*, he considers what he called "the interlude of Jim Vane" to be largely extraneous to the novel's other concerns and simply a set piece wherein Wilde could demonstrate his facility at a more traditional kind of gritty realism ("A Novel by Mr. Oscar Wilde" 264).[36] For Pater, the deterministic complications of biology and class seem to ruin the Aesthetic atmosphere, which should be one of free imaginative play among intensities and beauties. And for Edelman, despite his disavowals, this aesthetics is now a programmatic politics—an opposition to those ideologies of natural determinism that creative and scholarly work is duty-bound to resist in the name of the constructed and de-naturalized. Wilde, by including the Vanes, would seem to have faltered in his otherwise vanguard position in the resistance. To recall only the most memorable passage in Edelman's attack on repro-futurity, should we not wish Wilde to have said of Victorian sentimental biologism simply this: "Fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorized; fuck Annie; fuck the waif from *Les Mis*; fuck the poor, innocent kid on the Net; fuck Laws both with capital *l*s and with small; fuck the whole network of Symbolic

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[35] I want to thank my colleagues at the 2012 Oscar Wilde and His Circle seminar, held at UCLA's William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, for forcefully raising this important objection to Wilde's inclusion of the Vanes, which I had not previously considered.

[36] See Riquelme 492-7 for the sub-rosa hostility of Pater's review to Wilde's novel. Riquelme seems to take Wilde's side in the dispute, construing Pater's irritation with *Dorian Gray* largely as an Englishman's fear of his insurgent Irish ex-disciple. While Pater does patronizingly ethnicize Wilde in the review, his complaint that Wilde misunderstands Aestheticism by slighting its moral element is more just than Riquelme allows. For Pater, as I will show in chapter II.2, understood Aestheticism as a humanist, anti-oppressive credo; thus, his irritation at the moral ambiguities of Wilde's novel is understandable.

relations and the future that serves as its prop" (Edelman 29)?[37] Another reading of Chapter 5 is possible, however. What if, instead of reinforcing the familial, Wilde's portrayal of the Vanes offers his most thorough rejection of realism? In effect, and *pace* Pater, Wilde demonstrates that even a seeming walk-on from a Hardy or Gissing novel regards the world in an aesthetic light and is thus subject to aesthetic depiction. If we take Edelman's preferred Anglo-Saxon imperative to connote an interference with boundaries, an unsettling of certainties, a daring introduction of the sexual and the artificial, then perhaps Wilde's portrayal of the family represents *Dorian Gray*'s ultimate instance of "fucking" the Victorian novel.

The scene of the Vanes' introduction features none of Wilde's obvious stand-in figures (Hallward, Wotton, Gray): it is the first chapter we spend alone with the Vane family, a transition point in the plot wherein the insouciant dialogues among the well-to-do of the opening chapters move into the seedier environs that mark Dorian's slow corruption. While Sybil Vane exalts in her passion for Dorian, her mother counsels her against distractions from her economically necessary acting. Wilde's narrator, defending the non-instrumentality of Sybil's erotic transport, condescends to Mrs. Vane thusly: "Thin-lipped wisdom spoke at [Sybil] from the worn chair, hinted at prudence, quoted from the book of cowardice whose author apes the name of common sense" (55). The narrator conflates money-minded calculation with a resentful resistance to opening

[37] Edelman's need to go on denouncing nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century figures of sentimentality (Annie, the waif from *Les Mis*) in the name of twenty-first century queer oppositionality attests to the continuing centrality of sentiment to modernism, a topic taken up in my chapters on Pater and Woolf. See also chapter 2 of Edelman's book for his anti-sentimental against-the-grain readings of Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* and Eliot's *Silas Marner* for more in this vein. Pater, it should be said, offers a queer universalist vision wholly at odds with Edelman's—a crypto-Catholic one centered on the Madonna and child, as *Marius the Epicurean* demonstrates.

oneself up to passion. Mrs. Vane seems to be the epitome of middle-class morality as she submits all action, even the erotic and the artistic, to the pragmatic test of worldly utility. Regenia Gagnier claims that Wilde excludes the middle-class from his novel, focusing only on the aristocracy and the underclass, but the Vanes, as working artists, are properly speaking petit-bourgeois. Accordingly, the ignominy of visible economic striving may fall on them, since their economic situation is too precarious to allow them to affect the indifference toward necessity displayed by the aristocratic artist. Through Mrs. Vane, Wilde satirizes the received "wisdom" that, according to physiognomical lore, the matriarch's passionlessly thin lips embody.

If the novel had stopped with such a satire, however, it would be little more than the deliberately outrageous and class-condescending discourse of a writer attempting to transform art into an aristocratic privilege. But Wilde's narrator opens another window on Mrs. Vane's character when she contemplates how her quarrel with Sybil looks to her son: "Mrs. Vane fixed her eyes on him, and intensified her smile. She mentally elevated her son to the dignity of an audience. She felt sure that the *tableau* was interesting" (56). The old woman, like Lord Henry Wotton or Basil Hallward or Wilde himself, aestheticizes her own experiences, holding them at a mental distance in order to evaluate their capacity for sensation and perception, to appraise their worth as objects of beauty and affective investment. "Thin-lipped wisdom," and the Victorian utilitarianism it bolsters, here shows itself equal to Aestheticism's mandate. Mrs. Vane is not "woman" as domestic ideology imagined this figure. She does not selflessly uphold erotic rectitude à la Fanny Price or Jane Eyre, nor does she visit orphans on her way through a marriage

plot in the style of Esther Summerson. Instead, like a dandy carefully crafting his appearance for maximum effect, she undertakes a calculated performance of herself. Flagrantly artificial, she allows neither "the natural" nor any morality that would make nature its basis to determine her actions. In this way, Wilde's depiction of the maternal figure trespasses on prior ideas about domesticity just as much as his languorously erotic scenes between Gray and Wotton.[38]

We might, however, expect Wilde to be lenient in his satire toward Mrs. Vane, as she is herself an artist, even if a venal one. But Wilde confounds expectations further by extending aesthetic consciousness to characters who are not artists themselves. To leave the Vane family for a moment, another character who more might more troublingly incarnate crass materialism is the "hideous Jew" who manages the theater where the Vanes perform (47). While his portrayal is certainly dictated by anti-Semitic stereotype (i.e., the figure of "the Jew" as crassly, grotesquely material), he too is commended for aesthetic sensibility when he wins even Lord Henry's approval for his willingness to lose money by presenting Shakespeare's great drama and Sybil's great acting to the unappreciative masses: Lord Henry "insisted on shaking [the manager] by the hand, and assuring him that he was proud to meet a man who had discovered a real genius and gone bankrupt over a poet" (68). Wilde here troubles the stereotype to which he otherwise seems susceptible by making the Jewish figure, like Mrs. Vane, transcend material considerations in favor of aesthetics. The point is not that this moment in the novel

[38] It might be objected that Mrs. Vane, being an unmarried actress, is hardly an obvious avatar of domestic femininity as Victorian patriarchy understood it. This is true enough, but Mrs. Vane still represents the figure of the maternal, i.e., the traditional supervisor of private affect, and her Aestheticism as much as her social marginality testifies to Wilde's ability to imagine women's existence outside of the Victorian gender system.

avoids reproducing anti-Semitism—it plainly does not—but rather that Aestheticism is the textual element least amenable to assimilation by an ideology of restrictive cultural idealism that would seek to expel the foreign body from its domain. The Jewish manager's commitment to the shared project of disseminating heightened sensation and perception effectively admits him to the novel's communion of saints, as Lord Henry judges.

Sybil's brother, Jim, furnishes another example of Wilde's Aestheticist universalism. As with Mrs. Vane and the Jewish manager, Wilde's narrator makes a number of snobbish and demeaning observations about Jim. Introducing the character, the narrator observes that he "was thick-set of figure, and his hands and feet were large and somewhat clumsy in movement. He was not so finely bred as his sister," and when he walks out with Sybil, the narrator ventriloquizes the thoughts of the passers-by: "He was like a common gardener walking with a rose" (56, 58). In the surrealism of the latter description, Wilde's anti-realist Aestheticism—his desire to produce rich beauty rather than to reflect dire reality—comes close to canceling the narrator's snobbery in a way that anticipates his depiction of Jim more generally. The image of Sybil as an ambulatory rose on the Euston sidewalk has a humorous, near-grotesque whimsy, as of caricature, fable, or the nonsense verse of Wilde's contemporaries (e.g., Lear, Carroll), that makes manifestly absurd, and hence plainly constructed, the implications about breeding and commonness that lurk in the horticultural comparison.[39] Jim seems to share the narrator's

[39] Compare *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in which the sententious Miss Prism and the stodgy Reverend Chasuble are always taking each other's metaphors literally and then having to clarify the rhetorical mechanisms through which they generate social truth: "CHASUBLE: Were I fortunate enough to be Miss Prism's student, I would hang upon her lips. (MISS PRISM *glares*.) I spoke metaphorically. My

initial assessment of his own character as resolutely non-aesthetic. Wilde's narrator describes the young man's impatience for his mother's histrionics: "She would be sure to make a scene, and he detested scenes of every kind" (61). This is, according to his own self-understanding, a bluff, plain-speaking man who has nothing to do with beauty or spectacle. But Wilde contradicts Jim's testimony in advance. When Jim flies into a theatrical rage rife with dramatics on hearing about Sybil's well-to-do fiancée, "He jumped up and seized her roughly by the arm. 'Show him to me. Which is he? Point him out. I must see him!' he exclaimed," after which histrionic display of machismo Sybil reproves him: "'Oh, don't be so serious, Jim. You are like one of the heroes of those silly melodramas Mother used to be so fond of acting in'" (61). Whether he wants to acknowledge it or not, Jim shares fully as much as the languid, wealthy immoralist Henry Wotton in aestheticizing his experience. His own no-nonsense masculine self is an artificial construct performed for an audience—a crafted persona. With this portrayal, Wilde adduces an unacknowledged Aestheticism at the base of all social experience.

By introducing the philistine mother, the déclassé macho, and the anti-Semitic caricature, Wilde conducts a kind of cultural fieldwork to demonstrate that his Aestheticist creed is a universal anthropology, fundamentally characterizing the lives of those whom the artist/aristocrat would least expect of having relevance to the world of art. Wilde argues that Aestheticism is an inherent property of humanity, a concept that may exclude other ways of being, but does not exclude any particular class of person. Faithful to his political polemics, the anarcho-socialist Wilde envisions a democracy of

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metaphor was drawn from bees. [...] MISS PRISM: Young women are green. (DR. CHASUBLE *starts.*) I spoke horticulturally. My metaphor was drawn from fruits" (*Complete Works* 377, 380).

fine feeling, not so dissimilar from those of the sentimental novelists, who were convinced that the diffusion of a certain kind of affect could redeem a flawed society.[40] Wilde's difference form the sentimental radicals, however, inheres in his valorization of Aesthetic sensibility as the human capacity most responsible for political reform. Amanda Anderson explains the distinction by contrasting two views of art upheld by Wilde:

> According to the first view, human nature is infinitely malleable, because it is not 'nature' at all; according to the second view, by contrast, the bedrock of human nature is unchanging, and the entirely separate realm of art is the site of freedom. In expressing the second view, Wilde positions himself against the moral claims of realists like George Eliot or Elizabeth Gaskell, who believed that careful delineation of their fellow humans would prompt feelings of understanding, sympathy, and fellowship. (156)

What Anderson misses here, however, is the paradox in the second view as she expresses it: if art is always and everywhere a site of freedom from unchanging human nature, then the art-making capacity is itself an unchanging property of human nature, which is to say that, for Wilde, *the malleability of human nature is a feature of human nature itself*. Therefore, there is no real difference between the anti-essentialist view that human nature does not exist and the essentialist argument that human nature can be challenged or

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[40] Wilde's great fairy tale "The Happy Prince" offers a more explicit—indeed, almost flatly allegorical—narrative statement of Aestheticism's brand of neo-sentimentalism *manqué*. The statue of the prince, gilded and admired in the city square, is powerless to stop the suffering he sees everywhere in the polis, suffering that is described in the highly Dickensian terms of starving orphans and overworked seamstresses. Like art in a mercantile and utilitarian society, the prince gives aesthetic pleasure, but cannot change the world for the better. Only when he enlists the aid of a swallow to spread the wealth constituted by his jeweled eyes and gold integument to the populace does he help the citizens he oversees. The swallow, though, delayed through winter on his errand of social justice, dies of cold, as if to suggest that the affective ministrations of art are too fragile to survive past a season. At the story's end, the city authorities pull down the prince's now-unadorned statue and quarrel over which of themselves should replace him as a monument. Only God and His angels appreciate the prince and the swallow, and take them to Paradise at the story's end: art and artists, we are given to understand, long to relieve the material sorrows and privations of society, but their real existence is a spiritual one, ever thwarted by human authority and hostile nature.

evaded by humanity's innate Aesthetic sense. In consequence, Wilde's difference from sentimental realists, such as Eliot and Gaskell, is a difference over which element of human nature—its capacity for empathy or its capacity for beauty—should be understood as the source of political transformation, but not a difference over whether or not political transformation is desirable and possible.[41]

As an early dandy character, Prince Paul, observes in Wilde's political drama *Vera; or the Nihilists*, "in good democracy, every man should be an aristocrat" (698-9). The only revolution worth supporting would be one that disseminated the privilege of the elite to all, and the chief privilege of the elite in Wilde's work is the privilege to remake the world according to the dictates of beauty.[42] The contrast would be a Ruskinian or Tolstoyan puritanical version of radicalism, or what Wilde's most famous German counterpart and contemporary called a politics of *ressentiment*, in which the aesthetic enjoyments prized by the elite were disparaged as illegitimate and accordingly forbidden to all. Only by universally distributing aesthetic beauty could utopia—understood as the cessation of inequality and its consequent ideological conflicts—be achieved. Thus, beauty itself, even in inegalitarian conditions, intimates the coming utopia. The aesthete Wilde here anticipates the Marxist Fredric Jameson, who identifies the utopian kernel of

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[41] Underlying even this difference between the sentimental and the aesthetic reformists is another shared conviction—namely, that both the empathic and the aesthetic capacities have their root in sensation. See Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* for one influential early articulation of this premise, and chapters 1-3 of Eagleton's *Ideology of the Aesthetic* for a general, if skeptical, historical account.

[42] Despite the hostility of scientific Marxism both to Aestheticism and to anarchism, the early Romantic Marx of the 1844 manuscripts strikes a proto-Wildean note in his elaboration of essential/anti-essential human nature: "An animal forms only in accordance with the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object. Man therefore also forms objects in accordance with the laws of beauty" (n. pag.). See Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* chapter 8 for an incisive comparison of Wilde and Marx, though one that scants the prescient subtlety of Wilde's implicit judgment against orthodox socialism's reliance on corporate bodies, always potentially hostile to alterity, to perpetuate itself.

otherwise inegalitarian fictions—as in *The Political Unconscious*, wherein Conrad's fiction is "[s]een as Utopia and ideology all at once"—but I insist on an important distinction (257). For Jameson, the utopian, being in his view a Marxist affective horizon, is always a desire for *collective* self-transcendence. Wilde, however, like the authors treated in this project, consistently privileges the individual over the collective.

Following Vicki Mahaffey, I place Wilde in a lineage of anarchist radicalism that extends from the Romantic poets to contemporary theorists: "Like Deleuze and Guattari after him (and like Blake and Shelley before him), [Wilde] addresses social and psychological constraints in tandem; what he pursues in the name of individualism is an (impossible) degree of self-determination in which the self is free to develop its uniqueness unmarred by external circumstances" (Mahaffey 67). The Marxist critic would regard the individual's desire for liberation without a revolutionary (read: violent) transformation in the collective to be false consciousness, exemplary of capitalist alienation and reification. But anarchist and individualist writers, including Pater, Wilde, Joyce, and Woolf, tend to locate utopia in a present space of consciousness and desire and to regard violent collective coercion as a transgression upon that space—that is, a threat to the utopia already present. If Jameson and Wilde seem to start from a similar place of longing for a richer way of life, and if both draw theoretical inspiration from Hegel, they come to very different conclusions about how to effect the changes they wish to see. As Elizabeth Carolyn Miller explains, Wilde's writings join a larger late-nineteenth century movement to understand socialism and individualism as mutually constitutive:

> Disputes about Wilde's politics and the politics of aestheticism stem partly from the functionally different categories at work in nineteenth-century radical politics, and attention to this context reminds us that for Wilde, "socialism" and "individualism" were not mutually exclusive. At the time Wilde was writing, Marxist socialism was beginning to take root in Britain, but so were the ideas of anarchist socialists like Peter Kropotkin, another Russian exile whom Wilde deeply admired. The anarchists, rather than advocating socialism based on a powerful centralized state, envisioned a society of small, cooperative, communist collectives, operating from the principles of free choice and voluntary association. (88-9)[43]

With its own radical hopes informed by theorists like Jameson, Foucault and Bourdieu, who share despite their differences an almost overwhelming sense of the shaping power of institutions, contemporary criticism tends to emphasize Wilde's relative aloofness toward the constitution of his pleasures and interests by prevailing social forces.[44] An excessive emphasis on institutional power, however, can become a self-sustaining paranoia about power's omnipotence. Wilde's countervailing conviction that the individual's capacity for Aestheticist re-creation of the materials of social life can offer an important corrective to the excesses of such sociological determinism. This hopefulness about Aestheticism's capacity to transform the *polis,* a prophetic optimism most famously found in Wilde's "The Soul of Man Under Socialism," is most visible in

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[43] Miller's essay is forthcoming in a volume entitled *Wilde Discoveries*, edited by Joseph Bristow, but it is as-yet unpublished; I quote from her manuscript.

[44] See Guy and Small's *Oscar Wilde's Profession* for perhaps the most influential critique of Wilde as an aesthetic capitalist whose socialist politics amount to bad faith. For a more recent and still more antagonistic account of Wildean politics, see Gillespie's "The Will to Power in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*." Gillespie argues that the point of Aestheticism is the unleashing of the individual will, which he links to emergent fascist ideology; he advocates "a view of Dorian as more closely resembling a fascist than a sensualist" (104). To align Wilde with his character, though, Gillespie tends to ignore the critical light that Dorian's anti-social destructiveness shines on the occasional elitism of Wilde's other writings. Wilde in many respects could not be further from fascism—consider, for instance, his cosmopolitan and anti-militarist belief, expressed in "The Critic as Artist," that Aestheticism would "annihilate race-prejudices, by insisting upon the unity of the human mind in the variety of its forms," and so "give us the peace that springs from understanding" (1153). Far from proto-fascism, these are proleptically anti-fascist attitudes. Chapter II.2 below considers more extensively the relation between Aestheticism and totalitarian politics.

Dorian Gray precisely when that novel leaves the drawing rooms and studios of the elite and ventures among the populace. Instead of domesticating the novel's politics by directing their energies toward the familial or the social, such excursions rather queer the familial and the social by showing them to be constructed by the same Aestheticist consciousness enjoyed by the elite characters.

Amanda Anderson correctly notes that irony is the key to Wilde's hope for social reform, and she is also correct to contrast Wildean irony with the post-modern irony of thinkers such as Paul de Man and Judith Butler, for whom the ironic is endlessly destabilizing to all essentials and hierarchies. In Wilde's criticism, the trope of irony is the motor of progress toward the Aestheticist utopia in which all share the capacities of Lord Henry Wotton to cut up the world with an epigram. "The Decay of Lying," for instance, begins with Wilde's spokesman, Vivian, expatiating to Cyril, the text's straight-man, against nature as a resource for art or thought: "What Art really reveals to us is Nature's lack of design, her curious crudities, her extraordinary monotony, her absolutely unfinished condition. Nature has good intentions, of course, but, as Aristotle once said, she cannot carry them out" (1071). Nature is monotonous because it lacks the capacity to change consciously, according to intention—hence the title of Wilde's volume of criticism, *Intentions*. Escaping monotony requires self-consciousness, for only self-consciousness allows the subject to behold itself as an object and thus to alter itself deliberately. Post-Darwinian nature, on the other hand, is the product of pure and purposeless chance, the interaction of blind forces motivated not by thought but simply by the desire for self-perpetuation. The human subject's ability to lie, then, is the

guarantee of its ability to change meaningfully. For Wilde, irony serves as the equivalent, at the level of literary form, of lying in social intercourse. Vivian's endorsement of lying casts doubt on all his words in an instance of the famous Cretan liar paradox: how do we know that Vivian is not lying when he endorses lying? The text thickens its irony by embedding Vivian's views in a text-within-a-text—a draft of a periodical essay that he reads to Cyril—that also calls into question the finality of his thesis.

It is tempting to read these ironies as endless and, therefore, as endlessly self-defeating, to see in them Wilde's radical skepticism about meaning and reference and thus to conclude that meaning perpetually eludes both writer and reader and effectively cancels the distinction between them. Another concept of irony, however, was available to Wilde as a student of the Socratic method and of German Idealism.[45] In this mode, irony is not endlessly negating but endlessly productive: the final turn of the interpretive screw in "The Decay of Lying" is that its performance of its own unreliability confirms its thesis about the necessity of ironic distance for the production of new knowledge, new sensations, and new dialogue. Irony does not defeat meaning but generates it in abundance. Agata Bielik-Robson, who challenges the understanding of irony as

[45] That Wilde drew on German Idealism, and especially Hegel, for his own philosophy is emphasized by a number of commentators (see, e.g., Wright and Dowling, Introduction). Philip E. Smith II and Michael Helfand's edition of Wilde's Oxford notebooks is a concise guide to the influence of Hegel and his Oxford followers (who supplemented Darwin with Hegel by adding teleology to evolution) upon the undergraduate Wilde; see especially Smith and Helfand 17-27. Wilde's Hegelianism is relevant here because Hegel vociferously mocks the irony-as-permanent-parabasis position that Amanda Anderson associates with post-modernism but that Hegel (like Paul de Man after him) finds in the German Romantics. See Hegel's *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* for his lengthy, amusing denunciation of "the so-called *Irony*" which leads artists to regard "every possible thing [as] a mere dead creature, to which the free creator, knowing himself to be wholly unattached, feels himself in no way bound, seeing that he can annihilate it as well as create it" (70, 72). Hegel's critique of indeterminate irony anticipates Wilde's anxiety that Aestheticist distance, like ironic distance, may make the aesthete as much destroyer as creator.

perpetual self-negation, explains the productivist approach in her defense of Harold Bloom (a self-avowed practitioner of Wildean criticism): "The 'negative capability'—to use Keats's famous expression—of irony is thus an equivalent of original sin in the domain of culture: it triggers expulsion from the paradise of perfect, definite cultural forms and simple identifications into the desert of individuation, a process which is propelled by a wish to return to the cultural pleroma, but only on one's own individual terms" (2). Irony functions as the text's spur to its own individuation: by both invoking truth, as transmitted by culture, and questioning it through a recursive form, the text generates new and unexpected meanings, which authorizes it, in turn, to take its place alongside the works of the past. Identical to the aesthetic in its capacity to differentiate the subject from nature, irony is fundamentally progressive, its story a human comedy that ends with mind triumphant over its inert context.

Just as Wilde's Aestheticism joins his thought to the traditions of sentimental radicalism, so too does his aesthetic irony wed his project to earlier traditions in the novel. The progressive view of irony Wilde elaborates in his criticism is at one with the mode of the *Bildungsroman*. The protagonists of these novels of formation grow into their social position through learning that they are wrong about the most crucial aspects of their lives—about whether or not Mr. Darcy is a good man, Miss Havisham a benefactress, Reverend Casaubon a suitable mate. As Moretti writes in his study of the *Bildungsroman*, "Irony's most typical feature is its ability to stop time, to question what has already been decided, or to reexamine already finished events in a different light" (*The Way of the World* 121). Through reflecting on why and where they took the wrong

road, *Bildungsroman* protagonists achieve distance upon their own lives, which allows them to shape their futures consciously toward more appropriate ends. Given that Wilde-as-critic and the dominant novelistic tradition of the nineteenth century share a progressive and teleological conception of irony, then, the most important thing to say about *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is that it declines to be a *Bildungsroman* even though it operates in *bildung*'s most characteristic literary form and is written by an author whose non-fictional assertions indicate that he believes in progress. *Dorian Gray* literally, rather than figuratively, stops time, and with it stops the hero's moral growth.

With all of the foregoing evidence about the utopian and progressive potential of Aestheticism in mind, we can return to Sybil Vane and wonder what, if not authorial misogyny, is responsible for her death given that she, as an artist, should embody the energies of the Aesthetic. One simple answer might be—and to an extent *is*—that Sybil is undone by the enemies of Aestheticism: conventional morality, patriarchal ideology, heterosexist protocols. That Sybil dies a martyr to Aestheticism exposes less its sexist underbelly than Wilde's own sense of how conventional anti-aesthetic expectations of love and romance stultify female potential. According to Lord Henry Wotton, Sybil dies by swallowing "something by mistake, some dreadful thing they use at theatres. I don't know what it was, but it had either prussic acid or white lead in it" (79). Sybil, that is, appears to have killed herself by consuming face paint or costume dyes. Unable to live out the "real" desires prescribed by the ideology of marriage after Dorian rejects her for abandoning her art, and unable to pursue the aesthetic while in the throes of passion, she makes herself into an embodiment of the contradiction by poisoning herself with her own

mask—by making art itself the instrument of her death and her death a symbol of life's inability to live up to art. However, such a reading reveals a more far-reaching objection to Aestheticism than Felski's censure of its sexism. If the enemies of Aestheticism can succeed so easily in their campaigns against the artist simply by making physical and emotional desire run contrary to the demands of art, then perhaps something is wrong with the theory in the first place. Sybil's death shows art to be indigestible, unincorporable, and fundamentally *discorporate*: it cannot co-exist with the affects of the body. It is here that the Greek pun on "utopia" must come to the fore: the Aesthetic paradise is surely a good place, but it is not, in contrast to Wilde's oft-quoted wish, a place on the map. No one can live there.

To understand Wilde's own ambivalence about Aestheticist idealism, especially as it is embodied in the novel form, we will have to turn from Sybil to another cautionary figure, Dorian himself. For the artist Basil Hallward, who paints the fateful portrait, Dorian is "a new personality" for art, one who can point the way toward "harmony between soul and body" since "[w]e in our madness have separated the two, and have invented a realism that is vulgar, an ideality that is void" (23, 24). Dorian, with the Hellenically pederastic sensuality of his outward beauty indicating a moral perfection within, performs the delicate suture between material particulars and abstract universals that has been the goal of western thought since Plato. Such a suture is what Paul de Man calls "aesthetic ideology": the rhetorical deployment of the aesthetic to authorize a false universality by effacing irresolvable antinomies.[46] As de Man argues in his late readings

[46] Among the relevant Kantian passages is *Critique of Judgment*, §28: "Sublimity, therefore, does not reside in any of the things of nature, but only in our own mind, in so far as we may become conscious of our

of Kant, if this ideology, which can only ever be evoked rhetorically, fails, as it inevitably will, then the aesthetic will remain an affair of sensation and perception, the subject's immediate apprehension of phenomena—precisely what Pater would later valorize in the Conclusion to *The Renaissance*, and what Wilde would acclaim in the Preface to *Dorian Gray*. Aestheticism's idealism, in Wilde as in the post-Kantian Romantics that de Man scorns, is merely compensatory, a supplement or prosthesis hiding the conceptual void at the heart of sensible experience. On this account, there never was anything to Sybil or to Dorian but their desire and their desirability, a foundation too narrow to build an ethics or a politics on. The aesthetic judgment with which we regard the object (Sybil's performance, Dorian's face) requires us to see it initially without taking account of the totality to which it belongs, as severed from any purpose or use. Historicist thinkers—such as Hegel or the Hegelian Wilde of *Intentions* or the writers of nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane*—trust history to bind objects into a totality of temporal development.

The most renowned twentieth-century historicist critic of the novel was Georg Lukács. In his early pre-Marxist phase, when by his own testimony he was, like Wilde, a "romantic anti-capitalist," Lukács wrote that temporality and irony existed in a dialectical, developmental relation within the novel, so that the ideals corroded by irony were redeemed by time: "Time brings order into the chaos of men's lives and gives it the

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superiority over nature within, and thus also over nature without us (as exerting influence upon us)." For his part, de Man argues that Kantian imagination, which sacrifices itself to reason in order to bring about the union of sensual particular with conceptual universal, is a rhetorical trope: a tragic heroine. Toril Moi supplements de Man's charge that that imagination is a sacrificial female figure in the Kantian architectonic. According to Moi, in idealist aesthetics such as Kant's, "women incarnate human sexuality. In order to lift them above the mere animal stage, poetry and painting need to idealize them far more intensively than they do men," thus leading to the common nineteenth-century topos of women sacrificing their lives (animal nature) in defense of their honor (ideal humanity) (Moi 80). Moi 70-81 gives a general treatment of nineteenth-century aesthetic idealism's gender ideology.

semblance of a spontaneously flowering, organic entity" (*Theory of the Novel* 125). Aestheticism grants the subject enough ironic distance from his sensations to understand and thereby to alter them within the continuous stream of time. Historicism makes it possible to convert experience into narrative. Anti-historicist thinkers such as de Man regard this conversion of material into meaning as only ever provisional, contingent, and, at worst, opportunistic. De Man chides Lukács on this point, observing disdainfully that temporality for the historicist thinker naturalizes the constructed nature of all writing and art made visible by irony: "It seems that the organicism which Lukács had eliminated from the novel when he made irony its guiding structural principle, has reentered the picture in the guise of time. Time in this essay acts as a substitute for the organic continuity which Lukács seems unable to do without" ("Georg Lukács's 'Theory of the Novel'" 58) The local question *Dorian Gray* poses, then, is whether or not Sybil's suicide and Dorian's decline suggest Aestheticism's incapacity to generate progressive meaning—suggest, that is, that the novel gives anti-historicist testimony against the historicist literary theory that Wilde was writing almost simultaneously with it. The broader question that Wilde's novel, along with the Lukács/de Man quarrel, raises is whether or not the novel of Aestheticism will transform what had for two centuries been a largely historicist aesthetic mode into an anti-historicist one.

Of course, it is possible to read *Dorian Gray* as a *Bildungsroman* whose ironies merely raise a higher bar for teleological meaning to clear, rather than barring such meaning entirely. Gregory Castle, for one, interprets *Dorian Gray* as a revisionist *Bildungsroman*, displaying by negation the failure of an authentic aesthetic education,

one that would presumably align with Wilde's more orthodoxly Hegelian criticism by uniting particular to abstract.[47] For Castle, the failures of the characters to progress offer, in effect, a counter-example that the reader can then reverse to get to the progressive truth. But in so arguing, Castle has to ignore the philosophical point of the novel's Gothic conceit that Dorian becomes evil when he stops aging. Wilde deploys the Gothic to destroy, or more precisely, to *denature* the *Bildungsroman*—that is, Wilde uses the Gothic trope of the aging painting to strip temporality, the *Bildungsroman*'s needful binding agent, from the experience of the protagonist. Maureen O'Connor shows that the novel's Gothic invocation of supernatural stasis has a political dimension because it alludes to the Celtic mythological trope of *Tír na nOg*, or Ireland as the land of eternal youth: "The atemporality of *Tír na nOg*, like the implied stasis of Oriental culture and art, collaborates with Wilde's consistent advocacy of contemplation over action, imagination over reality, an ironic fulfillment of the stereotype of the lazy Celt so antithetical to manly Victorian ideals of duty and industry" (O'Connor 468). This is to say that Wilde's Gothic inflection of Aestheticism is an anti-colonial (and, as O'Connor makes clear elsewhere in her essay, queer and feminist) foreclosure on Aestheticism's assimilation to English middle-class imperial norms of seamless historical progress through production via exploitation. Wilde uses the anti-colonial Gothic to subject Aestheticism to a *reductio ad absurdum* by showing that the remove from which the aesthetic eye beholds reality is beyond good and evil. Consequently, there is no reliable map back to the utopia of communal feeling that the Aesthetic was supposed to effect in its historicist (and thus on this theory implicitly imperialist) guise. That this rebellious political gesture has only

[47] See Castle chapter 3.

dire consequences in the narrative, however, suggests an authorial and textual ambivalence that cannot be summarized simply as political resistance.[48]

The novel hints from the start that it will not be telling the hero's tale of growth and progress. Castle remarks that Wilde places no emphasis on Dorian's childhood and parentage, as a typical *Bildungsroman* might. While it is true that the novel does not provide a Dickensian level of detail on the subject, we are told—through the medium of Lord Henry Wotton's investigations—about the circumstances of Dorian's birth, and Wilde also gives enough clues to indicate its relevance to his later degradation. Lord Henry's uncle, Lord Fermor, reveals in Chapter 3 that Dorian's aristocratic mother made a misalliance with a common soldier, Dorian's father. The soldier was later killed in a duel, the responsibility for which plausible rumor attributes to Dorian's revenge-seeking grandfather. After this, Dorian's mother dies of grief. In short, illicit desire and the transgression of organicist hierarchies of caste produce Dorian: the breakdown of order is his birthright. When Lord Henry hears this story, he calls it "an almost modern romance"—an eruption into the Victorian present of the passion that once sent courtly adventurers on adulterous quests (39). Deleuze and Guattari, locating the medieval romancer Chrétien de Troyes and his errant, lovelorn knights at the origin of the novel, argue that, "The novel has always been defined by the adventure of lost characters who no longer know their name, what they are looking for, or what they are doing, amnesiacs,

[48] O'Connor acknowledges Wilde's ambivalence and attributes it to his liminal social position as member of the Anglo-Irish elite who "see reflected in [Irish myth] their own shadowy, purgatorial in-betweenness, neither quite English nor quite Irish" (468). For more on the novel's complex relation to Irish identity, see Eagleton, *Heathcliff*; Castle; and Wright, all of whom read the novel's Gothic elements as evidence of colonial sensibility. Upchurch 23-4 gives a detailed account of how *Dorian Gray* repeats and revises the *Tír na nOg* legend; he also makes a number of other links between the novel and elements of Celtic myth, some more compelling than others.

ataxics, catatonics" (173). Dorian is such a lost hero, orphaned by the violent preservation of the social order and its interdictions on desire. In this way, Wilde's hero begins from a kind of social no-place—but that does not mean that he will end up in one. It is, after all, a folk-tale tradition much older than the novel, or even than the medieval romance Lord Henry evokes, that the hero's tale of development begins in his natal obscurity and ruination.

The narrative trajectory of these violent beginnings, however, intimates *Dorian Gray*'s skepticism toward the redemptory Aestheticist historicism of Wilde's other writings. Much later in the novel, Dorian hides his portrait in the attic where he'd taken refuge as a boy from his stern grandfather, the murderer of his subaltern father. But the ironies of his evasions redound on him: first, he wraps the portrait in "a large, purple satin coverlet heavily embroidered with gold, a splendid piece of late seventeenth-century Venetian work that his grandfather had found in a convent near Bologna," which he imagines having been a pall for the dead (92). In other words, he covers the picture in loot that represents the privilege his grandfather sought to defend, thus allying himself with dead/murderous tradition. Moreover, Dorian also wishes to veil the portrait, since its aging will bring "the wrinkled throat, the cold, blue-veined hands, the twisted body, that he remembered in the grandfather who had been so stern to him in his boyhood" (94). The portrait will wear the signs that externalize the evil of the grandfather, hence Dorian imagines that he will be free. The novel at this point associates temporality—supposedly the stuff of progress and development—with biological decay and social regression. The grandson will turn into the grandfather through no will of his own, but

simply by the ticking of the clock. The Gothic trope of Dorian's non-aging promises on the other hand to work like irony in Moretti's formulation: by stopping the clock, it will offer Dorian the opportunity to become something other and better than his grandfather was. But this is not to be. Dorian becomes a ruiner of young lives and the murderer of Hallward, effectively transforming into his murderous grandfather precisely by transgressing social codes in the name of beauty. The stopping of the clock is what Aestheticism promises to its adherents in the name of positive change once the clock starts again, but the novel shows the promise not to come through. If the trope of the aging portrait in Wilde's novel is identical to the trope of aesthetic irony in Wilde's criticism, then the results differ by genre: ironic criticism promised progress, but ironic fiction proffers nothing but stasis—a boy becoming an old man without aging a day—or regress—a nineteenth-century youth repeating all the sins of the *ancien régime*.

The Picture of Dorian Gray, in sum, offers Aestheticism as an instance of what Adorno and Horkheimer will later call, in their own anti-historicist treatise, the dialectic of Enlightenment. In seeking to master nature, to convert experience into meaning, the subject in Adorno and Horkheimer adopts an aestheticizing distance from it, just as Dorian tries to escape his grandfather by distancing himself from his aristocratic, organicist ideology. The distance, however, destroys all human hierarchies and ultimately delivers the subject back to nature by deifying nature's dictates as an omniscient calculus, naturalizing social and subjective productions. As in Paul de Man, progressive utopianism, whether Aestheticist or sentimental, Hegelian or Wildean, is the means by which humanity becomes enslaved to its rhetorical impostures about its

intrinsically non-meaningful experiences. Thinking he can evade the tyranny his grandfather represents by doing whatever he wants, Dorian becomes the tyrant, as Adorno and Horkheimer see humanity's scientific pretensions first effecting an escape from nature, and then re-enthralling humanity to nature in the form of the radically leveling administration of all life, justified as knowledge about the way things are.

The sixteenth chapter of the novel, which narrates Dorian's journey to the opium den, represents the nadir of his corruption in terms of the scenes Wilde presents. It gives particular evidence that, for this novel, this severance of perception from purpose is the essence of a damaged life. As Dorian looks over the streets from his cab window, he sees "fantastic shadows…silhouetted against some lamp-lit blind. He watched them curiously. They moved like monstrous marionettes, and made gestures like live things. He hated them," and he concludes, "Ugliness was the one reality" (135). People moved by bodily affects become things, however mobile or seemingly alive. Their materiality, unelaborated by the shaping spirit of the critic's historical imagination or even the poet/artist's beautifying semblance, horrifies Dorian because it evokes life as a discontinuous gallery of obscenely animated objects, what T. S. Eliot—ostensibly a staunch anti-Wildean writer—will call "a heap of broken images" in *The Waste Land*. Later, in the opium den itself, Dorian sees "[a] crooked smile, like a Malay crease, [writhe] across the face of one of the women" (136). He perceives faces themselves as existing in autonomous parts with lives of their own, and the "Malay crease" hints too at a juxtaposition of two cultures on one face, along with the more overt hint of violence that comes from superimposing a sword over a smile, as if the latter were the gash caused

by the former. The romance represented by his parents' misalliance here becomes, in a racist formulation, a monstrous and disfiguring miscegenation. Dorian's parents had the value of love to replace the values of hierarchy. In the opium den, where the goal is not love but hedonism, nothing adds up, not even bodies, to the Dorian who is all surface.[49]

Language itself will fail if appearance and essence are so dissevered. Paul de Man's analysis of Kant again provides a useful model for the corruption of Dorian Gray.[50] When the apperception of objects fails to coalesce into organic unity through Kant's proposed sacrifice of imagination to reason, De Man argues that language itself will shift from a tropological to a performative mode: "To the dismemberment of the body corresponds a dismemberment of language, as meaning-producing tropes are replaced by the fragmentation of sentences and propositions into discrete words, or the fragmentation of words into syllables or finally letters" (*Aesthetic Ideology* 89). While

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[49] Queer thematics make themselves felt in the text's silences, at times editorially-imposed, about just what Dorian was doing in those absent scenes that seem to lead to disgrace for his young male companions. One might argue that the collapse of all normativity is first of all for Wilde a longed-for collapse of heteronormativity. For Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, on the other hand, *Dorian Gray* is a kind of anti-queer text in its construction of homosexuality as stable identity: the Hellenic *difference* that organized same-sex relations—the man-boy paradigm of pederasty—gives way for Wilde to the Narcissistic topos of Dorian and his portrait, providing the homosexual with a conservative self-identification (see *Epistemology of the Closet* chapter 3). Jeff Nunokawa also links Aestheticism explicitly to sexuality: for him, Wilde's entire project is the distanciation of desire so that it can be beheld rather than experienced (see chapter 4). I am closest to Nunokawa here: Aestheticism as portrayed in Wilde's novel does not liberate desire so much as it frees its contemplation from the ethical, a freedom that is at best morally inert and at worst destructive. This may lead some commenters to mistake Wilde for Foucault, as Nunokawa suggests; the evidence, however, indicates that Wilde's personal view of same-sex relations—as shown, for instance, in his rousing courtroom defense of the love that dare not speak its name—was orthodoxly Hellenic and Platonic in its spiritualism and intellectualism, rather than having either a scientistically essentialist focus on identity or a proto-Foucauldian emphasis on bodies and pleasures. In embracing Aestheticism, Wilde was giving up Plato's ladder of intellectualized love just as he gave up the novel's social mission. *Dorian Gray* is explicit on this point: loving Dorian leads Hallward not to truth or wisdom, but to his own doom.

[50] Perhaps it goes without saying, but let me here reluctantly note that Paul de Man in some sense *was* Dorian Gray in that he enjoyed worldly success while his misdeeds moldered in concealment until after his death. This no doubt lends special poignancy to de Man's profound understanding of the appearance/ essence problem. And while de Man's astringent literary theory forbids such biographical speculations, Wilde's novel, with its several stand-ins for the celebrity author, suggests the ultimate futility of separating the work from the life.

Wilde does not travel all the way down the avant-garde path to a radical textual materialism, as such later writers as Stein and Joyce will, his famously paradoxical apercus, strewn almost haphazardly throughout the novel and often in conflict with each other, indeed show language as fragmented and disconnected, unable to bind up the disparate strains of moral, intellectual and sensual experience narrated: "For in art there is no such thing as universal truth," writes Wilde in "The Truth of Masks," "A Truth in art is one whose contradictory is also true" (1173). Wilde here anticipates de Man's critique of Kantian aesthetics in showing the failure of the wedding of abstract to particular, and his novel decisively severs Dorian Gray's outward appearance from his inner state, as if to state, in almost crudely didactic terms, that the aesthetic will not give us a meaningful narrative with a utopic telos.

Wilde thus differs from de Man and his deconstructive and post-structuralist generational cohort by refusing to read this severance as a liberation from all coercive totalities: when the magical properties of his portrait enable Dorian to become a walking instance of "aesthetic ideology"—a false appearance of sensual beauty wed to moral perfection—chaos, up to and including murder, ensues.[51] "The Truth of Masks" is an almost lawyerly brief on behalf of historicism's necessity to art. Setting himself against theater critics who claim that historical correctness in costuming and set design holds no relevance to the staging of Shakespeare's plays, Wilde provides example after example of

[51] For an excellent post-structuralist account of *Dorian Gray*, see Mahaffey's reading, in which the novel becomes a Lacanian/Deleuzean parable about not giving up on desire: because Basil Hallward represses his own same-sex passion, he produces Dorian through the portrait as a similarly binary-bifurcated being, capable of shallow respectability and deep evil, but incapable of understanding himself legitimately as a desiring-machine. Mahaffey's interpretation is dazzling, but I argue that Wilde was more circumspect—and, typically for his time, Platonic—than she allows about the consequences of surrendering to all desire. See Mahaffey 81-86.

the importance of temporally-precise material culture to the Shakespearean imagination. But the author of "The Decay of Lying" has no interest in antiquarianism for its own sake.[52] He builds his case on the example of Renaissance artists, who used the items and facts excavated by historians "as motives for the production of a new art, which was to be not beautiful merely, but also strange. […] Archeology…was a means by which they could touch the dry dust of antiquity into the very breath and beauty of life" (1162). History here serves the ends of art, which not only catalogues the facts and things of the past (the antiquarian's duty), but recovers the transhistorical truth they contingently manifest. Given this, it should come as no surprise that Wilde immediately follows his famous apothegm on art as contradiction, which deceptively seems to anticipate the postmodernist *différance* of the signifier, with a proleptically anti-postmodern/Hegelian demand that art-criticism resolve in theory the contradictions that art reveals in practice.[53] "Truth is independent of facts always," Wilde insists, which entails a belief that appearance (fact) must be always be subsumed under essence (truth) in art (1166). Wilde further declares that "it is only in art-criticism, and through it, that we can realise Hegel's system of contraries. The truths of metaphysics are the truths of masks" (1173).[54] In other words, art displays contradiction, while art-criticism gives an account of how

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[52] "The Decay of Lying" argues that art should not copy reality—as do the fictions of the realist novelists and painters Wilde denounces—but rather create an autonomous realm of beauty for life to copy so as to make itself more pleasing.

[53] "The Truth of Masks" hints at what Wilde might have thought of postmodern aesthetics when he denounces stagings of Shakespeare that combine dress from different cultures and periods as turning art into a "chaos of costume, the fancy Dress-Ball, to the entire ruin of all picturesque and dramatic effect" (1169). Had he lived to see the twentieth-century theatrical and cinematic vogue for Shakespeare plays set in fascist Italy, capitalist boardrooms, antebellum plantations, apocalyptic moonscapes, etc., he would probably have been revolted.

[54] In his lectures on aesthetics, Hegel exalts philosophy for its ability to extrude rationally and discursively the metaphysical truths buried in the sensuousness of artworks. Moreover, the philosopher's historical attainment of such understanding means for Hegel that art's function has been superseded by philosophy.

apparent contradictions can be resolved through a higher state of consciousness able to perceive the total process to which the contradictions belong. The "masks" of the essay's title are not depth-free signifiers at differential play on the slippery surface of reference, but rather the transitory appearances in which universal history must garb itself to be intelligible to human thought.

