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Early Modernism and the English Short Story,

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ABSTRACT

The following themes are explored: the proliferation of the short story in relation to nascent modernism; the ideological preconditions for formal change, specifically a crisis within "Englishness"; and lastly, the growth of modernism in response to the unadaptability of dominant literary modes to cultural unrest. Despite a recent recourse to critical theory, short story criticism remains principally formalist in approach, and therefore reasserts the preferences of its original theorists. The emphasis upon symmetrical design can be traced back to the late Victorian ideology of vitalism. Fears of cultural degeneration mediate the apparent displacement of an organic ideal, defined in terms of autonomy, purity and instinct, and internalised through the pastoral iconography associated with England. The call for symmetry within early short story criticism colludes with this ideal, but also denies the actuality of an urban, technocratic and atomistic society. Symmetry, in that sense, explains the popularisation of the short story since it conspires with the lifelike attachment between word and object, and distantiation of alterity, which underpin the dominant genres of realism and romance. The literary market, though, was being divided by the internecine struggle between those two genres with the result that the novel was stalemated, by association, as an aesthetic product. Early modernism is comparatively progressive by centring absence and ambiguity within a critical encounter with alterity, whilst retaining a residual desire for cultural renewal. Early modernists adopt the short story not just for its innate emphasis upon ellipsis and paradox, but for its metaphorical association with the scientific changes, which were disrupting the organic ideal. Modernism foregrounds the manufactured nature of the short story, and therefore the transparency of symmetry. The interrogation of symmetry, however, exposes early modernism's own residual organicism, and anticipates its eventual dissolution. The modernist short story, though, presages the transformation of the novel.

Contents

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A number of individuals have contributed to the finished work. Firstly, I must thank my supervisor, Dr David Ayers, for whose care, attention and insight I am deeply indebted. Advice and encouragement also came from, amongst others, Dr Howard Booth, Dr Keith Carabine and Martin Scofield. I would also like to thank the School of Humanities at Oxford Brookes University, in particular Dr Roger Griffin, who introduced me to the history of the *fin de siècle,* and to Nigel Messenger, who first interested me in the short story. Friends and relations have also played their part, especially my sister-in-law Dr Virginia Samuel (who largely paid for the computer), my brother Dr John March-Russell (who showed me how the thing worked), and my mother Pamela Russell (as always).

Lastly, I would like to thank (though they shall never get to read this), Andy Kershaw, Steve Lamacq, John Peel and Mark Radcliffe for providing the soundtrack to which the thesis was written.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used during the thesis:

Joseph Conrad

TLS   `Twixt Land and Sea

TU   Tales of Unrest

WT   Within the Tides

Y   Youth and the End of the Tether

George Egerton

D   Discords

K   Keynotes

Henry James

CT   The Complete Tales of Henry James

FC   The Figure in the Carpet and Other Stories

JC   The Jolly Corner and Other Tales

Rudyard Kipling

ADC   A Diversity of Creatures

AR   Actions and Reactions

DC   Debits and Credits

LR   Limits and Renewals

TD   Traffics and Discoveries

D.H. Lawrence

EME   England, My England and Other Stories

LAH   Love Among the Haystacks and Other Stories

PO   The Prussian Officer and Other Stories

Vernon Lee

PJ   Pope Jacynth and More Supernatural Tales

ST   Supernatural Tales

TKW   That Kind of Woman: Stories from the Left Bank and Beyond

V   Vanitas: Polite Stories

Katherine Mansfield

GP   The Garden Party and Other Stories

SC   Something Childish and Other Stories

SKM   The Stories of Katherine Mansfield

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The following illustrations have been used during the thesis:

INTRODUCTION

When, in 1938, the *Punch* satirist Pont (Gavin Graham Laidler) offered his version of the modern short story, modernist form still remained controversial:

> ...the old carpet sweeper...three pieces...all in bits...what on earth did we ever
> buy that for...if i shut my eyes i can see kingscrossstation...i wonder why that
> is...somebody told me once...i must think...no time to think...through the
> trapdoor i can see janet with the feather duster but if i shut my eyes i can see
> kingscrossstation...hullo janet *there* you are...hullo mum there *you* are...now
> then janet i've spokentoyouaboutthatbefore...let us throw all these things out of
> the skylight...but not that or these and certainly not that i bought it the year
> freddie felldownstairs mrs henry tuddy...mrs henry tuddy...oh yes i remember
> now the woman with the arms...if i shut my eyes now i can see mrs tuddys
> arms...what exceptionally fine arms mrs tuddy had...the boxes might come in
> useful janet...i said the boxes might come in yes in...idiot the girl is...i wonder
> what she did to have suchveryfinearms...no janet i said these things in this
> trunk look like something orother palms...palms...PALMS...why mum they
> look more to me like your old fur coat...that is exactly what they are
> janet...dear mrs tuddy...i have been wondering all day...[1]

Despite its lack of any obvious parodic subject, Pont's pastiche reveals a number of contemporaneous views on the short story. Firstly, there is the displacement of plot (synonymous, by inference, with action, incident and revelation) by character, which is associated here with self-absorption, and arid or trivial introspection. The text's only revelation, the "palms" which are in fact a "fur coat", satirises the emphasis upon subjectivity as a sleight-of-hand, whilst the only dramatic incident, the memory of Freddie's fall, foregrounds the narrator's disinterest. Whereas drama is associated with the solitary male character, the initial focus for the narrative, "the old carpet sweeper", establishes both the domestic register and the narrator as female. Since the pastiche, though, is designed to be archetypal, the implication is that the short story is metaphorically feminine, and therefore inferior to the longer, more heavily plotted novel. Not only that, but that descriptions of private spaces, whether physical or psychological, are subordinate to narratives concerned with public realms, such as the social realist or romantic novel. There is therefore a hankering for the romance and realism, which dominated the literary market into the 1920s, and against which

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[1] Pont, 'Short Story in the New Manner' (1938), in *Writing Englishness, 1900-1950: An Introductory Sourcebook on National Identity,* ed. by Judy Giles and Tim Middleton (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 161-2.

modernism was configured as an intruder. The depiction of modernism as deviant is achieved through the narrator's narcissism - her self-involvement, obsession with details, and fascination with the sexually ambiguous Mrs Henry Tuddy. Furthermore, the short story is perceived not as marginal, as in subsequent accounts of modern British fiction, but as an archetype of modernist form. Its compression and selectivity heightens the uses of self-reflexivity: interior monologue, ellipsis, non-punctuation, and compound-words. In contrast with the (nominally) more organic and evolutionary novel, the short story is presented as an automatic and formulaic exercise, symbolised by the mechanical and repetitious introduction of characters. Whereas the novel is identified with society's superstructure, and with the hegemony which seeks to naturalise and to conceal society's economic arrangements, the short story is aligned with the base, and its form nakedly mimics its position within the productive process.

To sum-up: in the above example, modernism and the short story are rendered synonymous, and both are marginalised in relation to the dominant form (the linear novel), and the dominant modes (realism and romance). The form in which this marginalisation takes is not only engendered, describing the collapse of an outward-looking, masculine wholeness into an introspective, fractured femininity, but it is also implicated within a social critique, which claims that an organic view of writing has been displaced by one of mechanical production. The modernist short story exists as both a symptom, and a magnification of that displacement. Modernism is therefore entirely marginalised for its alleged collusion with the capitalist base, and its corruption of moral or cultural standards. The anti-modernist critique positions itself within historical and economic dynamics, which coincided with the rise of the English short story, roughly in the period from 1890 to 1920.

Pont's satire helps to illuminate the three main themes, which the following exegesis will explore. These are:

a) The causal factors for the explosion in short storywriting during the 1890s, and the subsequent developments both formally, and in terms of the modernist aesthetic.

b) The interaction between form and ideology, in particular the short story's shaping and mediation of historical disparities between traditional, organic notions of English society, and the recognition of an urban, atomistic and technocratic culture.

c) The growth of modernism in response to historical and cultural anxieties, and the failure of dominant literary forms - realism, romance and decadence - to explore and to understand the production of alterity as a result of internal contradictions within the economic and political hegemony. The short story is significant not only as an index of historical uncertainty, but also in pioneering textual strategies, which herald the rise of the modernist novel.

In brief, the short story will be analysed not as an interesting footnote, but as a major and, in many ways, quintessential modernist form, whose rise can only be explained through the historical conditions of its emergence.

Getting Started - Historical and Literary Contexts

To raise the spectre of the short story is to immediately enter a semantic minefield, as is the case also with concepts such as "English" and "modern". It is therefore useful to clarify these terms before outlining an historiography for the portmanteau known as the English modernist short story.

Critical debates still persist into the nature of the short story despite a tradition of modernist thought, which has called into question the idea of origins and essences. More recent post-structuralist criticism has encouraged readers to view literary works as texts, and concepts such as "the novel" or "the author" as products of received wisdom, arbitrary conventions, and legalistic or economic processes.[2]. The need to define the short story seems instead to be a defensive response to validate both the form and its critical study in relation to the novel, which by its longevity and cultural authority appears almost natural in its dominance. Mythification, though, is the basic ideological function, and it works to conceal the novel's mode of production. Definitions of the short story foreground certain features and diminish others, so that it becomes difficult to achieve a mutual consensus; let alone a satisfactory and inclusive definition.[3] Instead, typological disputes help to proliferate the taxonomic confusion, so that the object under study (the short story) vanishes beneath the welter of conflicting interpretations. It is therefore not the aim of the

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[2] See, for example, Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text' (1971), in *Image-Music-Text*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 155-64; and Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?' (1969), in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 196-210.

[3] See, for example, the essays in *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads*, ed. by Susan Lohafer and Jo Ellyn Clarey (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

present study to offer a new definition of the short story *per se*. Instead, Norman Friedman's minimum definition, "a short narrative fiction in prose"[4], remains the most useful approach, since it avoids precluding different subgenres and periods within the short story, or the foregrounding of different stylistic devices and narrative modes. The recognition of the flexibility and multiplicity inherent within the formal compression is central to the model of the modernist short story which will be outlined.

Side-stepping the issue of definition, though, recentres the roles of context and periodisation in distinguishing between different types of short story. Walter Allen, in claiming Sir Walter Scott as the first modern short storywriter in English[5], usefully dissociates the modern story from earlier oral forms, such as the anecdote, the tale or the fairy-story. Spoken texts, by being uttered within interpersonal or communal situations, lend a primacy to the human voice, and thence to the tale as a myth which binds the group together. The short story, by being written, published and distributed, lends a primacy to the word, and thence to the text as a historical process which foregrounds the displacements within its own enunciation, though mimesis might try to conceal that mediation. Allen's choice of Scott further associates the modern short story with the rise of Romanticism, and in particular the revaluation of modernity as a progressive force in its disruption of traditional structures. That legacy is important for the modernist short story, since it emerges at a time when modernity's progressiveness began to be reassessed. Other critics, though, tend to date the modern short story from towards the end of the Romantic period, for example in writers such as Nikolai Gogol and Edgar Allan Poe.[6]

Poe was the first writer to offer a coherent theory for the short story, and his model has been endlessly repeated. Brevity and precision underpin Poe's thesis: "there should be no word written", which does not contribute "to the one pre-established design". Since the object is to construct a narrative, which requires only "a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal", the composition must be geared to the working-through of a "single effect"; from which the reader derives an artistic

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[4] Norman Friedman, 'What Makes a Short Story Short?' (1958), in *Short Story Theories*, ed. by Charles E. May (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1976), pp. 131-46.

[5] Walter Allen, *The Short Story in English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 9-10.

[6] See, for example, H.E. Bates, *The Modern Short Story from 1809 to 1953*, 3rd edn (London: Robert Hale, 1988), pp. 26-33.

"totality", or "unity of impression", that is unachievable in the novel.[7] The emphasis upon intense experience corresponds with the Romantic concern for self-revelation, exemplified by Wordsworth's dictum of "emotion recollected in tranquillity"[8]. It also anticipates, though, the Joycean idea of epiphany: the transfigurative moment upon which both text and protagonist turn. However, as Ian Reid has observed, the elements associated with Poe's thesis - economy, turning-point, symmetry - do not form generic characteristics, which are inclusive of all short stories, but instead comment more upon Poe's own obsessions with plots, problem-solving and entrapment.[9] The theory, even while it promotes the short story's aesthetic claims, takes a utilitarian approach to the writing process, whilst reading is reduced to consumption. Poe's use of effect, which is designed to disturb the reader, and by withholding rational explanation, encourage them to continue reading is not dissimilar to the uses of sensation in popular mid-Victorian novels. Poe's method is therefore weakened as a distinctive theory for the short story. Instead, it resembles the handbooks published at the end of the nineteenth century, which emphasised craftsmanship over artistry, and viewed writing as a mechanical application of formulae for commercial purposes. However, the influence of Poe upon criticism and literary form, and his mimicking of the corruption of Romantic values into economic practice, indicate his modernity. As late as 1945, A.L. Bader could still stress that, despite the obscurity of narration, the modern short story was ultimately concerned with plot.[10]

Yet, Poe himself never used the term "short story", but employed instead the older designation of "the tale". The short story only gained currency as a critical tool following Brander Matthews' popularisation of Poe's theory in a series of articles: the first appearing in 1884 in response to the literary debate between Walter Besant and Matthews' fellow American, Henry James. Whereas Besant and James had confined their discussion of fiction to novels, Matthews sought to promote the short story as a more artistic form. His hyphenation and capitalisation of the "Short-story"

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[7] Edgar Allan Poe, 'Review of *Twice-Told Tales*' (1842), in *The New Short Story Theories*, ed. by Charles E. May (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994), pp. 60-1.
[8] William Wordsworth, preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), in *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. by R.L. Brett and A.R. Jones, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 266.
[9] Ian Reid, *The Short Story* (London: Routledge, 1977), pp. 54-65.
[10] A.L. Bader, 'The Structure of the Modern Short Story' (1945), in May (ed), *Short Story Theories*, pp. 107-15.

was designed to distinguish it from "the story which is merely short"[11], the commercial piece that lacked "symmetry of design"[12], and therefore the integrity and singularity of composition which separated it from the novel. If Poe's original model was directed, at least in part, by commercial considerations, Matthews saw in it an aesthetic quality, which could at the same time bridge the divide between realism and romance. Whereas Poe's usage of "the tale" retains a residue of the oral tradition, of a story which is convivially retold and in that context sustains a pretence of honesty and directness, Matthews' deployment of the "Short-story" is implicitly self-conscious: it foregrounds the text as a made object. Matthews' self-consciousness was not lost upon his critics, who reacted angrily against his assertion of the "Short-story" as an equally profound form as the novel.[13]

There is, however, a tension within Matthews' redeployment of Poe's theory, since his self-reflexivity contradicts the overall aim of the original thesis, which was the composition of stylistic effect in order to reinforce a reactionary view of reading as consumption. Matthews' inability to resolve that tension is ameliorated by his emphasis upon reconciliation - the aesthetic and philosophical meanings of symmetry and harmony. Matthews' conciliatory response places him within a late Victorian discourse of organicism and integration. His theory therefore acts as a crystallisation of an intellectual thought rather than a turning-point in literary history. As Dean Baldwin has stated, it provided "a theoretical basis to British practitioners and magazine editors"[14], and it is perfectly reasonable to say that the modern short story of Arnold Bennett or Somerset Maugham begins with Matthews' revaluation of Poe. However, the foregrounding of symmetry does not in itself supply a panacea, since Matthews' understanding of the term is purely a common-sensical one of balance and proportion. Instead of resolving the internal contradictions within his theory, Matthews' use of symmetry heightens the ambiguities of formal representation. This

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[11] Brander Matthews, *The Philosophy of the Short-story* (New York and London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1901), p. 25.

[12] ibid, p. 71.

[13] See, for example, an anonymous review from 1901 in *What is the Short Story?*, ed. by Eugene Current-García and Walton R. Patrick, 2nd edn (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1974), pp. 48-50.

[14] Dean Baldwin, 'The Tardy Evolution of the British Short Story', *Studies in Short Fiction*, vol. 30, no. 1 (1993), p. 31.

is the point, described by H.G. Wells as when "the splintering frame began to get into the picture"[15], where the modernist, as opposed to the modern, short story begins.

The other advantage in highlighting Matthews' role is that the emergence of the modernist short story is back-dated to the 1890s: the period in which, according to Wells, "short stories broke out everywhere".[16] Whilst short story criticism conventionally dates the English modernist short story from the time of D.H. Lawrence and Katherine Mansfield[17], its relocation within the 1890s not only brings the short story into line with standard accounts of modernism, which emphasise the cultural anxieties of the *fin de siècle* as predeterminants[18], but it also reinterprets the work of Lawrence and Mansfield by reshaping the history of the short story.[19] Baldwin has detailed the legal, economic and technological changes, which stimulated both the growth of magazines, and a potential market for short stories.[20] However, he is less convincing in describing the change of attitude, which encouraged editors to publish short stories as opposed to serialisations, miscellanies and condensed novels, apart from emphasising the influence of James, and the commercial successes of Robert Louis Stevenson and Rudyard Kipling.[21] Instead, James' prose was often criticised, whilst he struggled to conform to the story length required by editors. The intermittent stories of Joseph Conrad indicate that profitability from short stories alone was an elusive goal. Few authors founded their success exclusively upon short stories (in addition to Kipling and Stevenson can also be added Wells and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle), whilst Conrad, like most writers and readers, remained biased towards the novel. Yet, still he wrote short stories, though not for profit or status, but for specific cultural reasons, which will subsequently be outlined.

A more pertinent literary influence than James is the French author, Guy de Maupassant, who has routinely been seen as one of "the pillars of the entire structure

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[15] H.G. Wells, 'Digression about Novels' (1911), in *Henry James and H.G. Wells: A Record of Their Friendship, Their Debate on the Art of Fiction, and Their Quarrel,* ed. by Leon Edel and Gordon N. Ray (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1958), p. 222.

[16] Wells, introduction to *The Country of the Blind and Other Stories* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1914), p. v.

[17] See, for example, May, *The Short Story: The Reality of Artifice* (New York: Twayne, 1995), p. 16.

[18] See, for example, the essays in *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature, 1890-1930,* ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (London: Penguin, 1976).

[19] For present purposes, early modernism is taken as extending into the immediate post-1918 period. The thesis concentrates, however, upon writers who were publishing collections before 1914, and for whom the short story was crucial to their development. Consequently, authors such as E.M. Forster, Wyndham Lewis and Virginia Woolf have (unfortunately) been excluded.

[20] Baldwin, op cit, pp. 24-9.

[21] ibid, p. 31.

of the modern short story".[22] A pupil of Flaubert, an associate of Zola, and a
decadent in terms of lifestyle, Maupassant's stories are equally multi-faceted in both
style and content. From the mid-1880s, they were widely translated and read in
English. Conrad, and to a lesser extent James and Kipling, were devotees. Possibly
more influential than his stories, though, was Maupassant's preface to his novel
Pierre and Jean (1888), which even Mansfield, who once remarked that she "would
see every single French story up the chimney"[23], was impressed by.[24] Maupassant's
reception, however, comments more upon his audience, and the historical contexts in
which he was received.

Influence has been commonly seen as hermetically sealed, for example in the
direct, common-sensical way in which it is used by Baldwin, or alternatively in the
more intricate psychoanalytic model devised by Harold Bloom, in which a would-be
writer is forced to "swerve" away from his "strong" literary forefathers by a
deliberately "misreading", whilst still invoking their legacy.[25] The inherent
weaknesses within Bloom's model are revealed when it is historically contextualised,
for instance in Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's appropriation.[26] Gilbert and Gubar
not only see in Bloom's theory an illustration of the inner workings of patriarchy, but
also the basis for distinguishing between a male and a female literary tradition. To
arrive at that conclusion, though, they reassert the myth of a "sex war": a notion
concocted by leading suffragettes whose final aim was not political emancipation but
the purification of male sexuality (see also chapter three). Consequently, what passes
for historical analysis is instead obsessive chronology, and an over-determined
narrative, which obscures discrete historical complexity. The schematic and
monolithic nature of their work foregrounds the totalising tendencies within Bloom's
original thesis, whilst both texts can only simplify cultural phenomena by their
universalist and trans-historical representations of men and women.[27] To understand
Maupassant's impact on English fiction therefore requires a genuinely historicised

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[22] Bates, op cit, p. 73.

[23] Katherine Mansfield (September 1921), in *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by J.
Middleton Murry, 2nd edn (London: Constable, 1954), p. 263.

[24] See Mansfield, letter to Vera Beauchamp (May-June 1908), in *The Collected Letters of Katherine
Mansfield, vol. 1*, ed. by Vincent O' Sullivan and Margaret Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984),
p. 46.

[25] See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press,
1973), esp. pp. 5-16.

[26] See Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the
Twentieth Century, vols. 1 and 2* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988/9).

[27] See also the discussion of Gilbert's article, "Soldier's Heart", in chapter four.

model of influence, which is outlined in chapter one. The important feature to retain for the moment is that readers bring to their understanding of the text their own version of the author, and that Maupassant's reception foregrounds the contexts in which this image was conceived. Consequently, the repudiation of Maupassant by writers such as George Egerton and Vernon Lee is also revealing. The discourses, through which Maupassant is received and reinvented, mediate local concerns, in particular a perceived crisis of Englishness.

Critics often evade the question of Englishness by focusing upon short stories written within the English language with the result that the English short story is edged-out further by, in particular, American and Irish fiction.[28] However, following Frank O' Connor's famous formulation that short stories function as expressions of dispossessed groups within unsettled societies[29], it is possible to re-evaluate the English short story in much the same way as American and Irish fiction have been valued for their insights into national consciousness. The collapse of the three-volume novel did not only occur for economic reasons. If the Victorian novel, according to Wendall Harris, mimicked the rise of a Whiggish history obsessed with causes and effects, and detecting patterns that validated the current hegemony[30], then the disillusionment which followed the economic downturn of the 1870s called into question the form's certainty. It is also hardly coincidental that, as Alun Howkins has argued[31], a reassertion of organic or vitalistic values ensued in response to the disorientating effects of modernity. What have been regarded as fears of cultural degeneration - anxieties concerning class, gender and race, the growth of the city, and the pace of technology - mediate the disparity between the internalised picture of England as essentially organic and rural, and the reality of England as urbanised, technocratic and atomistic. In effect, the unforeseen consequences of modernity implode the discourses upon which Victorian society was founded. The schism which opened-up not only acted as a focal point for degeneration, but also as a vacuum into which these fears could be poured. The artistic consequences were not only that new forms or strategies were required, but that audiences also resorted to

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[28] See, for example, Allen, op cit.

[29] Frank O' Connor, 'The Lonely Voice' (1963), in May (ed), *Short Story Theories,* pp. 86-8.

[30] Wendall V. Harris, 'Vision and Form: The English Novel and the Emergence of the Short Story' (1975), in May (ed), *New Short Story Theories,* pp. 184-7.

[31] Alun Howkins, 'The Discovery of Rural England', in *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920,* ed. by Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 64-71.

narrative modes which seemingly either explained or discounted social disorder, thus maintaining the dominance of the single novel format.

The conflict between realism and romance, which shaped the literary scene of the *fin de siècle*, ultimately evaded the dilemmas of modernity by their mutual reliance upon the received fixity of subject and object. Their evasion, though, acknowledges the complexity of modern society, and unconsciously expresses the flaws within their formal representation. Realism was a composite term for two modes which were, in fact, incompatible - naturalism and decadence. Naturalism retained a faith in words as descriptive tools: the precise application of which served to expose society's underlying structures. Naturalism therefore sustained Victorian social polemic through a quasi-scientific belief in reason and explication. It consequently glossed-over the very paradoxes which science was producing, whilst still assuming that a moral standpoint existed outside of history. The object was therefore projected as "other", and contained by being distantiated within language. Decadents, conversely, realised that words had no innate meaning, but instead exhibited the same superficiality of other commodities. They therefore fetishised language for its artifice and depthlessness, but apart from sustained irony and self-referentiality, decadence featured no critique of the productive process. Romance, symbolised by new genres such as the imperial adventure or the spy thriller, inherited the props of Victorian fiction - plot, omniscience, dénouement - but in which closure turned upon the expulsion of the "other". Instead of exploring the ambiguities of modern society, the dominant fictional modes turned away. Only modernism, by foregrounding the omissions within representation, could offer an appropriate analysis, whilst with the novel still tied to conventional methods, only the short story could be truly innovative by not being bound to tradition.

The rise of modernism and of the short story were therefore interlinked. Though the relationship of modernism to modernity was paradoxical, as Suzanne Ferguson, for instance, has shown in the short story's reconfiguration of earlier genres[32], it presented itself as progressive, though not in the terms of Victorian ideology, for example in the views expressed by Ford Madox Ford in his first editorial for the *English Review* in December 1908:

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[32] Suzanne Ferguson, 'The Rise of the Short Story in the Hierarchy of Genres', in Lohafer and Clarey, op cit, pp. 182-91.

> In England, the country of Accepted Ideas, the novelist who is intent merely to
> register [...] is almost unknown. Yet it is England probably that most needs
> him, for England, less than any of the nations, knows where it stands, or to
> what it tends.[33]

The formal investigation of alterity mediated modernism's cultural imperative to
bridge the gap of degeneration, and reconnect ideology with actuality even if, as in
the stories of Lawrence, that proved ultimately impossible. The present discussion
therefore rejects recent analyses which have portrayed modernism as either insular
and apolitical or reactionary and implicitly anti-democratic.[34] Both of these
approaches are crudely historicist, in that the finished text is confused with the
apparent intentions of the author, and both assume a simplistic understanding of
ideological positions without contextualising them within their historical moment.
They say more about the critics' own political responses rather than the formal and
historical ambiguities which shaped modernism. The problem with, for instance,
David Trotter's assertion that modernism as a critical tool is "a blatant mystification"
is that it overrides the simple fact that the stories of, say, Conrad do not conform
either narratologically or philosophically with other romantic texts, or that Lawrence
deviates from his naturalistic antecedents. It is a lacuna which, in an otherwise useful
historical analysis, Trotter fails to resolve, and instead culminates in a series of case-
studies involving key modernists, such as James Joyce and Wyndham Lewis, based
upon an historically suspect model of disgust.[35] The attempt to erase modernism as
an ideology, as a movement or as a concept mediates the critics' own anxieties within
their own uncertain times, in particular the struggles of socialism and feminism in the
face of postmodernism and the marketplace. Suffice to say, the current analysis will
stress the continuing relevance of modernism - perhaps more so now than ever
before.

To sum-up: economic and aesthetic factors will not account for the spread of the
English short story. Cultural anxieties concerning the displacement of organicism by
an atomised, urbanised and technocratic reality destabilised the certainties of the

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[33] Reprinted by Ford Madox Ford (Hueffer) in *The Critical Attitude* (London: Duckworth, 1911), pp. 33-4.

[34] See, respectively, Clive Bloom, introduction to *Literature and Culture in Modern Britain, vol. 1: 1900-1929* (London: Longman, 1993), p. 27; and John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (London: Faber, 1992).

[35] David Trotter, *The English Novel in History: 1895-1920* (London: Routledge, 1993). The reference is to p. 4.

Victorian novel, and precipitated the take-off of the previously undervalued short story. However, neither realism nor romance were sufficient for exploring the disparities between ideology and actuality, so that modernism emerged as a third force. Since the novel was in crisis, the short story was conducive to the modernist needs for obliqueness and evocation. The result for literary criticism is that the origins, scope and periodisation of modernism must be reassessed. It is now possible to evaluate the historiography of the modernist short story.

Interpreting the Modernist Short Story

For a long time, literary criticism accepted the proposition that a fragmented society necessitated a fragmented form such as the short story. V.S. Pritchett, for example, re-emphasised the views of turn-of-the-century critics such as G.K. Chesterton:

> The modern nervous system is keyed up. The very collapse of standards, conventions and values [...] has been the making of the story writer who can catch any piece of life as it flies and make his personal performance out of it.[36]

The continuing influence of Pritchett's reflectionist model can be seen in the work of contemporary critics such as Valerie Shaw.[37] Yet, it is an essentially mimetic theory, in which the short story acts as an artless transcription of passing reality. It says nothing of how the form might heighten, distort or edit reality in the transmutation into art. Neither does it comment upon how an author might formulate a dialectic, but instead proposes a self-serving argument, in which the form merely justifies the original presupposition of social disorder, rather than submitting it to negotiation within the act of writing. The model reinforces Pritchett's own literary realism, and his adherence to the artist's authority.

A more intricate analysis, in that it helps also to distinguish between modern and modernist fiction, is Eileen Baldeshwiler's invention of the "lyrical" and "epical" short story.[38] Baldeshwiler picks up from earlier critics, such as the American H.S. Canby, who was frustrated with the plot-ridden and end-directed narrative (in other terms, the epical), and instead desired a more attentive and open-ended analysis of

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[36] V.S. Pritchett, 'Short Stories' (1953), in Current-García and Patrick, op cit, p. 117.
[37] Valerie Shaw, *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction* (London: Longman, 1983), esp. pp. 17-8 and 227-9.
[38] Eileen Baldeshwiler, 'The Lyric Short Story: The Sketch of a History' (1969), in May (ed), *New Short Story Theories*, p. 231.

theme, character and location (equivalent to the lyrical).[39] The weaknesses within Baldeshwiler's argument are due largely to periodisation, in that she associates the modernist, lyrical story with the conventional starting-point, Anton Chekhov, and with other seemingly like-minded practitioners (Mansfield, A.E. Coppard).[40] The case of Mansfield is illustrative, since Baldeshwiler defers her earlier stories, which are more clearly indebted to the fiction of the 1890s, and despite their influence upon her later work. The rejection of the roles played by "new woman" or romance fiction within the development of modernism paves the way for a teleology in which the short story progresses effortlessly from Romantic symbolism through to Joycean epiphany. The overt neatness is achieved by Baldeshwiler's projection on to the short story of ideas derived from poetry rather than the form itself.

Nonetheless, Baldeshwiler's description of a bifurcation within the short story in or around the start of the century has proved influential. Clare Hanson's distinction between short stories and short fictions, for example, discards the overlay of poetic metaphor, but retains the opposition between contrasting modes. Like Ferguson's analysis of impressionism and the short story[41], Hanson locates her study within other developments in art and literature.[42] Unlike Ferguson though, who merely stresses brevity as a defining characteristic, Hanson proceeds to more specific definitions of both modes. To a large extent, she is influenced by Roman Jakobson's demarcation between metaphor and metonymy in language[43], which David Lodge subsequently associated with the transition from realist to modernist fiction.[44] Hanson views the movement from the plotted, symmetrical short story to the plotless, fragmented short fiction as corresponding to that same transition. The problem with the model is (again) its overt neatness. The schematic approach towards not only individual texts, but also literary periods and genres, reduces criticism to the level of classification. Instead of negotiating the points in which given texts are alternately metaphoric or metonymic, texts are treated as the unified expression of their authors, and are then assimilated for categorisation. Though Hanson stresses the 1880s as her starting-point, periodisation exists in name only. Her tendency to view texts as unified wholes

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[39] Henry Seidel Canby, 'Free Fiction' (1915), in Current-García and Patrick, op cit, pp. 51-60.
[40] Baldeshwiler, op cit, pp. 232-7.
[41] Ferguson, 'Defining the Short Story: Impressionism and Form' (1982), in ibid, pp. 220-9.
[42] Clare Hanson, *Short Stories and Short Fictions 1880-1980* (London: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 1-2.
[43] See ibid, p. 36.
[44] Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy and the Typology of Modern Literature* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), esp. pp. 79-81 and 96-104.

denies any attempt at contextualisation. Furthermore, despite the emphasis upon the looseness of short fiction, modernist texts are valued for their formal dependence upon momentary crises or revelations, which largely reiterates Baldeshwiler's idea of the lyrical. Consequently, only one kind of modernist practice is privileged, and it is the usual one in reference to the short story (Joyce, Mansfield, Woolf). The advantage of Hanson's analysis is that she attempts to understand the form on its own terms, but she finishes in reasserting a conventional profile of the short story. Yet that only occurs because of a narrowly applied linguistic model, which privileges a particular type of aesthetic practice. The realisation that the two linguistic poles form parts of a dialectic, in which both imply the other[45], and that texts are not unified wholes, precipitates the foregrounding of other kinds of modernist practice, which are recognisably so due to their formal interrogation of historical context.

Conversely, Dominic Head's self-proclaimed study of the modernist short story is flawed, because of its rejection of formalism. Picking-up on earlier critical references to the enigmatic or paradoxical nature of the short story, Head goes on to argue that the modernist short story exhibits an unresolved tension between formal unity and textual disruption. In particular, dissonance takes the form of a multiplication or destabilisation of narrative "voice". Consequently, Head argues, the short story is capable of expressing social taboos and exposing the ambiguities of ideology.[46] Despite this apparent call to historicism, Head only replaces one type of formalism with another. His deployment of structuralist Marxists, such as Louis Althusser, Mikhail Bakhtin and Pierre Macherey, does not in itself transform short story criticism, since Head fails to contextualise the theory in terms of how short stories are produced and distributed. Consequently, the emphasis remains upon form despite the technical terminology, which Head seems to invest with a quasi-scientific rigorousness. The repudiation of formalism appears, however, to be misguided, since the extent to which reality is distorted by the imposition of form, and the semblance of artistic unity, would seem to be central to a materialistic critique.

Instead, Head's account bears similarities with a later article by Hanson, in particular the short story's communication of social taboo. Hanson argues that the imposition of an artistic frame allows for gaps and silences to remain within the text,

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[45] In his interpretation of Jakobson, Lodge recognises this interaction between metaphor and metonymy. See ibid, pp. 109-11.
[46] Dominic Head, *The Modernist Short Story: A Study of Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), esp. pp. 21-31.

whilst also sustaining the impression of unity. This formal paradox is compared by Hanson to the workings of the unconscious, in particular how ellipses mediate fantasy and desire.[47] Like Head, Hanson surrounds her argument in critical theory, primarily the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan and Jean-Francois Lyotard, as if that alone was justification, whilst her analysis fails to follow through with any kind of materialistic reading. Nonetheless, the interpretations supplied by Hanson and Head remain suggestive, because they approach the short story on its own terms, whilst both offer a formalist model which allows for some type of contextualisation.

The theories of Hanson and Head turn upon notions of symmetry and narrative unity, but apart from indicating areas of dissonance and ambiguity, they fail to specify the significance of the modernist short story. The following discussion responds to that lacuna by asking to what extent the disintegration of symmetrical form mimics the implosion of grand narratives, such as scientific advancement, economic liberalisation and imperial expansion, and therefore to what degree the short story was most appropriate in expressing this historical uncertainty. The "symmetry of design" popularised by Brander Matthews not only features the contentious idea of design, presupposing both an artificer and a divine purpose, but also of symmetry with its connotations of balance and harmony. However, it was also in the 1890s that mathematics began to complicate this common-sensical view of symmetry, which reinforced a vitalistic emphasis upon order and proportion. In much the same way as mid-Victorian sensation fiction can be seen as pre-empting the Freudian emphasis upon domestic trauma and unconscious desires, the present analysis will show that the modernist short story anticipates mathematical theories regarding broken symmetry, in part because writers were already having to respond to the implications of a related phenomenon, entropy, which had been discovered in the mid-1850s. The conclusion will describe this new model in greater detail, but for the moment I shall illustrate my point with a text praised for its symmetry - Conrad's "The Secret Sharer" (1910).

Cedric Watts, in particular, has documented the ways in which duplication, dualism and replication structure the narrative, and especially the unnamed sea captain's personal journey through to self-fulfilment.[48] Yet the symmetrical pattern is

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[47] Hanson, "Things out of Words': Towards a Poetics of Short Fiction', in *Re-Reading the Short Story* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 24-31.

[48] Cedric Watts, 'The Mirror-Tale: An Ethico-structural Analysis of Conrad's 'The Secret Sharer'', *Critical Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1977), pp. 25-37.

not exactly followed through - at least not in the conventional sense. The captain for example does not resemble Leggatt, the renegade whom he shelters, though the reader is assured of their similarity. The conclusion fails to mirror the introduction since certain details are absent, and that helps to deflate the sense of epiphany. Is Leggatt ultimately free, and how does his escape justify the captain's sense of self-fruition? At what cost, either personal or professional, has that had to be achieved? In addition, individual incidents fail to cohere. How, for instance, does Leggatt manage to avoid detection by the First Mate, and especially on a vessel of such small size? Importantly, the symmetrical design is itself a product of the first-person narration, so that the lacunae within the narrative foreground the distance between narration and formal pattern. What appears to be a highly co-ordinated narrative fragments into something which is deeply open-ended, because the surrounding frame reveals its own arbitrariness. At the heart, though, of this spiralling complexity are basically simple rules, such as those laid down by Poe, but the narrative is designed in such a way as to expose their apparent simplicity. At the same time as formal brevity condenses and collapses material, so that the short story mimics the bewildering excess of commercial society, the story's latent intricacy expands exponentially upon actual reading of the text.

When Hanson and Head refer to the inherent destabilisation of discursive or narrative devices, what they are really alluding to is the process of broken symmetry. In a sense, the modernist short story leaves the body (normative reality) standing, but removes the head: the intellectual or moral centre, which is also synonymous with the spiritual meaning of design. The metaphorical decapitation comments also upon the cultural sense of loss and corruption. However, the dialectic between simple structures and complex results, as seen in "The Secret Sharer", precipitates the interrogation of how ideology seeks intrinsically to rationalise and erase complexity. The modernist short story, therefore, indicates a new method of perception, which accords with the regenerationist ethos at the heart of early modernism. There may still be some qualms concerning the adoption of mathematical theory in order to explicate the modernist short story form, but that can be justified since science, technology and reason, the bastions of Victorian progress, were largely responsible for the production of alterity and degenerationist fears. The rise of the short story was itself partially indebted to the emergence of new technological processes, and with which it was popularly associated. In that respect, the theories of Theodor

Adorno, in particular his insights into the commodification of culture and the institutionalisation of reason, are extremely illuminating, especially in relation to the rise of modernism. The dialectical structure of the short story not only expresses but also exposes both the unforeseen consequences of science and technology, and literature's attempt at its representation: something which appears to be absent in later modernist texts. The short story therefore reveals the centrality of early modernism within English society's attempt to understand itself, and within the shifting contours of modernist aesthetics.

Thesis Outline

The opening chapter begins with an evaluation of Maupassant's conception of art, and the role of the artist. The impact of his theory can only be understood in terms of the concurrent debate in England between realism and romance. These forms, though, are implicated within an organic discourse, so that they give way to cultural anxieties concerning economic downturn, socio-political agitation, urbanisation and scientific discoveries. The reinterpretation of Maupassant's fiction through these historical contexts illuminates the origins of modernism, and the role played by the short story.

The following chapters function as case-studies which develop the opening arguments, and operate both chronologically and thematically. Chapter two, therefore, focuses upon Henry James' stories concerning the relationship between the artist and the mass media. Adorno's theory of "the culture industry" is introduced due to its relevance in describing the conflict between artistic integrity and technological reproduction. James tends to see the displacement of autonomy as a feminisation, so that as a contrast, chapter three recentres two neglected women writers, George Egerton and Vernon Lee. In order to understand them as modernists, the analysis begins first with an exploration of decadence, and then with the gradual rise of the "new woman": two phenomena which Egerton and Lee have both been associated with. The relationship between decadent and "new woman" fiction is critiqued, but the extent to which Egerton and Lee can be reassessed as modernists is dependent upon how they distance themselves from both labels, in particular the rise of a puritanical heterosexism within the women's movement. Chapter four contrasts with both the previous chapters, which offer aesthetic,

metropolitan and gendered explanations for the rise of modernism, by concentrating upon how Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling adapt the romance narrative. Importantly, instead of seeing science as a tool to be harnessed to a masculine emphasis upon instinct, both writers employ scientific metaphors to structure their fictions. Consequently, they view the dramatic changes wrought by science as non-threatening, but as something to be explored. Kipling, in particular, invests technology with a magical quality as part of a grieving process following the Great War.

At this stage, the thesis reaches a halfway point. Chapters five and six concentrate, respectively, upon D.H. Lawrence and Katherine Mansfield, and the extent to which they built upon the achievements of their predecessors as a testimony to the value of the English short story. Lawrence's writing also reveals the influence of literary editors such as Ford and Ezra Pound, in particular the adaptation of impressionism and imagism. Chapter five ends inconclusively though. Lawrence's departure from England not only anticipates his valorisation of non-European culture, but also comments upon his perception of post-war Britain, in particular the apparent rise of an homogenised, producer-led and, in that sense, feminised society, and of early modernism's inability to translate its political ideals into practice. Mansfield, though, reveals that Lawrence's frustrations, and of early modernism itself, stem from a residual and delusory belief in organicism. Mansfield dissociates, at a discursive level, self from consciousness, and instead portrays identity as an endless series of masks. Mansfield's foregrounding of interiority brings the thesis, in one sense, full circle. Unlike James' retreat into interior consciousness, though, Mansfield's investigation into what might constitute identity exposes the workings of ideology and discourse. She therefore emphasises the continuing importance of modernism, and of the role played by the short story, in terms of their constant scepticism.

One final point. The thesis is, unrepentantly, a literary history. There remains a suspicious view of this approach in some academic circles. Some claim that it is neither one thing nor another, but a kind of fossil analysis, whilst others claim that post-structuralist theory has undermined the certitudes of historical method. My personal response would be to argue that literary texts are constituted within historical realities, in particular the rise of the nation-state and of capitalism, and that these same forces condition the very fact of academic discourse and academic debate. The gaps within texts, however, mediate the contradictions between ideology and

contingency. Instead of schematically dividing between history as discourse and history as event, it can be seen that the points where narratives fracture communicate the incessant reverberations of events which exceed comprehension, but demand the reader's attention.[49] It is therefore possible to construct an interdisciplinary approach which analyses how discursive representations, such as literary texts, attempt to rationalise historical events, and of how their failure not only resounds the echo of the event, but also raises the need for new responses. At the very least, the thesis hopes, in the words of the poet and historian Denise Riley, to hear history "at work to stammer its imperfect story".[50]

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[49] A relevant discussion on the debate between literature and history is supplied by Sally Ledger in *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the "Fin de Siècle"* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 3-4.

[50] Denise Riley, 'Laibach Lyrik: Slovenia, 1991', in *Mop Mop Georgette: New and Selected Poems 1986-1993* (Cambridge: Reality Street, 1993), p. 9.

1) MAUPASSANT AND THE CONTEXT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

The translation of Guy de Maupassant's short fiction has often been seen as the instigation for the modern English short story by introducing British authors to European approaches to literature. An examination of Maupassant's own theory of fiction reveals, however, a tension between the self-reflexivity of style, and the desire for faithful representation. The struggle for artistic unity involves a need to define an otherwise fluid reality. Maupassant's emphasis upon artistic shape is immersed within an organic discourse, which appeals in different ways to realists, romanticists, and even aesthetes. However, there is a disparity with modernist fiction, which calls into question the directness of Maupassant's influence. To resolve this dilemma, a fresh understanding of influence as a process of re-reading is proposed. In order to appreciate this model, though, the external contexts surrounding Maupassant's reception must also be recognised. These include, firstly, debates upon the nature of fiction: reportage versus morality, realism versus romance. Those debates mediate, though, other cultural concerns, such as degeneration, gender, urbanisation and technology, amongst others. A brief analysis of some of these themes is essential, since the theory of influence, which is being proposed, forms part of a socio-cultural activity, in which these factors will impinge upon the act of re-reading Maupassant. One immediate effect of both Maupassant's reception and the cultural changes besetting Victorian England was the rise of the short story, which in its modernist guise can be read as both a symptom of, and a response to, these various transformations.

Maupassant's Theory of Fiction

Though Maupassant's preface to *Pierre and Jean* (1888) deals primarily with the novel, and not with the short story, it offers invaluable insight into his critical thinking. There are two main points for consideration: the nature of the artist, and of literary form. The preface is presented, firstly, as a riposte to prescriptive criticism. Instead of being impartial analysts, as Maupassant would prefer, critics form schools of thought, and "unchangeable rules of composition", according to their own preferences. Maupassant condemns these critics in two ways. Firstly, by treating it as the norm, they help to preserve the dominance of the traditional novel, one which operates "like a play in three acts", progressing from "exposition" to "action" to

"dénouement".[1] Maupassant claims that authors, who deviate from this norm, are accused of "being warped", and of "not seeing things in the same way" as the majority.[2] Secondly, critics are condemned for being "merely readers". Unlike the "expert in pictures", who only assesses an object's "artistic value", a reader "is looking only for the satisfaction of his own turn of mind".[3] The reader is presented as a passive consumer, lost within the demands of "the public". These demands - "make me sad", "make me dream" - depict readers as an infantile, unthinking mass. Critics, who should judge objectively, and set a lead to their audience, are no better, since their literary definitions contradict the author's "right to compose [...] in accordance with their personal conception of art". By regarding critics as no different from ordinary readers, Maupassant removes their moral or intellectual authority. The artist, in lacking any collective ties, assumes a nominal superiority. Though Maupassant argues that this stems from the author's "special way of thinking", his argument is suffused with social prejudice, for example, the disdainful comment "that without being productive themselves", critics need to form schools together.[4] In Maupassant's view, authority is dependent upon originality, and that that can only arise from solitude. Non-creativity is associated with the mass. By extrapolation, Maupassant forms a division between a nominal "high", the artist free to create and perfect his art, and a nominal "low", the pleasure-seeking mass. This mass is not class-based, but includes all except for the "few choice spirits", who seek beauty in art.[5] Only the artist, who is defined by the "clear, logical and sinewy" nature of his art, can stand alone from the masses, who are aligned with "brutal, arbitrary, disconnected" life.[6] This conception of the artist as autonomous and intact affects Maupassant's understanding of literary form.

Realism and romance, the dominant fictional schools, are dismissed as merely mirrors of each other. Both manipulate narrative - the former "for the sake of plausibility", and the latter "to please, thrill or touch".[7] Neither can offer a convincing representation of life, which Maupassant views as "inexplicable, illogical

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[1] Guy de Maupassant, 'The Novel', preface to *Pierre and Jean*, trans. by Leonard Tancock (London: Penguin, 1979, orig. pub. 1888), p. 22.
[2] ibid, p. 24.
[3] ibid, p. 23.
[4] ibid, p. 22.
[5] ibid, p. 23.
[6] ibid, pp. 27 and 34.
[7] ibid, pp. 24 and 26.

and contradictory".[8] Both depend upon achieving an artistic effect, and so select and foreground material for that purpose. In so doing, living complexity is reduced, and lent a rational coherence. Maupassant favours an alternative approach, one derived from Flaubert, in which authors discover the "unknown element" in objects, and seek out the "one word", which defines it.[9] The act of linking word with object creates a credibility without the use of contrivances or clichés. Importantly, this can only be the work of an individual, since it involves exclusively the translation of a "personal illusion"[10], the author's own particular world-view. It is this intensity which produces the artistic effect, since in Maupassant's argument, how an object's essence is described will depend upon how it is perceived by the artist. Not only is the object distinguished from any other "of the same race or kind"[11], but it also confirms the author's originality, distinguishing him from any other writer. The impression which emerges is of an artist-figure, whose autonomy is mediated through the stylistic shape of the text. It is his sincerity of expression, his re-presentation of the world, which the reader responds to.

To some extent, Maupassant parallels the theories of Edgar Allan Poe[12], but whereas Poe saw artistic effect as a means of revelation, Maupassant takes a more relativistic approach: "each of us create as many truths as there are men on earth".[13] The key influence is, therefore, that of Flaubert. He epitomises, for Maupassant, the courageous and independent artist; disinterested with the demands of either readers or literary schools. This sense of aloofness and self-possession is mediated through Flaubert's injunction to write with detachment; to be concise and seek out the *mot juste*. Maupassant equates this appeal for clarity with the "pure" and "sinewy" nature of good language. In suggesting a body metaphor for his art, Maupassant contrasts the Flaubertian method with the "muddy" and "puny efforts" of the over-elaborate Goncourts, which his writing "will not [...] be weakened" by.[14] The dynamism of the text mirrors the author's self-integration. Flaubert, too, desired to compose a work, "which would hold up on its own by the internal strength of its style", and would

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[8] ibid, p. 27.
[9] ibid, p. 33.
[10] ibid, p. 28.
[11] ibid, p. 33.
[12] Poe's French reception has been detailed by Célestin Pierre Cambiere in *The Influence of Edgar Allan Poe in France* (New York: Stechert, 1927).
[13] Maupassant, op cit, p. 27.
[14] ibid, pp. 32-4.

ideally be "about nothing, a book dependent on nothing external".[15] Flaubert viewed

forms such as naturalism as being degraded by their proximity to their subject matter.

Maupassant suggests, however, that Flaubert's pursuit of the essence of objects

expresses reality's incoherence, whilst lending it an artistic unity. There remains,

though, a tension between the emphasis upon literary design, and the unstructured

impressions of lived experience. Maupassant's recourse is to the artist-figure, and to

the imposition of his "illusion upon humanity".[16]

To summarise: Maupassant's theory offers a libertarian view of the artist, in

which the integration of word with object is synonymous with the author's own self-

assertion. It is, therefore, founded upon a solipsistic world-view, which is

underpinned by an organic and dualistic discourse. To desire only the essences of

things is to defer the objects of everyday existence, and to render them as "other", so

that the theory is implicitly authoritarian.

Fiction and the Body Politic

Before Maupassant's fiction had begun to be widely reviewed in England, there was

already a heated debate on art and culture. This had been initiated, in part, by the

spread of European literature, in particular the detached and explicit naturalism of

Zola and Ibsen, which was counterpointed in British fiction by George Moore, the

aestheticism of Wilde and Swinburne, and the "new women" writers such as Sarah

Grand or Mona Caird. In 1884, there had been an exchange on the "art of fiction"

between Walter Besant, who argued for the crafting of exciting narratives with a

strong moral line, and Henry James, who instead made the case for Art by arguing for

stylistic excellence and psychological observation.[17] However, the literary debate

intensified after the late 1880s with important contributions from, amongst others,

Arthur Waugh, the conservative critic and father of Evelyn, and Andrew Lang, the

Scottish novelist and commentator.

Waugh's "Reticence in Literature", intriguingly published in *The Yellow Book*,

succinctly puts the case for the conservative, anti-naturalist lobby. His piece calls for

the retention of "good taste" and "the moral idea" in order to prevent "losing our

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[15] Quoted by Stephen Heath in *Flaubert: Madame Bovary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 7.

[16] Maupassant, op cit, p. 28.

[17] Walter Besant, *The Art of Fiction* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1884); and Henry James, 'The Art of Fiction' (1884), in *The Critical Muse: Selected Literary Criticism,* ed. by Roger Gard (London: Penguin, 1987), pp. 186-206.

judgement in the ecstasies of the joy of life, becoming, in a word, effeminate". He proceeds to argue that man is defined by his intellect, woman "by sensations", so that the male artist must hold "true to his own view of life" lest he becomes "unmanly, effeminate [...] (to) gloat over pleasure, to revel in immodesty".[18] Consequently, though French naturalism is "virile", "strong, robust and muscular", it is also metaphorically feminine by being "vulgar", "sordid", lacking "unity".[19]

Waugh's article indicates the Victorian obsession with images of health and physical well-being. This was derived, in part, from the much earlier concept of the "body politic" in which the state is imagined to be a human body where social unease is seen to be a form of disease. But as Bruce Haley has argued, during the Victorian era this idea assumed an alternate meaning, adopted from Juvenal's desire for "a sound mind in a sound body". Originating within medicine and psychology, but passing into the language of literary criticism, this associated ill-health with immorality. Consequently, the evaluation of a literary text was not only in terms of its artistry but also its "soundness": the integration of narrative with character, the resolution of plot within a moral ending, becoming synonymous with "the healthy body" in terms of the proper and harmonious operation of its organs.[20] A taste for abstraction or the morbid were taken as signs of disorder, not only within the metaphorical body of the writing but also with the author: the incoherent text was considered to be an expression of the author's own instability. However, with the prevailing emphasis upon athleticism and wholesomeness, this body could only ever be depicted as masculine. The Victorian conception of femininity elided women's lack of physical strength with an alleged mental fragility. Her innate emotionalism, positively channelled through domesticity and maternity, could tip over into ill-temper and irrationality through an excess of work or stress. As George Romanes, the Darwinian biologist, asserted this was not just the condition of a few women, but was common to all, manifesting itself for example in feminine intuition and "refinement of the senses", but also dictating their lack of originality, poor judgement and inability to concentrate.[21] This weakness, according to early psychologists such

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[18] Arthur Waugh, 'Reticence in Literature', *The Yellow Book: An Illustrated Quarterly*, vol. 1 (1894), pp. 208-10.
[19] ibid, pp. 216-7.
[20] Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 46-68.
[21] George John Romanes, 'Mental Differences between Men and Women', *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 21 (1887), pp. 655-8.

as Henry Maudsley, could be attributed to the demands placed upon women by their bodies. This stemmed in part from the pervasive belief, derived from the First Law of Thermodynamics, that human beings only had a finite amount of energy which, for the safe operation of their systems, needed to be conserved rather than wasted.[22] However, women suffered an inevitable wastage due to their reproductive cycle and this, for the Victorians, dictated their instability: the mind being responsive to the needs of the body.[23] This physiological argument reinforced the social and sexual divisions between men and women, whilst at the same time encouraging men to monitor their women-folk, since their minds could become disturbed at any time during their life cycle. Menstruation, in particular, was often considered to be both a cause of hysteria and a more general sign of women's fragility, sliding into incoherence.[24] This instability of the female form predetermined "the healthy body" to be masculine, with its own emphasis upon autonomy, unity and dynamism, the "soundness, fearlessness and vigorousness" approved of by such arch-conservatives as Hugh Stutfield[25], a frequent writer on "decadent" movements, especially feminism. Consequently, when Waugh is confronted by a piece of what he considers to be bad writing, he accuses it of being "effeminate", revealing his own fear of Art becoming insensible and "womanly".

