

The modernist novel

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO



MODERNISM

Edited by Michael Levenson

3

DAVID TROTTER

The modernist novel

To write about the modernist novel, as opposed to the Victorian novel, say, or the Edwardian novel, is to write not only about the possibilities of the genre, but about its perceived impossibility. The possibilities were evident enough. From about 1890 to about 1930, the novel was as popular as it had been during the Victorian period, and newly diverse. According to Henry James, in 1899, it was a universally valid form, “the book *par excellence*”; according to Ford Madox Ford, in 1930, it was indispensable, “the only source to which you can turn to ascertain how your fellows spend their entire lives.”¹ And yet there was also a feeling, more prevalent among writers than among critics, that the novel as traditionally conceived was no longer up to the job: that its imaginary worlds did not, in fact, correspond to the way one’s fellows spent their entire lives. The feeling was most fully and influentially articulated by T. S. Eliot, when he argued, in “*Ulysses*, Order and Myth” (1923), that the novel had effectively “ended” with Flaubert and James: that the very formlessness which had once made it the adequate “expression” of a previous age, an age not yet formless enough to require “something stricter,” now prevented it from expressing a modernity characterized above all by the loss of form.² Before considering Eliot’s solution, it would be as well to examine further the dimensions of the problem. Those dimensions are most evident, I believe, in two novels which have always been regarded as quintessentially modernist: Ford’s *The Good Soldier* (1915), and Wyndham Lewis’s *Tarr* (1918).

The end of the novel: Ford and Lewis

Ford’s book *par excellence* was not quite the same as James’s. In his faith that novels produce knowledge, in his insistence that every last detail in a novel should be at once explicable and explanatory, Ford was entirely Jamesian, and Jamesian in a way that would not have offended Tolstoy or George Eliot. And yet he also claimed that he had always sought in his own

writing to render “the impression not the corrected chronicle”:³ that is, experience as it happens, not as it is subsequently conceptualized. Experience as it happens cannot very well be said to amount to reliable knowledge about the way our fellows live their lives. Ford’s Impressionism, a refinement of narrative techniques developed by his immediate precursors, James and Conrad, thus had radical implications for the novel’s supposed intelligibility and usefulness.

Whatever is described in the most innovative fiction of the period is described in relation to, and only in relation to, a perceiving mind. James’s later novels – *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), *The Golden Bowl* (1904) – create centers of consciousness through which the apprehension of events is filtered. Joseph Conrad’s *Lord Jim* (1900) and *Heart of Darkness* (1902) pair the narrator, Charlie Marlow, a much-traveled sea captain, with figures (Jim, Kurtz) whose volatile mixture of idealism and corruption at once fascinates him, and reveals the limitations of his own view of the world. Ford’s *The Good Soldier* represents a further turn of the impressionist screw. Dowell, the narrator, is himself as volatile a mixture of idealism and corruption as his friend and rival Edward Ashburnham, whose serial philanderings have destroyed several marriages and driven a young woman mad. He says that he cannot help us to understand the sad story he has to tell because the “whole world” is for him like “spots of color” on an immense canvas; if this was not so, he would have “something to catch hold of” (a determinate identity).⁴ Dowell, in short, suffers from Impressionism:⁵ his inability to tell a straight story is an aspect of his inability to know and be himself.

Dowell has tried to reconstruct the sequence of events which makes up his narrative by talking to Edward Ashburnham and his wife, Leonora. As far as we can tell, however, he had no such talk with Nancy, the young woman seduced by Ashburnham, before she lapsed into madness. Some of his remarks about her conduct are accordingly circumspect. But he does presume to describe her most intimate thoughts (“Nancy had, in fact, been thinking” [195]), as well as one of her drunken fantasies about Ashburnham. This presumption leaves us in “an interpretative quandary to which the openly avowed speculations of Marlow produce no equivalent.”⁶ Dowell may have gone mad. His obsession with Nancy may have led him to invent her thoughts and feelings. The narrative’s over-determination, at this point, inspires even less faith in Dowell than his own frequent admissions of uncertainty.

Marlow tells his tales to groups of men rather like those assembled at the beginning of Kipling’s soldiering stories, James’s *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), and H. G. Wells’s *The Time Machine* (1895): men whose very

unremarkableness, soon to be stimulated, perhaps, by exposure to the unknown, embodies a last hope for social and moral consensus. Dowell, by contrast, has only the eerily abstract "idea of being in a country cottage with a silent listener" (167). The silent listener (or silent reader) cannot very well hope to embody consensus of any kind. The Impressionism from which Dowell suffers threatened the genre's traditional claim to extend and revise a shared knowledge of the world which might yet constitute the basis for community.

There was another threat to the novel's intelligibility and usefulness, the most absolute then and least understood now. This was the threat posed by Futurism's advocacy of modernization in all its forms (economic, technological, social, political). F. T. Marinetti, the futurist poet and theorist, rejected literary tradition in the name of the dynamism and inhumanity of the machine age. Marinetti's proselytizing visits to London between 1910 and 1915 provided the catalyst for Anglo-American Modernism. To his dissemination of energies, Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis opposed the Vortex, an energy articulated by form; to Marinetti's hatred of the past, they opposed the distancing effect of temporal disjunction (the layering of historical moments); to his belief in technology, they opposed a belief in art.⁷ Such formulations, it is generally assumed, soon saw off the excitable Italian. Less often noticed is Marinetti's return, in Lewis's *Time and Western Man* (1927), to haunt the very idea of a modernist fiction.

Time and Western Man is, among other things, an attack on "the whole 'revolutionary' position" in contemporary politics and culture: "however 'revolutions' may begin," Lewis argued, "they always end in what Marinetti termed *passéism*." Marinetti's amnesiac Futurism is used as a stick with which to beat representation itself. Even the most original ideas, Lewis seems to say, become imitations as soon as they are represented (in words, images, deeds). The *passéism* of representation itself is the main obstacle to the artist or writer who would "make it new." Lewis was particularly hard on Joyce. The main "figures" in *Ulysses* are all "walking clichés," he maintained, and the narrative technique which renders them is primly orthodox, for all its evident virtuosity. Stephen Dedalus is a "lifeless" prig, while Leopold Bloom possesses "all the recognized theatrical properties of 'the Jew' up-to-date."⁸ That Lewis misconstrues Joyce's method should not be allowed to conceal the radical implications of what is in effect a critique of the novel as a genre. Figures in narrative fiction do tend towards cliché because they have to be made continuously recognizable despite internal and external alterations.

The opening chapters of *Tarr* (1918), in which the hero, an English

artist in Paris, challenges and insults the walking clichés who pass for his friends and colleagues, are Lewis's most raking assault on the genre which was to sustain his career as a writer. What Tarr loathes in them is their instant and unbroken recognizability. But there are limits to his own ability to avoid recognition. Tarr puts all his asceticism (that is, his imagination, his resistance to cliché) into his art; his taste in women remains, as a consequence, thoroughly derivative. Having trashed enough cliché for one morning, he visits his mistress, Bertha Lunken, only to discover that he himself has become something of a cliché in the eyes of at least one person. "This familiar life, with its ironical eye, mocked at him, too." Bertha and Tarr mirror each other. "Bertha's numb silence and abandon was a stupid *tableau vivant* of his own mood. In this impasse of arrested life he stood sick and useless."⁹ Arrested life is precisely what Lewis was later to find, and deplore, in Stephen Dedalus. Arrested by sex, Tarr gradually becomes a figure in a novel. He puts more and more of his asceticism into sex, less and less into art. The novel's concluding paragraphs sardonically catalog a series of thoroughly novelistic impetuosities and entrapments.

After Tarr has been halted in his tracks by Bertha's silence and abandon, the focus shifts to Otto Kreisler, a German sculptor and bourgeois bohemian, who becomes his chosen antagonist. Kreisler puts all his asceticism into sex; his sculpture is correspondingly lifeless. A creature of representation, such originality as he can lay claim to lies in the vehemence of his gestures, his humiliations. In an essay on "Inferior Religions" published in the *Little Review* in 1917, Lewis argued that the "chemistry of personality" working deep within a person throws off "carnival masks" which we can "photograph and fix" into an identity.¹⁰ Kreisler is a set of masks. Desire for the equally fixed and photographed Anastasya Vasek converts his customary "dullness" into "mechanical obstinacy." "He was a machine, dead weight of old iron, that started, must go dashing on" (100). And dash on he does, as wild a body as the "great comic effigies" hoisted in Lewis's early short stories, through flirtation, rape, accidental murder, and suicide. Kreisler's fate is to be a figure in a novel. Tarr, having set out to challenge and insult Kreisler, becomes more and more like him. Lewis set out to challenge and insult, through Tarr's asceticism, the novel as a genre. The genre won. His later remark that the book should have been called *Otto Kreisler* rather than *Tarr* was a confession that it was after all a novel.