Wilde displaces the universalizing remit from art to art-criticism, but this move leaves him unable to carry out the business of criticism, even of his unorthodox type, within a work of art itself. Criticism makes fiction a dead letter. If the novel as practiced by his realist/domestic forerunners disseminated values in the name of universal access to truths about the psyche, Wilde's fictions make no such claim: Dorian becomes a kind of cipher, as Wotton himself is, while Sybil's preference of the inner life of feeling to the outer life of beauty leads her not to redeeming sentiment but to suicide. By the terms of Wilde's own art-theory, the necessary historicist sense belongs only to criticism; thus, any art he produces is doomed to failure, just as *Dorian Gray* fails to generate a temporality of progress. As Wilde demotes art to mere *materia* for the historico-critical philosopher, it condemns his own artistic productions to the vassalage of appearance, a set of conflicting surface-effects awaiting the all-seeing eye of the critic to detect their essential unity. In this derogation of the private realm of feeling and according elevation of critical intellect, we may find a truer instance of Wilde's masculinist bias against his female and female-identified forerunners. This division cleaves his novel affectively in two, its ostensible moralizing at odds with the glamour of the corruption it presents.[55]

[55] For the novel's initial scandalous reception and Wilde's response thereto, see Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace* 56-63 and "Reviews and Reactions" in the Norton Critical Edition of *Dorian Gray* (345-75).

The novel's form enacts the disconnection it narrates: beauty and truth gesture toward each other across a chasm only the absent critic knows how to bridge—namely, with a rhetoric of temporality.

Wilde goes even further than these philosophical paradoxes. In his most comprehensive theoretical manifesto, even criticism itself fails to do anything other than repeat the artwork as aesthetic sensation. "The Critic as Artist" makes the problem of criticism especially visible as the text's form contradicts its content. In this dialogue between the earnest Victorian Ernest and the ironic Aesthete Gilbert, Wilde uses Gilbert as a mouthpiece for his thesis that criticism is superior to art:

> The antithesis between [art and criticism] is entirely arbitrary. Without the critical faculty, there is no artistic creation at all, worthy of the name. You spoke a little while ago of that fine spirit of choice and delicate instinct of selection by which the artist realises life for us, and gives to it a momentary perfection. Well, that spirit of choice, that subtle tact of omission, is really the critical faculty in one of its most characteristic moods, and no one who does not possess this critical faculty can create anything at all in art. Arnold's definition of literature as a criticism of life was not very felicitous in form, but it showed how keenly he recognised the importance of the critical element in all creative work. (1118)

On this account, only bad art—which Gilbert elsewhere defines as motivated by feeling—is without the critical faculty. The mere fact of the artist's deliberate selection and arrangement of his or her materials means the resulting artwork is a considered response to some aspect of life. Wilde here invokes the Greek etymon of "criticism" (*krinein*, to decide) which concerns judgment and choice. A good artist chooses what to represent, and in so choosing judges life. But at the level of its form, rather than of its

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In sum, most critics took the novel to be unwholesome, but could name no precise code it had transgressed. Wilde replied by insisting on his consistent moral purpose—that is, his intention to portray as calamitous the divorce of the aesthetic from the ethical—but his case fails to convince fully, given his seeming (and perhaps duplicitous) incognizance of the decadent life's sensually rich appeal as his novel renders it.

abstractable argument, "The Critic as Artist" displays the antinomies of this doctrine.

In the dialogue, Ernest objects several times to Gilbert's thesis about the power of criticism, and Gilbert replies with what we would now call performative language: that is, his replies not only discursively rebut Ernest but also embody the contention they enunciate. For example, Gilbert states that art is superior to life, and Ernest skeptically questions this. Gilbert then answers with the example of Dante, seemingly for no better reason than that the *Divine Comedy* happens to be on his bookshelf. He then proceeds to recreate in the most lyrically beautiful language the entire plot of Dante's poem rather than arguing about it in any way:

> We can say to ourselves, 'To-morrow, at dawn, we shall walk with grave Virgil through the valley of the shadow of death,' and lo! the dawn finds us in the obscure wood, and the Mantuan stands by our side. We pass through the gate of the legend fatal to hope, and with pity or with joy behold the horror of another world. (1132)

Gilbert remarkably goes on in this vein for almost three closely-printed pages in Wilde's *Complete Works*, limning the horror of Dante's world in his own words, suspending argument in favor of criticism conceived as phenomenological re-creation of the art object in compliance with his own earlier assertion that "criticism of the highest kind...treats the work of art simply as a starting-point for a new creation" (1127). And while this is certainly splendid prose—proving by example that criticism can equal imaginative writing in its eloquence—an objection does come to mind: Dante designed the artistic experience of his poem to communicate a very definite set of ethical, political, and cosmic truths, to explain, indeed, no less than the truth about God's creation. In fact, the nonchalance of Gilbert's choice of Dante should be read as a feint, for he almost

certainly selects Dante to exemplify aesthetic criticism as a provocation; the Florentine poet is perhaps the most famous example in European literature of an author who wrote to communicate the ultimate truth about the universe. To take pleasure in the intricacies of his vision for the sensations the *Divine Comedy* provides—those of walking in impossible landscapes, seeing sublime scenes, meeting souls that fascinate—defers as irrelevant or impertinent the question of whether or not Dante's vision is *true*, as the medieval poet thought it to be at the allegorical, moral, and anagogical levels of interpretation.[56] Wilde collapses artist into critic by making even the critic mute about metaphysical, ethical and political judgments.

The critic, argues Gilbert, becomes valuable only for his subjectivity: "[Criticism] is the only civilised form of autobiography, as it deals not with the events, but with the thoughts of one's life; not with life's physical accidents of deed or circumstance, but with the spiritual moods and imaginative passions of the mind" (1125). The key words of this famous sentence are *thoughts* (as opposed to ideas) and *moods* and *passions* (as opposed to beliefs and convictions). The critic, no less than the artist, is a figure of sensation and perception, and thus his commitments, no less than those of the artist, are irrelevant. Here we find a justification for the critical commonplace of Wilde-the-postmodernist invoked by Amanda Anderson and Lawrence Danson above. "The Critic as Artist," in elevating the critical persona but derogating authorial truth-claims, is a foundational text

[56] See Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 73-4 for an explication of the Dantean interpretive schema and for an instance of their reappropriation by the modern historicist critic—i.e., Jameson himself. Jameson effectively preserves allegorical, moral, and anagogical extrapolation from the literal level of the text by replacing God with the history of class struggle as the literal's ultimate referent. While Wilde—at times as Hegelian a thinker as Jameson—sometimes proposes a similar move, as we have seen at the conclusion to "The Truth of Masks," in "The Critic as Artist" he declines a hermeneutics of the text in favor of an erotics (to borrow Susan Sontag's resonant conclusion to a famous essay that starts with a Wildean epigraph).

for the postmodern identity politics that dissolves belief into subject-position. The critic/artist's importance depends upon who he or she *is* rather than what he or she *knows*.[57] Walter Benn Michaels, a fierce contemporary critic of such attitudes, makes plain their consequences. In explicating the eminently Wildean argument that "the meaning of a text—or of any work of art—is the experience we have of it," Michaels notes that this claim "requires us to give up the idea of meaning. For our beliefs are necessarily either true or false, which is just to say that having a belief about something involves disagreeing with anyone who has a different belief about the same thing" (116-7). Since Wilde's spokesman Gilbert asks us to dismiss the question of whether or not we agree with Dante's convictions so that we can have a richer personal experience of the Dantean text, he effectively dismisses the criterion of truth from criticism. That this gesture has become so foundational in the wake of post-structuralism (which, to summarize crudely, views "truth" as a contingent effect of semiosis), its boldness in the historical context should not be overlooked. Wilde overturns the entirety of the critical tradition from Plato to Pater and anticipates, where he does not actually influence, the dominant theoretical tendencies of the late twentieth century.

We might more modestly claim that Gilbert's anti-metaphysical, anti-epistemological approach to Dante does no more than usefully supply a plausible answer to a genuine practical question: why should the modern reader attend to older literary

[57] That Wilde, despite the forbidding complexities of his own subject-position, has become a figurehead of modern identity politics—the gay martyr, the Irish rebel—is thus perhaps not a coincidence. Sinfield remains the classic guide to the anachronism involved in identifying Wilde with the later paradigm of "the homosexual," while O'Connor and Kiberd discuss Wilde's fraught national liminality as part of the urban Anglo-Irish Protestant upper-bourgeois elite, a privileged minority and thus a complicated bearer of resistance politics in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Ireland.

works whose models of reality have been invalidated by scientific investigation and sociopolitical transformation? By replying that we should go on reading Dante (or Homer or the Greek tragedians, all similarly treated in the dialogue) for the irreplaceable sensations they provide, Wilde/Gilbert is being no more than pragmatic and populist. He champions the common reader against the scholar by dismissing as irrelevant the historical supersession of the ideologies these ancient and medieval artists espoused. Though few educated modern readers can possibly believe that the universe is organized as Homer or Dante present it, translations continue to be published and readers go on reading, probably dismissing the poets' explicit theses while finding their poems valuable for the affects they provide, just as Gilbert claims. But this admittedly practical argument about past art exacts a price from the present artist: it assumes *in advance* the aesthetic irrelevance of metaphysics, ethics, politics, and other truth-claims, and so bars from contemporary art the sources of authority that Homer or Dante, not to say Dickens or Eliot, claimed for themselves. Ernest intuits this at the dialogue's conclusion when he declares that Gilbert is "an antinomian"—one, that is, who recognizes no law (1154).[58] Nevertheless, the antinomian *critic* can at least revel in the productions of every era and enjoy every artistic sensation; the *artist*, on the other hand, remains condemned to produce mute objects whose testimony it requires the critic to extrude. In a sense, all artists become dead artists, consigned to a meaningless past even in the present. Thus, Wilde's most thorough critical statement is his least optimistic about the intrinsic worth of the art object—and his closest to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

[58] Wilde's emphasis on antinomianism is taken from Pater's *The Renaissance*. I will therefore explore the concept at greater length in chapter II.2.

Seen in such a light, Aestheticism—which, in its progressive utopian dimension, belongs equally to the lower-class Jim and the upper-class Lord Henry, to the female Sybil and the male Dorian—reveals itself as the word for art's dystopic failure to produce a coherent and lived ethical and political narrative, as well as the concomitant failure of any extant coherent morality to satisfy our artistic needs. "'You never say a moral thing, and you never do a wrong thing,'" as the painter Hallward early chides Lord Henry Wotton, who also exhibits a fissure between his avowed inner state and his outward actions (20). Aestheticism *names* a contradiction rather than concealing one: it will not attempt to resolve within its form the contradictions it presents, while still clinging to the hope that those contradictions may be resolved in some state of universal knowledge yet to be realized. Jeff Nunokawa writes, "At least by the lights of a contemporary sensibility concerned to exposed what passes for natural proclivities as cultural constructions invented and imposed by the discourses that claim only to reveal them, the reprobate hero of Wilde's novel could hardly be more cooperative" (90). The novel's obsessive concern with "influence," Nunokawa goes on to show, foregrounds the constitution of subjectivity by exterior forces, thus demonstrating the arbitrary construction of psyche and language. Wilde's novel exposes all values as artificial, yet refuses to replace them with a coherently "essential" ethical system signaled as such within the text, all while insisting upon the necessity of the universal as the province of the critic, rather than the novelist—and displaying, in his novel's plot, the ethical disaster of Dorian's construction-through-discourse.

The formal implication of this aesthetic theory for Wilde's novel is simply that it

cannot succeed as a novel on that genre's former terms. If Wilde carries on the sentimental/domestic project of enclosing a private space of distanciated sensation from which to assess and renovate society, he also shows the powerlessness of this space to evoke and thus to effect the totality of his culture. Art requires criticism to complete it, which is to say that it requires an external source of intelligence to create a meaningful whole out of sensation. For the lack of this extrinsic authority, Sybil Vane dies: she could neither live with her mask nor without it. Her name implies not only that she is a vain or futile oracle, but a weathervane as well: she alerts us to the cultural wind sweeping away the old novel. In the fragmenting culture of the 1890s, amid all the liberations and dominations of the dialectic of enlightenment's double-sided logic, the novel, and its governing presence, the female creator, experiences a kind of death. Dorian's own death drives the point home. As Castle comments, we might be tempted the read the novel's conclusion as a restoration of wholeness of the type that we see in other late-nineteenth-century fictions—for instance, in the defeat of Dracula or the triumphant deductions of Sherlock Holmes—but the reality of Dorian's corpse actually continues the text's theme of fragmentary non-meaning: "Even after death, identity continues to slip into nonidentity, to rest finally in some inert thing, an attenuated sign, a dead man's jewelry" (Castle 158). Aestheticism's divorce of art from life produces the novel's final image: a body sans soul or meaning, a stubbornly material sign with no spiritual referent—fact without truth.

But Dorian is not the novel's primary artist-figure, nor is he the most obvious candidate for Wilde's surrogate in the difficult negotiations of art and life. Gagnier

comments, "Contrary to Wilde's famous formula—'Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry is what the world thinks of me: Dorian what I would like to be—in other ages perhaps'—he really was Sybil Vane, the actor who could play any part" (98). I agree that Wilde's nearest analogue in the text is Sybil, but Sybil in the end could not play *any* part, hence her suicide, and we should recognize too that there was one part Wilde could not play: the novelist. This accounts for the supposed artistic flaws in Wilde's own uneven book, which veers from the superficial suspense and over-the-top melodrama of the potboiler, as when Gray blackmails his former friend Alan Campbell to destroy the murdered body of Hallward, to the proto-modernist textualized stasis of the eleventh chapter, which Wilde, anticipating the manner of such avant-garde novelists as William S. Burroughs or Kathy Acker, mostly plagiarized from museum catalogues.[59] The novel's Gothic horror comes from its cleavage between art and ethics, its inadequacies the evidence of its genre's seeming superannuation. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, seen in this light, is less a novel than a playful, poetic, and frightening lament for the novel, an extension of Dickens's or Eliot's domestic project doubling as a sometimes deliberately half-hearted elegy over that project. The inner world that the earlier writers had imagined could reform society now appears as fatally amputated from society, unable to do anything but enjoy itself in pleasures that it can never be quite sure are not wicked. Wilde, of course, never wrote a novel again. He could not go on, much like Beckett's narrator of over half a century hence who confronted a later moment in the same dialectical dilemma. But unlike Beckett's narrator, Wilde did not go on.

[59] Raby explains Wilde's borrowings: "[Dorian's] interests are described by Wilde in an astonishing sequence of economical transcriptions, drawing on books he had recently reviewed, or on sources like the South Kensington Museum Handbooks for Precious Stones or Textile Fabrics" (75).

Nevertheless, he left his successors several clues in the labyrinth of modern novel-writing. While *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, unlike the other narratives considered in this project, is not a notably inward novel—that is, it does not spend much time elaborating the thoughts and sensations of its characters—a study of the evolution of the text shows that the bulk of Wilde's revisions tend toward providing psychic interiority for the characters, especially for Dorian Gray. For instance, Wilde's handwritten emendations to the typescript on which the 1890 *Lippincott's* edition of the novel was based, held at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, evinces Wilde's concern to deepen Dorian's inwardness, often through the use of free indirect discourse. Before Dorian learns of Sibyl's suicide, he reflects on whether or not he should reconsider his decision not to marry her. Wilde's additions to the typed passage add free indirect discourse—"Or was there some other, more terrible reason?" the narrative asks of the portrait's changes in a mimesis of Dorian's own anxious ignorance—and also represent Dorian's subjective experience of time passing in a torpor of ethical confusion: "Three o'clock struck, and four; and half-past four, but he did not stir. He was trying to gather up the scarcest threads of life, and to weave them into a pattern; to find his way through the sanguine labyrinth of passions, through which he was wandering. He did not know what to do, or what to think" (99). These passages, both appended to the typescript, show an authorial investment in more fully, roundedly, and concretely displaying Dorian's subjective and inward experience to the reader.

A long interpolation along the same lines occurs when Dorian investigates his portrait after hearing of Sibyl's suicide. In the original typescript, Dorian "wondered and

hoped that some day he would see the change taking place before his very eyes," and then a new paragraph begins, "He felt that the moment had come for making his choice" (113). However, Wilde revises this passage by adding an extensive new paragraph between those sentences, which begins, in free indirect style, "Poor Sybil [*sic*]! What a romance it had all been! She had often mimicked death on the stage, and at last Death himself had touched her… How had she played that dreadful scene? Had she cursed him, as she died? No; she had died for love of him, and Love would always be a sacrament to him now" (113). The interpolated passage, one of the longest added by Wilde to the typescript aside from a three-page supplement to Chapter 9 (what would become Chapter 11 in the 1891 version), goes on to detail Dorian's feelings toward Sibyl and the emotions and memories they provoke in him. Wilde, in revising even the earliest instantiation of the tale, took care to limn the subjectivity of the protagonist and to present Dorian's psyche as object and problem for the reader.

That Wilde turns to free indirect discourse as a method for psychologizing his Gothic Aestheticist romance explains why *Dorian Gray* remains such a stimulatingly problematic text. Its Aestheticism licenses it to mix residual and emergent conventions in its assault on the dominant culture.[60] To wit: if, in deploying Gothic stasis against the developmental realist *Bildungsroman* to disrupt teleological historiography, the novel stages a return of the repressed with a colonial inflection, it nevertheless looks forward to high modernist technique by centering narrative on the socially-constructed interiority of a central figure who is also an authorial surrogate. At the beginning of this chapter, I

[60] I borrow the residual-dominant-emergent paradigm of cultural analysis from Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 121-7.

suggested that Wilde posed the question—how to write novels in the absence of coherent historical narratives?—that other authors would answer. The answer they give is interiority. They make the consciousness of their central characters the sole concern of the text and then invite the reader to explore this mimetic map of the modern psyche so as to locate him- or herself in the ungrounded spaces of modernity. As Wilde's revisions show, the literary technique corresponding to this goal is free indirect discourse. But this is only one element of Wilde's heterogeneous text and by no means the most privileged one. Franco Moretti observes that free indirect discourse is the signal literary device of bourgeois, sober, industrious realism, the form of "optimistic conservat[ism]" or what he follows Diderot and Auerbach in calling *seriousness*, defined as a generic affect "more or less halfway between comedy and tragedy" ("Serious Century" 397, 369). As a comedian, tragedian, melodramatist, and romancier with sexual and colonial agendas at odds with the bourgeois century that Moretti extols, Wilde was obviously not interested in using free indirect discourse to serve the ends of realism. Moretti sets nineteenth-century seriousness and its version of free indirect style against "the mass appeal of what in English is called 'romance'"—precisely what Wilde's novel also enlists, in addition to free indirect style, in its challenge to realism (400). Wilde leaves to later writers, Joyce and Woolf chief among them, the task of forging a new novel by intensifying and thus turning against itself the nineteenth-century's style of bourgeois sobriety. Wilde, for his part, anticipates this future but does not rush into it: the past is for him too valuable a repository of aesthetic challenges.

Pater pursues the psychologistic aim of modern fiction more consistently than

Wilde in *Marius the Epicurean*, thus making his novel the clearer forerunner to the modernist narratives of Joyce and Woolf. Pater, however, lacks Wilde's strong sense of the ethical and political possibilities that the Aesthete gives up by abandoning historicism. Marius the Epicurean is a more or less heroic figure in his eponymous narrative, and, while Joyce's Stephen Dedalus and Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway do much to alienate the reader, they nevertheless incarnate forms of aesthetic responsiveness that readers are invited to emulate. Only Wilde, through the figure of Dorian Gray, has the needful temerity to suggest that the aesthetic protagonist, a creature of sensation and perception amputated from the received narratives of Christianity and the Enlightenment, might be a wholly monstrous figure, a Nietzschean blonde beast ravening through the metropolis unshackled by slave morality. Wilde's skepticism gives *The Picture of Dorian Gray* its curious air of being at once the most radical and the most conservative novel studied here, its nimbus, like its author's, of a paradoxical queer saintliness, or of what Declan Kiberd calls Tory Anarchism. It anarchically calls every value into question while insinuating, in Tory fashion, that a life uninformed by traditional values might not be worth living after all.

Inspired by the novel's abrogation of all developmental narratives, I conclude this chapter by finding *The Picture of Dorian Gray*'s end—both conclusion and telos—in its beginning. For the long, languorous, and sensuous description that opens the novel is more than mere scene-setting and has aims and effects other than mimesis. A counter-example that Wilde would have known (and perhaps even alludes to, though no critic has suggested it that I am aware of) is Balzac's extended account, many pages long, of a

boarding-house's interior in the opening pages of *Le Père Goriot*. In keeping with that novel's subtitle—"All Is True"—Balzac's elaborate stage-dressing serves as a certificate of authenticity for the subsequent realist narrative. The Balzacian narrator effectively communicates the following to the reader via his elaborate depictions of furniture: you can trust what I tell you about Parisian society because it is as solidly precise and well-observed as my descriptions of these chairs and this sideboard. Balzac's opening description is mimetic, referential, external. Wilde's opening description has other priorities, priorities it will pass on to later novelists as hints toward an answer to the questions provoked by the romance's severance of appearance from essence, sign from referent. Here are the first two paragraphs of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in their entirety:

> The studio was filled with the rich odour of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden, there came through the open door the heavy scent of the lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn.
>
> From the corner of the divan of Persian saddle-bags on which he was lying, smoking, as was his custom, innumerable cigarettes, Lord Henry Wotton could just catch the gleam of the honey-sweet and honey-coloured blossoms of a laburnum, whose tremulous branches seemed hardly able to bear the burden of a beauty so flamelike as theirs; and now and then the fantastic shadows of birds in flight flitted across the long tussore-silk curtains that were stretched in front of the huge window, producing a kind of momentary Japanese effect, and making him think of those pallid, jade-faced painters of Tokio who, through the medium of an art that is necessarily immobile, seek to convey the sense of swiftness and motion. The sullen murmur of the bees shouldering their way through the long unmown grass, or circling with monotonous insistence round the dusty gilt horns of the straggling woodbine, seemed to make the stillness more oppressive. The dim roar of London was like the bourdon note of a distant organ. (18)

The novel immediately suspends us in a realm where culture and nature

intermingle: a place of human intelligence and labor (a studio), but one permeated by floral effluvia. The etymon of the first sentence's subject ("studio," deriving from the Latin *studium*) evokes the hallmark of modernist literacy: the new literature will demand not only reading but *study*. Yet the student/artist's labors will be rewarded by a wealth of sensations ("the rich odour") elicited by the flower that Wilde's beloved Hellenes saw as a sign of eros and used in the worship of goddesses (Isis, Aphrodite) and that Christians since the medieval period associate with the Virgin Mary (Hutton 136). Careful aesthetic study, then, will unite eros and purity, sensation and spirit, artifice and eternity. The garden outside the studio is portentous with Biblical and Miltonic warning, however. The lilac is similar to the rose in its religious significance: it symbolizes both "youthful innocence" (if white) and "the first motions of love" (if purple) in the Victorian language of flowers and was associated in Mediterranean Christianity with Easter ("Language of Flowers" n. pag.). But the heaviness of its odor evokes the burden of traveling the straight road. This weighty Easter-flower is therefore quickly upstaged by the attractively aesthetic ("still more delicate") snake in this garden, which comes in the form of a floral pun. "Pink-flowering thorn" would seem to refer to the hawthorn, a plant in the *Rosasceae* family, hence kin to the erotic/mystic rose. But Wilde's foreshortening of "hawthorn" to "thorn" points to the threat that waits for the artist/student who would pluck the rose—intimates, in other words, that the quest for a mystic union of sense and spirit, fact and truth, appearance and essence, may fail. The Aesthete as modern Christ will meet his crucifixion, as had his short-lived forerunners among the Romantic poets, e.g., the Shelley of "Ode to the West Wind": "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!"

(l.54, Greenblatt 1744). Furthermore, the feminized and queer bearer of late-Victorian inwardness, symbolized by the involutions of the proverbially vulvic rose, may fall before the phallic thorn of imperial masculinity. The *Rosasceae* family also includes plants bearing edible fruits, including the apple; this fact extends the opening paragraph's Christian allusions to the dangers the sensual life holds.[61] And if we want to indulge a taste for over-interpretation, we might even see in a reference to the hawthorn a declaration of generic allegiance via an allusion to the surname of Nathaniel Hawthorne, the nineteenth-century novelist who, in the Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, most famously defines and defends romance against realism (and whose son, Julian, gave *The Picture of Dorian Gray* one of its few sympathetic contemporary reviews).

If the novel's first paragraph tells the reader acquainted with flower-symbolism what the narrative will be about, the second paragraph teaches us how to read it. Its opening sentence is a 120-word-long path through at least six discrete clauses, for one thing, and its grammatical subject is moreover recumbent: Wilde is clearly enjoining us not to rush as we read his text. The syntax is there to impede us, even if we do want to hurry: the subject appears after a dependent clause that explains his (in)action through a baroquely delaying appositive phrase ("smoking, as was his wont, innumerable cigarettes") that nearly parodies the decadent stasis of Latinate prose.

In keeping with privileged stasis, our subject is an aristocrat with the ability to produce nothing but mental states even as he over-consumes luxury goods whose

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[61] King's study of botanical symbolism in the English novel, as it pertains to the sexual maturation of heroines, is relevant here. King introduces *Dorian Gray* as a homoerotic counterexample, wherein the young male rather than the young female is "in bloom." King does not address the novel's opening, but she performs close readings of the flower symbolism in later chapters. These support my case that Wilde's deployment of flower imagery is carefully patterned and allusive. See King 215-220.

manufacture depends upon a worldwide network of coercive labor practices—Wilde, recall, had toured the American South where he expressed some sympathy for the defeated Confederacy.[62] The global supports of the aesthetic lifestyle extend to artistic as well as to field labor, hence Lord Henry's Persian divan, his silk curtains, and his Japanese frame of mind. But just as the novel's opening paragraph weds nature to culture and sensation to spirituality, so too does this paragraph unite East to West, Japan to Europe: those painters of Tokyo that Lord Henry remembers have similar artistic goals to those underlying the novel we now read. For what does *The Picture of Dorian Gray* attempt to accomplish if not the *immobilization* of the novel, the conversion of this most mobile genre into one of stasis, indeed, into a form of portraiture? Only then, once the novel is stripped of its progressive temporality, can its use to suggest movement count as an artistic gesture. That this is an insight borrowed from the East hints that, while Europe may exploit its exterior, it also relies on it not only for material labor but for its very thoughts, which is to say that Japan, Wilde's utopic example of an artist-nation in "The Decay of Lying," may not be exterior to Europe at all but rather constitutive of its modern identity.

To return, however illusorily, from political geography back to natural, consider the laburnum trees, whose gleam Lord Henry just catches. Lord Henry's mere glimpse implies that aesthetic experience is always a matter of something tantalizingly withheld, of some half-unknown object of desire. Accordingly, the laburnum's mention in this text is freighted with Paterian allusion. Its beauty is "flamelike" but also a heavy "burden."

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[62] Ellmann reports, "When [Wilde] went to stay a night with Jefferson Davis, he made out an analogy between the Southern Confederacy and the Irish; both had gone forth to battle and fallen, and their pursuit of self-rule made them akin" (*Oscar Wilde* 197).

This contradictory image of solidified fire links back to Pater's "hard, gemlike flame," *The Renaissance*'s famous key image for the paradox of art as arrested flux, the aesthetic object as a given moment, suspended, held up for inspection and appreciation—just the idea that Lord Henry Wotton will go on to attribute to Japanese painting by the end of this sentence, further unifying Western and Eastern aesthetics (*The Renaissance* 236). While the passage's Eastern allusions conjure up geopolitics, the honeyed odor of the laburnum may give readers attuned to queer cryptographies a *memoire involuntaire* of sexual politics. In his essay on the pioneering eighteenth-century German classicist Winckelmann, Pater alludes to the Biblical story of Jonathan, beloved companion of King David. Jonathan and David were seen in the nineteenth century as an ancient instance of male homoeroticism; for instance, the mid-Victorian artist Simeon Solomon, some of whose paintings Wilde owned, treated the subject in an 1856 sequence of teasingly sexual drawings. In the Bible passage Pater references, Jonathan is sentenced to death by his father, King Saul, after he eats honey in defiance of Saul's wartime edict that the army would not eat until their enemy was defeated. Jonathan exclaims in consequence, "I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and, lo, I must die" (*King James Bible*, 1 Samuel 14: 43). Pater quotes this sentence in "Winckelmann" to ventriloquize the typical artist's response to "Christian asceticism," which "discredit[s] the slightest touch of sense" and "has from time to time provoked into strong emphasis the contrast or antagonism to itself, of the artistic life, with its inevitable sensuousness" (222). This is to say that the smell of honey presages its taste, and its taste is inextricably linked in the Aestheticist context to an understanding of art as sensuous, sexual,

homoerotic, and under threat from a dominant culture of punitively narrow norms. The novel's first paragraph alludes to a wished-for unity of sensuality and godliness, but the references to honey, replete with dissident sexuality, declare in a very quiet mode of subtextual and subcultural defiance that this text may be forced to take the "evil" side of sense if the godly declare that the sensualists must die. [63]

However, this novel concerns the antinomies of Aestheticism rather than its glories. What the long first sentence of this paragraph gives, the second takes away. The monotonous, sullen, laborious bees circling the woodbine (i.e., honeysuckle) probably find their way into this passage most proximally from Keats's "To Autumn," where they are last seen living in the pitiable delusion that "warm days will never cease / For summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells" (ll. 10-11, Greenblatt 1868). Keats's bees are already overfull and sticky with sensuousness gluttony, but Wilde's bees, living out the dialectic of Enlightenment, reconvert pleasure back into labor and nature back into culture by their resemblance to the insectoid cells of supposedly human London in their unrelenting pursuit of nectar. Both urban humans and pastoral bees operate mindlessly, generating an oppressive irritation of sound that, in the urban case, recalls the burdensome "bourdon note" heard in the churches where asceticism reigns. Here, the taste of honeysuckle is not art's fulfillment, but its oppressive reduction to pure sense: unctuously unconscious facticity, matter without mind. As in *Dorian Gray* at large, so in this passage, Wilde always juxtaposes Aestheticism's promise with its dangers.

If in a severe synecdoche I had to select one word from this opening passage to

[63] Wilde alludes early in his career to this same Paterian/Biblical passage in a punning sonnet about the division in his soul between classical restraint and romantic excess, "Hélas!": "Lo, with a little rod / I did but touch the honey of romance— / And must I lose a soul's inheritance?" (*Complete Works* 864)

stand in for all the rest, that word would be "tremulous." Wilde uses the adjective to characterize the branches under the weight of the laburnum leaves' honeyed, flaming beauty, and we might therefore see it as a apt description for the narrative architecture of the novel straining to accommodate the non-narrative energies of the aesthetic. "Tremulous" means only that a body is shaking, but gives no semantic content to those tremors: they might be caused by desire, pleasure, pain, fear, or awe before the sacred. "Tremulous" indicates the perils and possibilities of pure sensation—of the aesthetic.

Reducing this text to "tremulous" would ultimately be a mistake, though, because it cannot be read—nor can it have been written—out of pure affect. Consider the extensive allusions elaborated in my analysis above: to Pater and the Bible, to Keats and Shelley, to Greek myth and Christian tradition, to Japanese painting and American literature, to horticulture and etymology. These allusions are not the random scatterings of an Oxford education; they make up a dense network of cultural reference that allows the educated reader to understand from paragraphs that seem merely descriptive the themes, the generic context, and the sexual politics of the novel. For the most part, prior novelistic prose in English cannot be parsed in this way. I cannot pause to prove it here, but my sense is that no paragraph of Austen or Dickens or Hardy will yield on analysis such an allusive freight.[64] This manner of densely learned writing had previously been reserved for poetry; Milton, Pope, and Keats, for instance, will each reward this style of almost philological reading. But writing fictional prose that is thick with symbol and

[64] George Eliot is perhaps a Victorian exception in her most carefully-wrought passages (see Dorothea Brooke's visionarily unpleasant honeymoon in Rome in *Middlemarch*, for instance). Joseph Conrad, Henry James, and Pater are of course working along the same lines at the same time, however, and the work of Flaubert furnishes an important non-Anglophone model of prose-as-poetry (there is Melville, too, but his mature proto-modernist work is not known at the end of the nineteenth century).

allusion will be a technique adopted by major twentieth-century writers, including not only Joyce and Woolf, whose Aestheticist inheritance I treat below, but also a long list encompassing both sides of the Atlantic and extending into the twenty-first century: Dorothy Richardson, William Faulkner, Jean Toomer, Ford Madox Ford, Katherine Mansfield, Nella Larsen, E. M. Forster, Djuna Barnes, Maclolm Lowry, Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, and many more. What is the effect of such writing, and why does it come to the fore in the novel of Aestheticism? One effect is to make readerly activity an undeniable constituent of the text's meaning. While reading by definition requires readers, writing that refuses overt modes of rhetorical suasion even as it demands word-level decoding to establish its themes foregrounds both the process of reading and the role and the qualifications of the reader. Wilde, who sought a mass audience as well as the approval of Gide and Mallarmé, writes at the outset of this transformation in elite producers' approach to writing fiction. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is accordingly not nearly as demanding as the novels that will follow just a decade or so hence (e.g., *The Wings of the Dove*, *Pointed Roofs*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*). Half-potboiler, half-avant-garde, it keeps a foot in the world of popular romance.

Before leaving Wilde's novel for the more straightforward modernism of Joyce, though, I want to conclude by insisting that the romance elements of *Dorian Gray* are crucial to its role in the literary transition to stream-of-consciousness fiction. I noted at the outset of this chapter Elaine Showalter's contention that *fin-de-siècle* novelists turned to romance to re-masculinize fiction as domestic ideology waned in the context of imperialism, urbanization, new media, etc. Aestheticism in a crucial regard resists this

process by preserving, in the aesthetic subject, the private realm that domestic ideology had segregated from the public world. If the romancers struck out on adventures in the "wilds" of the city or of the empire, then the aesthete literally stays at home, as Huysmans's Des Esseintes does, and there has privileged moments of feeling and desire. Why then is *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (unlike *À Rebours*, unlike even the historical novel *Marius the Epicurean*) full of folkloric and Gothic elements that would seem more at home in Stoker or Stevenson? The answer: progressive history must be stopped for the modernist subject to emerge.

Consider that *Great Expectations* treats half a lifetime in half the number of pages that *Ulysses* devotes to one day—yet both are novels of common life (Joyce's flights of surrealist fancy notwithstanding), which is to say that both maintain a realism of content if not of form. Place the less securely canonical *The Picture of Dorian Gray* between those two undisputed monuments, and its role as formal catalyst becomes obvious: its *Bildungsroman*-destroying deployment of Gothic mystique frees its protagonist from the drama of development and transforms his subjectivity from an organism in time to a structure in place.[65] Here is the importance of Wilde's Chapter 11, which entirely suspends the narrative to explore at length the artistic enjoyments of Dorian, to the entire project of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. When the protagonist is arrested in time, like the

[65] I intend the three named works to be understood as metonyms for the larger trend in Anglo fiction of Gothic tropes mediating the shift from progressive didactic external narration to static interactive internal description. Other triads could obviously be substituted (e.g., *Jane Eyre – The Turn of the Screw – Pointed Roofs* or *Far from the Madding Crowd – Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde – The Good Soldier*). In each case, the intermediate romance text of the *fin de siècle* makes an unresolved conflict in the Victorian text explicit, which problem the modernist text then treats as a socially-constituted psychological matter. Relatedly, see Showalter chapter 1 for the parallels between Aestheticist-Decadent romantic Gothic novellas and emerging psychoanalysis as both deployed the brief "case study" form to reveal the problems latent in the progressive organic temporality of the domestic triple-decker.

aesthetic moment hymned by Pater in *The Renaissance*, the reader is free to explore what he now *is* rather than the process of his becoming. Wilde hurls the *sabot* of romance into the realist clockwork and thus allows us to inspect the mechanism of the modern subject for ourselves. "Inspect the mechanism," rather like the Formalists' injunction to "lay bare the device," might in fact be one of modernism's mottoes. The hidden pedagogy of Wilde's novel is a lesson on how to construe the text as a locus rather than a process—what is in process is thus not the characters but the readers. Wildean counter-romance shows the adventure-writer that sending middle-class readers to the East End or the Far East may prove less exotic than sending them into the labyrinth of their own subjectivity. Aestheticist romance preserves the inwardness innovated by domestic fiction, and in turn enables the experimentalists of modernism to recover and revise it.

In terms of critical method, re-emphasizing romance's importance to modernism may demand the restitution of theories developed especially for the reading of non-realist texts that make subjectivity manifest. As a case in point: taking off along one of Gilles Deleuze's least-traveled "lines of flight," Kris Pint unfashionably argues that literary and cultural critics should reanimate the psychoanalysis of Carl Jung in our continuing attempts to explore the intransigently strange territories of fictional discourse. Pint's explanation of several Jungian concepts indeed proves suggestive for understanding *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and its legacy for the modern novel. The most crucial idea is that of the *temenos*, or the magic circle in which theophanies might occur: "The *temenos* established a space for gods who would not be able to appear without (or outside) the borders of this *temenos*. One could even say that they can only exist because of the

creation of such a *temenos*, as their existence is only an appearance, a simulacrum, an image without an original. Their manifestation on the holy ground of the *temenos* is their only reality" (51). Basil Hallward's studio is obviously such a place, but more importantly, so is the passage describing it, dense as it is with allusions to religion, myth, and literature. Pint argues that we should understand any text as a charged ground of images, a space for the reader to traverse, where various mental states can be encountered and conversed with.[66] But this critical approach is hardly a capitulation to fixed essences, as one imagines the most distinguished materialist novel-theorists from Lukács to Armstrong objecting. For as Pint goes on to observe, the source of the images one encounters in the textual garden/*studium* is culture, not nature. Jung says that encountering these cultural images requires "active imagination," the reader's collaboration with the text in interpreting it. Pint elaborates: "By stimulating this 'active imagination', it becomes possible to discover and eventually break the unconscious spell of these powerful cultural images. In a continual process of self-experimentation and self-transformation one can actualize other variants within the potential field of these images" (53). In other words, the text-as-*temenos* calls on the active participation of the reader in granting content to its images. Readers who are so stimulated cannot help but critically evaluate these images, since they are also engaged in the process of generating them. On this account, the artist who, like Wilde and his successors, has abandoned temporality in the name of subjectivity creates a place full of half-evoked cultural simulacra that are

[66] Pint is of course carrying on Gilles Deleuze's polemic against Freud and Lacan, who saw language as the underlying structure of mind. Deleuze recommends Jung as a corrective, because Jung emphasizes that the mind is more like a landscape than like a language. Language, a system, restricts the subject's movement, whereas a landscape can be explored more freely.

reconstructed, thus better understood and therefore alterable, by the reader. The artist opens a space for cultural criticism, but the audience enters that space as the critic.

As John Paul Riquelme tells us, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* describes this process of creating a critical space even as it carries it out: "The collaborative act of creating the painting brings into being something apparently new, original, and masterful, that turns out to be not only beautiful but also atavistic and terrifyingly at odds with the public values of the society that applauds its beautiful appearance. That collaborative act parallels and engages with our own act of reading" (492). Wilde's textual fantasy allows the text-as-subjective-landscape to come into being in the form of Dorian's portrait, a culturally-constituted image of subjectivity. But Wilde does not emphasize through his own formal innovations the emergence of subjectivity from fantastical atemporality anywhere but in Chapter 11. It falls to Joyce, among Wilde's followers, to apprehend this new model of novel-writing as portrait better than the Aestheticist generation did. Joyce removes the mediation of the Gothic and creates a textual *temenos* that is nothing less than his hero's mind, filled with destructive cultural images. Joyce requires the reader to grasp and criticize these images if they are to understand his text at all, as Wilde did not, and so I turn next to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to understand the novel's development as form of critical social thought.

I.3. Always Meeting Ourselves: James Joyce's Hailing of the Critic

He wanted to say that literature was above politics.

—Joyce, "The Dead"

He found in the world without as actual what was in his world within as possible. Maeterlinck says: If Socrates leave his house today he will find the sage seated on his doorstep. If Judas go forth tonight it is to Judas his steps will tend. *Every life is many days, day after day. We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves.*

—Joyce, *Ulysses*

The problem Aestheticism bequeaths to later novelists is how to rejoin art and criticism if each is not to lead an incomplete life, the former lost amid sensuous particulars and the latter too abstract to be relevant to life as it is experienced. James Joyce, whose works are steeped in allusions to Wilde and Pater, is the writer who most explicitly took up this problem as it applied to novelistic thinking. In a 1909 article on Wilde that he wrote for the Triestine newspaper *Il Picolo della Sera*, Joyce demonstrates his grasp of the essence of Wilde's fraught achievement. Joyce's short piece of workmanlike journalism on Wilde, written during the ten-year process of composing *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, is for the most part painfully condescending. It reduces Wilde to "the logical and inevitable product of the Anglo-Saxon college and university system, a system of seclusion and secrecy" and speculates eugenically on "the epileptic cast of [Wilde's] nervous system" (150).[67] Even so, Joyce rightly concludes that Wilde's work was a "polyphonic variation on the relationship between art and nature, rather than a revelation of his psyche," which is to say that Joyce comprehends the

[67] The piece's occasion is a Triestine performance of Strauss's *Salomé*, based on Wilde's Symbolist drama. Joyce's perhaps surprising *de haut en bas* posture toward Wilde could be explained as self-protectiveness: the latter sexually-dissident cosmopolite Aesthete tries to avoid a too-close public association with the earlier one, perhaps for fear of incurring a similar fate. On the other hand, considerations of class/religion in the Irish context may be the explanation, as the downwardly-mobile petit-bourgeois Catholic takes discursive revenge on the privileged Protestant member of the professional/colonial elite.

difficulty and sophistication of the questions Wilde's work raises for the novelist, ostensibly committed to mimesis (151).

That Joyce sees the import of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*'s generic innovations is shown when he incisively quotes Wilde's own defense of his novel: "Oscar Wilde's self-defence in the *Scots Observer* should be accepted as legitimate by any bench of impartial judges. Each man writes his own sin into *Dorian Gray* (Wilde's most celebrated novel). What Dorian Gray's sin was no one says and no one knows. He who discovers it has committed it" (151). This might at first seem like nothing more than a simple quip meant to vindicate Wilde from charges laid by those who, then as now, moralize over others' transgressions to conceal their own. But it actually encodes a nuanced understanding of what Wilde's destruction of the realist novel of temporal progress and explicit social criticism portends for the twentieth-century novel. Each reader, Joyce implies, now becomes a writer of the text in the act of interpreting it. This shifts the burden of criticism, whether moral or political, onto the reader, who becomes a critic of society in the act of reconstructing the text of society as it manifests itself in the form of a novel. Furthermore, the identity of author and protagonist, once ensured by the protagonist's intellectual and moral growth over the course of the progressive narrative to the stature of the author, now shifts to an identity of protagonist and reader. Readers investigate a psyche made, like their own, of cultural discourses and thus come to understand their own subjective constitution. Whoever would understand Dorian Gray must understand him- or herself first. It is no longer, Joyce recognizes, the author's business to tell readers directly where their critical energies should go.

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* takes this dissociation between author and text as its problematic as it narrates the life of Stephen Dedalus from infancy to the cusp of adulthood. The main question in Joyce criticism, after all, has been about Joyce's attitude toward Stephen: is he critical of the young man or not? That is, can we identify a stable critical position that Joyce takes on the character of whom he spends the entire novel limning the subjectivity and charting the development? Wayne Booth offers an early summation of the problem in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Inviting us to imagine ourselves into the mind of a trickster who attempts to come up with a work of fiction that would wholly confound its critic, Booth evokes the difficulties of *A Portrait*: "Let us then write a book that will look like the author's autobiography… Let us then call for the reader's precise judgment on a very elaborate set of opinions and actions in which the hero is sometimes right, sometimes slightly wrong, and sometimes absurdly astray" (324). Following this, Booth offers a fulsome summary of critical opinion from the first quarter century of Joyce criticism. Predictably, critics split into two camps: those who take the conclusion of the novel to be an affirmative depiction of Stephen's maturity and those who instead see the novel as consistently ironic toward Stephen from beginning to end. It would be easy enough to write a similar summary of the half century since Booth. Even as critical concerns have moved on from humanism, New Criticism, and myth-criticism to post-structuralism, feminism, psychoanalysis, and post-colonialism, recent scholars continue to take their stand for or against Stephen.[68] Given this, it is

[68] The most influential anti-Stephen statement came with Kenner's "The *Portrait* in Perspective," in which the critic argues that Stephen remains captive to a spuriously idealizing Romantic view even at the novel's conclusion: "And it is quite plain from the final chapter of the *Portrait* that we are not to accept the mode of Stephen's 'freedom' as the 'message' of the book" (*Dublin's Joyce* 132). Ellmann, on the other hand,

chastening to read Booth fifty years later as he openly mocks the notion that the question can be decided by "re-reading *Portrait* one more time" (330). His own conclusion seems like a cutting of the Gordian knot: he argues that Joyce strove for full objectivity without realizing that doing so obviated the possibility of readers' divining his moral intention. In short, the novel is undecidable because its author is naïve.