Waugh concludes his article by arguing, "to endure restraint - *that* is to be strong", but for women writers this was only possible if they discarded "the habit of (their) sex and [...] rely upon (their) judgement".[26] For women this could have two damaging consequences - representation as a frigid blue-stocking, such as befell George Eliot following her death[27], or as an "unsexed" woman, for example in the popular depictions of "new women" as mannish androgens, disinterested in the feminine roles of maternity and domesticity. Since Waugh's argument is immersed in the belief of "the healthy body", good art could not possibly be produced by such "abnormal" creatures. Women are further marginalised in Waugh's argument by his

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[22] See Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 105-8.

[23] See Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987), pp. 122-3.

[24] See Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Insanity', *Victorian Studies,* vol. 23, no. 2 (1980), pp. 169-71.

[25] Hugh E.M. Stutfield, "Tommyrotics", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* vol. 157 (1895), p. 836.

[26] Waugh, op cit, pp. 219 and 210.

[27] See Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the "Fin de Siècle"* (London: Virago, 1992) pp. 62 and 76.

association of "new ideas" in literature with imperialist aims - "the discovery of new countries", "the acquisition of territory and knowledge".[28] Artistic reticence therefore corresponds with the discipline, humour and comradeship deemed by conservatives as underpinning the Empire. However, the Empire itself needed to be protected against signs of decadence.

One of the most forthright articles to link literature, decadence and effeminacy together was offered by Janet Hogarth, a university-educated "new woman" who later married W.L. Courtney, the editor of the *Fortnightly Review*. Deriving much of her critique from both "social Darwinism" and Max Nordau (to whom I shall refer later), Hogarth blames the growing complexity of urban life for an increase in hysteria. This manifests itself within writers as immorality, emotionalism, pessimism, affectation and narcissism.[29] These were all criticisms which, as Lyn Pykett has observed, were commonly associated with femininity, aligning womanliness with degeneracy.[30] Hogarth's critique of "feminine literature", by which she means women's writing, itself suggests this since her allegations of allusiveness, emotionalism and disproportion are the same that she levels against her male "degenerates" (amongst whom are Zola, Ibsen and Swinburne)[31], implying that they are somehow "womanly". However, the greatest "source of evil" in female authors is their "detachment from family life".[32] In this, Hogarth shares similar views with her fellow Darwinist Grant Allen, a self-proclaimed supporter of women's rights but who, for the survival of the race, argued that "a woman ought to be ashamed to say she has no desire to be a wife and mother". Allen also shared with Hogarth a firm belief in the separation of the sexes - "virility is the keynote to the best and the most forcible in the masculine character".[33] Hogarth, though, contends that better education will improve woman's role as a mother, drawing her away from the fictional "analysis of passion" to the stoicism and refinement of "the philosophical mind".[34] Hogarth's article indicates not only how far Victorian criticism was concerned with the definition of sexuality, particularly women's, but also suggests the

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[28] Waugh, op cit, p. 212.
[29] Janet E. Hogarth, 'Literary Degenerates', *Fortnightly Review,* vol. 57 (1895), p. 586.
[30] Lyn Pykett, *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), p. 30.
[31] Hogarth, op cit, pp. 587-8.
[32] ibid, p. 590.
[33] Grant Allen, 'Plain Words on the Woman Question', *Fortnightly Review,* vol. 46 (1889), p. 452.
[34] Hogarth, op cit, p. 592.

ways in which reactionary attitudes could permeate the work of nominal free-thinkers
such as Hogarth or Allen.

Andrew Lang was one of the most eloquent in prescribing a form of romantic
literature, in keeping with masculine and imperialist designs, for the nation's ills. In a
witty discussion of the "two-sided shield of Fiction", the "silver" of realism and the
"gold" of romance, Lang artfully disparages the European advocates of naturalism -
"I, for one, admire M. Dostoieffsky so much, and so sincerely, that I pay him the
supreme tribute of never reading him at all".[35] Lang begins by arguing that it "is not
salutary for a nature prone to gloom", and that it is a "tendency of Realism" to dwell
upon "the Unpleasant".[36] Gradually, his criticisms become more gendered: the
intimacy of "analysis makes one feel [...] intrusive and unmanly", whilst the emphasis
upon "modern character" excludes both "exciting events and engaging narrative", i.e.
realism pacifies literature, making it feminine.[37] For Lang, writing should be about
"the joy of adventurous living", which connects with "the savage within us". The
ideal reader of naturalism may be "highly cultured", but his civility is a delusion, a
screen to the "survival of barbarism" which encourages the basic human emotions of
love, action and adventure. "The Coming Man", the product of aesthetic, urban
society, is instead "bald" and "toothless", dislocated from Nature.[38] Whereas
naturalism appeared to be contributing to feelings of anomie by suggesting a kind of
atomism, a breaking-up of "common sense" realities through its detached
observation, romance enabled readers, according to Lang, to reconnect with themes
of coherence and engagement by emphasising clarity, universal passions and morality.
Besant also felt that romance could help male and female readers, the products of the
new mass education system, to internalise hegemonic values[39], whilst "the modern
Elephantiasis (could) continue to write in French", though hopefully with diminishing
sales.[40]

Though conservative critics portrayed realism as degenerate, and therefore
feminine, male realists also attempted to define their agenda by in part reconfiguring
the female body. In George Moore's first attack upon the circulating libraries, which

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[35] Andrew Lang, 'Realism and Romance', *Contemporary Review,* vol. 52 (1887), p. 684.

[36] ibid, pp. 686 and 687.

[37] ibid, p. 688.

[38] ibid, pp. 689-90.

[39] See Nigel Cross, *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth Century Grub Street* (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 205 and 217.

[40] Besant, 'Candour in English Fiction', *New Review,* vol. 2 (1890), p. 8.

he viewed as vetting and therefore limiting new fiction, he argues that the end-result of this will be a literature designed only for "young girls and widows of sedentary habits; for (whom) political questions have no interest". Ultimately, humanity will become "headless, trunkless, limbless"[41], a process in which the female subject is not only portrayed as broken and redundant, but her fragmentation seems to parallel the flux of "felt" experience, which the male realist attempts to structure through detailed analysis. It is because of this process that, in Moore's view, the contemporary novel lacks "backbone".[42] He seems to suggest that the novel not only needs to be written by a sound male artist, but also read by an equally sound male reader, who can interpret the work accordingly. But, paradoxically, Moore's polemic emphasises the growing realisation that a writer's work is a commodity, which is consumed similarly to any other product, by readers whom the author has no control over. This particularly disturbs Moore if the reader is, as he sees it, a moralistic matron or a romance-addled maiden.[43]

As Rachel Bowlby has argued, the emerging consumer culture not only targeted female shoppers, but was frequently viewed as feminine, since it was predominantly associated with women. Shopping was seen as an expression of women's alleged narcissism: their inability to think rationally, and their attraction to images and sensations.[44] For male authors, this presented them with a problem: masculine intellectualism or physicality were potentially undermined if they were nothing more than commodities to be consumed by women rather than the ideal audience of like-minded men. This was less of a dilemma for the romantic authors since their narratives, if nothing else, were sensationalistic. But for the aesthete there were two possible responses. One was symbolised by writers such as George Gissing and Henry James. Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891) offered a naturalistic plea on behalf of the struggling artist, disregarded by the mass of the book-buying public, and alienated from within the publishing industry. James too, rallied around the icon of the isolated artist, most memorably in his dispute with H.G. Wells, the latter preferring fiction's utilitarian function as a forum for ideas, by arguing, "it is art that

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[41] George Moore, 'A New Censorship of Literature' (1884), in *Literature at Nurse, or Circulating Morals: A Polemic on Victorian Censorship,* ed. by Pierre Coustillas (Hassocks, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1976), p. 28.
[42] ibid, p. 27.
[43] See Moore, 'Literature at Nurse' (1885), in ibid, pp. 16 and 22.
[44] Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola* (New York and London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 18-34.

makes life, makes interest, makes importance".[45] Both Gissing and James reinforce the sanctity of the solitary male artist against a feminised culture though, as will be argued, this takes different forms in their fictions.

The second response, associated with decadent fiction, was to reclaim the feminine. Max Beerbohm summarises this stance in an article which, though aimed as a satire, embraces the decadents' love of artifice as a feminine virtue. Beerbohm equates the "glad indulgence" of the 1890s, the gambling on the stock market or in foreign casinos, with the Roman Empire[46], and suggests that this is symbolised by the woman at leisure, her aimlessness and love of pretence. Beerbohm contends that action would "spoil the pretty procedure of her reason", and instead he celebrates the blankness of the female face, which should be "beautiful and without meaning".[47] The passive superficiality of the female consumer is converted into the highpoint of artifice. However, not only is she defined by her consumerism, but Beerbohm also presents her as a commodity through her use of cosmetics. This "mask", which she creates, is for him the realisation of women's "moods in all their shades" with the ultimate aim of male gratification. He warns against, though, men's use of cosmetics, since this would lead to "the amalgamation of the sexes", mimicking "the shriek of unbecoming" symbolised by feminists.[48] Consequently, though Beerbohm is content to portray artifice as feminine, it can only be successfully translated into Art if there remains a masculine mind controlling and shaping its form. This can be seen in novels written by men analysing the phenomenon of the "new woman", such as Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893) or Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (1895).

Absent from these discussions of art and culture is the female point of view. This is because female authors did not so much discuss the crisis of morality and representation as *be* the crisis - at least in part, and certainly for their male counterparts. In this respect, Janet Wolff has argued that the erosion of the Victorian ideology of separate spheres can be read as a context for modernism.[49] The division between the public, masculine world of work and the private, feminine realm of the

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[45] James (10th July 1915), in *Henry James and H.G. Wells: A Record of Their Friendship, Their Debate on the Art of Fiction, and Their Quarrel,* ed. by Leon Edel and Gordon N. Ray, (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1958), p. 267.

[46] Max Beerbohm, 'A Defence of Cosmetics', *The Yellow Book: An Illustrated Quarterly,* vol. 1 (1894), pp. 66-8.

[47] ibid, pp. 70-1.

[48] ibid, pp. 78 and 69.

[49] Janet Wolff, *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 12-28.

home institutionalised the gender dualism upon which patriarchy was supported. (This line of reasoning, though, necessarily renders invisible the occupations of working class women.) Females were actively discouraged from entering the public sphere except, possibly, under the feminine guise of philanthropy. However, in the latter part of the century an increasing number of females, the so-called "new women", began to enter the public realm via new educational and job opportunities. This called into question the assumptions that women could not cope with additional or different labour, concentrate for long periods or make rational decisions.[50] At the same time female intellectuals began to interrogate the role of marriage, to emphasise the pressures imposed by the institution, so much so that one commentator, somewhat erroneously, dubbed them "the anti-marriage league".[51] The clearest demonstration, however, of the gender crisis came in the form of campaigns, such as Josephine Butler's stand against the Contagious Diseases Act (repealed in 1886), or the early suffrage movement. For Susan Kent, these are inseparable, since both involved women in uncertain, intimate, unfeminine areas - sexuality and politics - which ultimately confronted the construction of gender roles and women's function within society.[52] The same could also be said about women's intervention into the literary world. Female authors assumed celebratory pseudonyms, such as Sarah Grand, or where they adopted male pseudonyms, such as Vernon Lee, it was not so much a disguise, as with George Eliot, but an appropriation of male aestheticism, since their true gender was well-known. However, as John Stokes has observed, such cultural disruptions tended to be "lumped together" by Victorian critics, who discerned connections where none existed.[53] For example, one can cite an anonymous piece in the *Westminster Review*, which progresses effortlessly from women writers to themes of class conflict, urban decay, and "the spread of Socialism and Nihilism".[54] This tendency to collapse diverse issues into one another not only simplified events, but also reinforced feelings of turmoil. At the same time, this article proposes a false comparison between these themes, suggesting that women

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[50] See David Rubinstein, *Before the Suffragettes: Women's Emancipation in the 1890s* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1986), pp. 69-71 and 185-7.

[51] Margaret Oliphant, 'The Anti-Marriage League', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 159 (1896), pp. 135-49.

[52] Susan Kingsley Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860 -1914* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 11-14.

[53] John Stokes, *In the Nineties* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 14.

[54] Quoted by Linda Dowling in 'The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s', *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, vol. 33, no. 4 (1979), pp. 439-440.

writers are in some way the cause of what follows, that each is one element within a more general process of "feminisation". In order to explore the artistic debates, which framed Maupassant's reception, one needs to unpick some of these strands and recontextualise them.

Aspects of Degeneration

Above all else, there was the prevailing fear of degeneration.[55] A nebulous anxiety, this myth permeated the language of social unease, crossing national boundaries, and affecting a diversity of discourses - religious, sociological and artistic. Its internationalism indicates the absence of any specific economic or social cause. Instead, it appeared to emerge from more general fears surrounding "modernisation" (for example the growth of capitalism and secularism, increasing urbanisation and industrialisation), the astonishing rapidity of which was in stark contrast with earlier European history. One can list a series of unforeseen consequences, such as the decline in religion, increasing anomie, vulgar materialism or the suppression of instinct, which appeared to contradict the Victorian faith in a progress built upon science, rationalism, capitalism and empire-building. This sense of negativity fuelled fears of collapse, reinterpreting historical events as symptoms of this over-riding condition. This reaction also stemmed from the Victorian belief in the *zeitgeist,* that history followed a pattern which could be divided into distinct epochs, each with their own particular character.[56] It was the seeming inevitability which appeared to make this process so disturbing. Different forms of degenerationist theory therefore emerged, but each featured a belief in cultural decline unless there was active intervention: by alternatively reacting against the tide of history (nineteenth century moralism), as part of a "cyclical rebirth" (the influence of Vico), or in believing that decadence would culminate within a new age (Zionism). At the same time there was an equal belief in the nation-state as a unique community with its own sense of a shared history and culture.[57] These feelings of autonomy and distinctiveness were common throughout Europe, including Britain, where degenerationist fears emerged in relation to imperialist concerns. As the title of an anthology edited by the Liberal

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[55] See Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848 - c. 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Also Roger Griffin's excellent summary, from a slightly different angle, in *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Pinter, 1991), pp. 200-4.

[56] Haley, op cit, pp. 58-60.

[57] See, for example, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 15-16.

politician Charles Masterman indicates, *The Heart of the Empire* (1901), there was a pervasive fear that a decaying centre could result in imperial collapse.

Instead, battling against these anxieties, there emerged across Europe, in Eric Hobsbawm's terms, a series of "mass-produced traditions".[58] The emergence of national education, a widening franchise and an aspiring lower middle class presented governments with new opportunities for inculcating a sense of national pride. The building of monuments, the iconification of historical figures and the introduction of public ceremonies were all designed to unite the nation in celebration of its history. This can also be seen within the regulation of leisure, and the promotion of sporting occasions as patriotic statements. But, as Hugh Cunningham has observed of national events such as Derby Day, these were spasmodic.[59] Their annual repetition merely offered a pretence of unity, though this was far outweighed by the collected leisure activity of separate classes, whilst other activities retained their class distinctions. At best, these manufactured traditions could offer a distraction but not a panacea to the pressures of social unease.

One can interpret the intensification of the artistic debate as a consequence of magnified fears following the renewed economic down-turn of the mid-1880s. Relative under-performance after the rapid expansion of the 1850s and '60s, at the same time as Germany's economic and military advance began to unsettle the balance of power, fuelled imperialist fears - the need to be strong enough to repel new enemies and protect the Empire.[60] But economic slow-down occurred at the same time as the so-called "rediscovery of poverty", magnifying the impact of depression and re-emphasising fears of internal corruption.[61] Theories that economic progress and philanthropy would remove poverty, by inculcating a fresh sense of self-help and morality, were dispelled by the findings of the new social investigators, which revealed the growth of the urban poor. This renewed old fears of the city's corrupting influence: that the deficiencies, once introduced into the urban population

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[58] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 263-307.

[59] Hugh Cunningham, 'Leisure and Culture', in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, vol. 2*, ed. by F.M.L. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 319.

[60] See David S. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 326-58.

[61] See Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 281-314.

from its environment, would be passed on into their offspring, weakening the human stock, and affecting any further entrants into the city.[62] Social problems, such as bad housing and sanitation, were seen as both encouraging and reflecting this hereditary decay for which remedies such as deportation and sterilisation were proposed.[63] Political thinkers became concerned about the increasing burden upon the social system, potentially dragging other classes downwards; the physical weakening of men to defend the Empire; and attacks upon property by a dispossessed and alienated under-class.[64] The rise of socialist agitation, symbolised most clearly by "Bloody Sunday" (1887) when a working-class demonstration attempted to enter the West End, was seen as a manifestation of this. However, in reality such disturbances were largely small-scale and over-exaggerated by the media, whilst socialism itself appealed more to the upper working classes than to the so-called "residuum".[65] However, the sense of real middle class panic can be gauged from the titles of studies such as Charles Booth's *In Darkest England* (1890).[66]

Attitudes towards the poor were often affected by evolutionary theory. However, "social Darwinism" sought to offer a rational explanation for degeneration as well as practical solutions. Social Darwinists, such as Herbert Spencer, reasserted a notion of progress by explaining away degeneration as an inevitable aspect of evolution. Degenerates were "weak" off-shoots who would, in time, be overtaken by the "strong" within the continual process of natural selection. This was both a corruption of evolutionary theory, by down-playing the roles of randomness and environment within Darwin's work, and a reassertion of more traditional ideas - the proclaimed differences between the "fit" and the "unfit", and Malthusian fears of population control.[67] By offering a pattern of progress, achieved through the inevitable victory of the "strong" over the "weak", social Darwinism demonstrated that contemporary fears of decay were merely a stage within the eventual vindication of the social and racial hierarchies which underpinned the Empire.[68] However, it also

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[62] ibid, pp. 127-33.
[63] ibid, pp. 309-10.
[64] ibid, pp. 286-91. See also Anthony S. Wohl, *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain* (London: Methuen, 1984), pp. 331-4.
[65] Gareth Jones, ibid, pp. 337-49.
[66] See also Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992), pp. 28-9.
[67] See Greta Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought: The Interaction Between Biological and Social Theory* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 6-8.
[68] ibid, pp. 140-59.

emphasised that active intervention was required in order for the "fit" to triumph, though solutions for the infectious "residuum" diverged between eugenic arguments and more liberal measures of education and welfare.[69] The fact that liberal economists, such as J.A. Hobson, and free-thinkers such as Karl Pearson, were influenced by social Darwinist arguments emphasises the widening gap between intellectuals and the population - itself a response to modernity.

The optimism of the social Darwinists was not, however, shared by other commentators. Rather than seeing urban decay and social unrest as part of a reconceived progress, Joseph Conrad for example picked-up on the sense of gloom and finality. Writing in 1897, he appears to recognise the mindlessness and arbitrariness of Darwin's original theory:

> There is a - let us say - a machine. It evolved itself (I am severely scientific) out of a chaos of scraps of iron and behold! - it knits. I am horrified at the horrible work and stand appalled. I feel it ought to embroider - but it goes on knitting. You come and say: "this is all right; it's only a question of the right kind of oil." [...] Alas no. You cannot by any special lubrication make embroidery with a knitting machine. And the most withering thought is that the infamous thing has made itself; made itself without thought, without conscience, without foresight [...] It is a tragic accident - and it has happened. [...] It knits us in and it knits us out.[70]

The similarly despondent tone of Nordau's critique, *Degeneration* (1895), appeared to confirm the downward spiral felt by many: "Over the earth the shadows creep with deepening gloom, wrapping all objects in a mysterious dimness, in which all certainty is destroyed and any guess seems plausible. Forms lose their outlines, and are dissolved in floating mist. The day is over, the night draws on".[71] Passages such as these possibly helped to make the work a best-seller.[72] Nordau's solution, a curious blend of pseudo-science and moral polemic anticipating his own conversion to Zionism, places its trust in the stolid, common man to adapt to the freneticism of urban society. The weak-minded artist, whom Nordau rails against, will instead die

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[69] Gareth Jones, op cit, pp. 302-12.

[70] Joseph Conrad, letter to R.B. Cunninghame Graham (20th December 1897), in *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, vol. 1*, ed. by Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 425.

[71] Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, 2nd edn (London: Heinemann, 1913), p. 6.

[72] See, for example, Nordau's reception by the correspondent "Unknown Quantity" in Stokes, op cit, pp. 7-8.

out.[73] At the same time however another scientific theory, that of entropy, was beginning to gain currency.[74] In the Second Law of Thermodynamics, entropy is the measurement of molecular disorder within a given system. Since all change within a given system involves a certain degree of disorder - the movement, vibration and recombination of molecules - entropy cannot decrease: it either remains constant or increases. Within a closed system entropy tends towards a maximum, since both molecular volition and the corresponding production of heat increase until the available energy is exhausted, and the system fragments. It was but a simple step, alongside other fears of degeneration, to speculate if the Universe itself was a closed system; in which case there would come a time when the cosmos disintegrated: the so-called "heat death of the Universe". H.G. Wells indicates the pervasiveness of entropic fears towards the end of *The Time Machine:*

> At last, more than thirty million years hence, the huge red-hot dome of the sun
> had come to obscure nearly a tenth part of the darkling heavens [...] the red
> beach, save for its livid green liverworts and lichens, seemed lifeless. And now
> it was flecked with white. A bitter cold assailed me [...] There were fringes of
> ice along the sea margin, with drifting masses further out; but the main
> expanse of that salt ocean, all bloody under the eternal sunset, was still
> unfrozen.[75]

Perhaps the two most important elements of the theory were the sense of escalating disorder and enclosure. Change, under this model, could not be interpreted as good or bad: all change was a sign of disorder. This did not just refer to urban depravation or political disturbance, but also to welcome developments, such as the spread of technology. As Stephen Kern has argued, technological expansion drastically altered concepts of time and space, displacing traditional linearity and distance with a new sense of a heterogeneous and simultaneous present, whilst the past and future became more dislocated, the former a nostalgic ideal and the latter remote and threatening.[76] In other words, technology embodied the flux of history. Scientific change not only undermined traditional certainties, but also produced an excess of movement, of rapidly altering perceptions, of over-signification. Kipling's "Mrs Bathurst" (1904),

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[73] Nordau, op cit, pp. 540-1.
[74] See Stephen G. Brush, *The Temperature of History: Phases of Science and Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Franklin, 1978), pp. 30-1.
[75] H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (London: Dent, 1935, orig. pub. 1895), pp. 95-6.
[76] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 314-7.

in which the heroine appears only as a cinematic image, illustrates this sense of complexity. For the character Vickery, the sight of his former lover walking towards him until "she melted out of the picture" leads to him deserting from the army in order to find her. As his colleague Pyecroft comments, "the pictures *were* the real thing - alive an' movin'" (*TD*, p. 279, my emphasis). But instead, like Hooper's hand, which appears to hold evidence of Vickery's apparent death, only for it to be revealed as empty, it is *not* Mrs Bathurst on the screen, only her image, the trace but not the actuality of her presence. Vickery follows her out of the narrative, "out of the picture", leaving behind him the confusion between what is or isn't real. The story features themes of alterity, loss and entrapment: the alienation of the individual from a mass of signs s/he cannot differentiate and comprehend. At the same time over-signification suggests a process of enclosure: the loss of space in which the individual can "be" him/herself, symbolised by the overcrowded cities and the regimentation of work and leisure. Conrad's Marlow captures this sense of disenchantment:

> Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps [...] At that time there
> were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked
> particularly inviting [...] I would put my finger on it and say, When I grow up I
> will go there. The North Pole was one of those places, I remember. Well, I
> haven't been there yet, and shall not try now. The glamour's off.[77]

Alterity and nebulous fears about "otherness", allied to a sense of enclosure or fragmentation, appear to be the products of these degenerationist concerns. Judith Walkowitz has recently examined this condition by studying representations of *fin de siècle* London. The Jack the Ripper murders (1888), for example, as they were played out in the newspapers, constituted a "media event" by translating popular myths, such as anti-Semitism, mad doctors, and ambivalences towards prostitution and the East End, into the language of melodrama.[78] This was distinct from the actuality of the crimes, but helped to spread an imaginary London landscape, mapped on to the real one, a fantastic, labyrinthine territory as suggested by James Thomson in his epic poem, "The City of Dreadful Night" (1874):

> Although lamps burn along the silent streets,
> Even when moonlight silvers empty squares

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[77] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin, 1973, orig. pub. 1902), p. 33.
[78] Walkowitz, op cit, pp. 203-26.

> The dark holds countless lanes and close retreats;
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> But when the night its sphereless mantle wears
>
> The open spaces yawn with gloom abysmal,
>
> The sombre mansions loom immense and dismal,
>
> The lanes are black as subterranean lairs. (III, lines 1-5)

Thomson contends that the "dreadful strain" of this eternal Night, which is "not of

Sleep", "makes wretches there insane" (II, lines 71-7).[79] Consequently, London and

its socio-economic realities were reconfigured as an alternative, hellish domain in

which, returning to Walkowitz's argument, social developments such as working

class agitation, immigrant ghettos or "new women" became symbols of this strange

realm, an alternate landscape which the media helped both to propagate and

contribute to (see chapter two).[80] These reconstructions of London not only

mediated cultural myths (racism, misogyny, elitism), which operate in part as a

rationalisation of historical complexity, but also influenced reactions towards city life.

This had the ironic effect of magnifying complexity by re-emphasising cultural

paranoias, and by blurring the distinctions between reality and fantasy. One can see

the effect of this in a renewal of Gothic literature during which some of the genre's

most memorable characters were created. As Rosemary Jackson has argued, the

Gothic depends upon an active interrogation of the "real" by foregrounding themes of

alterity, enclosure and disintegration.[81] However, in the 1880s and '90s these were

not just artistic devices but pervasive cultural fears. Consequently, one finds an

invasion of the city by Stevenson's Mr Hyde and Stoker's Dracula, whilst Haggard's

Ayesha and Wells' Dr Moreau ensnare unwary travellers on the outer edges of the

Empire. The Gothic also played an important role within the development of the

short story featuring significant work from, amongst others, Kipling, Henry James

and W.W. Jacobs. Though these fictions often deal with atavism, their fears of

regression and transgression may be read as metaphors for the psychological effects

of modernity - the familiar suddenly rendered unfamiliar.

This blurring of boundaries also contradicted the male iconography of "the

healthy body". Incoherence, excess and duplication - the characteristics of urban life,

the mass media and burgeoning consumer culture - were viewed, as Andreas Huyssen

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[79] James Thomson, 'The City of Dreadful Night', in *Victorian Poetry: "The City of Dreadful Night" and Other Poems,* ed. by N.P. Messenger and J.R. Walton (London: Dent, 1974), pp. 140-1.

[80] Walkowitz, op cit, pp. 10-13.

[81] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 19-26, 46-7 and 82-91.

has explored in representations of the crowd[82], as feminine. Out of these perceptions was formed the idea of historical and spatial "flux", which on the one hand women were seen to symbolise, and which on the other, male modernists such as T.S. Eliot or Ezra Pound attempted to negotiate and contain. It is important to remember that this flux was not natural, but a complex of perceptions, myths and ambivalences. However, it was felt to have real and disturbing consequences, as summed-up by Eliza Lynn Linton, a regular commentator on manners and morals: "whether the descendants of our grand old country, once so essentially masculine and powerful, are still to be ruled by men or directly influenced and swayed by her women, to become leaders of political thought, rulers of nations, founders of empires, or sink behind as dillettanti [...] content with poetry and aestheticism in lieu of science and dominion, finding chief delight in the worship of women, but this can never be the same thing as the manly love and honour given to women by men of a masculine race". [83]

Linton's exhaustive conclusion draws together fears of degeneration, empire, literature, science and, above all, "feminisation", of becoming sexually and spiritually "other". It was into this complex of anxieties that Maupassant as a writer, and as a potential influence was received, and it is to this that I shall now turn.

Maupassant's Reception and Influence

Despite being overshadowed most notably by Ibsen and Zola, Maupassant was nonetheless regarded as the pre-eminent short story-writer[84], and was accordingly reviewed by some of the leading critics of the day, amongst them Waugh, the Reverend William Barry and Yetta Blaze de Bury. Barry's critique is not only representative of conservative responses, but also positions Maupassant within a wider movement, "the French decadence". Writing under the influence of "the healthy body", Barry argues that Maupassant's increasing insanity is reflected in his growing obsession with "gruesome and terrible subjects", "fervid atmosphere", and technique over morality.[85] At the same time, affected by degenerationist theory,

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[82] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 49-53.

[83] Eliza Lynn Linton, 'The Characteristics of English Women, II', *Fortnightly Review,* vol. 45 (1889), p. 376.

[84] See Arthur Symons, 'Guy de Maupassant', *Athenaeum,* (July - December 1893), p. 97. Also H.G. Wells' comment that in the 1890s "the short story was Maupassant", *The Country of the Blind and Other Stories* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1914), p. vii.

[85] W.F. Barry, 'The French Decadence', *Quarterly Review,* vol. 174 (1892), p. 483.

Barry sees Maupassant as a product of his society, the expanding complexity of urban life resulting in greater pressure upon "weak and fevered brains", such as those of artists who cultivate "a rarefied and redoubtable faculty". This can lead to an exaggerated sensitivity, sensationalism, and a taste for "cruel" and "obscene horrors".[86] Maupassant in particular is "enamoured of decay", "a creature of instinct" who "cares only for excitement".[87] From this Barry concludes that French literature supplies ample evidence that France's "upper and middle classes [...] have fallen into a most unhealthy condition", and that this is the root cause for France's imperial decline.[88] Since Barry sees moral and artistic decadence as a form of disease, there was also the danger of infection. He therefore attacks English writers who see in Maupassant's work only an "artistic trifling", and not a "process of death".[89] "Disinterested pity" and "qualified admiration" are means through which the "sensual disbelief" of Paris could take root in Britain, threatening its moral and political authority.[90] Only by burning away this cancer can there be salvation: "Mankind (would) not lose" if "the volumes of Zola and Maupassant (were) put to the flames".[91] Having read this illness as an emasculation, Maupassant's world is devoid of "manliness and human feeling"[92], two years later Barry's fearful prediction appeared to have come true. Writing about the "new women", Barry equates this "tumultuous battalion", influenced by foreign ideas, with the French Revolution.[93] He prophesies that there will be a descent into anarchy unless the moral and sexual order is restored.[94]

It was not just conservatives who reacted vehemently against Maupassant, and what he appeared to stand for. George Moore, in a review which indicates his change of allegiance from Zola to Turgenev, also displays a belief in artistic "fitness". He attacks Maupassant for being "a vulgar and dingy little man", whose physical deformity is reflected in the "torn and mangled" structures of his novels. His short stories are "admirable", though ultimately he only reveals "more distinctly what (readers) saw before". This, Moore argues, is "sufficient to induce in the middle

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[86] ibid, pp. 498-9.
[87] ibid, pp. 491 and 497.
[88] ibid, p. 503.
[89] ibid, p. 504.
[90] ibid, p. 480.
[91] ibid, p. 482.
[92] ibid, p. 480.
[93] W.F. Barry, 'The Strike of a Sex', *Quarterly Review*, vol. 179 (1894), pp. 289-90.
[94] ibid, pp. 315-7.

classes the momentary belief that they are capable of thinking".[95] In other words, Maupassant's fiction is a debased form of realism by being commercial and low-brow: the truly insightful artist would, in Moore's argument, stand above both commodification, and a reading public which would prefer to treat his work as a commodity. For aesthetes, such as Oscar Wilde and Vernon Lee, their objection was to Maupassant's naturalism. Wilde attacked Maupassant for stripping life bare, and revealing in his "lurid little tragedies" a "foul sore and festering wound".[96] The allusion to dissection and anatomy indicates Wilde's suspicion of mixing pseudo-science (naturalism) with Art: the former is concerned with morbid "truth", whilst the latter consists of a lie, the construction of an artifice which is beautiful in itself. Lee criticises Maupassant's naturalism as a debasement of Art, reducing its subversive power to "rearrange and develop" life to mere reportage.[97] Besides attacking his pessimism, Lee also makes a point of singling-out his representation of women, in particular his use of the *femme fatale*, as a failure to understand female psychology and a device to gratify men's desires.[98] These objections were derived, in part, from the decadents' own reassertion of aesthetic values within what they viewed to be a vulgar, philistine society. They proposed a transcendent aestheticism, the much quoted "art for art's sake", over a mundane or squalid existence. This acted, though, as the swan song to a dying civilisation, which in turn led the decadents into celebrating areas made taboo by society, for example eroticism, occultism and allusiveness. Maupassant's fiction, though, is tainted for the decadents by being too closely associated with its subject matter, due to its emphasis upon representation. Conservatives, however, such as Shan Bullock, continued to equate Maupassant, who merely offers "a significant essence, a crystal thing", with the "decadence and perfumery" of aestheticism. The decision "not to cover pages", Bullock argues, is itself an immoral act: the failure to depict "men of flesh and blood; women of worth and substance". Instead, Bullock opines that the British short story should represent "our great middle class" and "unsophisticated peasants" in order to build "a nation" of writers and readers.[99]

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[95] George Moore, 'Guy de Maupassant', *The Illustrated London News,* 16th January 1892, p. 82.
[96] Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying' (1891), in *Selected Writings,* ed. by Richard Ellmann, (London: Chancellor Press, 1985), p. 7.
[97] Vernon Lee, *Baldwin: Being Dialogues on Views and Aspirations* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1886), pp. 221-3.
[98] ibid, p. 237.
[99] Shan F. Bullock, 'The British Short Story', *The Bookman,* vol. 16 (1899), p. 126.

Maupassant's proponents were themselves a mixed grouping. George Saintsbury, like Andrew Lang, sided with romance in the debate with realism, but nonetheless approved of Maupassant's lack of stylistic or psychological ostentatiousness.[100] Like Bullock, though, he warned against the subjectivity of impressionism since "Art should always seek the whole".[101] The desire for objectivity paradoxically associates Saintsbury with naturalism, and in particular the younger practitioners such as Arnold Bennett, who saw in Maupassant a radical guide for him to follow:

> I have just finished Guy de Maupassant's *Bel Ami*. One of the most obviously truthful, British-matron-shocking, disgusting, attractive, overwhelmingly-powerful novels I ever read.[102]

Later, Bennett cited Maupassant, alongside Turgenev, the de Goncourts and Moore, as one of his "masters and models".[103] Unlike Saintsbury who, following the criteria of Besant, primarily saw Maupassant as a craftsman of story and narrative, Bennett privileges him for his insight into truth: "it seems to me that only within the last few years have we absorbed from France that passion for the artistic shapely presentation of truth [...] which animated Flaubert, the de Goncourts and de Maupassant".[104] Bennett's belief in literature's role of exposing "truth", and his rationalist faith that this was something which could be achieved through greater precision in art, not only confirms his position within naturalism, but also indicates a difference in the conception of the author between naturalists and modernists.

As was suggested earlier, there is a difference between how Gissing and James composed their fiction in response to the "feminisation" of commercial culture. Gissing, like Moore or Bennett, retains his belief in a definable truth, more a condition than an idea, from which vantage-point he proceeds to write, in order to restate this truth which commercial forces would seek to undermine, to repackage as another commodity. Consequently, his image of the author is of one who is omniscient, who remains aloof from the subject matter of commerce, in which literary and sexual identities are exchangable, who stands above it in order, on the one hand,

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[100] George Saintsbury, *A History of the French Novel, vol. 2* (London: Macmillan, 1919), p. 514.
[101] ibid, p. 508.
[102] Arnold Bennett, letter to George Sturt (24th May 1893), in *The Letters of Arnold Bennett, vol. 2*, ed. by James Hepburn, (London and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 7.
[103] Bennett, letter to George Sturt (11th November 1895), in ibid, p. 29.
[104] Arnold Bennett, (1st January 1898), in *The Journals*, ed. by Frank Swinnerton (London: Penguin, 1971), p. 45.

to supply a social critique and, on the other, to avoid being tainted. This tendency to present only the externals of characters and objects, as if they were the site of truth, was most famously criticised by Virginia Woolf in her essay, "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" (1924). But rather than follow her argument that this refusal to portray the internal self is an example of bad writing, I prefer to suggest instead that this was a sincere response, however limited, to the impact of modernity.

James and Conrad however, in their studies of Maupassant, reveal little interest in empirical truth, and instead pay far more attention to issues of style. Neither, though, treat style in terms of craftsmanship (the conservative Saintsbury) or, like the decadents, as an end in itself, a revelling in artifice which glorifies society's disorientation, and offers a transcendent Art over mundane Life. Instead James, agreeing with Maupassant's preface to *Pierre and Jean,* in fact goes beyond Maupassant: "the particular way we see the world is our particular illusion [...] and this illusion fits itself to our organs and senses; our receptive vessel becomes the furniture of *our* little plot of the universal consciousness".[105] Whereas Maupassant assumed the Flaubertian method so as to lend order to the chaos of "felt" experience, to make one see more clearly, James interprets this more as a substitution: the replacement of flux with the clarity of artistic expression, which is itself an inscription of the inner self. If Maupassant sought to order the world to his design, and in his writing it is possible to see growing tensions within that project, then James seeks to re-create the world by inserting his specific vision into it. Again, this is not to be confused with transcendence, the binarism of Art over Life, since James is attempting to locate his work within the world, to renew it from within by redesigning the chaos of Life in order to accommodate his Art.

As both Lyn Pykett and Roger Griffin have emphasised, in their own particular ways, fears of degeneration were accompanied by regenerationist beliefs.[106] One of the most important, as has already been noted, was that of "cyclical rebirth". During the 1890s, it merged with myths of palingenesis, "palin" meaning anew and "genesis" creation, so that the term refers to the sense of renewal after a period of perceived decline. Following a cyclical view of history one could argue that palingenesis is nostalgic, desiring a return to a time before decadence. But in an era dominated by notions of historical linearity, the Victorians' internalisation of progress, palingenesis

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[105] James, 'Guy de Maupassant' (1888), in *Critical Muse,* p. 232.
[106] Pykett, op cit, pp. 38-48; Griffin, op cit, pp. 32-6.

is ultimately forward-looking: it takes from the past in order to re-shape the present and then move onwards. In this sense, palingenesis is closely related to contemporary understanding of the term "revolution". Rather than a complete overthrow of the previous regime, revolutions merely re-order what has gone before. However, all revolutions carry with them a desire for renewal, a belief that the new regime will radically transcend its decadent predecessor, what Georges Sorel termed the "mad chimera" or revolutionary impulse which fuels all ideologies.[107] This is true whether one is considering a political movement, the Russian Revolution for instance, or an artistic phenomenon such as Pound's "revolution of the word". Those who accept this myth believe that they and their contemporaries are living through an historical "turning-point": that decadence is not permanent but has reached its peak; that the new order which is about to emerge can be ushered in by their own active involvement. In this respect, modernism can be seen as just one of the palingenetic movements to emerge during the *fin de siècle*. Other examples include developments in politics (communism and fascism), in art (futurism or the Bauhaus), and in science (eugenics and psychotherapy), though other ideological aspects would have to be considered for these otherwise disparate movements to be properly disentangled. One merely notes that the desire for renovation was as pervasive as degenerationist anxieties. Examples from modernism itself include D.H. Lawrence's use of the phoenix as his personal symbol (in medieval times the phoenix was associated with entire eras of renewal following periods of decay), or in the cyclical design of novels like *Heart of Darkness* (1902), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and, of course, *Finnegans Wake* (1939). Though all of these writers are very different in terms of their style, this does not deny the presence of the myth. Its eventual expression is merely dependent upon the subjectivities of individual practitioners, of what other ideologies (i.e. myths) it might come into contact with.

This point is also exemplified by James' assertion of an art which can be valued for its clarity in lieu of a "universal measure of the truth".[108] Whereas naturalism and decadence turned to reportage and aestheticism as knee-jerk responses, investing in them an idea of truth, modernism built into its artistic practice the instability of its object, truth or reality, whilst trying to renew or re-order it. Conrad, for example,

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[107] Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, trans. by T.E. Hulme (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1961, orig. pub. 1908), p. 126.
[108] James, 'Guy de Maupassant', p. 233.

acknowledges "the changing aspects of nature" and "the ever-shifting surface of life".[109] This necessarily involves a redefinition of the artist, both in his writing - James' emphasis upon disinterestedness, impressionism and conciseness - and in his persona, the artist's alienation stems not just from his social exclusion, as with Gissing, but also from the difficulty of artistic creation, the removal of "the vague, the ready-made and the second-best" from his work.[110] Again, this is not a retrenchment from Life, but a centring of artistic construction at the heart of an author's existence. This emphasis upon complexity, though, requires a new form of reader, one with a "faculty of observation" and a "power of appreciation".[111] This is an important distinction since logic and concentration were perceived as masculine qualities: James, for example, equates the pleasant empty-headedness of romance with "the optimism of women and of spinsters; in other words the optimism of ignorance as well as of delicacy".[112] Both James and Conrad emphasise "the masculine firmness" and "genuine masculinity" of Maupassant.[113] This is significant, since at first it seems that James and Conrad are merely restating a traditional masculinism and misogyny. But on the contrary, traditional masculinists, such as Lang or Waugh, would have described Maupassant's fiction as "effeminate". Instead, it seems to me, that James and Conrad are offering a revised form of masculinity, symbolised in the move from Dickensian polemic (Gissing) or romantic melodrama (Haggard), to the coolness of impersonality. At the same time, however, this is also an appropriation of the self-reflexive "art for art's sake" of aestheticism, whilst simultaneously attempting to recast the pursuit of style as a hard, masculine exercise, divorced from the more hedonistic aspects of aestheticism, that which was considered to be decadent and effeminate. Conrad, in particular, seems to embody this when he juxtaposes Maupassant's "logic" and "clearness" with the "compelling charm" of a feminine "earth", thereby foregrounding the gender relationship between the male artist and the constantly changing flux, which he must observe and detail.[114] However, here James and Conrad slightly disagree in their reading of Maupassant. For James Maupassant's characters are motivated by instinct without reference to their psychological lives; for Conrad Maupassant's instinctiveness is a subtle understanding

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[109] Conrad, *Notes on Life and Letters* (New York: Doubleday, 1921), p. 31.
[110] James, 'Guy de Maupassant', p. 242.
[111] Conrad, *Notes,* p. 27.
[112] James, 'Guy de Maupassant', p. 247-8.
[113] James, ibid, p, 242; Conrad, *Notes,* p. 30.
[114] Conrad, ibid, pp. 29 and 31.

of a dispassionate universe.[115] Both, though, acquire from their reading of Maupassant the need to redefine their notion of the masculine artist, even if that involves creating a new form of readership. Both centre style as an internalisation and exploration of complexity and by exploring, rather than critiquing in the naturalistic mode, suggest a new form of possible meaning.

Each of these interpretations re-present Maupassant according to the needs and beliefs of the reader. Each rewriting of his work exposes their subjectivities. Importantly, each reader presents their version of Maupassant as definitive, though these versions are the product of the reader's interpretation. This seems to validate the distinction made by Seymour Chatman between the real and implied authors of a text.[116] It is impossible ever to "know" the real Maupassant: the reader merely interacts with a text's implied author and characters. But through the act of reading, the process of establishing a text's "meaning", the reader formulates a surrogate author-figure. It is this "Maupassant" which each of these readers not only re-create and attempt to describe in their criticism, but which they are also influenced by in one form or another. However as Roman Jakobson observed, no message, in this case a literary text, can be extracted from its point of contact with the reader, from what he/she might bring to the work, the form in which it is received, and whatever external contexts might impinge upon the reading.[117] In a very real sense both the message and its author are re-made each time they are re-read, depending upon the changing nature of readers and contexts. This is why such great stress has been placed upon understanding Maupassant's reception within its historical context. However, it is in the nature of such an approach that one can never fully know all the contexts which affect a given reading.

Consequently, one must treat Maupassant's received status as "father of the modern short story" in more relative terms. Arnold Bennett actively sought out Maupassant as a guide, but his fictions can hardly be called "modern-*ist*". Henry James, the most important early theorist of modernism, was ultimately ambivalent to Maupassant, whilst female authors, such as George Egerton, carved-out a form of modernist practice in reaction against Maupassant. His position is therefore symbolic

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[115] James, 'Guy de Maupassant', p. 255; Conrad, ibid, p. 30.
[116] Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 147-51.
[117] Roman Jakobson, 'Linguistics and Poetics' (1960), in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge (London: Longman, 1988), pp. 34-8.

- he represents whatever a given reader wishes to see - and in this respect, Maupassant is similar to one of the figures highlighted by Walkowitz, a symbol of Britain's disorientated psychological landscape. The alterity, which Maupassant symbolises, could be approached by authors in three ways. Confrontationally, from a conservative, pro-romance perspective (Lang); from the realism of Bennett as a challenge to public life; or in terms of modernism, by building alterity and the shiftiness of truth into its practice either through an appreciative or critical reading of Maupassant (respectively Conrad and Lee). This necessarily complicates, but also opens-up, the question of both Maupassant's influence and the historical origins of modernism. In this respect, the act of reintroducing neglected writers and forms, such as the short story, necessarily exposes the subjectivities of canonical modernism, calling into question the critical practices which have reinforced its dominance.

Conclusion

The initial consideration of Maupassant's artistic theory revealed an inherent contradiction. Despite its modernity, the shaping of complex phenomena into a unified whole mediates the persistence of a traditional, organic discourse. The theory, therefore, conceals an otherwise conservative dialectic between high and low, male and female, individual and mass. The terms, though, in which the theory was written meant that it could be widely interpreted, whilst its impact upon an English culture, which exhibited its own profound organic myths, was significant. The theory's comprehension comments less upon Maupassant, and more upon his readers, their motivations and ideological contexts. Maupassant's reception, therefore, exposes the inner workings of late Victorian culture, and of its relationship to its historical and economic base.

Degenerationist fears emerged from the conflict between an internalised ideal of England as essentially pastoral, and the actuality of late Victorian society as urbanised and materially-driven. Literature, as part of the superstructure, was forced into negotiating that sense of estrangement. Despite alterations within the productive process - the collapse of the three-volume novel, the expansion of the periodical market, and the emergence of new or more specialised audiences - the novel form, and the romantic genre remained predominant. Yet, because of literature's position within the superstructure, it could not supply the sense of overview and unity demanded by these dominant modes. Instead, it could at best only mediate the

internal contradictions between superstructure and base, and of its role in that relationship. The ensuing debates between realism and romance not only exemplify, but also exacerbate these discontinuities by introducing a self-consciousness, which is inappropriate to either genre. Both participants, by jointly making representation into an issue, raise questions about the nature of mimesis, which they are unable to resolve. Instead, their self-contradictions mediate the ambiguities within their own ideological discourses. The conversion of objects into an "other" expresses their underlying anxiety.

Naturalism retains its rational faith in words as instruments of meaning. Maupassant's use of the *mot juste* suggests, on one level, that an almost scientific precision in language may still contain the other; to render it into words and ensure its explication. Yet, Maupassant's theory also indicates that what passes for objective lifelikeness is no more than a persuasive, self-reflexive gesture. Consequently, the naturalistic project is irredeemably flawed. Romantic, pro-imperialist authors take a more prosaic approach towards language and representation. In their writing, the other is subjugated either by being eroticised or by being eliminated, or both. The impossibility of incorporating the other, even at a distance as in naturalism, mediates the romantic form's location within the nation-state's need to preserve, and expand its own boundaries. By contrast, decadent fiction (which was often regarded erroneously as a sub-genre of realism) fetishises the other as part of its ironic celebration of surfaces and commodities. For that reason, decadence is a proto-modernist discourse, though its uncritical play and emphasis upon the ephemeral cannot in themselves account for the rise, and diversity, of modernism. Instead, in the clash between realism and romance, modernism is best conceived as a third force, which transcends both of its rivals in promoting a new cultural synthesis. Whereas realism and romance are in different ways reactionary, modernism is implicitly progressive. It renovates textual and formal strategies in order to negotiate with the other, whilst also formulating a dialectic, which deciphers the historical production of alterity.

Early modernist fiction, therefore, constructs an artistic frame, which instead of resolving, sustains gaps and silences within the text. The relationship is reciprocal, since the frame allows for a critical distance, whilst in foregrounding ambiguity, the internal contradictions expose the arbitrariness of the frame itself. The form, therefore, acts as an analogue to the tensions between base and superstructure, and to

the production of seeming chaos as a direct result of modernisation and progress. It retains, though, a dialectic but one which is not prescriptive, so that interpretation expands exponentially to the text. The short story is especially important as a medium for these strategies, since the novel remained wedded to social dynamics, and to traditional narrative. By contrast, the short story thrived, because of its absent or unrecognised part in the history of English literature. Its lack of a past meant that the short story was open to experimentation; already signified by its emphases upon symmetry and fragmentation. Furthermore, its proliferation as part of the growing literary market meant that it was implicated within the changing economic base, so that its appropriation not only forged a link between base and superstructure, but also appealed to modernism's need to accept the other within its own critical discourse.

As the subsequent chapters will demonstrate, the short story not only anticipated textual strategies later employed by the novel, when the latter was ready to catch up with the short story, but it also describes the cultural development of modernism. The short story is, therefore, additionally significant as an index of its own time: its form expressing, but also questioning, the perception of historical time as compressed, fleeting or elusive. The discontinuities between form, content and ideology mediate the fractures within history, which the Victorian myth of the *zeitgeist* sought to conceal, and which began to crumble due to inherent contradictions. In particular, unexpected consequences surrounding the advance of science and technology, a cornerstone of Victorian confidence, supply a recurring context within the urbanisation of culture and society. Henry James' use of the short story in exploring the relationship between artistic integrity and mechanical reproduction is exemplary. It is also the first of my case studies.

2) HENRY JAMES AND "THE VOICE OF THE MARKET"

The major source for distributing the sense of alterity described in chapter one was the newspaper industry. Its dramatic emergence as a mass institution, allied to the changes within style and presentation stemming from "new journalism", established the newspaper in many eyes as a symptom of the strange, new urban landscape. One of these critics was Henry James, who in a sequence of stories during the 1890s, centres a conflict between the artist and the mass media. By applying the theories of Theodor Adorno, one can understand this conflict as an attempt by the media to package culture as a commodity for the consumer-reader. Not only does James recognise this process of commodification but, in depicting the plight of his artist-figures, he also appeals to the reader to be more culturally aware, to raise themselves above their consumer status. However, this meant that James was forced to align himself with aestheticism, which he viewed as colluding with the economic hegemony, so that his later stories detail the inability of communicating with readers as a whole. Following aestheticism's decline, James' decentring of the artist-figure not only anticipates poststructuralist strategies, but his emphasis upon the reader's role also embodies the emerging doctrine of individual consciousness. Underlying these various negotiations, though, is a gender politics. Reacting against an equally "feminised" commercial and artistic culture, James asserts that the reader must assume masculine qualities in order to achieve their own autonomy.

The Media Landscape

James' self-conscious centring of the artist-figure was already a well-worn device before the 1890s. It first appeared in stories such as "The Madonna of the Future" (1873), and was then developed in "The Author of Beltraffio" (1884) and "The Lesson of the Master" (1888), tales which explore the difficult reconciliation between the artistic and private life. But after *The Tragic Muse* (1890), James produced a string of stories in which he centres not simply the nature of artistic creativity, but the desire of the artist to be an artist in opposition to a voracious public sphere. This outside world consists, in James' work, of admirers, society hostesses, literary poseurs, and above all the mass media. The recognition of the newspaper industry as a mass institution, and its depiction in James' writing as all-pervasive, demands first of all some form of historical contextualisation.