It has been said that Lewis's work exists in a "special antagonism" to Ford's.¹¹ Ford threatened the novel with too much mind. Lewis threatened it with too much body. According to Ford, all that can be represented is the pattern of impressions striking a disembodied and isolated consciousness;

according to Lewis, all that can be represented is the sound of collisions, the impact made by one comic effigy upon another. Neither view does much for the novel's traditional claim to extend and revise a shared knowledge of the world. Yet Dowell, by identifying with Ashburnham, as Marlow identifies with Jim and Kurtz, at least recognizes his own desire for an identity based on moral choice, and so cancels his self-confessed "faintness." Furthermore, the punctiliously mimetic syntax with which Lewis renders Kreisler's death – "He hung, gradually choking, the last thing he was conscious of, his tongue" (301) – suggests that he was on occasion prepared to let a figure in a novel be a figure in a novel, if only at the moment of its vanishing.

The search for stricter form: Joyce and Lawrence

Eliot wanted to make the novel possible again by instilling into it a stricter form. He admired Joyce's use of Homeric myth as "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."¹² The solution to literature's inadequacy in the face of futility and anarchy was *more* literature: the novel would render itself less "novel," less abjectly the expression of an abject age, if it began to associate with epic. This tendency in modernist theory and practice might be thought of, by analogy with Nietzsche's will-to-power and will-to-life, as a will-to-literature. Modernism was one of the fiercest campaigns ever mounted in favor of literature.

The terms in which Modernism's will-to-literature made itself known had been established in nineteenth-century debates about Naturalism and Symbolism. Emile Zola had sought to modernize literature by making it less literary: writers should not flinch from unpoetic subject matter, and should treat whatever they wrote about with scientific exactitude and objectivity. Symbolism, on the other hand, modernized literature by making it more literary. Symbolism's indeterminacies preserved literature from science and common sense. Literature, according to Arthur Symons's influential *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), had become a kind of religion, with all the duties and responsibilities of sacred ritual. Naturalism and Symbolism might be said to have embodied its most extreme tendencies, towards mimesis and towards poesis. Should the work of art be judged, as Roger Fry put it in *Vision and Design* (1920), by its "conformity to appearance" or by "purely aesthetic criteria"?¹³ In modernist writing, mimesis is not so much an end in itself as an occasion for the

triumph of poesis. Both novelists and poets invoked through their choice of subject matter and technique a resistance to literature which they knew would yield only to the excess literature at their command.

The dialectic between Naturalism and Symbolism is nowhere more apparent than in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), which Eliot regarded as Joyce's farewell to the novel. Stephen Dedalus devises symbolist poems, and symbolist theories which have often been taken out of context as modernist doctrine. Having rejected the Church's sacred ritual, he makes a sacred ritual out of art. According to him, beauty precludes emotions such as desire and loathing which are kinetic rather than static, and directed towards a physical rather than a spiritual end. Yet his exposition of this theory, which takes the form of a dialogue with his friend Lynch, as they walk through the Dublin streets, is itself both kinetic and physical. One of his speeches is interrupted by a "harsh roar of jangled and rattling metal," when a dray laden with old iron turns the corner.¹⁴ Stephen's response to interruptions is to evolve a literary style capable of abstract order. He derives less pleasure from the reflection of external reality in language than from "the contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose" (181). When, a few minutes later, he dedicates himself to the creation of beauty, he dedicates himself to a style, a theory, rather than to a subject matter, in a periodic prose which mirrors the emotion, and which we can sense him admiring. Joyce just as evidently does not endorse this rampant will-to-literature, since he punctuates the reverie with the sound of young men bathing: "O, cripes, I'm drowned" (183).

Stephen's devotion is rewarded, towards the end of chapter 4, by the sight of a young woman gazing out to sea: a figure his lucid supple periodic prose immediately converts into a symbol. Chapter 5 opens with Stephen's breakfast. "The yellow dripping had been scooped out like a boghole and the pool under it brought back to his memory the dark turf-coloured water of the bath in Clongowes" (188). The sentences which describe this scene are notably plain and notably faithful to appearance. Here, in the sad decline of the Dedalus family into squalor, is a story Zola might have written. In an early essay, Joyce had praised Henrik Ibsen for portraying "average lives in their uncompromising truth."¹⁵ The Naturalism of *A Portrait*, its attention to the uncompromising truth of the lives which surround Stephen's, establishes a powerful resistance to literature. All five chapters conclude with a moment of self-transcendence; four times, the next chapter opens with a harsh reversion to squalor and to a plain style. The fifth and final chapter peters out in Stephen's inconsequential diary. Although the diary's conclusion invokes the promise of achievement

encrypted in his surname, it can hardly be said to resolve the dialectic between Naturalism and Symbolism. *A Portrait* is Modernism in a state of suspended animation.

Curiously enough, the writer who most summarily resolved the dialectic was Joyce's antithesis, D. H. Lawrence, whose vitalist philosophy decreed that a work of art should be judged neither by its fidelity to appearance, nor by purely aesthetic criteria, but by its tendency to intensify or diminish the will-to-life. In a 1913 review of *Death in Venice*, Lawrence characterized Thomas Mann as the "last too-sick disciple" of Flaubert, a writer who had "stood away from life as from a leprosy."¹⁶ His own work up to and including *Sons and Lovers* (1913) certainly did not stand away from the squalors and intimacies of a Midlands mining community. But the letters he wrote to his friend and mentor Edward Garnett in 1914 announced a change of emphasis. He now insisted that he was going "a stratum deeper" than anyone else had ever gone in writing that was "all analytical – quite unlike *Sons and Lovers*, not a bit visualised." Going deeper meant abandoning the "old stable ego," the traditional concept of character.¹⁷ The first fruit of these labors, which are generally thought to have made Lawrence a Modernist, was *The Rainbow* (1915). In its portrayal of the impact of social change on a Midlands family, the Brangwens, *The Rainbow* is in fact quite extensively visualized. Furthermore, it invokes Naturalism as a way of seeing, indeed a way of living. The "homogeneous amorphous sterility" of the industrial landscape, its "Zolaesque tragedy," appalls Ursula Brangwen, but fascinates her corruptible companion, Winifred Inger.¹⁸ By marrying Tom Brangwen, the colliery manager, Winifred chooses to live a Zolaesque tragedy. But mimesis, in this novel, is the occasion for the triumph of poesis. The marriage tests Ursula's will-to-life. It strengthens her determination not to succumb to the sterility of modern life. Zola, meanwhile, or Zola's shadow, tests Lawrence. Ursula owes her regeneration, at the very end of the novel, not to new thoughts or actions, but to a new sight, a sight seen, like Stephen Dedalus's sight of the young woman, through symbolist rather than naturalist eyes. "She saw in the rainbow the earth's new architecture, the old, brittle corruption of houses and factories swept away, the whole world built up in a living fabric of Truth, fitting to the overarching heavens" (459). The Truth emblazoned in the rainbow is a tribute as much to the reassertion of Lawrence's will-to-literature as to the reassertion of Ursula's will-to-life. Her brave new world fits not to the over-arching heavens gradually made visible by the development of the narrative, but to the overarching symbol incorporated from the outset in its title, and now, at last, understood. Rainbows of one kind or another

were to arch over a number of novels published in the 1920s which have since become modernist classics.

Mythical methods: Lawrence, Fitzgerald, Woolf

In November 1915, in the middle of a catastrophic war, and after the suppression of *The Rainbow*, a defiantly optimistic novel, Lawrence gave up on England's "collapsing" civilization.¹⁹ The book he embarked on in April 1916, *Women in Love*, a "potential sequel" to *The Rainbow*, was his most brutally apocalyptic (at one point he thought of calling it *Dies Irae*, "Day of Wrath"). Apocalypse was one of the things modernist writers imagined most fondly.²⁰ They saw themselves as inhabitants of a social and cultural system which had stagnated to the point where it was no longer susceptible to reform, but could only be renewed through total collapse or violent overthrow. Without apocalypse, Yeats, Eliot, and Pound would not have had careers. Yeats, Eliot, and Pound sit rather more easily together than the writers I shall consider in this section: Lawrence, Fitzgerald, and Woolf. But these, too, found in the literature of crisis a formula which enabled them to investigate at one and the same time a collapsing civilization and a collapsing genre.