But Booth's question is only a subset of the major issue that has divided Joyce criticism from its institutional beginning: there are those who think that Joyce's textual innovation—telling the story *and* demanding the story's critique, as I will explain below—renders his novels negative works, capable only of revealing the gaps and fissures of social reality, and those who think conversely that his refusal to supply his own social critique makes his works uniquely powerful agents of cultural construction. Fundamentally, these are debates about what Joyce believes to be the scope of the ambitions proper to the novel and the effects the form might achieve. Is he another Wilde, writing "The Happy Prince" to indicate that the artist in a commodified society is alone with God in perceiving a utopia that can no longer be made manifest? Or has he instead reinvented the powers of the novel on new terms—found, that is, the new critical vision that can fill out the novel of Aestheticist autonomy and inwardness with the same

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read the novel more positively, seeing in it "the gestation of a soul" (*James Joyce* 296). The negative view of Stephen has largely won out in criticism, given that Stephen's idealism, correctly identified by Kenner, brings in its train all the ideological anathemata of post-structuralism, including essentialism, elitism, and sexism. See my account of Henke and Sheffield below for the relevant feminist debate. Among more recent critics, Brivic's psychoanalytic approach in *Joyce Through Lacan and Žižek* is more forgiving, emphasizing the development of Stephen's creative powers through language as the novel goes on. Post-colonial critics, too, have read Stephen sympathetically: Said and Cheng understand him to be conditioned by colonialism, while Deane, also insisting on the character's constraint by colonialism and capitalism, nevertheless notes that "*Portrait* is the first novel in the English language in which a passion for thinking is fully presented… Stephen is remarkable because his capacity for thought is crucial, not an incidental feature of his personality" (76).

critical force that earlier realisms possessed?

For instance, Joyce appears in Richard Ellmann's landmark 1959 biography as a liberal humanist, concerned to promote the thoughtful decency of Leopold Bloom in an Ireland overrun by coarse bullies and authoritarian institutions. The novel for Ellmann's Joyce has the power to create positive effects through the inculcation in individual readers of a certain moral and aesthetic disposition, here associated with individualist Bloom and his clever kindness. This is an updated nineteenth-century appraisal of the novel's powers: if the form no longer requires spiritual insight to organize it, it nevertheless promotes social virtues to the polis. This may seem a superseded humanism, but in our own time Declan Kiberd's post-colonial reading of *Ulysses* resembles Ellmann's in its optimism. For Kiberd, Joyce is a literary nation-builder, "an artist who spoke for a newly-liberated people" (*Inventing Ireland* 327). What Kiberd calls the "mythic realism" of *Ulysses* makes the novel an anti-imperial modern epic that aspires to nothing less than a progressive nationalist vision of Ireland, a less xenophobic, less sexist nation than the more aristocratic and essentialist *patria* imagined by the likes of Yeats or de Valera, but a nation achieved in writing nonetheless. Kiberd's sense of novelistic power asks us to imagine modern fiction writers as present-day bards, constructing with their narratives the social world that its readers (and even co-habitant non-readers) will live in. Finally, feminist/psychoanalytic criticism also gives us Joyce as all-powerful novelist: see, for instance, Shelly Brivic's recent *Joyce Through Lacan and Žižek*, in which Joyce anticipates the powerful theories of the psychoanalysts and consequently deconstructs gender and national roles to pave the way for Third-World and

women's liberation.

An entirely different Joyce can be found in the criticism of Ellmann's contemporary, Hugh Kenner. Kenner's Joyce, like T. S. Eliot's in his "*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth," neo-classically construes fiction as a mirror held up to a sick society. *Ulysses*, on this view, is a textual machine that manifests the spiritual emptiness of mechanized culture. Its main characters are like Dante's sinners, caught for eternity in the posture of their offense: Stephen the ineffectual idealist, too fixated on the neo-Platonic beyond to achieve necessary understanding in the present; Bloom the soulless sensualist, his Lockean mind a blank slate for commerce to colonize with cliché; and finally Molly, a specimen of pure female carnality at mind's end, who, in Kenner's words, holds "authority over this animal kingdom of the dead" (*Dublin's Joyce* 262). Kenner's is a modernist Joyce *par excellence*, author of a gargantuan *Waste Land* the brokenness of whose textual form is intended to mourn the lost wholeness of pre-modern Christendom. The susceptibility to misogyny and anti-Semitism of Kenner's anti-Bloom thesis has not prevented it from finding echoes in Marxist Joyce criticism.[69] Franco Moretti, for instance, also gives us a wholly negative, anti-capitalist Joyce. Moretti reads *Ulysses* as a dystopia the text of which is a "clearance sale" for the ruins of liberal humanism in the aftermath of twentieth century capitalism's transition to an imperial system that turns the Western metropole into a consumerist dreamland out of touch with

[69] Kenner, to be fair, recanted in a 1987 preface to a new edition of *Dublin's Joyce*, acknowledging that he had scanted Joyce's positive portrayal of the Blooms and misread key elements of the novel due to insufficient context.

tradition and reality ("The Long Good-Bye" 206).[70] The modernist novel for Moretti as for Kenner can do nothing to ameliorate the condition it portrays. Feminist critique too offers a more negative Joyce—as in, for instance, Julia Kristeva or Colin MacCabe—a liberating anti-author along psychoanalytic lines: his texts give voice to infinite desire and to an identification with the feminine, which has been excluded from the symbolic order. To do so, however, he must refuse the symbolic's regime of sense, thus producing *écriture* embodying the excluded remainder of phallogocentric discourse.

As M. Keith Booker notes, Joyce's writing more than that of most other figures, even the comparably canonical or comparably modernist, is closely bound up with the critical discourses devoted to it in ways the author made himself responsible for:

> The close complicity between Joyce's writing and its criticism comes about partially because much of his work is so difficult that new readers tend to turn to published explication in search of help...In addition, Joyce…was intensely aware of the important role that criticism would play in the reception of his work, and often seems to have designed his texts as gold mines for enterprising critics. […] [H]is texts are generated in a very real way in the process of reading rather than being produced as finished artifacts in the process of writing" (3, 4).

Booker emphasizes two facts that will be central to my thesis about *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. First, the text was deliberately constructed to be unreadable

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[70] Jameson's view of *Ulysses* in "Modernism and Imperialism" makes an interesting contrast with Moretti. He shares Moretti's basically Leninist/Lukácsian critique of modernism as imperial-stage reification, but only as it applies to metropolitan novels. *Ulysses*, as a putatively peripheral text, escapes censure because backward turn-of-the-century Dublin offered Joyce authentic pre-capitalist lifeways as material. Jameson thus historicizes what will become Kiberd's view: the novel can serve as a national epic, but only before capitalism arrives in full in the nation. Joyce's self-conception was a cosmopolitan one—he saw himself as a European and took the challenge of the Catholic Church far more seriously than that of England. This challenges Kiberd and Jameson's emphasis on the nation as the conceptual key to unlock the Joycean text. Indeed, Joyce's attack on English imperialism and Irish nationalism come down to the same claim: both are *provincial*. The Church, on the other hand, lives up to its universalist name, and is thus the worthier antagonist, or, indeed, rival, and certainly the antagonist emphasized throughout *A Portrait*. See Lernout for a historical and empirical account of Joyce's worldly and European anti-clericalism.

without some level of critical activity, even if only on the part of the reader whom Joyce expected to work at interpretation. Second, Joyce viewed his work as a collaboration with critics, leaving the reader room to come to his or her own conclusions in many cases (though not all, as we will see) about the text's meanings. In this way, Joyce turns the novel's divorce from the social to his advantage: by being so inscrutably autonomous, he commands attention. Booker's account solves the riddle of the quarrelling critics who cannot decide how much power Joyce believes the modern novel to possess: the critics themselves *enact* Joyce's social authority as critic by themselves constructing cultural criticism out of the linguistic and psychic materials he has assembled for them. In other words, the novelist in Joyce's model surrenders to Wilde's dictum on the superiority of criticism, and, in so doing, renders his art all the more central to a culture in need of criticism. For this reason, my reading of Joyce will often take the form of a reading of his critics, since I apprehend in them planned-for constituents of his texts.

Before proceeding, some explanation for my choice of *A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man* as proof-text for this thesis may be in order. The debates I have sketched above—and examples could, of course, be multiplied *ad infinitum*—tend to take *Ulysses* as their centerpiece, understandably enough given its comprehensive social canvas, its massive influence on twentieth-century literature, and its sense of providing a summative conclusion to the earlier books—*Dubliners* and *A Portrait*—to which it is, in effect, a sequel. My analysis of Joyce's novelistic preoccupations, however, will focus on *A Portrait* for three reasons. *A Portrait*, for one thing, restricts itself entirely to Stephen's point of view and adopts no meta-language that would "place" either the protagonist or

what he observes.[71] In this way, the novel prepares the way for Joyce's more radical experiments in removing the author that one sees in the second half of *Ulysses* and in *Finnegans Wake*, wherein language seems to generate itself in the absence of a subject. Examining this technique *ab ovo* will have implications for its meaning in its more intense later avatars. My second reason for focusing on the earlier novel, similarly, comes from the fact, already recognized by critics like Kenner and Henke, that grasping Joyce's attitude toward Stephen Dedalus is the pre-condition for assessing his attitude toward Leopold and Molly Bloom. To understand *A Portrait* is, in a sense, to understand *Ulysses*. Finally, as a novel explicitly about an artist, it shows Joyce's sense of art's possibilities as manifested in and through the form of the novel, a topic that will recur at the end of my analysis.

To take up my first point, the novel's very title provides an entry point to the questions it raises about the aesthetic. Whereas earlier realist novels, from Richardson to Hardy, had called themselves "histories," thus emphasizing the linear temporality of human development, Joyce follows Pater (*Imaginary Portraits*), Wilde (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*) and Henry James (*The Portrait of a Lady*) in associating the kind of novel he wants to write not with narrative history but with static visual art. A portrait captures its subject at one moment in time, whereas a history tracks its subject as it changes. To make the novel a portrait, therefore, is to render it motionless. As we saw with Wilde, this robs the novel of its traditional power to make ethical sense and the political

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[71] For the importance of the term "meta-language" to Joyce criticism, see MacCabe, *Revolution of the Word* chapter 2, wherein Joyce's impersonal storytelling is famously contrasted with George Eliot's discursive narration. I differ from MacCabe in viewing Joyce's refusal of authorial commentary not as generating radical indeterminacy, but as producing a new kind of social knowledge instead. It is thus different in degree rather than kind from the realism that preceded it.

interventions that depend on it: with no fiction of progressive teleology, the novel becomes non-ethical. As Dorian grows dissolute and murderous in his arrested steady-state, the portrait in his attic de-evolves in a grotesque parody of the kind of ethical development that, say, George Eliot was interested in. For Wilde, the evacuation of the novel's traditional content led to a conflict in form. As Dorian fails to develop, the narrative stalls, most famously in the elaborately, almost boringly discursive Chapter 11, itself plagiarized as if to embody the stagnation and corruption it brings to our attention.

An apparent aporia, early recognized by Hugh Kenner in his essay "The Cubist *Portrait*," here makes itself known: *A Portrait*'s overall structure—tracking Stephen from infancy to post-adolescence—implies a historicist and teleological view of human development, while its title refuses history and development altogether. Indeed, the title's ambiguities do not end there. The novel is *a* portrait, not *the* portrait, which seems a clear enough confession of the provisionality of all discourse, and perhaps an implicit judgment on Wilde and James for their hubris in selecting the definite article. On the other hand, the novel is *a* portrait of *the* artist, a phrase with two possible meanings. Traditionally in the visual arts, the definite article before "artist" indicates the portrait's reflexivity: it portrays its own maker. Joyce's *Portrait*, then, is a self-portrait. But the article may suggest a still wider definitiveness: it may apply to all artists, in which case the novel portrays not an individual but a type, and probably an archetype rather than a mere social or historical type, given the absence of any historical delimitation on the term "artist." The title concludes, though, with a different kind of temporal limit: "as a young man." "As" presents both age and gender as modalities of artistic identity; this at least

answers one question about the novel's emphases, namely, that it concerns artistic identity as primary in relation to those of age or gender. The return of the indefinite article reinforces both the contingency of age and gender and the necessity of artistic identity. Joyce will offer *a* particular portrait of *a* particular young man, but the portrait's object will be *the* artist, particularly Joyce but potentially all artificers going back to Daedelus. This, as we have seen with Wilde and will see again in the later writers, is typical of Aestheticist modernism's mixture of historicism with essentialism. They view essential traits—usually subjectivity itself, along with its physical scaffolding—as subject to historical flux. The subjectivity of the artist, then, will be constantly before us as in a portrait, while the portrait will, like Dorian's, grow older along with its sitter. The privilege of literature over painting is to be diachronic and synchronic at once. In any case, Joyce here quietly solicits a first interpretation from the reader: his ambiguity about whether or not "the artist" refers only to himself or also to an archetypal artist-figure remands the decision to the audience.

The novel's first sentence provides an even clearer example of what the novel does to its readers. *Stephen Hero*, *A Portrait*'s early version, dramatizes its characters in literary critical debate; this gives way in the text's later iteration to a technique for foregrounding criticism that is at once more subtle and more insistent: "Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo…." (5, ellipses in original). Before we read any further, this metatextual opening forces us at once to recognize the novel as a fiction, perhaps as a fairy tale or fable—a

fiction, in short, with a moral. In a double gesture, Joyce alerts us that his story may have a moral while warning us to be on our guard against being moralized, a form of aesthetic distance that we may call "having one's cake and eating it too," though Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak put it more eloquently when she labeled its deconstructive variant as "a persistent critique of what one cannot 'not' want" (300). What we cannot not want in Joyce's book are fables and fairy tales, narratives that simultaneously enchant us out of reality with their utopian distance from the present—"once upon a time"—and order reality with their ideological validation of that same present through the deployment of mystifying, ethnocentric, blood-and-soil imagery: for the story of Baby Tuckoo, which Joyce really both heard and retold as a child, is "a version of the tale of the mythical cow (itself a version of 'silk of the kine', one of the names of Ireland) that took children away from ordinary life to an island fairy world whence they were eventually safely returned," the novel's annotator Jeri Johnson informs us (225). The fable of Baby Tuckoo, told to Stephen by his nationalist father, is a patriarchal tale of the *patria*, just the sort of thing that biographically-aware readers will know Joyce to have mocked and despised.

Joyce at once tells the story and draws our attention to it *as* a story—especially with that self-satisfied "and a very good time it was" that marks the discourse as a conservative mythologization of the past. As Jameson observes of Conrad, Joyce here gives us utopia and ideology at once—but wittingly, whereas Jameson assumed Conrad to be subject unknowingly to his epoch's unconscious knowledge of its own determinate contradictions (*Political Unconscious* chapter 5). Joyce, however, does not quite play both roles, Conrad *and* Jameson, storyteller *and* critic. Unlike T. S. Eliot, he did not

annotate his own early works, nor did he write his own life story; rather as Booker states, he summons his critics forth with calculated subtractions from the text. Nothing in the novel tells us that "Baby Tuckoo" is a genuine fairy tale figure connected with the "silk of the kine" tradition or that Joyce personally regarded that type of politicized fable as contemptible. Joyce does not *perform* criticism—instead, he calls it into being.

A personal anecdote may bluntly clarify this point. When I was in twelfth-grade English, *A Portrait* was required reading. Our teacher distributed copies of the novel one spring afternoon, and we began to browse through the books as we received them. A few people read the opening sentence and stared at each other in confusion; a murmur went around the room, until one student impertinently exclaimed to the teacher, "What the hell?" This frustrated student's cry is the sound of the critic answering his or her interpellation. By refusing to make an ordinary sort of sense— the first line of *Middlemarch*, after all, does not invite baffled profanities—Joyce's writing demands that someone come down along the road and make sense of it. In a calculated maneuver, Joyce dangles meaning before our eyes and then steps back, gambling that this will provoke the critic to take a step forward. Criticism, of course, has stampeded in response over the past half-century, scouring not only Joyce's texts but every text that comes to hand for the politicized fables lurking between the lines. Sentences like the one that opens *A Portrait* veritably taught the twentieth-century radical critic how to read.[72]

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[72] One question that presents itself here is, Why Joyce? That is to say, he was not, as my other chapters attest, the only writer of this period working toward the goal of readerly agency, and he was preceded in some of his methods by others who remain largely unsung, Dorothy Richardson chief among them. Yet it was Joyce who became, proverbially, the most-studied Anglophone author after Shakespeare, while Richardson is not even currently in print except in opportunistic reprint editions. This question is in part beyond the scope of the present essay because its answer is not to be found within the Joycean text. It has to do with institutional pressures of gender bias and political misperception. The neo-classical right-wing

All of the preceding interpretation happens before we even consider the source of the sentence in Stephen's own consciousness, however. The entire novel is focalized through Stephen, as the earlier *Stephen Hero* manuscript, in switching to other characters' perspectives and to authorial commentary, was not. This technique, or body of techniques, partially borrowed from Pater's *Marius* but also from Continental innovators such as Flaubert, leads to the modernist difference in the novel: following narratologist Seymour Chatman, I will label Joyce's fundamental strategy "covert narration." *A Portrait* extends Aestheticism's ambivalent renovation of the novel form by covertly narrating the story of its young protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, a lower-middle-class, Catholic Dubliner with artistic aspirations whose life and circumstances closely match those of his creator. Covert narration eschews the nineteenth-century novel's discursive, intrusive third-person narrator by making over third-person narratorial language in the tone, diction, and rhythm of the novelistic character's internal monologue: "In covert

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modernists from Pound to Kenner, for one thing, misconstrued Joyce as one of their own—though it must be said that the one-time socialist artist, with his latter-day mission to be all things to all people, did little to disabuse them of their misprision (this in contrast to the "out" feminist-socialist Richardson). As this neo-classical movement and its related ideological currents (New Criticism) did so much to institutionalize literary study in the early twentieth century, *it* canonized Joyce, and not his peers, on terms that did not begin to be challenged until Ellmann's 1959 biography revealed that Joyce was, however ambivalently, a man of the left. But Ellmann's revision, and the later ones that would come from MacCabe, Henke, Cheng, et al., who demonstrated Joyce's truer kinship with leftist forms of cultural critique, were challenges to Joyce's misappropriation and not his centrality—how could they be, given that these insurgent critical movements based their own authority on that of Joyce (as, to be frank, do I)? Thus Joyce retained his advantage after gaining it on something like false premises, an opportunity that Richardson did not enjoy. As to why Richardson in particular is still unheralded, even after almost a half century of great feminist success in restoring previously marginalized women writers to critical attention, I cannot answer fully without examining her own texts in depth, but I will provide one brief suggestion. In contrast not only to Joyce, but also markedly to Woolf, Richardson tends not to operate in the mode of unremitting allusion. While *Pointed Roofs* does refer back to Charlotte Brontë and it and subsequent volumes chart Miriam's reading discursively, Joyce and Woolf are allusive in a manifold way, and often to more canonical writers—witness both authors' endless agon with Shakespeare. This mobilization of critique through tradition, a "reformist" gesture, if you will, that emphasizes tradition by querying it, obviously went some way toward domesticating Joyce's and Woolf's experiments (and in this they were joined by Eliot and Pound). Richardson's relative neglect of this aspect of modernism perhaps led in turn to modernism's subsequent neglect of her.

narration we hear a voice speaking of events, characters, and setting, but its owner remains hidden in the discoursive shadows. Unlike the 'nonnarrated' story, the covertly narrated one can express a character's speech or thoughts in indirect form" (Chatman 197). This technique converts the entire text to a diegetical plane with no presumed position from which an independent authorial subject could speak directly to the social. The novel becomes a recursive object that fulfills Aestheticism's difficult injunction to the modernist novelist: to transform a traditionally social artform into an autonomous artwork. For the remainder of this essay, I will use "covert narration" as an umbrella term to cover several different rhetorical strategies. It includes "focalization" or "restricted viewpoint," in which a third-person narrator reports only on what one character thinks and observes. I also include what Hugh Kenner famously labeled "the Uncle Charles principle," in which the third-person narrator borrows the kind of language he or she uses from the character being discussed (see Kenner, *Joyce's Voices* chapter 2). Finally, and in defiance of most narratology, I also include "free indirect discourse" and "stream of consciousness" narration, in which the novel's language unmoors itself entirely from its basis in third person narration to present its characters' own unmediated internal monologue for extended sentences. If I use Chatman's term "covert narration" more loosely than he and other narratologists would, it is because I do not want to sacrifice to the letter of over-specificity the spirit of its deployment; the purpose of covert narration and its panoply of techniques is to create a nimbus of uncertainty about where the inner life of the character's language ends and the outer life of the narrator's social, rhetorical writing practice begins. The uncertainty itself interpellates the reader as critic.

To attempt to pin the technique down in each case with precise taxonomies is to be paradoxically imprecise about the destabilizing effect it is meant to have on readers.

Joyce allows the reader the independent latitude to weigh Stephen Dedalus's ideas and sensations against their worldly dramatization, while also forming a judgment on the figure of the artist himself.[73] Far from turning away from the political, Joyce's novel makes the political a matter of the autonomous Aesthetic text's formal constitution by forcing the reader to criticize the central character's consciousness as it is constituted by the social order of language itself. By turning inward toward his character's psyche and by foregrounding the linguistic organization of the text itself and its origin in the artist's (classed, gendered) subject position, Joyce transforms the novel into an object of criticism rather than its subject: fiction now flagrantly invites readers to examine its own enunciation as a constituent of the broader social field, or, to put it another way, it becomes a tool with which to criticize social institutions like sexuality, religion, and nationalism through their literary mediation in linguistic canons and codes. Moreover, the autonomous novel of covert narration does not appeal directly to its readers' feelings, as had Victorian fiction, but rather allows the reader to reflect on the linguistic and cultural mediations through which the feelings of the characters—and of the artist—are produced, thus creating affects that combine feeling with critical thought. Rather than

[73] Ramazani, tracing Flaubert's use of free indirect discourse (a subset of covert narration), insists on its close relation with irony: "it is in the free indirect mode that romantic irony [i.e., reminding readers of the text's artifice] best objectifies the dissonance between meaning and experience" (130). While *A Portrait* certainly dramatizes this dissonance—the world is not what Stephen wishes it to be—I demure from calling Joyce's texts especially ironic in any but the broadest sense, Paul de Man's "permanent parabasis," or the text's consistent slippage from reference, being the broadest sense (see "The Rhetoric of Temporality"). In a narrower sense of meaning the opposite of what it says, *A Portrait* cannot, as a self-bounded unit, be called ironic, since it requires the reader to judge how far its "saying" or even its narration conflicts with its meaning. I will say more of free indirect discourse in chapter II.3 below, as it is *Mrs. Dalloway*'s dominant mode.

furnishing art as social and historical legislation, to cite Percy Bysshe Shelley's famous "Defence of Poetry," the modernist novelist, empowered by Aestheticism's decoupling of social interventionism from art, becomes by default a reflexive critic of modern subjectivity and modern artistry. Novelists transform the displacement of their art from its former social centrality into a new form of political understanding; the modernist novel becomes, as Wilde himself prophesied for all art, a fundamentally critical enterprise. Contra Wilde, though, the audience, rather than the artists, become critics.

We can now re-examine the opening clause in the light of covert narration: "Once upon a time and a very good time it was a moocow came down along the road…" (5). The political fable the novel enjoins us to examine—precisely by not examining it itself—is now revealed to come not from nowhere, but from somewhere in particular. "His father told him that story: he had a hairy face: he looked at him through a glass: he was Baby Tuckoo" (5). The novel, dispensing with the diacritical marking of dialogue, delivers the story of Baby Tuckoo through two intermediaries: first, Mr. Dedalus, then the filtration of Mr. Dedalus's story through Stephen's internal response, which includes his identification with the story's protagonist. What comes to the fore here is not story itself, but story's production through subjectivity. To see the contrast, think of how prior novels—by Dickens, for instance—did their cognitive work. At the beginning of his career, Dickens encourages his readers to identify with the travails of Oliver Twist by presenting him as a basis of vulnerable normativity. An ordinary (read: inherently middle-class) little boy under threat, Oliver draws our sympathy to his person as he suffers under the various legal and extra-legal regimes of cruel grotesqueries from the

workhouse to the underworld. Later in his career, Dickens adopted a more sophisticated technique. In *Great Expectations*, he begins by encouraging reader identification with Pip, until he reveals toward the novel's conclusion that success and materialism have corrupted the protagonist and made him disloyal to those he should have loved and trusted. Even here, though, Dickens can only ask for identification and then either validate or frustrate it. Joyce, however, dramatizes reader identification itself even as he hints at the political purport of the story Stephen hears and shows Stephen, under his father's eye, identifying with the monocular objectivity of the storyteller and thus becoming constituted as a subject by the narration itself. Making such overtly recursive demands on the reader necessitates the writer's own withdrawal to a critical distance on the social field he describes, a distance unthinkable without Aestheticism's severance of art from the immediate test of ethical and political commitment. Wilde, though, was content to rest in the ambiguities the severance created, less because he was a failed novelist (though we might say that he was) than because of his interest in public provocation and paradox for their own sakes. His preferred technique was not covert narration, but dialogue interspersed with description: even in his novels and criticism, he remained a dramatist, an artist of public speech. Joyce seizes the opportunity to invent a subjectivizing novelistic practice suited to the moment—but as we will see, this too has its affinities with drama.

A Portrait's very narrative structure immediately suggests its difference from *Dorian Gray*. *A Portrait* refuses the stasis that Wilde borrowed from Huysmans, and boasts a far more complex structure: its five chapters oscillate in a wave motion, each

rising from a nadir in Stephen's development to a climax in which he believes himself to have achieved some form of fulfillment or enlightenment. In terms of the novel's thematics, its up-and-down narrative movement does not happen synchronically, but rather diachronically: Stephen's attainment at the conclusion of one chapter pales by the following chapter, as the young man develops new needs relative to the stages of his biological maturation and social initiation. For instance, the first chapter rises to a memorably lyrical conclusion in the aftermath of eight-year-old Stephen's triumph over the pandybat-wielding Father Dolan, who had punished him unjustly. Chapter 2 begins with an adolescent Stephen who undergoes the first stirrings of sexual desire even as his father's profligacy results in his family's social and economic decline. From the perspective of these erotic and class concerns, the corporal punishments threatened by the school authorities look distinctly less menacing. Yet Stephen's troubles in Chapter 2 recapitulate those of Chapter 1: whether it is the eight-year-old's fear of a punitive beating at school or a fourteen-year-old's inner conflict between sexual desire and spiritual purity, the novel's dominant theme makes itself known, namely, the tortured relation of the body's desires and limitations to the mind's aspirations. *A Portrait* charts the form this relation takes at successive moments in the life of Stephen, its torments arising in new shapes as the young man's biological, social, institutional, or intellectual situation develops.

Rather like the Hegelian dialectic, the novel shows every successful synthesis to produce a new contradiction as history unfolds.[74] If this were all, however, it would be

[74] On the evidence offered by his biographer Ellmann, Joyce does not appear to have read Hegel, but he certainly read the dialectical criticism of Wilde; Brivic identifies another source in Blake, one of whose

little different from a traditional *Bildungsroman*, the hero or heroine of which learns in stages the means to prosper in bourgeois society, as in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, *Oliver Twist*, and even, though more complexly and ambivalently, *Middlemarch*. But *A Portrait*, ending as it does on a suspended note, amid the inconclusive chaos of Stephen's diary entries, more properly belongs to the genre of the late or failed *Bildungsroman*, as Franco Moretti points out: like the novels of Flaubert, Hardy, and Conrad before it, *A Portrait* declines to narrate a linear development toward fulfillment.[75] It leaves us instead with a sense that Stephen's concluding peroration is every bit as limited and in need of later remediation as the perorations that went before it. Joyce even seems to complicate Stephen's identification with Deadalus the artificer when, in the novel's last line, Stephen invokes Daedelus not only as his precursor, but as his father: "Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead" (213). If Daedelus is his father, then that makes him Icarus—destined to fall from the heights of hubris. As for standing him in stead, this phrase recalls Stephen's constant search for stability throughout the novel, a search always defeated by the unavoidability of change. As he embarked on *Ulysses*, Joyce himself testified to his confidant, Frank Budgen, that "Stephen no longer interests me…

"Proverbs of Hell" encapsulates dialectical logic: "Without contraries there is no progression" (qtd. in Brivic 49).

[75] Castle's is the most comprehensive account of the modernist *Bildungsroman*, encompassing not only Wilde and Joyce, but also Hardy, Lawrence, and Woolf. His overall view of this genre sees it as both negating through irony the dehumanizations of instrumental life while "advanc[ing] new solutions to the problems of identity and society" (253). Moretti's thorough account of the entire genre, *The Way of the World*, argues in Marxist fashion that the *Bildungsroman* closely tracks the historical fortunes of the bourgeoisie, from a triumphal early stage, corresponding to the revolutionary period, in which the heroes and heroines insert themselves into society, to a bitter late stage—homologous with imperial-era contradictions of capitalism leading to World War I—where the formative process fails. Booker provides a suggestive analysis of the difference between the *Bildungsroman* in Goethe and Joyce, understanding the differences as ones of emphasis and milieu rather than being historically determined in Moretti's sense (see Booker chapter 5). My own understanding is closest to Castle's: Joyce's call to the reader to criticize his narrative of development complicates any reading of *A Portrait* as a simple failure-to-develop story.

He has a shape that can't be changed" (105).

Joyce's novel goes further than earlier late-stage or so-called failed examples of the *Bildungsroman*. These books make their critical stand against the culture that crushes their protagonists' aspirations a matter of plot as much as anything else. Simply to recount the main narrative line is to understand their crushing irony—Frederic Moreau wishes to succeed in Parisian society and to love Mme Arnoux but ends up disappointed and nostalgic; Jude Fawley wants to become a scholar and find true love with Sue Bridehead but loses everything he has and then dies; Lord Jim tries to make good on the quixotic imaginings of his youth by going to sea but discovers his own moral limitations before perishing at the hands of a brigand in a far outpost of the empire. The story of *A Portrait* is more mundane and ambiguous. To recount the story is even to suggest Stephen's success on his own terms: he escapes country, church, and family, which is what he had wanted to do from the time he went to university. Joyce calls the *Bildungsroman* into question by forcing its readers to scrutinize not the events it narrates, but the terms in which its protagonist understands them. We might in fact say that the novel becomes the reader's *Bildungsroman* as much as the protagonist's. This necessitates a writing practice more thoroughly concerned with limning the protagonist's consciousness than the earlier novelists had attempted (though, to be fair, Flaubert comes close and is obviously Joyce's main influence in this area). If earlier novelists had used their plots to negate their characters' desires, Joyce enjoins the readers themselves to provide the negation, not least by crafting a plot that stalls not at level of temporality—as Dorian's does when he does not age—but at the level instead of thematics. The novel

recapitulates its major themes through a series of layered images and motifs—water, birds, roses, blindness, ivory and gold, and the rhetorical figure of chiasmus. As time goes on, each theme recurs as if to index Stephen's development through successive stages of maturity, even as in each stage he fails to progress by meeting old impediments in new guises.

Take, for instance, the novel's simplest motif: the chiasmus.[76] It appears in the first short section when infant Stephen, after having committed an unstated transgression probably related either to his bedwetting habit or his budding desire for Betty Byrne, hides under the table while his aunt, suggestively called "Dante" in the narrative's mimesis of how a small child would say "auntie," threatens that eagles will pull out the boy's eyes if he does not apologize. Stephen then thinks:

> *Pull out his eyes,*
> *Apologise,*
> *Apologise,*
> *Pull out his eyes.*
>
> *Apologise,*
> *Pull out his eyes,*
> *Pull out his eyes,*
> *Apologise.* (6, original italics)

Chiasmus here stands for a Dantean neatness of punishment: sin leads simply to retribution. The mirrored repetitions mime in language the paralysis of theocratic Ireland, whose governing Church refuses the messiness of the body and its desires. Chiasmus is thus the aesthetic form corresponding to the spiritual authoritarianism Stephen will later wish to contest. But Joyce here shows how such authoritarianism captures the subject—precisely through aesthetics. Even under threat of familial

[76] See Kenner's "Introduction" to *A Portrait* for a concise treatment of this topic.

punishment, the young man lulls himself with the easy rhythms of religious judgment. If Stephen later finds himself unable to evade chiasmus in his art and dualism in his spirituality, the novel shows us why: they have gone very deep into the texture of his subjective being because they were introduced to him so early. As with the fable, Joyce's use of free indirect discourse or covert narration, even to display the repetitive thought patterns of an infant—a relatively new subject for European literature, going back only as far as perhaps Blake's "Infant Joy" and "Infant Sorrow"—allows him both to display the linguistic constitution of his protagonist and to require the reader to make sense of it.

Joyce's invitation to critique is structural as well as linguistic, as the novel's images recur again and again. Chiasmus next appears when the text gives us another poem. Stephen, now a boy or eight or so, sits at Clongowes Wood School and contemplates an identifying verse his classmate has written in his textbook:

> *Stephen Dedalus is my name,*
> *And Ireland is my nation.*
> *Clongowes is my dwellingplace*
> *And heaven my expectation.* (12, original italics)

While Stephen (and Joyce) will later reject the teleology of this narrative's content, which unproblematically links nation and religion to the individual, his interest here is in form: "He read the verses backwards but then they were not poetry" (12). In other words, Stephen learns by this exercise that reversal is insufficient to produce poetry. Poetry requires, if not a divine teleology, then at least some escape from the merely given, some forward motion. The next page extends Stephen's observation to public questions: "He wondered if they were arguing at home about [Parnell]. That was called politics. There were two sides in it…" (13). Irish politics, with its swing between Dante's religious and

Mr. Dedalus's secular nationalism, is also chiasmic, with the nation at its center. A matter of argumentation and reversal, it shows itself inferior to poetry, which can get beyond the deadlock of essentialized political positions. Joyce shows Stephen engaged in the reading process he expects the reader also to undergo: the close study of how language works leads on to insights about how to expand social life beyond the paralysis of theocracy, empire, and a resistant nationalism that only mimics the worst qualities of what it opposes.

Stephen often forget what he learns in one context as he encounters later situations, however, and the menace of chiasmic thinking does not leave him as he ages. In Chapter 3, for instance, his teenage conversion to an extremely conservative variant of his faith, which wins him through Father Arnall's lengthy threats to his youthful congregants of the many punishments of hell, recapitulates on a more sophisticated theological plane the transgression-retribution model early inculcated in him by Dante. (In this sense, his aunt Dante and the infernal poet Dante are spiritually identical.) Chapter 4, though, looks as if it offers Stephen a way out of such spiritual stultification. Stephen's aesthetic epiphany of the bird-girl on the shingle—described in the languid tones of Pater on *La Giaconda*—appears to indicate his embrace of the irreducible world of physical reality which the Church, in its relentlessly punitive focus on the soul, condemns. The passage concludes this way: "Her bosom was as a bird's soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some darkplumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face" (144). "Soft and slight, slight and soft," "her…hair was girlish: and girlish…her face": despite the

intervention of a clause here and there, this aesthetic epiphany of physical splendor remains caught in the easy reversals and dualisms of chiasmus. Indeed, we might read this as another spiritual transgression ("Heavenly God! cried Stephen's soul, in an outburst of profane joy") to be quickly coupled by the punishment of the material as chapter 5 opens with images of "[t]he yellow dripping" of his mother's grease jar, that had been "scooped out like a boghole" and reminds him of the punitive "turfcoloured water" of Clongowes (144, 146). Stephen swings like a pendulum between spiritualized matter and matter-befouled spirit.

The final chapter emphasizes his stasis one last time when he composes his villanelle, now depicting women as whorish temptresses instead of pure seabirds. While the poem offers a more sophisticated instance of verse than the simple chiasmus of the eagle rhyme or the couplets scrawled in the boy's textbook, its form reintroduces the motif of repetition within a pre-given structure. The poem's form, its verses predictably recurring at pre-determined intervals, make as clear as its content the unvarying dualism with which Stephen approaches reality, especially reality in the form of women. Brivic construes the villanelle as "a feminist poem that calls upon women to give up the lures of sexual mythology" (28). On the evidence of the poem alone, such an interpretation is arguable, though its flagrant and unquestioning deployment of the *belle dame sans merci* trope makes it unlikely: "*You have set man's heart ablaze / And you have had your will of him*," Stephen writes, invoking the Romantic and Decadent trope of the devouring, fatal woman seen above in Huysmans (188, original italics). Joyce's covert narration, however, gives us not only the language that Stephen produces—the poem—but also the

language of his consciousness that enables him to produce it; in the Lacanian vocabulary that Brivic favors, Joyce's text introduces into evidence the symbolic order, or the Big Other, as it constitutes Stephen's subjectivity. The novel encourages us to read the language and images that Stephen's culture inculcated in him as he goes about artistic creation. Readers are prepared to answer this charge by the earlier appearance in the novel of themes of bodily sin and pure and impure womanhood, as exemplified respectively by the Virgin Mary Stephen worships and the prostitutes he frequents.

As Stephen lay in bed composing his verses while dreaming of his erstwhile beloved, E. C., we read the following: "On all sides, distorted reflections of her image started from his memory: the flowergirl… the kitchengirl… a girl who had laughed… a girl he had glanced at" (185). All women are reflections of E. C.: there are no women, understood as a population of diverse individuals, but only one Woman, one image, a Platonic *eidos* of which the Catholic Marys—Virgin Mother and Whore Magdalene—are the types.[77] Moreover, Stephen reflects that, while a man sins by deed, a woman sins by virtue of being woman: "A sense of her innocence moved him almost to pity her, an innocence he had never understood till he had come to the knowledge of it through sin, an innocence which she too had not understood while she was innocent or before the

[77] Yoshida's fascinating study of *A Portrait* through Jung's four stages of eroticism—wherein man worships in Platonically ascending order earthy Eve, individual Helen, spiritual Mary, and cosmic Sophia—reveals some of the cultural materials Joyce was drawing on in his depiction of male sexual subjectivity beyond those of the Catholic patriarchy. By the end of the book, Yoshida abandons Jung in favor of Lacan and French feminism, arguing that the former is too neatly essentialist even in his arguments for sexual liberalism and that Joyce's novel parodies Jungian idealizations. Given that Lacanian psychoanalysis and *écriture feminine* have their sources in Joyce's fictions (see Sheffield chapter 1 for this), Yoshida ends up producing a Joycean critique of Jung rather than the reverse. Yoshida's study nevertheless illuminates the sexual politics of *A Portrait* compellingly, and suggests that myth criticism, now largely thought to be outmoded, may still have things to teach students of Joyce and modernism (as I suggested previously of Wilde in chapter I.2).

strange humiliation of her nature had come upon her" (187). Readers will recall that Stephen "sinned" in chapter 2 when he indulged his sexual desire with prostitutes. We might expect this to form a contrast, if the question is one of innocence vs. experience, with E. C., who has presumably not done the equivalent sexual deed, but in fact Stephen understands her too to have entered into sin through undergoing "the strange humiliation of her nature," a phrase that almost certainly refers to menses. In other words, Stephen sees women's menstruation as being equivalent to men's sexual activity, both equally sinful and shameful as they drag the pure soul down into the bodily mire. These are not thoughts one would expect to inform the composition of a feminist poem, no matter the definition of feminism in question, and it is their extrinsic testimony that allows the reader to understand the villanelle not as feminist discourse, but as standard male-Decadent misogyny of the kind analyzed above in my discussion of Huysmans. As Suzette Henke writes in what is perhaps the classic statement of the thesis that Stephen is a misogynist: "The formal, highly wrought verses of Stephen's poem reveal his perpetual obsession with the terrifying eroticism of the female. […] As poet-priest, he transubstantiates the eternal feminine into a disembodied muse that, once out of nature, ceases to threaten" (81).

Henke's critique, however, implies that Joyce's use of covert narration also rescues Brivic's application of the feminist label to the poem. On its own, the poem reproduces standard misogyny, but within the overall structure of the novel, it may be understood as potentially feminist. By giving us the text not only of the poem, but also of Stephen's subjectivity and the materials that comprise it, Joyce invites the reader to

investigate critically the relation between the two: he calls upon the reader to become a literary critic of Stephen's text and his own, and potentially a feminist critic. According to Henke, Joyce *exposes* misogyny rather than propounding it. The textualization of subjectivity makes readers over into active interpreters of Joyce's fictions, and consequently active interpreters of the society whose language Joyce places upon the page. The necessity of interpretation, though, does not necessarily pre-determine any particular conclusion. Elisabeth Sheffield, for instance, mounts a critique of Henke meant to show that Joyce's supposed feminist portrayal of Stephen's fear of desire actually rests on the age-old trope of woman-as-muse: "Woman and her biological and cultural attributes are deployed as tropes used to describe the creative powers of the male artist" (60). On Sheffield's account, it hardly matters if Joyce shows Stephen's dualism about women to be artistically limited; what is important is the reduction of women to mirrors for the psyche of the male creator.

It is beyond the scope of the present work to decide in favor of these interpretations; I am more interested in analyzing how the novel invites this divergence of views. In the debate among Brivic, Henke, and Sheffield, Joyce's texts become a staging-ground for contests over first principles. Brivic's Lacanian psychoanalysis, Henke's commitment to *écriture feminine*, and Sheffield's more empiricist and individualist brand of Anglo-American feminism cannot ultimately be reconciled, and they lead their proponents to vastly different conclusions about the text. What commands attention from the perspective of my thesis is the way in which Joyce, though the use of covert narration, makes these different interpretations available to readers of different

ideological persuasions. Of course, the same might be said of any narrative without a narrator given in the text as objective: a first-person novel, perhaps, or a dramatic monologue—what Chatman calls the nonnarrated text. But the Joycean difference centers on the access he provides to his central character's subjectivity, including what that character might not be able to say for himself. Like the contemporary movement of psychoanalysis, Joyce's novel aims to analyze the unconsciousness and remediate its workings by bringing them to light.

Such a Joycean tactic is most obvious where it most resembles Freud's practice: in the investigation of sexual desire. But *A Portrait* does not confine its examination of subjectivity to the sexual domain, nor does it necessarily allow critics to say anything they want. To take another example, this time from the novel's national politics, Joyce's covert narration directly reports Stephen's thoughts in an anticipation of stream-of-consciousness style when the young man reflects on the provenance—erroneously supposed to be Irish—of the word "tundish," which the university's English dean does not understand: "The language we are thinking is his before it is mine. […] I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language" (159). This is a famous passage, quoted by Edward W. Said, for one, in his broad study *Culture and Imperialism*, as well as by Vincent J. Cheng in his renowned account of Joyce's racial politics, as if it were the author's implicitly pro-nationalist final word on the subject (Said 223-4, Cheng 59).[78] But the end of the novel troubles such a reading: Stephen writes in his diary, "I looked ['tundish'] up and find it English and good

[78] Cheng's overall account, however, is particularly rich and subtle. *Joyce, Race, and Empire* approaches Joyce's novels as texts meant to construct a cosmopolitan nation, sovereign but hospitable to internal difference and external influence. In this, Cheng's analysis is substantially similar to that of Kiberd's.

old blunt English too. Damn the dean of studies and his funnel! What did he come here for to teach us his own language or to learn it from us? (*sic*)" (212). Joyce is here mocking any concept of return to an original language, the *ur-sprache* of the *Volk*, as the Celtic Revivalists recommend, by dramatizing the randomness and uncertainty of linguistic origins. The final question Stephen asks, with its unconventional punctuation and consequently tangled syntax, shows language to be endemically improper, wandering, and creative; individual speakers and their circumstantial usages make language, not racial or national notions of proprietorship ("his" vs. "mine"). This passage encourages critical readers to go back to Stephen's textualized consciousness ("My soul frets…") to behold not justified nationalist indignation, but rather the kind of essentializing self-pity and paralyzed sense of self-identity that may lead a colonial subject to become a nationalist prig. In any event, Joyce has spent the entire novel showing that none of Stephen's words is his own creation: his consciousness is a text woven of his culture's symbolic materials, from Catholicism to Decadence. This example demonstrates that Joyce does not deal in absolute indeterminacy: the novel's structure guides the reader, the later passage teaching us how to read the earlier one, and thus a pro-nationalist reading of the first "tundish" passage is not supported by the textual evidence. The novel does not license *any* interpretation in *every* case.

Joyce has his themes and polemics, as any author does; what matters for the purposes of this study are the means he uses to communicate them to readers, or rather, to ask the readers to communicate them on their own. In each instance, he makes Stephen's religious, political, and sexual dualism a *textual* matter. Readers must read the language

of Stephen's thoughts and his writings and decide for themselves what they ultimately portend. Joyce gives textual clues as to his own idea of the villanelle's quality or Stephen's nationalist reflection, but delivers no meta-textual judgment as the intrusive narrator of earlier fiction might have. Again, I differ from earlier critics in not seeing Joyce's text as a proto-postmodernist picture of *écriture*, i. e., the limitless proliferation of a multi-signifying textuality. To cite Colin MacCabe's influential view as an instance, the entire novel enacts the production of subjectivity itself through discourse: "The discourses in question are those of Catholicism and nationalism, of aesthetics and the artist, discourses which produce the 'I' that ends the text and immediately starts it again" (68). Joyce's textualism on this account does political work in exposing ideologies that would present themselves as natural instead of humanly constructed and thus alterable. But the insistence of critics on textuality fails to distinguish the text of covert narration and its offshoots (not only Joyce's, but that of Flaubert, James, Chekhov, Mansfield, Woolf) from an older tradition that it may superficially resemble, which is what Chatman calls the "nonnarrated" story, and which I would call the rhetorical tradition of fiction, including faux-memoirs (from Defoe to Charlotte Brontë), epistolary novels (from Richardson onward), and novels constructed from documents (from Mary Shelley to Bram Stoker). Each of these narratorial types foregrounds writing as such, precisely by attributing their texts to known writers. They far more nearly provide a means to investigate the social circulation of discourse because of writing's innate publicity; to this extent, they belong to a critical tradition of rhetoric, i.e., a tradition whose paramount goal is the persuasion of an audience, and whose fictional goal is the self-aware

presentation of fictional characters' attempts to so persuade.