As Lucy Brown has argued, the concept of "the news" was an invention of Victorian society.[1] At the beginning of the century the numbers of both newspapers and formats were limited, the Sunday and daily evening papers having only recently been introduced. But by the middle of the period, helped by the reduction upon Stamp Duty in 1836, the industry had expanded dramatically with particular increases in the provincial press, illustrated and comic journalism, and in papers representing either professions or pressure groups.[2] Further reforms during the 1850s and '60s, the abolition of advertising tax, stamp duty upon newspapers and a duty upon paper, further helped to stimulate the industry, so that by 1900 three thousand newspapers were being produced throughout Britain. Improvements in printing technology enabled better and greater production, whilst the expansion of the railways laid the basis for improved distribution, constructing a vast media and information network. Since the Victorian conception of progress posited the continuing development of Western society upon the acquisition of knowledge, in which to have understanding of an object was to hold mastery over it, the gathering and dissemination of news was felt by many to be an essential element in the gradual civilising and democratisation of British society. Though the media's expansion itself mitigated against political control, the beliefs of the industry paralleled other dominant social values - Christian morality, imperialism, liberal notions of progress - so that once radical papers, such as *The Times* or *The Daily Telegraph,* had long become established parts of English culture. Yet the production and increased circulation of cheap newspapers depended largely upon the new availability of affordable advertising. In 1886, 60.6% of the column space of *The Daily Telegraph* and 49% of *The Times* was devoted to adverts.[3] Though promoted as a bastion of cultural values, the newspaper industry was increasingly more dependent upon economic forces, whilst individual titles became more responsive to the ideological sympathies of their proprietors.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century London gradually became the focus of the industry. Though circulation increased amongst the provincial press, the actual number of titles declined. Improved production and distribution also aided the national circulation of the London papers, whilst metropolitan proprietors extended

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[1] Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 1.

[2] See Ivon Asquith, 'The Structure, Ownership and Control of the Press, 1780-1855', in *Newspaper History: From the 17th Century to the Present Day,* ed. by George Boyce et al (London: Constable, 1978), p. 99.

[3] Cited by Alan Lee in 'The Structure, Ownership and Control of the Press, 1855-1914', in ibid, p. 119.

their influence by owning provincial titles, as did C.A. Pearson, founder of the *Daily Express*, or by making financial contributions, as did Alfred Harmsworth, owner of the *Daily Mail*.[4] These can be seen as ways in which an homogenised national culture attempted to establish itself, one which was similar to other movements in regulating work and leisure (see chapter one). By the 1890s London could boast a plethora of morning and evening papers in addition to the so-called "Clubland" papers, such as the *Pall Mall Gazette*. There was also an increase in the number of periodicals, including illustrated items, whilst there were also more specialist works, the "press of opinion" such as the *Spectator*. Symptomatic of market tastes were new titles such as *The Bookman*, aimed at the discerning literary reader, and the artistic divide between the literary journals: W.E. Henley's conservative *National Observer* and Henry Harland's avant-garde *Yellow Book*. For James, these papers in which one either wrote or was written about framed his artistic world.

This growth of the London media was accompanied by the rise of "new journalism". The term was first coined, derisively, by Matthew Arnold in 1887, though one of its chief representatives W.T. Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, had outlined its basic principles in two articles written the previous year.[5] Stead argued for a journalism which would contribute to democracy by both championing political causes, and educating the readership. In many ways this was little different to the earlier "social investigations" of Dickens for his own journal, *Household Words*. However Stead's injunction, "everything that is of human interest is of interest to the press"[6], was decidedly different since Stead was arguing that the personal and the private should be open to the media. New journalism was, therefore, not so much a redirection in terms of ideology, but an alteration in terms of style and representation. Though Stead was wary of the term's more sensational associations, he nonetheless adopted one of the formal strategies of new journalism - the condensed digest of news and other periodicals - when he founded the *Review of Reviews* with capital from George Newnes. Newnes himself had come to fame in 1881 by establishing the most well-known of condensed digests, *Tit-Bits*. Stead developed this populist enterprise by publishing condensed versions of works by

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[4] ibid, p. 126.

[5] See Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press, 1855-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), pp. 117-9.

[6] Quoted by John Stokes in *In the Nineties* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 18.

authors like Dickens and Thackeray in an active marketing of popular writers for a specific audience.[7] In this sense authors were being converted into commodities for the marketplace.

The language of new journalism tended to be bright and lively, intimate and eye-catching. In this respect, the chief exponent was not Stead but T.P. O'Connor, editor of the *Star*. O'Connor was less interested in politics and political campaigning, and was instead more concerned with depicting human beings as they are, "living, breathing, in blushes or in tears".[8] This had an inevitable effect upon the language of journalism, with an emphasis upon readability and good humour, in which news reports became narratives, political events were converted "into human incidents, and their agents into personalities".[9] The design of the newspapers also changed with a fresh use of the front page as a forum for news stories, banner headlines, more illustrations, and shorter paragraphs and items. New features were introduced including the interview, "stop press" and the signed article, all of which indicated a greater interest for the human content, and the relationship between the journalist and the reader. What declined were the roles of opinion and commentary for something shorter, less directed and more commercial.[10] Critics of the new journalism, though, considered that the use of simple language, generalisations and slang, in addition to a more relaxed approach towards grammar and syntax, indicated sloppy or confused thinking, which might not only distort the truth but also perpetuate falsehoods. This therefore became a moral issue: of whether the press pursued or created the truth. As contemporary critics argued, the interview for example, whilst ostensibly offering insight and education for the reader, could also promote prurience amongst the readership, besides revealing a cynical manipulation of the medium by either the interviewer or interviewee for their own reasons.[11] As for the layout, writers and critics of the 1890s railed against its miscellaneous appearance as a sign of moral, social and intellectual disorder. Newspapermen often preferred to think of the press as an organ contributing to the healthy operation of the body politic, an example of the "healthy body" philosophies discussed previously in chapter one. For critics however, this organ, gathering and redistributing events as "news" like blood pumped

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[7] See Nigel Cross, *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth Century Grub Street* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 209-10.

[8] Quoted by Stokes, op cit, p. 19.

[9] ibid.

[10] See Lee, *Origins of the Popular Press,* pp. 120-1.

[11] See Stokes, op cit, p. 21.

through the human body, was both diseased and contagious.[12] The press, as both the producer and chief disseminator of news, was viewed in practice as embodying the late Victorian sense of alterity (see chapter one), the fear and confusion of an alternate and estranging landscape blending with and displacing the "real" world. If news reporting was in many ways a work of rhetoric and style, then it was asked, to what extent could readers distinguish this new type of journalism from other, more conventional forms of fiction?

This multiplication of narratives, of signs, was in turn related to the industry's dependence upon advertising. Both the size of revenue achieved and the space devoted to adverts, which resembled the typography of the newspapers, appeared to establish the press as one arm of advertising, the ethos of which was reflected in the media's own need to re-present events and figures as consumable items. The press acted, therefore, both as a commodifier and a commodity, an institution selling (metaphorically or otherwise) other entities, but which in turn sold itself. For authors such as James, this sense of ephemeracy and relativism imposed upon objects within systems of exchange appeared to threaten the autonomy of both authorship and of art. This concept of commodification, though, has been the theme of more recent Marxist critics to whom I shall now turn.

The Culture Industry

Recent criticism of late Victorian fiction has attempted to apply the thinking of Jean Baudrillard, the French post-Marxist, to the period.[13] Besides the suggestion of philosophical faddism, noting Baudrillard's much-discussed position within contemporary critical theory, the ready application of his work by these critics tends to gloss over the unresolved controversy of his writings. Baudrillard's central premise that capitalism has shifted not just from the production of necessities or commodities but to arbitrary symbols, through which commodities are sold and individuals constituted as consumers, so that the idea of production itself is no more than a sign in an empty process of consumption, is deeply debatable.[14] To apply Baudrillard's work is to accept this premise, even though the implications - of hollow

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[12] ibid, pp. 29-31.

[13] See, for example, Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola* (New York and London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 25-9.

[14] For an introduction to Baudrillard's philosophy, see his *Selected Writings*, ed. by Mark Poster (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988). To gauge the debate, one might examine *Forget Baudrillard?*, ed. by Chris Rojek and Bryan S. Turner (London: Routledge, 1993).

signifiers, or "simulations", endlessly referring to one another so that signification itself no longer exists - appear to describe a possible future rather than an inclusive, or valid, version of the present. One can interpret Baudrillard's project, though, as illustrating the upheavals within both modernist and Marxist thought, so that he emerges as an extreme end-point within a line of European intellectualism. This helps not only to appreciate Baudrillard - his useful interrogation of absolute realities, but also his fatalism, Eurocentricity and "counter-culture" yearnings - but it also recentres the influences acting upon him, whose thinking may prove both more useful and appropriate in relation to late Victorian writing. In particular, the mid-century work of the German Marxist, Theodor Adorno, reveals that commodification, rather than a dramatic new development according to Baudrillard, gradually evolved throughout the Modernist period.

Much of Baudrillard's initial ideas have their basis in the work of the Frankfurt School, an institute whose heyday was primarily that of the 1920s before being relocated to America during the War until it could return to Germany following the overthrow of Nazism.[15] Though the centre challenged capitalism, it also sought to revise classical Marxism in terms of the relationship between cultural change and ideology. Whilst other notable members included Herbert Marcuse and Max Horkheimer, it was Adorno who most of all expressed the ideas, which came to be termed "the culture industry". They first emerged following the exchange between Adorno and Walter Benjamin, a sometime member of the School. In 1936, Benjamin published his now-celebrated essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction".[16] It argued that the role of technology in modern art - the uses of editing, copying and montage - challenged the uniqueness of traditional art-forms, such as painting and sculpture, whose autonomy mediated the dominant values of the ruling classes. By foregrounding the processes of artistic construction, Benjamin contended that mass art-forms such as cinema could, but for the obstruction of capitalism, form the basis of a revolutionary cultural politics, since the individual now became an active participant within the work's reception. Adorno responded though, firstly by letter and then in a series of articles over the next thirty years, that these processes could not be separated from the ideological workings of capitalism.

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[15] For fuller details, see Tom Bottomore, *The Frankfurt School* (London: Routledge, 1989).
[16] See Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations,* ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn, 2nd edn (London: Fontana, 1992), pp. 211-44.

Taking Benjamin's own example of cinema, Adorno observed that most Hollywood movies were essentially realist, mediating a pacifying, common-sensical approach to reality, whilst where techniques such as montage were used, this often belied a reactionary ethos. The audience's acceptance of artistic features as progressive blinded them to the ways in which the product was rigidly defined by capitalist structures of production and reception. In accepting its "progressivism", the audience subjugated itself as a consumer.[17]

This construction of the consumer is itself related to the idea of commodity fetishism, first introduced by Marx, in which a product is valued not in terms of its usefulness but the price for which it is bought and sold. The individual prizes the commodity for its symbolic value, and for the money which he or she has paid for it, though this in turn ensnares them as a consumer within these systems of exchange.[18] Adorno refers to this ensnarement as a "mutilation", or even as a "castration"[19], in which the consumer is pacified. Because of capitalism's seemingly endless ability to create consumer choices in order to lend the appearance of freedom, whilst setting the terms of these options, the consumer remains in a state of false consciousness. Adorno termed this alliance of ideological and economic structures "the culture industry":

> In all its branches, products which are tailored for consumption by masses, and which to a great extent determine the nature of that consumption, are manufactured more or less according to plan. The individual branches are similar in structure or at least fit into each other, ordering themselves into a system almost without a gap. This is made possible by contemporary technical capabilities as well as by economic and administrative concentration. The culture industry intentionally integrates its consumers from above. To the detriment of both it forces together the spheres of high and low art, separated for thousands of years. The seriousness of high art is destroyed in speculation of its efficacy; the seriousness of the lower perishes with the civilisational constraints imposed on the rebellious resistance inherent within it as long as social control was not yet total. Thus, although the culture industry undeniably speculates on the conscious and unconscious state of the millions towards

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[17] For an excellent discussion of the exchange between Benjamin and Adorno, see Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), esp. pp. 151-8.

[18] See Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture,* ed. by J.M. Bernstein (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 34.

[19] See Adorno, *Prisms,* trans. by Samuel and Shierry Weber (London: Neville Spearman, 1967), pp. 129-31.

which it is directed, the masses are not primary, but secondary, they are an object of calculation; an appendage of the machinery.[20]

In lending a spurious individuality to commodities, and thence to the person who buys them, the industry's injunction to the consumer to "become what you are" is instead a process of rationalisation and pacification. Its pervasiveness, exemplified by the everyday presence of advertising on billboards or in newspapers, naturalises and renders common-sensical both the industry and its ideology. In this sense, the process is similar to Roland Barthes' famous dictum that myth, here synonymous with ideology, "transforms history into nature".[21] By disguising its own evolution and contingency, myth re-presents itself, almost subliminally, as something essentially true. Barthes' structuralist analysis though, in which myth is conveyed through discourses which endlessly reinvent themselves and are insidiously pervasive, highlights one of the limitations in Adorno's theory: namely, in order to criticise capitalism's standardisation of culture, he offers an equally over-systematic model. In this respect, he tends to present the capitalist state as static, its hegemony total, and the consumer as passive. However, as Roger Griffin notes, the utopian future promised by any ideology is never "fully realised in practice" since its mythic core, the set of abstract beliefs which rationalise, i.e. distort, the world to form the internal coherence of the ideology, inevitably comes into conflict with the reality of historical contingency. Consequently, any political or economic system will cause injustices and inequalities not anticipated by "the ideology which it invokes in its legitimation".[22] This has the subsequent effect of stimulating new, dissident ideologies whilst previously dominant ones decline as described by Raymond Williams in his model of shifting ideological patterns.[23] Furthermore if, as in the writings of Louis Althusser, the individual is constituted as a subject by being "interpellated" within, made the centre of, ideological discourses emanating from various social institutions[24], then this conflict of ideologies indicates the ways in which subjectivity is unstable and fragmented, so that the individual exists both as a subject and as an agent, if never free or outside of ideology. This more dynamic

[20] Adorno, *Culture Industry,* p. 85.
[21] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies,* ed. and trans. by Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 1993, orig. pub. 1957), p. 129.
[22] Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Pinter, 1991), pp. 15-6.
[23] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 121-7.
[24] See Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays,* trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971, orig. pub. 1968), pp. 160-6.

picture suggests, though, that capitalism's hold is never absolute, and that the consumer isn't simply passive.

This also calls into question the role of reception within Adorno's work. He interprets the modes of production and consumption as being essentially the same for all commodities, though this ignores that as the general mode of production expands more specialised modes emerge, producing more specialised products for specific groups. Consequently, commodities and their production resist absolute standardisation, so that an intricate commodity, such as a literary text, exists as a matrix of ideological and non-ideological determinants, all of which mediate tensions between the general and local modes of production.[25] The transferral of meaning is further complicated by the dissimilar subjectivities of the author and the reader, and the contexts within which the reader receives the text: the immediate, arbitrary point of contact, the formal conventions in which the text is presented and any surrounding materials (the co-text), and then any number of unquantifiable external contexts. This might, paradoxically, justify Adorno's dismissal of empirical research though, as Graham Murdock and Peter Golding suggest, this might also shield an over-deterministic model[26], a potential reductivity implied, for example, in Adorno's assertion that his 1936 essay on jazz would be a "complete verdict".[27] Such meta-criticism also mediates itself in the oft-stated charge of elitism which, despite Adorno's emphasis that both "high" and "low" art are the victims of capitalism, appears in the above quote from *The Culture Industry*, where he seems to yearn for the alleged separation between the two. Perhaps more problematic is Adorno's application of psychoanalytic theory, in which the metaphor of castration identifies the consumer only as male, and the emphases upon "mutilation" or "liquidation" imply a masculine obsession with wounds and wounding. Both exclude women to the detriment of Adorno's model being genuinely inclusive, and therefore valid.

However, because of his position within Modernism, these criticisms do not prevent using Adorno's theories to comment upon its development. Neither do the charges of elitism or sexism invalidate him from being compared with Henry James, who shared similar views. In particular, "The Science of Criticism" (1891) reveals

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[25] For a fuller exposition of these ideas, see Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology* (London: Verso, 1978), pp. 44-63.

[26] Graham Murdock and Peter Golding, 'Capitalism, Communications and Class Relations', in *Mass Communication and Society*, ed. by James Curran et al (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), pp. 18-9.

[27] Quoted by Lunn, op cit, p. 157.

striking similarities with Adorno's theories. Here, literary criticism is described as "a commodity", the product of a "flourishing industry", so much so that "it flows through the periodical press like a river that has burst its dikes". Not only is it as widespread as the products of Adorno's culture industry, it is also as banal: "the paucity of examples, of illustrations and productions, and the deluge of doctrine suspended in the void". James emphasises that this "affluence" is the product of both capitalism, "it gives us a glimpse of the high figure presumably reached by all the honest pennies accumulated in the cause", and of publicity:

> Periodical literature is [...] like a regular train which starts at an advertised hour, but which is free to start only if every seat be occupied. The seats are many, the train is ponderously long, and hence the manufacture of dummies for the seasons when there are not passengers enough. A stuffed mannikin is thrust into the empty seat, where it makes a creditable figure until the end of the journey. [...] In this way, in a well-conducted periodical, the blocks of *remplissage* are the dummies of criticism - the recurrent, regulated breakers in the tide of talk.[28]

James' use of the "mannikin" is slightly ambiguous. It seems primarily to refer to the incompetent reviewer, but it could also refer to the subject under discussion, who by being reviewed, and for no other reason, is converted into a celebrity, once defined by Daniel Boorstin as "a person who is known for his well-knowness".[29] The celebrity is a form of human spectacle, a commodity through which the media sells itself, but which as the living embodiment of the commodity exists as an ideal to which the individual might aspire, constituting him or herself as both a consumer and a commodity. Though Boorstin overstates a difference between "knowable" reality and mere fakery, this loss of individuality in the face of economic interests concerns James greatly, for example in his representation of the celebrity novelist. Either way, the symbolism of the dummy compares favourably with Adorno's concept of the "mutilated" subject, whilst for both the end-result of this process could only be a trivialisation and ruination of culture. James' short fiction of the 1890s illustrate these concerns.

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[28] Henry James, *The Critical Muse: Selected Literary Criticism,* ed. by Roger Gard (London: Penguin, 1987), pp. 290-1.

[29] Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), p. 57.

The Artistic Self: "The Private Life" and "The Middle Years"

Leon Edel has offered the accepted version of James' relationship with the market.
He emphasises James' expatriate status, his feeling of marginality within literary
circles, so that despite his initial success in London he was attracted to European
cultures. Edel contends, however, that James came to learn the importance of
English reserve, the concealment of one's private self, following the onset of illness,
his internalisation of *fin de siécle* anxieties, and the disappointment of staging *Guy
Domville* (1895). He now consolidated his persona of the "Master", aloof from the
marketplace, and began to pen the psychological studies which anticipate Woolf and
Proust.[30] In other words, James converted his sense of isolation into a position of
strength. However, as more recent critics have done[31], one can also ask to what
extent did James try to be accepted within the marketplace, and what effect this had
upon his writing.

The period in which James, according to Edel, recognised the sanctity of the
inner self coincided with the expansion of the mass media. As Nigel Cross points
out, the new periodicals were a major stimulus for the short story, offering fresh
opportunities to writers who were willing to appear in these titles, for example a
reluctant George Gissing. This corresponded both with the practice of either
condensing or serialising novels, and the common ethos amongst the newspapers of
offering smaller items, which required less time or concentration from the reader.[32]
By being associated with the media, the short story existed in relation to the
compressed, episodic format of new journalism, and also of what that signified for
many commentators: the reflection of a confused and disordered world, speeding-up
and spinning-away from the traditional, masculine order of the "healthy body".
Disunity could therefore be seen as an emasculation, in which the short story forms
part of a "feminisation", so for example William Courtney, editor of the *Fortnightly
Review,* lamented the fragmentation of the novel into "monographs on given subjects,
or else individual studies of character", twin features of the short story. This
"passion for the detail" at the expense of "the proper perspective of the whole"
suggests the imbalance and disproportion which Courtney defines as "the feminine

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[30] Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Middle Years: 1884-94* and *The Treacherous Years: 1895-1901*
(London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963 and 1969).
[31] See, for example, Anne T. Margolis, *Henry James and the Problem of Audience: An International
Act* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: U.M.I. Research Press, 1985).
[32] Cross, op cit, pp. 208-10.

note".[33] But as Cross observes, despite the collapse of the three-decker format, the novel remained the dominant literary form, especially amongst mainstream authors.[34] Aesthetic writers were best-known by other, less appreciated forms: drama (Wilde), poetry (for example Dowson), and the short story, a whole generation of writers viewed by critics like Courtney as feminine. Consequently, James' decision to use the short story rather than the novel in which to criticise the mass media involved playing both the newspapers and aesthetes at their own games, in addition to overthrowing gendered assumptions about the short story.

James' original decision to concentrate upon shorter fictions was taken whilst he tried to establish himself as a playwright. It was also designed as an experiment in the concise style of Maupassant, if not his pessimism or sexual frankness. This emphasis upon experimentation points to James' privileging of artistry and the artist's role, though he soon found writing to such a strict length disagreeable. The Jamesian short story would normally be too leisurely for the newspaper, with its own emphasis upon word limits, though by adopting the form James was associating himself with the media's brevity. The introduction of *The Yellow Book* in 1894, with its defence of aestheticism (though editorial ban upon the work of Wilde) and liberal attitude towards length, provided James with the outlet he needed. However two earlier stories, "The Private Life" (1892) and "The Middle Years" (1893), anticipate the themes of his *Yellow Book* contributions, such as the relationship of the artist to society and the role of the reader-acolyte.

At the heart of the former are two authors: the narrator, an unsuccessful playwright, and Clare Vawdrey, a dramatist described as one "of our literary glories" (*FC*, p. 191), both of whom are holidaying in Switzerland with a group of London socialites. Since much of James' fiction acts as a commentary either upon his life or career, it is reasonable to view the narrator as representing James, struggling to establish himself in the theatre, and Vawdrey as his ideal author-figure. In the story, though, the narrator is struck by the difference between Vawdrey the writer, described by the newspapers as "subjective and introspective", and Vawdrey the conversationalist, "having neither moods nor sensibilities nor preferences" (*FC*, p. 193), who is "but loud and liberal and cheerful" with opinions "sound and second-rate" (*FC*, p. 194). Vawdrey is more reticent about discussing his work, a new play

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[33] W.L. Courtney, *The Feminine Note in Fiction* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1904), p. xii.
[34] Cross, op cit, p. 215.

for another one of the tourists, Blanche Adney the actress. She persuades the narrator, though, into obtaining the manuscript whilst Vawdrey is talking to her. Entering the darkened room, the narrator discovers another man with "his back [...] half-turned", "bent over the table in the attitude of writing" (*FC*, p. 208), an image which recalls "the artist in *triumph*" from James' preface to *The Tragic Muse*, with "the back he turns to us as he bends over his work".[35] The narrator respectfully withdraws, gradually realising that there are two Vawdreys: "the genius" who writes the actual plays, and "the bourgeois" who ventures out into society (*FC*, p. 212). This is how Vawdrey has managed the adulation stemming from his artistic success: by providing a double who supplies what society seeks from its celebrities. This "Vawdrey" exists as a human spectacle, since his only role is being the "Vawdrey" whom society desires. As Blanche perceptively comments, "The wrong one? Which one do you call the right?" (*FC*, p. 213), since as far as society is concerned the "Vawdrey" one sees fits the popular conception of an author. The narrator, though, resists. He argues that the man he saw "looked like the author of Vawdrey's admirable works. It looked infinitely more like him than our friend does himself" (*FC*, p. 212). But just as the public Vawdrey satisfies society's wants, so this private Vawdrey acts as the ideal author-figure for the narrator, though this is no more "real" a conception than that of the author as celebrity.

Play and artifice pervade the story. As the narrator unwittingly comments, "I see plays all round me" (*FC*, p. 204) in the sense of potential dramas rather than in people's role-playing. However, he and Blanche, whose profession associates her with artifice, resemble detectives in their investigation of Vawdrey's identity, though the narrator proves somewhat unsuccessful, for example in his failure to spot Blanche's extra-marital affair. His narrative, though, makes ironic references to life's contingency as "a turn of the game" (*FC*, p. 191), and to the artificial "traditions and shibboleths" of social discourse (*FC*, p. 192), whilst the public Vawdrey offers "the brilliancy of a performance" (*FC*, p. 203) and Lord Mellifont "fills the stage" (*FC*, p. 224). The narrator's failure as an artist, indicated by his inability to persuade Blanche into accepting one of his plays, is not simply because, as James would argue, the artist is "deluded, diverted, frustrated or vanquished" when he mixes in society.[36] Instead, the narrator succumbs due to his failure to recognise the surfaces which

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[35] James, *Critical Muse*, p. 525.
[36] ibid.

manifest around him. His desire to find plays in the lives of the guests, similar to the journalist's pursuit of "human interest" stories, indicates a hunger for an absolute, though sentimental, truth. Consequently, he idealises Vawdrey the writer as being somehow more substantial and genuine than the rest of society saying, "Oh he was safe with me" (*FC*, p. 215). However, this search blinds the narrator to the lack of truth and the empty multiplication of appearances. Vawdrey, conversely, is successful because he realises the exchangability of identities within social discourse so that, through his double, he multiplies and adapts himself to different contexts. His true identity remains a shadowy presence in a darkened room, his ghostliness symbolising his lack of any practical existence within the public gaze. Vawdrey therefore distances himself from society whilst retaining access to social contact. The narrator, though, is lost because he can only exist within the shifting surfaces of public life. If Vawdrey is James' ideal of the author-figure, then one can argue that, rather than simple disdain for society, James desired to be both outside of yet within its borders.

"The Middle Years" places the great artist centre-stage. A middle-aged author, Dencombe, has travelled to Bournemouth for his health, though his illness is also one of despair, of failing to communicate through his fiction. Staring out at the sea, he sees only "the abyss of human illusion" (*FC*, p. 235), though as a writer Dencombe desires "another go [...] a better chance". His art has come only "after everything else", "hindered and retarded by experience" (*FC*, p. 239). The tale also suggests, however, that as a fine artist, "a fingerer of style" (*FC*, p. 246), Dencombe has been impeded by the middle-brow tastes promoted by George Moore's enemy, the circulating library (*FC*, p. 237). But during his stay he discovers an "admirer" (*FC*, p. 240), Doctor Hugh. Certain critics, following the work of Eve Sedgwick, have emphasised the homoeroticism between Dencombe and Hugh, but of equal significance is Hugh's construction as a reader-acolyte which, as Christof Wegelin has noted, corresponds with James' own growing awareness of his "Master" status to younger writers such as Conrad or Ford.[37] However, such attention was not always desired, for example from the aesthetic movement, or in Vernon Lee's dedication to James of her 1884 novel, *Miss Brown*.[38] Consequently, despite Brooke Horvath's

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[37] Christof Wegelin, 'Art and Life in James' "The Middle Years"', *Modern Fiction Studies,* vol. 33, no. 4 (1987), p. 640.
[38] See Edel, *Henry James: The Middle Years,* pp. 53-4.

description of characters such as Hugh as "the perfect protégé"[39], great emphasis is placed upon his limitations as a reader:

> Dencombe had told him what he "tried for"; with all his intelligence, on a first
> perusal, Doctor Hugh had failed to guess it. The baffled celebrity wondered
> then who in the world *would* guess it [...] Yet he wouldn't rail at the general
> mind today - consoling as that ever had been. (*FC,* p. 251)

In this respect Hugh is little different from the reading public whom James rails against in "The Future of the Novel" (1899), the "millions for whom taste is but an obscure, confused, immediate instinct".[40] However, just as James is ultimately optimistic about the novel due to its play upon human consciousness[41], so Dencombe places his hope in Hugh's sensitivity and intelligence. Both James and his fictional alter-ego imply that their self-conscious form of writing has the potential both of re-engaging with actual readers and of remaking them in ideal terms: to be better, more aware, more artistically and culturally competent than the contemporary "inarticulate", "abysmally absorbent" reader.[42] This palingenetic gesture underpins Dencombe's dying realisation that the "glory" of artistic work "is to have made somebody care". In other words, to have expressed some shared knowledge, to bind the author and reader together as like-minded individuals. However, this principle of co-operation also entails knowledge to be considered as a historical product, Dencombe as a subject writing and thinking in and through history, so that the author-reader relationship forges a small but ideologically specific community with shared beliefs. Consequently, Hugh must divorce himself from his employer the Countess, the story's symbol of bourgeois wealth, whilst Dencombe must realise that true success can only come from the pursuit of writing as a "task" not a career. Inevitably, there can be no "second chance" since artistic triumph can only be achieved in the moment of creation:

> We work in the dark - we do what we can - we give what we have. Our doubt
> is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art. (*FC,*
> p. 258)

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[39] Brooke K. Horvath, 'The Life of Art, the Art of Life: The Ascetic Aesthetics of Defeat in James' *Stories of Writers and Artists', Modern Fiction Studies,* vol. 28, no. 1 (1982), p. 102.
[40] James, *Critical Muse,* p. 336.
[41] ibid, pp. 337-8.
[42] ibid, p. 335.

Though Dencombe's martyrdom typifies Modernism's emphasis upon the alienated artist, it is not simply the case that James posits an opposition between the lone writer and the mass of disinterested readers. Instead, the relationship between Dencombe and Hugh mediates James' desire to appeal to the reader by re-presenting his ideas in a form, the short story, which might be attractive to a popular audience, whilst redesigning the reader's role. Despite the homo-eroticism of the relationship, one can also regard Dencombe and Hugh as, metaphorically, father and son. But one must also note that this is an act of fathering to the exclusion of any female involvement, so that the shared ideology of author and reader is also highly gendered. By implication, this is an extension of Victorian beliefs in the "healthy body", a coherent reading can only be made by a fully autonomous and integrated individual, but one in which feminine qualities, such as intuition and feeling, are foregrounded in relation to masculine virtues of logic and vitality. This appropriation of the feminine mediates the gender crisis of the 1890s (see chapter three), involving not only a realignment of masculinity in relation to shifting gender positions, but also a distancing by James from traditional masculinities; in which a reclamation of certain feminine characteristics serve to promote a regenerated notion of masculinity. Hugh, for example, in revealing a feminine sensitivity assumes the status of a muse, traditionally a female symbol, by becoming the "servant of (Dencombe's) altar" (*FC,* p. 251). By adopting the procreative role of the muse, Hugh inspires Dencombe in his attempt to establish Hugh as his ideal reader, and in the emphasis upon the strength of male comradeship. Women are not only forcefully excluded but actively demonised. The Countess is portrayed as jealous and spiteful whilst her secretary, Miss Vernham, is not only described as "mad" by Hugh (*FC,* p. 248), but when she intervenes to draw Hugh away, Dencombe's "old complications" return as a prelude to his eventual demise (*FC,* p. 256). Despite the humanistic message detected by Sara Chapman[43], the lineage of authors and readers formed in this tale is exclusively male.

Authorship and the Mass Market

"The Death of the Lion" (1894), James' first piece for *The Yellow Book,* reworks some of the themes portrayed in these earlier fictions. Like "The Private Life", the

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[43] Sara S. Chapman, *Henry James' Portrait of the Writer as Hero* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 54-60.

anonymous narrator feels protective towards the great artist and, though a young journalist and not a playwright, his profession marks him out as another example of "that frivolous thing an observer" (*FC*, p. 204). As in "The Middle Years", great emphasis is placed upon readership and companionship in opposition to the demands of society. However, rather than simply the threat of social distractions and low-brow tastes, the introduction to this story immediately sets the scene for a far greater enemy, namely that of the media. The young journalist, the rare example of a discerning reader, feels compelled "to have ideas" in order to placate his new editor, Mr Pinhorn. Pinhorn has bought-up the newspaper from its previous owner Deedy, whose name is no longer "mentioned in the office", in order to establish it as a commercial enterprise. As a remnant from the previous regime, the narrator must quite literally prove his worth, to prove himself as a salaried member of the "staff" as opposed to "forming part of a promiscuous lot, mainly plant and office-furniture" left behind by Deedy, though this will only further ensnare the narrator as a wage-slave. Consequently, he suggests writing a piece on the author Neil Paraday, a "celebrity" whom Pinhorn "has never heard of" (*FC*, p. 261). This is because Paraday is no celebrity, he has no name within the commercial discourse of Pinhorn. Instead, the narrative details Paraday's development as a celebrity, and the disastrous consequences which follow.

The narrator persuades Pinhorn by adopting his own language, "whatever there is we should have it all to ourselves, for he hasn't been touched", though the narrator secretly acknowledges that Pinhorn's "definition of genius was the art of finding people at home" (*FC*, p. 262). However, touched by Paraday's kindness, he resists the intention "to be personal", and instead of an exploitative article he dispatches "a study of (the) author's talent" (*FC*, p. 265), much to Pinhorn's chagrin. The narrator, though, is increasingly concerned by Paraday achieving celebrity status, "the idea of his security became supremely dear to me" (*FC*, p. 269), so much so that he advises Paraday to "be as dead as you can" (*FC*, p. 268), to remain hidden by his work and invisible within social discourse. However, both are overtaken by a major journal, *The Empire*, which desirous of a new "national glory" trumpets Paraday's latest novel. The patriotic and militaristic metaphors, "a salute of a whole column", "the guns had been booming", "now he was proclaimed and anointed and crowned" (*FC*, p. 270), associates *The Empire* with conservative magazines such as *Blackwood's*, though the methods of Morrow, the narrator's journalistic rival, are suggestive of

new journalism. Morrow inroduces himself as representing the interests of his readers, and of facilitating their desire to discover more about "Mr Paraday's surroundings". Though he claims to be interested in Paraday's "views on the subject of the art he so nobly exemplifies", Morrow is associated with a newspaper department called "Smatter and Chatter" (*FC*, p. 271). When presented with a copy of Paraday's novel, he tosses it aside explaining, "you mustn't take me for a reviewer" (*FC*, p. 276). His article, a "chatty familiar piece", denigrates Paraday's work in much the same way in order to concentrate upon his "home-life" (*FC*, p. 278). On the basis of this article and its massive syndication, Paraday is converted into a name, a commodity to be initiated into society.

This initiation is masterminded, in particular, by the society hostess Mrs Weeks Wimbush, "wife of the boundless brewer and proprietress of the universal menagerie" (*FC*, p. 279). Besides the use of jungle metaphors, Paraday becomes "king of the beasts of the year" (*FC*, p. 278), there is also an emphasis upon cannibalism, "she devoured everything he wrote" (*FC*, p. 291), in which female readers are associated with a voracious consumption. Mrs Wimbush's "establishment" is described as "a huge machine in which the tiniest and the biggest wheels went round to the same treadle" (*FC*, pp. 289-90). Consumption underpins this society, upon meeting Morrow the narrator feels like "a little fish in the stomach of a bigger one" (*FC*, p. 271), but one in which consumption is defined in terms of female desire. Morrow comments that as readers "the ladies are such popular favourites" (*FC*, p. 274), so that when the narrator encounters Fanny, Paraday's only other true disciple, he criticises her for using "that dreadful word 'personal'". He argues that the media's pursuit of the private is determined by female wants: "for you women bring it out with murderous effect" (*FC*, p. 284). However, the relationship between the narrator and Fanny becomes one of master and pupil, with the narrator endeavouring to retrieve her from the mass of female consumers, whom James personally criticised.[44] Exhorting her to concentrate upon the writing and not the author, the narrator desires to improve Fanny in much the same way that Dencombe treats Hugh.

In a sense, this involves inculcating Fanny with (allegedly) masculine qualities of reason and concentration. All of those associated with Mrs Wimbush are in some way "feminised". The artist's studio belonging to Mr Rumble is described as a

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[44] James, *Critical Muse*, p. 336.

chaotic "circus in which the man of the hour, and still more the woman, leaped through the hoops of his showy frames". It is here that Paraday is "caught and saddled" (*FC*, p. 289), or in other words emasculated, a process which the narrator also describes as being "domesticated" (*FC*, p. 281). Paraday is curiously passive throughout this process. In this respect he is similar to Dencombe: another sickly, middle-aged author. But in his **gentleness and naivety**, Paraday also shares similarities with dominant notions of feminine passivity, a sensitivity to which the **male author** might aspire, but which also seems to idealise the theme of victimhood. This not only underlines the suggestively homosexual relationship between Paraday and his disciple, the narrator's observation for example of his "pleasant eyes" (*FC*, p. 267), but also contrasts with the voracious femininity of Mrs Wimbush and her circle. Paraday's passivity presents him as a persecuted subject, almost a "damsel in distress", through whose narrative the reader sympathetically follows, with suitable cliff-hangers at the end of each section to carry the reader onwards. By sympathising with Paraday's plight, the reader is invited to understand the position of the author in society, hopefully ushering the reader into the rest of James' fiction and philosophy. But at the same time Paraday's narrative can also be read as a metaphor for the alienation of all individuals within capitalist society.

Paraday's progress is contrasted, in particular, with that of two other authors, Guy Walsingham and Dora Forbes. Both, like the real-life Sarah Grand and Grant Allen, are practitioners of "the larger latitude" (*FC*, p. 272), tales of sexual candour. Like George Egerton or John Oliver Hobbes both are pseudonyms. Walsingham is the female author of *Obsessions*, an ironic allusion to one word titles such as Egerton's *Keynotes* or Hubert Crackanthorpe's *Wreckage* (both 1893). Forbes, on the other hand, is the male author of *The Other Way Round*. Mentioning Forbes, Morrow asks for "an authoritative word from Mr Paraday - from the point of view of *his* sex" (*FC*, p. 273), which not only seems to imply a third sex, but in practice associates Paraday with writers whom he is antithetical, making it easier to sell both Paraday and the newspaper. Paraday's later participation "in the periodical prattle about the future of fiction" (*FC*, p. 290), alluding to James' own involvement in the "art of fiction" debate, further establishes his commodity status, since the reproduction of his opinions not only amount to facts about Paraday himself, through which he is "sold" to figures like Wimbush, but are also framed by the media's agenda, "periodical" in the sense of both a regular occurrence and determined by the

journals. This framing is paralleled by the juxtaposition of Paraday's portrait with those of Walsingham and Forbes, all taken by Rumble, "the reporter on canvas" (*FC*, p. 289).

Focusing on Walsingham and Forbes, though, James appears to be arguing that the purveyors of "the larger latitude", amongst them many of the contributors to *The Yellow Book*, whilst trying to shock were ultimately assisting the media's need for sensationalism. Despite their stated hostility towards these writers, the periodicals actively made room for them within their pages, fuelling the controversies whilst setting the terms of the debate, thereby containing and defining the participants as "decadents" or "eroto-maniacs". To comply was, for James, not only to lose one's subversiveness but more importantly integrity as an artist, whilst promoting oneself as a celebrity. This is exemplified by Walsingham and Forbes who, though far less talented than Paraday, prove great successes within Mrs Wimbush's company. Their ambiguous gender complements her feminised world - as the narrator comments, "one gets lost among the genders" (*FC*, p. 296). Yet this also emphasises James' ambivalence towards *The Yellow Book* and its aestheticism, a term which had begun to be applied to James' own work[45], but which he detested for its sense of exclusivity and suggestion of impropriety. He wrote to his family, telling them not to read "The Death of the Lion" in its magazine form, because "I hate too much the horrid aspect and company of the whole publication".[46] Elsewhere, he contrasted his "incurious text" with the "perversity" of Aubrey Beardsley's drawings.[47] Though James appreciated the generosity of the editor Henry Harland, and possibly also his decision not to print Wilde, he nonetheless felt it necessary to distance himself from aestheticism, particularly as *The Yellow Book* soon became "the conversational topic of the day".[48] His overall aim remained one of appealing to all readers rather than a select group.

At the end of the story Paraday, mentally and physically drained, falls gravely ill and dies, leaving behind him the manuscript to perhaps his greatest work. This, though, is lost by one of Wimbush's guests leaving the narrator, significantly, with

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[45] See Margolis, op cit, p. 107.

[46] James, letter to Mr and Mrs William James (28th May 1894), in *Letters, vol. 3, 1883-95*, ed. by Leon Edel (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 482.

[47] James, preface to "The Lesson of the Master", in *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*, ed. by Richard P. Blackmur (New York: Scribner's, 1934), p. 219.

[48] Katherine Lyon Mix, *A Study in Yellow: "The Yellow Book" and Its Contributors* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1960), p. 90.

only the advertising. However, the loss of the manuscript unites the narrator with Fanny, and in whose mutual admiration Paraday's legacy is preserved. This conclusion is significant in two ways. Firstly, Fanny's role is that of "a devoted associate" (*FC*, p. 303), a supportive handmaiden to the narrator rather than an equal participant in Paraday's inheritance. At this point in his career James still adhered to the views of women outlined in his 1892 story, "Greville Fane". Here, the journalist-narrator is sent to write an article on the dying Mrs Stormer who, under the pseudonym of Greville Fane, has written a series of romantic novels. He resists his editor's command to "let her off easy, but not too easy" (*CT 8*, p. 433) because, though he dislikes her work, he has known and respected her as a person. Instead, he takes an ironic pleasure in her writing because it "rested me so from literature", since "she could invent stories by the yard, but she couldn't write a page of English" (*CT 8*, p. 436). He even delights in her Besant-like attitudes toward her writing as "a profession like another" (*CT 8*, p. 439). Though Chapman stresses the narrator's "good-humoured fondness"[49], there is also the sense that he approves of Greville Fane because, whilst she fails to recognise her own limitations, she epitomises what a romantic lady-novelist ought to be. His loathing is for Mrs Stormer's children who fail to appreciate their mother. Ethel is described as "having arrived precociously at social wisdom, recognising that if she was neither pretty enough nor rich enough nor clever enough, she could at least [...] be rude enough" (*CT 8*, p. 446). Leolin exists "simply to live at (his mother's) expense" (*CT 8*, p. 448), and in the end he publishes "every scrap of scribbled paper that could be extracted from her table-drawers" (*CT 8*, p. 452). In fact the majority of the story is concerned not with Mrs Stormer's life as a novelist but as a parent: again another sign of approval since she does not neglect her maternal duties. Instead, she attains a martyred status by confirming that women can't write and mothers suffer in silence.

Consequently, James distrusted female readers if they were as vain as Ethel, so that in "The Death of the Lion" Fanny has to be re-taught by the narrator, or female novelists if they transgressed acceptable boundaries. By 1899 James' stance had softened slightly to the extent that women could, perhaps, play a full part in the novel's regeneration - "we may very well yet see the female elbow itself, kept in increasing activity by the play of the pen, smash with final resonance the window all

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[49] Chapman, op cit, p. 48.

this time most superstitiously closed"[50] However, he remained suspicious of the

sexually open "new woman" writer, as suggested in an ambiguous 1901 review of the

Italian novelist, Matilde Serao. Though James acknowledges that the "new woman"

novel has exposed the male novelist's portrayal of man's "relations with the pistol,

the pirate, the police, the wild and the tame beast" as "puerile", he fails to justify

women's writing in terms of its own form or content. Though he writes of "a healthy

indifference", James also comments of female authors "playing at 'grown-up'" as if

their writing amounts to no more than a pose.[51] This half-hearted acceptance is best

seen in the story "Broken Wings" (1900) in which an artist, Stuart Straith, and a

novelist, Mrs Harvey (her name indicating that she is not part of "the anti-marriage

league"), each believing the other to be a great success, are finally united when their

realise their joint poverty. Mrs Harvey's lack of success is contrasted, in particular,

with *The New Girl,* a crass but long-running play whose achievement is perhaps due

to it feeding-upon the "new woman" controversy (*JC,* p. 53), another example of the

movement's commercialism as opposed to the lone efforts of Mrs Harvey.

The second feature in the end to "The Death of the Lion" is that of artistic defeat

- Paraday's death and the anxieties surrounding his legacy. Despite Fanny's

reassurance, the narrator comments that "sometimes I believe her, but I've quite

ceased to believe myself" (*FC,* p. 303). A year later James composed "The Next

Time" as a companion-piece to this earlier story. Like "The Death of the Lion", it

was first published in *The Yellow Book* despite James' original intention to submit

only two stories to the journal (the other having been "The Coxon Fund"). However,

"The Next Time" was written following the disastrous premiere of his play *Guy

Domville* and, as Anne Margolis has argued, James was perhaps concerned that no

other outlet would publish his work.[52] But like "The Death of the Lion", it can also

be read as a satire upon aestheticism.

The story concerns two authors: the high-minded Ralph Limbert, who wants to

appeal to the public, and the populist Jane Highmore, who seeks critical acclaim

rather than commercial success. Neither achieve their ambition, they seem incapable

of writing against type, recalling James' comment from "The Art of Fiction" (1884)

that "the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the

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[50] James, *Critical Muse,* p. 344.
[51] ibid, pp. 346-7.
[52] Margolis, op cit, p. 104.

producer".[53] An author's style, James argues, is innate to their consciousness and cannot be altered without, as in the case of Limbert, physically harming the individual. As the narrator says of Limbert's attempts, "the perversity of the effort [...] had been frustrated by the purity of the gift" (*FC*, p. 336). Though the temptation to read the story in autobiographical terms is strong, of more interest is how it operates as an exposé of literary society. The narrator, for instance, is a professional critic and would-be novelist, who has "contributed to a journal less remunerative but also less chatty than the *Beacon*" (*FC*, p. 317), "the great northern organ" (*FC*, p. 314) from which Limbert is sacked as the London correspondent despite supplying "the very worst he (could) do for the money" (*FC*, p. 318). The narrator represents the critical stance of the little magazines, "of seeing nothing in certain celebrities, of seeing overmuch in an occasional nobody, and of judging from a point of view that [...] remained perverse and obscure" (*FC*, p. 310).

However, the narrative is not simply one of Limbert's failures, but of how the avant-garde is co-opted by financial interests. The story begins with Highmore seeking a review from the narrator for her latest novel, since she hopes this will lend it a respectability which will prevent it from selling. She desires to be "an exquisite failure" for, whereas success can only be counted in "nothing but money", "a failure now could make [...] such a reputation!" (*FC*, p. 308). Highmore realises that the public also consists of readers such as the narrator, whose approbation of unsuccessful novelists can still help to make them a name. In other words, though the narrator would prefer to see himself as existing outside the marketplace, he and his avant-garde associates are actively constituted within its boundaries, helping to shore-up its structures by lending respectability, i.e. commodity status, to authors of their choosing. Within a market system, where identities are exchangable, success and failure are relative terms as long as the object is granted commodity status by being named. However, those who name are themselves established as commodities by being included within the workings of the market. In a sense, this is an economy of failure for commodification, the granting of a commercial presence to an object, must also involve the diminution of that object as an entity, whilst any object not initiated into the market is left on the margins, practically invisible. In both cases a revolutionary art is neutralised in its resistance to the status quo. James has already

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[53] James, *Critical Muse,* p. 205.

suggested this in relation to "the larger latitude", here he targets aestheticism through Mr Bousefield, "the proprietor of a 'high-class monthly'" (*FC*, p. 328) who, having seen "the great reaction coming", appoints Limbert to the editorship of a new magazine designed as "a protest against the chatty" (*FC*, p. 329). As Limbert says, Bousefield has no understanding of literature, though by founding the magazine he appropriates aestheticism as nothing more than a style, converting it into a commodity whilst excising its subversiveness.

But Limbert's decision to print "literary" material elsewhere in the magazine, whilst writing dross himself in order to appeal to the public, backfires. Bousefield attacks Limbert for pitching the magazine at too high a level, in particular his own writing and the narrator's "Occasional Remarks", which the narrator has also written with the public in mind. Bousefield is forced to sack Limbert in order to save his magazine indicating not only that any artistic venture must ultimately appeal to public demands, but that its form and content is finally determined not by the editor or contributors, but whoever finances the enterprise. This seems to refer not only to *Guy Domville*, with which James had apparently "tried so to meet" public tastes[54], but also to *The Yellow Book* itself. Limbert, though, partially due to his family's needs, but also in line with his earlier proclamation, "success be hanged! - I want to sell" (*FC*, p. 331), now embarks upon a series of novels, each imitating popular styles, and each failing to impress the public. Ultimately, the strains of obsession and failure take their toll of Limbert, and he suffers a heart attack. But before he dies Limbert begins work on one last piece of which the narrator comments, "he had merely waked up one morning again in the country of the blue and had stayed there with a good conscience and a great idea" (*FC*, pp. 352-3). This landscape of the imagination foreshadows the dreamlike territory of "The Great Good Place" (1900) to which the author George Dane, burdened by commitments, travels in an hallucination and is ultimately renewed by. Though the offer of a second chance to Dane makes the later story appear compensatory, underlined by the final affirmation, "it *was* all right" (*CT 11*, p. 42), James' attitude in 1895 was very different. Despite his last, brief flourish Limbert dies, leaving behind him a fragment titled "Derogation", the form a popular one with decadent writers, such as Victoria Cross' controversial "Theodora: A Fragment" (1895). But the title resembles not only the

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[54] James, letter to William James (9th January 1895), in *Letters, vol. 3*, p. 509.

work of aesthetes, but also James' two collections of short stories from the period, *Terminations* (1895) and *Embarrassments* (1896). At this point in his career James had been forced, after all, to side with aestheticism in order to pursue a commercial identity, though for him this was perhaps equivalent to death. As he admitted to his family about *Guy Domville*, "every *raffiné* (James' term for aesthetes) in London [...] has been to see it, and yet it doesn't 'go'!"[55], whilst to William Howells he wrote, "I have fallen upon evil days".[56]

After 1895 the writer-hero in James' fiction increasingly withdraws or is absent altogether. Vereker's role in "The Figure in the Carpet" (1896) consists only of initiating the pursuit between the narrator, his journalist friend Corvick and the author whom Corvick marries, Gwendolen Erme, for the "little point", "the particular thing I've written my books most *for*" (*FC*, p. 365). He tempts the narrator by arguing that "it strikes me [...] as the thing for the critic to find", and by claiming "I've shouted my intention in his great blank face!" (*FC*, p. 366). Vereker also woos the narrator, "the critic just *isn't* a plain man" (*FC*, p. 367), as well as provoking him, "what else in heaven's name is criticism supposed to be?" (*FC*, p. 366). Cajoled and intrigued by Vereker, the narrator sets out to pursue his secret, drawing not only Corvick and Gwendolen into his quest, but also Gwendolen's second husband, Drayton Deane. Vereker himself practically retreats from the story, though his spirit permeates the narrative.

As many critics have emphasised, it is debatable whether there really is any "figure" to be unravelled; the whole quest appearing to be no more than a game arbitrarily set into motion by Vereker, and played out at the expense of its participants. Though Vereker describes his secret as "the organ of life" (*FC*, p. 368), it is notable that Corvick, Gwendolen and Vereker himself all die during the course of the narrative, so that the tale's loss of absolute meaning is accompanied by a dissolution of both identity and authority. In his preface to the story, James himself had suggested that Vereker had set something more like "a test" for the characters, arguing that the tale as a whole was an appeal for greater "analytic appreciation" in literary criticism.[57] However, one must be wary of James' preface, not only because the story actively questions interpretation, but also because the prefaces were written

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[55] James, letter to Mr and Mrs William James (2nd February 1895), in ibid, p. 517.
[56] James, letter to William Dean Howells (22nd January 1895), in ibid, p. 511.
[57] James, *Art of the Novel*, pp. 227 and 229.

with his audience in mind. In a sense, James was promoting himself to his readers, so that, though James detested the idea of authors revealing themselves to the press, he nonetheless offered explanations to his works as a marketing strategy. The prefaces formulate an author-figure through which readers, used to authors as public personae, may approach James' writing whilst James could both mask himself and control his product. However, the possibilities for ironic detachment between James and his readers, allied to the fact that the preface was written some time after "The Figure in the Carpet", are great so that one cannot accept James' explanations as definitive. In many ways, like Vereker perhaps, James is playing with the idea of authorship and authority.