Women in Love (1920), *The Great Gatsby* (1925), and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) share an interest not only in the continuous purposeful violence generated by an extraordinary event like the First World War, but in the random incidental violence sometimes shaken loose from ordinary existence. In a time of crisis, the fabric of meaning wears thin in places, and meaninglessness shows through: the stories we tell about experience, the symbols which offer themselves from within it, no longer suffice. Where meaninglessness does show through, it often takes the form of injury, because injury disturbs or negates the familiar shape human beings take. Injury was one of Lawrence's great subjects, and *Women in Love* is so full of it that it soon ceases to be incidental. When the Brangwens arrive for the water party at Shortlands, in chapter 14, they find that Gerald Crich has hurt his hand, which he carries, bandaged, in his jacket pocket. Gudrun Brangwen feels relieved that no one asks him about it (the routine explanations no longer seem adequate). By the time Winifred Crich's rabbit has got its claws into them, in chapter 18, they have become specialists in injury. In *The Great Gatsby*, it is people in motorcars who take the greatest toll, with people on foot a close second. Tom Buchanan breaks the arm of one mistress, when his car crashes, and the nose of another when he hits her. Ordinary violence arrives unannounced, and has gone before story or explanation can close around it ("Then there were bloody towels upon the

bathroom floor, and women's voices scolding").²¹ It is characteristic of Mrs. Ramsay, in *To the Lighthouse*, that she should take an interest in a one-armed bill-sticker, victim of a farming accident; but the circus his posters advertise soon makes her "forget her pity."²²

The literature of crisis seeks out concentrations (it is often an urban literature, because cities compress both time and space by multiplying encounters). It finds in the nodes and clusters where rottenness accumulates the portents of the catastrophe which will validate its apocalyptic fantasies. Walking down the main street of Beldover, in the first chapter of *Women in Love*, Gudrun Brangwen wonders why she should have chosen to subject herself to "this amorphous ugliness of a small colliery town in the Midlands."²³ The chapter does not offer a description of Beldover which might enable us to identify the very specific ugliness she has in mind. In the absence of such information, the associations of intimacy and relatedness embedded in the demonstrative come into play. Suspending his narrative for a moment, with Gudrun immobilised by "revulsion," Lawrence summons us to inspect "this" particular concentration of rottenness, just as, in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, a voice calls the prophet in under the shadow of "this red rock" to witness fear in a handful of dust.

Gudrun's revulsion is the prelude to commitment (the story will soon advance her to a position already marked out by Lawrence's rhetoric). Chapter 9 describes her growing "nostalgia" for Beldover. "She felt herself drawn out at evening into the main street of the town, that was uncreated and ugly, and yet surcharged with this same potent atmosphere of intense, dark callousness" (116). The surcharge, indicating concentration, a saturated node, acquires, in Lawrence's description of the main street, narrative as well as rhetorical substance. Gudrun is drawn despite herself into the embrace of Beldover, and of Beldover's virtual owner, Gerald Crich, whom she first kisses under the bridge where the colliers kiss their sweethearts (330-3).

Gudrun and Gerald are specialists not only in injury but in fructifying revulsion. When Gerald dives again and again into the lake at Shortlands in a futile attempt to rescue his drowning sister, in chapter 14, Gudrun wants to plunge in with him, "to know the horror also" (181). When Gerald first comes to Gudrun, by way of his father's newly dug grave, whose cold and sticky clay repels him, he plunges and sinks into her soft warmth, burying his head between her breasts (344). Together, Gudrun and Gerald seek out surcharged concentrations of rottenness, until they themselves become surcharged concentrations: Gerald in suicide, Gudrun in subjection to the comprehensively rotten Loerke.

Ursula Brangwen and Rupert Birkin, on the other hand, live to a different

rhythm, not that of fructifying revulsion, but that of desire satisfied, and thereafter at intervals lost and rediscovered. Ursula, unlike her sister, is “inured” to Beldover (12), as Birkin is to London Bohemia. It is Birkin who finally persuades Gerald to stop diving; like Ursula, he remains “callous” about the accident, unmoved, unabsorbed (190). For them, desire satisfied produces “anguish” that there cannot be some other kind of relationship, which in turn renews desire.

The division of attitude between the two pairs of protagonists divides the novel. Gerald and Gudrun inhabit a naturalist degeneration plot: progressive exposure of an inherent moral flaw drives them down through boredom and despair to subjection or death. They are described metonymically, as they would be in a Naturalist novel, by means of an inventory of dress, appearance, habit and occupation. Birkin and Ursula, on the other hand, inhabit what a symbolist regeneration plot would look like, if Symbolism had ever gone in for plots. They have no history (Ursula is barely recognizable as the forthright heroine of *The Rainbow*). Their only embodiment is metaphor (Ursula as a strange unconscious bud of womanhood, and so forth), and they renew themselves by yet further disembodiment (they quit their jobs). Ursula and Gudrun belong to different novels. When they go sketching by the lake, in chapter 10, Gudrun is both fascinated and repelled by the water plants: “she could feel their turgid fleshy structure as in a sensuous vision, she *knew* how they rose out of the mud.” She has found a node of rottenness. Ursula, by contrast, “rose and drifted away, unconscious like the butterflies” (119).

At times, the two plots seem about to fuse, as Ursula is paired momentarily with Gudrun, Birkin with Gerald. But in the end they diverge, and Lawrence’s inability to prevent this divergence does produce a certain strain: the naturalist degeneration plot proves such a stiff test for his will-to-literature that when it reasserts itself, as it must do if he is to finish his novel, it does so in a somewhat erratic fashion. The danger at such moments, David Bradshaw argues, is that the writer will impose his own anxieties and aspirations on the characters in a “coercive form of wishful or wilful thinking.”²⁴ When Birkin looks at Gerald’s corpse, he remembers “the beautiful face of one whom he had loved,” and feels momentarily restored. “No-one could remember it without gaining faith in the mystery, without the soul’s warming into new, deep life-trust” (471). Where, Bradshaw asks, does this restoration come from? Not from the narrative, since we have no idea which beautiful face Birkin, the man without a history, is talking about. It comes from Lawrence’s own determination to warm at least one soul, if only for a moment, before the last day (and literature’s last day) is finally done.

Tom Buchanan, in *The Great Gatsby*, has something of Gerald Crich's bull-like presumptuousness, and something of his gullibility where social theory is concerned. There are times, such as the description of the Valley of Ashes, when Fitzgerald seems to envisage a crisis novel on a Lawrentian scale. But Tom Buchanan is also an American "good soldier": like Edward Ashburnham, he is a "national figure in a way" (12), and one who gets caught in compromising situations with servant girls. When the rumor goes around that Tom's wife, Daisy, is a Catholic, we might almost suspect her of modeling herself on the staunchly Catholic Leonora Ashburnham. Nick Carraway makes a not un-Dowell-like narrator. Fitzgerald's affiliations were not with Lawrence, but with Ford and, especially, Conrad.

Carraway's first sight of the great Gatsby is of a man stretching out his arms to the "dark water" in a "curious way" (27). We have been here before. Gatsby is Kurtz or Lord Jim to Carraway's Marlow: a man at once stronger and weaker than his chronicler, potent in and through his dreams, but fallible. Carraway's tale, like Marlow's, is of Westerners going East into the heart of darkness. His last sight of Gatsby, a bright spot of color against white steps, dreamer still of an "incorruptible dream" (160), recapitulates Marlow's last sight of Jim, a white figure against a dark background, incurably "romantic." Not surprisingly, Fitzgerald found it harder to instill enigma into palpable wealth than Conrad had to instil it into the outposts of empire. When Carraway contrasts his own provincialism with the "vast carelessness" of the Buchanans (186), we may suppose that while Fitzgerald had seen the carelessness for himself, it was Conrad who made him think of it as vast.

Fitzgerald's first novel, *This Side of Paradise* (1920), was the story of a Stephen Dedalus-like "romantic egotist," Amory Blaine, who writes symbolist poems and assesses his Princeton acquaintances by inspecting their private libraries. It is Symbolism which renders (by failing to render precisely) the inexhaustibleness of the "inexhaustible charm" of wealth. Thus Carraway hears, beyond Gatsby's sentimentality, "an elusive rhythm, a fragment of lost words, that I had heard somewhere a long time ago" (118). Indeed, Gatsby's car, "terraced with a labyrinth of wind-shields that mirrored a dozen suns" (70), would not have been altogether out of place in a poem by Mallarmé. The problem, again, is wishful or willful thinking. Fitzgerald's yearning for a deep life trust is almost as urgent as Lawrence's. On his last night on West Egg, Carraway sits in the moonlight by Gatsby's empty house, and urges his soul into warmth: "I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes – a fresh, green breast of the world" (187). Where does *this* come from?