Practitioners of covert narration, conversely, appear to *abandon rhetoric*. Contra Lukács, for whom modernism brought in the reign of rampant subjectivism, Joyce retains the objective stance of third-person nineteenth-century narration, which, unlike the rhetorical tradition, naturalizes its text-production as the spontaneous emanation of worldly truth. Joyce sinks his own writerly agency far more deeply into his text than, say, George Eliot ever did by making his novel seem to come entirely from the inside of his central character.[79] But the goal is the same as Eliot's—to produce social knowledge in the absence of a discernible social agent. This production of social knowledge about the subject differs from the rhetorical tradition because it claims to go beneath the rhetoric's publicity in order to produce unmediated access to the inner lives of the characters it describes, an Aestheticist maneuver because it radically autonomizes art by ostensibly ignoring the social function of the artist, but also a domestic/realist strategy for disseminating truths about the psyche.

Accordingly, criticism has read this self-concealment of the author, in realist or modernist style, as bad faith—artists denying their intervention even as they make it and so mystifying art's role in social reproduction. See, for instance, Daniel Cottom's excoriation of George Eliot for seeming to produce universal psychological knowledge of her characters in his study *Social Figures*, Nancy Armstrong's dismantling of domestic fiction's pretensions to truth-production about the "self," or Lukács's aforementioned

[79] Again, I wish to emphasize the continuity of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century fiction. Aestheticism transforms domestic realism's knowledge of the psyche into an immanent textual practice. This puts Victorian *and* modernist novels on the same side, at odds with the rhetorical tradition that typified the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

assault on modernist writers for abandoning their social responsibility by embracing expressionism in "The Ideology of Modernism." *A Portrait* itself anticipates this charge in the scene wherein Stephen expounds his aesthetic philosophy that drama is the highest art. Stephen contrasts drama with epic—which, like Victorian novels, have Chatman's "overt narrator," and are thus midway between storyteller and audience—and lyric—whose narrator, like Chatman's "nonnarrated" texts, speaks from a simply personal, subjective viewpoint. In drama, on the other hand, "The personality of the artist…finally refines itself out of existence, impersonalises itself, so to speak. […] The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (180-1). In other words, like Chatman's covert narrator, the author withdraws and simply presents his creation for the audience to scrutinize. As Vivian Heller observes, "Stephen's ideal author penetrates the form of his creation so completely that he disappears. By perfecting the art of sublimation, he explodes the romantic myth of unmediated self-expression" (60). This anti-romantic demystification is the radical side of the autonomous aesthetic I have examined: it paradoxically removes itself from immediate social intelligibility or practicality in order to demonstrate that the subject—and the artistic subject no less—is little more than a tissue of social discourse. Furthermore, Stephen's remark immediately invites its own scrutiny, as the young man contradicts himself: the God of the creation, at least in the Thomist sense of the infinite, perfect, and physically unlimited deity that Stephen would have learned about from the Jesuits, does not have fingernails. This may seem a trivial or trivializing remark, but in fact it is consonant with Joyce's insistence

throughout his work that his characters have and are defined by their bodily needs and functions. Stephen unwittingly undercuts his own body-fearing idealism, showing that dramatic art comes not from God but from a human being.

The question of the politics of Joyce's writing practice does not resolve itself so quickly. Heller continues: "[Joyce] may be able to use his life as poetic material but he cannot exhaust its mysteries; indeed, the very process of turning memories into metaphors suggests that its riddles are insoluble" (60). Joyce's production of insolubility—as in the critical indecision over Stephen's attitude toward women or nationalism—have led to the charge, not restricted to totalitarian *apparatchiks* like Karl Radek, of an enervating ahistoricism and relativism. Derek Attridge attempts to respond to the most sophisticated version of this accusation as it appears in Fredric Jameson's Lukácsian fear that Joyce's texts swerve from the traumatic Real of history-as-class-conflict by showing reality to be entirely mediated through language.[80] Attridge contends that Joyce's indeterminate textualism

> does not constitute any kind of claim about the existence or non-existence, or the true nature of, the Real; what it does do is demonstrate a few facets of the immense power of language (and the systems of cultural signification with which it works) to create an impression of access to that inaccessible Real while at the same time drawing attention to the literary and linguistic processes through which this effect is achieved. (81)

Post-structuralist Attridge's defense of Joyce unexpectedly returns us to the kernel of

[80] See Williams's *Reading Joyce Politically* chapter 2 for an excellent survey of Joyce criticism from the Left, encompassing everyone from Radek and Lukács to Moretti and Jameson. Williams emphasizes the polarization between readings of Joyce as decadent reactionary that prevailed in Marxist criticism from the 1930s to the 1960s, and understandings of his texts as revolutionary overturnings of reason and tradition that came to the fore in the 1970s under the influence of psychoanalysis, feminism, structuralism, and post-structuralism. I argue here for a Joyce neither reactionary nor revolutionary, but reformist and critical There is not a direct enough route between Joyce's textual innovations and collective political practice to justify calling his novels revolutionary in anything but a metaphorical sense; neither, though, are his books so politically inert as to deaden the reader to radical speculations or even actions.

truth expressed by Joyce's harshest critics: do not Aristotelian Booth, Marxist Lukács, and avant-garde Bersani (whose critique will be quoted below), each from his different philosophical and political perspective, agree that Joyce's problem is an excess of mimesis? He so thoroughly evokes reality in language—including the linguistic reality of the human psyche—that readers do not know what to do with such a surplus of information. I have argued above that this dangling surplus of meaning draws criticism forth, and I think Attridge in persuasive in his contention that this call for scrutiny assumes the existence of the real (if not of Jameson's explicitly Marxist "Real")—but one question remains: what of the status of art itself?

The status of art in Joyce's novel may best be approached indirectly, by appealing less to its overt thematizations than to its markers in the discourse itself. As Attridge says, Joyce both uses the linguistic tools of mimesis, while inviting readers to recognize the tools themselves as he does so. This observation applies equally well to those passages that seem to deliver not only truth or reality but also beauty to the reader. Consider, for instance, the end of Chapter 1, in which youthful Stephen goes out to the sporting ground at Clongowes, reveling in his triumph over the priest who had unjustly struck him with the pandybat:

> The fellows were practising long shies and bowling lobs and slow twisters. In the soft gray silence he could hear the bumps of the balls: and from here and from there through the quiet air the sound of the cricketbats: pick, pack, pock, puck: like drops of water in a fountain falling softly in the brimming bowl. (49)

This passage calls on the reader-critic's cognitive power to be sure: its water imagery recalls the watery manifestations of Stephen's dualism that have occurred so far in the

novel, from his ambivalent feelings toward his own urine to his horror of the filthy Clongowes boghole. Whenever Stephen thinks of clean water, he is on his spiritual upswing, and the next chapter swiftly pulls him back down into the muck when we read a few pages later of "liquid dung" at a cowfarm that destroys Stephen's pastoral illusions (53). Moreover, the passage's very form, sound mimicking sense in a paratactic rhythm, indicates progress in Stephen's poetic development: he has temporarily gotten beyond the punitive chiasmus of "Pull out his eyes / Apologise" to achieve a sensuous contemplation of reality that does not hold it hostage to pre-formed categories.

But it does the passage an injustice to fail to note its invitation to a non-thematic appreciation as a piece of writing. Joyce deploys internal rhyme (there/air), a beguiling interplay of anapests and iambs (and from HERE and from THERE through the QUIet AIR), and a pleasingly consonant onomatopoeia (pick, pack, pock, puck) to create prose that provides the poetic *frisson* of sheer sound offered by such lyrical masters as Keats, Tennyson, and Hopkins. His art here fulfills the Aestheticist criteria of beautifying reality and giving readers pleasurable sensations. All of the passage's thematic elements that I have listed above, however, also operate in this prose: one cannot read it without questioning its role in Stephen's life. In other words, readers who encounter it within the structural matrix of the novel are called upon to place it in their overall account of Stephen's subjective development, even as they appreciate its beauty. More than scrutineers of aesthetic theory, as readers become during Stephen's discourse in Chapter 5, they here become critics of art even in its manifestation as beauty, forced to be aware

of its origin in a human subjectivity conditioned by time and culture.[81]

Covert narration may thus be read as the relatively uncoercive presentation of knowledge that could not be aesthetically arranged in any other way, and with which readers may do as they will, even at the liberty of being wrong. If one is persuaded that there are truths about one's own subjective constitution through the social field of language that one could not oneself express directly in language—and most radical critics, with Marx's "ideology," Freud's "unconscious," and Foucault's "discourse" in mind, are by definition so persuaded—then a literary device like covert narration can be a useful tool for the investigation of subject-formation using the thought-experiments that are fictional characters. Rather than seeing it as elitist mystification, we might regard it instead as a democratizing pedagogical tool, strategically withholding information in order to induce the audience to think through the problem on its own.[82] Finally, if I may make a crude observation in the midst of this theoretical discussion, the author's name on the title page should be enough to remind readers that the text does not in fact come from nowhere, but only pretends to, just as Stephen's fingernails remind *him* that artworks are made by men and women rather than by God. Physical realities have a way of insisting upon themselves without any help from artists.

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[81] Joyce's invitation to scrutinize the artwork leads Norris to see Joyce as avant-garde in the sense given the term by Bürger, who differentiates modernism from the avant-garde thusly: "The European avant-garde movements can be defined as an attack on the status of art in bourgeois society. What is negated is not an earlier form of art (a style) but art as an institution that is unassociated with the life praxis of men" (Bürger 49). I do not think that Joyce's novel, or any novel, can be avant-garde in this sense; Joyce does not aim to destroy the novel, as, say, Duchamp aimed to destroy gallery art with his stunt urinal, but rather to make readers critical consumers of novels and co-producers of their meaning. Even if he *had* aimed to destroy the novel, he failed spectacularly, producing novels that took their place next to those of the older tradition as required reading and inspiration for future fiction. For this reason, I differ with Norris, seeing Joyce in the reformist line of the modernists rather than the revolutionary corps of the vanguard. See Norris 6-7.

[82] The pedagogical situation is also structured by power relations, of course, and may therefore itself be criticized for elitism.

To be fair, though, the Joycean text does in fact aim at a transcendence of the subject who wrote it through its critical analysis of how writing operates to constitute subjectivity. MacCabe, after a theoretical discussion of how "texts [play] an important part in forming class positions," notes that, "These ideas go back a long way and surface within literature itself long before they make their appearance in criticism. I would argue—and here at least I think I would find many in agreement with me—that they find their most compelling exposition in the work of the Irish writer James Joyce" ("A Defense of Criticism" 2). Indeed, Joyce's texts might most clearly be seen as a dramatization of the now-canonical Althusserean account of subject-formation, an account meant to explain how texts create, rather than mimetically reflect, social positions, whether of class, gender, race, profession, etc. For Althusser, the individual becomes organized as a subject to ideology when hailed by a material discourse and persists as a subject when he or she enacts the rituals that materialize ideology. This is precisely what happens to Stephen, over and over again. He becomes a subject of Irish nationalism, of Catholicism, of Aestheticism, as each of these discourses, incarnated in materials from speech to sermons to printed texts, hail him as their recipient, and he in turn performs the ritualized actions (attending Mass, writing poems, etc.) that embody these ideologies. As Althusser notes in a sentence that reads like a summary of *A Portrait*, "where only a single subject (such and such an individual) is concerned, the existence of the ideas of his belief is material in that *his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that*

subject" (n. pag., original emphasis). This image of the subject's constitution and persistence through the materiality of language is a lesson taught by the novel. The reader cannot make the text legible without tracing Stephen's subject-formation, which brings to light the process of subject-formation at large.

Joyce effectively says to his readers what Althusser says to his own: "In order to grasp what follows, it is essential to realize that both he who is writing these lines and the reader who reads them are themselves subjects, and therefore ideological subjects (a tautological proposition), i.e. that the author and the reader of these lines both live 'spontaneously' or 'naturally' in ideology" (n. pag.). The goal of this artistic procedure I take to be the same as the goal of Althusser's theoretical procedure: the partial freeing of the subject from his or her own subjectification-through-ideological-discourses via the attainment of self-consciousness or reflexivity. Following Marxist tradition, Althusser calls this attainment "science": "the author, insofar as he writes the lines of a discourse which claims to be scientific, is completely absent as a 'subject' from 'his' scientific discourse (for all scientific discourse is by definition a subject-less discourse, there is no 'Subject of science' except in an ideology of science)" (n. pag.). But I call it Aestheticism: the revision of the novel away from participation in discourses to a meta-level at which discourses are investigated through techniques that are, if not fully objective, at least designed to testify to the limits of their own objectivity. It is this version of Aestheticism that serves as the pedagogy of the modernist novel.

The concept of pedagogy brings a further problem to mind, however. Anyone who has taught Joyce's texts—or who can remember encountering them as a student—

knows that reading them is not exactly an unmixed pleasure. They are what they are reputed to be: *difficult*. Quoting Lacan on the writerly *jouissance* of *Finnegans Wake*, Tom McCarthy and Simon Critchley note, "It is the sheer pressure of this presence that suffocates and oppresses the reader of *Finnegans Wake* because, as is well known, Lacanian jouissance is not pleasure but suffering, an excitation or excess that is too much for the organism to bear. En-Joyce-ment, or what Joyce calls 'joyicity', is not enjoyable" (n. pag.). While *Finnegans Wake* is more complex than *A Portrait* by many orders of magnitude, the difference is one of degree rather than kind: in each instance, Joyce guides readers, but does not tell them what to think. This *forces* them—and I use the verb advisedly, in order to swerve from Barthes's influential *soixante-huitard* language of reader-liberation—to assemble from the textual materials on offer their own thoughts about the subjects so textualized—in the case of *A Portrait*, art and Catholicism, empire and sexuality, nationalism and gender. In compelling readers to become critics, Joyce puts readers to *work*, rather than to the "play" that was the watchword of post-modern aesthetics.[83] In this, we behold yet another continuity between nineteenth- and twentieth-century fiction: both uphold labor as a producer of value. While Gagnier, Moretti and Wicke have emphasized Aestheticist and modernist writing as homologous with the shift from production to consumption in capitalist economics, I would rather read Wilde and Joyce as strenuously resisting this shift in culture. By throwing the critical task onto the reader, the writers aim to ensure that readers *produce* the text even as they consume it.[84]

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[83] See Moretti's "The Long Good-Bye: *Ulysses* and the End of Liberal Capitalism" and Wicke's "Mrs. Dalloway Goes to Market" for modernism-as-consumerism.

[84] Here is validation of Tratner, Wicke, and Kiberd's argument that the political economy implied by modernist fictions is collectivist and social democratic or Keynesian, with its mix of production and

As Lois Cucullu shows in her study of modernist expertise, Joyce's call for criticism of his autonomous text—in effect, his requirement that readers generate the social judgments that would have been wholly internal to earlier texts in the realist mode—provides the pre-condition for the installation of literature as educational discipline and cultural capital later in the twentieth century.[85] Joyce disciplines readers as critics through his own withdrawal from social judgment, thus providing what Wilde could not in his own novel: a fictional discourse that supplies a narrative of temporal development—which Wilde avoided through the Gothic trope of Dorian's perpetual youth—even as it nevertheless requires readers to become critics in order to complete the text's ethical and political meaning. In this way, an Aestheticist text becomes amoral rather than immoral, and does not foreclose on moral possibilities. For Joyce, Wilde was wrong: the artist does not have to be a critic to bring forth cognitively compelling work; it is rather the reader who must perform the labor of criticism in order to garner the cognitive treasures of the text.

To have said all of the foregoing about Wilde and Joyce's novels is not to have said all, though, or even necessarily to have said what is pragmatically most important; this necessitates my turn to a different facet of autonomous fiction in the second section of my study. As cognitively difficult as Joyce's fictions are, they undeniably *do* give a certain affective pleasure, and not only at the level of the beautifully-composed sentence. After all, each sixteenth of June—Bloomsday—is celebrated as secular holiday in major

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consumption and its emphasis on labor as both productive force and the target of consumption. If Wilde, Joyce, and Woolf are cultural anarchists, they are economic socialists, as one might deduce from Wilde's "Soul of Man Under Socialism."

[85] See Cucullu chapter 5.

cities throughout the world. Readers go to pubs, museums, universities, and conference halls to hear Joyce's work read aloud and to celebrate his characters' peregrinations. Leopold Bloom's house in Dublin—7 Eccles St.—receives regular visitors, as does the Martello tower where Stephen lives at the beginning of *Ulysses*. It is not uncommon for Joyce's readers to identify with his characters' struggles: in my own undergraduate seminar on Joyce, a forty-year-old male student then undergoing a divorce spoke movingly of his empathy for Bloom, while a non-traditional female student with grown children joked about her fellow-feeling with Molly, since both were sexually-free women in a conservative men's world. But *A Portrait* also enables identification in this way: to return for a moment to the personal, I myself grew up as a young man with artistic and intellectual ambitions in a provincial Catholic milieu, and I know for a fact that I was not the only such person dreamily scrawling *non serviam* into his school notebooks.[86] Such identifications are so common that they provoked Leo Bersani to censure Joyce as insufficiently avant-garde in his compellingly iconoclastic essay "Against *Ulysses*":

> Has any fictional character ever been so completely known [as Bloom]? Warm- hearted, commonsensical, and appealingly unfanatic in politics and religion; a loving son, father and even husband, full of enterprising (if unrealized and impractical) commercial schemes; slightly but not unappealingly pretentious intellectually; horny and bit guilty sexually... Bloom is eminently appealing and eminently ordinary. (204)

Despite the fact that Stephen is both less likable and less ordinary than Bloom, Bersani's complaint could also be applied to *A Portrait*, whose protagonist is similarly presented in exhaustive detail, complete with foibles—jejune masculine hubris, erotic troubles,

[86] Here one might also think of how later twentieth-century male writers from marginal or oppressed communities, such as the Jewish- or African-American, also allude to Stephen Dedalus as the precursor of their own autobiographical heroes, as in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* or Philip Roth's *The Ghost Writer*.

economic decline, thwarted ambition—with which many readers can identify, even as they are called upon to question their own identification by Joyce's exposure of the social discourses that underlie these character traits. For Bersani, this mimesis counts as a reactionary gesture, coming as it does after Flaubert's relentless irony toward his principle characters, and being contemporaneous with Lawrence's more thorough overthrow of his characters' rational faculty by their unconscious and bodily forces. Bersani even supports my claim that the domestic and modernist novels are in continuity when he compares Joyce to Austen, and Joyce scholars to Janeites, implicitly denigrating the writerly practice of creating characters stable enough to win reader affection and identification. Here we see the same topos with which this section began in its examination of Wilde: late-twentieth-century avant-garde theory replaces late-nineteenth-century quest romance as the tough and rigorous, not to say manly, style of writing that merely gossipy domestic realist novels and Aestheticist/modernist novels of consciousness cannot match due to the latter's emotionalism and theoretical weakness.

In this chapter, I have bowed somewhat to the element of truth in such critiques as Bersani's (and Booth's and Lukács's, as discussed above) by de-emphasizing affect in favor of cognition; I have, in effect, tried to speak up for the intellectual rigors, and even disciplinary rigors, of this literary mode that I call the autonomous novel. Wilde and Joyce write a type of novel that withdraws from social advocacy or rhetorical modalities of rational persuasion in favor of the inner life. But instead of celebrating this inner life uncritically, the novel, through its withdrawal, becomes an even more powerful form of social analysis, precisely by enjoining the reader to supply the overt political and ethical

critique that earlier novels contained at the level of the discursive sentence. In this way, the reader, frustrated by Dorian's lack of development, studies the *fin-de-siècle* chasm between aesthetics and ethics that thwarts his moral growth; similarly, Joyce's readers, given nothing to go on but the tissues of discourses that comprise Stephen's consciousness, must reverse-engineer the political purport of those discourses and then reconnect their politics to the young man Stephen becomes. Thus, my first move in establishing the Aestheticist/modernist novel as a form of critique privileges the cognitive power of these forms, even at the expense of neglecting an affective dimension so powerful that, in Joyce's case, it continues to inspire an annual festival all over the world. Having established this cognitive power here, I will turn in the next section to affect in Wilde and Joyce's precursor Pater and successor Woolf, two novelist/theorists who turn the critical power of autonomous form onto the subject's feelings far more than to his or her cognition. The withdrawal of the novel from overt engagement in political struggle turns the form toward the psyche—not in simplistic celebration, but in a spirit of critical interest. Their faith is that a change in the outer and collective world must begin with an alteration of the inner and individual subject.

PART II

Critical Emotion: The Spirit of Love

II.1. The Novel as Feeling Form

What then is this sentimental? It is that which appeals to us, where feeling prevails, and to be sure not a sensual but a spiritual feeling. The source and soul of all these emotions is love, and the spirit of love must hover everywhere invisibly visible in romantic poetry.

—Friedrich Schlegel, "Letter about the Novel"

In the previous section, I contested those critics for whom Aestheticism's influence on the novel leaves the form unable to perform the kind of social criticism that characterized the age of realism. By reading the auto-critical Bildungsromane of Wilde and Joyce—*The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*—I showed that Aestheticism's declining to submit narrative art to the court of public appeal turned the novel inward, toward its own procedures of meaning-making and truth-production. Wilde's novel enacts the form's ethical loss when severed from historical development when the text's Gothic plot strips its protagonist of temporal growth and maturation. Joyce's *Portrait* radicalizes Wilde's troubled amoralism by taking the Aesthetically asocial opportunity of writing the entire novel from inside the head of the central character, while retaining the classic realist novel's objective, third-person perspective. In this way, Joyce makes the reader a critic of his artist-hero's subjectivity as it is woven from the public languages and discourses that reader and writer share. While Wilde alerts readers to autonomous art's philosophical and ethical contradictions, Joyce remands the novel's critical power to readers themselves, who examine their own textual subjectivization by encountering that of the writer's surrogate. The autonomous

novel, then, does not quit the field of social cognition and political critique, as theorists like Lukács, Jameson, Bürger, and others have charged; rather, the novel becomes an incitement to literary criticism, wherein the social may be criticized as a text—that is, as a weave of subject-forming discourses.

To make such claims for the Aestheticist novel is to make explicit in a changed theoretical context what had been implicit in the apologies for modernism made in the era of High Theory. When Roland Barthes extols the "writerly" text for being an open network of signifiers, each of which could be appropriated and operated by readers themselves, or when Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari praise novels for describing a deterritorializing line of flight from settled and hierarchical forms of thought, they suggest that those novels that eschew a linear plot, a fixed order of narrative discourses, and a rhetoric overtly addressed to a middle-class reading public, are in effect more critical, indeed, more critically realistic, than the novels of high humanism preferred by moralists like Leavis and Marxists like Lukács. It would not have occurred to the canonical theorists of *la pensée '68* to assert a continuity between the realist social novel as such and the modernist novels that overturned its assumptions. In the present critical climate, however, when historicist and sociological models are hegemonic, along with an ethico-aesthetic pluralism that scorns the globalizing claims of modernism, it is necessary to re-articulate a defense of the autonomous novel's "linguistic turn" in terms intelligible to scholars who have rediscovered the political power and artistic merit of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

To invoke Stowe's paradigmatic sentimental novel, however, is to remind

ourselves of the limits of a purely cognitive or linguistic approach to fiction. Novelists wish to move readers' emotions: as Stowe provokes tears that she hopes will lead to reformist actions, so Wilde incites both disgust and titillation to make readers question Aestheticism's philosophical lacunae, while Joyce invites wry laughter at the pretensions of Stephen Dedalus, pretensions the reader may share. Both sensationalism and humor animated the reformism of the Victorian novel in writers as diverse as Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Thomas Hardy, but sentimentalism and the related concept of sympathy were most central to novelists' claims that their chosen literary form had special critical force in society.

In Dickens's *Great Expectations*, for instance, Pip moralizes thusly: "Heaven knows we need never be ashamed of our tears, for they are rain upon the blinding dust of earth, overlying our hard hearts" (160). Pip's statement could serve as a summation of a hundred years' faith in the artistic mobilization of affects classed under the names of sensibility, sentiment or sympathy. From the late eighteenth century on, one of the major ideological projects of the newly hegemonic bourgeoisie—a project coextensive with the major developments in narrative fiction and lyric poetry—was the promotion of an aesthetic meant to provoke tearful pity for the sufferings of others. From Sterne and Mackenzie to Barrett Browning and Stowe, sentimentalism—defined broadly as the solicitation of readerly tears through the portrayal of fictional pain, sorrow or privation—not only provided an aesthetic principle for novels and poems, but also subtended the middle-class approach to political activism and reform. The sentimental subject, whether writer, reader or fictional observer, would be moved to relieve the real-world sufferings

of those whom the fictional object of sentiment represented.[87]

To take an influential example, in her 1856 essay "The Natural History of German Life," George Eliot insists on sympathy as the key principle of all art. She promotes the recognition of this fact as a basis for the renovation of the social novel, which she accuses in its Dickensian manifestation of an overly externalized, thus unsympathetic, distortion of the lives of the people:[88]

> …our social novels profess to represent the people as they are, and the unreality of their representations is a grave evil. The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies. Appeals founded on generalizations and statistics require a sympathy ready-made, a moral sentiment already in activity; but a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may

[87] I offer two instances of sentimental form in the nineteenth-century novel, first from Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* and second Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In the former, the Coketown laborer Stephen Blackpool, who has fallen down a mineshaft in an attempt to escape a false charge of bank robbery, expires after having cleared his name under the narrator's vaguely religious effusion: "The star had shown him where to find the God of the poor; and through humility, and sorrow, and forgiveness, he had gone to his Redeemer's rest" (204). Not only does the narrator provoke tearful affect through the mobilization of readymade religious discourses, but the entire episode exonerates through Blackpool's humility and forgiveness the social system that has, in effect, murdered him. Along similar lines, Harriet Beecher Stowe's misguided but ultimately enlightened Senator Bird is moved to anti-slavery action under the influence of a sentimental spectacle—that of the inured escaped slave Eliza and her child—as well as of the tearful response to the spectacle's other witnesses: "The woman did not sob nor weep. She had gone to a place where tears are dry; but every one around her was, in some way characteristic of themselves, showing signs of hearty sympathy. […] Our senator was a statesman, and of course could not be expected to cry, like other mortals; and so he turned his back to the company, and looked out of the window, and seemed particularly busy in clearing his throat and wiping his spectacle-glasses, occasionally blowing his nose in a manner that was calculated to excite suspicion, had any one been in a state to observe critically" (1989 edition 82). The narrator forebears to describe masculine weeping, but the notion that sympathetic spectacles are a sufficient goad to ethical action for the remediation of suffering comes through in both cases. Similarly, in both cases, sympathy covers the division of mutually antagonistic social interests, bringing together oppressor and oppressed, master and servant, thus validating in large part the account of sentiment as a mystification of political struggle that I am about to summarize. Still, however, Dickens's mockery of Mrs. Jellyby and her "telescopic philanthropy" in *Bleak House*, as well as Stowe's sensitivity to the complexity of emotion, as shown by her allowance above that pain can pass the point of tears, indicate that a language of rupture or of absolute discontinuity between the Victorian and the modernist novel would be inappropriate; points of comparison as well of contrast can be found.

[88] I will return to Eliot's essay in the chapter II.3 because Woolf's critique of Arnold Bennett recapitulates Eliot's critique of Dickens to a remarkable degree and suggests an ongoing dialectic in the novel—one that predates the modernists and in which Aestheticism is an episode—between external description and depictions of consciousness.

> be called the raw material of moral sentiment. (110)

Eliot here suggests that a society complex enough to require statistical abstraction as its form of self-analysis also perforce requires in art some means of stimulating fellow-feeling. Such art will then impel the citizen to act on the otherwise inert knowledge generated by fact-based appeals to remediation.

Eliot's plea for sympathy evokes the nineteenth-century commonplace of "art's replacement of religion," where the latter term means not a body of metaphysical propositions but rather a thick form of sociality—the body of the church, say—linked by charity. Even more relevantly to Eliot's fictions, she elects novelistic sympathy as a replacement not only for religion, but for the *gemeinschaft* of the rural commune, which supposedly joined master and man in bonds of mutual obligation structured by natural rhythms. This community was quite literally broken up, as she dramatizes in *Middlemarch*, by secular forms of knowledge—everything from experimental medicine to rail transport to advanced philology—emanating from the metropole. With these forms of social organization, the church and the organic community, dissolved by the exigencies of modern production and consumption, philosophers like Smith and Hume, and novelists like Sterne, Dickens, and Eliot, put forth artistic sympathy as a new motive for social amelioration in the absence of a metaphysically-supported concept of *agape* or a soil-based organicist and reciprocal social hierarchy.

After its high period (1750-1870), sentiment fell into aesthetic desuetude and political disrepute. Though sentimental literature continued to be produced in the popular press, it ceased to enjoy aesthetic and political dominance as the public poetry and novels

of the Victorian period gave way both to aestheticism and modernism as well as to new popular genres. Various and sometimes opposed historical pressures discredited sentiment in the eyes of modernist writers and audiences: popular Darwinism de-emphasized the role of individual subjects in historical processes; scientific racism, consolidated imperialism and the eugenics movement foreclosed the extension of fellow-feeling to whole masses of humanity; insurgent groups of the exploited and oppressed (e.g., New Women, the working class) made bourgeois pity seem otiose and condescending; ideologies of world revolution, world government and/or pacifism reviled the philanthropic ideals and liberal nationalism to which sentiment had appealed; and new approaches in philosophy and psychology—think, as metonyms, of Nietzsche and Freud—exposed the flaws in theories of moral action premised upon self-present subjects.

Late twentieth-century scholars have followed the modernists in taking pains to expose the ideological and cultural work done by sentiment. Ann Douglas, for one, avers that a sentimentalized public sphere, degraded by emotional appeals that obfuscate the material conditions of social reality, is the result of middle-class woman's confinement to the domestic. Women's sentimental rebellion offers little in the way of valid social critique because its attempt to colonize public space by private feeling discourages a fundamental understanding of society that would give primacy to class struggle and political confrontation—an understanding found at least partially, for instance, in the work of Douglas's protagonists, Margaret Fuller and Herman Melville (note that the latter is often cited as a major precursor to literary modernism). Nancy Armstrong, in

Desire and Domestic Fiction, argues along similar lines that the middle class, in attempting to win hegemony in Britain over first the aristocracy and then the proletariat asserted that it struggled because it had access to some pre-political, extra-cultural knowledge about the individual's psychology, emotions and rights. The aristocrat wanted to rule because he wanted power, so the story goes, while the bourgeois wanted to rule because he wanted freedom. In order to dissimulate its own self-interest, the middle class elevates the individual's interior and its desire as ultimate ground of social reality. Armstrong contends that once middle-class women gained control over that sphere by becoming superintendents of the home and its cultural emissary, the novel, then they attained great social power indeed. Middle-class women (and men such as Richardson or Dickens, who in effect "wrote as women," or, putting it more skeptically, expropriated the female standpoint) secure this hegemony largely through the composition of novels that create the psychic interiors and desires that they will go on to control. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, writing with reference to Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*, focuses not on domestic woman but on sentiment's new paradigmatic man: a proto-bourgeois intellectual (a clergyman in Sterne, underscoring art's inheritance of religion's social functions) whose self-ironized investment in sentiment allows him to dominate his servants while asserting his rights against aristocrats in the changing social circumstances of early modernity and capitalism. Sedgwick pointedly labels this mingling of the candidly dominant with the self-parodically ingenuous as "imperialism with a baby face" (67).

Finally, Lauren Berlant has carried forth the anti-sentimental banner into the

present. In her study of "the unfinished business of sentimentality," Berlant revisits Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 protest novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Berlant wants to understand sentimentality as a form, rather than as a mere set of conventional scenes and images: "As when a refrigerator is opened by a person hungry for something other than food, the turn to sentimental rhetoric at moments of social anxiety constitutes a generic wish for an unconflicted world, one where structural inequities, not emotions and intimacies, are epiphenomenal" (20-1). The sentimental, then, is a form that enacts a repetition: it sutures the individual to the nation through an access of collective feeling that arrests both critical knowledge and non-sentimental feeling (anger above all) at the social violence that creates the suffering or disempowerment of sentiment's objects, be they the poor, the enslaved, the young, etc. As in Armstrong, the sentimental here serves the class that benefits from concealing their reproduction of inequality. But Berlant leaves an opening in her argument when she suggests that the sentimental is a form that tames genuine and legitimate feelings of empathy and identification that might prove disruptive to the social order: "The possibility that through the identification with alterity you will never be the same remains the radical threat and the great promise of this affective aesthetic" (47). That sentimental aesthetics are promising is more than their prior critics had allowed, and Berlant's example of a text that makes good sentiment's promise is particularly relevant to my argument. For Berlant holds up Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as a revision of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that preserves the aesthetics of intense affect in the face of injustice while not forcing these affects to congeal into an idealist fantasy of reconciliation that leaves the social structure in place. Instead, it allows its heroine,

Sethe, a "performance of affect without an emotion, an episode of intensified awareness... to occupy a place of corporeal self-knowledge that riddles us" (67). Sentiment may be redeemed through an aesthetic deployment of conscious reflection upon intense bodily affect without the mediation of sentiment's traditional ideological accompaniments. This is precisely the revision of sentiment made available by Aestheticist innovations in the novel, exemplified by Pater and Woolf. For this reason, it is significant that Berlant selects as her example of neo-sentimental affective aesthetics a novel marked by these very innovations (*Beloved*'s main narrative device is free indirect discourse) and written by an author especially expert in the tradition I describe (as is well-known, Toni Morrison wrote an M. A. thesis on William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf). While she joins in the attack on sentiment, then, Berlant also leaves a path clear to the countervailing defense of sentiment, on which I now focus.

Contemporary with the late flowering of anti-sentimental thought, a new celebration of the sentimental aesthetic arose. Most influentially, Jane Tompkins almost single-handedly restored the aforementioned *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to the canon by making a persuasive case for the novel's authority (indeed, Lauren Berlant's renewed criticism of Stowe is couched as a response to Tomkins). Tompkins anticipates Nancy Armstrong's thesis on the nineteenth-century centrality of domestic woman, but, instead of adopting Armstrong's hermeneutic of suspicion, she credits the spiritual authority, sincere motivation, and potential political power of novels intended to remake the culture over in the image of the love-centered hearth. Insisting on domestic fiction's emancipatory universalist ambition, Tompkins writes, "The enterprise of sentimental fiction…is

anything but domestic, in the sense of being limited to purely personal concerns. Its mission, on the contrary, is global and its interests identical with the interests of the [human] race" (146).[89]

More recently, Brigid Lowe takes on the anti-sentiment theorists directly, especially challenging the Foucauldian/Althusserean models of ideology critique that began in the 1980s and continues to flourish in novel-theory, in the work not only of Armstrong, but also of D. A. Miller, Daniel Cottom, Terry Eagleton and others. Lowe insists that these critics' deprecation of sympathy both relies on and obscures their own disengagement from practical politics, given that Enlightenment and Victorian notions of sympathy focused on the radical connection, or non-autonomy, of individuals across social boundaries at the level of feeling. The ideology critics in Lowe's account evacuate the positive content of the ideological terms actually being contested by sentimental novelists, regarding them instead as no more than masks for power. Ironically, this move has the effect of subtracting political awareness from criticism, since the critic's starting-point is a decontextualized presentism. Lowe further argues that this paradoxically depoliticizing character of politicized critique stems from the contemporary critics' evasion of Marxism's theoretical collapse as an anodyne for modernity. She proposes in lieu of Marxism or its latter-day supplements a revival of sentimental and sympathetic writing for its ability to engage readers at once rationally, emotionally, and physically in

[89] Tompkins' defense of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has proved influential in the broader world of letters, which is probably why Berlant felt the need to respond to it directly. In 1996, novelist Jane Smiley published a popular encomium to Stowe's novel in *Harper's*, also hinging her thesis on the good of recovering an occluded female tradition of artistic power and ambition. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., published a new annotated edition of the novel in 2006, and his introduction too fends off modernist attacks on sentimentality—most notably from James Baldwin, whose 1947 polemical essay "Everybody's Protest Novel" helped to bring Stowe's book, and sentimental fiction more generally, into disrepute.

the project of extending community to those exploited by the capitalist order.

Suzanne Clark updates Tompkins's and Lowe's historical arguments about the Victorian novel to the modernist period in what is still the only study wholly devoted to modernist literature and sentimentality. Like Tompkins, Clark laments modernist and post-modernist disregard for sentimental aesthetics and politics. She also points out a cultural narrative that helps to explain how I can regard canonical aesthetes like Pater and Woolf as sentimental when they, like their successors Douglas and Armstrong, would have understood their own works as protests against the baseless provocation of emotion in the service of political propaganda. Clark identifies what she refers to as "the ongoing construction and denial of the sentimental" (19). Each cultural movement from the Romantics forward, she shows, has regarded its predecessors as shallowly emotive and affectively sensationalistic:

> For example, romanticism arose as an opposition to feminized sentimentality and its accompanying natural sublime. But modernism constituted itself by conflating the romantic with the sentimental and the popular. The private discourse of feeling and the public community of women, guardians of feeling, are, under modernism, both sentimental. And postmodernism, apparently, is conflating modernism with sentimental humanism… (19)

The logic of the argument underlying such judgments might be expressed as, "My predecessor's work expresses and provokes unwarranted emotion, while my work expresses and provokes rationally-motivated emotion." Due to the ever-receding horizon of the non-sentimental, which Clark follows Julia Kristeva in attributing to the subject's abjection of the maternal body and its death-haunted corporeality, the canonical modernists may now appear to be sentimental themselves. As Clark implies, recent

critics of modernism have treated modernist writers this way, seeing in their works a delusional belief in art's transformative power comparable in its naiveté to Stowe's conviction that society should be renovated from the domestic kitchen outward. I will be arguing, on the other hand, that if nineteenth-century sentimentalism is worthy of defense, so too is that of the modernists.

Tompkins, Clark and Lowe are at one in holding modernism responsible for sentimentalism's decline, especially in its Aestheticist claims for artistic autonomy. We have seen above Clark's account of modernism's derogation of any emotive communal address, while Tompkins similarly summarizes the prejudice against sentimental fiction as deriving from "a modernist point of view, which tends to classify work that affects people's lives, or tries to, as merely sensational or propagandistic," and Lowe throughout her book lays the blame on modernist-inspired post-structuralist theory (Tompkins xi). In the section that follows, I will argue that, beginning with Pater's theory and fiction and coming to fruition in Woolf's middle-period novels, modernism does not so much simply expel or abject the sentimental but attempts, with varying degrees of success, to make it newly relevant to a culture increasingly metropolitan and stratified, thus hostile to the universalist ambitions harbored by mid-nineteenth-century novelists who felt they had a unified public to address as the protagonist of a narrative of civic reform.

If the first section of this project demonstrated the ways in which the novels of Wilde and Joyce informed the "linguistic turn" in literary and cultural studies by inviting the critique of representation and narrative later codified by the post-structuralist generation, this section will argue similarly for the Aestheticist genealogy of what is now

being called the contemporary "affective turn." Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, in their introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader*, identify the beginning of this turn in 1995, with the publication of two essays, Adam Frank and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold" and Brian Massumi's "The Autonomy of Affect" (5). Since these foundational texts, as Seigworth and Gregg document in their valuable survey, there has been an outpouring of work on affect in the arts and humanities as well as in the social and natural sciences, encompassing everything from medicine to performance art. The scope of this vast movement toward affect in intellectual life is too large to be explored fully in this brief introduction to my readings of Pater and Woolf, so I will focus my remarks on those aspects of the affective turn that bear closely on the theory of the novel, especially as it intersects with the history of sentimentality as I have sketched it above.

If sentimentalism in the novel drew its inspiration from the eighteenth-century thought of Smith and others, affect theory seeks an older source in the early modern ontology of Spinoza, for whom affect was a key category. To summarize briefly, Spinoza's innovation, in his *Ethics*, was to found a new conception of God, a rigorously monist one that identifies God with the whole of nature, and thus does away with the supernaturalism of all theologies premised upon a division between God and nature. Spinoza's God is not to be identified with mind, or the human image, or any other kind of free agent existing above and beyond the material world. The anthropology entailed by this monist ontology suggests that neither Platonic nor Cartesian dualism exist: if God is one infinite substance containing the entire universe, then human beings are also, in

Spinoza's technical vocabulary, combinatory modes of this substance—the modes, specifically, of extension and thought. Moreover, as Steven Nadler notes, "there is no causal interaction between the mind and the body" in Spinoza, which is to say that human actions in the world are not caused purely by mentation or intention (n. pag.). This is where Spinoza becomes relevant for contemporary affect-theory, especially as it challenges theories of psychology or society premised on the priority of language or cognition. If there is no mind/body dualism, then the western philosophical tradition's focus on reason and mind should be regarded as unwarranted, and other sources of experience and activity—the physical, the emotional—should be given their due. Nadler aptly summarizes Spinoza's complex approach to affect:

> Our affects are divided into actions and passions. When the cause of an event lies in our own nature—more particularly, our knowledge or adequate ideas—then it is a case of the mind acting. On the other hand, when something happens in us the cause of which lies outside of our nature, then we are passive and being acted upon. Usually what takes place, both when we are acting and when we are being acted upon, is some change in our mental or physical capacities, what Spinoza calls "an increase or decrease in our power of acting" or in our "power to persevere in being". All beings are naturally endowed with such a power or striving. This *conatus*, a kind of existential inertia, constitutes the "essence" of any being. "Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being." An affect just *is* any change in this power, for better or for worse. Affects that are actions are changes in this power that have their source (or "adequate cause") in our nature alone; affects that are passions are those changes in this power that originate outside of us. (n. pag., original emphasis)

"Affect," as an alteration in our mode of persisting within the one substance, becomes a crucial topic for analysis of human behavior. Later theorists will adopt this emphasis on affect without necessarily taking on Spinoza's neo-Stoic advocacy of the subject's regulation of passion through knowledge.

Louis Althusser, for one, revised the Marxist theory of ideology in accordance with Spinoza's monism, wryly noting that "the accusation of being in ideology only applies to others, never to oneself (unless one is really a Spinozist or a Marxist, which, in this matter, is to be exactly the same thing)" (n. pag.). Ideology has no outside because, as in *The Ethics*, it consists not of thoughts alone but of practices, of activities carried out by the entire person allowing it to persist in its social being, affected by both passions from outside and actions from within. Althusser's name for "action" in this case was "science," or the recognition of the affective forces impinging on the subject—an analog of Spinoza's adequate causes. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari offer in their works a more delirious adoption of Spinozist affect, incorporating it into their theory of the war-machine, "a non-subjectified machine assemblage with no intrinsic properties, only situational ones," which comes to replace categories of individual or collective intentional agency (Deleuze and Guattari 353). Persons and groups become rhizomatic (i.e., horizontal, de-centered) combines of perception and sensation, destroying and recreating all systems of sense and organization as their substance is modalized by the various affects offered by experience.[90]

As Gregg and Seigworth tell us, Brian Massumi, translator of Deleuze and Guattari, is one of the main innovators of the affective turn in his "Autonomy of Affect" (collected in 2002's *Parables of the Virtual*). Drawing primarily on Spinoza, as well as on Deleuze, Bergson, and Benjamin, Massumi argues that cultural studies based on semiotics has lead to an untenably extreme social constructionism that has re-inscribed

[90] Much more of Deleuze and Guattari will be said in chapter II.2 below; as they were devotees of Woolf and inspired by *Mrs. Dalloway*, I consider them in relation to it.

the human agent as the originator of reality. In other words, analytic techniques devised to de-center "man" have centered him all the more readily as the maker of culture in a new idealism that consigns the body and nature to mute realms inaccessible to critique. Massumi goes on to object that these post-structuralist or "linguistic turn" theories are conservative because hermetic, impermeable to influences from outside the closed structure of culture, and therefore unable to predict or account for change:

> Approaches to the image in its relation to language are incomplete if they operate only on the semantic or semiotic level, however that level is defined (linguistically, logically, narratologically, ideologically, or all of these in combination, as a Symbolic). What they lose, precisely, is the expression *event*—in favor of structure. Much could be gained by integrating the dimension of intensity into cultural theory. The stakes are the new. For structure is the place where nothing ever happens, that explanatory heaven in which all eventual permutations are prefigured in a self-consistent set of invariant generative rules. (27)[91]

In place of these semiotic approaches, Massumi proposes that we understand the subject as a complex structured by affective resonances between intentional and autonomic responses to stimuli characterized as much by *intensity* as by qualification (a term akin to something like "signification" in Massumi's argument): "For the present purposes, intensity will be equated with affect" (27). This concept of the subject, in which each instance of pre-conscious affect gives rise to a surplus of possibility that Massumi calls the "virtual," entails that we allow for *potential*, that is, for the subject's capacity to act in unforeseen ways based on the relays between affective movement and response.