His references, however, to the state of criticism are a useful reminder that the story is a satire upon the press, and in particular its obsession with facts. In "The Science of Criticism", James had argued that "periodical literature is a huge, open mouth which has to be fed".[58] Since this is the imperative, the reviewer rejects careful deliberation of the work for a hastily assembled concoction of opinions and details about the author. As Vereker's secret purports to be "the same thing" as his work (*FC*, p. 367), to track it down is to gain the defining fact about Vereker as an artist. It is the male characters, such as Corvick, who turn the pursuit into a competition: "he shall crown me victor - with the critical laurel" (*FC*, p. 377). Though it is suggested that the narrator is in love with Gwendolen, he concludes by saying that Deane's obsession with Vereker seems "quite my revenge" (*FC*, p. 400), presumably for having married her. The narrator also appears manipulative: "there was enough to make me wonder if I should have to marry Mrs Corvick to get what I wanted" (*FC*, p. 391). His real desire is Vereker - "I was shut up in my obsession for ever" (*FC*, p. 395). However, the men's pursuit of Vereker suggests a loss of masculine reserve, and a decline into introspection. (The same may also be said of Limbert in "The Next Time".) Loss of autonomy and authority, symbolised most of all by Corvick's death, go hand in hand with a form of "feminisation". Consequently, the pursuit of definitions in this story is implicitly gendered, with the men turning it first into a form of gamesmanship. But when it transgresses this boundary, and turns instead into obsession, then the pursuit becomes a form of hysteria and loss of masculinity.

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[58] James, *Critical Muse,* p. 290.

Gwendolen, for her part, withdraws from the search and, though she knows what Corvick claimed to be the mysterious "figure" in Vereker's work, she takes it to her grave, refusing to pass it on to the narrator. In many respects, Gwendolen comes nearest to James' ideal reader, preferring to appreciate Vereker rather than dogmatically pursue his true meaning. As a novelist, though, she is erratic. Her first novel is described as "a desert in which she had lost herself, but in which too she had dug a wonderful hole in the sand" (*FC*, p. 380), whilst her next two apparently vary according to the company she keeps. Though exemplifying the patronising view that women can only translate as writers what those around them think or feel[59], allied to the suggestion that Gwendolen ultimately fulfils herself as Deane's wife and mother to his children, James nonetheless presents her as a "real helper of the artist" by abandoning the chase.[60]

This conception of the reader is more fully explored in "The Story in It" (1902), where the sensitivity of Maud Blessingbourne contrasts with the literal-mindedness of Colonel Voyt. Though Chapman argues that this is another indication of James' softening attitude towards female writers and readers[61], in many ways this is a reworking of the relationship between Ruth Anvoy and George Gravener from "The Coxon Fund". Whereas Voyt and Mrs Dyott assert that literature, even when dealing with human relations, must be "an adventure" (*CT 11*, p. 319), possibly sexual, Maud contends that she reads only for "an interest", the "treatment" rather than the subject (*CT 11*, p. 316). Though she reads only French literature, and then but "three or four authors" (*CT 11*, p. 314), it is simply because she feels "outside" of Anglo-American writing (*CT 11*, p. 315). Maud criticises the French for essentially repeating the same story with "the same couple" (*CT 11*, p. 316), and with the same vivid details, to which she asks, " what's *their* sense of life?" (*CT 11*, p. 315). Proclaiming "I *love* life - in art, though I hate it anywhere else", Maud wonders whether fiction can represent "a decent woman" based upon careful observation of "behaviour - the most definite thing in the world" (*CT 11*, p. 317). Her associates disagree, arguing that goodness is incompatible with interest, and that "adventures of innocence" are "what the bored reader complains of" (*CT 11*, p. 320). Instead, Voyt and Dyott insist that a consumable product must feature a plot, incident and a moral conclusion. Whereas

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[59] See Joanna Russ, *How to Suppress Women's Writing* (London: The Women's Press, 1984), pp. 21-2.
[60] James, 'The Science of Criticism', in *Critical Muse*, p. 293.
[61] Chapman, op cit, p. 107.

Maud realises her lack of artistic talent, "to tell it would be to express it, and that's just what I can't do" (*CT 11*, p. 316), Voyt and Dyott give the impression that anybody can write. James himself asserted, though, that critics and therefore readers should strictly interpret: "it being assuredly the artist who invented art [...] and not the other way round".[62]

After Maud leaves, Dyott reveals to Voyt that Maud is in love with him. They conclude that this will be "but a small, scared, starved, subjective satisfaction that would do her no harm and nobody else any good". But, as Voyt unwittingly observes, who "would see the shadow of a 'story' in it?" (*CT 11*, p. 326). As Chapman argues, though, it is in these "deeply felt experiences" where "the drama of life (is) to be found".[63] The tale is also intriguing in that it is a colonel, an authority figure, who defends the sexually explicit French writing, suggesting the extent to which by the 1900s authors such as Maupassant, once so shocking, had become accepted by the establishment. Instead, in the decline of aestheticism and the gradual acceptance of naturalism, James could now reposition himself in relation to the mainstream. However, in his short stories at least, James no longer appealed to the public in order to reform them as readers. Though Maud is presented as his ideal audience, there is a lack of any imperative behind the portrayal, which is gently ironic. There is no actual author-figure in the story with whom one can sympathise, or in understanding his plight become a better reader. Instead, Maud appears to be the type of reader imagined in articles such as "The Future of the Novel", who almost haphazardly reacts against dominant views and pursues the form of fiction practised by James. Maud's hesitancy as opposed to the didacticism of Voyt and Dyott, and the lack of any explanation to how she discovered her reading tastes, would seem to support this view. In addition, any attempt to see Maud simply as a prescriptive model is undermined by the suggestion that Maud's literary arguments mediate her desire for Voyt: in many ways the acceptable goal for a young lady such as Maud.

Similarly "The Papers", a novella from 1903, and James' most searing attack upon the media, is largely unconcerned with reforming the public, beyond telling them not to trust news-reporters. Essentially a political satire, it has little to say about the role of the artist. Nonetheless, in stories such as "John Delavoy" (1898), there remains the need to protect the author's legacy from commodification.

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[62] James, 'The Science of Criticism', in *Critical Muse*, p. 293.
[63] Chapman, op cit, p. 107.

Delavoy is a great artist, recently deceased, around whose absence the narrative revolves. The narrator, a critic, seeks to publish an article on Delavoy, and to do this he is content to manipulate Delavoy's sister in order to get what he wants. As his editor, Mr Beston, comments "she naturally knows more about him than anyone" (*FC*, p. 409). Like the narrators of "The Death of the Lion" and "The Figure in the Carpet", he appears to be ultimately attracted to his artistic quarry. When he first sees Miss Delavoy he writes, "I felt as if I had been studying Delavoy's own face" (*FC*, p. 406), whilst "to be with her was still to be with (him)" (*FC*, p. 411). As in the pursuit of Vereker's secret, the narrator is concerned with designing a complete and coherent picture, a desire which is ironically trumped when an actual drawing of Delavoy is produced. As Beston says, "the article's very neat [...] But your drawing's our great prize" (*FC*, p. 415).

Both the article and portrait are invasions of the author's privacy, even when dead. In "John Delavoy", though, the narrator's ambitions are thwarted in part by Beston. The editor rejects the article because of its "indelicacy" (*FC*, p. 420), its emphasis upon the sexual content within Delavoy's fiction. Beston, like James' other newspaper editors, wants only trivia and personal details about Delavoy, though in a plot twist he is only feigning interest for the author in order to seduce Delavoy's sister. With this in mind, Beston decides to replace the narrator's article with one from her, "something the public *will* stand" (*FC*, p. 424), adding that "the interest of the public is whatever a clever article may make it" (*FC*, p. 425). Miss Delavoy, though, having collaborated with the narrator on his writing, refuses Beston. The exchange which follows illustrates many of James' views of the media. Pressed by Miss Delavoy, Beston reveals that he doesn't care for her brother, explaining that the piece "isn't for *him*" but "for the magazine". To this, the narrator adds that "the magazine *is* the public", meaning that the form and content of the journal is not only shaped by the spending power of its subscribers, but that it also determines the interests of its readers. As Beston says to Miss Delavoy, "your reminiscences would make a talk" (*FC*, p. 436), in other words a media event in which the appearance of open discussion serves only to constitute the readers as part of the "talk" orchestrated by the journal and its own agenda. This process operates ultimately to ensure that "the public isn't (conscious)", but that they remain subscribers to the journal and its ideology (*FC*, p. 440). In this respect one should also note, in terms not dissimilar to those of Adorno, Benjamin's observation that the correspondence

column in newspapers, though theoretically an opportunity for readers to express themselves, in practice only exploited them, filling up newspaper space, fuelling media-led controversies whilst blinding them to real injustices, and binding them as consumers to the newspaper.[64] However, this system of commodification would also apply to Miss Delavoy if she agreed to write a piece "to accompany the head" (*FC*, p. 436), referring not only to the actual portrait of her brother, but also to its reprinting within the layout of the magazine: article and picture becoming just another typographical feature, the Delavoys reduced to the level of an advert as part of the journal's commodity status. Beston though refuses to return the picture declaring, "to keep it *is* to use it" (*FC*, p. 438), and finally it is reproduced in his magazine "accompanied by a page or two, from an anonymous hand, of the pleasantest, liveliest comment" (*FC*, pp. 442-3). This in turn produces a tide of criticism which concludes "that the handsome thing had been done", ensuring that Delavoy's commodification is complete.

However, as James suggests, the act of reproduction alters the meaning of both Delavoy and his portrait by relocating them within the accompanying text of the magazine. Though this lends some form of authority to Beston, due to his manipulation of the material, James also indicates that this is undercut by the transparency of the reproduction, and the feeling that something - Delavoy himself - has been lost. The narrator's faithful analysis is published elsewhere, but fails to improve Delavoy's literary status, whilst his marriage to Miss Delavoy is marked only by the bitter comment, "we had achieved the union - that at least for resistance or endurance - is supposed to be strength" (*FC*, p. 443). His cynicism might possibly stem from his professional failure or his impotence in the face of Beston, but it could also be due to his separation from Delavoy. The narrative recentres alternate versions for the great author - the two articles, the picture and its reproduction, Miss Delavoy herself - but the artist himself is absent, and it is this absence which undermines all attempts to absolutely know Delavoy.

Conclusion

In his stories about the artist-figure, James progresses from centring the artist, his struggles to compose and his ultimate failure, to withdrawing the artist altogether.

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[64] Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht,* trans. by Anna Bostock (London: New Left Books, 1973), pp. 89-91.

The earlier strategies appear designed to attract the reader in order to understand the artist's, and therefore James' plight, a relationship which is often mirrored in the tales by an author and a (male) acolyte, or occasionally a female reader such as Maud Blessingbourne, who assumes masculine qualities of discipleship. But, in the later stories, the reader is left with narratives which refer internally to other narratives, the works or various re-presentations of the author, whilst the artist himself is absent. This decentredness operates on a number of levels. Firstly, though in many respects a late Victorian, James anticipates the type of post-structuralist thought embodied in Roland Barthes' 1968 essay, "The Death of the Author".[65] Both privilege the text, and its interplay of potential meanings, at the expense of the author, for example in the constant deferral of meaning in "The Figure in the Carpet", where Vereker's secret symbolises the delusion of a transcendent signified, the delusion of which triggers a pursuit that can only turn back in upon itself and lead nowhere.

However, whereas Barthes' argument is designed ultimately to liberate the reader, to translate the reading process into an act of writing, James' stories appear to protect the author-figure by suggesting that no act of interpretation can ever be accurate; that the author is never here, not even in his own text, but always elsewhere. This seems particularly so if the interpretative act takes place within a public forum such as a newspaper: James privileges above all else evading the objectifying gaze of public discourse. Whereas interpretation can be both an intervention and an appropriation, James respects private appreciation, for example in the gentle warmth of Dane's admirer from "The Great Good Place", the young man appearing almost ethereal in his kindness. Intriguingly, the admirer also merges with the last of the mysterious Brothers that Dane encounters within his hallucinatory landscape. This suggests that the identities of art and criticism must reside with the imagination, in a space such as the darkened room from "The Private Life" or "the country of the blue" in "The Next Time", beyond the differentiation of social discourse. Consequently, the narrator of "John Delavoy" is inextricably disconnected from his subject by accepting his own subordination within the marketplace. However, this emphasis upon the imagination proposes an ambivalent assertion of individual consciousness, of private interiority, against the public processes of commodification.

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[65] See Barthes, *Image-Music-Text,* ed. and trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 142-8.

Lastly, though James' style can often appear old-fashioned in its leisurely perambulations, this displacement of the author nonetheless marks out the Jamesian short story as modernist as opposed to the quasi-naturalism of Maupassant. It constructs a series of lacunae which are paradoxically sustained by the form, and only by the form, whilst undermining sites of meaning. This marks both a subversion of realist traditions and, in the modernist sense, a regeneration of literary form: an ironic achievement for stories concerned with the defeat of writers. However, this failure only exists on James' terms. To turn to the female authors, George Egerton and Vernon Lee, is to supply a counterpoint to James' critique.

3) DECADENT MODERNISM: GEORGE EGERTON AND VERNON LEE

In the previous chapter it was shown how Henry James, in his critique of consumer culture, depicts decadents and the mass media as feeding-off each other in their mutual search for sensations and notoriety. James portrays this pursuit as a vulgarisation, or "feminisation", of cultural values symbolised by the writers of "the larger latitude", in particular the so-called "new woman" authors. Guy Walsingham from "The Death of the Lion" was inspired by George Egerton, whilst James' antipathy towards feminism was influenced by his stormy relationship with Vernon Lee. Using ideas from Adorno and Horkheimer, decadence can be seen as resulting from contradictions within post-Enlightenment thought, though in practice much of its writing was naturalistic rather than aesthetic. "New woman" fiction, despite challenging dominant values, was also largely naturalistic. Since, in the debate between realism and romance, naturalism was viewed as degenerate, decadence and feminism were seen by critics as interchangeable. However, in exploring the growth of feminist thought, especially ideas of social purity and sexuality, and of the myth of the new woman, for example in the criticism of Eliza Lynn Linton, it is apparent that decadence and feminism were incompatible. But the deployment of naturalism, founded upon empirical beliefs stemming from the Enlightenment, was ultimately a self-defeating strategy, resulting in the pessimism characteristic of both decadence and the "new woman" novel. The disruption of naturalism in the short stories of Egerton and Lee offers a way out from this impasse. Egerton, influenced by Nietzsche in her eugenic beliefs, anticipates Pound's "revolution of the word". Lee displaces realism in her Gothic writing, and instead counters sexual stereotypes through a creative reworking of myth. By questioning the assumptions of both decadence and naturalism, they construct a form of modernist discourse in opposition to the Jamesian model. Furthermore, they challenge the pessimism which permeates the cultural criticisms of the decadents, and of subsequent modernists.

The Growth of Artistic Decadence

Since the mid-1850s, critics from Robert Buchanan to Janet Hogarth had warned of artistic decadence. Their chief suspects included the "fleshly school" of Rossetti, Morris and Swinburne; the aestheticism of Pater; and the later decadents such as Wilde and Beardsley. But, as Matei Calinescu has observed, the idea of decadence

had a much older pedigree.[1] The ancient Greeks, for example, believed that civilisation was in perpetual decline from the mythical "Golden Age". During the Middle Ages this teleology was transformed by the rise of millenarianism. Rather than an unending fall, decadence was seen as culminating within a definite climax: Judgement Day. Consequently, signs of decay were to be greeted with a sense of urgency as individuals attempted to absolve themselves from sin. In both these models, though, decadence was viewed as a natural process, framing human activity though beyond human intervention. As seen earlier in the discussion of degeneration, despite modernity's promise of progress, its challenge to traditional social structures meant that these residual beliefs of a fall from grace, mounting corruption and an imminent apocalypse persisted into the modern era. Progress was, for many, accompanied by an acute sense of loss and alienation.

The Enlightenment historian, Charles-Louis le Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, devised a pattern for decadence.[2] In his *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence* (1734), Montesquieu proposed that the Roman Republic had been the highpoint of civilisation, and that all which had followed was a decline. Rome had fallen not only because the size of the Empire became unmanageable, but because a moral malaise had infected the Roman people, allowing emperors and rival generals to pursue their own despotisms. This malaise was the inevitable effect of an empire which had expanded too quickly, resulting in commercialism, vulgarity and hedonism. Rather than blame some external, natural or religious cycle, Montesquieu emphasised that decadence was produced by internal corruption, and that this constituted an intrinsic, historical law. Montesquieu termed this pattern an *esprit général* which, as shown in chapter one, was translated during the Victorian era as the inexorable, totalising "Spirit of the Age". The implication of Montesquieu's argument was that all empires are subject to this same pattern, and that all must fall due to their own internal decay. Montesquieu's thesis was further popularised, and corroborated, by Edward Gibbons' *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which began publication in 1776.

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[1] Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1987), pp. 151-6.
[2] See Robert Shackleton, *Montesquieu: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 164-8.

Montesquieu's lesson, though, was not learnt by the Victorian empire-builders. Artistic decadence, however, can be seen as not only a reaction against the philistinism of bourgeois morality, but as a crisis within post-Enlightenment thought. Key tenets of the Enlightenment, such as free will, the moral improvement of individuals, and the application of reason, had been absorbed into the rhetoric of the nation-state: that human beings are rational, integrated and autonomous. This appropriation served not only to blind people to their conditions, but also to neutralise the political threat of Romanticism, in particular the repression of other key beliefs, such as the imagination and self-transcendence. ("Byronism" was, in fact, often used by critics as a synonym for decadence.[3]) Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, building upon earlier observations by Max Weber, argued that there was a central paradox within Enlightenment thinking. On the one hand, it sought to liberate individuals through the use of reason. But, on the other, reason allowed people to hold control over nature, and then over each other:

> Technology [...] does not work by concepts and images [...] but refers to
> method, the exploitation of others' work and capital. What men want to learn
> from nature is how to use it in order to wholly dominate it and other men [...]
> On the road to modern science, men renounce any claim to meaning.[4]

But, as Adorno and Horkheimer proceed to illustrate, nobody agrees upon what is or isn't rational and, since other possible solutions such as religion or tradition have been overthrown by science, this dilemma can only be resolved through force. The Enlightenment, therefore, abandoned its pursuit of truth, and instead legitimised what Adorno and Horkheimer term "the administered life": the bureaucratisation and standardisation of people's everyday lives through science and technology.[5] Furthermore, knowledge itself became disconnected from a notion of ethics and was instead re-packaged as "a commodity disseminated as information without permeating the individuals who acquired it".[6] This obviously re-connects with Henry James' view of the mass media, but for the decadents in particular, they rebelled not only against bourgeois society but also the failure of Romanticism. In reaction to

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[3] See, for example, Sydney Alexander, 'Pessimism and Progress', *Contemporary Review*, vol. 63 (1893), p. 83.
[4] Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. by John Cumming (London: Verso, 1986, orig. pub. 1947), pp. 4-5.
[5] ibid, p. 38. I shall return to this relationship between science and the state in my conclusion, and in light of the later discussion of eugenics.
[6] ibid, p. 197.

what they viewed as collusion and compromise, the decadents proposed a cult of artifice which affronted the metaphors of organicism which, coincidentally, pervaded both Victorian morality and Enlightenment thinking, especially the writings of Rousseau. The sense of disillusionment is captured in this 1888 review of Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* by the poet and short story-writer, Ernest Dowson:

> The time for romance, for novels written in the stage method is gone. In a
> worldly decaying civilisation, in an age of nostalgia like the present - what is
> the meaning of Mr Rider Haggard? He is an anachronism. It is to books like
> *Madame Bovary* and de Maupassant's *Une Vie*, to books like these one must
> go to find the true significance of the XIXth Century.[7]

Dowson argues for a literature which will offer insights into cultural decline but not remedy it. Linda Dowling has proposed that the decadents' foregrounding of artifice exposed the artificialities of everyday life, therefore paving the way for a new understanding of nature transformed by the urban language and landscape. In an extension of the popular analogy between the British and Roman Empires, the decadents saw themselves as barbarians intent on destroying imperial culture only to rebuild it anew.[8] Though suggestive, this interpretation is misleading. In the above passage Dowson describes the present as "an age of nostalgia" by which he means that no response is original: it can only recycle or refer back to what has gone before. It is this condition which, for Dowson, Flaubert and Maupassant expose. Consequently, it would be simply impossible for writers such as Dowson to propose the kind of revolutionary impulse which Dowling claims for decadence. All artistic responses are framed by the inexorable entropic process (see chapter one), so that decadence is essentially pessimistic. In this respect, it was particularly influenced by the ideas of Arthur Schopenhauer.

Largely ignored during his lifetime, Schopenhauer achieved notoriety in France following Theodule Ribot's translation of his work in 1874.[9] Within three years James Sully had noted his influence in England in his study, *Pessimism*. Very briefly, Schopenhauer argued that human beings were motivated by the "will to live". The

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[7] Quoted by Linda Dowling, 'The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s', *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, vol. 33, no. 4 (1979), p. 436.

[8] ibid, pp. 448-51.

[9] See Shehira Doss-Davezac, 'Schopenhauer According to the Symbolists: the Philosophical Roots of Late Nineteenth Century French Aesthetic Theory', in *Schopenhauer, Philosophy and the Arts*, ed. by Dale Jacquette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 249.

intellect itself is made subordinate to the instinctual need to protect oneself and to propagate, and is therefore blinded to the suffering which forms human existence. The will leads the individual inevitably into conflict and pain, but also extends the possibility of growth and change. But this is a delusion: only death, and the flight into non-existence, offers an escape from human suffering. However, Schopenhauer also privileged the importance of aesthetic experience. The realisation that there is no divine purpose to existence offers insight not into the appearance of things, but into the thing itself which, following Plato, Schopenhauer termed "the Idea". This insight can only be achieved in exceptional moments by exceptional people: geniuses who are in some way unnatural in that their intellect outweighs their instinct. They experience a heightened sense of reality, reimagining the world in order to understand its true nature. However, though these insights offer greater satisfaction than mere material desires, which are stimulated and frustrated by a perpetual sense of "lack", they remain fleeting and incapable of changing human misery. Only the glad acceptance of death, the entry into Nirvana, offers release.[10] As Shehira Doss-Davezac has shown, Schopenhauer's ideas neatly coincided with the French symbolists' own reaction against positivism and espousal of the transitory and mystical[11], though the same can also be said for the English decadents.

Schopenhauer's privileging of selfish instinct and interminable suffering predated Darwinism and entropy, both of which framed 1890s' intellectualism. His suggestion that the genius can still, despite life's cruelty, experience transfiguring moments encouraged the decadents' pursuit of sensuality and creativity - through the uses of drugs, sex and commerce. In practice, the decadents cultivated a form of languid hedonism within their equally cultivated cynicism and melancholia. Rather than slip into mere contentment, the decadent views his own malaise as an exploration of cultural paralysis through the strategies of ennui, spleen and impuissance.[12] In particular, the decadent distrusts all notions of romantic love. Human beings are not compassionate or altruistic, but motivated purely by self-gain. Sex is to be treated either as a reproductive need or as self-gratification with little regard for the other. The decadents shared their sexism with Schopenhauer, who contended that women's

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[10] A concise introduction to Schopenhauer's ideas is offered by Christopher Janaway in *Schopenhauer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), esp. pp. 37-42, 60-5 and 85-99.

[11] Doss-Davezac, op cit, pp. 251-71.

[12] See Brian Stableford, introduction to *The Dedalus Book of Decadence: Moral Ruins*, 2nd edn (Sawtry: Cambridgeshire: Dedalus, 1993), pp. 7-8.

interests are "love, conquests [...] dress, cosmetics, dancing", and that "dissimulation is inborn in women".[13] As Doss-Davezac argues, Schopenhauer's caricature surfaces in Gustave Moreau's depiction of Salome as a "bored, temperamental, highly sensual woman".[14] Moreau's painting from 1876, *Salome Dancing Before Herod* (see opposite), coincided with the popular representation of women as *femme fatales* - Medea, Lilith, Helen of Troy - and initiated a reinterpretation of Salome from manipulated maiden to sexual temptress in works by Flaubert, Huysmans and Wilde.[15] In women, decadents and symbolists saw the duplicity and artifice which they were both attracted to and repelled by. Consequently, the female figure was central to the decadents' pursuit of sensations to the point of self-extinction.

To sum-up: the decadents believed that society, exemplified by its regimentation and loss of Romantic ideals, was in terminal decline and heading towards a rapid end. They welcomed this decay through an ironic celebration of artifice and a cultivated disinterest. By examining their own paralysis they explored the malaise of their own culture. But they not only differed from their predecessors, such as Pater or the Pre-Raphaelites, in terms of cultural pessimism or personal desperation. Decadence was also a question of literary style, which in turn introduced innovative methods of presentation and distribution.

WRITING AND PUBLISHING DECADENCE

As Calinescu has observed, decadent style was originally defined by conservative critics, and it was only later that decadent proponents appropriated the terminology.[16] Writing in 1834, the French critic Désiré Nisard first used the phrase *l'art pour l'art* in an attack upon Romanticism. He condemned romantic literature for over-emphasising details so that the whole collapsed into a mass of fragments. Théophile Gautier's 1868 preface to Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* reclaimed the notion of "art for art's sake" by arguing that, in its self-reflexive foregrounding of different styles, it was the apogee of a dying civilisation.[17] Similarly, in his *style de décadence*, Paul Bourget ceded the play of meaning to the word: "A style of decadence is one in

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[13] Arthur Schopenhauer, 'On Women', in *Parerga and Paralipomena, vol. 2,* trans. by E.F.J. Payne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974, orig. pub. 1851), p. 617.

[14] Quoted by Doss-Davezac, op cit, p. 253.

[15] See Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in "Fin de Siècle" Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 380-4.

[16] Calinescu, op cit, pp. 157-8.

[17] See ibid, p. 164.

which the unity of the book is decomposed to give place to the independence of the page, in which the page is decomposed to give place to the independence of the phrase, and the phrase to give place to the independence of the word".[18] Slightly later, in his critique of Wagner, Nietzsche would propose a more dynamic notion of the word rather than Bourget's hedonistic play. (I shall explore this further in relation to George Egerton.)

Bourget's theory, though, found fertile ground in England where, since the 1850s, there was a growing belief that language had lost its vitality. As Dowling has shown, the Victorians inherited a Romantic philology, expressed by Wordsworth, which argued that the English language mediated the true spirit of the English people. Coleridge, though, had rejoined that everyday speech was impermanent, and instead conceived of a *lingua communis,* a body of written texts which in their common currency would unite the nation, and by being written down crystallise all that is best in the English language, in practice becoming a dialect all of its own.[19] The Victorian taste for rhetoric and readings indicates the pleasure and sustenance they found in speaking their own language.[20] However, the introduction of a more "scientific" philology from Germany, with its dry analysis of linguistic roots and phonetics, only emphasised the autonomy of language, its disconnection from the meanings projected on to it by human beings. In particular, the "scientific" philologist displaced Coleridge's reification of literature as a dialect, and instead asserted that, since language is transformed through sounds not symbols, literature was a falsification of language. It did not communicate any essence of human character, but instead was practically dead.[21] This contradicted the Victorian belief in literature as the expression of a "living language", the metaphor's healthy organicism being matched by the vigorous growth of the Empire. Instead, philology's refusal to judge, on phonetic grounds, between educated and uneducated speech coincided with bourgeois fears about the loss of standards within a pluralistic, urban democracy. As Dowling notes, as the analogy between the British and Roman Empires grew, so there was a corresponding fear of "barbarians" which, in its Hellenic derivation, technically referred to those who did not speak properly, whether it be savages

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[18] Quoted by Havelock Ellis, 'A Note on Paul Bourget' (1889), in *Views and Reviews: A Selection of Uncollected Articles 1884-1932, vol. 1* (London: Desmond Harmsworth, 1932), p. 52.

[19] Dowling, *Language and Decadence in the Victorian "Fin de Siècle"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 16-7 and 26-8.

[20] See ibid, pp. 40-3.

[21] See ibid, pp. 61-5.

abroad or the working classes.[22] Philology's attempt to capture the breadth of the English language, symbolised by the publication in 1888 of the *Oxford English Dictionary,* was therefore equated with a democratisation of the language, a recognition of slang, and a vulgarisation of cultural values.[23] Linguistic decay was associated with moral and social corruption, so that it was now that Montesquieu's lesson, that Rome had fallen due to its own internal rot, began to be appreciated.

One result was that, despite the antipathy between naturalism and decadence, critics conflated the two, treating both their language use as degenerate: in the former the representation of working class speech, and in the latter the clash of registers between colloquialisms and self-conscious antiquity. Their linguistic looseness suggested a moral laxity, exemplified by their sexual content. However, the positivistic basis of naturalism, of relating character to environment, only reinforced the philological method of seeking-out underlying structures, and displacing man-made myths with general laws of behaviour. In a sense, naturalism mirrored the efforts of writers such as Hopkins or William Barnes, who reacted against philology, and instead foregrounded the specialty of rural speech. Only decadence, in its conscious use of artifice, emphasised the disenchantment of an urban and science-ridden society to which philology was contributing. Decadent writing revels in a literary language considered to be "dead" under the new philological order, and in the isolation of words, like other commercial units, without any deeper or more profound meaning. Bourget's theory, for example, argued that a degenerate society was one in which organic structures had disintegrated into their component parts.[24] It was, therefore, a time in which the atomistic individual could enjoy all the sensual delights of urban society whilst, through his cultivated disaffection, observe himself taking pleasure. Consequently, to best express this condition, literature needed to be similarly fragmented with the whole conceding autonomy to the word as an object to be enjoyed in itself. In England a similar philosophy could be derived from Walter Pater, especially his conclusion to *The Renaissance* (1873). Here, Pater conceives of the world as "impressions unstable, flickering, inconsistent", each one being "the

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[22] ibid, p. 93.
[23] See ibid, pp. 95-6.
[24] See Calinescu, op cit, p. 170.

impression of the individual in his isolation".[25] The aim of the artist is to feel "as many pulsations as possible"; intensified by the "awful brevity" of life.[26]

However, translating this decadent ideal for media consumption was more difficult. As Ian Fletcher has argued, the original "little magazines" such as the Pre-Raphaelite *Germ* (1850) or the aesthetic *Century Guild Hobby Horse* (1884-92) were run by enthusiasts. They sought to promote Art not to court commercial success, since this would have undermined their high-minded project. In particular, the little magazine worked through a typically decadent paradox. On the one hand, there was its "delicious instability": a periodical is necessarily incomplete, whilst looking any further ahead than a couple of issues is to contemplate an unknown, almost occult, future. In compiling an ever more eclectic content, group identity dissolves into a series of individual pieces coherent in themselves. But on the other hand, there was also the need for stability whether in terms of a firm financial footing or in a clear artistic programme.[27] As Fletcher proceeds to demonstrate, the inability of these early practitioners to resolve this dilemma not only doomed their projects to an abrupt end, but also enabled publishers such as John Lane and Leonard Smithers to found their own "decadent" titles.[28]

The Yellow Book (1894-7), for instance, divided itself between the more conservative tastes of Lane and editor Henry Harland, and the more ambitious ideas of assistant editor Ella D'Arcy and illustrator Aubrey Beardsley. However, Beardsley's drawings were often no more than window-dressing. Alongside controversial figures such as George Egerton or Max Beerbohm, perfectly respectable writers like George Saintsbury and Arthur Waugh were also included. Harland's persuasion of Henry James to write for the journal, and his decision not to print Wilde, indicates his own anti-aesthetic stance. Ironically, though, it was the sight of Wilde carrying a yellow book, but not *The Yellow Book,* on his way to his trial which linked the magazine to Wildean decadence, and doomed it following his imprisonment. Otherwise, though, *The Yellow Book* failed for the most part to develop decadent poetry, whilst its prose tended to be naturalistic rather than aesthetic, for example the one-dimensional depictions of misery by Hubert

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[25] Walter Pater, 'Conclusion to *The Renaissance'*, in *Essays on Literature and Art,* ed. by Jennifer Uglow (London: Everyman, 1990), p. 45.
[26] ibid, pp. 46-7.
[27] Ian Fletcher, 'Decadence and the Little Magazines', in *Decadence and the 1890s* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), pp. 173-4.
[28] ibid, pp. 192-200.

Crackanthorpe, or D'Arcy's own superior contributions of sexual conflict. As Brian Stableford has argued, English decadence imported the style of French writing but omitted the substance. Dowson, for instance, is suitably melancholic, but he lacks the vicarious thrill of a Baudelaire.[29] However, this was not due solely to timidity or want of talent, but also the restrictions of editorial control. In the popular mind, however, decadence was equated with naturalism, and so *The Yellow Book* proved to be the controversial success Lane had desired. Following Wilde's disgrace, though, the journalists whom Lane had courted turned against the magazine and, in trying to distance itself from decadence, lost its identity. One of its refugees, Arthur Symons, launched *The Savoy* (1895-6), but it was also subject to the whims of its publisher, Smithers, who financed the project from the sell of pornography. Symons employed another eclectic approach, and very quickly the magazine became a platform for his own preference for symbolism rather than decadence. It closed after eight issues.

Both these examples would seem to prove James' argument that that which appears to be most subversive in art is inevitably compromised when organised as a commercial venture, and that in working with an event-driven mass media, it inextricably colludes with and supports the status quo. As Stableford admits, there was no such thing as a truly successful decadent career.[30] In a sense, the fatalism which the decadents ironically celebrated, symbolised by commercial enterprise, overtook both them and their ideal. James, though, engenders his argument. He presents the publishing industry as operating on behalf of female readers, whilst the exercise of self-promotion is conducted by society hostesses. The degeneracy of the mass media is depicted through the uncertain gender of novelists. At the heart of James' attack upon decadence lies the "new woman". Recent feminist criticism has tended to valorise her but, to explore the uneasy relationship between the decadent and the feminist, one must first see what the new woman actually meant to Victorian society. This can be best achieved by tracing her development through the work of her longest-standing critic, Eliza Lynn Linton.

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[29] Stableford, op cit, pp. 52-3.
[30] ibid, pp. 10-1.

Mrs Linton's Map of the New Woman

Mrs Linton embodied the contradictions of her society since, to use Blanche Crackanthorpe's term, she had been something of a "revolting daughter". In 1845, aged only twenty-three, she had left her father's parsonage in the Lake District, and had travelled to London. There she had married and, after an initial failure as a novelist, established herself as a journalist writing for magazines such as *Household Words.* Beginning in 1866, she published a series of articles in the *Saturday Review* which, though originally anonymous, established her as one of the leading social critics of her day.[31] She retained, though, many of the dominant social values, in particular Christian morality, patriotism and a clear separation of the sexes. Through her creations, the "girl of the period", the "shrieking sisterhood" and the "wild woman", Linton devised the social type which formed the basis for the new woman. However, she was also one of the leading architects of the Victorian feminine ideal.

THE WOMANLY WOMAN

As many historians have emphasised, Victorian society was founded upon a domestic ideology which had emerged from late eighteenth century evangelicalism, and which defined women in terms of the private sphere, and men in terms of the public.[32] After the mid-nineteenth century, however, this demarcation came under strain following the recognition of so-called "surplus women". The 1851 census had revealed that for every thousand men there were 1042 women. By 1901 this figure had risen to 1068. This disparity was due to both a higher death rate amongst men and a higher rate of male emigration.[33] Unfettered by marriage, surplus women were widely regarded as a socio-economic nuisance. The liberal economist, William Greg, advocated in 1862 the transportation of single women to the colonies: "We must restore by an emigration of women that natural proportion between the sexes in the old country and in the new ones, which was disturbed by an emigration of men, and the

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[31] See Vineta Colby, *The Singular Anomaly: Women Novelists of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), p. 16.

[32] See, for example, Catherine Hall, 'The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology', in *Fit Work for Women,* ed. by Sandra Burman (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 15-32.

[33] See Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality 1885-1914* (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 162.

disturbance of which has wrought so much mischief in both lands".[34] An anonymous piece in the *Saturday Review*, typifying utilitarian beliefs, "the social fabric is for the greatest happiness of the greatest number", argued that this could be best "attained by making marriage the rule". Marriage is presented as "the measure of civilisation" since, where women are economically independent of men, homelife deteriorates, men are discouraged from marrying, and vice increases. Instead, "as many women as possible (should) be dependent on marriage". But, as the article views marriage as no different from any other profession, then the single woman has simply "failed in business", and should not receive any form of welfare.[35] Other commentators proposed less extreme measures, in particular the re-education of women into the marriage ethos. John Ruskin was foremost in constructing the Victorian "domestic angel":

> But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle - and her intellect is not for
> invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. She
> sees the qualities of things, their claims, and their places. Her great function is
> Praise; she enters into no contest, but infallibly adjudges the crown of contest.
> By her office, and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation.[36]

Linton, too, championed Ruskin's "incorruptibly good" wife with fresh vigour. The "womanly woman", in Linton's writing, "has taken it to heart that patience, self-sacrifice, tenderness, quietness [...] are the virtues more especially feminine", and so "consequently she has cultivated all the meek and tender affections". Her very femininity "inclines her to loving forbearance, to patience under difficulties, to unwearied cheerfulness" whilst, since she has no aspirations outside of the home, she regards "a populous and happy nursery one of the greatest blessings of her state". Linton indicates that a social transaction underpins marriage but, unlike later feminists, vulgar economics does not enter this domestic ideal: "She thinks it no degradation that she should take pains to please [...] the man who, all day long, has been doing irksome work that her home may be beautiful and her life at ease".[37] Elsewhere, Linton writes:

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[34] W.R. Greg, 'Why are Women Redundant?', *National Review*, 14th April 1862, in *Women in Public: The Women's Movement 1850-1900*, ed. by Patricia Hollis (London: Graham Allen, 1979), p. 37.
[35] Anon, 'Queen Bees or Working Bees', *Saturday Review*, 12th November 1859, in ibid, pp. 10-1.
[36] John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* (Orpington and London: George Allen, 1898, orig. pub. 1865), pp. 107-8.
[37] Eliza Lynn Linton, 'Womanliness' (1883), in Hollis, op cit, pp. 20-1.

A woman's own fame is barren. It begins and ends with herself. Reflected
from her husband or her son, it has in it the glory of immortality - of
continuance [...] the *raison d'être* of a woman is maternity...[38]

Linton and Ruskin could have justified their assertions through reference to
contemporary science. William Acton for example, who was one of the first doctors
to argue that only medicine could truly explain sexuality, typified the orthodox view.
He contended that whereas men were driven by the sexual urge, even if the educated
gentleman could restrain himself, women had no sexual feelings at all, and merely
acceded to their husbands' desires out of a sense of duty. Those who refused were
socially deviant, whilst women who were sexually active, such as the working class
prostitute, merely revealed their innate animalism.[39] Besides the neurological
differences claimed by George Romanes (see chapter one), Patrick Geddes and J.
Arthur Thompson proposed a biological model. In their *Evolution of Sex* (1889),
they argued that male cells were "katabolic", or active and dynamic, whilst female
cells were "anabolic", or passive and energy-conserving. Consequently, like the
sperm, man was competitive and aggressive whilst, like the ovum, woman was placid
and maternal.[40] The implication of these theories was that the domestic ideology,
approved by Linton and Ruskin, was a natural arrangement, and that to alter it was to
go against Nature with potentially disastrous consequences. Since the
Enlightenment, though, woman's reproductive function had associated her more with
Nature, whilst man's (assumed) greater intellect, symbolised most obviously by
science, associated him with Culture.[41] Nature, though, could be two-faced:
passively revealing her secrets, or tempestuous and in need of being controlled. As
indicated in chapter one, men were encouraged to supervise their womenfolk just in
case they lapsed into unfeminine behaviour. Part of this "moral management"
involved the criticism of writers such as Linton, but equally "new woman" writers
were engaged in challenging this Nature-Culture divide.

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[38] Linton, 'The Wild Women, no. 1: as Politicians', *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 30 (1891), pp. 82-3.
[39] See Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England since 1830* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 77-9.
[40] See Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 89-92.
[41] See Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), pp. 87-110.

THE GIRL OF THE PERIOD

Despite the efforts of social engineers and moral reformers, the surplus woman did not disappear. Instead organisations, such as the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women (1859), were formed in order to train females in lady-like occupations, such as book-keeping, so that they could then be hired by employers. By extending the values of the private sphere into the public, societies like these empowered women, but without undermining the domestic ideology. Similar developments, where women's maternal and domestic instincts were seen as helpful, included the appearance of women on education and prison boards, and in local government, especially in areas of care and provision.[42] At the same time, national prosperity meant that families now had greater disposable income, and the young middle class woman, in particular, was targeted by the emergent consumer culture. The feminine ideal no longer seemed to be every woman's destiny, though at this time there was little sign of a feminist agenda.

Linton responded to these changes in 1868 with "the girl of the period", a creation which touched a cultural nerve and initiated various commercial off-shoots. Linton defines her by her "uselessness at home", her "horror of all useful work". Embodying the consumerist ideal, she is vain and superficial: her "dress is the object of such thought and intellect as she possesses". Linton's portrayal of "a creature who dyes her hair and paints her face" suggests the ways in which the modern girl prostitutes herself for a life "of fun and luxury", so that even the sanctity of marriage is reduced to an act of barter. Linton contrasts this unfeminine woman with her ideal of "a tender mother, an industrious housewife, a judicious mistress". The modern girl, conversely, is unsexed. On the one hand, in her dress and egotism, she succumbs to woman's innate emotionalism and narcissism. On the other, in her pursuit of the latest fashion, she apes the masculine by "talking slang as glibly as a man, and by preference leading the conversation to doubtful subjects". The modern girl's vulgarity, selfishness and pretence defines her as a "loud and rampant modernisation".[43] Like the decadents who saw in women, though to different effect, the artifice which they ambivalently enjoyed, Linton associates modernity itself, in its challenge to social cohesion, with unsanctioned femininity. Like other Victorian

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[42] For a fuller discussion, see Martha Vicinus' comprehensive study, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920* (London: Virago, 1985).

[43] Linton, 'The Girl of the Period', *Saturday Review,* 14th March 1868, pp. 339-40.

moralists, she desires to suspend modernity and reimpose the healthy organicism of the masculine body politic. Instead the girl of the period, in her brashness and vacuity, became the prototype for the new woman.

THE SHRIEKING SISTERHOOD

By the 1870s, as Britain moved into economic recession, a coherent feminism began to emerge, even if the term itself was not used until the 1890s. It was not, however, a movement but a series of sometimes separate, sometimes intersecting strands. Integral events, though, included the formation in 1868 of the National Society for Women's Suffrage (N.S.W.S.), the opening of Hitchin (later Girton) College, and the start of Josephine Butler's campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts (both 1869). Though many of the leaders were married, such as Butler or Millicent Fawcett, many of the participants were not. Some were young women, making it simple to deride these organisations as just another fad of the girl of the period, but others were older. As Maria Grey and Emily Shirreff wrote:

> A woman should be reminded [...] that in marrying she gives up many
> advantages. Her independence is, of course, renounced by the very act that
> makes her another's. Her habits, pursuits, society, sometimes even friendships
> must give way to his.[44]

Whether married or not, women's desire for autonomy was influenced by the notion of "social purity". Originally associated with male groups such as the Social Purity Alliance (1873), it was adopted by feminists who believed that sex education and the reform of sexual conduct were the basis for an ordered society.[45] They felt that the nation would be spiritually improved if women, men's moral superiors, were more publicly involved. This was Fawcett's justification, for example, in her campaign for the suffrage. Therefore, without overturning the domestic ideology, social-purity feminists reversed the Nature-Culture divide by arguing that, whereas men were driven by their sexual desires, women had greater self-control. However, in proclaiming women's moral autonomy, social purists imposed upon the rest of society an evangelical, bourgeois model of good behaviour. As Lucy Bland notes, tensions later arose between feminists such as Butler or Elizabeth Wolstenholme

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[44] Maria Grey and Emily Shirreff, *Thoughts on Self-Culture* (1871), in Hollis, op cit, p. 12.
[45] See Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality 1880-1930* (London: Pandora, 1985), pp. 6-8.

Elmy, who attacked curbs on the civil liberties of prostitutes, and activists such as Laura Chant who sought to drive prostitution off the streets.[46] The emergence of suffragists and repressive moralists, whose activism distanced themselves from the passive "angel", constituted a new social type to be wary of.

Linton dubbed these women "the shrieking sisterhood", another memorable phrase which passed into common currency. She attacks them as unfeminine - as mannish "with perverted instincts" or frigid, "unsexed by the atrophy of their instincts". Linton derides them as "the advanced class of women", a composite of both the social purist's claim to moral superiority, and the over-educated "blue-stocking", the product of colleges such as Girton. Again, through the notion of advancement, Linton criticises the state of modernity by equating progress with women who are so obviously degenerate. The destructive effects of modernity are represented metaphorically by women's desire for freedom, described as an attack upon the family, an unnatural "crusade against male supremacy".[47] The very idea of the shriek itself associates an incoherent modernity with the emerging medical classification of hysteria which, as Linton indicates in her article, was believed to be the result of abnormalities within women's reproductive system.[48] Linton not only popularised the caricature of the sexually-repressed prude but she also suggested that, in her strident moralism, the social purist ironically embodies a moral malaise. In her novel, *The Rebel of the Family* (1880), Linton's heroine, Perdita, is persuaded by the mannish Bell Blount into joining the suffrage movement, though the novel infers that this is only a prelude to even greater sins. Linton's real fear is that the young might be tempted astray, so that a moral disease spreads throughout the nation.

THE WILD WOMAN

However, by the mid-1870s, the suffrage campaign had become diffuse and divided. The failure of the 1884 Reform Act to extend the franchise to women appeared to end it altogether. Instead, it was about to be revitalised. The Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 had granted women limited legal rights, especially over the guardianship of children, an issue which dramatically ignited in 1885

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[46] Bland, op cit, pp. 96-101.
[47] Linton, 'Modern Man-Haters', *Saturday Review*, 29th April 1871, in Hollis, op cit, p. 234.
[48] See Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987), pp. 129-34.

following W.T. Stead's investigations into child prostitution. Stead's articles, "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon", were a blend of prurience and melodrama. They shocked their readers with their revelations of child abuse and the white slave trade. Most importantly, they captured the image of the sex-crazed male preying upon innocent, virginal girls (the abuse of boys was neglected), a scenario which tapped into other anxieties surrounding the labyrinthine city.[49] The affair followed the suspension in 1883 of the C.D. Acts (repealed three years later), a decision which implied that the source of infection lay not with the prostitute but the promiscuous male. Women's groups, formed from Butler's campaign, began to characterise men as sexually wanton, and to argue that society would be kept safe if women were more publicly involved. The National Vigilance Association (N.V.A.) sought, for example, amendments to the legislation passed after Stead's exposé, reforms to the judiciary and a women's police force.[50] But, as Bland emphasises, organisations such as these colluded with state interventions into working class life through the surveillance of prostitutes and the closure of brothels.[51] Though Linton might have portrayed them as "man-haters", social-purity feminists were motivated by very conventional notions of maternity and morality. However, these beliefs were to be both questioned and transformed by the so-called "marriage debate".

Mona Caird, a journalist, anti-vivisectionist and future novelist, initiated the debate during 1888. As feminists were increasingly doing, Caird applied evolutionary theory to marriage. The ambiguities within Darwin's argument, his use of metaphor, anthropomorphism and narrative, and his lack of genetic knowledge, still suggested some form of intentionalism. This allowed feminists to ignore women's inferiority within his theory. In particular, the role of sexual selection in *The Descent of Man* (1871) implied that women played the dominant part by actively choosing their mate.[52] Feminists could, therefore, argue that the direction of evolution hinged upon women's reproductive function, and to speculate that there had once been a Matriarchy, which had been overthrown by men's sexual excesses.[53] Caird, for example, argued that marriage had arisen out of Darwinian struggle: women had been carried off by men from competing tribes in order to perpetuate themselves. From

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[49] For fuller details, see Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992), pp. 94-105.
[50] See Jeffreys, op cit, pp. 60-1 and 72-6.
[51] Bland, op cit, pp. 101-5 and 108-10.
[52] See ibid, pp. 84-5.
[53] See ibid, pp. 78-9.

this had emerged the notion of possession, enshrined in law as coverture and in religion by the marriage vows. But, in practice, this only deluded people from seeing marriage as it truly is - legalised prostitution - whilst condemning women to the dangers of childbirth.[54]

The importance of Caird's article, though, is its suggestion that the domestic ideology offered a distorted view of female sexuality. In defining women in relation to male gratification, it denied female desire. Instead, Caird mediates the medical reclassification of women as sexed beings. Doctors such as J. Duncan Matthews and T.L. Nichols began to argue that healthy women did experience sexual feelings[55], whilst psychologists such as Henry Maudsley contended that, for their well-being, women needed to express their desires either through marriage or other outlets such as religion.[56] In many respects, this change of opinion stemmed from degenerationist fears surrounding the loss of Britain's imperial standing, and the need for women to produce "fit" members of society. But, perhaps, the most important contribution came from Elizabeth Blackwell. As the first female doctor, she was admired by other feminists, who viewed her as supplying a scientific explanation for female sexuality. Blackwell herself, though, saw science as explicating the claims of Christianity. She was a member of various social purity organisations, including the N.V.A. and the Moral Reform Union, as well as being a vice-president of the N.S.W.S.[57] Blackwell believed that women's highest achievement was motherhood, but that it was the potential for, rather than literal, conception which rendered women spiritually superior to men. Whereas men physically expressed their desires, women's sexual feelings were mental though just as real. Consequently, whilst earlier social purists had merely defined women as morally good, Blackwell extended the domestic ideology in a recognition of women's sexual activity. Upon women depended the continuance and moral education of the race.[58] Blackwell was therefore a pivotal figure. Whilst retaining the domestic ideology, she anticipated the rise of eugenics by asserting women's role as producers of "the race" and guardians of "the nation". The question for Caird, though, remained how this relationship could be constituted in

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[54] See Mona Caird, 'Marriage', *Westminster Review,* vol. 130 (1888), pp. 189-91.
[55] See Bland, op cit, p. 56.
[56] See ibid, pp. 61-2.
[57] For further biographical details, see Margaret Forster, *Significant Sisters: The Grassroots of Active Feminism 1839-1939* (London: Penguin, 1984), pp. 55-90.
[58] See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 205-6.

law. Her own solution was "free unions" organised beyond Church and state but on the couple's own terms. For women this would also involve the acquisition of legal, financial and voting rights.[59] Following Caird's article feminists speculated upon various reforms of or alternatives to marriage, such as celibacy or free love.

These competing strands, of social purity, marital reform and political rights, the latter symbolised by the Women's Franchise League (1889), came to a head in 1891 during the "Clitheroe case". Briefly, this involved the attempt by one Edmund Jackson to kidnap his estranged wife from outside a church in Clitheroe, Lancashire. He then imprisoned her in order to force his conjugal rights upon her. Her sisters applied for a writ of *habeas corpus* and, though the lower court initially sided with Mr Jackson, the Court of Appeal ruled that if a wife refused to live with her husband he had no right to confine her. Mrs Jackson was released.[60] Though coverture had not been overthrown, feminists such as Wolstenholme Elmy viewed the decision as a major step towards women gaining sovereignty over themselves. Her organisation, the Women's Emancipation Union, explicitly connected marital reform with political and economic rights. Conversely, critics such as Linton saw it not only as an attack upon the domestic ideal, but as a potential threat to the nation-state. Writing in *Nineteenth Century*, she expressed her astonishment at the judiciary. Whereas the shrieking sisterhood had been a troublesome minority, this decision had introduced "chaos and universal topsyturvydom". It could only lead to "the destruction of the family" and "the supremacy of women over men".[61] It would further encourage a group whom Linton termed the "wild women", whose characteristics she then described over the next two years.

Throughout Linton's criticism, the wild woman is portrayed as "a national sickness"[62], so that her purpose for writing is to prevent the young from being infected. The spectre of revolutionary France haunts her analysis: "the spirit which made [...] honest women into the yelling *tricoteuses* of those blood-stained saturnalia of '92, still exists in the sex".[63] Contemporary France, which in the popular imagination was associated with decadence, is presented as the dreadful fate waiting to befall Britain: "in France, where women have always had supreme influence [...]

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[59] See Caird, op cit, p. 198.
[60] For fuller details, see Bland, op cit, pp. 135-8.
[61] Linton, 'The Judicial Shock to Marriage', *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 29 (1890), p. 691.
[62] Linton, 'Partisans of the Wild Women', *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 31 (1892), p. 464.
[63] Linton, 'Wild Women as Politicians', p. 81.

the very blood and marrow of the nation is feminine".[64] Though she attacks such unfeminine trends for smoking, rational dress and physical exercise[65], the suffrage concerns Linton most. She denounces "the clamour for political rights" as "woman's confession of sexual enmity"[66], castigating in particular feminist comparisons between marriage and slavery. Though resistant to the medical re-sexing of women's bodies, Linton defines women in terms of their reproductive function, and stresses in particular the mental and physical dangers of "the heated passions and turmoil of political contest". Damage to female physiology will itself threaten the purity and survival of the race. In addition, enfranchisement will not only admit the well-behaved gentlewoman, but also "the far wider flood of the uneducated, the unrestrained, the irrational and emotional".[67] Linton's nightmare scenario is of an incoherent electorate voting for and being led by unnatural women, "a curious inversion of sex" with the "bearded chin, the bass voice, flat chest and lean hips of a woman who has failed in her physical development".[68] Mental derangement follows physical deviancy: the wild woman is "hysterically susceptible to outside influences"[69], and therefore she will squander away Britain's imperial possessions to France or Russia. National and cultural decline is presented as the direct result of women's refusal to accept their maternal role.