It is a question that might also be asked about the "vision" which enables

Lily Briscoe to complete her portrait of Mrs. Ramsay, in *To the Lighthouse*, and, since it coincides with Mr. Ramsay's long-deferred arrival at the lighthouse, Woolf to complete her novel. "Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision" (281). Is the vision the product of abilities and experiences rendered in and by the narrative? Or has the author wished or willed it on Lily's behalf? Woolf, I think, anticipated the question. Lily, baffled by her inability to reimagine Mrs. Ramsay, warns herself against wishful or willful thinking. "But one got nothing by soliciting urgently" (261). Woolf's answer to the question lies in the structure of her novel.

Part I of *To the Lighthouse*, "The Window," takes place on a September evening at a holiday home in the Hebrides, and describes the various activities and preoccupations of the Ramsays, their eight children and six guests. The main focus is on the family as an institution whose stability is at once creative and constricting. Families guarantee personal immortality through lineage and affiliation. But the centrality of this institution in society's self-furtherance has led it to arrogate powers and values which do not necessarily belong to it. Established as the primary medium of symbolic exchange, it expands or reduces all anxieties and aspirations to its own size, converting any stray ambition into itself. Woolf's point seems to be that while everything in the family is reproduction (of powers, of values), not all reproduction is in the family. To the personal immortality made more likely by lineage, though not guaranteed, since children sometimes die young, Woolf opposed the personal immortality made more likely by art, though not guaranteed, since paintings sometimes get stuffed in attics.

The family's arrogation of powers and values encourages arrogance. The egotism displayed by Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay is insufferable, and compelling, because it is displayed on behalf of an institution. This impersonal egotism, behind which, or interleaved with which, the person occasionally appears, or can be made to appear by a hopeless love, manifests itself as an absurd reduction of everything to the family, on Mr. Ramsay's part, and an absurd expansion of the family until it becomes everything, on Mrs. Ramsay's part. Mr. Ramsay behaves to his wife, his children, his startled guests, as though he were a gallant soldier, a castaway, the leader of a doomed polar expedition. Observing him, the resolutely unfamiliar Lily Briscoe and William Bankes wonder "why so brave a man in thought should be so timid in life" (62-3). Mrs. Ramsay, by contrast, turns bravery in life into thoughts which are timid because their only term is replication. She wishes to replicate her bravely fertile marriage by pairing off Lily and William, Minta Doyle and Paul Rayley.

In "The Window," powers and values are arrogated not only on behalf of

the family, but on behalf of literature. There is a kind of literary megalomania in the imperiousness of the proliferating metaphors: “the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of the male” (53), and so forth. Some of these metaphors belong to the characters; others have been wished or willed on their behalf by the author (does James really see his father as a beak of brass?). In part I, *style* solicits urgently. That Woolf should so frankly summon poesis to the aid of mimesis would not have surprised her first readers. Her career had already included one decisive shift of emphasis, from the orthodox realism of *The Voyage Out* (1915) and *Night and Day* (1917) to the lyrical experimentation of *Jacob’s Room* (1922) and *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). On 27 June 1925, at a time when she was planning *To the Lighthouse*, she recorded in her diary an ambition to substitute poesis for mimesis. “I have an idea that I will invent a new name for my books to supplant “novel.” A new —by Virginia Woolf. But what? Elegy?”²⁵ The new—by Virginia Woolf did indeed prove to be an elegy, for her father, Leslie Stephen, the literary critic and biographer, notoriously short-tempered and dependent on his wife, and for her mother, Julia, a legendary pre-Raphaelite beauty. The style of part I urgently solicits, through its elaborate expansiveness, elegiac feeling: it is already a elegy, long before anyone has died. If Joyce, in Eliot’s eyes, renewed the novel by associating it with epic, Woolf renewed it by associating it with elegy.

The pivotal part II, “Time Passes,” boldly reduces the crisis novel’s crisis to parentheses embedded in a description of the house’s abandonment and decay during a period of ten years. The parentheses flatly inform us of the deaths of Mrs. Ramsay, her daughter Prue (in childbirth), and her son Andrew (in battle): the predictability of the last two making the first even harder to explain and endure. Events no longer obtrude, to be enshrined in metaphor. “There was the silent apparition of an ashen-colored ship for instance, come, gone; there was a purplish stain upon the bland surface of the sea as if something had boiled and bled, invisibly, beneath.” These apparitions do not flower into meaning. Indeed, they block meaning, disrupt, for the stroller on the beach, “a scene calculated to stir the most sublime reflections” (182). The narrative is now a counterelegy, to the extent that it can recall the past (“how once the looking-glass had held a face”), but not the future in the past. Seventy-year-old Mrs. McNab, creature of experience rather than aspiration, fingers the gray cloak which had once provoked sublime reflections about Mrs. Ramsay’s beauty (184).

Part II hollows out the world constructed in part I: an empty house, an empty style. It is this emptiness which makes possible the redemptions of part III. Mrs. Ramsay is still loved, and greatly missed, but it is only in her absence that Mr. Ramsay can reach the lighthouse (he would surely not

have gone except as reparation) and Lily Briscoe complete her painting. Only when Mrs. Ramsay has receded, only when her beauty has ceased to still and freeze life, only when she has been supplanted by the life which goes on without her, can she become the object of Lily's painting, of Lily's love. The steps where Mrs. Ramsay had once sat fill elegiacally and then empty again. Only when she convinces herself that they really are empty and will remain empty for ever can Lily complete her painting. "She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished" (281). By emptying the steps, Woolf emptied her own will-to-literature. Not completely, though. For, just as the shape of the person who once occupied the steps remains in Lily's memory, so the conclusion of the novel's other story, with Mr. Ramsay's arrival at the lighthouse, validates the hint of sacred ritual in its overarching title. Woolf thus belongs, at a slight distance, with writers like Lawrence and Fitzgerald, like Marcel Proust and Thomas Mann, who were moved by a formidable will-to-literature.

Scorch marks: Joyce and Faulkner

The most enduring of the mythical moments of origin proposed for Anglo-American Modernism is the first post-impressionist exhibition in London in December 1910. My (equally mythical) choice would be the June 1918 issue of the *Little Review*, which included "Calypso," the fourth episode of Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Mr. Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls. He liked thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards, a stuffed roast heart, liver slices fried with crustcrumbs, fried hencod's roes. Most of all he liked grilled mutton kidneys which gave to his palate a fine tang of faintly scented urine.²⁶

Up to the moment when those inner organs appeared, it would have been reasonable to suppose that *Ulysses* was a sequel to *A Portrait*. The Stephen Dedalus of its first three episodes is recognizable as the Stephen Dedalus of *A Portrait*, now back from self-exile in Paris, and different only in the degree of self-doubt to which he is subject, and to which a new interior monologue technique gives us unprecedented access. The self-doubt makes him even *more* of a Prufrock, a symbolist *manqué*, than he was in *A Portrait*. However, readers turning the pages of the June 1918 issue of the *Little Review* would have encountered, in Mr. Leopold Bloom and his idiosyncratic palate, something else altogether. Bloom has a way of thinking, feeling, acting, and speaking every bit as distinctive, and every bit

as compelling, as Stephen's. Joyce responded to Ezra Pound's suggestion that Stephen should be brought forward at Bloom's expense by saying that Stephen interested him less because his "shape" could not now be changed. The age of Prufrock was over.

The first six episodes of *Ulysses* ("Telemachus," "Nestor," "Proteus," "Calypso," "Lotos-eaters," "Hades") are written in what Joyce called, in a letter of 1919, an "initial style":²⁷ they combine third-person, past-tense depiction of events with first-person present-tense depiction of the thoughts of the two main characters. The initial style devotes itself, as few literary styles had ever done before, to the mimesis of individual acts of apprehension: what we "see" is in general what Stephen and Bloom are conscious of. This degree of identification was too good (too reassuring) to last. When Joyce revised the *Little Review* version of the seventh episode, "Aeolus," which brings Stephen and Bloom separately to the central Dublin premises shared by the *Telegraph* and the *Freeman's Journal*, he added a set of newspaper-style subheadings ("THE GRANDEUR THAT WAS ROME") whose trite phrases comment obliquely on the dramatic action and mock the eloquence of the pundits assembled in the editorial office. The arbitrariness of these subheadings disrupts an initial style patently and reassuringly motivated by fidelity to appearance. Bloom's palate may be the first real surprise in *Ulysses*, but it is by no means the last.