Massumi introduces complications into his argument that pertain to my understanding of sentiment's relation to affect. On the one hand, his insistence on

[91] This closure to the new is arguably where Wilde and Joyce left us, as I explained in Part I, each having suspended temporality in the name of synchronic subjective/linguistic portraiture. Joyce escapes this deadlock in *Ulysses* by mobilizing affect through language, as will Pater and Woolf.

privileging intensity over signification or narrative allows us to return to scenes of novelistic sentiment with a refreshed understanding that they both represent and transmit a genuine affective experience, capable of burning through their ideological context to disclose a Real of affliction and response: "Intensity would seem to be associated with nonlinear processes: resonation and feedback which momentarily suspend the linear progress of the narrative present from past to future" (26). Instances of sentiment in novels can be seen, in this light, to begin in affective eruptions. However, Massumi is quick to reassure us that he is not promoting a new irrationalism, and that his idea of the autonomy of affect is, like Wilde's autonomy of art, heavily circumscribed. Affect, in short, becomes emotion—it is converted into narrative and meaning grounded in the individual and is thus re-captured by its social and political context: "Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning" (28). At this point, Massumi can be seen to meet the anti-sentimentalists: the affective surge in the scene of sentiment is re-processed into emotion in service of the story (or alibi) that the culture at large wants to tell.

This baleful capture of pre-conscious affect by the social consensus can be transcended through critique. Drawing on Spinoza, Massumi notes that affect also allows for critique, because "it is only when the idea of the affection is doubled by an *idea of the idea of the affection* that it attains the level of conscious reflection" (31, original emphasis). This means that affect's conversion into emotion/sentiment—a socially-programmed response—can itself become an object of reflection. This, for Massumi, is

the emergence of the *mind*, which means that the mind is a machine not for capturing affects but for apprehending, criticizing, and potentially revising their capture. Such a dynamic interaction between being-affected and becoming-active is what Walter Pater means by his Aestheticism when he advises his readers, in the Conclusion to *The Renaissance*, to attend to (i.e., to become conscious of) their most privileged moments of sensation. I take this echo of Aestheticism to be more or less obvious, however, overtly signaled by Massumi when he labels affect "autonomous," a word inescapably reminiscent of debates over art for art's sake. But Massumi's emphasis on affect and intensity also makes available a far more surprising revision of the literary history of Aestheticism, one that leads directly to the impassioned but inward portrayal of Pater's protagonist as witness to cruelty in *Marius the Epicurean*: Aestheticism enables a return to and a radicalization of the sentimental topos through new deployments of narrative prose focused on the interaction among affect, emotion, and reflection in the subject. An analysis of *Marius the Epicurean* informed by Massumi's affective thesis will be the centerpiece of the chapter on Pater below, where I argue that the Aesthetic presentation of interiority transforms the ideology of sentiment into a new universal materialist ethic based on the common capacity for pain shared by all sentient beings. By portraying his protagonist as affected by the pain of others, Pater calls upon readers to attend to their own affect and remediate the cruelty of their own societies.

In the last decade, Teresa Brennan has offered the most provocative extension of the affective turn inaugurated by Massumi and others, and the one that will open the way from Pater to Woolf. In *The Transmission of Affect*, Brennan theorizes that affect is

literally transpersonal, not just pre-personal as Massumi had argued. Brennan's argument, premised as much as the physiology of pheromones as on the philosophy of the subject, is that "the emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another" (3). Defining affect as "the physiological shift accompanying a judgment," Brennan holds that affects form prior to thoughts, that, moreover, "affects may, at least in some instances, find thoughts that suit them, not the other way around," and, finally, that "[t]houghts, indeed, appear more individual or personal than affects" (5, 7). This concept effectively collectivizes affect, so that it may create group-subjects, rather than just individual ones. Such a revision of affect theory leads from the cognitive novel-portraits of Wilde and Joyce and the affective novel-portrait of Pater to the affective ensemble piece of *Mrs. Dalloway,* which broadens the post-Aestheticist novel to encompass divergent points of subjectivity experiencing shared moments of feeling. But *Mrs. Dalloway* points beyond current affect-theory and its materialist bias, because it locates the source of collective affect in a transpersonal spirit incompletely incarnated in the human world and visible only in emotive moments of being. Where Woolf is faithful to the novelistic tradition, however, is in her singling out of sentimental scenes as vehicles for this spiritual-affective upwelling. This move anchors her fiction to a base in social critique from which to assail the English status quo of 1923 with her insurgent metaphysics. The novel's labor of criticism, then, from sentiment to affect, is never finished.

II.2. Isolated in the Slaughterhouse: Walter Pater's Neo-Sentimental Aestheticism

For there is a certain grief in things as they are, in man as he has come to be, as he certainly is, over and above those griefs of circumstance which are in a measure removable—some inexplicable shortcoming, or misadventure, on the part of nature itself—death, and old age as it must needs be, and that watching for their approach, which makes every stage of life like a dying over and over again. Almost all death is painful, and in every thing that comes to an end a touch of death, and therefore of wretched coldness struck home to one, of remorse, of loss and parting, of outraged attachments. Given faultless men and women, given a perfect state of society which should have no need to practise on men's susceptibilities for its own selfish ends, adding one turn more to the wheel of the great rack for its own interest or amusement, there would still be this evil in the world, of a certain necessary sorrow and desolation, felt, just in proportion to the moral, or nervous perfection men have attained to. And what we need in the world, over against that, is a certain permanent and general power of compassion—humanity's standing force of self-pity—as an elementary ingredient of our social atmosphere, if we are to live in it at all.

—Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*

For influential early twentieth-century critics, regardless of their ideology, Walter Pater was a mere aesthete who promoted a decadent ideology of "art for art's sake" that left aesthetics fatally cut off from ethics and politics. As I showed below, Wilde himself may have been the first important critic to so interpret Pater's philosophy through his dramatization of its dire consequences in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. T. S. Eliot in turn blames Pater for radicalizing Matthew Arnold's effort "to set up Culture in the true place of Religion, and to leave Religion to be laid waste by the anarchy of feeling," a malicious neglect effected by Pater's emphasis on emotion and sensation over reasoned faith (387). For Eliot, Pater's Aestheticism augurs the destruction of tradition and the liberation of desire; the poet-critic claims that Pater's insistence on art for its own sake actually confuses art and life by leveling both to the plane of affect. Hence, Pater "propagated some confusion between art and life which is not wholly irresponsible for some untidy lives" (Eliot 392). This homophobic insinuation about Pater's relation to Wilde, whose "untidy" life is almost certainly the one intended, underscores Eliot's sense that Pater was a dangerous radical whose theories would lead to a breakdown of order. In the middle of the twentieth century, the anti-Aestheticist theoretical critique comes from the left, in the

form of Raymond Williams's attack on Pater in *Culture and Society 1780-1950* as a derivative late Romantic whose style is nothing but mystifying "gauze"—a metaphor that associates Pater at once with femininity and debility (179). According to Williams, we find in Pater's aesthetics the "reduction of a whole process [of situated perception], characterized by its movements and its interactions, to a fragmentary, isolated product—Pater's image of the contemplating being" (180). Williams understands Aestheticism, then, as an instance of reification, or the mystifying substitution of supposedly settled concepts (the aesthetic, the work of art, the observer) for a dialectical social process, the dynamic interaction of subject, object, and product through historical time and political mediation. Whereas Eliot blames Pater for destroying the unity of an organic society, Williams holds him responsible for undoing the union of theory and praxis.

Matthew Potolsky, rehearsing the canonical anti-Pater critiques of Eliot, Williams, and several more writers, notes that contemporary modes of scholarship, especially those influenced by gender and queer theory, have overturned these views and come to see Pater's writings as effectual political work. The new Pater scholarship "demonstrates [that] Pater is not merely a *de facto* reactionary, but a sexual dissident and erotic theorist" (186).[92] Potolsky's important essay on Pater's utopian vision of affective community joins this trend in scholarship on Aestheticism, showing that "Pater tries to outline the possibility of communal affiliation based on literary and aesthetic judgment" (187). While my argument is consonant with Potolsky's, I argue in the following chapter that the question of aesthetic form and tradition themselves bear on our understanding of Pater's complicated politics. While Potolsky draws much of his evidence from Pater's

[92] For influential queer revisions of Pater scholarship, see Dellamora, Dowling, and Love.

unfinished novel *Gaston de Latour*, he makes little of it *as a novel*—he ignores, in other words, Pater's choice to promote a communal and affective politics through a literary form whose conventions were developed, as theorists of sentiment have long argued, to disseminate just such emotions.

In his neglect of Pater's fiction qua fiction, Potolsky is not alone. Critics rarely treat Pater as an important figure in the history of the modern novel, even though his influence on several major novelists, most notably Henry James, Marcel Proust, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, has long been recognized.[93] Regarding him instead as the last of the Victorian sages, whose prose theorizing sets the tone for twentieth-century formalism, critics have traditionally seen Pater's work as an English domestication of European philosophical radicalism or else as what Harold Bloom calls a "hinge" between Romantic and modernist poetry—between, to use Bloom's own examples, the sensuous humanism of John Keats and the lush skepticism of Wallace Stevens ("The Place of Pater" 34). J. Hillis Miller traces Pater's influence through several streams of twentieth-century American and European literature, from the modernist poetics of Pound and Eliot to the deconstructive criticism of Derrida and de Man, but, though he mentions Joyce and Proust as "Pater's progeny," Miller makes no mention of the importance of Pater's formal innovations in the novel or their effect on later fiction (76). Such a critical focus on criticism and poetry initially makes sense: most of Pater's writing was in the genre of

[93] Perhaps the best way to substantiate this contention would be to list influential theoretical and historical accounts of the modern or modernist novel from which Pater is entirely absent or in which he is relegated to a footnote or a passing mention: Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination,* Auerbach's *Mimesis*, Lukács's *The Historical Novel*, Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Jameson's *The Political Unconscious,* Miller's *The Novel and the Police*, Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Moretti's *The Way of the World*, Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet,* and Doody's *The True Story of the Novel.*

literary and art criticism, and his relentless focus on individual subjectivity comports well with the modern, post-Wordsworthian lyric's emphasis on inwardness. Pater's most recent biographer, Denis Donoghue, typifies this critical current when he first notes that "Pater is a shade or trace in virtually any writer of any significance from Hopkins and Wilde to Ashbery" but later goes on to dismiss the claim that Pater had any serious interest in the novelistic tradition: "[c]omparisons with Scott, Balzac, Stendhal, and Tolstoi, or even with lesser historical novelists, are beside whatever point *Marius* has" (6, 189). Donoghue's implicit claim that *Marius* is a minor and possibly pointless fiction seems questionable when we recall that Pater's sole completed novel influenced Wilde, Joyce, Woolf, and other key modernist fiction writers as much as or more than Pater's critical texts influenced any twentieth-century poet.[94] This information should make clear the need to reckon with the Aesthete as modern novelist.

Before proceeding to *Marius*, a revised account of Pater's theoretical development will be necessary if the writer's brand of Aestheticism is to be rescued from the common criticism that it is merely aloof—or worse. Benjamin Morgan summarizes the anti-Aestheticist charge in its strongest form, which he identifies with the tradition of the Frankfurt School, from Walter Benjamin's attack on Aestheticism as inherently

[94] See Ellmann's *Oscar Wilde* for Pater's personal, as well as literary, influence on his student. Donoghue's biography of Pater treats at length Henry James's extensive and perhaps anxiously back-handed commentary on Pater's writings, as does Freedman's study of James and British Aestheticism (see Donoghue chapter 2 and Freedman chapter 3). The importance of Pater to Joyce can be seen simply by reading the fourth chapter of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which parodies Pater's style to indicate its pervasive influence on young Stephen and hence on young Joyce. Similarly, Woolf herself attests to the importance of *Marius the Epicurean* for her at the fraught time of her father's death in her memoir "Old Bloomsbury" (see *Moments of Being* 182). As for Proust, Eells notes that he wrote little on Pater and was dismissive in what he wrote, subordinating Pater to his beloved Ruskin, but Eells goes on to show the stylistic and thematic resemblances between the writers: "The affinities between Pater's and Proust's works are numerous and are sometimes so close that Proust appears to be citing Pater's very words" (96-7). With the possible exception of Flaubert, Pater is the one novelistic precursor that these diverse writers share in common as a decisive influence.

"fascist" to Peter Bürger's dismissal of *l'art pour l'art* as the last resort of bourgeois individualists (Morgan 732-3). Morgan counters by pointing out the complications in Pater's thought, asserting that the writer "holds [the autonomy of art] only as a provisional possibility" (733). But Pater's own writings, especially the most notorious, tell a story less amenable to the "provisionality" thesis. His most famous work in his lifetime and today, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, seems in its infamous Conclusion to argue for the complete amoralism of both art *and* experience, an amoralism that leaves Pater open to the Benjaminian accusation of proto-fascist indifference to the claims of history.[95] However, passages in the essays collected in *The Renaissance* frame the Conclusion by showing that Pater's Aestheticism entails an aesthetic politics far closer to the one sketched above in my outline of sentimental thought—in short, an almost salvific theory of art as the model for and the incitement to a reformed society.

The *Renaissance*'s concluding invocation of "art for art's sake" allows us to understand what art's "sake" or purpose is: the affective enlargement of individual and collective life in the name of beauty (239). It is thus significant that Pater's English translation of the tautological French phrase of earlier in the century—*l'art pour l'art*—to "art for art's sake" definitively implies that art *has* a purpose and invites the reader to ask what that purpose is. The Conclusion taken as a whole portrays human life as a

[95] Pater's *Renaissance* has a tumultuous textual history. Originally published in 1873 as *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, the purportedly hedonistic and irreligious Conclusion prompted an outcry from academia and the press. Pater, chastened by the scandal, deleted the Conclusion for the second edition. Furthermore, realizing the justice of Emilia Pattison's criticism that the book was mis-named, as its author had no interest in history as such, he altered the title to *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*. The third edition of 1877 restored the Conclusion but kept the second edition's title. Moreover, Pater revised a number of passages up until the publication of the third edition. In what follows, I quote from a republication of the sixth edition of 1901, itself based on the third edition, which again represents Pater's final intention for the text. None of my arguments depend on passages significantly revised between the first and third editions. For a full account of the publication history, see Donoghue chapter 11.

suspended death sentence ("Well! we are *condemnés*, as Victor Hugo says: we are all under a sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve") and its supporting quotations come not from the aesthetes and decadents we might expect, such as Poe or Gautier, but from two of the most *engagé* writers in French—Rousseau and Hugo (238). In making the condemned criminal and social outcast the paradigm of human existence, the Conclusion promotes art as a reprieve from and thus a counter to social suffering.

The individual essays of *The Renaissance* provide expanded arguments for art as a social force. For instance, here is how Pater describes the artistic appeal of Sandro Botticelli's frescoes:

> So just what Dante scorns as unworthy alike of heaven and hell, Botticelli accepts, that middle world in which men take no side in great conflicts, and decide no great causes, and make great refusals. He thus sets for himself the limits within which art, undisturbed by any moral ambition, does its most sincere and surest work. His interest is neither in the untempered goodness of Angelico's saints, nor the untempered evil of Orcagna's Inferno; but with men and women, in their mixed and uncertain condition, always attractive, clothed sometimes by passion with a character of loveliness and energy, but saddened perpetually by the shadow upon them of the great things from which they shrink. His morality is all sympathy; and it is this sympathy, conveying into his work somewhat more than is usual of the true complexion of humanity, which makes him, visionary as he is, so forcible a realist. (55-6) [96]

The key abstractions of this paragraph seem to conflict with one another. The first sentence, beginning with classicist Pater's signature Latinate hypotaxis and its surplus of complicating and delaying subordinate clauses, gives way in the final clauses to a parataxis with a concluding surprise: Botticelli's people "take *no* side" and "decide *no*

[96] It is beyond the scope of this project to adjudicate the scholarly viability of Pater's accounts of the many historical figures and periods his works treat. For my purposes, I approach Pater's historical works as rhetorical structures; my analyses will prioritize the attitudes and affects they promote rather than the ones they purport to reflect.

great causes," we read, and from this rhythm of negation, we might expect that, because they shun the very category of greatness, they would also make *no* great refusals. Pater's final clause tells us, to the contrary, that in fact they *do* make great refusals—presumably, the refusal of political engagement itself. This sentence's startling lapse in grammatical parallelism points to the paradox of a political apolitics: the political agency of spurning political agency. The next sentence gives the contemporary reader another jolt: on the one hand, Pater writes that art should be without "moral ambition." He here sounds like Jane Tompkins's modernists, looking down on sentimental literature as so much pulpit-pounding or agitprop. Then, however, Pater writes of art's "sincerest and surest work," "work" being Jane Tompkins's own word for what engaged art does as it transforms culture. Finally, the end of the passage revokes the claim that art should be without moral ambition and instead names both the morality appropriate to art's work and that morality's attendant aesthetic: *sympathy* and *realism*.

One does not expect an aesthete to advocate either of these George Eliot-like values, and Pater certainly does not endorse them on Eliot's terms. But he does retain Eliot's concepts and much of her basic theory: as Eliot, in "The Natural History of German Life," disparages Dickens for the brutal externality of his descriptions, so Pater implicitly criticizes Dante, Angelico, and Orcagna for a superficial interest in grand action, which neglects the inner lives and everyday compromises of the ordinary people who are most affected by religion, politics, and morality. The antidote to these medieval and modern forms of abstraction is sympathy for both Eliot and Pater.[97] As we saw,

[97] It is useful to remember that *Middlemarch* (1871-2) and *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) were first published within about one year of each other, even though the conventions of literary

George Eliot's ambition for her version of sympathy was to unite the classes and bind the nation up into the kind of holistic society that the church and the village once provided before they were vitiated by industrial capitalism. Pater's work harbors no such liberal-nationalist hope since it usually treats temporally and geographically distant settings and evidences no particular concern for England as a nation, but his ultimate goal was substantially similar to Eliot's.

What work does Pater expect sympathy—and its consequently realistic appraisal of people's actual lives—to do? An earlier essay in *The Renaissance*, "Two Early French Stories," provides a suggestion:

> One of the strongest characteristics of that outbreak of the reason and the imagination, of that assertion of the liberty of the heart, in the middle age, which I have termed a medieval Renaissance, was its antinomianism, its spirit of rebellion and revolt against the moral and religious ideas of the time. In their search after the pleasures of the senses and the imagination, in their care for beauty, in their worship of the body, people were impelled beyond the bounds of the Christian ideal; and their love became sometimes a strange idolatry, a strange rival religion. (24)

"Antinomianism," a theological term, refers to believers' sole reliance on the inner light—part and parcel of God—to guide them, which entails their rebellious indifference toward *nomos*, or merely human laws and institutions. In Pater's secular and incipiently queer terms, an antinomian relies not only on godly impulses from within what Pater calls "the heart" and "the imagination," but also from the material desiring impulses of

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periodization tend to treat the two books as belonging to different epochs, with Eliot's novel serving as the summation of domestic realism and Pater's critical work inaugurating a new set of proto-modernist priorities and interests (a critical trope probably set in stone by Yeats's famous placement of the Mona Lisa excerpt from *The Renaissance* at the beginning of his *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*). Eliot, for her part, would have concurred with this presumption, since she regarded *The Renaissance* as "quite poisonous in its false principles and criticism and false conception of life" (qtd. in Dellamora 18).

the body.[98] Following Romantic predecessors like Shelley and Whitman, and putting a melioristic spin on Darwin, Pater proposes that the liberation of "natural" desire will restore a wholeness to life absent from the reifying idealist doctrines of religious dogmatism. To such dogmas, Pater opposes his "rival religion" of Hellenism, or the ancient Greek worship of beauty. As his pointed reappropriation of the word "religion" suggests, antinomianism in Pater's account will lead not to social anarchy, but to strengthened community, just as the essay on Botticelli implies that an artist's rejection of the political sphere produces a more critical and realistic art. He writes that, "within the enchanted region of the Renaissance….there are no fixed parties, no exclusions: all breathes of that unity of culture in which 'whatsoever things are comely' are reconciled, for the elevation and adorning of our spirits" (26-7). In this dialectical thought, greater individualism conduces to greater communitarianism, as all individuals, by following their own natural sympathies toward the beautiful, create a society inclusive of all the

[98] Pater's defense of same-sex desire is all but explicit in *The Renaissance*, particularly in "Two Early French Stories." He discusses Chaucer, for instance, in terms that anticipate the theory of homosocial desire between men with a common female love object: "one knows not whether the love of both Palamon and Arcite for Emelya, or of those two for each other, is the chiefer subject of the *Knight's Tale*" (8). Similarly, the essay goes on to extol the passionate friendships of men, "faithful unto death," which he sees as another vehicle for the unity of culture (8). Pater's utopia of mutually desiring men, much like Wilde's after him, may lead critics to perceive a greater ideological division than exists between the Aestheticists and the Victorian sentimental realists who preceded them. Those realists, after all, centered their affective utopias on heterosexual companionate marriage and its fireside setting, while, as Sedgwick argues, late Victorian sentimentality shifts its privileged locus from domestic woman to agonistic man in tandem with the literary-historical move from realism to romance (see *Epistemology* chapter 3). Even as the social content changes, though, the political form of thinking remains the same: the sentimental subject's power of sympathy can unfix the bonds of a cruel and ugly society that forces innocents to suffer. While I agree that the shift from heterosexual domesticity to nascent (if disavowed) queer desire is a very important one, I nevertheless want to claim importance for the *continuities* between Victorian and modernist approaches to cultural politics. Observing these continuities will allow us both to demystify untenable Aestheticist and modernist claims to absolute novelty and to form a more competent evaluation of Victorian aesthetics, which may look in the end less alien or outmoded than the modernists and their theoretical successors claim.

manifold forms of beauty that may exist.[99]

Sympathy in Pater, as in George Eliot, promises to heal the *polis,* riven as it is by competing systems whose proponents threaten to impose them by external force on what ought to be an organic community of fellow-feeling. Natania Rosenfeld summarizes the ethico-political implications of Pater's seemingly apolitical interest in the aesthetically particular for its own, non-universalized sake: "Such an aestheticism implies an ethics…that eschews the untouchability mandated by caste, homophobia, or precious (Ruskinian) attitudes toward the art object. Pater's responsiveness to art, and to the artists whose spirits he strives to imagine and embody, is tactile, fleshly, physical rather than metaphysical" (355). Rosenfeld here argues that Pater's theory of art requires a sympathetic subject, capable of receiving and extending fellow-feeling to the aesthetic object. Regenia Gagnier, coming at Pater from a very different critical position than Rosenfeld's, also captures this ethical dimension of Pater's thought when she rejects an ostensibly tempting identification of Pater's Aestheticism with the neo-classical advocacy of consumerism dominating economic thought at the end of the nineteenth century. Gagnier shows instead that underlying Pater's seemingly consumerist individualism is a "romantic aesthetic reminiscent of Marx or Ruskin" that "entails a shift from methodological individualism to concern for social welfare, the relation between individual interests and the interest of the community" (*The Insatiability of Human Wants* 57). That Pater emphasizes intersubjective sympathizing as well as affective responses to art objects will be shown by my reading of *Marius the Epicurean*'s update of novelistic

[99] This argument has lately been revived in theory by Scarry's *On Beauty and Being Just,* which contends that the love of beauty will lead to a redistributive (i.e., socialist) politics by way of the individual's desire to disseminate beauty as widely as possible.

sentimental ethics.

Pater's paradoxical antinomian communitarian utopianism is not as absolute or as untroubled as it seems in the early and deliberately provocative *Renaissance*. In his later criticism, Pater details his own sense of the Aestheticist antinomies that so bedeviled Wilde and that later led critics as different as T. S. Eliot and Raymond Williams to associate autonomous aesthetics with dangerous irresponsibility. Readers familiar with his biography will know that Pater was throughout his life deeply attracted to "the Christian ideal" as well as to the "rival religion" of sensuous paganism: in his youth he seriously considered ordination, while in his last years he returned to regular church attendance—albeit from "an aesthetic impulse: he attended service for the ritual, not the doctrine" (Donoghue 28, 99). Moreover, Pater's opposition of sensuality to idealism, Hellenism to Christianity, may seem ahistorical and mystifying, but Pater is not a theoretical naïf by current standards.

Redirecting our gaze from the beginning to the end of his career will lead us to his rich sense of Aestheticism's historical problematic and its relation to ethics, politics, and religion. The last non-fiction book Pater published in his lifetime, 1893's *Plato and Platonism*, opens with a defense of a historicist and materialist approach to cultural studies as thorough as any modern scholar could wish. Pater's late statement on critical method is worth quoting at length, given its seemingly straightforward denial of art's autonomy. Pater espouses

> the historic method, which bids us replace the doctrine, or the system, we are busy with, or such an ancient monument of philosophic thought as *The Republic*, as far as possible in the group of conditions, intellectual, social, material, amid which it was actually produced, if we would really

> understand it. That ages have their genius as well as the individual; that in every age there is a peculiar ensemble of conditions which determines a common character in every product of that age, in business and art, in fashion and speculation, in religion and manners, in men's very faces; that nothing man has projected from himself is really intelligible except at its own date, and from its proper point of view in the never-resting "secular process"; the solidarity of philosophy, of the intellectual life, with common or general history; that what it behooves the student of philosophic systems to cultivate is the "historic sense": by force of these convictions many a normal, or at first sight abnormal, phase of speculation has found a reasonable meaning for us. As the strangely twisted pine-tree, which would be a freak of nature on an English lawn, is seen, if we replace it, in thought, amid the contending forces of the Alpine torrent that actually shaped its growth, to have been the creature of necessity, of the logic of certain facts; so, beliefs the most fantastic, the "communism" of Plato, for instance, have their natural propriety when duly correlated with those facts, those conditions round about them, of which they are in truth a part. (10-11)

In other words, every work of the human imagination must be considered as the product of a historical process and as an aggregate of homologous historical elements rather than as an organic whole given form by a purely individual genius. Consequently, there can be no such thing as an apolitical work of art; even works that steadfastly refuse to admit the political into themselves will, like the transplanted pine-tree of Pater's concluding simile, bear on their very surfaces the impress of the common historical forces that shaped them, irrespective of their author's intentions. As in Joyce's fictions, we see here the theses and methods of post-modern demystification *in nuce*. If Pater had earlier praised those aesthetes who avoided political decisions and made "great refusals," he here exposes all such refusals as illusory; all people, and all their works, are subject to historical forces as unavoidable as weather.

Pater attributes the modern origin of this historical method in criticism to the philosophy of Hegel and the science of Darwin, but he identifies its earliest manifestation

in the thought of Heraclitus, the pre-Socratic philosopher who argued that underlying all seemingly solid things—objects, subjects, or concepts—was a fiery flux, a cyclic birth and rebirth of matter in a blaze of temporality.[100] *Plato and Platonism* accordingly appears at first to be a Heraclitean, anti-essentialist, and liberal demystification or de-naturalization of Plato. Pater portrays the Athenian philosopher as a conservative prophet of order, desiring to fix the world's natural flux within his Theory of Forms and promulgating Spartan authoritarianism as his metaphysics' corresponding politics. But the Plato who emerges in Pater's study gradually takes on the contours of the study's author. Like the novels that feature Dorian Gray, Stephen Dedalus, Clarissa Dalloway or, indeed, Marius the Epicurean as their protagonists, *Plato and Platonism* is a critical anatomy of an authorial surrogate. For Pater eventually demonstrates that nothing other than Aestheticism itself—the affective and sensuous movement of the subject toward the beautiful objects of its desire—is the source of Plato's essentialism and authoritarianism. The idealist philosophy of Pater's Plato starts as a sensuous attraction to the things of the world and ends in the intellectual and political effort to fix them at their most beautiful, even by the symbolic violence of coercive sociality.

Pater goes so far as to attribute Plato's notorious censoriousness, his stringent restrictions on the arts in *The Republic*, to the philosopher's desire to purify the aesthetic sense of the citizenry and to create the perfect city as unified artistic object—indeed, as a

[100] See Shuter chapter 3 for an extended treatment of Pater's Heraclitean tendencies. In brief, Shuter argues that it is the later, supposedly more conservative Pater who adopts the philosophy of flux and not, as we might expect, the younger liberal author of *The Renaissance*. Consequently, Shuter claims that Pater's late works appear more skeptical and less dogmatic than received wisdom about the thinker's late-life rightward drift would indicate. My demonstration of Pater's continued allegiance to the historicist method in criticism as late as *Plato and Platonism* is congruent with Shuter's thesis.

well-wrought urn, classically proportioned and balanced, meant to survive the centuries unmarred by history's wind and rain. Comparing the art Plato advocates not with the Renaissance's antinomian naturalism, but rather with the sternly idealizing churches of the Middle Ages, Pater writes, "The rigid logic of their charm controls our taste, as logic proper binds the intelligence: we would have something of that quality, if we might, for ourselves, in what we do or make; feel, under its influence, very diffident of our own loose, or gaudy, or literally insignificant, decorations" (280). The "literally insignificant" is the meaningless, that which does not signify. Such decorations, by failing to communicate essential truths, can only distract the person forced to confront them every day and thus disrupt the balance of elements that Plato saw as psychic health. Aestheticism—the attraction to sensuous beauty—becomes its opposite, moralized idealism, when its beautiful objects are identified with the ultimate or highest good.

Plato's proposition that we reform decoration by purging it of any elements that do not conduce to the end of harmony in the human soul takes a sinister turn in the next sentence when Pater identifies the classical aesthetic as the motivation for Platonic authoritarianism, as well as its means of ideologically reproducing loyal citizens: "'Abide,' [the Platonist] says to youth, 'in these places, and the like of them, and mechanically, irresistibly, the soul of them will impregnate yours. With whatever beside is in congruity with them in the order of hearing and sight, they will tell…upon your very countenance, your walk and gestures, in the course and concatenation of your inmost thoughts'" (280-1). The Platonist-aesthete in Pater's account dreams of enforcing artistic order through the coercive institutions of the state. Furthermore, this Platonic artist's

attitude toward the audience—or, in the ideal *res publica*, the citizenry—is frankly disciplinary: the aesthetic state deploys its artistic forms to produce a certain type of subject. To appreciate the audacity of Pater's fictive Plato, one might imagine that Wilde, rather than taking to the democratic lecture platform, took up arms instead and attempted to found a police state to enforce his House Beautiful doctrines—which themselves called, like Pater's reified "Middle Ages," for an aesthetic economy and coherence in home decor, in opposition to mid-Victorian variety and abundance.

The subsequent history of modernism relieves us of having to strive too hard to imagine such a scenario. Wilde's practice, if not every element of his theory, remained democratic, but aesthetic Platonists in late-Pater's staunchly elitist sense would soon be emerging throughout Europe and the U.S., thinkers who feared and despised the early twentieth century's multitude of social upheavals, and who in turn promoted one version or another of the aesthetic state as a mechanism for order's restoration. Avant-garde groups, such as the Futurists, are the most obvious examples—think of F. T. Marinetti's exaltation of cleansing warfare and streamlined machinery, as well as his desired techno-utopia of machinically-regulated change meant to replace the amorphous corruptions of nature, the flesh, and the feminized and racialized masses.[101] Walter Benjamin had such authoritarian vanguardism in mind when he identified Aestheticism with fascism. But interwar figures associated with more orthodox or majoritarian positions in the political field shared an aesthetic hostility to social disorder as well as a desire to purify it through the agency of the state. In his essay "Eliot, Lukács, and the Politics of Modernism," Michael North complicates any easy left/right or avant-garde/modernist distinctions when

[101] See Marinetti's "The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism."

it comes to aesthetic authoritarianism by comparing T. S. Eliot with Georg Lukács. North finds that "this reactionary modernist and this conservative revolutionary shared, for at least a few years, a single position that was both modernist and anti-modern, revolutionary and conservative" (170). Following Lukács's own later self-assessment, North labels this position "romantic anti-capitalism" and traces the many affiliations between Eliot and Lukács as they raged against "the economic and political fragmentation of modern civilization," hoping to replace its individualism and disunity with classical aesthetic forms and hierarchical political governance, whether overseen by Eliot's royalist monarchy or by Lukács's Leninist party (173). North even shows Eliot and Lukács on common ground in their shared assessment of the novel as a form, which both regard as a fragmentary record of modern alienation whose highest historical task is to reveal by corrosive irony the inadequacy of the present and, in so doing, to demonstrate the need for epic forms of the future that can bind culture together again.

North's lucid comparison of the far left and far right positions brings us to the end of *Plato and Platonism*, in which Pater, erstwhile celebrant of the Renaissance's incipient liberalism, uses the historicist critical method that is the intellectual fruit of that liberalism to think his way into sympathy with the "blessed rage for order" that typifies the Middle Ages in the imaginations of romantic anti-capitalists from the Pre-Raphaelites through Pound and Eliot.[102] *Plato and Platonism* thus gives us Pater's career in miniature, from its early defense of historical contingency and materialist explanation to a late preference for the ordered forms of the Christian faith—what Pater's younger

[102] The quoted phrase comes from Wallace Stevens's "The Idea of Order at Key West," where it stands for the poet's vain but inevitable desire to give form to experience.

contemporary G. K. Chesterton was to label in his popular Catholic apologetics "the romance of orthodoxy," by which he meant the adventurous retention of balance between reason and emotion, desire and restraint, mercy and justice, through believing in and striving toward the transcendent ground of being—whether the Platonic Forms or the Thomist God. The aesthetic preference for order or orthodoxy may lead to a dangerous temptation: the aesthete may attempt to reverse-engineer a society from his preferred artistic forms. Adapting a famous Adornian phrase about mass culture's desublimating properties, we might say that Pater anticipates modern totalitarianism and understands it as "Aestheticism in reverse."[103] If Aestheticism, particularly in *The Renaissance*, is a liberatory force, producing the social unity-through-diversity that results from each person following his or her individual (but nevertheless common-to-all) natural desire, then Aestheticism in *Plato and Platonism* becomes the source of all political coercion, as the Aesthete insists that the entire *polis* be subject to his *poiesis* in its color and shape, as well as in the very dispositions of its inhabitants.[104]

In a powerful essay that I take to be exemplary of the "hermeneutics of suspicion"

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[103] In his essay "How to Look at Television," Adorno says that "much television material" represents "psychoanalysis in reverse," since it valorizes the very behaviors and mental states that psychoanalysis would regard as pathological regressions to earlier developmental stages (174).

[104] Important theories of the avant-garde from the late twentieth century echo this Paterian thesis. Bürger's, most notably, emphasizes the avant-garde's desire to liquidate art and its autonomy by generalizing it throughout the whole of society—that is, by making the *polis* itself the greatest work of art. Groys's study of Stalinist aesthetics generalizes Bürger's thesis to the art of totalitarianism at large. Groys claims that socialist realism in Stalin's USSR is not, as is commonly assumed, the enemy of the avant-garde but rather its successor in the agency of remaking society: "Under Stalin the dream of the avant-garde was in fact fulfilled and the life of society was organized in monolithic artistic forms, though of course not those that the avant-garde itself had favored" (9). Groys's case could likely be applied to other twentieth-century totalitarian states in their transition from the interwar avant-garde to various forms of epic neo-classicism. Pater, who could not, of course, foresee these developments from the purview of the late nineteenth century, nevertheless perceives the longstanding tendency in European aesthetics to which they belong. He identifies the origins of this tendency in the philosophy of Plato and ambivalently sympathizes with it in his criticism even as he vociferously attacks it in his fiction.

often applied both to Aestheticism and sentimentalism, Daniel Cottom proposes the idea that a certain hatred of humanity, typified by the manifestos of Marinetti and the philosophy of Nietzsche, may be necessary to distinguish art from life. Cottom does not make this argument to excuse Marinetti's fascism—indeed, he bluntly refers to Marinetti's life as "stupid and despicable"—but to expose as naïve the Benjaminian or broadly leftist hope that a properly politicized art could ever be redeemed from art's essential contiguity with oppression (97). Identifying the aesthetic as endemically dangerous to the social, Cottom thus ends where Plato ends:

> The contortions that so many critics have gone through to separate futurism from its fascist associations—from the brutal conventions to which it was so devoted from the beginning—are themselves evidence of the misanthropy people desire, and find, in art. As we fail to recognize whenever we yearn for an art indistinguishable from life, art is most human when its constitutive antagonism to humanity goes unrecognized. (97)

This implies that the only way to avoid totalitarian aesthetics is to avoid aesthetics, because art as such is an enemy of humanity; only by refusing the autonomy of the aesthetic can the critic skirt the danger that art poses in its will-to-power over common life. In arguing this point, Cottom takes his place among a distinguished company of critics for whom Pater's, or any other, humanist brand of autonomous art is more dangerous than the straightforwardly authoritarian aesthetics of Nietzsche or the avant-garde, because more unwitting. Pater himself anticipates this critique in *Plato and Platonism*, showing that Aestheticist anarchy may lead its partisans into life-hating tyranny.

Even at his most nostalgic for Platonic or medieval order, however, Pater never

takes his aesthetic illiberalism as far as that of the avant-garde's in the direction of misanthropic elitism. It is impossible to imagine the antiquarian don endorsing Marinetti's call to level whole cities or Wyndham Lewis's advice to suffragettes: "IF YOU DESTROY A GREAT WORK OF ART you are destroying a greater soul than if you annihilated a whole district of London" (*BLAST* 152, Lewis's caps). For Pater, who had an "expressivist" aesthetic anthropology, as F. C. McGrath notes, great works of art were the products of exceptional human souls, considered both as individual artists and as historical and cultural aggregates; McGrath puts it this way: "Style for Pater was the external expression of an inner vision" (95). Hence Pater's scholarly method: his studies are of *artists* rather than of single works, and generally include an explication of the entire social context that were the artists' conditions of possibility. Thus, to murder human beings or destroy societies in the name of art, as Marinetti and Lewis insouciantly recommend, would be for Pater to destroy the very basis of art. To study Pater's scholarship is to recognize that the Aestheticism he promoted not avoids anti-humanist formalism, but is actually hostile to it, since artworks on Pater's account are holistic emanations of social tendencies and the individuals who incarnate them.[105]

Pater's expressivist anthropology makes his adoption of the novel a less surprising artistic choice than it might otherwise seem. While his non-fiction writing, taken as a whole, never resolves the contradictions between the emancipatory and

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[105] As Gagnier notes, "most subsequent readers of Pater retained his formalism and ignored his ethics" (*The Insatiability of Human Wants* 58). The confusion of Aestheticism with mere formalism in the Anglophone context becomes paradigmatically elitist in the twentieth century. Pater's portrait of Plato shows his awareness of and temptation toward these elements in his aesthetic theory, but his residual social utopianism prevents his ever capitulating wholly to anti-democratic sentiments. It is thus a mistake, I would argue, to read the elitist twentieth-century career of formalist Aestheticism back into Pater's more circumspect work.

oppressive dimensions of an Aestheticist approach to life, the traditional literary form in which to examine individuals as social actors and as historical aggregates is less the critical essay or the intellectual history than the novel—a dialogical representation of multitudinous discourses and, consequently, a wider canvas for Pater's speculations than his comparatively univocal essays. As Laurel Brake writes, the novel "represents a release for Pater from the exclusive demands of the discourse of history to those of fiction and the imagination. It offers narrative and formal opportunities for the writer of larger scope, and the potential to match the formal complexity with that of content" (229). More than this, however, the novel is a narrative form, which is to say that it adds to Aestheticism the conceptual element that Wilde most missed in it—the element of temporality. If Aestheticism becomes elitism and even totalitarianism when it tries to fix the Heraclitean flow of history into eternal forms—Pater's paradoxically "hard, gemlike flame" comes to mind—then the novel's formal commitment to historicity rather than to eternity provides a democratizing therapy for the Aesthetic critic and an answer to the argument running from Plato to Cottom that art demands a stern refusal of human solidarity (*The Renaissance* 236). Reading the novel as a critique of essentialist and idealist thought discloses Pater's greatest endorsement of sympathy and sentiment as the justifications for Aestheticism and as the eventual solution to the problem of social suffering.[106] In other words, Aestheticism in motion—or, to put it another way, in

[106] Like other historicist thinkers of his era, Pater often expresses belief in linear historical progress, as suggested by his invocation in *Plato and Platonism* of the "secular process," a concept deriving from Hegel's immanent Absolute coming through history to self-consciousness (10; see McGrath 95 and Shuter 63-77 for Pater's Hegelianism). On the other hand, I will show that passages in *Marius* indicate intimations of a conviction that material and secular progress strews wreckage and disaster in its wake. This is hinted at already in the section quoted above from "Two Early French Stories," in which Pater laments that the turn to dogmatic theology in the Reformation wipes out the utopian revival of pagan sensuousness seen in

history—becomes sentimentalism. The novel is the literary homeland of sentimental ideology, as the scholars cited in the first section of this chapter attest. Thus, it is in one way unsurprising that Pater's novel contains his most extended reflections on sympathy and sentimentality as potentially redemptive emotions in unequal societies. Yet *Marius* offers an unexpected example of such novelistic reflections, given its incipient modernism at the level of its stylist interiority. If we should be watchful for traces of the ostensibly occluded sentimental ideology in the fictions of modernism, as Suzanne Clark claims, then where better to look but in a novel whose unorthodox stylization of its protagonists "ideas and sensations" would prove so influential for the canonical figures of early twentieth-century modernist fiction?

Marius the Epicurean, like Pater's short stories, is an "imaginary portrait." This is a genre of historical fiction—named, though hardly invented, by Pater—that attempts to evoke an epoch through the extensive depiction of one of its exemplary (invented) personages. The imaginary portrait, then, is continuous with Pater's scholarly or critical writing, which isolates the features of key historical moments through the study of exceptional individuals who actually existed, such as Leonardo or Botticelli. As I observed of literary portraiture in my reading of Joyce, a novel-portrait can be seen as a contradiction in terms, given that the novel since Sir Walter Scott is traditionally considered the literary genre most committed to historicity—that is, to time understood not simply as random sequence, but as a causal narrative of development leading comprehensibly to the present. If the major novelistic genres of the nineteenth century

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the late Middle Ages. Like his Victorian precursors in social and artistic criticism (Ruskin, Morris, Arnold), Pater did not believe that gains in material wealth or social complexity necessarily entailed civilizational betterment.

are the historical novel and the *Bildungsroman*, then the former treats collective development and the latter the development of an individual. The novel-portraits of Joyce and Wilde arrest this generic function, as we saw, by emphasizing their protagonist's synchronic subjectivity; through Wilde's textual fantasy, Dorian Gray literally does not develop, while Joyce's Stephen Dedalus grows older but not wiser, repeating his mistakes at higher and higher levels of complexity while moving toward no telos of maturation. Pater's 1885 novel—the earliest studied in this project—is more traditional: we follow the titular second-century intellectual from birth to death and from ideological confusion and uncertainty to an equivocal embrace of Christianity.[107] *Marius* thus conforms structurally to the traditional developmental narrative of the *Bildungsroman*, albeit to what Franco Moretti calls the genre's "late" form in which the hero ultimately meets disappointment in his quest for social integration (this given that Marius never really reconciles himself to late-Roman society, as he turns away from its dominant ideologies while failing to embrace nascent Christianity in a full or committed way).

Where Pater most innovates with *Marius* is in his staunch commitment to the interiority of his protagonist, an innovative gesture in the historical novel. Georg Lukács provides the most influential theory of this nineteenth-century genre, and his observations will clarify the modernist difference in Pater. [108] According to Lukács, the historical

[107] Even Pater's short imaginary portraits follow a traditional *bildungsroman* pattern, tracking characters like Watteau in "A Prince of Court Painters" or the eponymous hero of "Sebastian van Storck" from youth to maturity and then to death. One notable exception is "The Child in the House," Pater's imaginary *self*-portrait, a forerunner to Joyce's own, which focuses on childhood in an attempt to isolate the source of Aestheticist sensibility in the childhood dwelling of Pater's surrogate, Florian Deleal.

novel's main task is "not the re-telling of great historical events, but the poetic awakening of the people who figured in those events" (*Historical Novel* 42). The historical novel communicates the affective and cognitive dimension of the past's dialectical progression toward the present by portraying typical or representative fictional examples of ordinary people caught up in economic, social, and political transitions. The successful historical novelist will be attracted to imagined ordinary characters instead of real-life grand figures, says Lukács, because the former "experience the smallest oscillations in [the broad living basis of historical events] as immediate disturbances of their individual lives," thus making them more sensitive registers of change (43-4).[109] The historical novel—which finds its exemplar, for Lukács, in the aforementioned work of Scott—promotes historicity by detailing the intellectual and affective experiences of common people as they both create and endure "transformations of history" (49). In this way, the historical novel is a democratic art form that "brings the past close to us and allows us to experience its real and true being," the authorial precondition for which is a similar intimacy with the contending social forces that shape the present (53).

For Lukács, the great period of the historical novel peaks in the early nineteenth century and then declines with the bourgeois class that invented it. After the 1848

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[108] For a comprehensive literary-historical account of *Marius*'s place among the nineteenth century's many historical novels of late antiquity, see Dahl, whose conclusion supports my own: while Pater's novel "points backward" to more traditional historical novels, it also represents "an experiment, a new departure, a movement toward the modern psychological novel that depends on metaphor and the growth of psychological sensibility rather than on outward action" (24).