POST-LINTON: THE NEW WOMAN

David Rubinstein has dated the appearance of the new woman to an exchange of articles in 1894 between the realist writer Sarah Grand and the romanticist Ouida.[70] But, as I have shown, the new woman was really the culmination of some forty years of female dissidence. She was a composite of Linton's foolish "girl of the period", the repressed and hysterical "shrieking sisterhood", and the over-active, domineering "wild woman". She was "new" insofar that, as a composite, she existed as a *tabula rasa* on to which other fears and anxieties could be mapped. For example, just before the new woman's first official appearance Blanche Crackanthorpe, the wife of

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[64] ibid, p. 84.
[65] See Linton, 'The Wild Women as Social Insurgents', *Nineteenth Century,* vol. 30 (1891), pp. 596-605.
[66] Linton, 'Wild Women as Politicians', p. 82.
[67] ibid, p. 80.
[68] ibid, p. 79.
[69] Linton, 'Partisans', p. 457.
[70] David Rubinstein, *Before the Suffragettes: Women's Emancipation in the 1890s* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1986), pp. 15-6.

a barrister and mother of Hubert, described the "revolting daughter", the young woman who resisted parental control. Crackanthorpe's aim was to restore harmony between mothers and daughters and so, though she acknowledged that "marriage is the *best* profession for a woman", she also appreciated that "all women cannot enter its strait and narrow gate".[71] Crackanthorpe's conciliatory solution was to offer women professional training, but in the furore which followed her article, the revolting daughter was depicted as an agent of degeneration not dissimilar or unrelated to other national unrest, such as the recent miners' strike. New women, such as the revolting daughter, existed as consolatory figures in that by being demonised they explained the rapid and disturbing changes within modern society. Consequently, the new woman persisted as a term of abuse amongst conservative critics until the 1910s. *Punch,* for instance, was practically obsessive in its depiction and condemnation of the new woman. The following illustrations (see over) summarise the various representations of the new woman.

Figure one presents her as an over-educated "Girton girl", mannish in her dress and cigarettes, and adopting the sedentary position associated with aestheticism. The wife and her friend are mirror images of one another, indicating both their self-love and the self-indulgence which drives the harassed husband, a recurring type, away to the servants' hall. Similarly, in figure three a theatre-goer's dinner jacket is burnt by his cigar in shock at beholding the female decadent. She gazes over her shoulder at the reader in a parody of what, as John Berger notes, was a frequent motif in art, the female displaying her femininity to the spectator.[72] But the reader feels only smugness because, despite her coquettish hat and parasol, and the flaunting of her bare back and under-garment, she is a hag. Figure four features a young maiden who is unsexed in her appearance, the coquettish hat juxtaposed with the rational dress, her pastimes of smoking (again) and cycling, and in the risqué language which she uses in the accompanying poem. Figure two is simply astonishing in its misogyny. The poem, written in the style of Hilaire Belloc, narrates the story of Harriet, a suffragette who foolishly plays with matches and burns herself to death. Her "manly" bloomers associates her with the wild woman, but her strict hairstyle suggests the puritanism of the social purists. Two cats, symbolising common sense and the

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[71] B.A. Crackanthorpe, 'The Revolt of the Daughters', *Nineteenth Century,* vol. 35 (1894), p. 25.
[72] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: B.B.C. and Penguin, 1972), pp. 54-7.

Figure 1

THE NEW WOMAN.

"You're not leaving us, Jack! Tea will be here directly!"
"Oh, I'm going for a Cup of Tea in the Servants' Hall. I can't get on without Female Society, you know!"

THE DREADFUL STORY (The New Woman) ABOUT HARRIET & THE MATCHES

MR. PUNCH'S STRUWWELPETER.

Figure 2

HOW IT IS DONE.
(An Art-Recipe.)

QVID EST PICTVRA ? — VERITAS FALSA·
(Epictetus.)

Figure 3

TAKE a lot of black triangles,
  Some amorphous blobs of red ;
Just a sprinkle of queer spangles,
  An ill-drawn Medusa head ;
Some red locks in Gorgon tangles,
  And a scarlet sunshade, spread :
Take a "*portière*" quaint and spotty,
  Take a turn-up nose or two ;
The loose lips of one " gone dotty,"
  A cheese-cutter chin, askew ;
Pose like that of front-row " TOTTIE,"
  Hat as worn by " Coster Loo " ;
Take an hour-glass waist, in section,
  Shoulders hunched up camel-wise ;

Give a look of introspection
  (Or a squint) to two black eyes ;
Or a glance of quaint dejection,
  Or a glare of wild surprise ;
Slab and slop them all together
  With a background of sheer
    sludge ;
(Like a slum in foggy weather),
  And this blend of scrawl and
    smudge
Vend as ART—in highest feather !—
  Dupes in praise will blare and blether.
Honest *Burchells* will cry —
    " FUDGE ! ! ! "

THE MAN AND THE MAID.
(Up-to-date " Biking " Version.)

Figure 4

" WHERE are you going, young
    Man ? " cried the Maid.
" I'm going a cycling, Miss ! "
    he said.
" May I come with you, young
    Man ? " asked the Maid.
" Why, ye-e-es, if you feel like
    it, Miss ! " he said.
" But—why do I find you like
    Man arrayed ? "
" Oh, knickers are cumfy, young
    Man ! " she said.
" But the boys will chevvy you,
    Miss, I'm afraid ! "
" What does *that* matter, young
    Man ? " she said.
" Are you a Scorcher, young
    Man ? " asked the Maid.
" Nothing so vulgar, fair Miss ! "
    he said.
" Then I don't think much of
    you ! " mocked the Maid.
" Neither does 'ARRY, sweet
    Miss ! " he said.

" What is your ideal, young Man ? " said the Maid.
" A womanly Woman, fair Miss " he said.
" Then *I* can't marry you, Sir ! " cried the Maid.
" Thank heaven for *that*, manly Miss ! " he said.

mythical moral guardian Mrs Grundy, look reproachfully on, so that both the verse and the cartoon positively gloat over Harriet's demise.

But the myth of the new woman, which these cartoons try to conceal by appearing authoritative, by being framed and printed, by persuading the reader to feel content in his superiority, was in reality unstable. As a composite, it attempted to cover and explain various social disorders, but therefore it was always on the verge of disintegrating into its component parts. One such paradox was the way in which the new woman was meant to be simultaneously unfeminine, a vulgarised male, or over-feminine, either by being too passive or too emotional. The impossibility of discovering the balanced feminine ideal in society was matched by the difficulty in sustaining the anti-feminist myth against the historical actuality. In particular, contradictions within feminist writing, and in its popular association with decadence, indicate the limits of the myth.

Decadence and Literary Feminism

It was perhaps due to the interest surrounding Caird's articles that Ibsen's *A Doll's House* finally received its British premiere in 1889. Edith Lees, who later married the sexologist Havelock Ellis, attended the performance with other feminists such as Olive Schreiner and Eleanor Marx. She described her reactions to Nora's famous final exit: "Was there hope or despair in the banging of that door? Was it life or death for women? Was it joy or sorrow for men? Was it revelation or disaster?"[73] The "new woman" fiction of the 1890s can be seen as offering answers to these questions. Hugh Stutfield, a virulent critic of female emancipation, discerned two types of feminist writing - the "purity school" and the "neurotic school".[74]

The former, associated with writers such as Schreiner and Sarah Grand, expressed the concerns of social purity, especially the reform of male sexual behaviour. Grand's most notorious text, *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) for instance, followed the controversial premiere two years earlier of Ibsen's *Ghosts* by discussing the dangers of syphilis. Whilst the character of Evadne, who has educated herself through reading Mill and Zola, refuses to sleep with her husband after discovering his dissolute past, the innocent Edith contracts syphilis from her spouse, gives birth to a

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[73] Quoted by Showalter, introduction to *Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the "Fin de Siècle"* (London: Virago, 1993), p. vii.

[74] See Hugh E.M. Stutfield, 'The Psychology of Feminism', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 161 (1897), pp. 104-17.

deformed child, and finally dies in an asylum. Grand's candour and stark realism associated her with other "literary degenerates", such as Ibsen and Zola, though she herself, like most social-purity feminists, had very fixed views about marriage and morality. This can be detected in her novel through the character of Angelica who, being a typical "girl of the period", rebels against her parents, follows the latest fads and then, after marrying a man whom she does not love, begins an adulterous affair. However, after her lover dies, Angelica realises her destiny as a wife and mother, and returns to her husband. Ironically though, despite these novelists' desire to reform male conduct in a reassertion of marital values, feminists such as Fawcett dissociated themselves from "new woman" fiction for fear that its sexual frankness would damage their own cause.[75]

During 1893, though, the first major work of the "neurotic school", Egerton's *Keynotes,* was published. However, so-called "neurotics", such as Egerton, Caird or D'Arcy, did not reject the views of their social purity predecessors. Instead, they reasserted the need for female sovereignty, as well as greater respect between the sexes. But in the light of the marriage debate, and the impact of social Darwinism and medical reclassifications of female sexuality, they replaced an emphasis upon marriage and morality for alternative solutions. Caird, for example, in her novel *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894) portrayed motherhood not as an innate quality but as a social construct, whilst D'Arcy in her anthology *Monochromes* (1895) depicted marriage not as a refuge but as a battleground. Instead, free unions and free love recur throughout these fictions, whilst in Ménie Muriel Dowie's novel *Gallia* (1895) the heroine chooses a partner on the basis of sexual selection. The metaphor of transvestism, indicating a desire to choose different sexual roles, also recurs for example in Victoria Cross' *Yellow Book* contribution, "Theodora: A Fragment" (1895). For these reasons, writers like these were dubbed "erotomaniacs" or "sex-maniacs". However, the most controversial work from this period was written not by a woman but by a man, Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (1895).

As mentioned previously in chapter one, Allen saw himself as a champion of women's rights, though he was also a firm believer in social Darwinism, and in woman's role as wife and mother. Furthermore, he was an advocate of what was

[75] See Sally Ledger, 'The New Woman and the Crisis of Victorianism', in *Cultural Politics at the "Fin de Siècle",* ed. by Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 33.

sometimes known as "the new hedonism", a synonym normally for free love though, due to the prevalence of social purity within feminist thinking, it was more closely associated with the decadents. These contradictions surface within Allen's novel. The decision of Herminia Barton to enter a free union outrages bourgeois morality, though in doing so she recognises that the confines of marriage fail to express her sexual desires. But, after her lover dies, Herminia realises that their illegitimate daughter, Dolores, must be provided for so, like any conventional mother, she selflessly commits herself to scrimping and saving as a literary hack. However, when Dolores rejects her and opts for a traditional marriage, Herminia does not stand in her way. Instead she commits suicide by swallowing prussic acid. Dolores is symbolic of the future, whereas Herminia's role as a good mother is to protect and educate her, but not to prevent her daughter's development. The ending captures Allen's ambivalences. On the one hand, Herminia is a sacrificial victim: "Not for nothing does blind fate vouchsafe such martyrs to humanity. From their graves shall spring glorious the church of the future". But on the other, Herminia's method of death is a common nineteenth century device for punishing transgressive heroines, for example the death of Emma Bovary. (Herminia's *real* crime would have been if she had lived and had tried to prevent her daughter's marriage.) At the same time, though, Allen cannot prevent himself from savouring one last time the body of this sexually rebellious woman: "she found her mother's body cold and stiff upon the bed, in a pure white dress, with two crushed white roses just peeping from her bodice".[76] Critics such as Fawcett or Grand attacked the novel for its depiction of free love[77], but they did so from their own repressive moralism. More importantly, in a key distinction between decadence and feminism, the new hedonism is shown as something which men can enjoy as a reader, as a writer or as a character in Allen's fiction - Herminia's resultant hardship far outweighs her lover's death - whilst, for women, it entails a precarious existence, in which personal liberty is uneasily juxtaposed with their maternal duties. Consequently, the female is always objectified in male decadent writing, whilst in feminist fiction she is the subject.

This concentration upon the subject underpinned the charge of neurosis. It did not refer to actual depictions of madness, even if these female protagonists were less

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[76] Grant Allen, *The Woman Who Did* (London: Grant Richards, 1908, orig. pub. 1895), p. 216.
[77] See Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the "Fin de Siècle"* (London: Virago, 1992), p. 52.

confident or as principled than their social purity predecessors. Nerves were a trope
of much "new woman" writing, mainly as the result of women's inability to fit into
the feminine ideal, and did not belong to any one school. Instead, neurosis referred
to the female character's examination of her own emotional life. As Stutfield
declaims, she turns "herself inside out [...] analysing and probing into the innermost
crannies of her nature".[79] Introspection associated these writers with decadent
morbidity. Stutfield, for example, contended that it is "especially amongst women"
where "the popularity of debased and morbid literature" is strongest.[80] However, as
John Stokes has observed, "morbidity" was frequently used as a euphemism for
homosexuality.[81] If these fictions were designed for women, then it was axiomatic
that their male authors must, in some way, be feminine, whose "morals are the morals
of women, not of men".[82] The emergence of female decadent writers merely
confirmed this process of feminisation. Stutfield was prepared to cite its cause -
hysteria, the result of the "excitements of modern life" which lead inevitably to
"sapping manliness and making people flabby".[83] In art its signs are melancholy and
alienation, the suggestion that "everything is an enigma", whilst in behaviour it is "a
maddening", a desire for "new thrills and sensations"[84], in other words the decadent
ethos.

This hunger for self-analysis and fresh experiences led to another frequent
allegation - disproportion. Decadent writing was often criticised for its love of
surfaces, the excessive description of textures and colours. Similarly, as another
conservative critic James Noble declared, feminist fiction is like "a series of pictures
painted from reflections in convex mirrors, the colossal nose which dominates the
face being represented by one colossal appetite which dominates life". The primacy
of sex, and its naturalistic or impressionistic treatment, violates "the obvious
proportion of life".[85] Noble's defence of objective description disingenuously
appropriates realism in order to reaffirm a common-sensical, bourgeois world-view.
"Good" art is balanced, whereas "erotomaniac" fiction can only be read guiltily in
private, literature as a quasi-masturbatory act, or brazenly in public as a form of

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[79] Stutfield, 'Psychology', p. 105.
[80] Stutfield, "Tommyrotics", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* vol. 157 (1895), p. 834.
[81] John Stokes, *In the Nineties* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 26.
[82] Linton, 'Partisans', p. 458.
[83] Stutfield, "Tommyrotics", p. 834.
[84] ibid, p. 835.
[85] James Ashcroft Noble, 'The Fiction of Sexuality', *Contemporary Review,* vol. 67 (1895), p. 493.

exhibitionism.[86] Either way, this type of writing has a deleterious effect upon the reader: the moral disease feared by Linton. The loss of balance within literature is explained by W.L. Courtney "that more and more in our modern age novels are written by women for women". Whereas George Eliot's mind was "essentially [...] masculine", the modern female writer succumbs to the feminine tendency for self-consciousness and didacticism, for seeing the part rather than the whole.[87]

This loss of the broad canvas is portrayed as a pessimistic abdication of authorship. As shown earlier, the decadent was necessarily a pessimist due to the loss of Enlightenment ideals. The "new woman" writer similarly questioned the Enlightenment association of women with Nature. Whereas social-purity feminists reversed the discourse to portray men as the promiscuous "Other", feminist writers such as Schreiner and Caird deployed economic arguments in order to expose the social construction of femininity and motherhood. However, as Gail Cunningham indicates, feminist writers were largely naturalistic, and so had to record society's injustices. Consequently, their heroines rarely fulfil themselves.[88] One can also argue that their use of naturalism was itself derived from positivistic values originating within the Enlightenment, so that their critical method was ultimately self-defeating. Their pessimism, arrived at for different reasons, impressed decadent authors, for example in Dowson's review of Schreiner (see above), though it also linked "new women" writers with decadents in the popular mind. As Dowling writes, they were perceived as "twin apostles of social apocalypse"[89], or as Linton concludes, "the unsexed woman pleases the unsexed man".[90]

Contemporary critics have on the whole perpetuated this conflation between feminism and decadence. Like their Victorian predecessors, they have argued that Wilde's downfall brought a premature end to the "new woman" writer.[91] As with the naturalism of *The Yellow Book*, feminist fiction was popularly associated with aestheticism and decadence. It would therefore be reasonable to argue that feminist writers were mortally wounded following Wilde's trial. But, as I have indicated, there were significant ideological differences and dissimilar motivations between

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[86] See ibid, pp. 494-6.

[87] W.L. Courtney, *The Feminine Note in Fiction* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1904), p. xii.

[88] Gail Cunningham, *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 49-50.

[89] Dowling, 'Decadent and New Woman', p. 447.

[90] Linton, 'Partisans', p. 461.

[91] See, for example, Ledger, op cit, p. 24.

feminism and decadence. Without diminishing the harm dealt to feminism during the fall-out from Wilde's conviction, I want to propose an alternative reason for the decline of the "new woman" writer. Despite recent critics' emphasis upon formal innovations within the "new woman" novel[91], the techniques of multiple narratives, episodism, allegory, verse and fantasy did not displace the elements of "classic realism" described by Catherine Belsey - illusionism, a hierarchy of discourses, closure - or the Enlightenment ideology of the integrated subject which these elements support.[92] Rather than form the basis of a distinctive aestheticism, these strategies were merely surface trappings imposed upon a conventional linear narrative. Neither were they especially innovative, but instead appear to be more highly foregrounded versions of elements found previously within writers such as Dickens, Eliot or Wilkie Collins. What had altered was the content and the introduction of a more explicit feminist viewpoint. Formally, though, the naturalistic emphasis upon mimesis suggested a common-sensical view of reality, compounded by a definition of women's identity in materialistic terms. At the same time, as Cunningham indicates, the "new woman" writer inherited the Victorian novel's emphasis upon plot, so that the naturalistic form was compromised by melodrama as the narrative was manipulated through the unravelling of plot and the imposition of closure. The heavy-handedness of construction, and the obviousness of its polemic, contributed to the feminist novel becoming something of a joke by the end of the 1890s.[93] This decline into derision, though, was part and parcel of the demise of the three-decker novel. Despite its controversial content, a sprawling work such as *The Heavenly Twins* remained one of Henry James' "large loose baggy monsters".[94] The "new woman" novel collapsed because of its complicity with this dated format. To articulate an innovative feminine consciousness, feminist writers required alternatives of form and style. In exploring the work of Egerton and Lee one can see both the potential of the short story and the emergence of a modernist discourse which, in its opposition to both naturalism and decadence, rejects James' conflation of "new woman" writing with the interests of commerce.

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[91] See, for example, Penny Boumelha, *Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982), pp. 66-7.

[92] Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London: Methuen, 1980), pp. 70-6.

[93] Cunningham, op cit, pp. 78-9.

[94] James, preface to *The Tragic Muse* (1890), in *The Critical Muse: Selected Literary Criticism,* ed. by Roger Gard (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 515.

George Egerton

Other than Sarah Grand, Egerton was the most controversial "new woman" writer, though her period of fame was brief.[95] After the initial success of *Keynotes* (1893) and *Discords* (1894), the sales of her later collections were disappointing. Though she published two intriguing novels, *The Wheel of God* (1898) and *Rosa Amorosa* (1901), she turned to playwriting through her second husband, the drama critic and literary agent Reginald Golding Bright, but without success. But, during the 1890s, Egerton had made several literary innovations. It is unfair to claim, as some have done, that Egerton exhausted herself.[96] She suffered not for want of talent, but for being a forerunner to the later modernists. She lacked both the experience and the received traditions to resolve the tensions between form and content in her work, though it is these contradictions which make her writing stand out from other "new woman" texts.

Egerton was born Mary Chavelita Dunne in Australia in 1859 to an Irish father and a Welsh mother. The family returned to Ireland where Mary received a Catholic upbringing. Following her mother's death, Mary was sent to Germany to be educated before travelling to London to train as a nurse. But Mary fled to New York where she worked in a series of low-paid jobs before returning to England. In 1887 she became a companion to a newly-married couple, only to begin an affair with the husband, Henry Higginson. The two eloped to Norway, but Higginson proved to be a violent drunkard and died in 1889. Mary, though, learnt Scandinavian and met the leading writers - Ibsen, Hamsun and Björnson. Consequently, whilst Maupassant was being introduced into England, Mary bypassed his influence altogether, and later dismissed him as just another elder statesman of the realist school.[97] By the same token she also avoided the impact on decadence of Schopenhauer, but instead read the work of Nietzsche. *Keynotes* features the first references to him in English literature. Returning to England, Mary translated Hamsun's *Hunger* (published 1899)[98], and in 1891 married a penniless Newfoundlander, George Egerton

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[95] All biographical details are from *A Leaf from "The Yellow Book": The Correspondence of George Egerton,* ed. by Terence de Vere White (London: Richards Press, 1958).
[96] See, for example, Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy,* p. 66.
[97] See George Egerton, translator's note to *Hunger* by Knut Hamsun (London: Duckworth, 1921), p. ix.
[98] For Hamsun's influence on Egerton, see Laura Chrisman, 'Empire, 'Race' and Feminism at the *Fin de Siècle:* the Work of George Egerton and Olive Schreiner', in Ledger and McCracken, op cit, p. 47.

Clairmonte. Lack of money forced them to move to Ireland, and then to Mary's decision to write stories, adopting Clairmonte's first names as her pseudonym. She submitted a sample of her writing to T.P. Gill at the Dublin *Weekly Sun.* He responded enthusiastically and advised her to send her work to either Heinemann or John Lane. However, believing Egerton to be male, he warned her that her fiction could induce "a young man" to such "a state that he either goes off and has a woman or it is bad for his health (and possibly worse for his morals) if he doesn't".[99] Egerton followed Gill's advice and Lane accepted her.

The success of *Keynotes* was enormous. By 1896 it had entered its seventh edition, and had leant its title to a series of new authors published by Lane, including D'Arcy, Allen and Arthur Machen.[100] Its presentation - sexually candid tales bound with a cover by Beardsley - ensured the public's identification of the new woman with the decadent. *Punch* ran an exacting parody, "She-Notes" by Borgia Smudgiton with illustrations by Mortarthurio Whiskerly, which suggests that their readers must have been familiar with the original. Generally, it was well-received but conservative critics had a field day. J.A. Spender, who as "The Philistine" attacked sex-mania, described the stories as "written with the least amount of literary skill and in the worst literary taste".[101] Mrs Oliphant included Egerton within her "anti-marriage league", whilst Stutfield argued that "she personifies our modern nervousness, and her best characters are quivering bundles of nerve". But, in a back-handed compliment, he also appreciated that "her instinct enables her to perceive the fundamental traits of woman's nature".[102] In an era dominated by "the Woman Question", though, many men were happy to have Egerton as a potential guide to women's psychology. Thomas Hardy, for example, used Egerton's "A Cross Line" as source material for his characterisation of Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure* (1895).[103] Egerton herself saw this exploration as her key motive:

> I realised that in literature, everything had been better done by man than woman
> could hope to emulate. There was only one small plot left for her to tell; the *terra*

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[99] T.P. Gill to George Egerton (10th March 1893), in *Correspondence,* p. 24.

[100] For more details, see Wendall V. Harris, 'John Lane's Keynotes Series and the Fiction of the 1890s', *P.M.L.A.,* vol. 83, no. 5 (1968), pp. 1407-13.

[101] Quoted by White, in *Correspondence,* p. 9.

[102] Stutfield, 'Psychology', pp. 109-10.

[103] See Cunningham, op cit, pp. 105-6.

> *incognita* of herself, as she knew herself to be, not as man liked to imagine her - in
> a word to give herself away, as man had given himself in his writing.[104]

The interest with the content of Egerton's fiction, rather than its form, has persisted

into more recent criticism. Martha Vicinus, for example, asserts that "the real

excitement of reading Egerton comes from the discovery of self".[105] This type of

reading, though, is problematic. It suggests an almost jubilant celebration of the self,

which obscures Egerton's portrayal of loveless marriages, the historical faultlines

upon which her concept of selfhood rests, and the formal tensions within her writing

which question the integrated subject. To explore this dichotomy my analysis is

divided into two sections. The first examines Egerton's notion of the self; the second

studies her literary innovations.

THE EUGENIC SELF

Like other feminists, Egerton accepted the precepts of social purity. The rebellious

daughter of "Virgin Soil", for example, exclaims: "it must be so, as long as marriage

is based on such unequal terms, as long as man demands from a wife as a right, what

he must sue from a mistress as a favour; until marriage becomes for many women a

legal prostitution [...] mere bearers of children conceived in a sense of duty, not love

(*D*, p. 155). Whilst defining men as lustful, Egerton valorises motherhood, for

example through the confidante of "Gone Under":

> I think the *only divine* fibre in a woman is her maternal instinct. Every good
> quality she has is consequent or co-existent with that. Suppress it, and it turns to a
> fibroid, sapping all that is healthful and good in her nature... (*D*, p. 100)

But, unlike the earlier social purists, Egerton does not celebrate literal or

domesticated motherhood. Instead, like Elizabeth Blackwell, she praises women's

potentiality. In her utopian tale "The Regeneration of Two" her heroine, a spoiled

widow moved by a poet's honesty, not only founds a commune for fallen women but,

when the poet returns to her, enters into a free union with him. The story concludes

with a positively maternal image of the shelter: "inside the music of women's voices

singing at their work and the patter of children's feet [...] fill the house in which love

is making a carnival of roses" (*D*, p. 253). Consequently, Egerton's protagonist

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[104] Egerton, 'A Keynote to *Keynotes*', in *Ten Contemporaries: Notes Toward their Definitive Bibliography,* ed. by John Gawsworth (London: Ernest Benn, 1932), p. 58.
[105] Vicinus, introduction to Egerton's *Keynotes and Discords* (London: Virago, 1983), p. xix.

becomes a symbolic mother to the "waifs and strays" (*D*, p. 204) who populate her house, though the most important rebirth is of herself. But the shelter's activity, of women working and children laughing, associates it with the more dynamic notion of motherhood conceived by Blackwell and other post-Darwinist feminists. Egerton's heroine is, in keeping with medical reclassifications, a passionate woman and demands a sexual outlet in the form of her lover (redeemed as a man by being that most sensitive of things, a poet). At the same time, though, her union confers upon her a pseudo-marital status. This is an important distinction since Egerton, like her protagonist, detests "promiscuous mothering" (*D*, p. 208). Consequently, fatalism and ambivalence pervade the commune. As Bland observes, for a woman "to fall" was to be altered irrevocably. Though she might regain respectability, if caught in time, she could never replace her lost purity.[106] Egerton's heroine, therefore, sets her women to doing useful work, such as spinning but, though they might regain their self-respect, her utilitarianism limits rather than releases any aspirations they might have. In other words, whereas she, a middle class woman, can enjoy the delights of a free union and the satisfaction of saving victims of circumstance, her women being working class must be put to work before being safely married off.

This mixture of sympathy and distaste stems from Egerton's eugenic beliefs. Whereas social purists up to Blackwell had understood maternity in terms of morality, eugenists comprehended it in terms of race and nationhood. Eugenics was first conceived in the 1860s by Darwin's cousin and fellow scientist, Francis Galton, though he was more influenced by Herbert Spencer's corruption of evolutionary theory. The term technically referred to the selective breeding of "pure" offspring by encouraging the "fit" members of society to reproduce, and by discouraging the "unfit" through education, segregation or sterilisation.[107] Though eugenics failed to have political effect until after the Boer War had emphasised the poor health of recruits[108], it did impact upon intellectuals during the 1880s and '90s. The translation of the working classes from rural to urban areas had seemed to have weakened their "natural fitness", resulting in low intelligence, stunted growth and loose morals. Altering the environment would not remedy these deformities, since they had entered

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[106] Bland, op cit, p. 116.

[107] See Greta Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought: The Interaction between Biological and Social Theory* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 99-100.

[108] See G.R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought 1899-1914* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), pp. 60-1.

the genes and had become hereditary. The proliferation of a degenerate proletariat, in excess of a "desirable" middle class, threatened to engulf the "healthy" stock of society.[109] But the dual policies of "race building" and "race cleansing" depended upon, as with Blackwell before and in contemporary sexology, perceiving women as sexual beings whose destiny was to reproduce. However, whereas Blackwell had stressed women's potential for rather than literal conception, eugenics offered a more prescriptive emphasis upon women's reproductive function. As Bland states, "women were the link to the future"[110], as mothers and as educators. Consequently, as Anna Davin has shown, women were actively encouraged to become mothers through education and financial endowments, whilst their maternal proficiency was supervised by societies, health visitors and the medical profession.[111] The other side-effect was that, as Sheila Jeffreys has argued, women who could not or would not conceive were condemned as social burdens.[112]

The appeal of eugenics to feminists rested upon a potential contradiction: the recognition of female sexuality versus the selective breeding of children. However, many feminists saw eugenics as supplying a scientific justification for their moral beliefs, so that social purity was rapidly updated into genetic purity. The pinnacle of a woman's sexuality was to produce legitimate children, for she was satisfying both her physical needs, and society's moral and cultural requirements. The acclamation of motherhood allowed feminists to speak from a morally superior position even while this failed to challenge the domestic or imperialist ideologies.[113] However, though the emphasis was on childbirth, feminists maintained the spirituality of motherhood. The hereditary basis for eugenics could be used to show that the male sexual transgressions, which had overthrown the mythical "Matriarchy", had been inherited by men, so that modern man was innately bestial.[114] This underpinned, in particular, the ideas of feminists such as Frances Swiney, who saw the aim of eugenics as eliminating illicit male sexuality and encouraging moral sexual conduct, flourishing within an "Eternal Motherhood".[115] Turn-of-the-century feminists, such as Swiney or Christabel Pankhurst, saw eugenics as legitimising for the greater good

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[109] See Jones, op cit, pp. 102-3.
[110] Bland, op cit, p. 230.
[111] Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *History Workshop*, vol. 5 (1978), pp. 12-22.
[112] Jeffreys, op cit, pp. 93-8.
[113] See Bland, op cit, pp. 229-31.
[114] See ibid, p. 80.
[115] Quoted in ibid, p. 233.

their own assertion of female chastity. The transmission of sexual diseases, or "the great scourge" as described by Pankhurst, was associated with male promiscuity. Only if men reformed themselves, and women were more publicly involved, would society be purified.[116] Feminists portrayed this conflict as a "sex war", a term which has recently been valorised by critics such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. However, the feminists who pedalled this concept were motivated by a desire to control the sexual identities of men and women within the social, gendered and racialist hierarchies which underpinned the Empire.

Egerton, too, conceived a war between the "cultivated lies" of a sexual morality devised by men and the "instinctive truths" of a female nature suppressed by patriarchy. Undoubtedly influenced by the Nietzschean "will to power"[117], Egerton saw the aim of feminism and of her writing as recentring this true femininity: the realisation "that one is a higher animal with a destiny to fulfil" (*K*, p. 41). Unlike other eugenic feminists, who emphasised their Anglo-Saxon purity, Egerton depicts this true "self" in highly erotic and racial terms:

> They (men) have all overlooked the eternal wildness, the untamed primitive
> savage temperament that lurks in the mildest, best woman. Deep in through ages
> of convention this primeval trait burns, an untameable quantity that may be
> concealed but is never eradicated by culture - the keynote of woman's witchcraft
> and woman's strength. (*K*, p. 22)

Whereas other feminists sought to reverse the Nature-Culture binary, Egerton reclaims woman's association with nature as the basis for a female identity: "the untrue feminine is of man's making, whilst the strong, the natural, the true womanly is of God's making" (*K*, p. 42). This assertion of the passionate and the instinctual, as opposed to the rational and the temperate, leads Egerton to view the suffrage ambivalently. Her heroine from "The Regeneration of Two" describes "the advanced women" as "so desperately in earnest". Her claim that "philanthropy is a masculine attribute" (*D*, p. 166), i.e. a mode of behaviour imposed upon women, supplies the key to Egerton's critique. In a tone reminiscent of Lawrence, the poet describes seeing "factory doors open and troops of men and women and children, apologies for human beings, narrow-chested, stunted [...] troop out of them", and of "great

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[116] See ibid, pp. 242-7.

[117] For a useful overview, see J.P. Stern, *Nietzsche* (London: Fontana, 1978), esp. pp. 80-7.

monopolies eating away the substance of the people" (*D*, p. 192). Egerton's diatribe implies that feminists who proclaim their rationality ultimately collude with capitalist and patriarchal exploitation: the destructive, vampiric imagery being later juxtaposed with the nurturant qualities of the shelter. The heroine's allusion to anthropological theories, "the fathers were only an accident" (*D*, p. 206), stresses the unnaturalness of (literally) man-made society. Instead, Egerton suggests that liberation will only emerge from women's recognition of their instinctuality and of motherhood's integral role:

> Yet she is the flower of humanity; he, but the accessory [...] Her maternity lifts
> her above him every time. Man hasn't kept the race going, the burden of the
> centuries has lain on the women. (*D*, p. 207)

Consequently, though Egerton rejects the binary of male logic versus female softness, she merely reverses the terms of another binary set by patriarchy: feminine passivity versus female irrationality. Though this does amount to a redefinition of femininity, it lacks the subversive edge praised by critics such as Vicinus. Instead, it permits Egerton to assume a morally superior position without aligning herself with other social-purity feminists, or overthrowing the establishment values which she sets out to challenge. This tactic results in Egerton's use of religious imagery, despite her lapsed beliefs, and in the missionary zeal of her heroines. In "The Regeneration of Two" the female protagonist dreams of "having a mission", to find "something for myself" (*D*, pp. 166-7), though this would be achieved by holding control over others. These characters are essentially egotists. During the middle section of "A Psychological Moment at Three Periods", for example, the adolescent heroine observes an idiot boy at a carousel, fastened to a pole and playing a hurdy-gurdy. His appearance is as aesthetically displeasing as his exploitation is morally offensive:

> His head is abnormally large, the heavy eyelids lie half folded on the prominent
> eyeballs [...] his damp hair clings to his temples and about his outstanding ears.
> His mouth gapes, and his long tongue lolls from side to side. (*D*, p. 17)

However, the girl's immediate reaction is to ask, "why should I see it? [...] why should I always pitch on the rotten spot on the fruit?" Only later does she say, "I would raise a crusade for the service of the suffering" before, significantly, laying "her hot, tear-stained cheek to the cool lap of Mother Earth" (*D*, p. 19). Instead, she

objectifies the boy as an existential statement, "is that what I shall find in the world to come - some poor idiot turning the organ for all the luckier born to dance?", whilst also privileging her own alienation: "I alone see" (*D*, p. 18). Later, when as an adult she has been blackmailed, she hears again the hurdy-gurdy's refrain, suggesting that the meaningless void is indeed inevitable. (The idiot boy, however, is incapable of such existential angst: this again is a luxury of the "healthy" middle classes.) Instead, the girl's hypothetical crusade is aimed mainly at removing her suffering, "always I see the pain, the sorrow, underneath the music", by ridding herself of the degenerate: "God, I tell you, you needn't have made him! You knew from all time he'd be there, and why should he be?" (*D*, p. 19). Within a single paragraph "I" is repeated twelve times, which tends to suggest who the "poor thing" of her outburst really is.

As Laura Chrisman has argued, though Egerton criticises the effects of capitalism, she herself behaves exploitatively by appropriating images of "otherness", such as the idiot boy, in order to express the feelings of her middle class women.[118] This results in a marginalisation of the "other", his/her condition is presented as fixed rather than socio-economically contingent, whilst the heroine's angst, emanating from comparisons with the "other", takes precedence. Consequently "true" womanhood, having been suppressed by the conventions of femininity, manifests itself through Egerton's depiction of women as enigmatic and in her valorisation of "otherness", such as the motif of witchcraft or the role of pastoralism. This occult nature is indicated by Egerton's abjuring of names for her characters, suggesting that they share some common womanliness. Her emphasis upon mystery and nature therefore, seems to be a guise through which to reassert a belief in motherhood. Like other eugenic feminists, Egerton seeks to redefine womanhood from within the domestic ideology whilst, anticipating Lawrence, her emphasis upon female desire reasserts the "sexual fix" of man and woman perpetually intertwined with one another.[119] However, Egerton's conception of womanhood is also related to the act of representation. An examination of form problematises this account of Egerton as an otherwise late Victorian realist.

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[118] Chrisman, op cit, p. 62.

[119] This term comes from Stephen Heath's study, *The Sexual Fix* (London: Macmillan, 1982).

Unlike her contemporaries, Egerton's eugenicism was influenced by Nietzsche. Despite being reviewed as early as 1891, it was not until the late 1890s, following the translation of his complete works, that Nietzsche became a tangible influence upon eugenists amongst the Fabians, sexologists like Havelock Ellis, and writers like John Davidson and W.B. Yeats.[120] In the early 1890s Egerton's knowledge of Nietzsche was practically unique. Whereas Schopenhauer legitimised decadent pessimism, Nietzsche's assertion that, in a God-less universe, it is imperative for humans to impose their own meanings was relatively optimistic. In a vulgarised form, though, his belief in men's attainment of a greater self-consciousness (the *übermensch)* was appropriated by the eugenic emphasis upon purity. Nietzsche himself rejected such positivist notions of progress as oppressive and over-rational, whilst denying individuals insight into the decentredness of time and of themselves. Rather than being fatalistic, his assertion of a cyclical history, rendered within the episodism and circularity of his writings, explodes the binarism of liberal progress versus decadent regress. Instead, the constant reiteration of the will over life and over itself offers not only an ambivalent but also a more meaningful process, since with each repetition the individual gains a temporary insight into the circularity of time, and of those "higher specimens" who exist simultaneously within past, present and future.[121] Both progressive and regressive views of history ultimately define the subject either in its autonomy or malaise. The cyclical view, by being both forward and backward-looking, offers a more open-ended concept of subjectivity. Though the same moment recurs in Nietzsche's philosophy, the subject has a fresh opportunity of transcending both his situation and social self. Consequently, despite the fatalisms which are implicit within Nietzsche, in particular between men and women, the individual and the mass, writers such as Egerton saw in him an escape from the inevitable apocalypse of decadence.

In contrast with Gilbert and Gubar's hypothetical matrilineal tradition, Egerton's literary antecedents were therefore all male. Like other eugenic feminists, she inherited patriarchal attitudes, for example the motif of alienation, whilst also

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[120] See Patrick Bridgwater, *Nietzsche in Anglosaxony: A Study of Nietzsche's Impact on English and American Literature* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1972).

[121] The key work in this context is Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, orig. pub. 1883-5), esp. pp. 178-9.

transforming the ideology for her own needs. For instance, Egerton dismisses the misogyny of the pro-Nietzschean author, Knut Hamsun, whilst praising his mastery "at probing into the [...] mysterious territory of uncontrollable, half-conscious impulses" as well as his "strong will", "sound intellect" and "iron tenacity".[122] One can see here the basis for her passionate protagonists, and her interest in the contradictoriness of psychology. To depict this in her writing, Egerton was required to question fictional form. Her decision to write short stories in itself registers the need for more impressionistic, ambiguous devices. Like Nietzsche, Egerton saw that language underpinned identity, and that the exploration of the unconscious had strongly proto-Freudian overtones.[123] She resolved the apparent contradiction between her eugenic beliefs in selfhood, and her challenge to the integrated subject, by arguing that linguistic innovation offered a new vitality. In addition, Egerton's reforms have to be seen within the philological crisis. Rather than ironically celebrate "dead" language, as in Bourget's theory, Egerton desires, in an extension of her eugenicism, to cleanse the word.

For Nietzsche, trained as a philologist, language was an arbitrary system designed to offer a semblance of understanding an unknowable, uncaring universe. The naming of objects, rather than revealing their essence, merely rationalised their existence for human consciousness. Consequently, there was no direct but only a metaphorical relationship between word and object. The word mediates what Nietzsche described as "a nerve-stimulus in sounds"[124], but which is displaced by first being translated into an idea and then into man-made language; the purpose of which is to re-present the world as if it was rational and coherent. The concept of truth, implicated within the mimetic claims of language, is therefore viewed by Nietzsche as "a mobile army of metaphors [...] a sum of human relations which became poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding". The deceptive, compensatory role of language ultimately means that "truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they *are* illusions, worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the sense".[125] One of these illusions is a belief in the integrated subject: Descartes' suggestion that

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[122] Egerton, translator's note to *Hunger,* p. ix.
[123] Egerton, 'A Keynote to *Keynotes*', p. 58.
[124] Nietzsche, 'On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense' (1873), in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, vol. 2*, ed. by Oscar Levy, trans. by Maximilian A. Mügge (London: George Allen, 1911), p. 177.
[125] ibid, p. 180.

"there has to be something 'that thinks' is simply a formulation of our grammatical custom that adds a doer to every deed".[126] As Nietzsche argues, the constant assertion, self-questioning, and reassertion of the will finally involves the imposition of a fiction, "Being", on to the flux, "becoming", which epitomises human experience.[127] Since this is a process conducted through language, which can only rationalise incoherent phenomena, the notion of "Being" is always superficial, so that the fiction fragments, and the will must be reconfigured once more.

Nietzsche's dissociation of language from meaning, his presentation of identity in terms of language, and his recognition that identity is understood more by the absence which it seeks to conceal have meant that Nietzsche has been seen as a forerunner to post-structuralism, the tropes of which have been viewed by recent critics as underpinning the modernist "revolution of the word".[128] Confronted by a dispassionate universe, symbolised by the silence which encircles language, Nietzsche opts instead for writing, not as a means of communication, but as the highest expression of man's "will to power". Despite literary language's "deadness", he sees in linguistic innovation the paradoxical decentring and reconstruction which is implicit within the will. The artistic usage of the word asserts the author's will, but points also to its provisionality: that its claims to representation are fictitious, since this presupposes a metaphysical justification beyond language, and that just as the word decentres previous usages, so it is also subject to further recentrings. In other words, it operates across an absence, which challenges common-sensical reality, so that the word exists within a continual cycle of decline and renovation. This tendency can be seen in Nietzsche's vibrant description of decadent style:

> Words become predominant and leap right out of the sentence to which they
> belong, the sentences themselves trespass beyond their bounds [...] and the page in
> its turn gains in vigour at the cost of the whole [...] The whole no longer lives at
> all: it is composed, reckoned up, artificial, a fictitious thing.[129]

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[126] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. by Walter Kaufmann, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968), p. 268.

[127] See, for example, Nietzsche, "Reason' in Philosophy' (1889), in *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 46.

[128] See, for example, Colin McCabe, *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word* (London: Macmillan, 1978), esp. pp. 69-79.

[129] Nietzsche, 'The Case of Wagner: A Musician's Problem' (1888), in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, vol. 8*, ed. by Oscar Levy, trans. by Anthony M. Ludovici (Edinburgh and London: T.N. Foulis, 1911), pp. 19-20.

Nietzsche's eulogy to the whole can only be seen as a partial lament. Already he has removed notions of "Being", to be replaced by an emphasis upon a fragmentary "becoming". Though he presents himself as a critic of decadence, Nietzsche's proposal that to understand the roots of morality, "we must first be Wagnerites"[130], implies recognising the decadence within ourselves. Only from this realisation can renewal come. Though, for Nietzsche, literary decadence might suggest loss and incoherence, ceding authority to the word also suggests a fresh vitality, a purgation of dead metaphors, i.e. truths, which obscure the process of "becoming". In this sense, Nietzsche's account is not dissimilar to Ezra Pound's reminiscence, when between "1908 and 1910 a few men in London groped toward the 'revolution of the word".[131] Pound refers to "a world eaten by usury", in which "the word, rotted by commerce, affects us all".[132] "Bad writing" is the "symptom of the European disease": a refusal to face facts rather than abstracts, the vague clichés and redundant metaphors which disguise themselves as truths. Pound, instead, summarises his project: "clean the word, clearly define its borders and health pervades the whole human congeries". By this, Pound asserts that literary form should be "an *active* pattern, a pattern that sets things in motion".[133] Rather than a decadent hedonism, "impressionism meant for (Ford) something it did not to Mr Symons", Pound sees in the word the basis for revitalisation, corresponding with Nietzsche's emphasis upon activity and self-will. In this respect, though Pound stresses "the lone whimper" of his colleagues[134], Nietzsche's influence upon the nature of writing can be seen to extend from Egerton through to imagism, Lawrence and A.R. Orage's journal, *The New Age* (1907).[135]

How do these ideas manifest themselves in Egerton's writing? As both Boumelha and Chrisman emphasise, many of Egerton's stories take the form of conversations between women in which the addressee narrates the addresser's tale. Resembling a religious confessional, despite their irreligious content, their

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[130] ibid, p. xxxi.

[131] Ezra Pound, *Polite Essays* (London: Faber, 1937), p. 49.

[132] ibid, pp. 54-5.

[133] ibid, pp. 51-2.

[134] ibid, p. 50.

[135] It must be noted, though, that as "early" modernism passed into its "high" phase, with both a clarification and a qualification of its principles and methods, Nietzsche was as much rejected as Schopenhauer and decadence before him. By this point, writers had refined their own ideas and were driven by them. See, for example, Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1926), pp. 120-7.

confidentiality reasserts motherhood and morality as a shared belief. Where used, the external narrator's incomprehension at the narrative transfers a logic to the addresser, whilst allowing her to retain her inscrutability.[136] But, as Gerd Bjørhovde demonstrates, to insert an implied narrator, whether it be the addressee or not, simplifies Egerton's multi-layered structures.[137] For example, the addressees in stories such as "Gone Under" and "Wedlock" are unwitting and ineffectual listeners, whose naivety transfers the tale unresolved to the reader. In "Now Spring Has Come" the speaker is prompted by an otherwise silent addressee into recalling a love affair, which repeats the addresser's sense of "analysing, being analysed" (*K*, p. 59). There are suggestions of Freud's "talking cure", contrasted with a demand to repress until "there is shipwreck of some sort" (*K*, p. 57), but rather than exorcise the memories the narration vacillates, "but to go back" (*K*, p. 49); falters, "ah yes, I'll go on, where was I? Oh, spring was coming, wasn't it? I do not laugh as I used to, eh? How used I laugh? I forget" (*K*, p. 58); and then breaks, "it would be impossible to make you see things as I felt them" (*K*, p. 44). Instead, the final enigmatic line, "do you really think that crinolines will be worn?" (*K*, p. 67), deliberately suspends the narrative rather than resolves it. Even where an omniscient narrator is used, as in the introduction to "A Cross Line", the vagueness of images such as "the rather flat notes of a man's voice" (*K*, p. 1), how flat is "rather flat"?, disturbs the effectiveness of the device. Instead, one may wonder who actually functions as the implied narrator. A third "voice", though, would undermine the intimate communication upon which the confessional rests, disrupting both the levels of subjectivity and "feminine" confidence with which the confessional is associated.

Though Egerton does not totally discard the omniscient narrator, her expansion in point of view undercuts her otherwise prescriptive notions of selfhood. "A Cross Line", for example, involves at its most basic a woman who contemplates an adulterous affair, overcomes her revulsion at motherhood, and remains with her husband after discovering her pregnancy. With such a minimal plot, the reader's attention turns to the language, though it is this which complicates the reactionary narrative. Instead of an authorial "voice" directing the reader through to the conclusion, the writing attempts to capture the processes of the woman's "busy

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[136] Boumelha, op cit, pp. 91-2; Chrisman, op cit, p. 54.
[137] Gerd Bjørhovde, *Rebellious Structures: Women Writers and the Crisis of the Novel 1880-1900* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1987), pp. 156-62.

brain" in "producing pictures and finding associations". This unfixing of the hierarchy of discourses means that the reader does not have to accept as final the meaning, which is imposed at the point of closure. As Lyn Pykett emphasises, the story's effect is not displaced by the apparently conventional ending, since this fails to explain either the narrative style, or why the protagonist thinks and behaves as she does.[138] Instead, even when disempowered by economic and biological needs, the story's constant switching of viewpoints attests to the power of female speech in its "more varied expression" over the male (*K*, p. 11). This decentring of authority is registered not only in the tensions within omniscient narration, but also in the use of free indirect speech. For example, the stranger's thoughts on meeting the protagonist, "his quick glance has noted the thick wedding ring on her slim brown hand [...] A lady decidedly. Fast? perhaps. Original? undoubtedly. Worth knowing? rather" (*K*, p. 4), are depicted as questions though whether they are merely transcribed by an external narrator, a call and response between character and narrator, or a dialogue within the stranger's mind is unclear. Otherwise, Egerton uses a form of free direct speech which highlights the disparity between the spoken and the unspoken, for instance: "Trout run big here?' (what odd eyes the woman has, kind of magnetic)". This type of cross-cutting is then picked-up in the shifting gaze between the woman, "she smiles assentingly"; the stranger, "what the devil is she amused at?"; and then in the interpolated phrase, "an inspiration", which stems either from the stranger or some anonymous third source; and can refer both to the stranger's next actions or his perception of the woman (*K*, p. 5) This complex movement is often represented by Egerton through the use of parentheses interrupting a character's speech, for example "my husband (he steals a side look at her) brought home some beauties" (*K*, p. 7), so that the reader is not only made aware of a subtle nuance, but also that language exists dialogically in which the focus of meaning lies suspended between the participants. Otherwise, parentheses serve as a means of indicating emotional changes, so that they resemble stage directions. The text itself is more like a drama where, in the absence of a hierarchy, the reader moves uncertainly between subjective discourses.

The most celebrated passage from "A Cross Line" is the protagonist's dream sequence. Whereas earlier in the story Egerton refers to sexuality through symbolism

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[138] Lyn Pykett, *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), p. 63.

and suggestion, the departure from realism allows her to be all the more explicit. During her fantasy, Egerton's heroine "fancies herself in Arabia on the back of a swift steed" in which she feels "the swing under her of his rushing stride". Then she imagines herself dancing, Salome-like, with her arms "clasped by jewelled snakes" whilst "one with quivering diamond fangs coils round her hips" (*K*, p. 19). Chrisman has argued that Egerton exploits Eastern myths in order to represent female exoticism[139], and though one could claim that its dissidence is contained by being a daydream, an overlooked aspect is that a male audience is incorporated into the fantasy. Rather than simply being a description of woman's "eternal wildness", the fantasy functions as a performance in which meaning is deferred to the audience. For the fantasy to work, it is dependent upon their reaction, their eventual ecstatic applause. Consequently, when the protagonist watches herself, her perception is mediated through the gaze of her imagined audience. The description is therefore dependent both on how men view women, for example in the stylisation of the striptease, and on how women have been eroticised in art. Rather than simply collude with an imperialist rhetoric, Egerton plays upon various patriarchal scenarios, for instance the myth of Salome or Rider Haggard's description of Ayesha. By re-working them through her own scenario, Egerton exposes their artifice as projections of the male gaze. Therefore, instead of being essential, femininity is presented as a process. The protagonist's identification with the rider and the dancer positions her as a subject to these narratives, though authoring the fantasy also dissociates her from them, allowing her to assume a form of agency. As Pykett argues, the passage's transition into a more discursive study of "other women she has known" (*K*, p. 21), and of how women have been viewed by men, challenges its own disruption.[140] Not only does it distance the reader from the fantasy, in exploring woman's "complex nature", it rearticulates this complexity. Again, one has the sense of an evolving self, picked-up also in "Now Spring Has Come" as the narrator gazes into her mirror, views her "foreign self" (*K*, p. 52), and tries "to fancy how *he* saw me" until "one forgot one's body in gazing" (*K*, pp. 48-9).