However, the initial style makes a rapid recovery, to render for us Bloom's search for an enabling lunch, in "Lestrygonians," and Stephen's search for an enabling aesthetic theory, in "Scylla and Charybdis." The honeymoon between author and reader resumes, as a glimpse into the Burton restaurant neatly epitomizes Naturalism – "Spaton sawdust, sweetish warmish cigarette smoke, reek of plug, spilt beer, men's beery piss, the stale of ferment" (215) – while Stephen's sardonic identification with "the druid priests of Cymbeline, hierophantic" (280) neatly epitomizes Symbolism. The first nine episodes of *Ulysses* consign *A Portrait* to history by invalidating its solipsism. But, despite the "Aeolus" subheadings, they have not yet consigned literature to history because they still operate within the limits marked by literature's alternating self-representations as Naturalism (or extreme mimesis) and Symbolism (or extreme poesis).

On the last page of the fair copy of "Scylla and Charybdis," Joyce wrote "End of the First Part of 'Ulysses.'" The next five episodes ("Wandering Rocks," "Sirens," "Cyclops," "Nausicaa," "Oxen of the Sun") reveal a significant change of emphasis, from a preoccupation with character and realistic detail to a preoccupation with symbolic correspondences and stylistic elaboration. In "Wandering Rocks," Joyce for the first time used the initial style to depict the thoughts of characters other than Stephen and

Bloom; in “Sirens,” he distorted it beyond recognition by filtering it through a musical structure which reconfigures Bloom’s stream of consciousness to fit its own patterns; in “Cyclops,” he abandoned it altogether in favor of a narrative persona (a barfly) whose salty monologue is punctuated by parodies of various literary and subliterary styles; in “Nausicaa,” it returns temporarily, although only in the context of a more extended parody (of popular fiction); in “Oxen of the Sun,” parody (of English literary styles) becomes the book’s exclusive narrative technique, a screen through which the dramatic action, set in a hospital ward, can dimly be perceived. Joyce referred to this rapid appropriation and abandonment of styles as his “scorching” method: “each successive episode, dealing with some province of artistic culture (rhetoric or music or dialectic), leaves behind it a burnt-up field.”²⁸ The burnt-up field was the field of his own will-to-literature.

The definitions of modernist writing produced in Anglo-American criticism from the 1930s to the 1970s – from Edmund Wilson’s *Axel’s Castle* (1931) to Hugh Kenner’s *The Pound Era* (1971) – were primarily literary–historical in emphasis: their purpose was to distinguish literature written during the first three decades of the century, in formal and philosophical terms, from what came before, and, to a lesser extent, what came after. The terms did not always stick. Was *Ulysses* the last word in modern novels? Or the first word in modern poems? Some critics regretted that as a novel it ends after “Scylla and Charybdis,” others that as a poem it does not begin until “Wandering Rocks.” Few of these literary–historical accounts acknowledged the full implications of Joyce’s commitment to parody. In “Sirens,” for example, which describes Bloom’s late lunch in the Ormond Bar, the book begins to quote, or to parody, itself. “Leopold cut liverslices. As said before he ate with relish the inner organs, nutty gizzards, fried cods’ roes” (347). *As said before*: few novels draw attention so brazenly to their own artifice, while few poems advance with such self-dismissiveness towards symbolism.

Since the 1960s, *Ulysses* has to a large extent been read not as a novel or a poem, but, in the wake of deconstruction, as a “text.” Textual readings suggest that the stylistic elaborations developed in the middle episodes expose the limits, not of literary genre, but of the symbolic order in and through which identity is constructed. These readings derive from deconstruction’s emphasis on the difference *within* a text, or a person’s identity, rather than on the difference *between* texts or identities. Where modernist fiction is concerned, they might be said to work best, not when they substitute “difference within” for “difference between,” as a definition both of the field of study and of aesthetic and political value, but when they set

the two concepts in relation. For Modernism could be understood as an attempt variously to exclude either difference-within or difference-between from definitions of aesthetic and political value. Of the “Men of 1914,” Eliot, Pound and Lewis all evolved doctrines whose main function was to convert difference-within into difference-between. Their insistence on impersonality, and on the primacy of the “world of objects,” in Eliot’s phrase, was an effort to control the unsettling drift of desire, and to preempt the messy sexual and political coalitions into which its compulsive mimeticism, its insatiable “herd instinct,” might lead it: the autonomy of art would ensure the autonomy of the self. “The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art,” Eliot argued, “is by finding an ‘objective correlative’; in other words, a set of objects, a chain of events, which shall be the formula of that particular emotion.”²⁹ Joyce’s appeal, by contrast, is that he made the search for objective correlatives his subject matter rather than his doctrine: “Circe” exposes the differences-within which Anglo-Irish culture has repressed in order to construct differences between men and women, rich and poor, Catholic and Jew, Englishman and Irishman. To put it another way, deconstruction has shown that Joyce had good moral and political reason to disable through parody the genre whose conventions his book began by observing. Of the other writers who also made differences-within their subject matter, the most significant, Kafka apart, was William Faulkner.

Faulkner did not need to begin by writing about a symbolist poet. He *was* one (*The Marble Faun*, 1924). His decisive departure from literary tradition came with his fourth novel, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), where he took the step Joyce had taken in the June 1918 issue of the *Little Review*: he placed his Stephen Dedalus figure, Quentin Compson, in relation to other consciousnesses. Indeed, this Prufrock ushers *himself* into history, by committing suicide on 2 June 1910: the rest of the story, narrated successively by his two brothers, Benjy and Jason, and an omniscient narrator, takes place on three days in April 1928.

The Sound and the Fury is framed by exclusions: to begin with, an impossible interiority which excludes all difference-between; to end with, an impossible exteriority which excludes all difference-within. Benjy converts externally differentiated time and space into internally differentiated mood. When a golfer cries “Here, caddie,” he thinks only of his beloved lost sister, Caddy, feels sad, and starts to bellow. Benjy presses up against boundaries – the fence through which he watches the golfers, the gate where he waits for Caddy, the fence across which he delivers Mrs. Patterson’s letter, the piece of wood Dilsey places down the center of Luster’s bed, the fence along which he follows the girls going home from school – which have for him no

meaning, indeed no reality. It is others who notice that his clothes have snagged on the fence, or tell him to keep his hands in his pockets in cold weather. His words brush against the world of objects without grasping the distribution within it of cause and effect, or of racial and social characteristics. His narrative, unlike those of the other protagonists, does not differentiate black speech from white by its use of idiom (Dilsey says “Yes, sir” to his father, not “Yessuh” or “Yes, suh”). Benjy, in short, is Eliot’s worst nightmare: a gigantic, blubbering subjective correlative.

Quentin Compson is a student at Harvard, and roughly the same age as Stephen Dedalus. Unlike Benjy, he knows all about differences-between; but he cannot live them. His interior monologue, which occupies the day of his suicide, thus recurs incessantly to difference-within. Stephen Dedalus, in “Proteus,” remembers a time in Paris when he tried on a woman’s shoe, and muses about “Wilde’s love that dare not speak its name” (62). Quentin finds in his friends’ chaffing an insinuation about his own protean sexuality (“Calling Shreve my husband”).³⁰ A ritualized exchange with a poor black man at a railway crossing in Virginia may confirm momentarily his identity as a privileged white man. But observation of the Deacon, at Harvard, who has one social and racial identity for his familiars – “See you again, fellows . . . glad to have chatted with you” – and another for new arrivals from the South – “Right dis way, young marster, hyer we is” (83) – only serves to confuse the issue. Confusion is worse confounded when a young boy he encounters while killing time on the day of his suicide says that he “talks like a coloured man” (103). Authority deserts him as surely as it deserts K., in Kafka’s *The Trial* (1925), another man arrested for a crime he is not aware of having committed.