[109] None of this analysis should suggest that Lukács's reading of Scott ought to be taken on without question. The theorist strenuously rejects those critics, for instance, who see in Scott's novels the values of "the English merchants and colonizers of contemporary English imperialism" (48). But an extended reading of *Waverley* would show that Scott's narrative mode is characterized by an anthropological tone toward both the literal past and the "pastness" of pre-modern societies and traditions. This tone constructs the modern novelist as subject of a knowledge-producing narrative apparatus that turns all superseded social forms into objects of analytical subjection.

revolutions, in which the bourgeoisie put down the first wave of working-class rebellion, novelists like Flaubert write what Lukács considers decadent historical fictions, borne out of an escapist desire to experience the past as a scene of difference-for-its-own-sake (as "simply negation of the present") and manifesting a luridly cynical interest in violence (e.g., "Flaubert's substitution of atrocities and brutalities for the real summits of social life") endemic to an enervated and decaying social class that has turned, out of desperation, to "cowardly, compromising, and ever more reactionary liberalism" (232, 239, 237). In this course of his denunciation of the proto-modernist historical novel, with its interior focus and skepticism about teleological historical narratives, Lukács refers very briefly to *Marius the Epicurean* as an instance of the "deadening preponderance of antiquarianism" which "can…take a refined, precious, nuanced and decorative form, from both a scholarly and stylistic point of view, as in Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*," a novel wherein "an over-refined emotional experience is coupled with an over-stylized background (245, 246). Lukács does not elaborate, but by "over-stylized background," he probably has in mind Pater's emphasis on the extreme cruelty of the late Roman empire (to be discussed in detail below), while "over-refined emotional experiences" refers to the novel's relentless confinement to what its subtitle calls Marius's "sensations and ideas."

Marius anticipates—and no doubt influenced—Joyce's *Portrait* in its structure: four sections narrate the protagonist's intellectual and spiritual development. The novel's action is mostly internal, confined to Marius's thoughts and feelings; historical events and other characters are filtered entirely through his sensibility and discussed as they

affect his thought processes. Pater does not use free indirect discourse: he describes Marius's sensations and ideas using an externalized rhetoric similar to that of the realist novel, and he even occasionally digresses into third-person omniscient historical explanations or explicitly late-Victorian reflections on his own present concerns. Even so, he does not explore the interiority of any character other than Marius. Stylistically, then, we might say that the novel is midway between Victorian realism and modernist stream-of-consciousness, adopting the content of the latter in the manner of the former. Even the novel's textual heterogeneity is motivated (in the Russian Formalist sense of the term) by the hero's experiences: Pater includes interpolated texts either read, written, or enacted by Marius. These include Marius's own diary; the tale of "Cupid and Psyche," which he reads in Apulieus's *Golden Ass*; and a dialogue of Lucian's at the fictive "original" of which Marius happens to be present. At the end of each of the novel's main divisions, Marius reaches a plateau of understanding that is shown to be incomplete by the wider frame provided by the next part (or, in the case of the final section, by the novel's inconclusive ending and the hero's ambiguous religious affiliation at the time of his death). Part the First takes Marius from his childhood in the countryside, where he enjoys a Wordsworthian communion with nature, to his first experiences of Eros and literature in the city when he falls under the sway of the beautiful and ambitious poet Flavian. By Part the Second, Flavian has died of plague, and Marius becomes amanuensis to the philosophical emperor Marcus Aurelius; the last chapter of this section ends with Marius recoiling from Aurelius's Stoic philosophy since it seems to provide a warrant for the extreme violence of the arena. In Part the Third, Marius explores various

second-century philosophies, from Stoicism to Cyrenaicism, before having a spiritual experience in the countryside that leads him to the faith that a universal spirit operates behind all of nature. Finally, Part the Fourth brings Marius to the brink of Christian conversion, but he never makes the overt commitment, even as he dies of fever while being held prisoner as a suspected Christian and is commemorated by the early Church as a martyr.

As my précis suggests, *Marius* is not quite the synchronic, fatalistic fantasia that Lukács accuses Flaubert's "decadent" fictions of being.[110] Pater does portray a representative fictional character who encounters grander historical figures as supporting characters, fulfilling Lukács's history-from-below criterion. The novel's narrative voice, like Scott's, remains discursively controlled and knowledgeable as well, guiding the reader through the details of second-century Rome while keeping an emphasis on historical change and development. Pater, moreover, does not foreground the alterity of the Roman past, but rather its similarities to his own era—hence even the early reviewers' sure sense that the novel was autobiographical as much as it was historical—but neither does he emphasize, as Scott and Lukács would prefer, the continuity between past and present.[111] Instead, Pater presents late-Victorian England as a repetition of

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[110] Pater's biographer Donoghue, though from a different ideological standpoint than that of Lukács, also disparages all of Pater's historical fiction. Donoghue makes no theoretical statement, but seems on the evidence of the text to belong to the Bloom/Rorty camp of neo-Romantic humanist pragmatism. He thus duly emphasizes Pater's skepticism over his historicism, commenting, "He didn't want to feel responsible for the depiction of an age, a historical configuration, a particular moment in the emergence of a social formation" (196). As I will show, I dissent from Donoghue here and take *Marius the Epicurean* to be an extended meditation on the emergence of social formations.

[111] See Levey 11-12 for an account of three early reviews—those of William Sharp, John Miller Gray, and Mrs. Humphrey Ward—all of whom took the novel to be a portrait of the author. Levey points out that, "Each of these three reviewers received from Pater a courteous letter of thanks. To none did he demur at the suggestions of autobiography in *Marius*…" (12).

second-century Rome, as when, late in the novel, he states outright, "That age and our own have much in common" (181). But Pater does not makes this claim to invoke a fatalistic cyclical interpretation of history, as some of his contemporaries—e.g., Nietzsche or Yeats—might; as my analysis of Pater's non-fiction showed, his writings evince a Hegelian believe in historical progress. The very first sentence of *Marius* refers to massive historical change: "As, in the triumph of Christianity, the old religion lingered latest in the country, and died out at last as but paganism—the religion of the villagers, before the advance of the Christian Church, so, in an earlier century, it was in places remote from town-life that the older and purer forms of paganism itself had survived the longest" (37). According to this vision of history, every moment is a time of organic movement, in which ideologies and social formations are growing and decaying.

The Victorian era's relation to late antiquity in the novel can then be seen as something like the relation between *Marius*'s successive chapters: the same conflicts are repeated in the later at higher levels of complexity and detail than they held in the earlier epoch. Pater's vision of cultural evolution is least Darwinian in its teleology: the novel represents Christianity as a genuine solution to the social problems of late antiquity, or, in other words, as moral and political progress rather than as the random change that the theory of evolution identifies as characteristic of life. But this should not lead us to suspect that *Marius* reflects Pater's own increasing Christian devotion. Toward the novel's conclusion a different view suggests itself when Marius thinks of the Christian Mass as representing "not so much new matter as a new spirit, moulding, informing, with a new intention, many observances not witnessed for the first time to-day" (249). In

Pater's gradualist vision, the "matter" of human life remains constant, but ideological and social developments ("spirit") shape it for the better.

Carolyn Williams summarizes Pater's dialectical method aptly: "he describes a diachronic process as successive self-divisions within the 'same' thing, departures from a source that are also returns to and recreations of it" (60). The "thing" from which history departs is physical human life and its epiphenomenal desires and tastes, as we saw in *The Renaissance*, but it is endlessly shaped and re-shaped through and by its temporal, superstructural developments. If this historical spirit is what's truly important in emerging systems of belief and social organization, then something like the "Christian spirit," rather than the specifically theological, metaphysical, and political propositions of early Christianity or its official legatees in the Catholic and Anglican communions, will be needed to reform the decaying British empire. A close examination of the terms in which Pater figures both the decadence of Rome and the progressive character of Christianity will show that Pater does not have Christianity itself in mind for his redemptive *fin-de-siècle* ideology; instead, he endorses the spirit represented in antiquity by Christianity, which can be found in nineteenth-century England in the novelistic qualities of sympathy and sentiment. In short, Pater implicitly espouses the dissemination of sentiment as the late-Victorian equivalent of early Christianity's late-antique cultural revolution. Moreover, in his reflections on the protagonist's titular Epicureanism, he also appoints an Aestheticist approach to reality—a focus on pre-conceptual sensual experience—as the best means of promoting sentiment.

If we consider the novel's beginning and ending together before analyzing the

middle sections, its overall ideological purport will become clear. The first two chapters of the novel present a maternal domestic idyll described with a tenderness, detail, and lyricism that exceeds even similar celebrations in Stowe, Gaskell, or Dickens. Young Marius, we read, is born in the countryside to farming parents during the reign of the Antonines. While Marius's family initially pursues the affected "*gentleman* farming" of the Roman aristocracy, they soon take up agriculture as a "serious business," and Marius's resulting contact with productive farm labor "had brought him, at least, intimately near to those elementary conditions of life, a reverence for which, the great Roman poet [Virgil]…held to be the ground of primitive Roman religion, as of primitive morals" (44, original italics). The initial basis for Marius's later emotional and intellectual development is a natural piety generated by intimate contact with the natural world, supplemented by an emphasis on the moral good of productive labor. Lest we miss the nineteenth-century tradition in which these descriptions take their place, the narrator himself drops the name of Wordsworth by paying him a back-handed compliment: "The old-fashioned, partly Puritanic awe, the power of which Wordsworth noted and valued so highly in a northern peasantry, had its counterpart in the feeling of the Roman lad" (38). Pater associates this pastoral upbringing as a product of "the earlier and simpler patriarchal religion" of the Italian countryside (37).

The novel is not long in lingering nostalgically over this patriarchal and puritanical culture; what we might initially take for a Romantic nature utopia, Pater considerably complicates with the first of the novel's many descriptions of cruelty to animals in the name of pre-Christian religion and nature-loving philosophy. During the

Ambarvalia (glossed by Levey as a "rural festival for purification of the countryside"), the youthful Marius becomes distracted by "a certain pity at the bottom of his heart, and almost on his lips, for the sacrificial victims and their looks of terror, rising almost to disgust at the central act of the sacrifice itself" (300, 40). Note the emotional narrative this sentence charts: an observer beholds suffering and is implicitly moved by fellow-feeling—moved, that is, by his own knowledge of what it is to feel terror and his ability to project that onto other sentient creatures—to pity the objects of his gaze. But this pity is not inert: it gives rise (through *time*) to a further emotion, namely, disgust at the social and political institutions—here, religion—that authorize and carry out the infliction of suffering. As Marius observes further, with a gaze that refuses to idealize the peasantry even as it derogates the priests, his own pity contrasts with the affect of "some then present" who "certainly displayed a frank curiosity in the spectacle thus permitted them on religious grounds" (40). The crowd, that is, spectates at scenes of cruelty with consciences cleansed by ideological pretexts: this implies a further consequence of sympathy and sentiment, which is that they empower those who feel them, rather than those who simply think in abstract terms, to see through ideology's ruses to the exploitation underlying society. While Marius's contact with nature has induced this capacity for sympathy in him, the "patriarchal religion" that rules the countryside is no locus for its expression. The novel soon finds an alternative ethical center for its investment in sympathy in the figure of Marius's mother.

As the narrative goes on, Marius's father dies an early death, as if to suggest the exhaustion of the values he embodies. Marius's mother then endures a long and

lachrymose widowhood consecrated to the memory of the husband, and her son thus becomes influenced by a counter-patriarchal and anti-puritanical set of affects, associated with the maternal and the domestic: "Marius the younger, even thus early, came to think of women's tears, of women's hands to lay one to rest, in death as in the sleep of childhood, as a sort of natural want" (47). The final word of this passage, hovering between its archaic meaning of "lack" and its modern sense of "desire," implies a wistfulness or nostalgia toward the sentimental-maternal as a social value. It is natural both to lack and to desire domestic values in a world whose dominant ideologies and practices are insensitive to the feelings of people like Marius and his mother, feelings that include sympathy for the suffering and grief for the dead. Pater checks the naturalizing and sexist drift of this passage, which would seem to reduce his mother to her metonymized body (hands and tears), when he shows that is not only from his mother's *corpus* that Marius derives his own sentimentality, but from her cultural appurtenances as well: "Helping her with her white and purple wools, and caring for her musical instruments, he won, as if from the handling of such things, an urbane and feminine refinement" (47). In other words, domesticity is a *culture*—a matter not only of tears and hands, but also of clothing and music—and an "urbane" more than a pastoral culture at that. Marius thus explicitly associates his mother's sentimentality not with the countryside but with the refinements of civilized life—an urban/social (we might say "novelistic") supplement to the lyrical, poetic affects inculcated by the productive country where the "patriarchal religion" reigns (36).[112] Marius's early sympathy for the

[112] As we saw in chapter I.2 below, Aestheticism often reduced woman to nature, most paradigmatically in Huysmans's *À Rebours*. Pater was capable of writing in this mode—see for an example his most famous

sacrificial victims here develops, under the influence of his tearful mother's urbane affect, into "a sympathy for all creatures [...] something of an almost religious veneration for life as such" (47, 48). What had been during the sacrifice an inchoate set of sympathies for the animals and antipathies for the religious authorities now begins to coalesce into a more formalized ethical program, itself potentially capable of being institutionalized as religious practice.

This possibility of a counter-religion fully emerges at the novel's conclusion, to which I now turn to show how sentimentality's historical fulfillment for late-antique culture turns out to be Christianity. Pater consistently represents Christianity in terms of the traditionally Victorian domestic/sentimental. When Marius visits the house of the Christian woman Cecilia, "one dominant thought increased upon him, the thought of chaste women and their children—of all the various affections of family life under its most natural conditions, yet developed, as if in devout imitation of some sublime new type of it, into large controlling passions" (228). The narrator goes on to note that the "sublime new type" being imitated in Christian domesticity is "the *Holy Family*" (229). Christianity, then, introduces into the ancient world a new mythos centered on the image of Madonna and child (note the implicit Mariolatry of Pater, who was, like many in his generation, long attracted to Catholicism).[113] This sublime picture, like the stern architecture of Sparta described in *Plato and Platonism*, produces new dispositions and

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single piece of prose, the description of Mona Lisa in *The Renaissance* as an eternal vampire, an instance of woman-as-consuming-nature, a trope analyzed extensively in Huyssen chapter 3 and Felski chapter 3. *Marius*, however, takes almost the opposite approach: to be feminized in this novel is to be civilized, not naturalized.

[113] See Hanson chapter 3 for a sensitive account of Pater's Mariolatry: "Pater has accomplished something rarely glimpsed in literature: while Christianity has traditionally presumed an association with the paternal Word, Pater has chosen instead an affective Marianism, a faith inflected by homoerotic desire and maternal identification" (203).

social habits in those who look upon it, which in turn leads to new institutions for the dissemination of the desired affect, in this case, sentiment.

Pater's pointed use of the word "sublime" to describe an image of mother and child emphasizes the radicalism of Christianity as the novel represents it. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' most notable philosophers and poets of sublimity—Burke, Kant, Shelley—reserve the term for natural or cosmic grandeur and privileged a strenuous human response, whether the rational mind's triumph in thought over the body's vulnerability in Kant or the individual's effort to merge with the onrushing wind of cosmic history in Shelley's poems. This idea of the sublime was famously read as masculinist irresponsibility and dangerous idealism by such novelists of the Romantic era as Mary Shelley and Jane Austen. Shelley's Victor Frankenstein pursues the world-making power of the sublime-seeking idealist imagination to its tragic conclusion in his creation of a cruel and monstrous parody of the family, while Austen's *Persuasion* gently disciplines the Promethean inclinations of its poetry-intoxicated supporting characters by subjecting them to the domestic logic of the marriage plot and the homely subjectivity of the prosy heroine, Anne Elliot.[114] Pater's novel at the end of the nineteenth century mounts the same critique as those of Shelley and Austen at the beginning. To drive the point home, Pater's narrator, in one of his wide-ranging historical reflections, castigates later periods of Christian theology and history for their puritanism—"sour, falsely anti-

[114] Mellor's is the classic reading in this vein of Shelley's novel (see chapter 4, significantly titled "Promethean Politics"). Austen's *Persuasion*, on the other hand, hardly requires exegesis, as its heroine, standing in for the author, explicitly warns away another character, Benwick, from Romantic poetry, due to its disordering intensity: "she ventured to hope he did not always read only poetry, and to say, that she thought it was the misfortune of poetry to be seldom safely enjoyed by those who enjoyed it completely; and that the strong feelings which alone could estimate it truly were the very feelings which ought to taste it but sparingly" (85).

mundane, ever with an air of ascetic affectation, and a bigoted distaste in particular for all the peculiar graces of womanhood" (242). Pater opposes two historical forces here, both within and without Christianity: one a pitiless masculinist idealism and the other a sensuous, sympathetic materialism associated with female "graces," a word whose overtones of both learned deportment and personal ornamentation further associate femininity in Pater's novel, against the Aestheticist grain, with culture rather than nature. But Pater argues for a domestic appropriation of the sublime rather than its mere derogation.

Christianity's commitment to the material world, its Incarnational logic, is able to divinize humanity and thus make its processes of growth, socialization, and development themselves objects of sublime contemplation and incitements to pious imitation. Erich Auerbach makes this case in his classic study of European realism when he shows how the Christian story breaks the high/low style division of the ancient Mediterranean by conferring the tragic dignity of Christ's sacrifice on everyday human lives: the disciple Peter, as represented in the Gospel of Mark,

> is the image of man in the highest and deepest and most tragic sense. Of course this mingling of styles…was graphically and harshly dramatized through God's incarnation in a human being of the humblest social station, through his existence on earth amid humble everyday people and conditions, and through his Passion, which, judged by earthly standards, was ignominious; and it naturally came to have—in view of the wide diffusion and strong effect of that literature in later ages—a most decisive bearing upon man's conception of the tragic and the sublime. (41)

Pater's revision of this Christian topos, coming in a much later age, depends on the gender ideology of the late nineteenth century as well as on Aestheticism's sexual secularity. If the novel's opening chapters pose the problem of how to synthesize

Marius's all-encompassing pity, learned at his mother's knee, with an often cruel social life characterized as patriarchal, then Christianity appears to be the historical solution due to its emphasis on those values Pater associates with the feminine. Dellamora makes an ostensibly opposed argument in his essay on Pater's erstwhile student, the Jesuit priest and queer poet Hopkins, but his reading of an aestheticized Catholicism illuminates Pater's position: "In turning to Catholicism, Hopkins was able to find a theology that emphasized the worthiness of the redeemed human body, including its genitality, especially as evident in certain visual representations of Christ in medieval and Renaissance art" (51-2). According to Dellamora, a body-centered Christian iconography offers the late-Victorian queer artist/believer a simultaneous secular validation and spiritual sublimation of his desire for the adored male body. As we've seen in considering *The Renaissance*, Pater's early erotic vision is a Romantic one that frankly follows Shelley and Whitman by allowing sexual desire to unfold as secular redemption by constituting a utopian community of passionate mutual attachment. In mid-career, though, Pater turns not to the homoerotic figure of the beautiful young man but rather to the domestic image of Madonna and Child when he wishes to emphasize the agapic, rather than the erotic, dimension of Aestheticism; he turns, that is, to the image that Victorian culture had traditionally charged with the affect of compassion and the politics of reform, even as he revises this "chaste" figure into one that inculcates "large controlling passions." Unlike Hopkins, whose ordination obviated any need for him to suture his transcendental commitments to his immanent desires along the necessarily political axis of immanence itself, Pater sublates bodily affect and spiritual asceticism

into the image of a divinized woman on the model of which culture may be humanized. Pater's defense of the domestic/sentimental is enabled by his Aestheticist revision of Christian Mariolatry into a secular politics of compassion.[115]

Were we to read this conclusion as Pater's simple, transhistorical endorsement of Christianity as a universal panacea, *Marius the Epicurean* would not only appear to be an exercise in nostalgic antiquarianism and an unconvincing response to the intellectual challenges posed by the century of Hegel and Darwin, it would also contradict Pater's non-fictional insistence, early and late, that Hegel and Darwin were indeed his masters and historicism his critical and artistic method. Turning now to the novel's central chapters, and especially to its negative portrayal of Marcus Aurelius and the gladiatorial contests and religious extremisms that he oversees, will demonstrate Pater's traditionally novelistic investment in sympathy, as well as his revision of the genre's means of promoting such emotion. After the death of Marius's beloved poet Flavian, who had promised to generate a new poetry to revive Latin as a living language, Marius comes to Rome itself where he enters the service of the "philosophical emperor" Aurelius. Chapter XII introduces Aurelius as a pragmatist partisan of philosophical and political moderation. Like the youthful Marius, Aurelius's values proceed from the old patriarchal religion, to the extent that the emperor himself claims "descent from Numa," the founder

[115] While it is worth criticizing the gendered formulations of Pater's neo-sentimental Mariolatry, its recuperable kernel—when lifted from the husk of separate-spheres ideology—is the aesthetic potential of an empathic politics. The recent return to Christian theology in Marxist theory, led by Slavoj Žižek, supports my case by writing Mary out of the story entirely and by adducing an exceedingly idealist Christ, whose corpus, far from a potential locus of bodily affect, queer or otherwise, is only "the vanishing mediator/medium through whose death the human community itself 'passes into' the new spiritual stage" (Žižek 51). Žižek's staunch refusal of the sentimental (and his consequent celebration of violence) is predicated upon his refusal of the flesh itself; seen through the prism offered by this theory, the Aestheticized Holy Family presented in *Marius* appears as a still-relevant, if problematic, resource for an affective politics.

of Roman paganism; but unlike Marius, Aurelius's paganism remains untempered by the worldly and domestic sentiments (143). From the ancient pagan wisdom, Aurelius derives his sense of being "between Chance with meek resignation, and a Providence with boundless possibilities and hope," which leads him "to make his use of the flower, when the fruit perhaps was useless or poisonous" (142, 144). Aurelius's Stoicism thus blends an admission of the gaps in human knowledge with an abiding faith that "Providence" will ensure the rightness of every action; for this reason, pragmatic compromise with the unjust or the corrupt may still tend toward positive ends. Thus, Aurelius will use a plant's flower even if its fruit is poisonous, a metaphor that, in a novel about Christianity, unavoidably recalls Christ's contrary admonition to look past the superficial when evaluating a prophet: "Ye shall know them by their fruits," he chides (*King James Bible*, Matthew 7: 16).

Given Aurelius's pragmatism, wherein even unethical actions or unsavory characters can conduce toward the social good, we might take him for the novel's true allegorical figure for the resolutely amoral neo-classical economics that Regenia Gagnier identifies at the root of late-Victorian culture. What seems to argue against such a reading of Aurelius is his asceticism.[116] He endorses, in the narrator's words, "a sacrifice of the body to the soul," and exhibits "the ascetic pride which lurks under all Platonism, resultant from its opposition of the seen to the unseen, as falsehood to truth—the imperial Stoic, like his true descendant, the hermit of the middle age, was ready, in no friendly humor, to mock, there in its narrow bed, the corpse which had made so much of itself in

[116] The Modern Library seems to agree with the economic reading: their latest edition of Aurelius's *Meditations* is generically labeled on its back cover as both "Philosophy" and "Business" for the guidance of booksellers and -buyers.

life" (143, 147). Reading this passage through the interpretive lens provided both by the novel's conclusion and by Pater's non-fiction writings, we encounter again the topos of Platonism's authoritarian medieval character, its hostility to the needs and desires of the body, and its proto-totalitarian pride in its ideal schemes to order the *polis* around philosophical wisdom known only to the elite adepts of the "unseen." This is a worldview Pater consistently considers masculinist and life-denying and to which he explicitly opposes his and Marius's Aestheticism, or the valorization of material perception without determination by any idealizing telos: "Marius could but contrast all that with his own Cyrenaic [i.e., Epicurean] eagerness, just then, to taste and see and touch" (147). Aestheticism, figured as its ancient counterpart Epicureanism, represents a desire "to taste and see and touch"—verbs which Pater's narrator here employs intransitively, thus open to any object. Aestheticism's desire is for experience without *a priori* restriction or fear of otherness. Against its later development as formalism, memorably denounced by Pierre Bourdieu as the apotheosis of an illusorily autonomous eye cut off from the social and physical worlds of the body and its administration, Marius's Epicureanism engages more senses than the visual and entails aesthetics other than the specular, encompassing what can be tasted and touched.[117] In other words, this version of aestheticism prizes radical connection, at the most basic level of the body's

[117] See Bourdieu's "The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic" in *The Field of Cultural Production*. Having invoked Bourdieu in the context of Pater's Platonic preoccupations, I cannot fail to recall the sociologist's somewhat chilling defense of his own anti-aesthetic stance: "the sociologist—close in this respect to the philosopher according to Plato—stands opposed to 'the friend of beautiful spectacles and voices' that the writer also is: the 'reality' that he tracks cannot be reduced to the immediate data of the sensory experience in which it is revealed; he aims not to offer (in)sight, or feeling, but to construct systems of intelligible relations capable of making sense of sentient data" (*The Rules of Art* xviii). In other words, the social scientist in modernity takes over from the philosopher-king in antiquity, dispelling the enchantments of language wielded by poets and sophists, who would, under the cover of sensual beauty, aggrandize themselves at the expense of the immaterial truth behind material relations.

surface, to the rest of the world. Aurelius's Stoicism, on the other hand, holds the body in manifest contempt and mocks its fragility. Pater insists on this with near-didacticism when he devotes page after page to Aurelius's speech, in stately archaic language, on the contemptibly transitory and worthless character of human life, before noting that "[t]he discourse ended almost in darkness…that night winter began, the hardest that had been known for a lifetime," as if the emperor's haughty scorn for life had produced the physical effect of life's cessation under a pall of darkness and ice (153).

Almost all commentators on Pater's novel note that its portrayal of Aurelius serves as a disguised polemic against Matthew Arnold, whose essay lauding the Stoic emperor as "perhaps the most beautiful figure in history" was published in book form in 1865, when Pater was a student (Arnold 224). Arnold, like Pater, notes the similarity of second-century Rome to nineteenth-century England ("[Aurelius] lived and acted in a state of society modern by its essential characteristics, in an epoch akin to our own"), presents Aurelius as the final flower of pagan thought in its humble submission to nature, and associates that thought and its expression with the poetry of Wordsworth (Aurelius's "observation of nature [has] a delicate penetration, a sympathetic tenderness, worthy of Wordsworth") (224, 233). Unlike Pater, Arnold argues that Aurelius should be taken as a model intellectual for a period of doubt, for "those ages most especially that walk by sight, not by faith, and yet have no open vision" (240). In Arnold's view, the modern bourgeois elite needs Stoic self-control and rational submission to nature's invisible hand as a replacement for the religious faith that scientific discovery, empiricist epistemology, and secular philosophy renders untenable. In this sense, we may indeed read Aurelius in

both Arnold and Pater's accounts as a figure for bourgeois authority—and, indeed, the Flaubert-admiring Pater gives the allegorical game away when he has Marius observe that the emperor's home life was one of "mediocrity, though of a mediocrity for once really golden" (163). The vocabulary of mediocrity recalls Flaubert's Homais, to take only the nineteenth century's most famous example: it is redolent of a social analysis that denies bourgeois rationality's capacity for producing any rich or rewarding artistic forms. In Flaubert and related writers like Baudelaire and Nietzsche, however, this critique never goes beyond an aristocratic or reactionary contempt for the good burgher's practical mean-mindedness and its presumed political corollary, democracy. Pater, in wedding Aestheticism to sympathy, proposes the more egalitarian conclusion that an aesthetic approach to reality has the potential to create a broader, rather than a narrower, community of feeling.

Arnold quotes as exemplary those maxims of Aurelius's wherein he reproaches himself for failing to maintain rational control of his emotions at all times: "'What have I now in this part of me which they call the ruling principle, and whose soul have I now?—that of a child, or of a young man, or of a weak woman, or of a tyrant, or of one of the lower animals in the service of man, or of a wild beast?'" (qtd. in Arnold 236). In adducing tyranny as a product of emotive weakness, Aurelius draws on the ancient political theory that a tyrant was a man ruled by appetitive passions and who, therefore, battened on the state and its citizens, another Platonic philosophy finding its echo in modern theories that derogate emotive aestheticism in the name of political rationality. Aside from the tyrant, however, all of Aurelius's other figures of sentimental weakness—

male child, male youth, woman, animal—are figures Pater works to defend in *Marius the Epicurean* from Aurelius's Stoic indifference to suffering. Against Arnold, Pater reads Aurelius's ideology of pragmatic compromise with injustice and strict rational self-control as complicit in their own form of tyranny.

At the mid-point of the novel comes a chapter whose bitter title, "Manly Amusement," emphasizes through sarcasm the direly unamusing nature of the suffering it depicts, and it further indicts the model of masculinity that leads to such horror. In this chapter, Marius's Aesthetic sentimentalism finds its apogee as he watches with rising disgust the slaughters in the Roman arena, supervised by a cold Aurelius. The chapter begins in an entirely different mood, with the promise of formalist relish: Marius, thinking back on his poet friend Flavian, imagines that he would have an aestheticized "appetite for every detail of the entertainment," such as its colors, which, when detached from the social and material facts of which they are properties, include "certain great red patches"—which is to say, the blood of animals that will be spilled (166, 167). Pater here warns that the formalist eye may abstract away suffering and its attendant realities—turning blood, which is biological in its origin and social in its disposition, into meaningless redness. That the narrator associates this danger with the dead poet Flavian, who desired to attain political power through his art, implies an abstracting, de-politicizing formalism as the outcome of art's imbrication with constituted authority (a thoroughly anarchic stance one word for which is, again, "antinomianism"). Marius, though, comes to the arena after having spent time with Flavian's replacement in his affections, the Christian soldier Cornelius, who abstains from the garish public spectacles

of the late empire. Marius's sympathetic imagination allows him to experience his own sensations and perceptions through the eyes of his intimates; thus, Cornelius acts as his "outwardly embodied conscience," an economical way of phrasing the Enlightenment theory that humans are morally guided by their ability to feel in mind what other bodies feel (165). With the abstemious Cornelius, rather than the ambitious Flavian, acting as his second set of eyes, Marius beholds mere brutality in the arena, and the narrator's miming of his consciousness adopts a verbal register characteristic of mid-Victorian sentimental appeal.

Of the spectacle, the narrator comments: "There would be real wild and domestic creatures, all of rare species, and a real slaughter. On so happy an occasion, it was hoped, the elder emperor might even concede a point, and a living criminal fall into the jaws of the wild beasts" (167). The twice-repeated "real" insists on the referential materiality of all objects of contemplation, while the word "happy" is a sarcastic pun—on the one hand, it implies that the occasion is a fortunate or cheering one even as the narrator's foregrounding of the real animals and the living criminal who will be slaughtered enjoins the reader to ask for whom it is so fortunate; on the other hand, "happy" suggests, by way of its relation to "hap" and "happenstance," that this slaughter is the arbitrary product of contingency, the outcome of variable volition, and thus not inevitable. Such sarcasm, in which horrible suffering finds itself juxtaposed with the satisfaction and complacency of those complicit in it, was the hallmark of Dickens's style, and Pater here employs it to politicize the slaughter he describes.[118]

[118] Many instances of such Dickensian sarcasm could be produced, wherein he juxtaposes the indifference or privileged ignorance of upper-class characters with the sufferings of those social inferiors that the class

Politically speaking, Aurelius—and the tradition of philosophical elitism running from Plato to Arnold that he represents—is the target of the sentimental radicalism Pater voices through Marius's consciousness. But Pater's point is emphatically *not* that Aurelius is a cruel tyrant, a bloody Nero burning people alive for his pleasure. He allows that Aurelius is comparatively liberal, a figure of enlightenment who "provided that nets should be spread under the dancers on the tight-rope, and buttons for the swords of the gladiators" (169). The Stoic emperor is, in short, a reformer of the polity. His reformist method, however, in keeping with his philosophical habitus of bodiless cognition, is powerless to rid the polity of cruelty because the hypertrophy of cognition itself is complicit in social violence both spontaneous and institutionalized: "For the most part, indeed, the Emperor averted his eyes from [the slaughter]…but he had seemed, after all, indifferent. He was revolving, perhaps, the old Stoic paradox of the *Imperceptibility of pain*: which might serve as an excuse, should those savage popular humours ever again turn against men and women" (169). Aurelius's averted eyes mark both his sensitive inability to appreciate cruel spectacles and his elite privilege to ignore the violence produced by the institutions he supervises. In this double movement of ideology, cruelty

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system itself has brought about. One interventionist example from *Bleak House* will indicate the general tone. In chapter 16 of the novel, the aristocratic Lady Dedlock ventures from her country home to the London slum, Tom-All-Alone's, in search of Jo, a homeless boy acquainted with her former lover and the father of the novel's heroine. The third-person narrator, following the Lady in quest of the pauper, expatiates with angrily ironic rhetorical questions that parody the ignorance of those who see no causal relations between the conditions of the classes: "What connexion can there be, between the place in Lincolnshire, the house in town, the Mercury in powder, and the whereabouts of Jo the outlaw with the broom, who had that distant ray of light upon him when he swept the churchyard-step? What connexion can there have been between many people in the innumerable histories of this world, who, from opposite sides of great gulfs, have, nevertheless, been very curiously brought together!" (193). As in Pater's description of the arena, the narrator of the novel itself steps forth to cajole the audience into thought about the social relations they live out. The difference, of course, is that Dickens's exteriorized narrative apparatus—in short, the plot—will objectively limn the "connexion" itself; Pater, after identifying the connection, traces its subjective effect on the intellectual observer and explores his consequent responsibility.

is considered the unique property of the lower classes who spectate in the arena, even as the elites ultimately responsible for both the violence and its justifications deny their own agency by claiming, first, to be averse to the bloodshed and, second, to be merely following public taste in their allowance of it.

But even non-philosophical rulers are capable of this evasion; what makes the antique philosopher-king (and the modern Arnoldian cultural bourgeois he allegorizes) different is the Stoic paradox of pain's imperceptibility. This notion is paradoxical because pain is by definition perceptible—a matter of sensation. The Stoic philosopher attempts to liberate himself from all sensations and affects of the body in order to attain a purified rationality, a bodiless white communion with the Logos. Pain, on this view, is a less a sensation than an illusion created by the body's presumptuous arrogation of the psyche's attentions. If the body fundamentally does not matter, then Stoicism is right to recommend that one should be indifferent to pain. What Pater makes visible in the passage quoted, however, is that is all too easy for an emperor to argue that pain does not matter when he is not the one having it inflicted upon him by the apparatus of the state. Stoic indifference then becomes nothing more than an "excuse" for whatever brutality social groups were going to inflict on each other. As such, Stoicism and its philosophical offshoots, rather than Marius's sensuous Epicureanism and its modern Aestheticist instantiation, is the true ideology of quietest autonomy in its cruel denial of the body's needs. As the narrator states of Marius, "He at least, the humble follower of the bodily eye, was aware of a crisis in life…the issues of which he must by no means compromise or confuse; of the antagonisms of which the 'wise' Marcus Aurelius was unaware" (170).

Implicitly, then, knowledge begins with the body's apperception of sensible reality and from there reaches a moral understanding. There can be no bodiless reason or ethics—these functions have a substrate of sensation and emotion, however disavowed, and an Epicurean or Aestheticist humility in allowing the immediate apperception of sensible things not to coalesce immediately into conceptual determinations will in the end generate a richer and more truthful concept when a concept comes, as it inevitably will. Aestheticism here emerges as a full-blooded humanist credo which guarantees the secular sanctity of life based on the irreducibility of each sentient being's sensibility.

So far, I have myself proceeded conceptually, tracking Pater's overt theorizing of the "crisis in life" that Marius perceives. But how does the problem enact itself at the level of literary form? Often enough, Pater merely essays—that is, he writes his own theorizing to accompany the narration in the tradition of many a nineteenth-century novelist from Scott to Eliot. The end of the arena chapter, particularly, is marked by a moralizing narratorial loquacity, chiefly in the service of forestalling any bigoted self-congratulation on the part of the English middle-class reader, whom Pater suspects of wishing to regard the arena as a relic of antique or Latin barbarism rather than as an allegory for oppression in general. At the end of the chapter, Pater recommends that when we read about historical atrocities (he also mentions the slave trade and religious persecutions), we should ask ourselves what "may be present to our minds such as might have furnished us, living in another age, and in the midst of those legal crimes, with plausible excuses for them" (170). In other words, Pater again uses the narrative occasion of animal cruelty to plead for a critique of ideology, where the latter word is

considered as a name for all the conceptual ruses promulgated by exploiters and oppressors to justify the suffering they inflict on the disprivileged.

Earlier in the chapter, Pater is clear enough about what modern cultural form he does *not* believe will serve for this critique: "For the long shows of the amphitheatre were, so to speak, the novel-reading of the age—a current help provided for sluggish imaginations, in regard, for instance, to grisly accidents, such as might happen to one's self; but with every facility for comfortable inspection" (168). Remarkably, Pater names the novel as the modern version of the Roman arena. What links the two is a kind of masochistic vicariousness whereby an enervated audience jolts itself awake with imagined agonies, which pains are themselves made pleasurable by the relief of their purely notional character. The novel presumably represents an advance over the arena since in the former case nobody really has to suffer to get the audience's benumbed attention. Nevertheless, both institutions promote a vulgate version of the Stoic elitism for which a distanced mentation is everything and actual sensation nothing.

Pater's disparagement of the novel form within his own novel is so unoriginal, however, as to be almost a generic requirement. From Cervantes mocking romance to Sterne poking fun at teleological storytelling, from Austen sending up the Gothic to Flaubert derogating Emma Bovary's romantic tastes, and on through the modernist revolutions of Joyce, Woolf, and Lawrence to the many revisionist novels (by Achebe, Rhys, Coetzee, Rushdie and more) of postcolonialism, the novel has throughout its history insisted on its own perpetual modernity by denouncing all prior narrative conventions as artistically, ethically, and politically inadequate. When novelists make

this gesture, they generally do so to nominate the kind of novel they are then writing as the legitimate exercise of the fictional mode. As Laurel Brake writes, "Pater's novels functioned as his position papers on fiction, in relation to both the current debates on the art of fiction as well as to his antecedents and the tradition of novel discourse" (229). We can therefore assume that Pater means us to understand his own novel as resisting the process of vicarious sado-masochism that he sees in other examples of the genre, even as he too depicts scenes of great suffering and cruelty, both those observed by his hero and, finally, those suffered by him. The question is consequently not one of content, but of form. How does Pater deploy form to create fiction whose ethical purport squares with its conceptual apparatus of materialist aestheticism as the foundation of social awareness and reform?

Early in the novel, Pater's narrator theorizes about literary form at length in explicating the ideas of Marius's friend, mentor, and implicit love-object, the poet Flavian, who develops a literary style that Pater labels "Euphuism"—after John Lyly's extravagantly stylized 1578 novel *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit*—and which he compares to the styles of the Elizabethan writers and the French Romantics. In an essay comparing the aesthetics of Pater and Joyce, Brennan explains Pater's revisionist adoption of Lyly's style: "The dual force of Apuleius's mixed style provides the model for Pater's Euphuism. It does not directly refer to the senses of the term following John Lyly's *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit*, that is, to 'periphrastic or "high-flown" language,' but instead stands for a continuing principle in literature in which vulgar speech is applied to an encrusted literary language as a means to purify expression" (154-55).

Euphuism arises when the language of literary and intellectual production grows increasingly remote from the vernacular, thus becoming stiff and artificial. The Euphuist attempts to reform literary language by double process of conservation and revolution: on the one hand, the poet will reconnect with the older form of the language, before it decayed into elite mannerism, while on the other hand he will infuse his texts with the energy of the living language as spoken in the streets, "the *proletariate* of speech" (89). Even a quick perusal of the text of *Marius*, however, will show that common speech makes no appearance. This, in fact, is the sum of Lukács's charge against Pater and his historical-novelist contemporaries—that they turn to a frozen and stylized image of the past only to retreat from the street-level realities of a present they find threatening. Pater's novel adopts more fully the other option Euphuism presents, which is the reanimation of older forms of the language. The advantage of the historical novel becomes, on this reading, that it can keep alive in the present forms and styles that may otherwise seem too elevated a register in which to describe the contemporary. Mikhail Bakhtin, a theorist not known for endorsing either antiquarianism or any variant of the high style, himself saw this as a legitimately dialogic aspiration for novelists: he notes that the writer may "[fight] for the renovation of an antiquated literary language, in the interests of those strata of the national language that have remained (to a greater or lesser degree) outside the centralizing and unifying influence of the artistic and ideological norm established by the dominant literary language" (167). Thus, the kind of antiquarianism of style that Lukács deplores in *Marius* here takes its place among the dialogic potentialities of the form surveyed by Bakhtin. Pater's florid, many-clausal

sentences, with their slow and halting movement through long historical vistas and inner sensations, challenge the positivist fixations of a journalistic and scientistic or else vernacular naturalism in vogue in fictional prose throughout the 1880s and ’90s (think of Zola and Maupassant in France, Gissing and Kipling in Britain, and Twain and Crane in the U. S.). By reanimating the Latinate strata of English, Pater finds a form in which to evoke the movement of the mind as it processes its own sensations and ideas.

Such a desire to recapture verbal and ideological elements of the past, however, calls into question the larger concept of historical periodization itself, which Pater realizes when he addresses critics of the Euphuistic poet who ask, “Cannot those who have a thing to say, say it directly? Why not be simple and broad, like the old writers of Greece?” (91). This question represents an untenable universalism that regards all periods, styles, and genres as essentially the same, with no real difference of purpose or context between Homer’s oral epic, Flavian’s written poem, and Pater’s printed novel. The narrator responds in historicist fashion by insisting that “intellectual conditions” changed too extensively between Homer and Flavian to allow for the latter poet simply to write like the earlier one, as if the make-up of the audience, conditions of delivery, and epistemic background made no difference (92). But at the same time, a doubt intrudes: “Would not future generations, looking back upon this, under the power of the enchanted-distance fallacy, find it ideal to view, in contrast with its own languor…? Had Homer, even, appeared unreal and affected in his poetic flight, to some of the people of his own age…?” (92). With these questions, the narrator rejects a facile version of historicism in either its progressivist or declinist modes. Our approach to the past, he

suggests, is always structured by our own distance from it, which allows it to appear smoother and less conflicted than our own period. What is really universal and transhistorical, this passage suggests, is not some chimerical unity or value of the arts, but rather the facts of social variety and epistemological mediation themselves. Even Homer—the supposedly primordial bard—must, like the second-century Euphuist or the nineteenth-century Aesthete, devise a language within the broader social field of linguistic practices for the ordering of a chaotic reality (recall here Pater's devotion to Heraclitus, the philosopher of flux). This problem invariably faces all verbal artists and thus constitutes the universal aspect of the literary enterprise. But because the specific conditions of language and society that each writer encounters will differ with time and place, literary works are themselves historical.[119]

Pater's novelistic insistence on interiority here finds its justification. If the modern novel represents Stoic philosophy in its fetishization of human suffering, then a novel will best respond to that cultural circumstance by writing in a mode that restores suffering to its proper historical dimension as that which is produced in social circumstances and which therefore calls for political redress. As we saw in a reading of the novel's opening pages, Pater depicts this social awareness as the consequence of sympathy: because Marius is capable of imagining what animal sacrifice-victims feel, he

[119] The implicit theory of literature underlying Pater's reflections on the problem of belatedness and tradition thus resembles Bakhtin's ideas far more than those of Lukács. For Bakhtin, all works of literature intervene in a conflicted social reality linguistically sedimented at any given time in the various discourses, from academic jargon to street slang, that comprise society's self-representation. According to Bakhtin, some genres, such as the epic or the lyric poem, tend to evade the challenge of ideological conflict at the linguistic level by employing an elevated or artificial language, while the novel (a Euphuistic genre, on Pater's account) incorporates within itself the various social discourses and their battle for hegemony. See Bakhtin's "From the Pre-History of Novelistic Discourse" and "Discourse in the Novel" for elaborations of this theory.

is capable of feeling that their plight is as much of an injustice as it would be if it happened to him. The novel's focus on animal cruelty radicalizes this concept of sympathy by removing intelligence as a criterion for rights; Pater, in short, undoes Victorian scientism's version of the teleological chain of being that progresses upward from animality to civilization, thus relegating both animals and those human populations associated in European racist and culturalist ideologies with animals to the disposable status of what Giorgio Agamben would call "bare life." The novel refuses such vertical teleologies, instead arraying all creatures along the horizontal axis of their capacity to feel. If Marcus Aurelius is, as the narrator comments, Marius's "inferior now and for ever on the question of righteousness" due to the emperor's supervision of the arena, it is because Aurelius Platonically refuses to admit his vulnerable equality with all sentient life (170).