However, the heterosexual bias of Egerton's writing limits its dissidence. Though her women appropriate masculine pursuits and a sexual activity, their

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[139] Chrisman, op cit, p. 55.
[140] Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 172.

psychologies are explored, as in the dream, in relation to men. Rather than deconstruct patriarchal definitions of women, Egerton merely rearranges the terms which it sets. Though this reversal is initially striking, in the long run its effectiveness is limited. The descent into polemic and melodrama, indicated in the transition from the transcendent-sounding *Keynotes* to the gritty, dissonant *Discords*, points to the attenuation of Egerton's ideas. The significance of the dream sequence from "A Cross Line" lies in its intersection between artistic ambiguity and essentialist notions of race and sex. Egerton's inability to satisfactorily resolve these contradictions ultimately doomed her career, though this irresolution contributes to the open-endedness of her writing. Her emphasis upon indirect, elliptical narratives, with unstable points of view, forces the reader into decoding these narrative gaps. In other words, Egerton's approach culminates in a position similar to Henry James: meaning resides not with the text but with the reader though, to appreciate the text, s/he must be involved within and made aware of its composition. This form of pro-active, self-reflexive writing dissociates Egerton from both decadence and naturalism, as well as the categories of realism and romance through which critics have paradoxically attempted to classify her.[141] James' accusation of "the larger latitude" seems in retrospect an attempt to marginalise Egerton's literary style from the discourse which he saw himself as constructing. Re-reading Egerton as a modernist undoes James' allegation and decentres the movement's accepted development.

Vernon Lee

James' relationship with Vernon Lee seems also to be another exercise in trivialising a fellow writer in order to preserve his own version of modernism. After an initial friendship, Lee's dedication to James of her first novel, *Miss Brown* (1884), a satire upon aestheticism, outraged him, firstly because he felt that it was disrespectful, in practice wishing him good luck, and secondly because he detested, however slightly, being associated with decadence. He wrote to T.S. Perry that the novel was "painfully disagreeable in tone" and "violently satirical [...] without delicacy or fineness"[142], and advised another friend not to buy it.[143] Writing to Lee herself,

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[141] See, respectively, Wendall V. Harris, 'Egerton: Forgotten Realist', *The Victorian Newsletter,* no. 33 (1968), pp. 31-5; and Patricia Stubbs, *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920* (London: The Harvester Press, 1979), p. 111.

[142] Henry James, letter to T.S. Perry (12th December 1884), in *Letters, vol. 3: 1883-95,* ed. by Leon Edel (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 61.

though, James was disingenuously polite in his criticisms, and seems to have been at pains to maintain their friendship, primarily because of Lee's intellect and Europeanism. Holidaying with her in Florence, though, James wrote uneasily to Edmund Gosse that Lee was intelligent "with a vengeance"[144] and, even while praising her mind, James persistently emphasised her ugliness and contrariness.[145] The publication in 1892 of Lee's short story "Lady Tal", with its thinly-disguised caricature of James, brought their relationship to an abrupt close. Throughout James had been publicly courteous to Lee but in private, behind her back, had ridiculed her. Nonetheless, he expressed a common antipathy towards Lee, who undoubtedly could be both arrogant and opinionated. John Addington Symonds, for example, complained that "she can 'write' [...] But she shocks and irritates by the ineffable ugliness and vulgarity into which she so willingly plunges".[146] The criticisms of James, Symonds and others though, in equating artistic imbalance with mental or physical disorder, replicated the media's depiction of "new women". In other words, whilst James attacked the decadents for colluding with the media, he himself was content to conspire with a pervasive misogyny in order to disparage an irritant like Lee. The success of this tactic was such that Lee was characterised for the later modernists as a "withered virgin"[147], whose writing was equally diseased. Virginia Woolf, for example, commented that one cannot "let the pen write without guidance; for fear of becoming slack and untidy like Vernon Lee".[148] Wyndham Lewis too had inherited a view of Lee as frigid and over-educated. In his study of Shakespeare he declares that Lee writes with "almost drivelling righteousness", and then proceeds to misrepresent her, misquote her, take her out of context, and even to refer to her as "Mrs Lee", making her sound like a Victorian matron or stern social purist.[149] Consequently, having received a misrepresentation of Vernon Lee, many of the

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[143] See James, letter to Grace Norton (24th January 1885), in ibid, p. 66.

[144] James, letter to Edmund Gosse (24th April 1887), in ibid, p. 181.

[145] See James, letters to Grace Norton and Sarah Butler Wister (both 27th February 1887), in ibid, pp. 166 and 169-70.

[146] Quoted by Carl Markgraf, "Vernon Lee': A Commentary and an Annotated Bibliography of Writings about Her', *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920*, vol. 26, no. 4 (1983), p. 279. Except where stated, all contemporary views on Lee stem from this article.

[147] Virginia Woolf, letter to Vanessa Bell (15th July 1918), in *The Question of Things Happening: The Letters of Virginia Woolf, vol. 2: 1912-22*, ed. by Nigel Nicholson (London: The Hogarth Press, 1976), p. 259.

[148] Woolf, 20th April 1919, in *A Writer's Diary*, ed. by Leonard Woolf (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953), p. 14.

[149] Lewis, *The Lion and the Fox: The Role of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1951, orig. pub. 1927), pp. 111-4. I am grateful to Peter Gunn for this reference.

"high" modernists, often in ignorance of her as a person and a writer, recycled and even expanded this calumny as part of their critique of Victorianism, in practice erasing one of the architects of modernism from the histories which were already beginning to be written.

Who was this woman who could excite such strong reactions?[150] She had been born Violet Paget in Boulogne in 1856. Her mother was a free-thinking Englishwoman, and her father a former revolutionary and son of a French emigré. Due to the ill-health of her half-brother, the decadent writer Eugene Lee-Hamilton, the family roamed throughout Europe before settling in Florence in 1873, where Violet would spend most of her life. During these wanderings she revealed her enthusiasm for art and for history, her extraordinary grasp of foreign languages and, at the age of fourteen, published a series of historical sketches in a Lausanne newspaper. Strongly encouraged by her mother, Violet was set to become a writer. By 1875 articles, first under her own name and then as Vernon Lee, were appearing in British journals, and then in 1880 her *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* brought her not only critical acclaim, but took her for the first time to London. Here, she confirmed her reputation with the essays in *Belcaro* (1881) and *Euphorion* (1884); in particular her critique of Ruskin helped to popularise "art for art's sake". However, Lee also distanced herself from aestheticism by arguing that the careful composition of a beautiful work of art was in itself a moral statement. Like James, Lee believed that bad composition - misrepresentations, undue moralising - distorted the harmony of art and that this, not signs of mental or physical degeneracy, was immoral. For instance, whereas Egerton seeks to reclaim the *femme fatale* from male art, Lee, as seen in chapter two, attacks Maupassant for his use of it, but goes on to suggest that its deployment reveals a need within Maupassant's own psychology. Increasingly, Lee saw writing as an interaction between the author and the reader, with the author being responsible for co-ordinating that relationship. A device such as the *femme fatale* revealed too much of the author's own personality, capsizing the relationship, so that for Lee, like Lawrence after her, morality in literature was "the trembling instability of the balance".[151]

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[150] All biographical details are from Gunn, *Vernon Lee: Violet Paget 1856-1935* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

[151] D.H. Lawrence, 'Morality and the Novel' (1925), in *Phoenix*, ed. by E.D. McDonald (London: Heinemann, 1936), p. 528.

By the late 1890s Lee's privileging of form and impersonality became suffused with her interest in empathy, the new pseudo-science from Germany which claimed to understand how readers responded psychologically to texts. Collaborating with her lover, Kit Anstruther-Thomson, Lee produced a series of studies, whose eccentricity practically alienated what remained of her audience. However, though their motivation might have been different, their emphasis upon close reading and practical experiments predates both Leavis and I.A. Richards. Like James, Lee preferred "showing" to "telling", and often conceived of writing as a painterly or musical exercise in which "the Reader's mind is the Writer's palette", or the keyboard upon which he plays.[152] The author's words are the colours or notes which he skilfully combines in order to create the desired effect. However, since the reader is a conscious being and "not a blank, inert plate"[153], the establishment of "meaning" involves an active engagement between writer and reader. Like James, Lee viewed the aim of "good writing" as producing "the best possible Readers"[154], i.e. to make us more competent members of a culturally aware community. This social role to Lee's theory is illustrated in her short story "The Doll", in which the narrator empathetically "reads" a life-size doll designed by a late Italian Count to resemble his dead wife:

> I don't know what the Doll had done to me; but I found that I was thinking of her
> all day long. It was as if I had just made a new acquaintance [...] rushed into a
> sudden friendship with a woman whose secret I had surprised [...] by some mere
> accident. For I somehow knew everything about her. (*TKW*, p. 11)

In decoding the Doll's past, the narrator progresses from being a reader to becoming an author by imaginatively reconstructing the Countess' oppressive marriage, and then of how her memory was denied the chance of fading by the Count making the Doll the object of his fantasies: "the husband had the Doll made, and dressed it in her clothes, and placed it in her boudoir [...] He allowed no one to go in, and cleaned and dusted it all himself, and spent hours every day weeping and moaning before the Doll". In death, as in life, the Countess' own personality is obliterated by the Count's obsessive love until eventually the Doll is neglected and, following his death, is

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[152] Vernon Lee, *The Handling of Words and Other Studies into Literary Psychology* (London: The Bodley Head, 1923), pp. 41 and 44.
[153] ibid, p. 64.
[154] ibid, p. 33.

confined to a closet. However, as Lee indicates, with authorship comes responsibility, so that the narrator buys the Doll and burns it, metaphorically freeing the Countess. She retains though her wedding ring, in a sense is wedded to the Countess but, paralleling the Count's and Countess' inability to communicate, decides not to mention the Doll to her husband. The narrator's belief in "how impossible it is ever *really* to make others feel in the same way as ourselves" (*TKW*, p. 12), and her refusal to reveal all her ideas about the Doll to her addressee, contrasts with her relationship with her Italian guide, who unquestioningly helps to build the funeral pyre, and with the Doll itself. The narrator makes "no distinction between the portrait and the original" (*TKW*, p. 11), so that when she screams at the housekeeper, who has "proceeded in a ghastly way to bend the articulated arms, and to cross one leg over the other" (*TKW*, p. 10), it is also a cry against how the Countess had been manipulated in real life. Her decision to keep the Doll secret from her husband, and to only half-reveal her obsession, infers the lesbian sub-text which the narrative revolves around but can never express. The Doll's destruction silences this theme whilst, in its singular effect upon the narrator, leaves the story enigmatically open. To understand why Lee's fiction operates in this way, one must first contextualise the emerging discourse on lesbianism.

LESBIANISM: (R)OUTED IN LANGUAGE

Lesbianism was one of the major sub-texts throughout this period in women's history. As seen earlier, Mrs Linton made great play of the alleged masculinity and unnatural physicality of feminists. However, though they were seen as dangerous by luring away young women, thus distracting them from their proper destiny (matrimony and motherhood), the idea of sexual intercourse was not countenanced. The fear lay not so much with a perverse sexuality but with racial purity: that increasing numbers of "healthy" women might be discouraged from reproducing by the degenerate minority. The vulgarised pseudo-marriage of Bell Blount and her partner from Linton's *The Rebel of the Family* is not so much a lesbian relationship as a demonised female friendship, once an acceptable norm in the early nineteenth century but increasingly seen, due to the growth of degenerationist fears, as an unproductive, sterile distraction. When sexology began to categorise lesbianism, it was to these now-loathed friendships that writers such as Havelock Ellis turned for material.

By the 1890s, when sexology began to have an impact amongst intellectuals, a writer interested in sexuality such as George Egerton could approach the subject with greater awareness than Linton. Her story, "A Psychological Moment", is notable in its portrayal of same-sex attraction as both natural in a girl's unevolved sexuality, and as a resistance to patriarchy. The first section contrasts a childish friendship, "they wear a bit of each other's hair in silver lockets under their frocks, and think of each other every evening" (*D*, p. 4), with the mother's authoritarian message, "just trust God, as you trust me" (*D*, p. 5). In the second section, the repressed atmosphere of the convent "adds to the piquancy of a flirtation with a chum of one's own sex", such as "a clasp of hand in the crush on the great staircase, an embrace in the golosh room". More problematic are the teenagers who project their unfocussed desires on to the sisters. Consequently, the convent is a hive of sexual tension in which the sisters "know how to blow hot and blow cold" (*D*, p. 12), so as to keep their devotees, the "flames", in place. Ellis, though, would term these relationships as non-congenital, or "spurious", inversions.[155] Egerton follows the binds of theory in the final section by, somewhat unconvincingly, displacing lesbian attraction into a form of heterosexual solidarity, which compensates for the hardship of patriarchy. Egerton's retrenchment indicates that her use of lesbian symbolism is motivated by her own anti-patriarchal agenda, and that her consequent unease stems from her inherited heterosexual values. Indeed, whilst legitimising heterosexual desire within women, sexology's classification of lesbianism can be seen as relying more on cultural stereotypes that amounted to a systematic marginalisation.[156]

To quote Edward Carpenter, homosexuals and lesbians were an "intermediate sex", each possessing a greater percentage of either essential masculinity or femininity. Since sexology constituted a dialogue between heterosexual science and a gay sub-culture, evidenced by Ellis' collaboration with John Addington Symonds, male homosexuality received, however, preferential treatment. Rather than being effeminate degenerates, homosexuals were sensitive and artistic, and exhibited a "healthy" physicality.[157] Lesbians conversely, by being mannish, were aggressive and predatory. Whereas homosexuality was a form of male companionship, lesbianism

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[155] Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, *Sexual Inversion* (London: Wilson and Macmillan, 1897), pp. 82-4.

[156] Some feminists, though, have argued that sexology provided lesbians with a language in which to express themselves. See, for example, Caroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 284-5.

[157] See Ellis and Symonds, op cit, pp. 14-21.

involved the attraction of a genuine invert to a "pseudosexual", a feminine woman whose inclination was really heterosexual, with the result that the true lesbian dominated her partner. Whilst Ellis justified homosexuality with instances drawn from nature, the inequality of the lesbian relationship stemmed from, what Ellis claimed, was a correlation between lesbianism and neurosis.[158] As Jeffreys notes, Ellis' case studies included female friendships, which were now re-presented as bizarre and abnormal.[159] In particular, Ellis was concerned that the growth of feminism would produce a concomitant rise not in true inversion, but in its "spurious imitation" with disastrous consequences for racial purity.[160] At the same time sexology failed to forge a link between homosexuals and lesbians. Symonds' advice to Mary Robinson, one of Vernon Lee's lovers, to steer clear from "clever women" infers the sexological type of the lesbian predator. His hatred of Lee, in many ways the archetypal invert (plain, intelligent, obsessive), perhaps explains why Ellis' suggestion to use Lee and Robinson as a case study failed to appear.[161] Symonds' resistance also illustrates the ways in which gay culture reasserted the patriarchal motif of the *femme fatale*, often in the decadent guise of the temptress, as a means of self-identity in opposition to a "feminised" culture.

During her life-time, though, Lee was also subject as a lesbian to the vicissitudes within feminist thought. Reacting against the repressive moralism within the suffrage movement, Dora Marsden launched *The Freewoman* in 1911 to campaign for feminism within a broader social context, in which men were not seen as predators but as colleagues. Inspired by sexology, Marsden argued for women to be seen as sexual beings, and debates raged in her journal over the nature and language of female sexuality.[162] Though this was an improvement on social-purity feminism, the call by Marsden and others for women to be sexually active could only be understood in opposition to celibacy (spinsterhood) or non-penetrative sex (lesbianism).[163] Heterosexuality was still asserted as the norm whilst other behaviour was marginalised. Jeffreys' comforting contention that social purists, such as Christabel Pankhurst, defended the spinster, and by implication the lesbian[164], is undercut by the

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[158] ibid, pp. 87-8.
[159] Jeffreys, op cit, p. 107.
[160] Ellis and Symonds, op cit, p. 100.
[161] See Phyllis Grosskurth, *John Addington Symonds* (London: Longmans, 1964), p. 223.
[162] See Bland, op cit, pp. 268-77.
[163] See ibid, pp. 281-3 and 286-7.
[164] Jeffreys, op cit, pp. 97-8.

increasingly bellicose language of social-purity feminism with the onset of war. Pankhurst's journal *The Suffragette* was renamed the *Britannia* (1915) and, in accordance with the racialism that underpinned social purity, championed women's role as mothers of the Empire, both as breeders of soldiers and defenders of their menfolk. Lesbians such as Lee were necessarily excluded, whilst more particularly her pacifism, enshrined in her drama *Satan the Waster* (1920), was roundly condemned. Dame Ethel Smyth, composer of the suffragette anthem *The March of the Women,* loathed "her utter lack of patriotism".[165] Lee was consequently marginalised not only by the male architects of modernism, but also by the feminist appropriation of sexology and eugenics, the essentialisms of which all too easily elided with a militaristic rhetoric.

"MACABRE FAIRY STORIES"

Apart from her criticism, Lee was best known for her travel writing and everyday observations. Intensely subjective, they marked an attenuation of Lee's empathetic ideas, and justified criticisms of her style as over-personal. Yet with her other work largely ignored, they became her stock-in-trade. In addition to *Miss Brown,* Lee published three minor historical novels, so that her reputation as a fiction writer rests solely upon four anthologies: *Hauntings* (1890), *Vanitas* (1892), *Pope Jacynth* (1904) and *For Maurice* (1927). The majority are Gothic fantasies or, as one reviewer from the 1950s described them, "macabre fairy stories".[166] However, Lee's writing totally lacks the compensatory element within traditional faery: the allegorical structure which resolves itself during the closure as a moral or humanistic truth.[167] The reader is instead invited to participate within the act of ascribing meaning. Whilst distancing herself from conventional Gothic, "Oke of Okehurst" (1890) is Lee's sole ghost story, she positions herself within a female tradition from Mary Shelley through to modernist practitioners such as May Sinclair. In fact, the European settings of Lee's stories sometimes recall the novels of Ann Radcliffe, but without their rational solutions. Though Lee can be located within the fears of alterity (see chapter one), which encouraged James to turn to the Gothic, she herself

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[165] Dame Ethel Smyth (12th January 1933), quoted in *The Sickle Side of the Moon: The Letters of Virginia Woolf, vol. 5: 1932-5,* ed. by Nigel Nicholson (London: The Hogarth Press, 1979), p. 146.
[166] Quoted by Markgraf, op cit, p. 309.
[167] See also Rosemary Jackson's discussion in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 153-6.

viewed her fiction as an extension of her historical and travel writings. No particular literary influence can be detected - her fiction often appears to be a tissue of styles drawn from folk-tales, sensationalism and the essay - so that her conception of history assumes importance.

Lee saw her travel writing as uncovering the *genii loci,* or "spirits of places", the emotional, often unconscious associations between people and the landscape. For Lee, history did not consist of dead facts, but emotional ties which persist into and define the present. In her essay, "Ravenna and Her Ghosts", Lee describes the ruins as "a nest of ghosts. They hang about all those silent, damp churches; invisible [...] But one feels their breathing all round" (*PJ,* p. 135). The "other" world of the past does not lie buried, traced over by the present, but exists simultaneously alongside and within the present. Lee, therefore, dispels comforting notions of progress, to be replaced by a form of stasis, or of the past erupting into the present. Elsewhere, Lee argues that "the lie of the land" is not a physical entity, which can be minutely described, but a mental landscape in which particular places carry special meanings for the spectator, a "bend round which we have watched someone depart, the stretch of road which seemed to lead us away out of captivity". Furthermore, Lee contends that this irrational attraction transcends the individual: it "is among the obscure things inherited with our blood, and making up the stuff of our souls. For how else explain the strange powers which different shapes of the earth's surface have over different individuals; the sudden pleasure, as of the sight of an old friend, the pang of pathos which we may all receive in a scene which is new, without memories, and so unlike everything familiar as to be almost without associations?" To translate this "indescribable thing" into fiction[168], Lee rejects the realist novel, and turns instead to the Gothic short story.

Lee's depiction of the past as permeating the present corresponds with Freud's discussion of *das Unheimlich,* the uncanny. Its opposite, *das Heimlich,* functions on two levels. In one sense, it means the homely, the familiar, so that *das Unheimlich* conveys the feeling of estrangement, of the recognisable transformed into the alien. But *das Heimlich* also refers to concealment, so that its opposite implies exposure. Consequently, the uncanny operates by revealing what has been made taboo, and in

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[168] Lee, *Limbo and Other Essays* (London: Grant Richards, 1897), p. 47.

so doing defamiliarises the tissue of normality.[169] As Rosemary Jackson notes,
though this display of unsanctioned desire can neutralise transgressive urges, a more
effective form of fantasy challenges the autonomous subject, upon which institutional
order rests, through a process of self-dissolution. The subject is drawn painfully
along by an unrequited longing to reunite with a time before the imposition of
subjectivity.[170] This is true of Lee's writing, where the present safeguards its own
coherence by concealing the past within itself, and by suppressing all that fails to
agree with its own self-invented narrative. For Lee, true history resides within the
unconscious, almost atavistic hold of places and objects over people's imaginations.
A history that forms a teleology in which the present self-justifies itself is an untruth,
a myth. Consequently, Lee's writing features a dialectic between history and myth in
which characters are drawn, in the face of self-extinction, to the repressed areas of
the past.

This repression is embodied by the narrator of "A Wicked Voice" (1890). A
disciple of Wagner, he is instead lauded for his vocal compositions in the style of
Mozart, Handel and Gluck, since he is unable to compose anything else due to an
enchantment. Yet he condemns the singing voice as "not invented by the human
intellect, but begotten of the body, and [...] merely stirs up the dregs of our nature!
For what is the voice but the Beast calling, awakening that other Beast sleeping in the
depths of Mankind [...] the demon with his woman's face?" (*ST*, p. 129). The
narrator's loathing of the body indicates his anality, which he then projects on to the
landscape of Venice, the story's setting, as it "swelters in the midst of the waters,
exhaling, like some great lily, mysterious influences, which make the brain swim and
the heart faint" (*ST*, p. 128). But the androgynous devil he refers to is an eighteenth
century singer, Zaffirino, whose "first song could make any woman turn pale and
lower her eyes, the second make her madly in love, while the third song could kill her
off on the spot" (*ST*, p. 132). Gazing at Zaffirino's portrait, the narrator comments,
"that effeminate, fat face of his is almost beautiful [...] I have seen faces like this [...]
when I read Swinburne and Baudelaire, the faces of wicked, vindictive women" (*ST*,
p. 135). Journeying through Venice, the protagonist describes the city as "a miasma
of long-dead melodies, which sickened but intoxicated my soul" (*ST*, p. 137), and one

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[169] Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), in *The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 14: Art and
Literature,* ed. by Albert Dickson, trans. by James Strachey (London: Pelican, 1985), esp. pp. 341-7.
[170] Jackson, op cit, pp. 72-91.

melody in particular, "an exquisite vibrating note, of a strange, exotic, unique quality" (*ST,* p. 138), which comes to him in a dream. Taking the voice as an omen that his much-needed inspiration will soon arrive, the narrator awaits "its coming as a lover awaits his beloved" (*ST,* p. 139), he is haunted by its sound as he travels throughout the city. But unlike the enclosed psycho-drama of Maupassant's "The Horla", "the mysterious singer" becomes "the universal topic" throughout Venice (*ST,* p. 145). It is as if the whole city, which has "neglected [...] the great champions of old" (*ST,* p. 140), is suffering from a "moral malaria" (*ST,* p. 128) that parallels the narrator's own dis-ease. This twist prevents the story being read as an hallucination, since it seems that something actual has invaded the community, even if no one can agree "whether the voice belonged to a man or to a woman: everyone had some new definition" (*ST,* p. 145).

The narrator flees Venice for the countryside, but at the villa where he takes refuge he is still haunted by the music. He tracks it down to a salon within the villa where he discovers Zaffirino singing to a lady. Realising that she is about to die, the narrator bursts in only to find the room empty save for "the ropes which had once supported a chandelier" and an antique, broken harpsichord (*ST,* p. 157). Bereft of his inspiration, Zaffirino's voice, the narrator is left producing music which he loathes. His final, masochistic plea, "may I not hear one note, only one note of thine, O singer, O wicked and contemptible wretch?", refers back to the earlier allusion to Swinburne, and thence to the gay sub-culture, which the narrator's painful attraction to Zaffirino represents. Zaffirino's ambiguous gender and loathsome appeal, coupled with the narrator's fear of division, of writing "music which is certainly by me [...] but which still is not my own" (*ST,* p. 158), translate the feelings of guilt and desire which, but for the break with realism, could silence discourse altogether. The narrator's repression and artistic sterility function as a critique both of homosexual intellectuals such as Symonds, and of the psychology, the anality and social disaffection, that fuels the decadent "art for art's sake" ethos.

Whereas the protagonist of "A Wicked Voice" initially resists the past, Don Juan in "The Virgin of the Seven Daggers" (1909) sets out to literally embrace it. Unlike the romantic hero of Mozart or Byron, this Don Juan is a heartless seducer, a murderer and a racist, whose villainy rides unchecked on the voraciousness of Spanish imperialism. Using necromancy, he intends to marry a Moorish princess who has been dead for three centuries. This necrophiliac fantasy involves journeying

under the Alhambra into the Infanta's burial chamber where she has been miraculously preserved. Here, Don Juan finds himself in a colonnade filled with birds, vegetation and fountains; leading into courts and passages with an array of attendants, eunuchs and warriors; culminating within "a vast circular hall" (*ST*, p. 207), and a dais upon which the Infanta sits. This fecundity and womb-like space suggest a return to the mother's body, but Don Juan soon discovers that this retreat amounts to death. Quizzed by the Infanta's attendants on whether she is more attractive than any of his lovers, Don Juan answers affirmatively until he is asked if the Infanta is more beautiful than the Virgin of the Seven Daggers, the Spanish Madonna, to whom Don Juan has dedicated himself despite all his crimes. He answers no, and is beheaded, an act described by Lee with typical relish: "then all was black, and Don Juan felt himself, that is to say, his own head, rebound three times like a ball upon the alabaster steps" (*ST*, p. 215).

Yet, at first, it seems that the execution is simply a dream, that staple ending of traditional faery. Don Juan awakes on a hillside and returns, unseen, to Grenada. A large crowd has gathered in front of the Madonna's effigy. Making his way to the front, Don Juan discovers a corpse: his own. He breaks down, appeals to the Madonna, and is rewarded for his faithfulness by ascending to heaven. But, this is not the end. A letter appended to the text from Don Pedro Calderon de la Barca to the Archpriest Morales suggests that if the story was "presented in the shape of a play, adorned with graces of style and with flowers of rhetoric, it would be indeed [...] well calculated to spread the glory of our holy church" (*ST*, p. 221). Each of these "trick endings" undercut any form of transcendent closure, and instead drag the narrative down to a materialistic base, which in turn dissolves. As the concluding remarks indicate, written in the disinterested, scholarly "voice" of the introduction, the Church's attempt to appropriate the story came to naught. Instead, the denial of transcendence highlights the exploitations within the narrative. Don Juan's venture acts as a metaphor for the suppression of Islamic culture by Catholicism. The reification of his story into art (the play) attempts to convert an imperialistic history into a myth: a myth because it seeks to present as natural the Church's rule whilst disguising its socio-economic roots, that its survival depends upon men like Don Juan.

However, the dispassionate tone of Lee's narrator does not privilege as true the tale of Don Juan as presented. Instead, the self-allusion to "unworthy modern hands"

(*ST*, p. 222) undermines this version as being definitive. History, conceived as an unconscious, cultural process, is for Lee a form of story-telling, which is always open-ended because it is in dialogue with individuals, whose responses reshape and translate this history. Myth, conversely, is monologic: it is institutional, closed, to be accepted as a given. This dialectic surfaces in stories such as "A Wedding Chest" (1902), which is prefaced by a museum catalogue. The following narrative foregrounds the catalogue's reified (i.e. mythic) status, but the juxtaposition does not explain it away. Instead, the two versions exist in dialogue with each other, since it is down to the reader to discriminate between them, and to contribute to a process of rewriting, which is also a retelling.

This process of reification is also notable in the way that images of women, such as the Madonna, are appropriated. As Marina Warner has shown, ideas of Truth and Justice have traditionally been realised in classical depictions of the female form, especially at times when actual women were deemed incapable of conceiving or using these concepts. But, as Warner also argues, "on to the female body have been projected the fantasies and longings and terrors of generations of men [...] a constant exchange takes place between images and reality".[171] In other words, an effigy is never stable though its framing as classical art - its material, composition, density, location - might suggest otherwise. Instead, it acts as a figment of the imagination, a cluster of psychological drives and desires, which mediates how men, inserted within patriarchy, think and which, when physically realised, feeds back into the culture from which it was produced. Don Juan projects his idea of womanhood on to the Madonna, rationalising his sins in her name. Each of his seductions, culminating with a nun, are a failed attempt to convert this myth into actuality. The Church's attempt to convert his tale into art is also doomed to failure. However, these men persist for, as Count Kollonitz comments in Lee's "A Frivolous Conversation", "without the ideal in some form or shape - God, woman, beauty, chivalry - why, the world would be a pit of darkness" (*V*, p. 16): the point being that this is a *man-made* world suspended precariously across the dark pit which is the mother's body.

The Madonna signifies the ideal of motherhood. Don Juan's entry into the Infanta's womb-like chamber necessitates his punishment, a symbolic castration, for attempting to reunite with the mother's body. His reward involves the realisation of

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[171] Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (London: Picador, 1987), p. 37.

his "lack": the boy-child's separation from the mother during the formation of subjectivity. Don Juan's heavenly ascent confirms the apparent inevitability of this division, though the ways in which the narrative has been framed not only undercuts authorial omniscience, but also dissociates itself from what is a masculine projection. Conversely, the antagonist of "Amour Dure" (1887), Medea da Carpi, embodies the male ego's anxiety that reunion entails disintegration, that mother does not signify security. Like Euripides' *femme fatale*, Lee's character is a variant of Lilith, in Assyrian mythology the first woman but who, for refusing to lie beneath Adam, was cast out of Eden; only to reappear as a succubus within men's dreams and as a child-killer.[172] These themes of vampirism and infanticide ensured that, as discussed earlier, Lilith and Medea became key decadent motifs. Consequently, as in "A Wicked Voice", Lee's protagonist, the historian Spiridion Trepka, is a decadent critic who attacks "modern scientific vandalism" (*ST*, p. 86) and "the degeneracy of Italian women" (*ST*, p. 100), whilst praising the romance of Urbania which "as usual has been overlooked by our Dryasdusts" (*ST*, p. 90).

However, Spiridion's gross idealisation of Italy for his own grievances has its comeuppance when he becomes obsessed with a portrait of Medea, a sixteenth century aristocrat, who advanced to vast power through seduction and murder. Following the death of her seventh husband, the Duke of Urbania, his brother initially imprisoned and then executed Medea in order to prevent the state leaving his family's control. But, terrified still of encountering her in purgatory, Duke Robert had "placed in the cavity of the chest" of his effigy "a silver statuette of his familiar genius or angel [...] consecrated by the astrologers", so "that his soul might rest until the general Resurrection" (*ST*, p. 98). Unlike the Vice-Prefect's son, Spiridion has no lover's tales "to entertain him with" (*ST*, p. 99), but is fascinated by Medea's face, her mouth which "looks as if it could bite or suck like a leech" (*ST*, p. 97). Though he understands the meaning of Medea's device, "Amour Dure - Dure Amour" ("love that lasts, cruel love"), that "no man must survive long who conceives himself to have a right over her", and that only "the willingness to pay for such happiness by death, can at all make a man worthy of being her lover" (*ST*, p. 102), Spiridion relentlessly pursues his investigations into Medea. Justifying her actions as beyond morality, by explaining them away within his own reinvention of the past, Spiridion projects all his

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[172] For more details on Lilith, see Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* (New York: Ktav, 1967), pp. 207-45.

masochistic desires on to Medea. As he comments, "am I turning novelist instead of historian?" (*ST*, p. 100). Eventually, Spiridion sees visions of Medea in the street, and pursues a woman whom he takes to be her; on the last occasion receiving a message to smash the statuette within Duke Robert's effigy. Spiridion takes this as a sign of being "reserved for something wonderful in this world" (*ST*, p. 120), though his feeling "as if I were the greatest historian of the age; and, at the same time [...] a boy of twelve" (*ST*, p. 109), suggests the pubescent immaturity of his beliefs. On Christmas Eve he mutilates the statue, and then waits for Medea to appear. An appended, anonymous note comments that he was later found stabbed through the heart: Medea's preferred method of execution. On the one hand, Lee's Medea corresponds with the decadent icon but on the other, she exceeds the decadent gaze by constituting the absence which undermines the male observer. Like Egerton's exotic dancer, Lee deflects the gaze in order to appropriate the *femme fatale* but, unlike Egerton, she indicates that Medea is a creation of male desires, whilst that which evades masculine discourse is undefinable.

This evasion manifests itself in the various alternative histories written by Lee, the most ambitious being "Dionea" (1890). A young girl is shipwrecked on the Italian coast, speaking only "some half-intelligible jabber" (*PJ*, p. 95). The discovery of a parchment reveals her name to be Dionea, the name of a martyred saint but also a derivation from Dione, the mother of Venus. The child may therefore be the reincarnation of a pagan spirit, a male projection of beauty brought to life. Raised in a convent, despite refusing to be baptised, Dionea shows no aptitude for "learning, sewing, washing up dishes" (*PJ*, p. 97), but instead possesses great beauty and physique, whilst birds magically flock to her. Others, though, describe Dionea as "serpentine", whilst her lips are like "a tiny snake's curves" (*PJ*, p. 104), associating her with another variant of Lilith, the Lamia: the serpent disguised as a woman.[173]

A sculptor, Waldemar, arrives in the district. His decision to sculpt "only men and boys, athletes and fauns", and his refusal to represent women, "what do I want with the unaesthetic sex, as Schopenhauer calls it?", associates him with decadence. Waldemar's pale, consumptive wife is his ideal of womanhood for, as he argues, the female figure "is almost inevitably inferior in strength and beauty; woman is not form, but expression and therefore suits painting, but not sculpture. The point of a woman

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[173] See also Warner, *Managing Monsters: Six Myths of Our Time* (London: Vintage, 1994), pp. 5-7.

is not her body, but [...] her soul" (*PJ*, pp. 114-5). Yet, Waldemar is attracted to Dionea, though his attempt to recapture her as a statue of Venus ends in disaster. He sacrifices both himself and his wife to the effigy whilst Dionea disappears, though there are alleged sightings of her sailing away on a mysterious Greek boat. As with Medea, the attempt to contain a polymorphous sexual force is doomed to failure: Waldemar dies because of his obsession with a self-invented delusion. This in turn is picked-up in the way that the narrative is presented as a series of letters from Dr Allesandro de Rosis. On one level, this portrays science's attempt to expose nature, but in an ingenious move, despite his rationalism and republicanism, the doctor is shown as being equally obsessed with paganism and irrationalism: he is writing a book on the interconnectedness of folk-tales. However, his thesis is seriously flawed and is never completed; in the same way that Dionea's true identity is never revealed. Instead, Lee indicates that supposed rationality conceals an underlying irrationality, from out of which figures such as Dionea are projected.

I shall conclude by summarising my key points in relation to Lee's most celebrated story, "Prince Alberic and the Snake Lady".[174] Her only *Yellow Book* contribution (in 1896), the fairy tale opening and decorative language associate it with Wildean decadence. But it differs in two ways. Firstly, it is historically aware. Set at the turn of the seventeenth century, the story can be read as the decline of a dynasty, the House of Luna and its Red Palace. Duke Balthasar's removal from his grandson's, Prince Alberic's, chamber of a tapestry bearing the legend of Alberic the Blond and the Snake Lady Oriana is described as an "act of hostility" (*ST*, p. 19), though it is done with the aim of morally improving the boy. "A prince of enlightened mind" (*ST*, p. 20), the Duke's repression of an occult past is allied to his political ambitions, of continuing the line and preserving the duchy. His pragmatism leads to him surrounding himself with advisers, the Jester, the Jesuit and the Dwarf - their names suggest their facelessness as well as being a satirical device - whose machinations in the state's name are motivated by self-interest. Alberic, meanwhile, is exiled to the Castle of Sparkling Waters for destroying his replacement tapestry. He discovers, though, that the ruins and its grounds are a replica of his beloved

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[174] Pertinent critiques include Burdett Gardner, *The Lesbian Imagination (Victorian Style): A Psychological and Critical Study of "Vernon Lee"* (New York and London: Garland, 1987), esp. pp. 22-7 and 314-5; and Ruth Robbins, 'Vernon Lee: Decadent Woman?', in *"Fin de Siècle/Fin du Globe": Fears and Fantasies of the Late Nineteenth Century,* ed. by John Stokes (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 153-7.

original - "his remembrance" being "older than that of the Red Palace" (*ST*, p. 21), i.e. before his insertion into the "real" world. To enter these gardens is to return to a time before difference, in which their description attempts to reconcile opposing colours and contrasting surfaces, so that Alberic experiences a profound sense of alterity, "that he was in the tapestry, but that the tapestry had become the whole world" (*ST*, p. 30). Its inclusivity contrasts with the royal court which operates by exclusion and rationalisation, a paranoiac need to defend one's borders given metaphorical treatment: the Duke's fear of snakes.

This leads on to the story's second divergence. During his ostracism Alberic's sole friend is a snake, which he plays with during the afternoon, whilst his only teaching comes from a woman, who visits Alberic at evening-time, claiming to be his Godmother. Lee proposes a metaphorically feminine education - of gossip, the exchange of stories, and of communal reading, like the telling of a fairy tale. Alberic is most responsive, in part because of his androgynous character: "at once manly and delicate" with "long hair" implying "almost a woman's care and coquetry" (*ST*, p. 37). Consequently, rather than the decadent objectification of the feminine, Lee's writing features a fluid interaction between genders. This sexual ambiguity is directly related also to the slippages between official and unofficial histories. From an elderly peasant Alberic learns the history of the Snake Lady: that she was a woman cursed to be a snake but for an hour in the evening, whom Alberic the Blond failed to disenchant by his unfaithfulness, and whom "a second Alberic also [...] failed before the ten years of fidelity were over, and became a monk" (*ST*, p. 51). However, when the story is told to a priest, the reply, "a very unlikely story, my lord, and not a very moral one" (*ST*, p. 52), questions the validity of its origin as well as being reminiscent of late Victorian criticism. The peasant's tale contradicts the reified version of the tapestry: a fearless knight confronting a half-woman, half-snake. But Alberic, infatuated with the lady, is still drawn to the myth and to his role as the third Alberic: "it was, he knew, the hour and place of his fate" (*ST*, p. 57). He kisses his pet snake, and is astonished to find it turn into his Godmother.

When Balthasar considers it politic to return the Prince, Alberic smuggles Oriana into the Red Palace in her snake form. Balthasar still desires to marry Alberic off, in particular to the Drysalter Princess, whose dowry alone "should complete the rockery, the aqueduct, and the chapel" (*ST*, p. 64). Alberic refuses, and instead increasingly lives alone, though there are persistent rumours of overheard

conversations, music and found embroidery belonging not to the Prince. Despite confinement and losing all his possessions, Alberic still declines, so that finally Balthasar and his advisers seek to entreat the Prince. But instead they spy the snake, the Duke takes fright, and the quartet attack the serpent. Alberic is imprisoned where he dies "a fortnight later, it was stated, insane" and "hastily buried under a slab [...] without any name or date", though "those who approached maintained that [...] he refused all nourishment [...] from set purpose" (*ST*, p. 71). Balthasar also dies soon afterwards from debauchery, encouraged by terrifying hallucinations that stem from rumours that, instead of a snake, there was found "the body of a woman, naked, and miserably disfigured with blows and sabre cuts" (*ST*, p. 72). Otherwise, though, Oriana is never seen by anybody else except Alberic, so that she might just be a projection of his own unexpressed desires; her conflation of female imagery and phallic symbolism mirroring Alberic's androgyny. The story can, therefore, be read as a metaphor for Alberic's unease with his own latent homosexuality, and his reluctance to assume the patriarchy of his grandfather. At the same time, though, Lee devises a sympathetic bisexual figure in Oriana, whilst emphasising the Lamia as a male construct. But she also shows that these fantasies underpin the common-sensicality of patriarchy, which sustains itself either through exclusion, for example in artistic reification, or execution. However, though Lee indicates that patriarchal rule is conducted across the bodies of women, they are not eternal victims. The duchy is in turn swamped by the Empire, largely because it has ignored both a mystical past and a feminine empathy, indicated in the House's title and Balthasar's last name, Maria. In this sense, the myths of patriarchy are washed away by the tides of history: a prescient warning for Britain itself as it entered its own new century.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that in the tripartite structure of the literary 1890s, decadence versus realism versus romance, George Egerton and Vernon Lee sided with none of these factions. Despite Henry James' critique, both can be seen as forming a modernist practice to rival James. Both writers focus on problems of narrative and representation: Egerton's attention to language places her in a lineage with the "hard" aestheticism (as opposed to "soft" decadence) of Eliot and Pound, whilst Lee's account of gender and myth anticipates feminist revisions, such as Woolf's *Orlando*

(1928). Lee, though, is the more artistically successful. Her critical ideas lend her writing a certainty that Egerton's work, a mixture of influences and daring intuition, often lacks. Lee might also have benefited from her marginalisation, paradoxically hardening her resolve for a small, though interested audience; whereas Egerton's fame forced her into matching her initial success, whilst it also brought her into contact with intellectuals whose ideas - eugenics and sexology - she tended to receive uncritically. However, neither was Lee a recluse, and in this respect both authors differ from James. Whereas he retreated from appealing to readers to privileging a notion of individual consciousness, Egerton and Lee embraced an impersonal ethos which, as Patricia Waugh has argued of female modernism[175], allowed them to engage with public issues of politics, art and society. Their inclusion of the reader within their writing re-emphasises the communal role of literature which James, for clear cultural reasons, steadily abandoned. This in turn affected aspects of "high" modernism, where impersonality was associated with distance and control, and which grew out of the Jamesian model, whilst Egerton and Lee were marginalised. The ideology of individual consciousness, though challenging traditional patriarchy, asserted a renewed masculine identity that drew upon earlier fantasies, the same desires that Egerton and Lee question, and which Katherine Mansfield was to do again. (This theme shall be returned to in chapters five and six.)

But Egerton and Lee also differ from approved modernist rhetoric in terms of optimism. Both suggest that the objectifying gaze is never stable or complete, but can be deflected or refracted. For Egerton, this belief is influenced by the Nietzschean "will", which is constantly in process; whilst for Lee, it is coloured by her view that myth is dialogic, that it is always open to new myths. The masculine use of impersonality, developed in James, suggests conversely a fatalistic inevitability, of alienation and self-defence. Consequently, it is all the more appropriate to understand James' fiction in terms of Adorno's mutilated, over-regimented subject. However, Adorno's vision is seriously flawed, in particular his depiction of science. For rather than describe a capitalist society founded upon scientific principles, his and Horkheimer's portrayal is essentially one which is technocratic: heavy, machine-based technology being more easily appropriated than pure science. This same chapter, for instance, has shown the corruption of a pure scientific theory, evolution, into

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[175] Patricia Waugh, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 19.

eugenics, which could be more effectively grafted on to the racialist and sexist hierarchies deployed by many feminists and imperialists alike. It is therefore misleading to argue that the nation-state grew irresistibly out of modern science, the relationship instead seems to be more one of exploitation and marginalisation, or that science leads inevitably to disenchantment, a key fallacy within both decadent and, to a certain extent, modernist thought. Disillusionment arises from a corruption, and misuse, of the possibilities of science by the rationalisation, i.e. reductivity, of a market-based economy and short-sighted politics.

But, as Egerton and Lee indicate in their reworking of myth, it doesn't have to be like this. It is too soon to argue that the Enlightenment is over, even if it has begun due to the intervention of the nation-state. Neither is it true to claim that tradition and religion have been overthrown: their persistence can still contribute to social unease. The anti-scientism of Adorno and Horkheimer could, ironically, give succour to irrationalist forces which they otherwise would condemn. Movements, such as neo-fascism or "Dark Green" politics, feed directly upon the type of cyclical history proposed by Montesquieu, itself an irrational projection, since history is not necessarily understood by the rise and fall of empires, and empires do not necessarily decline because of moral malaise. Lee's depiction of history as competing stories, with one version unfolding into another, challenges the programmatic nature of linear (whether of ascent or descent) and cyclical teleologies. Instead, this more chaotic model offers greater fluidity, whilst expressing the contradictoriness of the subject, as shown in both Egerton and Lee. However, this escape into non-linear history is itself a palingenetic move, so common throughout modernism.

Lastly, both writers chart changing notions of femininity: Egerton in terms of unconscious, heterosexual desires, and Lee in terms of taboo sexualities that otherwise express the silence of lesbianism. But in concert with these changes, and particularly after the recognition of homosexuality, masculinity was also in transition. Unlike Egerton and Lee, Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling emerged in relation to romance, though their interest in Maupassant indicates their need to redefine its parameters. This is the theme of the next chapter, following Conrad on imperial shores, and Kipling closer to home.

4) IMPERIAL TWILIGHT: CONRAD AND KIPLING

The previous chapter showed, in part, how the decadents characterised society as philistine and science-ridden, and that this interpretation can be corroborated by Adorno's analysis of the tyranny of reason. I cautioned against, however, a conspiratorial view of the relationship between science and the state. This chapter examines two pro-imperialist authors, Conrad and Kipling, whose approaches to writing are underpinned by their scientific interests: respectively, Darwinism and technology. Both writers emerged in relation to romance, which resurfaced after the 1870s by asserting, in opposition to a "feminised" naturalism and decadence, a common-sensical view of race, class and gender. Whilst these tales privileged instinct and character-building, science was also harnessed in a vulgarised form as a means of control. The genre can, therefore, be included within various attempts at social cohesion from the political (the "Tory Democracy") to the educational (the scouting movement). Though Conrad and Kipling are both inspired by regeneration - Conrad desires to sever imperialism from capitalism; Kipling to replace the aristocracy with a technocracy - neither prejudge change, but view it merely as different. Their stance stems from their scientific concerns, and contrasts with conventional romance, which sees difference as other and threatening. In their stories, the effects of evolution and technology actively produce difference, and this process becomes the focal interest for Conrad and Kipling, legitimising the imperial order for the former, and rationalising the after-effects of war for the latter; not as a means of containment but as an aid in exploring alterity. (For Kipling, this process is also suffused with related concerns of grief and recovery.) Both writers view their investigation as opening-up the self, even though it challenges the "healthy body" philosophy upon which romance and Victorian masculinity were built. Their exploration also affects the presentation of language, so that Conrad and Kipling develop the preceding ideas of James, Egerton and Lee.

The Context of Late Victorian Romance

As argued previously, surplus women were seen as a national burden, and proposals called for them to be exported overseas as wives for men serving the Empire. In his critique of "the Woman Question", however, Grant Allen inadvertently revealed the underlying problem:

> In America, the young man has gone West. In England, he is in the army, in
> the navy, in the Indian Civil Service, in the Cape Mounted Rifles. He is sheep-
> farming in New Zealand, ranching in Colorado, growing tea in Assam,
> planting coffee in Ceylon; he is a cowboy in Montana, or a wheat-farmer in
> Manitoba, or a diamond-digger at Kimberley, or a merchant at Melbourne; in
> short, he is everywhere and anywhere, except where he ought to be, making
> love to the pretty girls in England.[1]

With so many possibilities open to them, it was doubtful whether young men would accept quiet domesticity. The romance of foreign service, captured by Allen, aspired to the athletic ideal contained within, what Patrick Brantlinger has termed, the "imperial Gothic".[2] Many of these fictions were distributed through the periodicals which bound together and constituted "Clubland". As Brian Harrison has suggested, the network of London clubs formed both a physical and social barrier between men and women. They comprised bachelors and husbands, who acted "as if they were bachelors", with backgrounds in the public schools, Oxbridge, and the professions.[3] The clubs' extension of male comradeship was reinforced by the journals, some of which were aimed directly at them. In addition, the imperialistic tales printed in periodicals such as the *National Observer* helped to spread bourgeois values to the more aspiring working men's clubs. The upper and working classes could unite in a celebration of masculinity, which connected them spiritually with the imperial frontiersmen.

The flourishing of romance must, therefore, be seen in its political context. The sense of national decay encouraged charismatic right-wing figures to propose a "Tory Democracy": a set of core beliefs - love of tradition, country, monarchy - common to both the upper and lower orders.[4] Though shamelessly populist, politicians such as Randolph Churchill or Joseph Chamberlain aimed their ideas at the new suburbanites rather than the more traditional middle classes. They therefore form part of a process of nation-building, seen in chapter one, exemplified also by the foregrounding of national events, such as the F.A. Cup Final. Occasions such as these ensured that the

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[1] Grant Allen, 'Plain Words on the Woman Question', *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 46 (1889), pp. 454-5.
[2] Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 227-53.
[3] Brian Harrison, *Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 97.
[4] For a case study, see R.E. Quinault, 'Lord Randolph Churchill and Tory Democracy, 1880-1885', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1979), pp. 141-65.

individual was lost within the symbolism of national pride and, as it is well known, working-class entertainments, such as football matches or music hall, were often used as recruitment drives for the military. Hugh Cunningham cautions against a simplistic picture of the working classes as passive and acquiescent, though he also acknowledges that the barrage of propagandist material, and the appropriation of patriotic language by the right, made resistance difficult.[5] Much the same can be said for the iconography of imperial adventure, through which historical figures such as Henry Morton Stanley were recast, and which influenced organisations that aimed to reform working class boys (see figures one and two). Lord Baden-Powell, whose involvement in the Boer War brought him into contact with the apparent degeneracy of English troops, modelled his Boy Scouts on Kipling's Kim. Baden-Powell's solution - physical fitness, survival training and good conduct - privileged instinct over reason. Passive or "feminine" activities, such as book reading and spiritual devotion, were disregarded.[6] Instead, Baden-Powell attempted to realise the ethos of self-reliance mediated through the schoolboy fictions of the Boy's Own Paper (1879), and the adventure yarns of R.M. Ballantyne and G.A. Henty.

As Joseph Bristow has argued, these publications corresponded with the spread of dominant values through national education so that, both in and out of school, boys were confronted with approved literature.[7] The elimination of the so-called "penny dreadful", whose sensationalism seemed to indulge the aetiolated condition of working class children, was therefore more than state censorship, but an exercise in cultural cleansing. During the 1880s, though, the success of Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island (1883) and Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines (1885) re-presented the imperial tale for an adult rather than juvenile audience. The great moments of exploration - Burton and Speke's journey along the White Nile; Stanley and Livingstone's meeting in the heart of Africa - had already achieved legendary status through the vast literature accruing on the Empire: for example, Stanley's own sequence of best-selling publicity exercises. As Brantlinger has emphasised, these discourses largely invented notions such as "the dark continent",

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[5] Hugh Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914', History Workshop, no. 12 (1981), pp. 23-7.
[6] See Allen Warren, 'Baden-Powell, Scouting and the Development of Manly Character', in Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940, ed. by J.A. Mangan and James Walvin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 201-2.
[7] Joseph Bristow, Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World (London: Harper Collins, 1991), pp. 20-1.

Figure 1.   Stanley resisting temptation.

WILL YOU HELP US TO TURN **THESE**

INTO

THIS?

IF SO

PLEASE FILL UP AND RETURN THE FORM ON OPPOSITE PAGE.

Church Lads' Brigade leaflet of the 1890s which depicts the movement as an agency of social control to attract the middle-class subscriber

Figure 2

through which Europeans projected their own anxieties[8], with the result that an audience emerged desiring more. Authors appropriated the schoolboy romance, harnessing it to the conventions of sensation fiction. Though critics recognised that the imperial Gothic's violence exceeded the penny dreadfuls, its pro-imperialist and masculinist agenda rendered it acceptable.[9] Furthermore, anti-realists such as George Saintsbury saw in the "return to pure romance" a rejection of "the more complicated kind of novel" of Eliot and James with its "minute manners-painting and refined character analysis".[10] Only, he argued, "when we have bathed once more, long and well in the romance of adventure and passion" would readers be cured of realism's degenerative effect.[11] Similar sentiments can also be found in Andrew Lang's criticism (see chapter one), though in 1887 he encapsulated the impact of, amongst others, Haggard and Stevenson poetically:

> King Romance was wounded deep,
>   All his knights were dead and gone,
> All his court was fallen on sleep,
>   In a vale of Avalon!
>
> Then you came from South and North -
>   From Tugela, from the Tweed;
> Blazoned his achievements forth,
>   King Romance is come indeed! (lines 1-4, 17-20)[12]

The novelists are transformed into a composite Parsifal figure, who bring fresh vitality to the Fisher King of romance. The King's emasculation, his deep wound, and his comatose court, suggesting a decadent weariness, symbolise a time of introspective realism and aestheticism. The arrival of Haggard and Stevenson though, reclaiming the chivalry of the departed knights, explodes this wasteland with the dynamic, phallic blaze which epitomises "King Romance". Lang's rewriting of the literary landscape as a quest narrative, employing the masters of romance as his heroes, one of whom (Haggard) Lang later collaborated with, almost borders on the metafictional. But Lang's unselfconscious writing indicates his sincere admiration of

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[8] Brantlinger, op cit, pp. 195-6.
[9] See Bristow, op cit, p. 47.
[10] George Saintsbury, 'The Present State of the Novel', *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 42 (1887), p. 411.
[11] ibid, p. 417.
[12] Andrew Lang, 'The Restoration of Romance', in *The Poetical Works of Andrew Lang, vol. 3*, ed. by Mrs Lang (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1923), pp. 196-7.

romance as well as his acceptance of its underlying beliefs: the masculine narrative of duty and self-sacrifice.