Jason Compson, who has never left the South, and who has acted as head of the family since his father’s death, establishes *his* authority through reiterated paranoid assertions of the difference between himself and a series of rapidly conceived sexual or racial antagonists. His anti-Semitism, for example, is as blatant, and as abrupt, as that of Mr. Deasy, the headmaster of the school at which Stephen teaches, in the “Nestor” episode of *Ulysses*. What appalls Jason about Caddy’s daughter, Quentin, is her promiscuity, her “slip[ping] around.” In his eyes, to slip around is to behave like a “nigger wench” (163): to sacrifice racial as well as moral integrity. His interior monologue seeks out the objective correlatives which will secure forever the differences between black and white, men and women: “Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say” (155). It thus represents the speech of a black woman like Dilsey as densely idiomatic: “Can’t you liv in de same house wid you own blood niece without quoilin?” (219)

Jason’s efforts to impose himself fail miserably, and his failure appears to

invoke, in the novel's concluding section, an exaggeratedly imposing omniscient narrator who harbors no illusions about the feebleness of those efforts. This omniscience forces us to acknowledge discrepancies between event and meaning. In the opening paragraph, we encounter, not Dilsey's words, as in the previous sections, but her flesh, as the wind needles laterally into it, "precipitating not so much a moisture as a substance partaking of the quality of thin, not quite congealed oil" (229). The words which needle this flesh as emphatically as the wind does, tattooing it with discursive elaboration, are evidently the narrator's. What does Dilsey know about precipitation? Luster, carrying a pile of logs, is invisible "within and beyond his wooden avatar" – but not to Dilsey, who, unmindful of symbolism, guides him across the kitchen with a firm hand. As the flesh weakens, in this final section, blundering to a halt, or succumbing to migraine, or seduction, so the word flourishes and the discrepancy between event and meaning widens.

It is the omniscient narrator who produces, by way of a conjuring trick, the book's one authentic (pure, complete) identity, that of the Reverend Shegog. When Shegog, a shabby, insignificant little man, rises to preach, he speaks at first "like a white man" (254). "I got the recollection and the blood of the Lamb!" (255) Gradually, however, his voice rises above the shabbiness and insignificance, until it provokes a response, "a woman's single soprano: 'Yes, Jesus!'" (255). The response transforms him. His "intonation" and "pronunciation" become "negroid," his words a glimpse of the power and the glory of God. He has been remade across and by means of the difference between man and woman, black and white. The narrative retranscribes his refrain: "I got de ricklickshun en de blood of de Lamb!" (256) Shegog's sermon, the most densely idiomatic passage in the book, is its narrative other (what "Penelope" is to *Ulysses*). The sermon's full black identity mirrors the full white identity of the impersonal narrator's omniscience. Both are conjuring tricks.

The fable of the emergence of white heterosexual identity, through Benjy's perpetual childhood and Quentin's protean adolescence to Jason's imitations of patriarchy, has been completed only by a supplement which reveals the lack at its center. For the discrepant exteriority of the omniscient narrative, far from gathering the pieces together and filling in gaps, as Faulkner himself suggested it did, merely reverses the discrepant interiority of Benjy's monologue. Both views are impossible: Benjy's words could not be his own; the omniscient narrator's words could go omnisciently on forever and still not touch Benjy's experience. Faulkner's fable about what is possible by way of identity (in Mississippi in 1928) shuttles fretfully backwards and forwards between those impossibilities.

Equivocations: Hemingway, Richardson

One might characterize Faulkner's subsequent career as a movement away from Joyce and Kafka back towards Conrad: *Light in August* (1932) has sometimes been compared to *Nostromo* (1904) in terms of its scope and to *Under Western Eyes* (1913) in terms of its treatment of salvation (or release) through suffering. The later sagas, which develop the fictional history of the American South inaugurated by *Flags in the Dust* (1928), extend and deepen his analysis of the construction of identity in or across racial and sexual difference. Joe Christmas, in *Light in August*, tries desperately to convert difference-within into the difference between himself and a series of lovers: he acts black when with white women, and white when with black women. But the only result of these encounters is to reopen the equivocation in himself, which he must then overcome through violence, and the identificatory retribution that violence brings down on him.

Ernest Hemingway, disciple of Gertrude Stein, started a lot closer to the center of Modernism than Faulkner, and moved away from it more rapidly. Hemingway became, after Joyce had conclusively demonstrated his ineradicable perversity in the later episodes of *Ulysses*, the poets' favorite prose writer. Ezra Pound approved. No prose writer stuck more closely to imagist principles: terseness, impersonality, attention to the world of objects. But objective correlatives were, for a brief period during the early 1920s, his theme rather than his method. When, in *In Our Time*, the dissatisfied wife in "Cat in the Rain" decides to feminize herself by letting her hair grow – "I want to pull my hair back tight and smooth and make a big knot at the back that I can feel," she said³¹ – the phantom knot is *her* objective correlative, not Hemingway's.

In *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), the bullfighter Pedro Montero, emblem of masculinity, wants Brett Ashley to let her hair grow – "He said it would make me more womanly" (181) – and then marry him: "After I'd gotten more womanly, of course" (182). Her refusal is a refusal of gendered identity, and it keeps her in the orbit of the narrator, Jake Barnes, whose war wound has destroyed his manhood. This relationship is of its essence mediated, equivocal, inauthentic. The novel's tripartite structure marks out the three stages of the rite of passage which might restore Jake to immediacy, and through immediacy to manhood: separation from the banal, purposeless, inauthentic Paris life described in book I; a liminal phase, described in book II, during which identity can be stripped down and rebuilt, in Spain, at the festival in Pamplona; and a return, transfigured, to ordinary existence, in book III. The map of Europe becomes a gigantic

objective correlative. To cross the border between France and Spain is to move from a mundane into a sacred realm. But Jake disavows the *aficion*, the passion for the bullfight, which might have remasculinized him and rendered him whole again, when he introduces Brett to Pedro Montero; after that betrayal, the *aficionados* will not even speak to him. The sacredness of Spain, its restorative power, is compromised by the network of boundaries and checkpoints which divide one part of it from another: a *carabineer* asks for fishing permits; a customs officer in Pamplona searches baggage; a verger stops Brett from entering a church because she has no hat. An elsewhere thus divided from itself is no longer elsewhere, no longer the crucible of psychic restoration. Jake is always looking into things, into the cage where the bulls are penned, into the runway down which the bulls will chase the crowd. But, for him, unlike Gerald Crich or Gudrun Brangwen, to look into things is to look through them. It is after one of his inspections that Jake meets the *aficion*-free waiter who believes that bullfighting is bullshitting. On his way back into France, at the start of book III, he gets no further than Bayonne, before doubling back into Spain, and into Brett's doubling back from the arms of Montero.

Hemingway soon became, in his books, at any rate, the Hemingway of legend: the man who, enraged by Max Eastman's jibe about false chest hair, marched into the *New Republic* offices and bared all (or part). His fullest and least tragic exploration of androgyny, *The Garden of Eden*, was not published in his lifetime. During the 1920s and 1930s, androgyny – psychic, sexual and, so to speak, textual – was largely the province of women writers. Their explorations, for the most part published in their lifetimes, though frequently neglected by readers and reviewers, have over the last twenty years been richly and extensively reclaimed by feminism: reclaimed, more often than not, in the name of critical difference, of psychic and textual slipping around.

Female Modernism was an answer to the relentless conversion of difference-within into difference-between which had for so long sustained patriarchal ideology in general, and literary representations of women in particular. That is why Virginia Woolf insisted on the disabling exteriority of literary realism, in "Modern Fiction" (1919) and "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1924). In *Hilda Lessways* (1911), she complained, Arnold Bennett tries to make us believe in the reality of his heroine by describing the house she lives in, and the houses she can see from the house she lives in. "House property was the common ground from which the Edwardians found it easy to proceed to intimacy." Woolf thought that writers should proceed to intimacy from a different ground (the ground of difference-within itself): the "pattern" which each incident or impression "scores upon the con-

sciousness.”³² Identity was to be grasped by means of a poetic of awareness: the more aware a person is, the more representable he or she becomes; and, by implication, the more representable, the more aware. Female Modernism might thus be understood as a program for the conversion of difference-between into difference-within.