On the evidence of a passage cancelled between the first and second editions of *Marius*, Pater came to be even more assured that the portrayal of cruelty in fiction had to rely on the representation of a feeling consciousness. Late in the novel, the two-part Chapter 20 contrasts pagan with Christian social life. At the conclusion of an elite Roman social gathering in honor of an aristocratic poet, the host's son grows angry at his pet cat, shuts the animal in an oven, and forgets to release it. Pater had originally described the grim conclusion (I here quote Valancourt Books' reprint of the first edition): "And it was with a really natural laugh, for once, that, on opening the oven, [the host's son] caught sight of the animal's grotesque appearance, as it lay there, half-burnt, just within the red-hot iron door" (216). Pater's reason for deleting this passage has not

been recorded. Perhaps he thought the satire on the emotional enervation of the Roman aristocracy was too broad in its portrayal of a member of this class as only able to laugh naturally—as opposed to laughing as a game of status—when beholding a tortured creature. More importantly, though, the flat, affectless sentence that describes the animal's suffering is not anchored to Marius's perceptions or their emotional modification by the terrible scene he beholds. In other words, presenting the suffering of the animal without the mediation of a feeling subject turns the scene into a shocking spectacle for the reader, just as it is for the perpetrator of the violence against the cat. Such benumbed reportage of violence perpetuates the very inability to feel to which Pater ascribes the violence.

Marius the Epicurean thus lavishes upon sentience all the resources of the most elevated English that 1885 has to offer. Its historical purview licenses the stylistic glorification of Marius's feeling itself—a feeling in turn capable of extending itself even to animal life—as the proper object of a style that confers high literary distinction. Such a stylistic elevation promotes a porous inwardness as the ground of political remediation. Pater carves out such a huge space inside the individual not to isolate him or her; the Robinsonade of consciousness that modernism is often accused of creating makes no appearance in *Marius*, a novel that instead depicts its hero as so receptive to the feelings of others that he takes on the sensibilities of everyone he loves (his mother, Flavian, Cornelius) and sympathizes so strongly with even the animal victims of his society that he rebels against its dominant ideologies.

This stylistic sanctification of universal sympathy makes *Marius* the most utopian

of all the novels studied here. But it does contain a significant lacuna when it fails to show exactly how such sympathy may be perpetuated in society through institutions capable of winning the individual's allegiance. As I showed above, Pater depicts the beginnings of Christianity's cultural triumph and also allegorizes Christianity as the late-antique counterpart to nineteenth-century sentiment and its novelistic argument against idealism and the sublime. Pater's hero-surrogate, however, never takes the step of officially joining the Christian Church. He considers it, and he effectually becomes part of the family of the Christian Cecilia—even to the point of contemplating a marriage to her, which is eventually undertaken by his friend Cornelius. But as Pater's implicitly queer novel refuses the heterosexual marriage plot, so too does it resist the subsumption of its hero's sympathetic sensibility into the emerging institution that would otherwise appear to be its historical repository. This problem is reflected in the arena scene, when the narrator describes Marius as being the only person in the amphitheatre to reject the gruesome spectacle and consequently feeling "isolated in the great slaughter-house" (169). In this sense the problem of individualism re-asserts itself at not the social but rather the political level. What is the modern individual, especially the intellectual or artist, equipped with sensitivity, to do about the suffering he cannot help but feel if his individuality—that is, his autonomy from institutions—is the very ground of his sensitivity? Pater suggests one answer when Marius, captured with a group of outlawed Christians, exchanges his freedom for that of Cornelius and dies a martyr, even though he himself was not a Christian: "and martyrdom," the novel concludes, "as the church always said, [is] a kind of sacrament with plenary grace" (297). In other words, Marius

has taken an honorary sacrament and received full salvation through God's grace. But, as Clyde de L. Ryals notes, this conflicts with the narrator's own conviction that Marius "was, as we know, no hero, no heroic martyr—had indeed no right to be" (291). According to Ryals, "Marius remains essentially a passive spectator," even though the other Christians consider him a full member of the church in death (126). Ryals reads this as a proto-postmodern aporia, the novel's production of a constitutively ironic lack of closure. I would read it more strongly, and more in line with Pater's Hegelianism, as a portrayal of the historical process taking its course in the absence of individual agency. As Marius lay dying, he hopes that "this world's delightful shows, as the scattered fragments of a poetry, till then but half understood, might be taken up into the text of a lost epic, recovered at last" (294). This suggests that the unfolding story of human development encompasses Marius whether he spectates or acts or does nothing at all. Carolyn Williams glosses this aspect of the novel by associating it with traditional realism's focus on ordinary men and women who typify social change: "Pater takes the premise of realism to its extreme…by delineating characters whose rarefied sensitivity indicates that great forces are passing through them but whose very sensitivity at the same time renders them passive" (181).

It is not, therefore, Pater's Aestheticism that entails his hero's passivity, but his historicist supplement to the aesthetic privileging of the passing moment. The sensitive intellectual may feel isolated, but in fact the winds of history are at his back.[120] Shuter

[120] I thus differ from Love's treatment of Pater as a figure whose seemingly apolitical stance is ascribable to the marginalization his sexual identity brought about: "I read withdrawal in his work not as a refusal of politics but rather as a politics of refusal and see in this shrinking politics a specifically queer response to the experience of social exclusion" (58). While I am sympathetic to Love's broader argument that critics

puts it aptly: "Only when expectation has been excluded and retrospection is possible can we recognize Pater's characteristic narrative idiom" (17). Such an idiom arrogates the aestheticism of the observing subject's sensations to a progressive unfolding of totality, graspable only in retrospection. The novel's aestheticism relies, then, on the reader's critical-historical imagination to provide the order once provided by the more interventionist narrators of the realist mode, in Scott, Dickens, Eliot, and others. Pater's progressivist thinking is the most conventional aspect of his work with respect to its context, and it will be largely abandoned by later Aestheticist and modernist writers, starting with Wilde, who, as we saw, strips even the *Bildungsroman* of its progressive temporality.

What remains of use to the modernist imagination is Pater's Aestheticist creation, in the form of a novelistic character, of an individual inwardness that is not like private property, but like a grotto or inlet into which all social sensations may flow, and out of which the angry desire to reform the polity may issue. Such an image of the self is what

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should be less quick to stigmatize non-activist political stances as *de facto* conservative ones, I would apply her own caution against an overly binary victimology to Pater himself. Love observes, "As important as it is to be aware of the real differences between 'dominant' and 'marginal' modernisms it is also important to remember how difficult it can be, in any given case, to tell the difference," a difficulty she uses Joyce to exemplify, since Joyce was a straight white male, a colonial subject, a sexual fetishist, a religious renegade, an artistic elitist, a downwardly-mobile and often indigent member of the lower middle class, a canonical author, and more, a complex of identity ascriptions that fails to tell us if Joyce is "dominant" or "marginal" since he clearly partakes of both categories (54). As for Pater, his own writings straightforwardly assume the problematic of the privileged observer: he takes a stance inside the elite and at the same time at an intellectual and emotional distance from it, a position crisply allegorized by Marius's role as amanuensis to the Emperor. As Bourdieu has explained, the intellectual elite within modernity, of which Pater was certainly a member, belongs to "the dominated fraction of the dominant class." This is not at all to deny the importance of Pater's social victimization in a homophobic society—and, I hope I have shown, his later critical reception was certainly tainted by a homophobia that probably explains his unjustly diminished stature today. Nevertheless, on the evidence of his writing itself, he was willing to argue for the virtues of the marginal from an avowed position of centrality. Pater's other works notwithstanding, *Marius the Epicurean* is a novel about a privileged figure learning to identify with society's victims, rather than about one who comes to recognize himself as one of those victims.

emerges from *Marius the Epicurean*, and it is this image that Virginia Woolf will liberate from Pater's Latinate hypotaxis and Roman setting and put in motion on the ultramodern London street along the paratactical stream of consciousness, with this important difference: for Woolf, these sensations proceed from not from the body, but from its spiritual other.

II.3. Alive in Each Other: Virginia Woolf's Holy Spirit

This late age of the world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears.
—Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

It held, foolish as the idea was, something of her own in it, this country sky, this sky above Westminster.
—Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

Considered in terms of the assumptions of contemporary literary theory, Virginia Woolf is the most heterodox figure studied here. This might seem to be an absurd statement, since Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* is one of the founding texts of feminist theory, found in all relevant anthologies, just as her essays "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" and "Modern Fiction" continue to govern the aesthetics of fictional production and reception. Yet in her feminist polemic, Woolf imagines authorship as a transcendent, androgynous state, explicitly on the model of the Romantic notion of autonomous genius, while the essays on fiction bluntly declare that materialism is death.[121] From the persistence of Marxism and the emergence of cognitive science to the prevalent and ongoing attempts to model humanistic scholarship on the quantitative methods of the natural and social sciences, no doctrine is more hegemonic in current literary studies than the materialist belief that imaginative productions are governed by economic, political, social, and/or biological circumstance—and this belief's corollary, that authors have very

[121] See chapter 6 of *A Room of One's Own*, in which Woolf cites Coleridge's theory of the androgynous imagination: "It is fatal for a woman to lay the least stress on any grievance; to plead even with justice any cause; in any way to speak consciously as a woman. And fatal is no figure of speech; for anything written with that conscious bias is doomed to death. It ceases to be fertilized. Brilliant and effective, powerful and masterly, as it may appear for a day or two, it must wither at nightfall; it cannot grow in the minds of others. Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the art of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated" (104). Woolf's feminism and socialism serve the traditional Aestheticist end of protecting this imagination from the constraints of the socio-political world so that it may attain inward integrity; she is not interested in politicizing the imagination by her materialist activism but precisely in *depoliticizing* it. To be fair, Woolf's position seems to have changed by the time of *Three Guineas*, but her works of the 1920s, which are my concern here, remain her most influential.

limited agency against the overdetermining forces of language, history, embodiment, or ideology. What appears to be natural is only cultural, and what appears to be true is only rhetoric: so goes the refrain of the contemporary critic, who axiomatically denies that any truth transcending human institutions can be found in imaginative texts.

That Woolf favored instead a Romantic and almost supernaturalist view of aesthetic authority renders her, when read without preconceptions (or, indeed, a paternalistic condescension) derived from post-1960s identity politics, a more disruptive figure than her novelistic peers in modernism, each of whom at least partially anticipated contemporary theory by locating the sources of the aesthetic in the material substrates of the body (Pater), history (Wilde), or language (Joyce). At first glance, it also renders her irrelevant to my thesis, since the sort of secular criticism Pater, Wilde, and Joyce hoped their texts would accomplish also tended to refuse the spiritual, either by imagining it as inherently beyond humanity's cognitive reach (as in the Platonists Pater and Wilde) or as a ruse of power (as in the fiercely anti-clerical Joyce).[122] For Woolf, on the other hand, fantasia is more the rule than the exception that *Orlando* is sometimes thought to be. Consider the archetypal colonial-exotic pilgrim's progress of *The Voyage Out*; the telepathic characters that populate *Mrs. Dalloway*'s panpsychic London; the disguised Gothicism of *To the Lighthouse*, with its visionary heroine and its decayed house haunted by the revenants of Lesley and Julia Stephen on a dream-like seacoast presided over by

[122] Meisel remains the most extensive treatment of Woolf's debts to Pater. However, he tends to emphasize a sense shared by both writers as language as a material resource with a "textual unconscious" full of traits to be mobilized by the Aesthete writer. I am more interested here in the difference between them: Woolf takes Pater's starting point—the artist unbound by nomos in a world of flux—but from there progresses to an ecstatic visionary mode of mobile spirit that Pater would have found foreign, associating its premise with Plato's conservative idealism.

the god Poseidon; or the placeless reveries of *The Waves*, its disembodied voices momentarily coalescing and dispersing out of and into some primordial flux. Unlike Wilde's Gothic parable *Dorian Gray*, where the supernatural merely allegorizes an ethical dilemma, a generic crisis, and a social-psychological attitude, Woolf's novels take as their literal premise some transpersonal, immaterial agency of the psyche, and they authorize their own stature with reference to the author's knowledge of such transcendent truths. Wilde did not really believe that a painting could contain a soul but found in the fantastic idea a compelling philosophical emblem; on the other hand, *Mrs. Dalloway* presents, as non-allegorical and everyday matters, Peter Walsh and Clarissa Dalloway reading each other's minds while some sort of immortal earth-spirit in the form of a beggar wails a love song near Hyde Park. In defiance of traditional Woolf criticism, with its emphasis on the production of gender or the ideologies of imperialism and capitalism, the contemporary scholar might wonder what all this has to do with earthly politics at all. "I have an idea that I will invent a new name for my books to supplant 'novel.' A new ---------- by Virginia Woolf. But what?" Woolf famously inquires of *To the Lighthouse* in her diary, and then later, "I doubt that I shall ever write another novel after O[rlando]. I shall invent a new name for them," intuiting that her chosen form was in some sense not the novel at all, was too invested in subjectivity and transcendence, consciousness and spirit (*Diary* 3: 34, 176).[123]

[123] It should be said that there have been considerations of Woolf and religion in recent years. See for instance Lewis's analysis of churchgoing in Woolf's fiction, wherein Woolf is shown to lament the church's modern status "as absent center and its failure to unite the community," or, conversely, Lackey's insistence that Woolf was a staunch Nietzschean anti-Christian non-believer who "is one of the first to articulate clearly and consistently the consequences of atheism on subjectivity" (Lewis 686; Lackey 346). But my concern here is not with Woolf's religion, considered as the organized social practice of human orientation toward the divine. Rather, I am interested in the prior question of the ontology of Woolf's texts:

Yet Woolf's novels are among the most influential of the early twentieth century, and despite their author's by-now well-known political limitations, one can verify empirically that her influence transcends the bounds of class, gender, genre, nation, race, ideology, and language: witness the testimony of such a diverse company of Woolf-lovers as Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel Garcia-Marquez, Clarice Lispector, Ursula K. Le Guin, Toni Morrison, Cynthia Ozick, Gabriel Josipovici, Margaret Atwood, and Zadie Smith. Woolf's fictional mode has even become a standard today. If you pick up any new literary novel—of the type that seems to make a bid for the U. S.'s National Book Award or the U. K.'s Man Booker Prize—you are likely to encounter pages of lyrically emotive free indirect discourse narrating a non-linear series of privileged moments in the lives of ordinary, albeit themselves rather privileged, individuals, usually in an urban or suburban setting, generally accompanied by the subtle or unsubtle promotion of a mildly self-contradicting left-liberal politics and a vaguely genteel-agnostic invocation of the numinous.[124] This is a somewhat cruel reduction, but I think it adequately suggests that *Mrs. Dalloway* is virtually the paradigm of the modern art novel, far more than the esoteric specialist's haven that is *Ulysses*, whose most radical innovations are confined to the literary/theoretical avant-garde or else have moved laterally into cinema or the art world. Woolf remains the key *novelistic* touchstone of Anglo modernism. To understand

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what do they say not about the human act of affirming or denying divinity, but about the nature and purpose of the universe itself? While I take Woolf to be far less invested than are Pater, Wilde, and Joyce in adopting, revising, or attacking the traditional tropes and personae of Christianity, I will also show that she is even more concerned than they are to articulate a new, visionary ontology not anchored to any extant faith community. To this extent, she is much the most ambitious writer treated in this project.

[124] See Zadie Smith's widely-disseminated 2008 essay "Two Paths for the Novel," which decries the hegemony of what she calls "lyrical realism" in contemporary literary fiction today. While Smith does not mention Woolf, the features of lyrical realism that she notes correspond to Woolf's mid-'20s domestic novels.

the novel today is to understand *Mrs. Dalloway*, and without grasping its spiritualist theory of subjectivity and the mode of social criticism it enables we will not be able to account for the possibilities and pitfalls of modern literary fiction.

The key to *Mrs. Dalloway*'s spiritualism is *affect*, especially in its interaction with sentiment. As we saw in Pater, Aestheticism's project of freeing the novel from extrinsic ideological determination nevertheless allows a continued role for sentimental feeling. Marius the Epicurean, while the sole locus of emotion in his eponymous novel, nevertheless experiences tearful sympathy at the spectacle of suffering, even extending this sympathy beyond the boundary of the human as he witnesses the torture of animals. But Pater's novel tends to *report* these feelings discursively, leaving them within the realm of nineteenth-century sentimentality. Woolf, on the other hand, performs—rather than discoursing about—the interaction of affect and sentiment. For the purposes of this essay, I have synthesized definitions of terms from various writers from Spinoza to Teresa Brennan on the topic of feeling.[125] "Affect" refers to pre-individual sensations in the subject in response to external stimuli, and, as such, they are ethically neutral; "sentiment" marks a set of affects provoked by a spectacle of suffering that can—in certain cultural contexts, namely, those that privilege the individual—constitute the observer of suffering into an individual agent capable of ethical action on behalf of his or her pitiable object; finally, "emotion" and "feeling" indicate how any affect is experienced by an individual. In general, I judge literary language and structure to produce affects in the reader, which, depending on the reader's individual, social and

[125] The texts I primarily draw from here are Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari, Massumi, Teresa Brennan, and Uhlmann.

political circumstances, may or may not coalesce into certain emotions. But Woolf's most influential novels—those of the mid-1920s, especially *Mrs. Dalloway*—deliberately manipulate their own production of affect even as they mount an implicit argument for affect's potential to replace sentiment as the novel's central contribution to the remediation of social suffering.

A close reading of Woolf's manifesto of modernist fiction, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," will demonstrate her often-unrecognized commitment to sentiment as a fictional mode and hint at the foundation of the non-materialist ontology that *Mrs. Dalloway* will both depict and enact. Woolf's essay is well-known as a sharp, even mocking criticism of Arnold Bennett and his Edwardian generation of realist novelists, but it is important to recognize that Woolf does not reject realism outright. In his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Peter Bürger defines two different types of critique: a "[d]ogmatic criticism" that establishes its truth on the basis of its object's untruth and so remains external to its object, and an "immanent," dialectical criticism for which "the contradictions in the criticized theory are not indications of insufficient intellectual rigor on the part of the author, but an indication of an unsolved problem or one that has remained hidden. Dialectical criticism thus stands in a relation of dependency to the criticized theory" (liv). In other words, immanent critique does not reject the theory it criticizes altogether, but rather establishes via an analysis of contradiction the criticized theory's inability to fulfill itself on its own terms, terms whose truth—or truth within the history that conditions them—the dialectician acknowledges. I invoke immanent critique here because it is necessary first to recognize that the famous aesthetic manifesto Woolf wrote just before

undertaking her experimental novel, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," critiques its own object immanently. In contrast to the widely-held idea that Woolf saw her own fictional innovations as a radical rupture or break with the past, her most celebrated statement of aesthetic intent represents her project as the development, if not the fulfillment, of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century realism's achievements in psychological portraiture and sentimental social criticism. Woolf censures the Edwardian generation of Wells, Galsworthy, and Bennett not for their realism, but for their betrayal of realism, their curdling of realism's affective holism into what she saw as a mere mechanical positivism. Furthermore, she figures sentimental affect as the Edwardians' gravest neglect—Edwardian realism *lacks* sentiment, and it is this lacuna that Woolf's modernist innovations will correct.

What might lead readers to imagine that Woolf stages a thoroughgoing revolt is the essay's most famous single sentence: "And now I will hazard a second assertion, which is more disputable perhaps, to the effect that in or about December, 1910, human character changed" (421).[126] Of course, this sentence, with its multiple hedges ("hazard," "disputable," "to the effect," "in or about") is not famous per se, but only its final clause. That "human character changed" suggests that Woolf believed in the ultimate malleability of human nature—that she was, in effect, a good anti-essentialist social constructionist, our contemporary. The remainder of the essay, though, not only belies

[126] I quote the final version of the text, reprinted as "Character in Fiction" in Woolf's *Collected Essays* from the 1924 version published in the *Criterion*. This is an expansion of Woolf's original lecture, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," delivered to the Cambridge Heretics on 18 May 1924, and was published multiple times—as a pamphlet, as part of a Hogarth Press essay series, and in the *New York Times*—under its original title, which, due to its familiarity, is how I will refer to it. See 436-7 of Woolf's *Collected Essays Volume III* for a complete publication history; the information given here is a summary thereof.

this interpretation of Woolf's statement, but rather shows that she intends precisely the opposite. For what does Woolf mean by "human character"? She borrows the term from her polemical adversary, Arnold Bennett, only to redefine it so that his commitment to it makes him appear shallow and reductive: "I believe that all novels, that is to say, deal with character, and that it is to express character....that the form of the novel, so clumsy, verbose, and undramatic, so rich, elastic, and alive, has been evolved. To express character, I have said; but you will at once reflect that the very widest interpretation can be put upon those words" (425). Woolf then demonstrates the wide interpretation of "character" by imagining how an English, a French, and a Russian novelist would write of her imagined train co-passenger, Mrs. Brown. In quick parodic sketches that draw on stereotyped national styles of characterization—the eccentric English, the rational French, the soulful Russians—Woolf indicates that "character" is a superficial feature of human personality, only as profound as hackneyed ethnic jokes.

To digress briefly so as to situate Woolf's modernism in a broader intellectual history, I want to note that the complaint of "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" is an impressively durable one in modernity. As Chapter II.1 below details, George Eliot, in 1856, rebukes Charles Dickens in similar terms to those used by Woolf against Bennett. At the turn of the twenty-first century, James Wood repeats the charge against materialist superficialism, this time applied to Salman Rushdie, Thomas Pynchon, Zadie Smith, David Foster Wallace, and others in his widely influential essay, "Hysterical Realism." All three polemicists—Eliot, Woolf, Wood—share a concern that the consciousness of the individual will be suppressed by deterministic theories of human nature generated by

new technologies, from nineteenth-century statistics to twentieth-century train travel to the twenty-first-century Internet.[127] Like Eliot censuring Dickens for his aggregate imagination and Woolf upbraiding Bennett for his sociological mimesis, James Wood reads contemporary novels—which he claims are overly influenced by the example of Dickens, in a neat historical circularity that returns us to 1856—as over-emphasizing extrinsic, mechanistic connections among modern people that leaves their inner lives out of account:

> Alas, since the characters in these novels are not really alive, not fully human, their connectedness can only be insisted on. Indeed, the reader begins to think that it is being insisted on precisely because they do not really exist. Life is never experienced with such a fervid intensity of connectedness. After all, hell *is* other people, actually: real humans disaggregate more often than they congregate. So these novels find themselves in the paradoxical position of enforcing connections that are finally conceptual rather than human. (182, original emphasis)

Wood follows Woolf in arguing that the representation of "life"—some principle of inner vitality that neither author can define—is the telos of fiction. Shirking this crucial task of interior mimesis, though, is a political and ethical mistake as well as an aesthetic one for these writers. A novelist who cannot represent inwardness forfeits the novel's opportunity to forge new social connections rather than simply reporting on those that exist already. Materialists, on this theory, re-draw the boundaries they observe, whether large-scale divisions of race, class, and gender, or the smaller, more particular barriers

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[127] Many more examples could be produced of what I call the "inner life" school of modern fiction writing, from Henry James's Prefaces to Willa Cather's advocacy of the "novel *demeublé*," from James Baldwin's repudiation of political protest fiction to the insistence in Philip Roth's late work that the essence of writing is the attempt to know others. Woolf is far from alone among Anglophone novelists of the twentieth century in her insistence upon novelistic subjectivity. Dorrit Cohn hypothesizes a cyclical history of the novel in which periods of exterior character portrayal are followed by interior mimesis, as Sterne follows Defoe, Eliot follows Dickens, Woolf follows Bennett, and Wood follows Rushdie: "One could probably argue for a theory of cyclical (or spiral) return of the genre to its inward matrix whenever its characters get hyper-active, its world too cluttered, its orientation too veristic" (qtd. in Laurence 25).

that may exist between any two individuals. Novel-writing that is overly impressed with its command of "the facts" in effect *reproduces* those facts, regardless of whether its authors believe themselves to be in favor of social reform and transformation (as Dickens, Bennett, and Rushdie manifestly were and are). The wager of what we might call the "inner life" school of fiction-writing is that social transformation can only come from below the level of institutions, including the institution of language, when the interior affect of one individual becomes available to one or more others. But this wager entails a certain essentialism—a belief that some minimal substance pre-exists all institutions and representations, what Wood above has euphemized as "the human."[128] An implicit theory of the human is central to this novelistic humanism.

Woolf makes clear her allegiance to this humanist essentialism when she later names the proper quarry of fiction not as "human character," but rather "human nature": "There she sits in the corner of the carriage—that carriage which is travelling, not from Richmond to Waterloo, but from one age of English literature to the next, for Mrs. Brown is eternal, Mrs. Brown is human nature, Mrs. Brown changes only on the surface, it is the novelists who get in and out" (430). When one age changes to another, *character* changes along with it; but human *nature* remains unchanged beneath the veneer of historical rupture. Woolf's statement about December 1910, then, is not an avant-garde declaration, but a parody of one: it is a hyperbolic warning to writers not to be distracted by the year-to-year minutiae of alterations in character's mere wardrobe when in fact they

[128] Wood's claims notwithstanding, it is not necessary for the believer in an underlying substance to isolate and valorize the human, as chapter II.2 made clear by showing Pater's extension of empathy to all sentient life. *Mrs. Dalloway* will go even further than this, beyond the animate and beyond the material, when it introduces the beggar woman's song. But Woolf's creative practice is in this respect more radical than her theorizing, as "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" speaks only of human nature.

should aspire to touch the flesh of human nature itself. Woolf understands the Edwardian realists, with their utopian aspirations typified by Wells's futurist prophesying, to constitute the true avant-garde; by contrast, she proclaims a restoration.

What does Woolf wish to restore? Consider that she contests Bennett on his chosen ground: she allows that "Mr. Bennett is perfectly right" to think "only if the characters are real does a novel have any chance of surviving" (426). This challenges not Bennett's premise that novels should be realistic, but instead Bennett's definition of reality itself. Because Woolf believes in an "eternal….human nature" that changes "only on the surface," the Edwardian "materialist" writers (Woolf's term of abuse in the later essay "Modern Fiction") spends his words on superfices: clothing, housing, income, furniture, town. For Woolf, however, the essence of character is to be found in the interior. She shares Bennett's program—creating realistic fictional characters—while observing the contradiction in his means of fulfilling it: character depends on the inner life for its fictional reality, while Bennett and other "materialists" join forces with the extrinsic threats to the psyche by a fragmenting—even if potentially emancipating—modernity.[129]

To offer a counter-example to the deficiencies of Bennett's materialist theory and novelistic practice, Woolf lists seven classic novels that, to her mind, succeed in creating great characters: "*War and Peace*, *Vanity Fair*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Madame Bovary*, *Pride*

[129] Woolf could not be further from modernists such as Flaubert or Pound in this respect: she does not scorn the public as a cliché-ridden herd, but rather acknowledges that the writer must communicate with it on common ground "by putting before [the reader] something which he recognizes, which therefore stimulates his imagination, and makes him willing to co-operate in the far more difficult business of intimacy" (431). Modernity's challenge to the novelist, however liberating it may be for the cook or the middle-class woman she serves, is that it presents a difficulty in "bridging the gulf between the hostess and her unknown guest on the one hand, the writer and his unknown reader on the other" (431).

and Prejudice, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Villette" (426). The first striking thing about this list is its heterogeneity: Woolf does not hesitate to place the autonomous *object d'art Madame Bovary* in the same category with the national epic *War and Peace*, while the textually recursive humorist Sterne finds himself alongside with the somberly, bitterly, and earnestly ironic Hardy. Clearly, then, no particular style is at issue in Woolf's argument—which is in keeping with her own career-long deployment of stylistic variety, from realism (*The Voyage Out*) to stream-of-consciousness (*Mrs. Dalloway*) to fantasy (*Orlando*) to dramatic prose poetry *(The Waves*) to political rhetoric (*Three Guineas*). What, then, unites the items on Woolf's list if not style? All of them have domestic life for their content (if, as in Thackeray and Tolstoy, juxtaposed with broader histories) and all may be described as works either allied to or parasitic upon the mode of sentimental realism. All seven of these disparate texts focus on common life and everyday feeling, whether made heroic, as in Tolstoy, or ironic, as in Sterne. For this reason, we can take domestic life as Woolf's minimum criterion for the portrayal of characters in novels; novels must be about the quotidian first and foremost. Furthermore, she sees prior eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels not as inferior to the productions of her era, but instead as superior to those modern novels which have not, in her view, sufficiently kept pace with what social, technological, and political change have and have not done to the inner lives of everyday people, rather than simply their extrinsic circumstances. None of the writers on Woolf's list can be accused of ignoring political and social developments; even Austen, who is often said to neglect politics merely because her texts do not secrete the name of Napoleon, gives a striking picture of the changes in class and gender

relations among the Regency English gentry. Thus, for Woolf, the question is not one of refusing to write about the social and the political. It is rather that the novel is the form best poised to depict how history moves inward, how it transforms consciousness. The Edwardian realists are Woolf's emblem of an interregnum of insensibility in the history of the novel; dazzled by statistics and gadgetry, they are numb to feeling, which is the novel's *sine qua non*. Woolf appropriates modern authority not by repudiating tradition, as the avant-garde might, but rather by claiming that her own practice is the legitimate legatee of tradition—in this case, the tradition of writing prose narratives about the everyday feelings of common people.

Woolf stakes a further claim to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century traditions. As we have seen, she is interested not in character but nature, and what constitutes human nature for Woolf is affect, the internal movement of feeling toward or away from the object world. The novel's affective repertoire up to Woolf's time centered around sentiment; its central scene featured a sorrower and a sympathizer. "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" places as much weight on the author as privileged observer of suffering—here, in the form of Mrs. Brown's tears—as Sterne or Dickens would have:

> There was something pinched about her—a look of suffering, of apprehension, and, in addition, she was extremely small. [...] It was plain, from Mrs. Brown's silence, from the uneasy affability with which Mr. Smith spoke, that he had some power over her which he was exerting disagreeably. [...] Mrs. Brown took out her little white handerchief and began to dab her eyes. She was crying. But she went on listening quite composedly to what he was saying, and he went on talking, a little louder, a little angrily, as if he had seen her cry often before; as if it were a painful habit. (423, 424)

We have here a scene, apparently, of social victimization. Mrs. Brown is being cruelly

mistreated by her companion, as her bodily effluvium signals to her privileged observer. Her observer, in turn, responds with the exercise of sympathetic imagination, inwardly elaborating on the meaning of the scene, judging the bully to be hostile and insensitive and taking careful note of the victim's vulnerability. In Woolf's charge that Bennett is indifferent to the essence of Mrs. Brown's plight lay the implication that his novels are not sentimental *enough*, that is, that they do not properly impress upon their reader the needful sympathy for the suffering beheld everywhere in society—in train cars, for instance. Intimacy between writer and reader, sympathy between observing author and suffering heroine—these are the solutions Woolf poses to a problem with Bennett's realism made visible to her by her co-passenger's obscure tears. Moreover, the suffering object of Woolf's pity, Mrs. Brown, is no less a figure than "the spirit we live by, life itself," while Bennett's materialistic "tools are death" (436, 430).

But Woolf does not imagine that the self-styled modern novelist can revive sentimental style on its former terms. As a reader of Sterne, whose novels emphasized the irony of the sentimental observer's power over the object of his worldly pity, Woolf carefully evades—or, better, represents her observing surrogate's evasion of—the pitfall represented by condescending to Mrs. Brown, of construing the suffering object as entirely appropriated by the pitying subject's gaze. For one thing, Mrs. Brown is not the paragon of goodness that the sentimentally suffering are often supposed to be, as with perishing children in the poetry of Wordsworth or the novels of Dickens: "'Ah, poor people,' said Mrs. Brown, a trifle condescendingly. 'My grandmother had a maid who came when she was fifteen and stayed till she was eighty' (this was said with a kind of

hurt and aggressive pride to impress us both perhaps)" (423). This line of dialogue serves two functions in Woolf's narrative. First, it establishes that the subject/object structure of sentimental perception is porous on both sides. The social victim, herself weeping and the potential incitement of weeping in others, also sympathizes with those she understands to constitute a victim class below her own, in this case, domestic servants. This suggests, in contrast to the sociological analysis supposedly favored by the Edwardians, the granularity of power relations in practice, anticipating Foucault's influential dictum that "Power is everywhere...because it comes from everywhere" (93).

Woolf's parenthetical remark further discloses the potential root of pity in pride, aggression, and a sense of privilege affronted. Mrs. Brown's ability to sigh over the plight of the domestic is based on her social advantage over this person, an advantage she retains *through the assertion of sympathy itself* when faced with a social superior (Mr. Smith, the male bully). Mrs. Brown, knowing that she is Mr. Smith's object, holds onto her own sense of subjecthood by objectifying the domestic servant in turn. But this act, as represented by Woolf, redounds upon its author. After all, does not Mrs. Woolf, feeling herself rendered a mute object by the reifying gaze of Mr. Bennett, transform herself by the act of writing into a subject by constructing Mrs. Brown as an object, who then, objectified by Mr. Smith, objectifies the domestic servant—as in fact, we may be reminded, Mrs. Woolf rather haughtily did earlier in the essay ("In life one can see the change, if I may use a homely illustration, in the character of one's cook") (422)? The bearer of sentiment is at once observer and observed, aggressor and victim.

If it is the case that emotion in fiction is inextricably entangled with power

relations, then why should the novelist bother to resist the schematic realism of the Edwardians? After all, even if it is unsubtle in comparison with the modernists' Nietzschean echoes and Foucauldian foreshadowings, its diminution of individual affect in favor of collective determinism nevertheless offers a political clarity unavoidably blurred by the mingled tears of subject and object that we find in Woolf. Woolf's overt answer to this question—that, if affect is not represented, "life" escapes—is unsatisfying given her inability to define "life." More telling, and more suggestive of what "life" means, is her covert answer. Eventually, Mr. Smith leaves the train and Woolf is faced with Mrs. Brown alone: "She sat in her corner opposite, very clean, very small, rather queer, and suffering intensely. The impression she made was overwhelming. It came pouring out like a draught, like a smell of burning" (424-5). Until the final clause of the second sentence, we might expect more tears, more liquid, to flow "like a draught" from Mrs. Brown's overwhelmed eyes. But this time, the somatic extrusion of the psyche is not water but *fire*—or at least the olfactory evidence that something is burning within. Compare Woolf's later figuration of repressed sexual desire in *Mrs. Dalloway*: "a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed" (31). The suffering woman with smoke pouring from her eyes: a surreal revisionary image of the sentimental topos, one with feminist implications (the smoldering anger of the disempowered woman), queer implications (the subject's unspoken but enflamed desire, even, in the burning flower image, her genital engorgement), and, necessarily underlying these, a call for a revised aesthetic practice that can evoke, without reifying by labeling, those experiences that are both too particular (Mrs. Brown's condescension to her grandmother's maid) and

too general (the affective motions of the human body) to be caught within the nation/class schemata of Bennett et al.[130]

A scene of sentiment—Mrs. Woolf compassionating Mrs. Brown—both effloresces and ignites (recalling the crocus-borne flame) as one character undergoes the complex passion—sorrow, desire, resentment, anger—of another. To vary my metaphor, Woolf uses sentiment as a Trojan horse, smuggling in whole classes of affects—and, by extension, classes of person—excluded in prior realist representations, which act of rebellion she nevertheless dialectically avers to be the fulfillment of those representations' intrinsic telos: the mimesis of universal nature. It is one thing, though, to assert that this is what novels should do in an essay, but how is one to make a novel enact this transformation? To answer, we must turn to Woolf's fiction and return to the question we opened with, not just of affect but of spirituality.

Mrs. Dalloway's eponymous heroine has a long pre-history in Woolf's career, for she appears, alongside her husband, as a supporting character in Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out*. Importantly for my thesis, the first glimpse we catch of Mrs. Dalloway in that novel satirically allies her with the tradition of sentiment in English fiction. *The Voyage Out* presents Clarissa as a complacent, conservative member of the English ruling class, an anti-suffragist smugly surveying the colonies with imperial self-righteousness and moreover given to making elaborately fatuous remarks reminiscent of Wilde's Lady

[130] It should be said here that a number of critics have persuasively come to Bennett's defense, including Hynes; Kenner, *A Sinking Island*; and Carey. Hynes and Carey emphasize Bennett's underrated ability to portray subjectivity as richly as Woolf, Forster, or Lawrence; Kenner extols Bennett for his unsung experimental methods of novelistic construction and his uncomplacent literary awareness of how technology affects media, which Kenner accuses Bloomsbury as a whole of neglecting due to its privileged isolation.

Bracknell (e.g., "What I find so tiresome about the sea is that there are no flowers in it") (45). The Dalloways enter the novel when they join the titular journey of the novel's heroine, Rachel Vinrace, a sheltered ingénue turning New Woman, on a ship bound for South America. As part of the older woman's educative design upon the younger, Clarissa gives Rachel her diary to read. The diary recounts the earlier legs of the Dalloways' journey, and in it Rachel finds Clarissa in the posture of the sentimental traveler, that eighteenth-century fictional archetype:[131]

> [In Portugal] Clarissa inspected the royal stables, and took several snapshots showing men now exiled and windows now broken. Among other things she photographed Fielding's grave, and let loose a small bird which some ruffian had trapped, "because one hates to think of anything in a cage where English people lie buried," the diary stated. (42)

Thus in a Catholic/Iberian country, redolent for the self-satisfied English tourist of "papist" theocracy and inquisitorial tortures, Clarissa licenses her sense of national/imperial ideological superiority over the southern European "ruffians" by freeing their captive birds. Woolf anticipates later twentieth-century critics of sentiment by showing it to be, in Sedgwick's words, "imperialism with a baby face" (*Between Men* 67).

The allusion to Fielding, famous mocker of Samuel Richardson's emotive epistolary novels, alerts the canny reader to the presence of canonical eighteenth-century anti-sentiment satire in this passage, but I would argue that it is also a slight misdirection. The true citation in this passage is not of Fielding or Richardson but of Laurence Sterne, author of a noted scene in which a sensitive traveler tries to free a bird.[132] In Sterne's *A*

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[131] For a general treatment of this figure in the eighteenth-century, see Todd.

[132] Woolf, albeit later in her career, also cites Sterne as a specific influence on her work in the Preface to

Sentimental Journey through France and Italy, the protagonist Yorick light-heartedly imagines that if he runs out of money on his journey, he could live a pleasant life at the expense of the French state in the Bastille. Yorick is further reflecting that the Bastille, if stripped of the accoutrements of a prison (tower, fossé, barricaded doors), would feel less oppressive to those confined within it, when he sees a caged starling crying that it cannot get out:

> The bird flew to the place where I was attempting his deliverance, and thrusting his head through the trellis, press'd his breast against it, as if impatient.—I fear, poor creature! said I, I cannot set thee at liberty.—"No," said the starling—"I can't get out—I can't get out," said the starling.
>
> I vow I never had my affections more tenderly awakened; or do I remember an incident in my life, where the dissipated spirits, to which my reason had been a bubble, were so suddenly call'd home. Mechanical as the notes were, yet so true in tune to nature were they chanted, that in one moment they overthrew all my systematic reasonings upon the Bastille; and I heavily walk'd up-stairs, unsaying every word I had said in going down them. (69)

The point of this passage is to chide, however gently, the intellectual culture-worker (Yorick, like Sterne, is a cleric/writer) for a kind of feckless sociological idealism. The writer can imagine, in theory, that the mind is superior to experience and that reality can be so rationalized that prisons lose their terror and that slavery might be welcomed by the

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Orlando, and she composes an essay on Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*. See *Orlando* 5 and *The Second Common Reader* 68-75. In the latter piece, Woolf astutely notes of sentiment's double-edged nature, "Thus in *A Sentimental Journey* we are never allowed to forget that Sterne is above all things sensitive, sympathetic, humane; that above all things he prizes the decencies, the simplicities of the human heart. And directly a writer sets out to prove himself this or that our suspicions are aroused. For the little extra stress he lays on the quality he desires us to see in him, coarsens it and over-paints it, so that instead of humour, we get farce, and instead of sentiment, sentimentality. Here, instead of being convinced of the tenderness of Sterne's heart—which in *Tristram Shandy* was never in question—we begin to doubt it" (73). See Laurence 30 for Sterne as a "forerunner of Woolf"; see also Fernald for Woolf's complex, ambivalent relationship to the literary and intellectual discourses of eighteenth-century England, especially her reservations about the public-sphere tradition of masculine intellectual debate whose lacunae the ideology of sentiment was partially intended to fill.

enslaved. But the sentimental journey leads to a collision between the writer's imagination and the brute facts: airily discoursing about imprisonment, Yorick meets a real prisoner—in this case, the starling—and the emotional upheaval provoked by beholding another sentient being's hardship causes Yorick to realize that his mere thoughts about imprisonment are an irresponsible abdication of his responsibility to act to remediate suffering—a responsibility to which his sentimentalism recalls him by constituting him as an ethical agent.[133] Out of this conversion from rational idealism to sentimental empiricism, Sterne forges a mobile rhetoric of subjectivity full of emotive outbursts and quick changes in mood that constitute a kind of proto-stream-of-consciousness; this rhetoric dramatizes the conversion of affect into sentiment as the subject becomes an individual.[134]

By the time of *The Voyage Out*—after the Sepoy rebellion and the scramble for Africa and the Boer War, in the midst of the Great War—the sentimental traveler, in the guise of Clarissa Dalloway, appears, at least to an intellectual of the left like Woolf, as a ridiculously transparent veil thrown over an imperial will to power. The earlier portrayal of Clarissa invites the question, then, of why Woolf should return with sympathy to this

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[133] Translator Massumi explains the sentiment/affect division in *A Thousand Plateaus*, which is close to the one I've observed in this essay. "Sentiment" is a "personal feeling," that is, a feeling located within the person, whereas "affect" is, as Spinoza understood it, the ability to "affect and be affected," or to undergo changes in the sensorium from one state to another that may express themselves in physical and/or mental modes (xvi)

[134] The afterlife of Sterne's starling episode is worth recording. The starling's cry is later quoted by Maria Bertram in Austen's *Mansfield Park*, where it typifies that character's amoral flightiness in contrast to the uncomplaining fidelity of the pious heroine, Fanny Price (see Austen 71). The caged starling appears in a later modernist novel, namely, Nabokov's *Lolita*, where the educated narrator puts the starling's words in his illicit beloved's mouth in a parodically self-pitying poem; this is another instance, like that of Clarissa in *The Voyage Out*, where sentimentality is attributed to a predator who deploys it to conceal the violence of his or her actions (see Nabokov 255-7). Thus, we might use Sterne's starling to chart the decline of sentimentalism, from an eighteenth-century progressive mode at the forefront of emergent liberalism to a twentieth-century object of mockery by those who regard it not as emancipatory but rather, to echo a Marxian phrase, as a flower on the chain of oppression.

figure of imperial sentimentality in her mature work and whether this return signals a change in attitude toward the politics of sentiment. *Mrs. Dalloway* is the novel in which Woolf attempts a resolution to Bennett's contradictions as explained in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," and accordingly "life"—the privileged term of that essay—makes an appearance in the novel, not incarnated in any particular body (such as Mrs. Brown) but rather as the goal of the protagonist's party-throwing ambitions, as it is Woolf's approved goal of novelistic ambition. Woolf has not only revisited Clarissa with a more merciful eye, but has deputized her former object of satire as her aesthetic surrogate.

We read that, "[S]ince her people were courtiers once in the time of the Georges, she, too, was going that very night to kindle and illuminate; to give her party" (5). That is, descended from what we might call the aesthetic class of the old aristocracy, soon to be replaced in the twentieth century by that class of professionals typified in this novel in negative mode by Holmes and Bradshaw and in positive terms by Elizabeth Dalloway, Clarissa construes herself as an artist, a culture-worker, one whose social duty is the creation of aesthetic experiences. ("Kindle and illuminate" should evoke the Aestheticist gem-like flame for the Pater-steeped Woolf.) And Clarissa's qualification for the job is the same as Woolf's major criterion for the novelist: "Her only gift was knowing people almost by instinct," i.e., she, like the novelist, is a good judge of character (8) But over half the length of the novel is devoted to following this aesthetic wife of a Conservative M. P., from Westminster to Bond Street and back again in a consumerist traipse across the very center of London's field of political power. That power is sent up in the novel's depiction of an unknown V.I.P. whose motorcade is delayed in modern traffic and the

spectacle of whose procession gets upstaged by an skywriting airplane that advertises a brand of toffee above London, as well as in the fatuous figures of Lady Bruton and Hugh Whitbread, well-fed indigenes of high society immured in their privilege. The sign of the damage caused by political power is also glimpsed in the shell-shocked provincial petit-bourgeois Septimus Warren Smith, who lost his sanity for the aspiring parvenu's fantasy of "an England that consisted almost entirely of the plays of Shakespeare and [lecturer on poetry] Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square," and who is menaced unto death by the respectable Dr. Bradshaw, a domestic emanation of colonialism in his assault on the mind's integrity (84). Nevertheless, the novel's relatively tight adherence to free indirect discourse and its single-day setting offers little in the way of the Victorian or Edwardian novel's cross-class panorama and attendant scenes of pitiable suffering in the lower orders. Clarissa's artistry notwithstanding, much of "life" in that term's simplest sense gets left out of this book.