In particular, the imperial Gothic mediated the cult of athleticism predominant after the 1870s. As J.A. Mangan has observed, the spread of gamesmanship not only introduced greater uniformity throughout the public schools, but also consolidated the culture of manliness.[13] Fiction served as one means of disseminating the ideology to other sectors in society, though it contrasted with earlier concepts of masculinity. Three elements - physicality, chivalry, morality - underpinned masculinity, though their degree and interplay gradually altered. At the start of the nineteenth century, when evangelicalism distinguished between private and public spheres, manliness was understood in terms of piety, familial duty and honest work. Thomas Arnold, the head of Rugby School, argued that a boy needed "1st, religious and moral principles; 2ndly, gentlemanly conduct; 3rdly, intellectual ability"[14], the last requiring the first two. Arnold aimed to bring boys to manhood as soon as possible through an emphasis upon earnestness, work and virtue, since serious endeavour expressed God's role on Earth, especially within the family. The masculine ideal was therefore the "paterfamilias", self-sacrificing in the world of work, fair and just in the home.

But the evangelical model produced a difficult balancing-act for men between the economic necessity of work, and the otherwise feminine realm of the family. Veering one way or the other, from stern autocracy to over-familiarity, suggested some form of immorality or unmanliness. An additional difficulty was the decline of evangelicalism as its values were appropriated by commercial, bourgeois society. This process was compounded by the rift within Anglicanism stemming from the Oxford Movement, which rejected all forms of secularism and Protestantism, including the Evangelicals.[15] Critics such as Charles Kingsley condemned the Movement as perverse. Its preference for book-learning and abstraction, the metaphysical love of God over the earthly love of women, and the occultism of religious office and spiritual brotherhood was presented as corrupt and effeminate. Instead, Kingsley argued for a renewed evangelicalism in which boys were trained to be strong, dutiful and healthy with the aim of fighting for God, conquering nature and

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[13] J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), esp. pp. 68-96 and 179-206.

[14] Quoted by David Newsome, *Godliness and Good Learning: Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal* (London: John Murray, 1961), p. 34.

[15] See ibid, p. 7.

procreating in marriage.[16] The representative text was *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) by Thomas Hughes who, unlike Kingsley, was happy to be called a "muscular Christian". Set at Rugby, and written in the shadow of Thomas Arnold, the novel instead privileges sportsmanship over study, endurance over religious belief. Manliness is epitomised by East, described as "frank, hearty, and good-natured [...] chock full of life and spirits". He advises Tom that "if he's got nothing odd about him, and answers straightforward, and holds his head up" he'll be successful.[17] Success for Hughes is symbolised by Tom captaining the Cricket Eleven. Otherwise, piety in the novel is embodied by the consumptive George Arthur, whose spirituality both balances the physicality of Tom and East and redeems them: Tom's protection of Arthur indicates his readiness to fight in a good cause. But Arthur's death also compartmentalises the spiritual whilst lending pre-eminence to the physical.

Increasingly, the pact made with the public school ethos of games and team spirit meant that muscular Christianity paid only lip-service to intellectual or spiritual pursuits. By the 1880s, according to Jeffrey Richards' schema[18], this process of secularisation was complete. Imperial pressures and social Darwinist fears combined with the games ethos to form a new type of gentleman: stoical, fit, primed for leadership.[19] Imagination and sensitivity, and the earlier notion of Christian servility, were displaced as the emphasis upon academic excellence declined. Instead, the celebration of athleticism produced a new culture of rituals, such as annual sporting events, dress codes and team songs, the aim of which was to meld individuals together, and form microcosms which duplicated militaristic structures. The most famous example of this symbolism is Sir Henry Newbolt's poem, "Vitaï Lampada" (1898):

> The sand of the desert is sodden red, -
>   Red with the wreck of a square that broke;-
> The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead,
>   And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.
> The river of death has brimmed his banks,
>   And England's far, and Honour a name,

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[16] See ibid, p. 207-9.

[17] Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (Harmondsworth: Puffin, 1971, orig. pub. 1857), p. 79.

[18] Jeffrey Richards, "Passing the Love of Women': Manly Love and Victorian Society', in Mangan and Walvin, op cit, pp. 103-4.

[19] See Mangan, op cit, pp. 135-6.

> But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:
>
> "Play up! play up! and play the game!" (lines 9-16)[20]

In retrospect, a terrible pathos surrounds this verse in its premonition of battlefields juxtaposed with the (now naive) rallying cry. But in its inception, the poem incorporated many of the myths which gentlemen were trained *en masse* to identify with. Their insertion into Clubland, the armed forces, or appointments overseas reinforced this process of identification. And when they relaxed, the periodicals and the fiction contained within reminded them of acceptable values and codes of behaviour. The pressure to conform was, in all probability, greater for this gentleman class than the proletariat. Despite attempts to indoctrinate the working classes, socio-economic divisions and aspirational differences meant that the majority engaged more with their own culture, and their own conception of masculinity.[21] (In the long run, however, this cultural difference made the working class no less resistant to the call-up.) The children of upper or middle class families, where the cult of respectability was strongest, were conversely predisposed to these values. As shown, however, this inculcation demanded the suppression of alternate masculinities. The work of Conrad and Kipling, even while operating from within patriarchy, emphasises this disparity.

Conrad and Imperialism

Conrad protested repeatedly that he did not write romance. Even his collaboration with Ford Madox Ford entitled *Romance* (1903) appears to satirise rather than simply add to the genre. Furthermore Conrad, unlike Kipling, freely acknowledged his admiration of European realists, such as Alphonse Daudet and Anatole France. But to translate his beliefs for the marketplace, usefully summarised by Michael Jones as "the lonely initiation into manhood; the journey into the self; the problem of creating a heroic self outside of a fallen contemporary society"[22], Conrad was forced to position himself with romance. In the 1890s, it was the literature nearest and most adaptable to Conrad's interests, even though his bleakness and artistry alienated

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[20] Henry Newbolt, 'Vitaï Lampada', in *Collected Poems: 1897-1907* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1910?), p. 132.
[21] See John Springhall, 'Building Character in the British Boy: The Attempt to Extend Christian Manliness to Working-Class Adolescents, 1880-1914', in Mangan and Walvin, op cit, pp. 57-61.
[22] Michael P. Jones, *Conrad's Heroism: A Paradise Lost* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: U.M.I. Research Press, 1985), p. 107.

readers who sought simple, manly tales. Though writers could become wealthy by supplying their audience's needs, as Harold Orel has shown in the case of H.G. Wells[23], the literary market functioned through narrow genres, which Conrad resolutely failed to fit until the success of *Chance* (1914). Conrad's long-term preference for the novel indicates its continuing prestige over the short story, to which he only turned during the longeurs between novels, and the need to pay off debts.

Though Lawrence Graver emphasises that Conrad often earned more from his short stories than his novels[24], the joint income from both failed to erase his accumulated debt.[25] The purely economic decision to serialise both his tales and novels underlines that, of all the early modernists, Conrad was the most resistant to the short story form. He remains, however, an important case study, since his writing refutes the claim that the form became attractive following economic and publishing changes.[26] Like the majority of writers, Conrad neither lost his respect for the novel nor could he earn a living from short fiction alone. Furthermore, like James, Conrad's disinterest in aestheticism dissociates the short story from a decadent love of fragmentation. In terms of Maupassant's impact, Conrad was the most appreciative of modernists, for example in his critical preface (see chapter one) or the introduction to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1897), which was largely inspired by Maupassant's preface to *Pierre and Jean*. However "The Idiots" (1896), Conrad's most Maupassantian tale in terms of style and setting, is also one of his weakest. Instead, Maupassant's influence is mediated through Conrad's own style, attitude and experience. The "Maupassant" which Conrad invents is defined by his dispassion and precision, and acts therefore as a justification for Conrad's own methodology. His literary practice defers, however, aspects of Maupassant which do not fit with this construct. Consequently, even with Conrad, Maupassant's influence on modernism is at best indirect. An examination of Conrad's fiction reveals, because of rather than despite his reticence, more pertinent reasons for the short story's appeal to modernism.

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[23] Harold Orel, *The Victorian Short Story: The Development and Triumph of a Literary Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 172-3.
[24] Lawrence Graver, *Conrad's Short Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 25.
[25] See Orel, op cit, p. 172.
[26] See Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel, 1875-1914* (London: Fontana, 1991), pp. 39-42.

It is important to note that, despite his adherence to the novel, Conrad's first prose work was the sketchy short story, "The Black Mate" (1886, revised 1908). By his own admission, "The Lagoon" (1897) was "told in the same breath" as the first two novels (*TU*, p. 9), whilst "An Outpost of Progress" (1897) breaks both with the Malayan fiction and Conrad's early melodrama to offer a deeper analysis of imperialism. Even whilst implying the short story's inferiority, Conrad makes use of it in order to deploy ideas and strategies unacceptable in the romantic novel. Consequently, these short stories are integral to the development of Conrad's "major phase", the period 1898-1910. The marginality of the short story, even in Conrad's own mind, accommodates concepts that were themselves marginal or taboo, including his own sense of cultural exclusion, memorably characterised in "Amy Foster" (1901). In particular, the imperial tales make space for Conrad's own problematic views on colonialism and masculinity.

Numerous critics have examined Conrad's relationship with imperialism, but all have tended to emphasise its economic base.[27] This approach is shaped by contemporary responses to Cecil Rhodes, who was viewed as the quintessential imperialist. Rhodes' astonishing career, which involved massive territorial expansion through the ruthless opening-up of new markets in Africa, crystallised the perceived connection between imperialism and economics. J.A. Hobson's critique *Imperialism* (1902) took Rhodes as its model, and therefore ensured his identification with imperialism, a process continued by Lenin's analysis *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), which both utilised Hobson's thesis and quoted Rhodes at length. Unlike the Marxists though, Hobson, a left-wing liberal, did not oppose capitalism, but saw the Empire resulting also from British social structures.[28] The resistance of the upper classes to the working class receiving a greater share of the national product had encouraged, Hobson argued, both "oversaving", a surfeit of capital requiring investment, and "underconsumption", a lack of home demand. Since the majority were deprived of necessary purchasing power, owners of capital required fresh markets overseas. Imperialism, which otherwise disguised Britain's socio-economic decay, was justified for the masses in terms of popular nationalism, i.e. the Tory Democracy or Chamberlain's "social imperialism". Hobson's conclusion

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[27] See, for example, Benita Parry, *Conrad and Imperialism: Ideological Boundaries and Visionary Frontiers* (London: Macmillan, 1983).

[28] An excellent summary of Hobson's ideas is supplied by Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Theories of Imperialism,* trans. by P.S. Falla (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), pp. 11-8.

was that if wealth was redistributed there would be sufficient room for investment at home without imperialism's expensive inhumanity. Hobson's account is important, because he distinguishes between economic and social imperatives for imperialism, whilst also challenging the view that empire was the inevitable consequence of market forces, or a necessary tool to distract the masses. The correlation between capital investments and colonial territories dates his analysis, more than half of capital exports went instead to countries outside the Empire[29], but Hobson anticipates more recent studies which privilege cultural and ideological factors within the growth of imperialism.

Conrad precedes Hobson by distinguishing between an imperialist ideal, a social order, and imperialism as it is practised, a capitalist machine exemplified by Rhodes. Whereas Hobson wanted to redirect capitalism in order to erase the need for imperialism, Conrad desired to excise capitalism so as to purify the imperial order. The social prejudices which Hobson sees as undermining Britain, Conrad takes as the basis of a stable society. The introduction of this hierarchy to colonial territories, both to restrain the savage wildness and to maintain the colonials' subjugation, Marlow's comment in *Heart of Darkness* (1902) that cannibals are "fine fellows [...] in their place"[30], is threatened by the unnaturalness of capitalism. In his article "Autocracy and War" (1905), Conrad portrays capitalism as both exploitative and destructive: people are reduced to producing "variegated rubbish [...] for the benefit of a few employers".[31] Imperialism has extended this process until Europe has become "an armed and trading continent" with the aim "of improving the nigger (as a buying machine)."[32] Marlow, for example, refers to the fireman as "an improved specimen", "a dog in a parody of breeches", who "ought to have been clapping his hands and stamping his feet on the bank".[33] Conrad therefore desires an imperialism, which would preserve the colonials within their "natural" state as well as the Europeans' innate superiority over them. An imperialism founded upon economic drives merely amplifies the darkness within men's being, and their proximity to barbarism.

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[29] See Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century: 1815-1914, A Study of Empire and Expansion* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1976), p. 28.

[30] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin, 1973, orig. pub. 1902), p. 67.

[31] Reprinted in Conrad, *Notes on Life and Letters* (New York: Doubleday, 1921), p. 106.

[32] ibid, pp. 107 and 112.

[33] Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 70.

"An Outpost of Progress" illustrates Conrad's beliefs. The title refers to positivist notions of evolution, that mankind was moving upwards, and especially to late Victorian exponents such as Cesare Lombroso, whose work, as William Greenslade notes[34], Conrad utilised in order to debunk them. Their interpretation of Darwinism reintroduced an element of reason and human intervention. As seen in chapter one, Conrad realised the full implications of evolution, its mindlessness and unpredictability, so that the idea of progress was a delusion imposed upon chaos. Instead of representing the highpoint of civilisation, the imperialism described in "Outpost" signifies the degeneration within the nation-state. As Jeremy Hawthorn has argued, fiction sustains the ivory traders Kayerts and Carlier, though they lack any form of critical judgement.[35] Discovering "some torn books", amongst them Victor Hugo and James Fenimore Cooper, they come to discuss "these imaginary personages [...] as if they had been living friends", and are "filled [...] with indignation" or "suffused with tears". At the same time, they also unearth a newspaper detailing "Our Colonial Expansion", which they equally consume, and which also acts like the romantic fiction to make them "think better of themselves" (*TU*, p. 90). The story's irony and authorial distance foreground the fictionality of both pro-imperialist forms as well as the credulity of Kayerts and Carlier. Confronted with their servant Makola's decision to sell their men for ivory, they take refuge in words hoping them to be true:

> "Slavery is an awful thing", stammered out Kayerts in an unsteady voice.
> "Frightful - the sufferings", grunted Carlier with conviction.
> They believed their words. Everybody shows a respectful deference to certain sounds that he and his fellows make. But about feelings people really know nothing [...] we talk about oppression, cruelty, devotion, self-sacrifice, virtue, and we know nothing real beyond the words. (*TU*, pp. 99-100).

This need for words and alienation from their meanings is highlighted especially by the imperial discourse. The newspaper, which Kayerts and Carlier absorb so avidly, extols "the merits of those who went about bringing light [...] to the dark places of the earth" (*TU*, p. 90). Yet, if anything, the Congo is distinguished by "the vibrating brilliance of vertical sunshine" (*TU*, p. 89), though to the European eye it reveals

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[34] William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 107-8.
[35] Jeremy Hawthorn, *Joseph Conrad: Narrative Technique and Ideological Commitment* (London: Edward Arnold, 1990), pp. 162-3.

"nothing intelligible" (*TU*, p. 88). This incomprehension is because, Conrad argues, "few men realize that [...] their character, their capabilities and their audacities, are only the expression of their belief in the safety of their surroundings" (*TU*, p. 85). The estrangement, which Vernon Lee describes in her discussion of landscape (see chapter three), forces men to rely on language as a type of insulation. Consequently, when confronted with an agitated Makola, Kayerts and Carlier experience "a reminiscence of something not exactly familiar, and yet resembling the speech of civilised men. It sounded like one of those impossible languages which sometimes we hear in our dreams" (*TU*, p. 92). They sense some residual cultural memory, but immersed within the imperial discourse they lack the language to express it.

Imperialism's division between light and dark offers a temporary management of the colonial experience, but it fails to resolve a by-product of that mission: "to the negation of the habitual, which is safe, there is added the affirmation of the unusual, which is dangerous; a suggestion of things vague, uncontrollable, and repulsive, whose discomposing intrusion excites the imagination and tries the civilized nerves of the foolish and the wise alike" (*TU*, p. 86). This is also a statement of Conrad's method. Whereas writers such as Haggard contain the "other" either through eroticism or death, Conrad's ironic play on civilisation indicates his preference for exploring "the unusual". Safety, visualised in the introduction to "Youth" (1898) as yachting or cruising, land-hugging ventures which offer "only the amusement of life" as opposed to a sea voyage which "is life itself" (*Y*, p. 9), is superficial. Danger, embodied by the unfamiliar, is instead life-enhancing. Emotion is not simply suppressed in Conrad's work. Rather than degenerative, it often presages the gaining of insight: the examples of Kurtz, or the relationship in "Youth" between the younger and older Marlows. A true Darwinist, Conrad does not judge change, but views it neutrally as merely different, so that its exploration offers unforeseen possibilities.

Conrad's approach contrasts, though, with his own characters. Blinkered by the language of imperialism, they are unable to adapt to their environments. It is this adaptability which Conrad sees as underpinning human identity, manifesting itself within Marlow's stoical, matter-of-fact narration, "youth, strength, genius, thoughts, achievements, simple hearts - all dies...no matter" (*Y*, p. 12), or in the fulfilment of team work: "it is the sea that gives it - the vastness, the loneliness surrounding their dark, stolid souls" (*Y*, p. 26). Here, individual thought offers the only meaning in an otherwise meaningless void, but this presupposes some form of self-consciousness,

which Kayerts and Carlier noticeably lack, having consented to "live on condition of being machines" (*TU,* p. 87). As Jakob Lothe argues, their deaths are "the absurd outcome of a desperate situation"[36], though they also occur because of their inability to think critically beyond the dictates of imperialism. As Hawthorn stresses[37], the outburst which leads ultimately to Carlier's murder arises from Kayerts' refusal to see himself as a "stingy old slave-dealer" (*TU,* p. 103). The embodiment of this ideology, though, is Makola, the "civilized nigger" (*TU,* p. 97). Various critics have emphasised that Makola appears to be in greater command than the Europeans, but this is only because he has accepted his servile status within the imperial order, and has no pretensions to authority like Kayerts and Carlier. The idea of racial superiority blinds them to their economic subordination until the very end when Carlier cracks and Kayerts, realising his hopelessness, commits suicide. Makola, though, appreciates being raised just above his origins: he insists "that his name was Henry Price" (*TU,* p. 83), and cheerfully sells fellow colonials in a parody of both Western slavery and bureaucratic efficiency. Makola's explanation, "I did the best for you and the Company" (*TU,* p. 98), emphasises his *petit-bourgeois* aspirations, symbolised by the scenes of happy family life which contrast with the loneliness of Kayerts and Carlier. Consequently, the reader is informed that Makola "despised the two white men" (*TU,* p. 83), though he is also quick to persuade Kayerts that Carlier died from fever. Very probably this is motivated by self-interest, covering-up for Kayerts protects Makola's own position, but it also demonstrates his greater adaptability, whilst tying him into the capitalist base, and dividing Makola from the other imperial subjects.

Makola can be contrasted with another colonial figure, the eponymous hero of "Karain: A Memory" (1897). As Reynolds Humphries notes, the title implies both a recollection of Karain and Karain's own remembrance, suggesting an equality between the British and Malayan narratives.[38] Humphries argues, though, that by embedding Karain's tale within itself, the Western discourse aims to maintain Karain as its subject, but that in practice the reader's interest is diverted by Karain's narrative.[39] However, the story does not have to be read in such manipulative terms.

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[36] Jakob Lothe, *Conrad's Narrative Method* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 52.
[37] Hawthorn, op cit, pp. 167-8.
[38] Reynolds Humphries, "Karain: A Memory' - How to Spin a Yarn', in *Joseph Conrad: Critical Assessments, vol. 2,* ed. by Keith Carabine (Mountfield, East Sussex: Helm Information, 1992), p. 155.
[39] ibid, pp. 158-60.

Karain instead represents Conrad's ideal native, uncorrupted by capitalism, and is paid due respect. Before Karain begins his tale, the narrator acknowledges that "no man will speak to his master" (*TU*, p. 32), and that as a leader Karain gave his people "wisdom, advice, reward, punishment, life or death, with the same serenity of attitude and voice". Even though the reader is constantly reminded that Karain is performing, his description as "implacable and vast" (*TU*, p. 17) merely adds to his allure; encapsulated by the narrator's comment that "he summed up his race, his country, the elemental force of ardent life, of tropical nature" (*TU*, p. 16). The racialism of this passage is undercut by Karain's appeal, even his "childish shrewdness" is endearing (*TU*, p. 25), and of the surroundings: "sounds ceased, men slept, forms vanished - and the reality of the universe alone remained - a marvellous thing of darkness and glimmers" (*TU*, p. 18). This exotic description belies a racist sub-text, but it is undeniably attractive, so that it calls into question the positions of both narrator and reader.

The narrator takes a common-sensical view throughout the story. Immersed within the imperial ideology, he temporarily resolves his antipathy and fascination by resorting to the manly code: Karain is "an adventurer of the sea, an outcast, a ruler - and my very good friend" (*TU*, p. 17). Similarly, extolling the self-reliant explorer, he criticises the "respectable people sitting safely in counting-houses" (*TU*, p. 26). The narrator's world is defined by dynamism and tackling danger. In this respect, he shares something with Conrad, but crucially he lacks the awareness of the mouthpiece, Marlow: "there are those voyages that seem ordered for the illustration of life, that might stand for a symbol of existence. You fight, work, sweat, nearly kill yourself [...] trying to accomplish something - and you can't" (*Y*, p. 9). The narrator assumes a more prosaic approach, closer to the more practical Hollis than the sensitive Jackson who, planning his deception of Karain, describes the British spirit as "a masterful, conscientious, unscrupulous, unconquerable devil [...] that does a lot of good" (*TU*, p. 51). The narrator's straight-forwardness is signified by his racism: his surprise at Karain's "steadfastness of which I would have thought him racially incapable" (*TU*, p. 25). His discrimination is related also to a preoccupation with time: "the firm, pulsating beat of the two ship's chronometers [...] seemed to me a protection and a relief" (*TU*, p. 43). Cut adrift from Greenwich Time, the Malayan jungle is characterised by its non-linearity. It is a "motionless fantasy" (*TU*, p. 18), whose people "had forgotten all the past, and had lost all concern for the future"

(*TU,* p. 17), and in which even "the earth, the sea, the sky, the passing wind and the stirring leaf" (*TU,* p. 32) co-exist as listeners to Karain's tale. The story's eruption into present time is another example of this stasis, as is Karain's fear of being haunted by the ghost of his companion Matara, whom he shot to protect their quarry, Matara's sister. Returning to London, the narrator re-encounters Jackson, still brooding on Karain's story, and tells him to look around:

> Our ears were filled by a headlong shuffle and beat of rapid footsteps and an underlying rumour - a rumour vast, faint, pulsating, as of panting breaths, of beating hearts, of gasping voices. Innumerable eyes stared straight in front, feet moved hurriedly, blank faces flowed, arms swung. Over all, a narrow ragged strip of smoky sky wound about between the high roofs, extended and motionless, like a soiled streamer flying above the rout of a mob. (*TU,* pp. 55-6)

Jackson, who sees with "the eyes of a boy", recalling Karain's childlikeness, refuses to accept this impressionistic vista as more real than Karain's tale. The narrator merely concludes that "he had been too long away from home" (*TU,* p. 56). Like Karain, Jackson feels the simultaneity of past and present, and is alienated from the continual activity of the modern city. In particular, he is concerned about the coin passed-off on Karain as a charm to ward off Matara's spirit since, as "civilisation follows trade" (*TU,* p. 109), it also represents the onset of modernity. The narrator functions, however, only in terms of autonomy and linearity, and is therefore at home with the city's mindless reinvention of itself. Jackson, who by implication has been infected with "the form of madness peculiar to (Karain's) race" (*TU,* p. 47), is equivalent to a sub-species awaiting extinction due to its unadaptability.

A similar dilemma can be found in "A Smile of Fortune" (1911). Conrad's sea-captain must choose between Alice Jacobus, and risk a scandal, or trade with her untrustworthy and socially undesirable father. As he acknowledges, "living in a world more or less homicidal and desperately mercantile, it was plainly my duty to make the best of its opportunities" (*TLS,* p. 11). The parallelism between murder and commerce foreshadows the protagonist's downfall after Jacobus has discovered the affair, and persuaded him into buying a useless supply of potatoes. Their putrefaction symbolises the decay of both the captain's romantic and professional ambitions. His solution, selling the potatoes for an excessive price to a famine-stricken colony, reduces him to another Jacobus. The captain's resignation, because "the Indian

Ocean [...] has lost its charm", results in the first mate Mr Burns' response, "what's one ocean more than another?" (*TLS*, p. 77). His practicality, like the narrator of "Karain", singles him out as the captain's successor who, reduced to the level of a passenger, becomes an outcast like Jackson.

Conrad, though, does not see the universe as simply deterministic, since this would merely replicate decadent fatalism. Conrad appreciates that individuals, though primed by evolution, also impose themselves upon their environments, and that this interaction is a necessary part of the evolutionary process. Viewed neutrally, losses and gains are an inevitable outcome of the forces of change. Conrad's characters are therefore presented with choices, most particularly in the major novels, where the implications of their decisions can be traced through. However, a short story such as "The Secret Sharer" (1910) allows Conrad to explore the intensity of the decision itself, especially in the context of initiation. Conrad's novice captain rescues a mysterious stranger, Leggatt, who has killed a man on another ship. Persuaded into hiding Leggatt, the narrator must decide whether to hand him over, and risk explaining his own actions, or releasing Leggatt in such a way that he is neither detected nor his own motives are revealed. Various critics have explored the story's psychological symbolism[40], or the narrative strategies which produce its mystery and ambiguity.[41] For my purposes, I shall examine the end. The captain plans to abandon Leggatt on the island of Koh-ring, though this will bring the ship perilously close to the shore. As in "Youth", with its crew battling to sustain the burning vessel, the captain must endanger his ship as an act of self-transformation, since he is personally involved with Leggatt's fate. In this way, the protagonist impinges upon his environment, which in turn affects him. The "uncharted regions" (*TLS*, p. 116), which Leggatt escapes into, are not simply a geographical area, but the narrator's inner self. Only by traversing this abyss can the captain reconcile the divisions between "being a stranger to the ship; and [...] a stranger to myself" (*TLS*, p. 83). To convey this fluidity of self, Conrad reuses the motif of darkness: "already she was [...] in the very blackness of it, already swallowed up as it were, gone too close to be recalled, gone from me altogether" (*TLS*, p. 121). It is only by engaging with the other, and proving oneself in its midst - the captain's skilful command,

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[40] See, for example, Karl Miller, *Doubles: Studies in Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 256-7.
[41] See Lothe, op cit, pp. 59-71.

Leggatt's successful escape - that self-knowledge can be attained. However, the story's perfunctory finish, merely the enigmatic line, "a free man, a proud swimmer striking out for a new destiny" (*TLS*, p. 124), which can refer to both characters, leaves this question of self-fulfilment unresolved. Whereas the romantic novel moves through repeated testings of its hero, from which he is restrengthened, the short story's suspension of narrative drive exposes uncertainties within the integrated self. The abandonment of Leggatt allows the narrator to establish himself within the public world, but it comes only at the expense of his other. The lack of closure not only multiplies possible interpretations[42], but it also turns reading into an unmanly form of self-analysis. Though this theme is explored in Conrad's novels, "The Secret Sharer"'s open-endedness offers a most unsettling treatment, which may explain why Conrad turned to the short story in this specific case, but also why more often he didn't. Many of his later tales appear instead to be attenuations of his earlier fiction.

Another problem with Conrad's writing is that, in the symbiosis of identity and environment, it is unclear where the influence of one ends and the other begins. In stories such as "The Secret Sharer" this can suggest mutability, but elsewhere it can imply essentialism. Karain's validation as a speaker, for example, is at the expense of his tribesmen. Whereas he is clearly defined, the other Malayans are little more than faces in the jungle. In both cases, an appropriation and objectification is enacted, a kind of imperialistic "divide and rule". In "Outpost" the Africans are portrayed as incoherent: "an uncouth babbling noise" with "startled, never-resting eyes" (*TU*, p. 88), whilst Marlow reminds the reader "of that hidden something, that gift of good or evil that makes racial difference, that shapes the fate of nations" (*Y*, p. 28). Yet, the ironic characterisation of Makola implies his unnaturalness. He is not dissimilar to Jacobus, whose abnormality is engendered. He walks "mincingly" and is described as "a commercial old maid" (*TLS*, p. 18), whilst the topsyturvydom of commerce is compounded by his masculine daughter. Her hair, hands and voice are "like a man's" (*TLS*, p. 51), though she is also Medusa-like with a "heavy black coil of twisted hair [...] crowning the bowed head with a crushing and disdained glory" (*TLS*, pp. 59-60). As the narrator comments, "it was impossible to give her a sense of proportion" (*TLS*, p. 56). Women, like colonials, form a blindness in Conrad's thinking, and often

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[42] Contrast the views of H.M. Daleski, *Joseph Conrad: The Way of Dispossession* (London: Faber, 1977), pp. 174-83 with Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 139-40.

they disturb his male characters. In "Karain", the object of the hunt is Matara's sister, "the woman who had broken faith, and therefore must die" (*TU*, p. 37), whilst it is Karain's misplaced affection for her which dooms him. However, the ways in which women are portrayed by men reveal the limits of patriarchal thinking, for example in "The Planter of Malata" (1915). Renouard has concealed the death of Felicia Moorsam's fiancé so he can seduce her. He is indoctrinated within the manly code: "he had to keep watch on his eyes, his limbs, on the muscles of his face" (*WT*, p. 41). He projects his repressed emotions on to the society girl, transforming her into "a tragic Venus" (*WT*, p. 42). Renouard contemplates the seduction as "a glorious struggle with this amazon" (*WT*, p. 46). However, he is also bound by the imperatives of duty and honour, and finally is forced into a position where he must reveal the truth. Conrad converts this dilemma into self-sacrifice:

> This walk up the hill and down again was like the supreme effort of an explorer trying to penetrate the interior of an unknown country, the secret of which is too well defended by its cruel and barren nature. Decoyed by a mirage, he had gone too far - so far that there was no going back. (*WT*, p. 77)

Whilst critiquing the manly code, Conrad reintroduces a masculine stoicism to structure his story. He translates Darwinism into a human framework that does not prejudge the theory, but installs a recodified masculinity of stoical self-awareness rather than arrogant physicality. As to the question of imperialism, though, Conrad could not discard capitalism (his later commercial success suggests his final acquiescence), but in many respects he had targeted the wrong enemy. Conrad's own nationalism blinded him to the ideology of the nation-state which, in a variety of socio-political initiatives, was reinforcing itself at the turn of the century. The need to identify one's national self by constructing borders, and then expanding those borders, was a more significant long-term cause for war than economic factors.[43] The military and cultural consequences of nationalism form the backdrop to Kipling's later fiction.

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[43] See James Joll, *The Origins of the First World War*, 2nd edn (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 165-70 and 199-229.

Kipling: Languages of Loss

When Rudyard Kipling was employed as a correspondent during the Boer War, he remained one of Britain's most popular authors. Despite charges of literary "hooliganism"[44], he could be both a companion of Cecil Rhodes, and seen as a friend to the troops. Kipling's pro-militarism can be seen in "The Army of a Dream" (1904). A Boer War veteran dreams of a volunteer army, which selects from a nation that has accepted military service as a prerequisite for public life: "if we don't volunteer [...] we don't vote, and we don't get poor-relief, and the women don't love us" (*TD*, p. 212). Boys are drilled from school, class and racial prejudice are eliminated from the corps, and "the great European family" now "knows what invasion means" (*TD*, p. 215). At its worst, the story is no better than a recruitment campaign: "women had descended from the carriages, and were pressing in about us admiringly" (*TD*, p. 237) whilst, affirming the need for soundness, those who decline "rank with lunatics, women and minors" (*TD*, p. 217). But, as George Shepperson comments, Kipling did not produce "the great South African book that was expected of him".[45] Though Kipling shared with other ultra-conservatives, such as Rhodes and Baden-Powell, a hatred of traditional conservatism and the need for "national efficiency", he did not share the view that the British soldier was degenerate. Since the Indian tales, Kipling had celebrated the infantryman often at the expense of authority. During the Boer War, Kipling saw soldiers under fire, disease-ridden, mutilated.[46] Kipling blamed this disaster upon a political and military establishment that disregarded the troops' interests. In his story, Kipling transforms the common soldier from society's stooge to its chief icon. The move is similar to H.G. Wells' conception of a technocratic elite, the scientist elevated to social saviour[47], alluded to in the benign aerial controllers of Kipling's "As Easy as A.B.C." (1912). But at the end of "The Army", the utopia is revealed to have been an hallucination so that, instead of its crude militarism, the reader is left with the narrator's fractured memories:

[44] See Robert Buchanan, 'The Voice of the Hooligan' (1899), in *Kipling: The Critical Heritage,* ed. by Roger Lancelyn Green (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 233-49.
[45] George Shepperson, 'Kipling and the Boer War', in *Rudyard Kipling: The Man, His World and His Work,* ed. by John Gross (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), p. 87.
[46] See ibid, p. 86.
[47] See H.G. Wells, 'Anticipations: Of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought' (1901), in *Anticipations, Etc.* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1904), p. 60.

> Then it came upon me [...] we had waited, Vee and I, that night for the body of
> Boy Bayley; and that Vee himself had died of typhoid in the spring of 1902 [...]
> Bayley, shifting slightly, revealed to me the three-day-old wound on his left
> side that had soaked the ground about him. I saw Pigeon fling up a helpless
> arm as to guard himself against a spatter of shrapnel, and Luttrell with a
> foolish tight-lipped smile lurched over all in one jointless piece. Only old
> Vee's honest face held steady for awhile against the darkness that had
> swallowed up the battalion behind us. Then his jaw dropped and the face
> stiffened, so that a fly made bold to explore the puffed and scornful nostril.
> (*TD*, p. 241)

Will the utopia ensure that there are no more wasted lives, or does this conclusion reveal the grim reality disguised by the endless war games? The perfunctory end fails to resolve this tension. Instead the notion of manoeuvring, which permeates the story, seems paramount. There are the physical manoeuvres - the drills, competitions and tactics - and there's also the text's ideological manoeuvring: the attempt to persuade the reader of the utopia's rightness by posing and answering the narrator's questions. But there's also the idea of manoeuvring as motion, challenging the rigidity of authority. The dream's turn into nightmare resembles the surprise endings of O. Henry, in which an unexpected revelation forces the reader to reinterpret the preceding narrative. But O. Henry's stories still presuppose a pattern and a meaning. Kipling's twist undermines the apparent symmetry, but leaves nothing in its place. The story ultimately lacks the confidence of its beliefs. The textual swerves and silences mediate the divisions between Kipling's political and emotional responses, and his inability to offer an overview on the War. Paradoxically, Kipling at his most bombastic marks the beginning of his modernist phase.

Apart from the celebrated "Mrs Bathurst", two other stories from this period, "Wireless" and "They", confirm Kipling's progress. The former expresses the Edwardian love affair with gadgets and scientific discoveries. The growth of consumerism and urban development meant that technology was no longer remote and threatening, but domesticated and familiar. As Paul Thompson states, an increasing number of households were making use of domestic fuels and appliances; suburbanisation encouraged public transport; whilst poorer families encountered technology in leisure and entertainment, for instance in cinema or the lighting of

theatres.[48] Jonathan Rose indicates the impact that discoveries such as radio waves made upon intellectuals[49], but the real importance of inventions such as telegraphy was that they were tangible. The bridges and railways which Kipling had previously celebrated were examples of big science, heavy technologies that impressed but also dwarfed the individual. The inventions of the consumer society were on a smaller, more human scale. Kipling's enthusiasm for the motor car is evidenced in the opening to "They": "I let the county flow under my wheels" (*TD*, p. 243). But unlike the integrated parts of "The Ship that Found Herself" (1895), whose interdependence forms a microcosm of Kipling's ideal society, he portrays these private technologies as interrupting social dynamics.

Kipling, who met Marconi in 1899, shared with other intellectuals the belief that radio waves signified a mystical consciousness. Rider Haggard records that Kipling "went on to show that anything which any of us did *well* was no credit to us: 'We are only telephone wires'".[50] Kipling himself attributed inspiration to his "Personal Daemon", similar to Jung's "animus", though he also acknowledged that, despite the injunction, "do not try to think consciously. Drift, wait and obey"[51], good writing could only be perfected through the processes of "Higher Editing".[52] This mysterious interaction between conscious and unconscious thought forms "Wireless"'s central interest. The story involves a demonstration of telegraphy in which a lovelorn chemist, Shaynor, is persuaded to transcribe the messages received. A consumptive, he accepts a drug from the narrator, and in a trance begins to write Keats' poem, "The Eve of St Agnes", even though he has never read Keats. When the trance abruptly ends, the participants discover that the equipment is malfunctioning. The tale is carefully designed with individual details mediating biographical or intertextual references to Keats and his writing, though at the same time any obvious comparison between Keats and Shaynor is undercut by Shaynor's depiction as a vulgarised version of the poet, and his mistranslation of the poem. Like "Mrs Bathurst"'s multi-layered narrative, one proposition is immediately negated by another, so that any

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[48] Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society*, 2nd edn (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), pp. 294-6.

[49] Jonathan Rose, *The Edwardian Temperament: 1895-1919* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986), pp. 6-7.

[50] H. Rider Haggard (22nd May 1918), in *Rudyard Kipling to Rider Haggard: The Record of a Friendship*, ed. by Morton Cohen (London: Hutchinson, 1965), p. 100.

[51] Rudyard Kipling, *Something of Myself: For my Friends Known and Unknown* (London: Macmillan, 1937), p. 210.

[52] ibid, pp. 207-8.

overriding symmetry is displaced. Instead, this narrative structure resembles the thought process: at the heart of which is the act of communication.

In his drugged state Shaynor has no knowledge of what he is writing or editing. In practice, he becomes part of the machinery, acting as a conductor through which Keats' inspiration is induced. The poem's refraction is attributed to the malfunction, but this is mere hypothesis. Cashell's claim that "Science will know tomorrow" what caused the error will not explain why it achieved this particular effect, or the meaning of what occurred. Instead, technology intervenes in such a way to dissociate the written word from its source of origin, and that science can but rationalise this process without explaining away the intervention. It is simply impossible to say whether Keats' spirit has infused Shaynor (presupposing a metaphysical domain beyond language), if it is just a technical error (an explanation limited by its reason), or some form of psychological manifestation: a type of "dream-work" or unconscious cultural memory. But this third explanation is challenged by the story's self-consciousness: the careful planning of details and allusions. An intertextual reading, though, is disturbed by Shaynor deviating from "The Eve of St Agnes", and making references to "Ode to a Nightingale" and Coleridge's "Kubla Khan". Kipling, however, does not view this alienation with melancholy but curiosity. As Cashell comments, "only a word here and there. Just enough to tantalise". The loss of origins heralds the magic of language itself: telegraphy is compared, for example, with "a spiritualistic seance" (*TD*, p. 199).

The estranging effect of technology also appears in "They", and the car's seeming ability to think for the narrator: "I went again, or it may have been that my car took the road of her own volition" (*TD*, p. 249). The introduction's exhilarating journey moves both spatially, "still the track descended" (*TD*, p. 244), and temporally: references to "Norman churches", King Arthur, a "Roman road" and Elizabethan England (*TD*, pp. 243-4). The descent represents the inner workings of the narrator's mind - its swerves, pauses and retreats - and of the reader's experience of the text. The car divides the narrator from himself: he is made to feel "a trespasser", "from the other side of the county". Despite himself though, "through no merit of my own I was free" (*TD*, p. 256), he returns compulsively to the House Beautiful, which his car guides him to despite its being hidden within "the crumpled hills interlaced so jealously" (*TD*, p. 249). Though, as in "Wireless", Kipling stresses particular details - the narrator's first sight of the children, their equivocal presence,

the notion of "walking in the wood" - the reader does not necessarily decode these signs initially, but instead, like the narrator, is forced to revisit the narrative. The dislocation of car travel, its conflation of space and time, foregrounds the narrator's self-alienation. He reluctantly admits that he does "not altogether hate" children (*TD*, p. 245), but confesses that "I have never seen my dead in any dream", whilst "looking up at the window where the child stood all but hidden". The blind woman contends that this "must be as bad as being blind" (*TD*, p. 247). Later, she observes that "you've such good defences in your eyes" (*TD*, p. 251). The gaze objectifies and distances: only by its aversion can insight come. Conversely, the blind woman can see "the naked soul" (*TD*, p. 253). Though Kipling viewed religious cults, such as theosophy, with scepticism, he had personal experience of mediums: both his mother and sister claimed to have second sight.[53] In many respects, Kipling paralleled the work of psychical researchers, many of whom were leading intellectuals, who rigorously tested supernatural phenomena.[54] The aura, which the blind woman sees circling the narrator, was believed to be an impression left on the external environment by the individual's thoughts.[55] Her comment, "they aren't in the world at all. They're in *you*" (*TD*, p. 252), suggests that the children are projections of the narrator's subconscious. His restless search for them is pointless. Only by allowing them to look for him can he achieve peace: "the little brushing kiss fell in the centre of my palm [...] a fragment of the mute code devised very long ago". Then the narrator realises that the children are ghosts, and that the spectral child was his own. But he also recognises that, following the blind woman's insistence that "they came because I loved them - because I needed them" (*TD*, p. 263), "it would be wrong" for him to remain. Whilst the children provide her with a love that she could not otherwise know, the narrator must live with his child's absence; symbolised also by the invisible aura of his innermost thoughts. In a story distinguished by its irresolution, the narrator is significantly "grateful [...] beyond words" (*TD*, p. 264).

However, in these transitional stories, Kipling does seem to be concerned with uncovering, in deconstructionist terms, the "trace" of what has been lost. In "Wireless", there is a fascination with the source of inspiration, but in "They" it is related to grief. This story, in particular, corresponds well with Freud's notion of

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[53] See Angus Wilson, *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Works* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1977), p. 266.
[54] See Rose, op cit, pp. 4-5.
[55] See Sandra Kemp, *Kipling's Hidden Narratives* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 47.

"grief-work", the process in which an individual moves from desiring the absentee to rationalising their loss. Through the working-through of memories, he/she rearranges their world in order to accommodate the absence.[56] The narrator's early inhibitions, and then his frequent visits to the House Beautiful until he understands its true meaning, seem to fit with this model. However, the repetition of loss in Kipling's later writing suggests that all of these stories form an extended exercise in grief-work, whether for personal or political reasons. As Freud comments, mourning can either refer "to the loss of a loved person, or [...] some abstraction, such as one's country", and that "in mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty".[57] This development in Kipling's work is interrelated with his analysis of the English landscape once he had settled permanently in Sussex.

ABROAD IN BRITAIN

Kipling returned to England in 1902. Besides reporting on the Boer War, he had been seriously ill, whilst in 1899 his daughter Josephine had died.[58] The rural retreat has been seen as a quest for lost purity. In a persuasive account, though, David Trotter has located Kipling within contemporary mythologising of the English countryside - its people, language and history - and how Kipling refracted this reinvention.[59] At his crudest, in stories such as "My Son's Wife" (1913), Kipling reiterates the simplistic divide between town and country observed by the liberal politician, Charles Masterman: the "England of reserved, silent men, dispersed in small towns, villages, and country homes" versus the "England packed tightly in such gigantic aggregations of population as the world has never before seen".[60] But unlike his friend Rider Haggard, who saw the countryside as the source of Englishness, Kipling approached rural England as "the most marvellous of all foreign countries that I have ever been in".[61] "They", Kipling's first attempt at pastoralism, is

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[56] Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917), in *The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 11: On Metapsychology, the Theory of Psychoanalysis,* ed. by Angela Richards, trans. by James Strachey (London: Pelican, 1984), p. 253.

[57] ibid, pp. 252 and 254.

[58] See Shepperson, op cit, p. 83.

[59] David Trotter, 'Kipling's England: The Edwardian Years', in *Kipling Considered,* ed. by Phillip Mallett (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 56-70.

[60] Charles F.G. Masterman, 'Realities at Home', in *The Heart of the Empire: Discussions of Problems of Modern City Life in England, with an Essay on Imperialism,* 2nd edn (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1902), p. 7.

[61] Kipling, letter to Charles Eliot Norton (30th November 1902), in *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling, vol. 3: 1900-10,* ed. by Thomas Pinney (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 113.

structurally not dissimilar to the imperial Gothic: a protagonist ventures into an unknown territory, undergoes self-examination, and returns renewed. Only the narrative direction - inwards rather than outwards - and the subsequent effect are different: uncertainty replaces triumphalism.

Kipling's idyll is neither static nor tranquil, but instead is marked by strangeness. "The House Surgeon" (1909), for instance, concerns Mary Moultrie who, "brooding over what she believed was her sister's suicide", infects the entire home with her depression. "Her thoughts being concentrated" on the house until "they felt [...] like a burning-glass" turns it into "a light of blackness" that terrifies all who stay there (*AR*, p. 300). Psychics occur in "They" and "The Dog Hervey" (1914), whilst the river in "Friendly Brook" (1914), which drowns the blackmailing outsider, indicates that the rural community is not without violence. The effect of these stories is to disturb the role of perception. At their closure, the object under analysis - house, dog, child for example - still exists, "but what has changed are the connections with and reflections through" it.[62] The object's significance not only alters in relation to different interpretations, but also contributes to the re-readings which are formed. The object is at once both part of, and outside, the discourse. For example, Hervey's name creates confusion, whether spelt with an 'a' or 'e', the latter alluding to a quotation from Samuel Johnson, which supplies the story's key. Once this is realised, the hallucination projected by Miss Sichliffe is broken, and Hervey is transformed in the observer's gaze from a sickly to a healthy dog. But Hervey himself seems to contribute to this process by reflecting the viewer's own anxieties. In his pet's eyes, the narrator sees "a normal decent dog, flecked here and there with that strained half-soul which man's love and association have added to his nature. But with Harvey the eye was perplexed, as a tortured man's. Only by looking far into its deeps could one make out the spirit of the proper animal, beclouded and cowering beneath some unfair burden" (*ADC*, p. 130). However, does the narrator see only what he wants to see? And even after the spell has been broken, has "the proper animal" been revealed, or is it still a matter of perception? One can argue that, by extension, the Sussex landscape acts as a gigantic mirror, and that it was probably this elusiveness which attracted Kipling.

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[62] Kemp, op cit, p. 60.

However, Kipling's foregrounding of the landscape's unnaturalness meant that he did not simply retreat into the pastoral. He was still fascinated by cities, for example London in "The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat" (1917). Critics have viewed this farcical revenge story as disproportionately mean[63], but its excessiveness draws from the impact upon the narrative by the mass media. In some respects, the story shares Henry James' critique of the newspaper industry (see chapter two): barbed comments such as "our subscribers rather relished the correspondence, and contemporaries quoted freely" (*ADC*, p. 154), but Kipling delights in the collusion and reproducibility of mass-media. The vendetta against arrogant Sir Thomas Ingell, the type of Tory grandee Kipling loathed, relies not just upon newspaper opinion, but the organisation of political stunts, such as a ridiculous made-up dance, "the Gubby", and their distribution through modern communications - film, photography, gramophone records, music hall. Underpinning them all is advertising, "the most delicate of all the sciences" according to impresario, Bat Masquerier (*ADC*, p. 151). Ingell is simply overwhelmed and outflanked. He departs, still uncomprehending, for "a private interview with his Chief Whip" (*ADC*, p. 182) after Parliament itself has dissolved helplessly into a rendition of the eponymous song. The narrator, who attends the conspiracy as a disinterested on-looker, at one point describes "the disgorging picture-palaces capering on the pavements", and "the red electrics flash 'Gubby' across the Thames" (*ADC*, p. 167). This is the strange, modern landscape where language is illuminated, reinvented (the verb "to huckle" from Ingell's constituency of Huckley), and divorced from meaning: "I'm not in charge any more" confesses Masquerier (*ADC*, p. 178). The vicarious thrill of technology, though, in its abdication from authority, offers an ominous portent of the wartime environment.

WAR AND RECOVERY

Kipling's first fictions after the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 concerned the home front, and continued his interest with landscape. "Mary Postgate" (1915), however, re-emphasises the strangeness of rural England, and the interaction between science and nature. The spectre of aerial attack was a horrifying by-product of technology, but in "Mary Postgate" Kipling cannot help but be fascinated by "the ripped and shredded body" of Edna Gerritt (*ADC*, p. 350). Modern warfare added another layer

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[63] See, for example, Philip Mason, *Kipling: The Glass, the Shadow and the Fire* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 211.

to the unnatural landscape, and this story, in particular, examines the war's transformative effect. Many critics have accepted its literal meaning: Mary allows a wounded German airman to die as revenge for the deaths of Edna and Wynn, her mistress' nephew and Flying Corps casualty.[64] Some though, preferring not to read the story as propaganda, have argued that it shows how Mary, a dull unimaginative woman, is corrupted by the War.[65] Both these interpretations, however, down-play the first part of the narrative when Mary stoically bears Wynn's abusive remarks: "a sheep would know more than you do, Postey. You're lamentable. You are less use than an empty tin can" (ADC, p. 343). Neither does she show much remorse when his death is confirmed except to say, "it's a great pity he didn't die in action after he had killed somebody" (ADC, p. 345). In addition, critics gloss over the lack of evidence of an enemy attack. Dr Hennis ascribes Edna's death to the rotten state of Gerritt's stable, whilst Mary only thinks she heard an aeroplane and an explosion. Lastly, critics ignore that, as Mary burns Wynn's belongings, the airman whom she sees resembles him, "dressed [...] in a uniform something like Wynn's", and that Mary discovers the airman just as she is contemplating Wynn. The whole scene has a dream-like quality: the airman is shadowy, "half hidden behind a laurel" (ADC, p. 352), a "thing beneath the oak". As the funeral pyre grows, the airman's cries become more agonised. Though Mary uses "Wynn's own words" - "you bloody pagan" - to shut him up (ADC, p. 354), her mimicry suggests also a critical distance: that she is throwing them back at Wynn. A strong sexual overtone pervades the scene's closure as the possessions are consumed and the airman dies: "her long pleasure was broken by a sound that she had waited for in agony several times in her life [...] She closed her eyes and drank it in". Whether the airman is real or not, Mary exorcises her repressed anger against Wynn, and returns home where she scandalises "the whole routine by taking a luxurious hot bath before tea" (ADC, p. 355). No longer dull or subordinate, Mary symbolises the overturning of sexual and social hierarchies which Kipling, like later modernists, attributes to the War.

"Mary Postgate" also appears as one of the texts employed by Sandra Gilbert in her controversial article, "Soldier's Heart"[66], which has coloured subsequent

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[64] See, for example, Wilson, op cit, pp. 309-12.

[65] See, for example, J.M.S. Tompkins, *The Art of Rudyard Kipling*, 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 1965), pp. 135-7.

[66] Reprinted in *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century, vol. 2: Sexchanges* by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 258-323.

discussions of the War and gender. Besides historical errors (the story was written *before* the death of Kipling's son), Gilbert follows received opinion by viewing the tale as propaganda, but concludes that it expresses Kipling's "revulsion at his heroine's murderous sensuality".[67] Such an interpretation is erroneous if one considers the whole text, especially the ways in which Mary has been treated and represented by those in authority. As I have indicated previously, Gilbert and Gubar's appropriation of the term "sex war" is historically and politically naive, since it belies its origins within eugenic feminism. When Gilbert mixes this invented conflict with the realities of the Great War, the concept's weakness is exposed.