The efficacy of this poetic of awareness was a matter of dispute from the outset, even, or especially, among women writers. Dorothy Richardson tested it to the limit in *Pilgrimage*, a sequence of thirteen novels (or “chapters”) beginning with *Pointed Roofs* (1915) and concluding with *March Moonlight*, published posthumously in 1967. *Pilgrimage* describes the experiences of Miriam Henderson, a woman forced out of the stifling security of middle-class family life by her father’s bankruptcy. In a 1918 essay on the first three volumes which Woolf read with approval, May Sinclair, whose own *Mary Olivier: A Life* (1919) was distinctly Richardsonian, noted that Richardson had abandoned the objective method and “taken Miriam’s nature upon her.”³³ As the distance between author and protagonist collapsed, so did that between protagonist and world. This much merging was not to everyone’s taste. Katherine Mansfield, reviewing *Interim* (1919), where the shocks of “inward recognition” are produced by “such things as well-browned mutton, gas jets, varnished wallpapers,” wondered whether the systematic dissolution of the differences between self and world had not merely produced *indifference*. Miriam’s closeness to life, she concluded, “leaves us feeling, as before, that everything being of equal importance to her, it is impossible that everything should not be of equal unimportance.”³⁴

This is, I think, a significant disagreement, whose implications can be grasped by comparing Mansfield’s description of a sojourn in Germany in *In a German Pension* (1913) with Richardson’s in *Pointed Roofs* (1915). Mansfield’s cousin, Elizabeth von Arnim, had already made a successful literary career out of witty assaults on German arrogance, philistinism, boorishness, and misogyny. She herself chose the same targets, in stories about appalling table manners (soup spilt on waistcoats, ears cleaned with a napkin, and so on) and the unwelcome intimacies made possible by umbrellas. The catalog of differences between England and Germany, men and women, is a little too relentless, as she herself later recognized, but it does sometimes produce a change of attitude: an encounter with a German feminist, for example, forces the narrator to reconsider and reaffirm her own, differently formulated convictions.

Germany proves less of an ordeal for Miriam Henderson, who has gone there to teach English, than might have been expected, and certainly not the land of soup-stained ties and umbrella harrassment depicted by Mans-

field. The success of her first class is said to be important not in itself but because it removes “an obstacle to gladness which was waiting to break forth.”³⁵ Gladness breaking forth is very much the subject of the early volumes of *Pilgrimage*, and Germany counts only insofar as it hinders or encourages the breaking forth. Sitting in a *delikatessen*, surrounded by the girls from her school, she feels “securely adrift” (88). In Mansfield’s stories, no one is ever *securely* adrift.

The mind grows rings: Joyce, Woolf, Ford

Deconstructive criticism has done greater justice to the aesthetic and political power of parody and self-parody, in *Ulysses*, than literary history ever did. But the preoccupation with textual and psychic splitting, like all preoccupations, has its limits. Critical difference becomes an absolute value, to be teased out from within the text, and then celebrated either as a pleasure or as an ideological unmasking. Attridge, for example, claims that his reading of “Sirens” does not so much explain the episode’s “linguistic adventures” as participate in them, “enjoying and learning from them at the same time.”³⁶ Joyce, however, reported that after completing “Sirens” he found it impossible to listen to music of any kind. There was a price to be paid for the pleasures of scorching.

Michael Levenson has most astutely assessed the cost of the book’s commitment to parody and self-parody by associating it with the figure of Buck Mulligan, the mocking blasphemer whom Stephen names “Usurper.” “The ear for verbal absurdity, the eye for moral weakness, the insatiable appetite for pun and paradox, the willingness to amuse until amusement irritates, the incessant unrepentant theatricality – these central features of Mulligan’s sensibility become dominant features at the centre of *Ulysses*.”³⁷ To the extent that the book endorses parody and self-parody, it endorses the actions of its two melodramatic villains, its two usurpers, Mulligan and Blazes Boylan: for it is Boylan’s “erotic arousal” which the “linguistic adventures” of “Sirens” ensure, not Bloom’s. Deconstruction cannot describe the moral and emotional cost of parody.

Modernist writers, on the other hand, could, and did. Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus* (1947) is both a novel and an essay on Modernism. It is the life of a brilliant young composer, Adrian Leverkühn, as told, during the first years of the Second World War, by his older friend and critic, Zeitblom. As a student, Leverkühn convinces himself that traditional forms have been exhausted. “Why does almost everything seem to me like its own parody? Why must I think that almost all, no, all the methods and conventions of art today *are good for parody only*?”³⁸ Leverkühn’s own music combines

extreme formal austerity with the depiction of a universe in which humankind has been displaced by the elemental and the primal. Zeitblom, whose allegiance is to the “human and articulate,” finds this combination “daemonic.” Zeitblom’s humanism is subjected to ironic treatment, but there can be no mistaking the pain which Leverkuhn’s commitment to parody causes him. Similarly, there can be no mistaking the pain which Buck Mulligan’s Faustian pact causes Stephen Dedalus, or the pain which Blazes Boylan’s rather more visceral Faustian pact causes Leopold Bloom.

The last four episodes of *Ulysses* (“Circe,” “Eumaeus,” “Ithaca,” “Penelope”) exceed all others in length and range of reference. Rather than placing further stylistic screens around events, these episodes treat what has already happened during the day as a set of narrative elements to be endlessly combined and recombined. This final stage could be seen as a return from the fields burnt up by parody to the house of domestic fiction. With Stephen and Bloom united, then safely installed at 7 Eccles Street, while Molly sleeps upstairs, surely the book’s “odyssey of style” is also complete?³⁹ Hugh Kenner has rightly drawn attention to “a governing rhythm of the book, whereby impression in the first half is modified by knowledge in the second.”⁴⁰ “Penelope,” an episode regarded as extramural by many, including Joyce himself, none the less provides more information about the Blooms than any other. But what prevents stylistic as well as thematic completion or return is a new emphasis, in the final episodes, on possibility rather than (usually the novel’s sustaining convention) probability. In “Ithaca,” when Bloom turns on the faucet, the question “Did it flow?” elicits a lengthy explanation of how and why the water flows (782–3). This explanation is a thought which could have occurred to Bloom as he turns on the faucet. Since we do not know whether it did or not, we are not much the wiser about his state of mind at that particular moment. But we have learned something about the kind of topic which would interest a person like him. This is virtual Bloom, if you like, rather than actual (novelistic) Bloom.

Virtual Bloom is actual Bloom’s adjunct: neither conjoined, nor disjoined. Virtual Bloom has attracted relatively little attention, either from literary historians, who favour conjoining, or from deconstructionists, who favor disjoining. And yet he is surely amplified in our minds by the thoughts he may or may not have had. By dealing not in probability, but in possibility, Joyce renewed the genre of the novel. Seen from this point of view, his book’s epic correspondences are another of its virtual realities (another way of conceiving virtual reality), rather than, as Eliot supposed, an ordering principle. In “Ithaca” and “Penelope,” the question we ask of Leopold, Molly and Stephen is not “Who are they, finally?” but “What

might they yet do for each other, in each other's lives?" The technique which supervenes on parody, in *Ulysses* and a number of other modernist novels, is a process of psychic and textual additiveness (a proliferation of virtual realities).

Virginia Woolf's notably disjunctive *The Waves* (1931) sets in parallel series the reflections of six characters, in such a way as to suggest the permeability or friability of selfhood. The elderly Bernard, whose Marlow- or Gerontion-like address to an unnamed dinner companion concludes the book, observes that it is not "one life" he looks back on: "I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am – Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis: or how to distinguish my life from theirs."⁴¹ But it is striking that while he does speak of the dissipation or streaming away of identity, he also speaks of its accumulation, accretion, acceleration, augmentation and sedimentation. Jinny, Susan, and the rest are, among other things, his adjuncts, his virtual selves. "The mind grows rings; the identity becomes robust; pain is absorbed in growth" (198). Sometimes, as he is well aware, the growth is halted, the pain breaks through. But Bernard, simply by surviving, has won his glimpse of "eternal renewal." In that respect, he begins to seem less like Marlow or Gerontion, and more like a character in a novel by Arnold Bennett.