By the novel's mid-point, the lack of what Georg Lukács and Fredric Jameson would call social totality and what Sterne and Dickens would see as social responsibility has begun to disturb Clarissa herself after her husband leaves for a committee meeting about an offshore genocide whose victims she cannot even identify: "Hunted out of existence, maimed, frozen, the victims of cruelty and injustice (she had heard Richard say so over and over again)—no, she could feel nothing for the Albanians, or was it the Armenians? but she loved her roses (didn't that help the Armenians?)" (117). By contrast with "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," in which Woolf had upbraided Bennett for his lack of sympathetic imagination, the sympathetic imagination—and, most

importantly, its stimulation through a moralizing and incantatory rhetoric—here utterly fails Clarissa. The Dickensian peroration on Armenian suffering that she has learned by rote cannot dislodge the Wildean roses from the center of her attention: the failure is as much one of literary form as it is an ethical lapse.[135] At work in this passage is a self-consciousness, on the part of author and protagonist, of the essential problem faced by English artists in the era of high imperialism. Fredric Jameson describes the dilemma, with reference to E. M. Forster:

> …if 'infinity' (and 'imperialism') is bad or negative in Forster, its perception, as bodily and poetic process, is no longer that, but rather a positive achievement and an enlargement of our sensorium: so that the beauty of the new figure seems oddly unrelated to the social and historical judgment which is its content. ("Modernism and Imperialism" 58)

In other words, precisely the dislocations that make the Armenian (or, indeed, Indian or African) plight impossible to think in the metropolis also result, by way of a metropolitan consumer capitalism dependent for labor, capital and raw material on an unthinkable elsewhere, in the aestheticizing eye that converts all its objects into gorgeous singularities. Jameson translates into discursive statements what Woolf dramatizes in Clarissa's reverie—and it would be mistaken to think that Woolf stands aloof from Clarissa as she criticizes her. Woolf's criticism of Clarissa is in part a self-criticism, an immanent critique from within a fraction of the ruling class.[136] As Alex Zwerdling notes,

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[135] Woolf's skepticism about rhetoric is very different from, say, Pound's. The modernist poet associates rhetoric with Milton and Wordsworth—that is, with revolutionary poetry, republican ideals and Protestant individualism—as against his (and T. S. Eliot's) preferred authoritarian Dante, who supposedly dissolves rhetoric into proto-Poundian images (see Pound 7). Woolf remains in the tradition of democratic goals, for all of its gross hypocrisies and failures and in spite of her own resistance to Milton, to her not a revolutionary poet but an exemplary patriarch; her turn from externalized rhetoric to immanent affect (discussed below) criticizes in order to improve the tradition that she joins.

[136] A self-criticism via an authorial surrogate of the kind we have encountered before in Pater's Marius, Wilde's Dorian, and Joyce's Stephen.

"Woolf's picture of Clarissa Dalloway's world is sharply critical, but as we will see it cannot be called an indictment, because it deliberately looks at its object from the inside" (120).

Soon after her failure to feel with or for the Armenians, Clarissa muses, "Well, how was she going to defend herself?" and comes eventually to the conclusion that, "What she liked was simply life;" the only way for her to connect the disparate denizens of a modernity that denies and scatters life is through her party-giving: "and she felt if only they could be brought together; so she did it. And it was an offering; to combine, to create; but to whom?" (118, 119). The echoes of Woolf's own critical writing (the exaltation of a vague "life") and the traditional novelistic language of drawing unlikely connections across the boundaries of the city indicate that Woolf understands Clarissa not as her opposite number, an ill-educated housewife wasting her time and her expropriated wealth on society parties, but rather as a fictional surrogate who represents aesthetic creation in all its critical force and structural limitation. Woolf, however, relocates the artist-figure from the writer's fraught cultural position (as author/intellectual) in the dominated fraction of the dominant class to Clarissa's position in the dominant fraction of the dominant class itself. Of course, roses don't help the Armenians, and neither do novels, Woolf seems to be arguing—but the novelistic impulse, the impulse to imagine connection and self-implication that is at the root of theoretical culture, is the only thing that will help anyone in the end. Jameson is able to criticize Woolf immanently partly because Woolf endeavored to criticize her own work immanently in a raising of the novelistic to a level of skeptical self-awareness weaker, if present at all, in prior

sentimental realism.

What separates novelistic discourse from such purely theoretical discourse as Jameson's, however, is emotion, and *Mrs. Dalloway* is nothing if not an emotional novel and an argument for emotion in theoretical culture. Again to cite Zwerdling: "Perhaps Woolf saw a necessary connection in unstable times between traditional political power and the absence of empathy and moral imagination" (124). That Clarissa even attempts to sympathize with the plight of others distinguishes her from the pedagogy of power in her own society, as evidenced by Septimus's inability to feel emotion as a result of his military training. But even as Clarissa becomes aware of her sympathetic imagination's limits when she defends her parties to herself, the figure in the novel she most reviles and, in spite of her incipient humanism, goes on reviling, suffers in another part of the city. [137] Doris Kilman, forced out of her teaching position due to wartime prejudice against those of German heritage, mourning a war-dead brother, tutoring Elizabeth Dalloway in the role of Mr. Dalloway's charity case, desperately in love with her pupil and clinging to a compensatory religious conversion, mentally excoriates Clarissa: "She had been merely condescending. She came from the most worthless of all classes—the rich, with a smattering of culture" (120). While Clarissa internally rhapsodizes about the inability of love or religion to explain the mysterious and essential privacy of her neighbor's soul in Westminster, Kilman in the Army and Navy stores attempts to explain

[137] Lest we suspect that Woolf named Kilman in accord with Clarissa's judgment upon Doris as the murderer of the human spirit, the novel carefully makes clear that "Kilman" is a translation into the language of the culture that mistreats Doris of a name that has no such connotations in its original German (see *Dalloway* 120). Clarissa's assurance that Kilman is a killer only completes the process of English attempts to efface Doris as a person rather than as an imposed identity. In this way, she is kin to Clarissa ("Mrs. Dalloway," after all, the imposed social identity that ironically furnishes a title to this novel about the subjectivity behind the social) in a way that Clarissa cannot admit.

to Elizabeth Dalloway that, "There were other points of view," while crying inwardly, "But no one knew the agony!" (127, 126). To observe that the novel, in giving voice to Kilman's point of view and her agony, includes what Clarissa cannot—in effect, gives the party that boundaries of class, ethnicity, gender and experience prevent her from giving or even contemplating—does not go far enough in explaining the novel's approach to theorizing its own limitations and how they might be overcome. This conception of fiction as pluralistic and democratic in matter does not explain the difference in manner between Woolf and her dialogic Victorian precursors.

The seriousness of this apparent loss in holistic analysis and fictional presentation should not be underrated. Theorists of the novel from Victoria's time to postmodernism, from George Eliot to Fredric Jameson, have praised the form for its rare capacity to think two thoughts at once: 1. the collective, historical, and social determinants that constitute the individual's field of action and constraint; 2. the inner world of the subject which, while perhaps socially-produced in the last instance, is only ever experienced individually through affective apperception. Woolf, on the other hand, proposes a superior third and culminating dimension to fictional prose, a further sublation of the individual/collective dialectic: the conversion of the objective (i.e., third-person) narrative plane to a vehicle for the affect of the represented subject via free indirect discourse or stream of consciousness. This is not Woolf's innovation alone: it has nineteenth-century precursors in Austen and Pater and James, while her modernist peers, such as Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield, E. M. Forster, and D. H. Lawrence, were working to a similar end. But in Woolf's novels of the mid-1920s, she codified this aesthetic maneuver by carrying

it out more radically at the level of form than Lawrence and Forster (who retained an attachment to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century interventionist narrator) and more marketably at the level of content than Mansfield and Richardson (who often favored recondite protagonists in minor circumstances marked by negative affect in comparison with the generally exuberant, high-living Woolfian heroines, Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay).[138] Anthony Uhlmann explains how the fictional process works in Woolf:

> ...we are offered subjective and objective understandings at once: we are allowed to *be* an alien mode while grasping the causes that bring that mode about. Yet this is not done through clear, logical relations; rather, the logic of sensation developed in art requires gaps that lead to thought in the effort to bridge the gap. In doing this, however, they *imply* a unity...which allows an overview that promises an understanding of an interrelation of viewpoints around a set of events. (17, original emphases)

By "sensation," Uhlmann refers to the reception by the subject of experience, which subject's sensation then may be recreated for other through the process of combining the materials of art (language for the writer, color for the painter, etc.).[139] Woolf's ambition is to generate a processual text that enacts sensation for and in the reader, who then may investigate the sources and effects of these sensations.

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[138] Woolf's attention to these differences between herself and her contemporaries is acute. Of Forster, she writes, "Mr Forster has been apt to pervade his books like a careful hostess who is anxious to introduce, to explain, to warn her guests of a step here, of a draught there," noting his own allegiance to the interventionist role of the narrator on the old model of the novel ("The Novels of E. M. Forster" 112). On the other hand, she observes of Dorothy Richardson's *The Tunnel* that "We have to consider the quality of [protagonist] Miriam Henderson's consciousness," before concluding that this consciousness is too passive, too interested in what Woolf regards as trivial; as Woolf witheringly declares of Richardson's heroine, "The consciousness of Miriam takes the reflection of a dentist's room to perfection" ("Dorothy Richardson" 190). Her fictional aim, therefore, is to represent consciousness without Forster's tendency to hold readers' hands or Richardson's liability to strand them in minutiae.

[139] Later in his treatise, he elaborates, borrowing from Spinoza, Leibniz, and Deleuze: "Sensation involves perception, both making it possible and calling it into being: what we perceive is what announces itself to our perceptions through sensation" (83). Sensation, therefore, is not unmediated experience, but precisely the biological/cultural matrix that mediates experience in the subject, which then may be reproduced, mimicked, or narrated in signs (language, plastic arts, music, et al.).

The modernist difference in Woolf's fiction is free indirect discourse.[140] Almost the entirety of *Mrs. Dalloway* is narrated as if from within its characters' psyches, often to the point of dispensing with any markers of authorial narration rather than first-person thought-transcription (stream of consciousness).[141] This shift in viewpoint from the traditional narrating authorial voice to the characters' psychic interiors converts the novel's surface to a plane of pure diegesis: the narrator goes underground into "the caves behind [her] characters," as Woolf notes in her diary (2: 213). Free indirect discourse was famously assailed, along with other modernist techniques, by Georg Lukács as the elevation of a paradoxically "abstract particularity" that never connects immediate experience or sensation (that to which free indirect discourse supposedly gives access) to the totality it embodies and typifies ("Ideology of Modernism" 207). Jameson's own assessment of modernist style as an exaltation of sensation and perception meant to redeem the reified life lived in the heart of empire does not stray too far from Lukács's censure. Woolf continues in her diary, however, "The idea is that the caves shall connect, and each comes to daylight in the present moment" (2: 213). She regards the technique not as the final radicalization of individualism, in which each person bathes in his or her own unique stream of feeling, but rather as a socializing device for bringing to light (i.e., to consciousness) the interior that each person shares. Contra Lukács and Jameson, Woolf argues that effective criticism requires the particularity of individual

[140] See chapter I.3 for a fuller history of the secondary literature on free indirect discourse, stream of consciousness, and related. The upshot is that these devices, for which narratology has a symptomatically bewildering diversity of names, generate an interpretive gap—exemplified by the Beckettian/Foucauldian question, "Who's speaking?"—into which the reader must venture. Thus, I do not aim at narratological precision in trying to determine, say, where free indirect discourse ends and stream of consciousness begins, but rather am more concerned to explain why these ambiguities exist and what is their effect.

[141] There are several narratorial intrusions in the novel, however, and they will be discussed below.

feeling to be expressed if each person is to become aware of his or her connection to every other.

The transcendent deity who tended to narrate the realist novel in Victorian or Edwardian styles provoked emotion in the reader by externally recounting a scene of suffering in which either the reader or a fictional stand-in for the reader empathized along an imagined sight-line with a suffering object of attention (even Pater, as we saw above, did not wander far from this form despite his other innovations). The externalized narrative apparatus pre-processes affect into sentiment—that is, it converts the subject's sensations into the individual's feelings—by beginning with the narrator's "objective" observations. The guiding narrator presents himself as the knowing creator of the reality he evokes, making him—and often his privileged characters—the master of any affects that threaten a sense of individual stability. The disappearing narrator of free indirect novels is an immanent deity like Spinoza's: i.e., a unified substance whose seemingly individual modes are but aspects of itself. [142]

Modernist style in Woolf, then, aims at closure between "the social (grasped in moral terms) and the aesthetic" (Jameson, "Modernism" 59). What Jameson sees as the mystification of metropolitan complicity in the exploitative imperialism that underwrites its denizens' new sensoria and new art, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari would read in more liberating terms. They argue that any artistic or scientific division of form from

[142] The comparison of narrators to gods was suggested to me by Joyce's ironic fictional double Stephen Dedalus and his unattributed citation of Flaubert, for whom the author should be not Spinoza's immanent deity, present in the entirety of a creation that is not its work but substance, but rather a *deus abscondus* who creates a world and then retreats to a posture of indifference (see chapter I.3 above). Insofar as Flaubert and Joyce wrote in free indirect style, they misconceived the narratological theology of their practice.

content is a statist move by an idealizing intellect that wants to master all possible matter. Partisans of a "nomadic" immanentism that rejects teleological dialectics, they write, "Thus matter, in nomad science, is never prepared and therefore homogenized matter, but is essentially laden with singularities (which constitute a form of content). And neither is expression formal; it is inseparable from pertinent traits" (369). Free indirect discourse attempts to do away with the settled narrative apparatus of a prior realism, which processes all content into prepared form, with a new narrative technology that expresses singularities and pertinent traits (the subjectivity of the characters) with means that do not pre-decide the shapes those traits must take. When Deleuze and Guattari later write that a "sentiment-affect affinity marks the right time for revolutions and popular wars," they provide a clue to the similarity and the difference between Woolf's modernism and sentimental realism (403). In both cases, affect must become sentiment for political action to occur, but sentimental realism, as a form that homogenizes its matter and conceals the movement of affect, neutralizes the radical potential of the affects' becoming-sentimental. In Woolf's modernism, on the other hand, the form-destabilizing, matter-affirming nomadism of the expression of pertinent traits may issue in an insurgency that the settled forms foreclose, as I will show below in my reading of Woolfean affect as mobile between minds and across relations of class and gender.

How does this affective/objective novelistic practice differ, though, from that of Joyce, as described above in chapter I.3? To put it simply, Joyce de-emphasizes the reader's experience of affect in favor of cognition. His texts require substantial de-coding before the emotion underlying them can be communicated to the reader. Like a

musical score, their affect is apparent only in performance, once the reader has learned how to play. When the Joycean texts' sense is mastered—by learning through reading and re-reading *Ulysses* that Bloom is constantly aware of Molly's infidelity during his peregrinations, for instance—the affect they transmit can be very powerful. But feeling is attendant in Joyce upon language: one has to learn the particular idiolects of his characters' inner lives before those lives' affects can be registered by their audience. (Recall the immediately confusing first paragraph, written in a babytalk fabulist register, of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, discussed at length above.) Woolf, by contrast, consistently underemphasizes the idiolect of each individual character in favor of representing their emotions; she tends not to "do the police in different voices," to cite T. S. Eliot's Dickensian ambition, but rather in different shades of feeling. Woolf's free-indirect stylings when the narrator switches rapidly between perspectives as Clarissa reunites with Peter Walsh provide an example:

> "I often wish I'd got on better with your father," he said.
>
> "But he never liked anyone who—our friends," said Clarissa, and she could have bitten her tongue for thus reminding Peter that he had wanted to marry her.
>
> Of course I did, thought Peter, it almost broke my heart too, he thought; and was overcome with his own grief, which rose like a moon looked at from a terrace, ghastly beautiful with light from the sunken day. (41)

We find much the same lexical register and syntax attributed to both characters, even the same order of general cliché ("bitten her tongue," "broke my heart"). This would be unthinkable for Joyce, who grants each character his or her own unique idiom, as if every subject were a country with its own language. Woolf gives her characters their individual repertoire of feeling and image, as seen when Peter indulges his taste for romantic kitsch

with his inner reverie about the moon of his grief, but she does not particularize the speech she uses to represent their inner lives. This relatively unmarked use of language enables the unprecedented motility of her narrator, which enters different characters' minds from one sentence to another. Joyce's works correspond to the so-called "linguistic turn" in imagining subjects to be constituted by discourse. Woolf, by contrast, anticipates the "affective turn," in which subjects are seen, following Spinoza/Deleuze rather than Nietzsche/Foucault, as functions of felt modification of their substance. Furthermore, as Teresa Brennan states, "the transmission of affect, conceptually, presupposes a horizontal line of transmission: the line of the heart" (75). This emotive line, whose relation to sentiment Brennan's lyrical phrasing captures well, is the one that Woolf's novel charts between her disparate characters across the teeming city, and perhaps accounts for the absence of that city's alienating and desolating features as portrayed by other modernists without Woolf's relation to sentiment (compare, for instance, the more or less dystopic visions of London offered from 1900 to 1940 by Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and Bowen's *The Death of the Heart*).

Woolf's turn to affect importantly entails a difference in ontology as well as aesthetics. In the passage quoted above, Clarissa thinks (not speaks) about Peter's long-ago desire to marry her, and Peter replies (inwardly, not outwardly), "Of course I did." In short, these two characters are literally able to read each other's minds, to conduct a psychic dialogue beneath their physical one. This development is not anticipated in Woolf's overt theory of fiction, which remains wedded to realism rather than to the

science fiction that characterizes *Mrs. Dalloway* in this moment. And not only the moment of Peter and Clarissa's meeting: many passages in the novel enlarge affect into a transpersonal and transhistorical spiritual force that mobilizes material agents in its unfolding. These Spinozist metaphysics may seem rather abstract terms to put to Woolf's social satire, but in fact they explain otherwise puzzling features of the text, features that suggest a spirit within and between both subjects and objects, joining them, when the moment of affect is upon them, to a tenuous though ecstatic communion. *Mrs. Dalloway* insists upon a non-realist connection among all its characters that harks back, if not to Spinoza himself (whom Woolf seems not to have read), then at least to the monism of Woolf's Romantic precursors, such as Wordsworth.[143] Septimus's paranoid vision of "this gradual drawing together of everything to one centre before his eyes" is borne out but also redeemed by the recurrent imagery, located in a variety of characters from the sinisterly fatuous Lady Bruton to Richard and Clarissa to Peter, of a "thin thread" or "a single spider's thread" or, in Doris's case, "the very entrails of her body" connecting the principle figures to each other as they move alone through the city (15, 109, 111, 129).

Septimus, like Clarissa and like Woolf, is also an artist figure, one whose message in his many writings and drawings is "Universal love: the meaning of the world" (144).

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[143] I am thinking, for instance, of the apprehension of an immanent nature-spirit at which the speaker of "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" arrives:

> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things. (ll. 94-102, Greenblatt 1493-4)

As Septimus shares both artistic surrogacy and a vision of love with Clarissa ("they loved life," she inwardly enthuses of her co-pedestrians on the London sidewalk), we can assume this message is endorsed by the novel overall (4). But Septimus's shell shock, singling him out as a target for what Deleuze and Guattari would call the royal science of Doctors Holmes and Bradshaw, forces him to stage an insurgency of his own with his suicide (144). Neither his wife, who seems to understand after his death why he had done it ("So that was Dr. Holmes"), nor Clarissa, who despises Bradshaw as "obscurely evil…extremely polite to women, but capable of some great outrage," judges Septimus's act to be especially mysterious or contemptible (147, 180).[144] Septimus's madness, therefore, represents not a faultiness of vision—the text endorses his holistic perception that everything is connected. What leads Septimus to his death is rather the abuse, manipulation, and truncation of human connectedness—by the nationalism that leads to war and empire, by the coercion of the inner life represented by the psychiatric profession, by the social conventions that isolate the heterosexual couple in marriage and cut them off from community or other forms of love and desire.

The lesson of Septimus's paranoia and his suicide, and of Kilman's agonizing sense that her love for Elizabeth disembowels her, and indeed of the Great War itself, is

[144] Clarissa's image of Bradshaw outraging women figures psychological practice in terms of rape. Nancy Armstrong, in her critique of Freud and his profession as a masculinist counter-attack against the female power won by domestic woman in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, uses the same figure for psychoanalytical interpretive practices. Armstrong counterpoises Freud to Woolf, as a female artist wishing to retain the cultural authority of feminized affect and expression. My reading is in line with Armstrong's insofar as the continued survival of the domestic novel's centrality in one form or another is at issue, but I think she underrates the extent to which male modernists such as Joyce and Lawrence were, as she allows of male Victorians such as Dickens, in effect "writing as women." Indeed, *Mrs. Dalloway*'s motifs of Septimus as sexually passive and latently queer (e.g., his melancholia over the death of his comrade Evans) indicate that to preach the message of "universal love"—what Armstrong derogates, in the tradition of Ann Douglas, as a subjectivizing swerve from "real" politics (or the undisguised conflict of interests)—is to be feminized wherever politics as such, considered as the open and aggressive contest for power, is gendered male.

that the thread of human connection *is* thin. *Mrs. Dalloway* does not advocate a simple-minded meliorism for which things are getting better and better, more and more connected, all the time. If that were true, then Clarissa would not so struggle to comprehend the suffering of the Armenians, nor would the sinister physicians Holmes and Bradshaw prey on their patients. There is a principle of evil in *Mrs. Dalloway*, and it is worth identifying to get a better handle on the principle of good that Woolf, through the very form of her text, counterposes to it. The names Woolf gives this evil in a famous passage of authorial outrage are Proportion and Conversion:

> Worshipping proportion, Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalised despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion...
>
> But Proportion has a sister, less smiling, more formidable, a Goddess even now engaged—in the heat and sands of India, the mud and swamp of Africa, the purlieus of London...in dashing down shrines, smashing idols, and setting up in their place her own stern countenance. (97)

Proportion is, by the terms used in this chapter, anti-affective: it suspends the modifications of the human substance and prevents them from their proper issuance in feeling or action. Proportion checks women's reproductive freedom, censors speech and writing, and applies a punitive juridical model to those affects it deems inappropriate. Woolf's careful observation that proportion penalizes despair suggests the value of negative affect: as when Clarissa feels rejuvenated by Septimus's self-deliverance from the men of proportion, negative affect, taking its course, can spark, even between individuals, a heightened sense of feeling and perception—as well as of political judgment, as when Clarissa instantly recognizes the true nature of Bradshaw ("Yet—what

she felt was, one wouldn't like Sir William to see one unhappy. No; not that man") (178).[145] Conversion is proportion applied by force: in this guise, it checks not only individual but also collective and communal affect, destroying cultures and traditions, leveling world culture to its mathematical anti-aesthetic ideal. Thus, Woolf anticipates Deleuze and Guattari in analyzing racism and imperialism as the construction and enforcement of one affective and aesthetic standard, to which she, like the theorists, counterposes aesthetic affect.[146]

The process whereby Clarissa comes to feel with and for Septimus provides the counterpoint to the ideology of Proportion and its enforcement in Coercion. After being told of Septimus's death by Bradshaw's wife, she first feels fury at the spoiling of her well-ordered party by such terrible news, but then her selfish anger gives way to something else:

> He had killed himself—but how? Always her body went through it first, when she was told, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt. He had thrown himself from a window. Up had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes. There he lay with a thud, thud, thud, in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness. So she saw it. (179)

But Clarissa does not see it, because it would be impossible to "see" a sound in someone

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[145] On the political value of negative emotion, partially explored through a reading of *Mrs. Dalloway*, see Ahmed chapter 2, where she valorizes the unhappiness of the political radical, the "feminist killjoy" who becomes aware of suffering, as Mrs. Dalloway does when she hears of Septimus's death, and so is forced to attend to "the suffering that persists when life becomes chatter" (75).

[146] See Deleuze and Guattari chapter 7 for how racism is based upon the deviation of faces from a white standard; this chapter also contains a related reflection on the novel as the literary form most hostile to the constitution of stable, rooted identities such as those that underpin racist and imperialist ideals. Citing Woolf throughout *A Thousand Plateaus* and inviting readers to take "Virginia Woolf's walk through the crowd, among the taxis," Deleuze and Guattari trace a continuity in the novel from Chrétien de Troyes to Beckett, from Yvain to Molloy, and consequently privilege not the *Bildungsroman*, that genre with which Hegelians from Pater and Wilde to Jameson and Moretti are obsessed, but rather the picaresque, of which they offer *Mrs. Dalloway* as an example (263; see also 173-4).

else's brain. Instead, she feels it after the fact, as an affective modification undergone by her body in defiance of her conscious, individual irritation at having to think such a thing. Emotion arises from empathy rather than sympathy, feeling-with rather than feeling-for, and the enabling device is free indirect discourse. This passage begins with Woolf's semiosis of Clarissa's own thoughts and sensations (signaled by the interjection, "but how?"), then moves surprisingly into a second-order stream of consciousness: within the narrator's semiosis of Clarissa's thoughts we find Clarissa's semiosis of Septimus's thoughts as she experiences them ("thud, thud, thud"). Clarissa becomes a nomad novelist in this moment when affect runs away with feeling. This scene inverts Clarissa's earlier failure to empathize with the Armenians: there, an externalized rhetoric that pictured suffering paled before the somatic affection of the body by the present rose, while here Septimus's matter expresses itself according to the singularity of its suffering in Clarissa's own affections, bringing to consciousness in an affect-sentiment affinity her connection to a suffering exterior to herself. Ann Banfield provides a lucid explanation of how the use of free indirect discourse in Woolf's novels solves the problems posed by Descartes's *cogito*, namely, that the *cogito*'s "I think" should be replaced by the progressive tense ("am thinking") if it is to guarantee the subject's present existence and that its "I" begs the question of who is thinking. The revised *cogito* of free indirect discourse, with its shifting use of deictic terms ("he," "she," "now," "this," "that") organized around multiple centers of subjectivity, according to Banfield, "finds an endpoint to scepticism in a neutral, impersonal subjectivity" and therefore orients itself toward "a world in some sense external to the Self" (173).[147] This is just what happens

[147] A crucial footnote in Banfield's highly technical essay on the *cogito* intimates its otherwise unspoken

when Clarissa momentarily assumes the role of the novel's narrator, herself deploying free indirect discourse to assume, however briefly, the *cogito* of Septimus so that he lives again within her consciousness.[148]

If the nomadism of Clarissa's second-order stream of consciousness raises to her awareness the supposedly proscribed agony of the colonized (Septimus, recall, is metaphorically victimized by Bradshaw's imperial mission of "Proportion" and "Conversion"), then her final response to her becoming-affected by Septimus's death redraws the boundary between aestheticizing subject and suffering object. This boundary does little in the end to remove the older realist border between suffering object and moralizing subject—and, indeed, leaves open the Lukácsian case that modernism excludes and oppresses more efficaciously than its predecessor as it destroys the potential for subjective ethical action in a coherent social sphere on the part of the witness (99-

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political goals, which I take to be similar to Woolf's. Banfield observes that Nietzsche first popularized the admittedly justifiable skepticism of Georg Lichtenberg about the *cogito* as agential subject, a skepticism then taken on around the time of the Dreyfus affair by right-wing thinkers such as Maurice Barrès to discredit the subject in the name of the *volk*: "Lichtenberg is made to counter Cartesian universalism with a collective, national, or racial unconscious. Alain Finkielkraut comments on the same passage [of Barrès's text]: 'Barrès peut ainsi exhorter ses compatriotes à se détourner des grand mots d'éternel ou de toujours, et..., à la place de "je pense," laise la possibilité de dire: *Es denkt in mir*, "ça pense en moi"' (Alain Finkielkraut, *La défaite de la pensée* [Paris: Gallimard, 1989], 65)" (Banfield 141, original ellipses). Thus, the *cogito* must be rescued if any universal system of ethics is to be defended against the ideologies of racism, imperialism, and genocide. Only if the autonomous subject can be shown to exist can he/she/it be protected from the violence of what Woolf will label "Conversion," or the subject's arrogation to coercive collective projects of normalization or extermination. Banfield argues that Woolf and other novelists, such as D. H. Lawrence and Maurice Blanchot, provide this guarantee of the *cogitatur* through their deployment of impersonal subjective narration.

[148] It is here that Woolf's difference from Spinozism becomes clear, as my invocation of the *cogito* implies. Woolf, as will be shown at the conclusion of this essay, is not consistently a monist, but rather a dualist who sees the human interaction with the underlying substance of nature to be inconstant, however much they are motivated by affect rather than by mentation. She has more in common with the neo-Platonism of Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," therefore, than with a strict monism of the type Spinoza or Deleuze advocate. As McNeillie writes, arguing against an overhasty identification of Woolf with Bloomsbury thinkers like G. E. Moore, "Plato, it has to be said, was the philosopher Woolf read far more enthusiastically and extensively than she ever read Moore or any other philosopher," and he also notes her influence specifically by "Shelley's poetry (his version of Platonism)" (13).

100). Clarissa's reverie on the death of Septimus concludes this way: "She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it… He made her feel the beauty, made her feel the fun" (182). In one sense, we might read this as radical empathy giving way to the grossest appropriation: Septimus's death and the global suffering it metonymizes become more objects of metropolitan consumption, choice, because rare, delectations. On this basis, the novel's final one-paragraph sentence fragment, from the colonial administrator Peter Walsh's enamored perspective, ingeniously deploys free indirect discourse's grammatical transposition of present (sensation, perception) into past (retrospective narration) to consign Clarissa, decisively if wishfully, to history: "For there she *was*" (190, my emphasis). Clarissa stands in the end for a senescent imperial aestheticism whose terms will have to be renewed by the novelist for whom she serves as proxy if the suffering she only sporadically conceptualizes can be made legible and thus actionable to an increasingly metropolitan, hence nomadic audience. But another way to take "He made her feel the beauty, made her feel the fun" is to understand it as a transfer of affect, a cross-person transmission, to use Brennan's term, of the visionary apprehension that all things connect despite the appearance of disunity fostered by the coercions of the world's rationalizers. This is why Woolf specifically upbraids Bradshaw for penalizing despair: despair, too, may ignite the inner life. In this sense, Septimus's death has not be a vain one—he has carried forth the baton of aesthetic illumination and passed it on to Clarissa, who may then pass it in her turn, in which case "there she was" is a sentence offered not as condemnation but as elegy.[149]

[149] See Hite for a summary of critical views on Clarissa's reaction to the suicide and for a brilliant original

To wit: *Mrs. Dalloway* does offer one pertinent glimpse of a potential future beyond aestheticized empire in Elizabeth Dalloway, a young woman who baffles her mother with her urban mobility and her attraction to certain suffering others (her dog, Miss Kilman). Unlike Clarissa's confinement to the ambit of London's political power-field, Elizabeth's peregrinations take her further from home, to the bustling Strand, where she dreams of being a doctor or other professional, of leading a non-leisure based life devoted to activity in service to a broader public. The freedom she feels on the public bus (on top of which she projects herself into the future "like the figurehead of a ship") and the dreams of social labor that it inspires in her evoke a metropolitan subjectivity whose flexible city wandering and expanded modern sensibilities need not necessarily foreclose on a civic humanism that can grasp the damaging totalities to which it belongs (132). Elizabeth reminds us that Enlightenment's dialectic liberates even as it dominates. There remains the matter of Elizabeth's racialization:

> Was it that some Mongol had been wrecked off the coast of Norfolk (as Mrs. Hillberry said), had mixed with the Dalloway ladies, perhaps, a hundred years ago? For the Dalloways, in general, were fair-haired; blue-eyed; Elizabeth, on the contrary, was dark; had Chinese eyes in a pale face; an Oriental mystery… (119-120)

This passage certainly joins Septimus's metonymic colonization as another Orientalist appropriation of colonial subjectivity for the benefit of imperialism's privileged class. However troublingly, Elizabeth's "Oriental" eyes nevertheless intimate both the novelist and the hostess's ambivalent awareness that a better future may not be an exclusively

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reading, congruent to my own general sense of how modernist fiction works, that the scene as written is rendered deliberately opaque through Woolf's refusal to use what Hite calls "tonal cues," thus throwing the whole moral burden of evaluating Clarissa, in all her hopelessly mingled empathy and callousness, on the reader. Hite refers to Woolf's novels as "tonal labyrinths" in which we must get lost if we are to understand the complexity of ethical and political problems (254).

European one, and her mythical manifestation of hundred-year-old blood remind us that the horde serves in *A Thousand Plateaus* as a historical exemplar of the nomadic war machine whose vagabond art and science offer emancipatory practices that the imperial state would rather interdict.[150]

Mrs. Dalloway is still more daring in its metaphysical than in its political speculations. Throughout the novel, Woolf enlarges the scope of her representation to encompass subjects greater than the individual or even the social collective.[151] Unlike, say, Conrad or James, Woolf refuses to confine her mobile narration simply to individual points of view. As we have seen, this means she will think nothing of switching between perspectives in a scene (as with Peter and Clarissa) or into an oracular authorial voice (as when the narrator denounces Proportion and Conversion). As Patricia Ondek Laurence states in her study of Woolf's "Narration of Interiority," "distinctions like speech and thought or narration and dialogue—which are incontestable in a novelist like Jane Austen—disappear in Virginia Woolf" (20). But this all-encompassing aspect of Woolf's novelistic language takes us beyond the narration of human interiority, for *Mrs. Dalloway*'s narrator knows things that no human being can know and consequently claims a visionary authority traditionally more akin to that of the nineteenth-century poet

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[150] See Seshagiri's chapter on Woolf in *Race and the Modernist Imagination* that addresses the Orientalist discourse that contextualizes the racing of Elizabeth and Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*.

[151] Saloman perceptively identifies Woolf's narratorial expansiveness as the effect of her interest in the essay, rather than the novel, as the privileged literary form of modernism. Saloman criticizes *Mrs. Dalloway* for being "immediately limited by the fact that it cannot attempt to break narrative structure, or to challenge the conventions of mimesis, character, and, above all, authorial persona without drawing attention to its formal project," whereas these ruptures with mimesis and identity are endemic to the essay, which renders the essay as a form immediately amenable to modernism in a way the novel is not (33). Saloman therefore shares my sense of Woolf's aesthetic project but views it as more fully realized in her essays rather than her novels. Moreover, Saloman suggestively links Woolf to a precursor essayist, Ralph Waldo Emerson—another Romantic believer in the universal spirit underlying the movements of all matter.

(e.g., the Shelley of *Prometheus Unbound* or the Tennyson of *In Memoriam A. H. H.*) rather than the novelist, who still construed him- or herself as an historian. In this connection, joining Woolf to the Romantics, Robert Alter persuasively glosses *Mrs. Dalloway* as an "urban pastoral," in which "urban experience...can provide the sense of invigoration, harmony with one's surroundings, and enrapturing aesthetic revelation that is traditionally associated with the green world of pastoral" (105). He usefully goes on to contrast Mrs. Dalloway's exuberance with the bitterness of Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* by emphasizing precisely Woolf's spiritualized sense of communion as against Flaubert's naturalist determinism and isolation: "In *The Sentimental Education*, consciousness is in most respects acted upon by an elusive and multifarious urban reality constantly in motion. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, consciousness puts all these things together" (107). While I agree, I would nevertheless argue that is not the consciousness of this or that character that "puts all these things together," but the narrator's supra-individual, trans-personal consciousness, the embodiment of substance modified by affect.

The novel manifests this Romantic spirituality in its treatment of immaterial connections among the characters. Fearful of death as the novel opens, Clarissa consoles herself by believing that

> somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. (9)

At first glance, this lengthy ungrammatical sentence, faithful to Clarissa's mental

wandering, makes a somewhat trivial, perhaps even platitudinous, claim: that individuals live on after death in the minds and memories of those who knew them. But read more closely, Clarissa's reflections disclose a frank supernaturalism. She is part not only of Peter Walsh, who can consciously remember her, but also of the trees and the house, which are not conscious at all.[152] That trees bear the life principle is perhaps why Septimus declares that "Men must not cut down trees," in another instance of near telepathy in the novel, as the former soldier appears to pick up on Clarissa's thoughts like a radio signal (24). This is a more radical disprivileging of the human, defined as the agential subject, than we observed above in Pater's protests against animal cruelty. The part of her that "somehow" survives is not the thinking part or the social part, not "Mrs. Dalloway," but some spirit, something akin to mist. As with "life" or "the spirit we live by" in Woolf's essay, this survival cannot be specified and, while this may frustrate the systematizing intellect or come off as so much evasion, I propose that we take it seriously as a component of Woolf's affective politics and her theory of fiction: the numinous, unnamable, transpersonal, and transhistorical spiritual principle that her mobile text attempts to materialize is a *corrective* to the coercions of stabilizing ideologies like nation, race, gender, and sexuality.

Woolf evokes a mysterious life spirit that underlies the heterogeneity of human

[152] In this vein, Brown counter-intuitively claims Woolf for his "thing theory," a new "materialist phenomenology that does not bracket history, but asks both *how*, in history (how, in one cultural formation), human subjects and material objects constitute one another" (5, original emphasis). While Brown allows that Woolf's readers are "far more captivated by the life of the subject, the fate of individuality, and the vicissitudes of consciousness in her fiction," he explores how her early story "Solid Objects" addresses "the way attention to the substance of iron, for instance, can provide access to a 'primeval history' that is no longer anthropocentric" (4, 9). Brown's attention to the neglected extra-subjective in Woolf's work is congruent with my own, but I supplement it with an acknowledgement that Woolfian phenomenology is not primarily materialist, which is to say that her attention to material discloses the ontological, rather than historically-determined, force that underlies the phenomenal.

needs, desires, and practices, a force not capable of being codified in language and inadmissible to materialist analysis, but one which her prose nevertheless attempts to mobilize as a political intervention. That her language remains vague is in fact crucial to its polemical intent: to *name* the affective drive her prose enacts would, even if it were possible, open it to manipulation by the men of proportion. As Deleuze and Guattari note, "in order to designate something exactly, anexact expressions are utterly unavoidable. Not at all because it is a necessary step, or because one can only advance by approximations: anexactitude is in no way an approximation; on the contrary, it is the exact passage of that which is underway" (20). Woolf's vocabulary of vagueness—life, the spirit, somehow, mist, etc.—captures, by way of etymology, the *vagary* of the force her text is meant to incarnate.

Overlooking this mystical, anti-materialist strain of affective politics in Woolf is to misunderstand her position. Jane Marcus provocatively and famously compares Woolf to Lenin and Trotsky, but on the evidence of her metaphysical speculations, Woolf cannot simply be arrogated to the tradition of materialist critique.[153] The ideals animating her radical politics do not, by her account, arrive to her from within the social. Marcus is on surer ground when, later in her essay, she notes that Woolf was influenced by her aunt, the Quaker theologian Caroline Emelia Stephen. According to Alison M. Lewis, Woolf possessed copies of Stephen's work in her private library and wrote of her admiringly, "All her life she has been listening to inner voices, and talking with spirits" (qtd. in Lewis n. pag.). For Lewis, Woolf's privileged "moments of being," depicted in

[153] See Marcus 146 and her later essay, "The Niece of a Nun," which traces the influence of Stephen's theology on Woolf and calls for a critical reckoning with the "mysticism" of "Saint Virginia" (12).

the epiphanic movements of affect beyond the self that *Mrs. Dalloway*'s Londoners undergo, are akin to the mysticism promoted by Stephen's theology of the inner light that is part and parcel of God: "These moments of revelation show a mystical unity to the greater whole, which brings us to the closest thing that Virginia Woolf may have had to a creed" (Lewis n. pag.). This "mystical unity" is the force underlying the social unity Woolf's fiction prophesies, where divisions of class, gender, and empire may be superseded in the supra-rational apprehension that "the whole world is a work of art" (qtd. in Lewis; *Moments of Being* 72). Anthony Uhlmann, viewing the same topic through the lens of baroque metaphysics rather than Quaker theology, similarly observes, "The moment of being Woolf describes is a moment of pure and intense sensation. It is intense because it involves the folding within of pure potential. All life, or at least a clue to its meaning, is condensed into a moment, is held within that moment. In writing one seeks to recapture such a moment or to approximate the intense sensations it produces, by other means" (113). Thus, the itinerary for novelistic practice charted in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" here finds its telos: the movement of affect in the presence of others—what an earlier literary tradition valorized as sentiment—produces sensations that lead individual subjects outside themselves to a communion with all life, an experience, however rare, that streams back into concrete social reality to produce heretofore-unexpected affinities, like Clarissa's for Septimus, or Elizabeth's for the workers of the Strand, or Septimus's for the very trees. Aestheticism's license of the novel to turn inward permits a doubling back from the psyche toward the social that could not be accomplished by the extrinsic and all-too-rational social criticism of the novel as Woolf

found it at the beginning of her career.

None of the foregoing should be taken as a wholesale endorsement of Woolf's mystic politics, however. Woolf's ambitious undertaking does occasionally founder on precisely those social contradictions that materialist critique was devised to analyze and remedy. *Mrs. Dalloway* offers us one direct look at this force that pre-exists society, identity, institution, and meaning. It occurs when Peter Walsh encounters what we later learn is a female beggar but who initially appears in the text as just "a frail quivering sound, a voice bubbling up without direction, vigour, beginning or end"—in other words, a voice like the novel's own, beginning *in media res* and seeming to progress without the traditional birth-to-marriage/death emplotment of fiction (78). The narrative goes on to describe "the voice of no age or sex, the voice of an ancient spring spouting from the earth," issuing from a figure that looks not human but like "a wind-beaten tree for ever barren of leaves which lets the wind run up and down its branches singing" (79). Existing "[t]hrough all ages," the figure's mouth is "a mere hole in the earth, muddy too, matted with root fibres and tangled grasses," she would "still be there in ten million years, remembering how once she had walked in May" (79, 80). A number of themes importantly are drawn together in this image. Like Mrs. Brown, the singing woman has existed for eternity—in short, she is "human nature," the pre-social, pre-individual infrastructure of affect beneath all revolutions in mere character. She is figured as a tree, which is an important symbol of the life-principle for the novel's hero-doubles, Clarissa and Septimus. The singer is also metaphorically androgynous: at once "a tall, quivering shape" but also a "hole," she evokes both phallic and vulvic imagery and thus stands for

the self-contained transcendence and synthesis of society's gendered polarities epitomized for Woolf in the androgynous artist (79, 80). Before gender, before identity, before sex, before plot, before consciousness, and before language (for her song is marked by "an absence of all human meaning"), the singer is the affective life force, pure movement of the spirit, briefly incarnate as a citizen of London and as a novelistic character, the *principle* underlying all other persons in Woolf's ontology (79).

Yet by specifying this force of pure affect in a figure of whom we may predicate age and sex and class, Woolf has fallen into the trap she otherwise astutely recognizes in the figure of Bradshaw. For, as John Carey complains of the passage about the singing beggar, "By converting her into a peasant or super-peasant, timeless, immemorial, mixed up with the soil and tree roots, Woolf deprives the woman of the distasteful social reality which she would possess as a member of the mass asking for money. The peasant disappears in a primitive cosmetic haze" (37). Carey claims that Woolf's spiritual investment in this case mystifies the social, turning a historically-produced condition of inequality—why, after all, should there be beggars in booming 1920s London?—into timeless myth. While this is in one way false to the spirit, if you will, of Woolf's fiction, which is invested precisely in unsettling social determinants, in another way it must be said that the novel invites this critique, as does "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," by incarnating the force of affect in specific social characters who are also of a lower class than that of Woolf or of her characters or even of her readers (e.g., John Carey). By collapsing the novel's affective plane allegorically into one of its modes, in this case a character who is a social type, Woolf reterritorializes the social field rather than

deterritorializing it: she regenerates and reproduces the class and gender determinants that the affective motility of the novel is elsewhere at pains to contest.[154]

Nevertheless, the singing beggar makes visible the affective politics of novelistic form that Woolf developed out of her concern with sentiment in "Mr. Bennett and Mr. Brown." Convinced that materialist modes of charting the social were destructive of the feeling necessary to remediate social suffering, Woolf first re-invents the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sentimental topos of the privileged observer and his or her pained object of compassion. As *The Voyage Out* and her essay on Sterne make clear, however, Woolf also endorsed the argument that sentimentalism too often served to legitimate and even to aggrandize the privilege of the observer over the sufferer. In consequence, Woolf develops an affective form that, instead of discursively narrating scenes of sentiment or inciting sentiment in the reader through hortatory rhetoric, instead suffuses the entire textual plane with the affects of its characters as well as of the narrator and the scenes he or she observes. Woolf's later metaphor for this process will be "saturation": "Why admit anything to literature that is not poetry—by which I mean saturated" (*Diary* 3: 209-10)? The material in which Woolf's text is to be saturated is the emotion out of which it flows at every moment. This all-circulating, all-soaking emotion, Woolf reveals in her depiction of the beggar and in her constant metaphors of connection among disparate characters and temporalities, comes from a pre-social, spiritual force that happens to

[154] Bakhtin suggests the underlying logic of Woolf's mistake when, in "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," he disparages the novelistic category of "the everyday" which Woolf seems to rely on here and in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown." "Everyday life," Bakhtin notes, "is the nether world, the grave, where the sun does not shine, where there is no starry firmament" (128). In other words, "the everyday" is a reification of biological time, understood as gross facticity and as dissevered from historical time and the temporality of progress and development. Woolf collapses "the starry firmament"—i.e., the universal movement of affect—onto a grotesque figure of the everyday, which evacuates the latter of historical content and prematurely assigns the former a positive material basis.

incarnate itself in objects and people and novels. The realization of this force that her novel undertakes both transmits particular affects to the reader and makes the reader aware of the "spirit we live by" as manifested within others. While this is far from the essentially conceptual social criticism undertaken by Wilde and Joyce, and an almost unrecognizable development of Pater's Aestheticist argument for materialist sentiment, it is Woolf's ambitious conception of what the modernist novel can accomplish as a critique of social life, obeyed to the letter by today's writers, but still singular in spirit.

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