Many, if not most, plots, and certainly those favored by the great nineteenth-century realists, turn on moments of revelation, recognition scenes, when the illusions nurtured by timidity, prejudice, or habit fall away, and a naked self confronts a naked world. These are the moments when identity is begun, renewed, or completed. French Naturalism added a different plot, in which the revelation is gradual, and of something already known, but concealed: a moral or physical flaw, an organic "lesion." Both kinds of plot favor awareness. Illusions are there to be stripped away. There can be no personal freedom until they have been stripped away. Bennett was less interested in crises, and the comic or tragic awareness they bring, than in the illusions that remain. His protagonists are incapable of or do not want awareness. They advance their hollowness into a world which, as they age, becomes ever more crowded, ever more impenetrable. They feel the changes in pressure within them, but the shell of their nescience neither cracks nor fills with hard-earned wisdom, with love. Edwin Clayhanger, hero of the Clayhanger tetralogy (1910–18), is motivated in his youth by a fierce hatred of Methodism. But by the time he is asked, in middle age, to serve as District Treasurer of the Additional Chapels Fund, he does not even have enough animosity left for a contemptuous refusal. Ambition goes the same way: "his life has become a life of half-measures, a continual falling-short." Yet he is in his way fulfilled, even assertive. He has

accumulated an identity. Bernard, in *The Waves*, knows something about epiphany, about rupture; but also something about the half-measures which may add up to eternal renewal. I do not mean to suggest that Woolf had abandoned her belief in moments of being, in not falling short: Miss La Trobe, the heroine of *Between the Acts* (1941), is about as un-Bennett-like a protagonist as one could possibly imagine. But I do think that she, like a number of other modernist writers, was more interested in cumulative models of selfhood than her most recent critics have supposed. "We all begin well, for in our youth there is nothing we are more intolerant of than our own sins writ large in others and we fight them fiercely in ourselves; but we grow old and we see that these our sins are of all sins the really harmless ones to own, nay that they give a charm to any character, and so our struggle with them dies away." That might quite plausibly have been an extract from a review of the Clayhanger novels. In fact, it is the fourth sentence of *The Making of Americans*.⁴²

One writer whose reputation would probably be enhanced by a new interest in cumulative models of selfhood is Ford Madox Ford. Ford is known today primarily as the author of the elliptical *The Good Soldier*, as Modernism's most influential literary editor, at the *English Review* and the *Transatlantic Review*, and as one of its shrewdest theorists, whose contempt for arch medievalism is said to have saved Ezra Pound three years' work. His masterpiece, *Parade's End* (1924–8), although comparable to *Pilgrimage* or the earlier episodes of *Ulysses* in its rendering of interiority, has suffered a certain neglect: largely, I suspect, because the conception of identity it develops rests neither on difference-between nor on difference-within. The protagonist, Christopher Tietjens, statistician, soldier, and cuckold, is, above all, long-suffering: not for him the pain of abrupt recognition suffered by a Quentin Compson or a Nora Flood; not for him Miriam Henderson's long gladness.

The best way to demonstrate the idiosyncratic modernity of *Parade's End* is to compare it with Violet Hunt's *The Last Ditch* (1918), a novel from which, I believe, Ford learned a great deal. Hunt, Ford's quondam lover and companion, regarded herself as the model not only for Tietjens's sadistic wife, Sylvia, but for Valentine Wannop, the young suffragette he falls in love with in *Some Do Not* (1924) and settles down with in *The Last Post* (1928). She made her name as the author of ghost stories and somber studies of the New Woman. *The Last Ditch* has no pretensions to Modernism. Hunt's friend and best critic, May Sinclair, dismissed it out of hand, and it has since escaped critical comment altogether. The parallels with *Parade's End* suggest that it deserves better. Both novels are set immediately before and during the First World War, and are concerned

with the destiny of a class (the landed gentry) to all appearances damaged beyond repair by slaughter in the trenches and democratization at home. This class finds itself, at parade's end, in the last ditch. And yet it endures and adapts.

The Last Ditch consists of letters written by a cultured aristocrat, the Lady Arles, and one of her daughters, Lady Venice St. Remy, later Lady Venice Bar, to another daughter, Mrs. Laura Quinney, who has married an American and now lives in Newport, Rhode Island. After a brief engagement to Percy Gregson, a Labour Member of Parliament and decent, God-fearing man of the "new order," Venice marries a very faintly indecent man of the old order, Sir Audely Bar, who has generally been regarded as her mother's property. Audely Bar is a model for Christopher Tietjens. He has Tietjens's impassive blondeness and cold blue stare. Like Tietjens, he is lazy and supine, but invariably competent when called upon to act, and possessing a wide range of knowledge. When Venice writes an article about "war babies" (she's in favor), Bar points out that there are no war babies to speak of; Tietjens disabuses Valentine's article-writing mother of the same notion. Both men are in their early forties; both volunteer for active service even though they are over age, and, when confined by injury or illness to administrative tasks, perform them with exemplary, fruitless dedication. Both end up with younger women.

The main difference between Bar and Tietjens is physical. Though lazy and supine, Bar is slim. His shapeliness makes him an English type, a regulation "good soldier." Tietjens, on the other hand, is decidedly stout, and his lack of shape is a continued affront to identities founded on social, moral, or sexual distinctions. When he and his brother Mark stand facing each other, Mark suggests carved wood, Christopher wheat sacks.⁴³ It is Mark who cracks up, while Christopher adapts. Christopher strikes Sylvia as physically and morally "lymphatic." "How, she said to herself, could she ever move, put emotion into, this lump!" (406) But the shapelessness is not a dispersal, a proliferation of differences-within. Tietjens does not slip around. He bulks and looms. He occupies space, and minds. He is described as "ballooning slowly" (261) from a doorway, or "lumping opposite" (294) a fellow officer at the mess room table, or "splurging heavily down" (342) on to his camp bed. Ford's book is more modern than Hunt's because it adapts ("ballooning," "lumping") or improvizes ("splurge") until it has found terms for an identity founded neither on difference-within nor on difference-between. So assertive is Tietjens's presence, so massively accumulated, so vivid in other people's minds, that he dominates the final volume of the sequence, *The Last Post*, without appearing in it at all. *The Last Post* introduces us to virtual Tietjens.

Both narratives subside rather than end. Audely will as usual will “fall soft,” remarks Lady Arles, with his imminent marriage to Venice in mind; and he does. “It did not seem possible,” Sylvia Tietjens reflects, “that Christopher should settle down into tranquil devotion to brother and mistress after the years of emotion she had given him.” And *he* does, too. “It was as if a man should have jumped out of a frying pan into – a duckpond” (792). These soft landings, neither affirmation nor catastrophe, neither comedy nor tragedy, are something new in fiction.

Landings of any kind, soft or hard, presuppose a leap or a fall, such as the years of emotion Sylvia has given Tietjens: a discontinuity, a departure, a crisis. For a moment (a long moment, perhaps), everything is in the air. Hence, no doubt, the enduring symbolic potential of leaps and falls. But soft landings differ from hard in that they need not involve a change for the better or a change for the worse. They may leave things more or less as they were. Having dusted ourselves off, we go about our business. Soft landings partake neither of the meaningfulness we attribute to continuity nor of the meaningfulness we attribute to discontinuity. Tietjens’s completeness emerges in that suspension at once of meaningful continuity and of meaningful discontinuity.

Soft landings are not a courtesy Conrad extends to Lord Jim, whose tumbles into water (from the bridge of the *Patna*) and mud (from Rajah Tunku Allang’s compound) tend if anything to break him up. Jim violently resists such softness as there is in landings, and I would suggest, tentatively, that Conrad does a certain violence, by means of Marlow’s fretting, to his representation of Jim’s engulfment. “He reached and grabbed desperately with his hands, and only succeeded in gathering a horrible cold shiny heap of slime against his breast – up to his very chin. It seemed to him that he was burying himself alive, and then he struck out madly, scattering the mud with his fists.”⁴⁴ Jim’s gathering of slime is eerily enforced, or it may be eerily preempted, by Marlow’s gathering of adjectives: not just horrible, not even just horrible and cold, but horrible, cold, and *shiny*. Marlow cannot allow the experience to be anything for Jim but a meaningful discontinuity, a death and resurrection. “It seemed to him that he was burying himself alive” (230). The madness would appear to be as much Marlow’s as Jim’s, as much Conrad’s as Marlow’s. Conrad, I think, a traditionalist at heart, found it hard to imagine a nonviolent rupture.

Ford is modern because he lets Tietjens land softly, rather than breaking him up. He was not alone in his forbearance. Nick Adams, pitched off the train on to the cinder track by a “lousy crut of a brakeman” (292) in “The Battler,” halfway through *In Our Time*, manages to alight in a less bruising fashion in the concluding story, “Big Two-Hearted River” (340). Leopold

Bloom, about to enter his house via the area, allows his body to move freely in space by “separating himself from the railings and crouching in preparation for the impact of the fall.” He, too, lands softly. Regaining “new stable equilibrium,” he rises “uninjured though concussed by the impact” (799–80). Bernard’s investment in the lives of his friends, Tietjens’s presence even when absent, the thoughts Bloom might have had: these are as much the note of modernist fiction as Ursula Brangwen’s rainbow and the equivocations of Miriam Henderson.

NOTES

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