Gilbert schematically divides between male narratives of "sexual gloom" - impotent rage against a dehumanised technocracy or a "feminised" home front - and female narratives of "sexual glee" - the liberation of women in work and art at the expense of men. To realise this scheme, Gilbert has to make a number of presuppositions since, despite the international, cross-generational scope, no ambiguity appears within, or between, men and women. Here, I am particularly concerned with Gilbert's depiction of men.[68] Injury and distress are presented as an "unsexing" (Gilbert reinvokes the active-passive binary without highlighting its artificiality), and therefore explaining men's presumed anger. Horrendous suffering is reduced to an abstract question of gender. At no point is Gilbert sympathetic: like the quote from Christabel Pankhurst, which prefaces the article, she blames men for starting the War. This simplistic, even callous, approach is ineffective: by generalising, Gilbert cannot grasp the psychological stimuli, the rhetoric of soundness and autonomy, which ultimately victimised men. Her rejection of ambiguity disables her argument. Refusing to accept that men might not think alike, she presents an uncaring attitude towards human pain, which merely perpetuates, and colludes with, an obscene notion of war. To understand Kipling's post-war fiction, I shall therefore reject this approach, and instead concentrate on the ambiguities which do appear in his work.

At the start of the War, Kipling had worked as an official propagandist[69], but in 1913, whilst watching army manoeuvres at Aldershot, he had imagined a ghost army,

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[67] ibid, p. 289.

[68] On Gilbert's analysis of women, see Claire M. Tylee, "Maleness Run Riot' - The Great War and Women's Resistance to Militarism', *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 11, no. 3 (1988), pp. 199-210.

[69] See Peter Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words: Literature as Propaganda, 1914-18 and After* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1989), pp. 25-6.

"the whole pressure of our dead of the Boer War flickering and re-forming".[70]
Though he decided against turning the incident into a story, considering it "absurd,
unnecessary and hysterical"[71], the memory powerfully suggests that he viewed the
Great War as a repetition of the South African conflict and its consequent suffering.
Writing propaganda was a matter of doing one's duty but, as "Mary Postgate"
suggests, Kipling was aware that this war would signify a sea-change, something
which came home forcibly after his son, John, died at the Battle of Loos. Kipling
visited the trenches at Flanders during the War; worked for the Imperial War Graves
Commission in 1919; and in 1923 published his study, *The Irish Guards in the Great
War*. Reviewing the book, the poet and ex-serviceman, Edmund Blunden, felt that
Kipling had failed: "he constantly falls short, in expressions merely strained, in sheer
want of comprehension".[72] As Paul Fussell comments, the work expresses the
tensions between literary writing and historical detail.[73] However, in Kipling's short
stories, this problem of communication, of comprehending and dealing with the War,
mediates something of the psychological damage.

As Adrian Gregory records, British cities teemed with ex-soldiers, mentally and
physically scarred, and often living in poverty. The 1920s saw demonstrations
demanding both support and recognition for ex-servicemen.[74] They felt themselves
excluded from Armistice Day, which had itself been forced through against
government resistance.[75] The informal commemorations of 1919 indicate the great
surge of feeling throughout communities, which also stimulated the practice of
seances.[76] As the narrator of "The Bull that Thought" (1924) comments, "after the
War [...] everything is credible" (*DC*, p. 160).

Kipling's post-war stories often feature an unsettling blend of realism and
fantasy, which John Bayley finds "peculiarly frustrating" as if they were intended
merely "to awe or amaze us" through a stylistic ingenuity, "which both brings the

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[70] Kipling, *Something of Myself,* p. 214.
[71] ibid, p. 215.
[72] Edmund Blunden, 'Mr Kipling Reconstructs' (1923), quoted in Green, op cit, p. 332.
[73] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 171-2.
[74] Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day, 1919-46* (Oxford: Berg, 1994), pp. 52-61.
[75] See ibid, pp. 8-9.
[76] See Geoffrey K. Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 155-7.

author into the foreground and gives him something to hide behind".[77] His contention, though, that these stories have unambiguous meanings is dubious: in "A Madonna of the Trenches" (1924), rather than consoling Strangwick that love transcends death, his aunt's apparition causes his breakdown. Strangwick's assertion that "if the dead *do* rise [...] why *anything* can `appen" means there is no longer "a single gor-dam thing left [...] to take hold of, here or hereafter" (*DC*, p. 190). Strangwick's crisis stems from the loss of fixed moral positions, the opposition of life and death, and his inability to say what is real. Rather than ending existence, the War by actually happening has shown its limitless possibilities, so that Strangwick's all too human notion of meaning collapses. Dr Keede's persuasion of Strangwick to talk through his memories does not cure him: it merely quietens Strangwick and puts him to sleep. Keede does not believe in the ghost, but neither can he explain it away: it is the only explanation for Strangwick's disintegration, though it defies reason. The equivocation explains Bayley's unease: the story is suspended across a logical lacuna. If the reader accepts the ghost as real, he/she must question the story's realistic frame. Dismissing the ghost as unreal, only reveals the paucity of logic and realism's limits.

In these stories, language and writing are the central concerns. By centring the desire or repression of speech, Kipling centres a particular feature of shellshock[78], and therefore of the War's psychic experience. The themes of healing and endurance combine in the attempt to communicate under any circumstance. In "The Janeites" (1924) `Ammick is cut in two by an explosion, but insists on talking "before `e died, an' nothin' to `im below `is stummick" (*DC*, p. 136). Bevin recalls in "A Friend of the Family" (1924) "the man without the face - preaching" (*DC*, p. 220), whilst in "The Miracle of St Jubanus" (1930) Martin Ballart, who has returned from the War "blasted, withered, dumb" (*LR*, p. 233), is saved by the power of laughter. In "Fairy-Kist" (1927), however, language in the form of "Voices" compels Wollin, who has "been wounded and gassed and gangrened" (*LR*, p. 131), to "plant roots and things at large up and down the country-side" (*LR*, p. 137). His erratic behaviour implicates him as a murder suspect, but the questioning of Keede and Lemming reveal the Voices to be an otherwise innocent story read to Wollin during his illness, but which

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[77] John Bayley, *The Uses of Division: Unity and Disharmony in Literature* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1976), pp. 70-1.
[78] See Martin Stone, 'Shellshock and the Psychologists', in *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry, vol. 3*, ed. by W.P. Bynum et al. (London: Tavistock, 1985), pp. 250-1.

became "mixed up with bombings and nightmares" (*LR*, p. 140). The story's crime element, of which Wollin is in any case innocent, becomes incidental to the psychological inquiry in which, as Sandra Kemp observes, the events are systematically reinterpreted.[79] The amateur sleuths play with a number of theories before settling on the most appropriate; not necessarily the most true. A thin line divides Wollin from rehabilitation, and either Broadmoor or suicide, as indicated by the fate of Wollin's double, the incurably insane Jimmy Tigner. Critics often claim that the role of companionship in these stories forms part of the healing process[80], but it can also smother. In "Fairy-Kist", the reader is breezily informed that once Wollin "got the explanation", his trauma "evaporated like ether" (*LR*, p. 140). The transformation is surely too rapid and trouble-free, but then it has been described by the men who have as much hounded Wollin as cured him. By positioning Wollin as the object of their discourse, and then rearranging that narrative to their own satisfaction, Keede and Lemming manipulate Wollin in much the same way as he was victimised during the War. Even the Voices act as military commands, reducing Wollin to their play-thing.

Where the object also narrates however, such as Humberstall in "The Janeites", manipulation is displaced. When Anthony attempts to reassure Humberstall, "you come out of it all right", the latter resists, "but I almost wish I `adn't" (*DC*, p. 133). The Lodge can support individuals, but it can neither cure nor silence their grief. Rather than the strength of companionship, these narratives detail its fragility. In "The Janeites", this tension is illustrated when Humberstall, who suffers from fits and memory loss, loses his narrative thread, and Anthony fills the silence with a tale about his taxi colliding "with a Marble Arch refuge". The narrator's use of "tactful" (*DC*, p. 122), as Anthony describes the impact, indicates his tactlessness: Humberstall was injured by a direct hit. Anthony's interruption and false bonhomie are both oppressive. When Humberstall is allowed to continue his tale, his story draws attention away from the Lodge's emphasis on work and company. Instead, Humberstall's description of how his battery formed a secret society, which operated through codes culled from Jane Austen, dissects the ways in which all clubs, including the Lodge, function through ritual and symbolism. When all has been lost, including life itself, there is still language, symbolised by `Ammick's need to keep

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[79] Kemp, op cit, pp. 75-8.
[80] See, for example, Tompkins, op cit, pp. 175-6.

talking, and Humberstall's narration. Despite there being "nothin' *to* [...] nor *in*" the novels (*DC*, p. 128), there is nonetheless "no one to touch Jane when you're in a tight place" (*DC*, p. 137): only the writing in itself matters. The importance of language and its opposite, silence or death, was indicated by Kipling himself:

> I am Earth, overtaking all things except words. They alone escape me.
> Therefore, I lie heavy on their makers.[81]

The responsibilities of communication pull the communal settings of Kipling's stories toward a consideration of individual trauma. "The Gardener" (1926) is the most celebrated example, but two others, where these tensions manifest themselves, are "Unprofessional" (1930) and "The Woman in His Life" (1928). The former concerns a group of doctors, united during the War, who develop a cure for cancer by studying the effect of "planetary influences" on the "tides" in human cells. But there's a side-effect: an overwhelming suicidal desire. Though the doctors save their successful patient from herself, she has otherwise lost everything: she is a widow; a "simply beautiful" scar signifies her sterility (*LR*, p. 198); and she has been reclassified as a number. Her appeal, "I ought to be busy dying" (*LR*, p. 202), suggests that the doctors are impeding a proper preparation for death, in practice repeating the War's maltreatment of individuals at the risk of their own moral being.

This suggestion that post-war society merely replicates the war economy surfaces also in "The Woman in His Life". John Marden, a manufacturer who worked as an engineer in the taking of Messines Ridge, is suffering from "repetition-work". It takes the form of an hallucination: a shadow dog, "an inky, fat horror with a pink tongue" (*LR*, p. 57), which embodies Marden's repression of his own war memories. Marden's career singles him out as a representative of the technocracy which, in "The Gardener", led to "the Somme [...] being manufactured" (*DC*, p. 281). However, his automatic progression suggests that he is little more than one of the precision parts which he designs. Floyd's hatred of his own job, merely "turnin' two taps and fiddlin' three levers" (*LR*, p. 54), emphasises that though work is important for Kipling, ritual without meaning, the ethos of the production line, is corrupting: Marden has simply suppressed his "secret dread" (*LR*, p. 55).

The solution seems at first glance sentimental - Marden saves himself through the love of his dog, Dinah - whilst it also rehashes a typically Kiplingesque formula,

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[81] Kipling, epigram to 'Literature' (1906), in *A Book of Words* (London: Macmillan, 1928), p. 1.

the hoax, since Marden is tricked into accepting her by Shingle, his ex-batman.
However, the frequency of hoaxes in Kipling's later fiction, "Dayspring Mishandled"
(1928) is the grand example, suggests their self-conscious usage, so that the device
both plays with the characters, and is itself played with. Kipling's usage borders on
the absurd, especially after "On the Gate" (1926) where Heaven is portrayed as a
chaotic bureaucracy, mirroring military hierarchies and obsession with logistics,
though God Himelf is absent: "when the War came, (they) were as unprepared as
civilized mankind; and, like mankind, they improvised and recriminated in the face of
Heaven" (*DC*, p. 235). If meaning is a hoax, or "half-baked Universe" (*DC*, p. 236),
then what appears to be sentimentality in "The Woman in His Life" conceals
emotional depth.

Supplanting the "black dawg" of Marden's nightmares (*LR*, p. 58) with the real
animal might suggest the need for male comradeship, particularly in a "feminised"
post-war world. Floyd tells Marden to "get a girl" to do his job, whilst the
effeminate financial secretary, who practically runs the company, becomes "violently
affected" (*LR*, p. 54). But the hoax is also played-out at Shingle's own expense. He
finds his role challenged by Dinah: she dares "him to displace John's pyjamas from
their bed" (*LR*, p. 66). Marden refuses also to be separated from the dog who, as
Kemp notes[82], reflects his changing temperament: "she was by turns [...] arrogant,
imbecile, coy, forthcoming, jealous, abject, humorous" (*LR*, p. 64). Dinah's shifting
emotions suggest also the vagaries of womankind, but rather than unstable or
disturbing, they express the humanity which is lacking in Marden's shadow dog.
Contrary to Gilbert's thesis of "unsexed" men, it is only by embracing the feminine
aspects of his personality, symbolised by Dinah, that Marden reintegrates himself.

This process is most clearly seen in the way that language is displaced from
Marden, "being inarticulate, except where the Works were concerned" (*LR*, p. 55), to
Dinah. She "rebukes", "scolds", "insists", and even discovers "gifts of conversation"
(*LR*, p. 63). Kipling is not being needlessly anthropomorphic: Dinah projects the
emotional and linguistic range which Marden cannot. However, when she becomes
trapped in a tunnel out in the countryside, Marden is forced to relive his war
experience: "every forgotten or hardly-held-back horror of his two years'
underground-work returned on him with the imagined weight of all earth overhead"

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[82] Kemp, op cit, p. 79.

(*LR*, p. 70). The claustrophobia of Marden's nightmares, the dread that "the Universe would crash down on him" (*LR*, p. 57), is relieved only by resorting to "the old way of the old work" (*LR*, p. 70), and an effort of which "nothing in his working past had searched him to these depths" (*LR*, p. 71). The manly self-sacrifice of rescuing Dinah is tempered by the tunnel's symbolism - the unmanly journey inwards - and the fact that, in retrieving the dog, Marden is also saving himself. Once recovered, the previously monosyllabic Marden is suddenly voluble as "feminine" verbosity is transferred back from the dog to the man. Similarly, the final image of the pair driving away in his car suggests a synthesis between technology and nature though, as Shingle's sister infers, the hoax is ultimately played-out on Dinah: "she'll get `er come-uppance one of these days [...] I'm thinkin' she may `ave started a fire that someone else'll warm" (*LR*, p. 73).

Conclusion

Recent critics have disowned romance's position within the growth of modernism, preferring to portray "new woman" fiction as the movement's progenitor.[83] In this chapter, though, I have shown how two authors associated with romance interrogated the form, and produced an impersonal, self-reflexive literary practice. In this sense, this chapter mirrors the previous analysis of Egerton and Lee, whose break with decadence led to similar results. It is therefore unnecessary to impose a division between male and female writing within modernism's evolution. Instead, there is a criss-crossing and overlapping between the genders.

At the heart of these four writers' work, to which Henry James must also be added, is a concern with language: the needs for communication, and the limits of representation. This is not just a stylistic concern. At the turn of the century, there was an increasing gap between the received impression of England as rural and harmonious, mediated through the ideology of organicism, and the reality of England as urban and fragmented, the outcome of the forces upon which economic and imperial success was founded. This gap was the source for contemporary fears of degeneration, alterity and anomie. Romance, which more than any other genre was implicated within the politics of the "healthy body", exposes these fears. If realism, post-Maupassant, responded by containing otherness through a misguided faith in

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[83] See, for example, Lyn Pykett, *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), pp. 67-76.

representation, and decadence through a fetishism of the other, then romance's
response was to silence otherness through eroticism and death. All three strategies
are evasive. Modernism explodes this tripartite structure by making space in its
narratives for the exploration of alterity. The stories of Conrad and Kipling
exemplify modernism's structuring of itself around gaps or silences through oblique
artistic strategies. The foregrounding of absence not only comments upon the
lacunae within modern society, but also mediates otherwise taboo material. The
short story's marginality was more conducive to this process than the established
novel, and therefore appealed to the modernists. Self-reflexivity and open-endedness
form these absences through the slippages in language, whilst sustaining their
existence.

For Conrad, this structure allows him to question the roles of imperialism and
masculinity, whilst revealing his curiosity with the African and Malayan landscapes.
The fear of "going native" is irrelevant to Conrad: it is their unadaptability which
dooms Kayerts and Carlier. The mindlessness and relationality of Darwinism permit
Conrad to view racial otherness as merely different rather than degenerate, and to
construct an ironic or stoical self-awareness with which to bind the narrative. Where
Conrad imposes differences, for example between Karain and his people, this stems
from his nationalistic and social prejudices rather than any vulgarisation of
evolutionary theory. However, he exchanges the otherness of·race for the otherness
of capitalism. By caricaturing capitalism as alien and unnatural, Conrad objectifies it
in much the same way as race is objectified in the imperial Gothic. Jackson's
alienation acknowledges the fact of capitalism, but otherwise it is an evasive tactic,
merely incorporating capitalism into a fatalistic view of existence. Consequently,
Conrad never quite breaks the link between an imperialist ideal and capitalism.

Kipling's fascination with technology, however, means that he engages implicitly
with capitalism. Like Conrad, his scientific beliefs lead to an acceptance of change as
different rather than threatening but, unlike Conrad, they also result in the spectacle
of London in "The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat". Kipling's use of
pastoralism does not propound a mythic harmony but that, like the city, it is a made
environment: the emphasis of physical work at the start of "Friendly Brook".
Furthermore, where science and language affect the landscape (for Kipling, the two
interrelate), they leave behind them ambiguity. Kipling's England is characterised by
its dislocation, and his stories are consistently concerned with uncovering the "trace"

of what has passed, even though this exploration tends to leave only further irresolution. In the absences which are unearthed, Kipling finds a magic and, after the War, a humanitarianism which give meaning to his technocracy. This interplay between reason and irrationality, realism and fantasy, may help explain the admiration of writers such as Borges.[84] Kipling demonstrated the short story's ability for examining and ordering these lacunae. Part of this restructuring, exemplified by the character of Marden, involves reasserting masculinity, but in relation to feminine notions of sensitivity and communication. This reorientation is evident in Kipling's self-conscious play with plot and design. If "The Secret Sharer" is a veritable masterclass in symmetry (though a Poe-like unity is not necessarily forthcoming), then Kipling's disruptions, most controversially the religious allusion which closes "The Gardener", discard the realistic faith in these conventions for a more stylised and artificial ethos. Whilst still tightly structured like James or Lee, Kipling's playfulness suggests something of the inspiration of Egerton. In Kipling, a process that began with Maupassant, the Continental influence on and reappraisal of the English short story, reaches its apogee. For Lawrence and Mansfield, the subjects of the final chapters, they did not have to look to Europe for their stimulus, but to the strategies which have been discussed up to now.

Lastly, there is the question of World War One. Conrad and Kipling both imply that conflict emerged out of economic forces mediated through technology (even if Kipling, in "On the Gate", singles out the Germans by barring them entry into Heaven). In "The Woman in His Life" and "Unprofessional", Kipling infers that the War stimulated rationalisation and standardisation in peace-time, though elsewhere he stresses the roles of salvation and metamorphosis. What Kipling appears to be outlining is the concept of "total war": that the Great War was a watershed, whose ramifications affected every aspect of life, post-1918. Historians have since questioned this model, emphasising the difficulties in assessing processes which may or may not have been generated with or without the intervention of the War.[85] Total war appears to be an over-reaction to the nightmare of conflict, an attempt to simplify contemporaneous events into a coherent pattern. However, the *zeitgeist* was

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[84] See Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition', in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings,* ed. by Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby, 2nd edn (New York: New Directions, 1964), p. 182.
[85] See, for example, Ian F.W. Beckett, 'Total War', in *War, Peace and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Europe,* ed. by Clive Emsley et al (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989), pp. 26-44.

a residual belief from the "healthy body", whose rhetoric of integration and dynamism collaborated with the nationalistic drives which, as I have indicated, were a more central determinant for war than market forces. The War, consequently, demanded a re-examination of the masculinist ideology, though whether it was an "unsexing" is doubtful. Gilbert's thesis depends upon generalisations such as total war to presuppose that there was a common mind-set: the so-called "war generation". Kipling's fiction is, as I have shown, neither morbid nor antagonistic, but ambiguous in its depiction of language and identity. The War is certainly portrayed as a catastrophe, but more often in the scientific, rather than degenerationist, sense: an unpredictable event with unforeseen consequences. Positive by-products emerge in the form of personal renewal in stories such as "Mary Postgate" and "The Gardener". Notably, the central protagonists are both female.

Even in "Unprofessional", Kipling's tone is ambivalent because the moral uncertainty is juxtaposed with the excitement of scientific investigation. As has been shown, Conrad and Kipling achieve their innovations through the application of scientific theory. In their work, art and science are compatible. But, it was one of the contemporary myths that capitalism, allied to science, had instigated the War. After 1918, an anti-scientism is prevalent in the work of writers who came of age during the conflict. Adorno's critique (outlined in chapter three) is symptomatic of the response, though arguably it is to modernism's loss. T.S. Eliot for example, who acknowledged his debt to Conrad and Kipling in, respectively, "The Hollow Men" (1925) and "Burnt Norton" (1935), preferred to stress the irrationalism of their writings. For many "high" modernists, their feelings were ironically captured by Kipling in "On the Gate": "we are dying in a new age" (*DC*, p. 237).

5) D.H. LAWRENCE AND THE LIMITS OF EARLY MODERNISM

Kipling had viewed the Edwardian landscape, its cultural and physical geography, with fascination. The work of D.H. Lawrence attempts to make sense of it. Central to his project is the short story, a medium in which he experiments with artistic representation. Lawrence's short fiction provides, therefore, a perspective on his developing beliefs, often before they were articulated in his novels. Following the decline of the short story during the 1900s, Lawrence's rejection of naturalism and decadence transports him into the circles surrounding the *English Review* and *The Egoist*. Moving between figures such as Ford Madox Ford and Ezra Pound, Lawrence's progress not only illustrates the growth of modernist aesthetics, but also the refinement of his own views, which ultimately question the persistence of early modernism. Central to Lawrence's critique is his need to depict the alterity of contemporary life, and the continuance of vitalistic or organic ideas. The result is an impersonal style, which at various times draws upon impressionism and imagism, but which sustains personal responses that are influenced by feminist thinkers such as Dora Marsden. World War One brings Lawrence's writing to a head. The assimilation of feminist principles into opening-up male subjectivity begins to be replaced by a revivified patriarchal ideal. The ossification of Lawrence's early modernism presages the more prescriptive and totalising works of the 1920s.

Lawrence, Ford and the "English Review"

Writing in 1914 of his fellow short storywriters, H.G. Wells concluded that, "I do not think [...] that the later achievements [...] of any of the survivors of that time, with the sole exception of Joseph Conrad, can compare with the work they did before 1900".[1] "Survivors" is an appropriate term: many of Wells' generation had either died or been diminished. Their loss disabled not only the development of the short story, but also Edwardian fiction. Wells, however, indicates another causal factor: the rise of "sixpenny popular magazines", which proceeded "to deaden down the conception of what a short story might be", and "scattered" what had been "a *clientèle* of appreciative short-story readers".[2] The success of the short story had encouraged further outlets in general publications, though ironically, their

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[1] H.G. Wells, introduction to *The Country of the Blind and Other Stories* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1914), p. vi.
[2] ibid, p. v.

proliferation had diluted both the quality and audience. A good illustration would be the *Nottinghamshire Guardian,* the local paper which printed Lawrence's first short story, "A Prelude", as its prize-winning Christmas tale in 1907. The three categories, "An Amusing Adventure", "A Legend" and "An Enjoyable Christmas", indicate the persistence of plot-based romantic narratives, and the healthy cheerfulness recommended by reactionary critics. The premise of the competition was that anybody could write a short story, a populist response indicative also of the wave of literary manuals.[3] The valorisation of the short story as art by naturalists, aesthetes or early modernists was in retreat; supplanted by the more craftsmanlike stories of Algernon Blackwood, G.K. Chesterton and Saki.

Changes in the short story, though, were symptomatic of wider developments in British fiction: the reorientation of mainstream literature to incorporate what had been radical elements in "new woman" or naturalistic writing. Major figures, including John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett and Wells himself, appropriated themes such as sex and marriage, or personae like the rebellious daughter, but recast them within traditional narratives: what Jane Eldridge Miller has (somewhat loosely) described as a "modernism of content".[4] Some critics have viewed this appropriation as an imperialist act[5], but it is more likely that readers' expectations had altered following the Boer War, and visible campaigns such as the suffragette movement, thus necessitating a greater vocabulary within realist fiction. Rather than notorious exceptions, like *Keynotes* or *The Woman Who Did*, the new realist novels were consistently popular. Galsworthy, in particular, adopted the naturalistic tone of European literature, but his positioning of marital problems within an analysis of social dynamics established him as a high-minded, rather than prurient, novelist.[6] The decline of the "new woman" novel into pastiche had effectively neutered its original challenge, thus allowing its modes to be assimilated into the mainstream novel. Instead of transgression or didacticism, with the notable, though ambiguous, exception of Wells' *Ann Veronica* (1909), the Edwardian novel presents gender issues as an acceptable, even expected, textual layer. Though still engaged as social

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[3] A representative example is Arnold Bennett's *How to Become an Author: A Practical Guide* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1903).

[4] Jane Eldridge Miller, *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel* (London: Virago, 1994), p. 7.

[5] See, for example, Gaye Tuchman and Nina E. Fortin, *Edging Women Out: Victorian Novelists, Publishers and Social Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

[6] See Miller, op cit, pp. 58-60.

comment, Edwardian fiction places its critique within traditional structures: mimesis, plot, character. Similarly, the short story, which as I have shown, had become concerned with problems in communication and identity, was also subject to these changes. As publishing opportunities grew, the form and definition of the short story became more prescribed: the result of manufacturing a product for the marketplace.

Naturalists and modernists, however, were not as divided as some histories have suggested. Both groups were opposed to conventional romance, and the legacy of Victorian culture. Though writers such as Wells were not interested in the aesthetics of form, they were concerned that literature should be a forum for ideas rather than just entertainment. During 1908, a cross-section of serious writers, including Wells, Conrad and Ford Madox Ford (then Hueffer), began to consider a literary journal that could act as such a forum.[7] The new critical reviews, such as the *Times Literary Supplement* (1902), formed part of their inspiration, though their aim was to promote high quality fiction, which would counterpoint the new rigorous criticism. The "little magazines", such as *The Yellow Book,* therefore supplied the second half of their model, though unlike their decadent predecessors, their aim was not to wallow in nihilism, but to renew literature by engaging interested readers drawn through the *T.L.S.* or the more populist *Bookman.* However, like Henry Harland before him, Ford, who had assumed the running of the project, contacted Henry James, who retained a special distinction within English letters. Ford also approached Thomas Hardy, whose failure to find a publisher for his poem, "A Sunday Morning Tragedy", ignited the project.[8] Both Hardy's poem and James' short story, "The Jolly Corner", alongside contributions from Galsworthy, Conrad, Wells and Tolstoy, appeared in the first edition of the *English Review* in December 1908.

As Michael Levenson has stressed, Ford is perhaps the key transitional figure between late Victorian and modernist writing.[9] Whilst associating himself with Flaubert, Maupassant and Turgenev, Ford also placed himself in line with Conrad and James: the first English writer who could claim an indigenous modernist lineage. Ford's sense of inheritance is reflected in his wide range of contributors from late Victorians (W.B. Yeats, George Moore, Vernon Lee) to Edwardians (Bennett, E.M.

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[7] See Arthur Mizener, *The Saddest Story: A Biography of Ford Madox Ford* (London: The Bodley Head, 1971), p. 154.
[8] See ibid, pp. 155-6.
[9] Michael H. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 48-9.

Forster, Rupert Brooke) to the young modernists (Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Lawrence). What linked these diverse writers, in Ford's mind, was their commitment to an artistic value, which opposed standardisation in culture and society[10]; not in itself a peculiarly modernist response, though one which can be found in the modernist writers observed so far. Instead, what crystallises Ford's modernism is his conclusion that cultural decline originated in the death of the Victorian sage, but that it was impossible to resuscitate the omniscience of moral authority.[11] Faced with an ultra-scientific, over-bureaucratised society, the artist can trust only in the clarity of his own perceptions. Ford's impressionist ethos reconnects with James' retreat into interior consciousness, but indicating the influence of Conrad, it forms a means through which to explore the transitoriness of modern society, whilst sustaining a critical distance. Ford's impressionistic method can be seen at work in his line-by-line analysis of Lawrence's "Odour of Chrysanthemums" (originally written 1909):

> "The gorse still flickered indistinctly in the raw afternoon..." Good too, distinctly good. This is the just-sufficient observation of Nature that gives you, in a single phrase, landscape, time of day, weather, season.
>
> Your mind does all this for you without any ratiocination on your part. You are not, I mean, purposedly sleuthing.[12]

The method is derived from the *mot juste*, but the emphases upon condensation and intuition - the plurality of meaning through precise language, and its unconscious reception - transcends mere naturalistic description. The elevation of form anticipates the divergences between Ford and his more naturalistic colleagues, which ultimately sabotaged Ford's editorship after just one year.[13]

Lawrence was not directly influenced by Ford, though their ideas coincided. During the move to Croydon in 1908, Lawrence was writing prose, both long and short, and the poetry which brought him to Ford's attention. Lawrence's short stories offer not only a forum for experimentation, as with other authors, but also a microcosm of his career: Lawrence's diverse writing is strongly interconnected. He was also reading voraciously, and critics have highlighted the influence of authors

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[10] See, for example, Ford Madox Ford (Hueffer), *The Critical Attitude* (London: Duckworth, 1911), pp. 113-5.
[11] See ibid, pp. 118-22.
[12] Quoted by Mizener, op cit, p. 168.
[13] See ibid, pp. 157-64.

such as Turgenev and Verga.[14] These European writers must be juxtaposed, however, with the British literature which Lawrence was consuming: James, Moore, Conrad, "new woman" novels, naturalistic fiction. (This is an important explanation for the absence of Maupassant, though Lawrence knew his work, but one which is in keeping with the direction of my argument, which has been to decentre Maupassant's role.) Even unfashionable authors, such as Kipling, can be seen as contributing to Lawrence's style: the former's doctrine of "Higher Editing" is not dissimilar to the latter's obsessive rewriting. As for Lawrence's subsequent admiration for Ford, much of that depends upon his understanding of what Ford meant by impressionism.

As Levenson has shown, Ford's ethos depended upon reconciling two contradictory elements: an objective mimesis, and a subjective response.[15] Ford argued, for example, that "it is the duty of the poet to reflect his own day as it appears to him"[16], whilst also stating "that Life did not narrate, but made impressions on our brains".[17] The subject is therefore placed at the centre of its universe, and the concise representation of the external world, as perceived by the subject, stands for a new type of objectivity. Ford remains consistent in asserting that an author's text "is merely an expression of his personality"[18], since the world which he sees is dependent upon his character, and there is no other world which can be reasonably described. By a sleight of hand, subjectivity and objectivity are reconciled, but through which the subject is decentred. Rather than impressing itself upon its environment, the subject is passive: things happen to it. It therefore becomes the object of its own discourse; the ways in which "we are always in one place with our minds somewhere quite other".[19] The two-fold nature of Ford's method, though, lent itself to different interpretations. Pound, for example, stressed its self-effacement, and could still respect Ford (see chapter three) whilst denigrating impressionism, for instance in his description of futurism as an "accelerated impressionism [...] a spreading, or surface art".[20] Lawrence, conversely, was attracted to Ford's approach in terms of its refined subjectivity. The displacement of rhetoric and intrusive narration inferred a

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[14] See, for example, Janice Hubbard Harris, *The Short Fiction of D.H. Lawrence* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984), pp. 4 and 6.

[15] Levenson, op cit, p. 115.

[16] Ford, 'Impressionism - Some Speculations' (1913), in *Critical Writings of Ford Madox Ford*, ed. by Frank MacShane (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. 150.

[17] Ford, 'Joseph Conrad' (1924), in ibid, p. 73.

[18] Ford, 'On Impressionism' (1914), in ibid, p. 43.

[19] ibid, p. 41.

[20] Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (Hessle, East Yorkshire: Marvell Press, 1960), p. 90.

progression from "the old stable ego of the character" to "another ego, according to whose action the individual is unrecognisable".[21] Impressionism offers a critical framework, whilst the concentration upon the personal dissolves the social self.[22]

Lawrence's Croydon stories are therefore important, because of their movement towards foregrounding, as in the above example, representation itself. This development necessarily discards romance, but also critiques naturalism and decadence. Whereas George Moore could "desire to paint the portrait of my country"[23], he was certain of a referent which could be described. For Lawrence, this was an assumption which could not be made. In Kipling's rural tales, realism is punctuated by enigmatic events and logical inconsistencies. In Lawrence's case, the pastoral is practically a dream; supplanted by an industrial centre tied vicariously to the needs of the city. Escaping to London though, which is implied within Lawrence's apparent acceptance of aestheticism[24], offers no respite. "The Witch à la Mode" (1911), which on one level can be read as a demonic love affair[25], can instead be seen as a satire on decadence. Winifred Varley, with whom Bernard Coutts contemplates unfaithfulness, is a form of decadent temptress, "swooning on her unnatural ebb of passion [...] gradually dismissing him" (*LAH*, p. 61). Though Winifred expresses something of Lawrence's ambiguous feelings toward women[26], she is not only a figment of the decadent imagination, but also one of its exponents. Winifred drops "suddenly as if inert, lolling her arms against the cushions" (*LAH*, p. 59) in the caricatured pose of a decadent, whilst references to Wilde, Wagner and Meredith colour the story. The talk of Winifred and Bernard touches upon fashionable topics - Life, atavism and art:

> "Your foggy weather of symbolism as usual", he said.
>
> "The fog is not of symbols", she replied, in her metallic voice of displeasure. "It may be symbols are candles in a fog -"

[21] D.H. Lawrence, letter to Edward Garnett (5th June 1914), in *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence: vol. 2*, ed. by George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 183.

[22] The correspondence in Lawrence's thinking, certainly up until 1914, with Nietzsche's recreation of the will is suggestive. See Colin Milton, *Lawrence and Nietzsche: A Study in Influence* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987).

[23] George Moore, preface to *The Untilled Field* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1990, orig. pub. 1903), p. xix.

[24] See Graham Holderness, *D.H. Lawrence: History, Ideology and Fiction* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1982), esp. pp. 229-34.

[25] See Michael Black, *D.H. Lawrence: The Early Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 130-6.

[26] See Hilary Simpson, *D.H. Lawrence and Feminism* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 55-6.

"I prefer my fog without candles. I'm the fog, eh? Then I'll blow out your candles, and you'll see me better. Your candles of speech, symbols and so forth only lead you wronger". (*LAH*, p. 55)

Bernard's love-hate relationship is not just with Winifred herself, but with the culture she represents: urban, luxuriant, decadent. In rejecting Winifred, Bernard discards her ethos of symbolism, equivalent to the impressionism of Whistler and Symons, since in presupposing that there is "a fog" which must be illuminated, Winifred colludes with her subject-matter. The indistinctness of aestheticism is portrayed, as in conservative criticism, as feminine: the drawing-room salon of Winifred and Laura Syfurt; the statue of Venus with "lustrous marble loins [...] bending in suspense" (*LAH*, p. 51). Lawrence, though, forms part of modernism's reaction against decadence's "softness", exemplified by T.S. Eliot's description of the "soapy sea/Of Symonds - Walter Pater - Vernon Lee".[27] The burn, which jolts Bernard into realisation and flight, is less a symbolic castration, and more like a stigma, Bernard has "burning red hands" (*LAH*, p. 62), which offers both physical pain and divine insight. Modernism, too, is stigmatised by its severance from decadence; reinforcing its own aestheticism as a result. Bernard's apparent flight to his fiancée in Yorkshire reasserts, though, the problem of representation. Constance, conspicuous by her absence, symbolises the material reality which aestheticism had denied, and which naturalism increasingly failed to capture. Modernism, by focusing upon representation itself, offered an escape from this impasse.

Returning to "Odour of Chrysanthemums", it can be seen how modernist style appealed to Lawrence. As Ford approvingly noted, Lawrence's writing is precise and insightful. There is little extraneous or inappropriate language. The veneer of impersonality though, the imposition of a critical distance, allows Lawrence to be more personal. Not the fake personality of polemic or hyperbole, which demonstrates that the author is "one of us" (that he cares), whilst allowing him an undeserved superiority to the events described, but the inscription of a self in process, which "knows no finality, no finished crystallization"[28], caught momentarily by the impressionistic short story. The 1914 text shifts from the materialistic register of

[27] T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, ed. by Valerie Eliot (London: Faber, 1971), p. 27. I am grateful to Martin Scofield for this reference.
[28] Lawrence, introduction to *New Poems* (1920), in *Phoenix*, ed. by E.D. McDonald (London: Heinemann, 1936), p. 219.

tales such as "The Miner at Home" (1912) to the metaphysical in its evocation of human "channels through which life had flowed" (*PO,* p. 198). As Janice Harris has argued, this shift both within the narrative, and between alternate versions is implicated in Lawrence's contemporaneous marriage, and escape from his mother[29], the inspiration for Lawrence's "Magna Mater". The earlier magazine version had presented the mother-figure of Elizabeth more sympathetically. The ritualistic cleansing of Bates' corpse removes "the recreant [...] (she) had fought against so strenuously", and instead restores to her "the clean young knight".[30] The point of view is Elizabeth's: her emotions and memories, and of what the body signifies to her as it is renewed by her "mother-feeling".[31] In the later version, the body draws attention to itself. Elizabeth is excluded: "she seemed to be [...] trying to get some connexion. But she could not [...] He was impregnable" (*PO,* p. 196). In 1911, Elizabeth and Mrs Bates "sometimes [...] forgot it was death, and the touch of the man's body gave them strange thrills".[32] By 1914, "they never forgot it was death, and [...] a great dread possessed them both" (*PO,* p. 197). Instead of reclamation, Elizabeth realises "the horror of the distance between them" (*PO,* p. 199), and the agonies endured by Bates as a husband not, as previously, as a miner. The references to "her womb" and "the child within her" associate Elizabeth with the dispassionate life-force, and alienate her from Bates: "he was dead, and her living flesh had no place against his" (*PO,* p. 197). The physical presence of death, the body's weight and inertia, corresponds to the "deadness" of the author, the more highly refined and impersonal style, in the later version.

The writer's gradual retreat, the distantiation of Bates from Elizabeth, and her subsequent poor treatment might offer potential evidence for Patricia Waugh's psychoanalytic reading of modernism, briefly mentioned in chapter three. Waugh argues that modernist style is related to male ego-formation: the shoring-up of psychic boundaries against a threatening universe, and the subjugation of outsiders as "other" and "feminine".[33] The main flaws in Waugh's account are the presumption of an archetypal author-figure, and the privileging of individual strategies as essentially modernist. Though Waugh's dissection of the psychological motivations behind

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[29] Harris, op cit, p. 35.
[30] Lawrence, 'Odour of Chrysanthemums', *English Review,* no. 31 (1911), p. 432.
[31] ibid, p. 430.
[32] ibid, p. 431.
[33] Patricia Waugh, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 21.

impersonality may be valid in relation to specific authors, in Lawrence's case it serves only to obfuscate. Instead of retreating into abstractions, as a discussion of life-forces might suggest, Lawrence's movement between different versions of the text indicate not only changes in personal belief, but also an emotional investment in the story. Consequently, the reader must beware Lawrence's own act of disinformation to "never trust the artist. Trust the tale".[34]

Besides the textual alterations which various critics have noted, there are also continuities. The narrative progression is broadly from the public to the private domain, necessitating the excision of the original sociological explanation for Bates' corruption. In both published versions, Bates is a fallen man, who eventually is redeemed, though the later text reinforces the central symbol of the flowers, redolent of birth, growth and decay: "It was chrysanthemums when I married him, and chrysanthemums when you were born, and the first time they ever brought him home drunk, he'd got brown chrysanthemums in his button-hole" (*PO*, p. 186). The idea of the life-cycle is already present, and instead of being an afterthought, is developed in the 1914 version. The events in Lawrence's life around 1912, rather than constituting a watershed, enhance and refine his emerging beliefs. But in the later version, the symbolism of the flowers is counterpointed by the symbolism of Bates' corpse, which in many ways affirms, rather than denies, life: "she was grateful to death, which restored the truth" (*PO*, p. 198). The closure, though, does not consist of a moment of self-realisation or self-reassurance, but remains open, tense and apprehensive as Elizabeth mechanically tidies the kitchen. The life-force passes unconcerned through this narrative, and into the other narratives which, as Keith Cushman has explored[35], rework the scenario in what can be described as a wave of textual productivity. Like life itself, Lawrence is unable to finish his story, but each narrative seeps into the other. Consequently, in discarding naturalism, Lawrence must also drop the vague humanist sentiment, "upright in soul are women, however they bow the swerving body"[36], which he uses to close the 1911 version. Though Elizabeth is deliberately marginalised, both she and Bates are subsumed within the vitalist ideal: the importance for Lawrence, therefore, of Elizabeth's pregnancy. The

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[34] Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (London: Penguin, 1971, orig. pub. 1923), p. 8.
[35] Keith Cushman compares four different rewrites of the story, and three other adaptations in *D.H. Lawrence at Work: The Emergence of the "Prussian Officer" Stories* (Hassocks, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1978), pp. 52-76.
[36] Lawrence, 'Odour of Chrysanthemums', p. 432.

synthesis in "Odours of Chrysanthemums" between a "masculine" impersonality and a "feminine" vitalism anticipates the hybridisation of human wills - one to activity, the other to passivity - in the analysis of Thomas Hardy.[37] The feminine is not simply objectified, however, for without it there would be no "Life", a talisman for Lawrence and other Edwardian writers[38], just an arid technical exercise. The story's title provides a major clue. It is the perfume, not the object itself, which demands the reader's attention: that which is unseen, sensual, non-corporeal; adjacent to the physical entity. The odour offers the sense of life, whilst its fragile symbolism enacts life's dissolution. The structuring of the short story sustains these omissions, whilst providing a critical framework which avoids an indulgent or insular aestheticism.

Lawrence's relationship to impressionism is therefore complex, but it seems that it offered him a synthesis through which to explore other kinds of hybrid: an impersonal narration that could convey personal beliefs, a masculine discourse which could incorporate feminine elements. The short story medium was an index of hybridisation: physically concise but intellectually panoramic. "Odour of Chrysanthemums" established Lawrence's reputation with publishers such as Edward Garnett and Martin Secker. It also confirmed him as one of the most promising of Ford's "les jeunes", one of whom, Ezra Pound, now intervened in Lawrence's career.

Lawrence, Imagism and "The Egoist"

Pound had first met Lawrence in 1909. Thereafter, their paths did not cross again until 1913 when Pound wrote favourably of Lawrence's *Love Poems and Others*. Lawrence sent a copy of his story "Once -!" to Pound in the hope that, despite its sexual content, Pound could get it published. He failed, but what is interesting is why Pound should have made the effort, contacting both *The Smart Set*, for whom he was their British representative, and *The Egoist*, his latest venture. Despite personal animosity[39], Pound acknowledged Lawrence's status, and wrote approvingly of the story's "realism".[40] As indicated earlier, though, realism was a contentious term in Pound's critical vocabulary, presupposing authorial distance and objectivity, whereas

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[37] Lawrence, 'Study of Thomas Hardy' (1914), in *Phoenix*, esp. pp. 444-9.
[38] See Jonathan Rose, *The Edwardian Temperament: 1895-1919* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986), pp. 74-116.
[39] See Pound, letter to Harriet Monroe (March 1913), in *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound: 1907-1941*, ed. by D.D. Paige (London: Faber, 1950), p. 17.
[40] Pound, letter to Dora Marsden (c. January 1914), quoted by Bruce Clarke, 'D.H. Lawrence and the *Egoist* Group', *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1992), p. 70.

the liberated German woman in "Once -!" is possibly inspired by Lawrence's relationship with Frieda. Anita's tales of sexual experience are not only candid, "the night I was married [...] I lay counting the flowers on the wall-paper [...] he bored me so" (*LAH*, p. 138), but also threaten to burst the realist frame:

> One could never be on firm ground with her. Always, one was slipping and
> plunging on uncertainly. (*LAH*, p. 145)

The male narrator, who attempts to order Anita's memories, desires "to do more than give her pleasure", to retain his identity rather than be placed "in her pocket" (*LAH*, p. 139). However, Anita's story betrays the narrator into revealing his intentions, and her admission to lacking something in love wrong-foots him, "my heart stood still" (*LAH*, p. 146), by implicitly inviting him. Despite the narrator's best attempts, it is instead Anita who succeeds in defending and asserting herself. Though frank, Anita is not voracious, and her charisma deflects from the narrator's insecurity, whilst her final manipulation is delivered with exquisite timing. In short, despite her promiscuity, Anita embodies the type of controlled egoism that Pound admired. If this seems at first unlikely, taking into account Pound's misogyny, then his support of female talents, such as Mina Loy or Marianne Moore, must be remembered where their ideas coincided with his.

Egoism itself, a brand of anarchic individualism which had its origins in the nineteenth century philosophy of Max Stirner[41], was really based around one person - Dora Marsden. Pound's association with the ideology stemmed largely from his beliefs in impersonality, of an omnipresent but otherwise invisible author. As Bruce Clarke has shown, Marsden's ideological thought was already established before Pound's involvement; and the conversion of her journal *The New Freewoman* into *The Egoist* was one of mutual consent.[42] As noted in chapter four, Marsden's initial venture, *The Freewoman* (1911), discarded ideas of the vote and sexual purity for a more open exploration of female identity. Lawrence's story, "New Eve and Old Adam" (1913), echoes the debates raging in Marsden's various journals, whilst also developing the theme of selfhood in "Once -!" into a marital context.

A mysterious telegram exposes the latent tensions between Peter and Paula Moest. In an interesting inversion of traditional gendered thinking, though

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[41] See Levenson, op cit, pp. 63-5.
[42] Clarke, 'Dora Marsden and Ezra Pound: *The New Freewoman* and 'The Serious Artist", *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 33, no. 1 (1992), pp. 95-102.

compatible with Lawrence's sexual politics, Peter symbolises Nature - instinct, harmony - and Paula, the liberated wife, Culture. Though critics have pointed to the discursive style[43], the section in which Peter contemplates his role, after he has walked out on Paula, takes place solely in his own mind, and without the need of dialogue. It is as if spoken language distorts inner meaning, and must be discarded. Lawrence's dilemma mimics feminist debates on a sexual discourse[44], but here it is heightened by being mediated through Peter's view of Paula:

> Then she began to sing. She had a good voice, but she could not keep time. As a
> rule it made his heart warm with tenderness for her [...] But today he hated her
> for it. Why the devil couldn't she submit to the natural laws of the stuff! (*LAH*, p.
> 151)

This passage seems to capture some of the differences between the Moests. Peter sees music as unitary and organic, so views Paula's singing as corrupt. His anger anticipates feeling "like a thing whose roots are all straining on their hold" (*LAH*, p. 158). Paula, by inference, sees music as a cultural product, which can be remade and played around with. Underpinning both perceptions are different ideas of the self: one in which it is rooted and unchanging; the other in which it can be reinvented. Lawrence attempts to sustain both conceptions, and not to judge between them. Instead of the story concluding on some moment of self-realisation, Peter returns temporarily to Paula, whilst the ending consists of a pair of letters following their separation. The naturalistic frame, however, is unbalanced by Lawrence's concentration upon Peter. By doing so, Lawrence expresses his own honest incomprehension in what was an unresolved sexual debate. Paula's motivations can only be inferred by the reader. Whereas Peter's feelings are thoroughly explored, substantiating his character, Paula remains indistinct, even flighty:

> She shook her cigarette carelessly in the direction of the fire. The ash fell on the
> beautiful Asiatic rug. She glanced at it, but did not trouble. (*LAH*, p. 153)

The story's "sex war" seems generated by a faddish, metropolitan feminism. In contrast, Peter's flight to Italy invokes the popular association of the Latin temperament with (male) vitality. Whereas life is represented in "Odour of

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[43] See Black, op cit, p. 242; Harris, op cit, p. 89.
[44] See Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality 1885-1914* (London: Penguin, 1995), pp. 273-7.

Chrysanthemums" by the scent's fleetingness, in "New Eve and Old Adam" it begins to take on a more distinct presence.

In his hotel room, Peter attempts through "the exciting thrill of the shower-bath, to bring back the life into his dazed body" in which "he had gradually lost that physical pride and pleasure" (*LAH*, p. 156). He fails though: the act is too deliberate like "a man going through a barren routine". Only in going to sleep, in which "there was nothing left for his mental consciousness to flourish amongst" (*LAH*, p. 157), does Peter attain a degree of self-understanding, but "without knowing it" since "it was all below his consciousness", except in the morning "his mind was limpidly clear", and "his body felt like a clean, empty shell" (*LAH*, p. 158). Instead, the reader is granted access to an early instance of Lawrence's ideology of "blood-consciousness": "it was his blood, and the elemental male in it, that now rose from him: unknown instincts and unperceived movements out of the depths of his physical being rose and heaved blindly" (*LAH*, p. 157). Paula has rejected Peter for being impersonal towards her, failing to fully appreciate why he had "seemed only like an instrument for his work, his business, not like a person at all" (*LAH*, p. 155). The implication appears to be that Peter's vitality has been suppressed by the deadening effect of work; that his proprietorial attitude to marriage redoubles his assimilation into capitalist hierarchies. Lawrence shares Marsden's view that gender issues necessitate a complete social revolution, rather than merely extending the franchise.[45] The clash of wills in "New Eve and Old Adam" provokes an egoism founded upon atavistic urges, but which appropriates from the feminism of *The Freewoman*, and from earlier writers like George Egerton, the celebration of the individual's own body and psyche. Lawrence is indebted to feminism insofar as it enables him to construct a new phallocentric version of the male.

Lawrence contributed no short stories to *The Egoist*, but did submit a number of poems, mainly out of friendship for Richard Aldington, who had replaced Pound as literary editor, and whom Lawrence had met independently of the journal.[46] Lawrence was therefore close to the imagist circle, which since 1913 had proliferated through the magazine. Critics have tended to underestimate imagism's influence

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[45] See Gillian Hanscombe and Virginia L. Smyers, *Writing for their Lives: The Modernist Women, 1910-1940* (London: The Women's Press, 1987), pp. 165-7.

[46] See Lawrence, letter to Harriet Monroe (31st July 1914), in *Letters, vol. 2*, p. 203.

upon Lawrence[47], reiterating Pound's famous description of Lawrence as "an Amygist", who never "accepted the Imagist program".[48] Pound, though, was motivated by his loathing for Amy Lowell, who edited the second imagist anthology, which included Lawrence's poetry. Elsewhere, however, Pound conceded that "life wd. have been (in my case) much less interesting if I had waited till Joyce, Lewis, Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, etc. complied with what my taste was in 1908"[49], suggesting that he imposed his own preferences upon them. More recent critics have highlighted the artistic differences between Pound and the writers whom imagism was designed to promote.[50] It is therefore reasonable to say that, even if Lawrence did not write in an imagist style, he appropriated imagist elements for his own purposes.

As Lawrence's own brand of egoism began to take shape, so his writing demanded stylistic changes. The rewriting of "Daughters of the Vicar" (1914) indicates the diminution of symbolism, with its overtones of "soft" aestheticism, and its recontextualisation within a more condensed and intricate style. Lawrence had originally conceived the story in 1911 as "Two Marriages", the aim being to explore two contrasting couples set against the realistic background of a mining community. The story introduced the motif of two sisters, and in the period leading up to *The Rainbow* (1915), it was revised and retitled, first in 1913, and then again in 1914. As Cushman argues, each successive rewrite gradually displaces Lawrence's anxieties about class and his unease with closure for a more open-ended narrative, which focuses upon the characters' sexual and psychological being.[51] To achieve this effect, Lawrence decelerates the narrative through repetition and detail in such a way that recalls F.S. Flint's doctrine on imagism:

1. Direct treatment of the "thing", whether subjective or objective.

2. To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation.

3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.[52]

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[47] See, for example, Kim A. Herzinger, *D.H. Lawrence in His Time: 1908-1915* (London: Associated University Presses, 1982), p. 157.

[48] Pound, letter to Glenn Hughes (26th September 1927), in *Selected Letters*, p. 212.

[49] Pound, letter to Lincoln Kirstein (c. May 1931), in ibid, p. 234.

[50] See, for example, Megan Lloyd Davies, 'H.D. Imagiste? Bisexuality: Identity: Imagism', in *Kicking Daffodils: Twentieth-Century Women Poets,* ed. by Vicki Bertram (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 39-54.

[51] Cushman, op cit, pp. 83-114.

[52] F.S. Flint, 'Imagisme' (1913), in *Imagist Poetry,* ed. by Peter Jones (London: Penguin, 1972), p. 129.

Flint's article originally appeared in *Poetry,* whose editor, Harriet Monroe, corresponded with Lawrence. In the same issue, Pound added that "an 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time".[53] It was therefore practically impossible to write a long imagist piece, but in the form of the short story, even one as technically long as "Daughters of the Vicar", the writer could compose the text through an accretion of images. This method was especially useful to Lawrence in terms of depicting sexual longing, where previously he had relied upon symbolism:

> She was all that was beyond him, of revelation and exquisiteness. All that was
> ideal and beyond him she was that - and he was lost to himself in looking at her.
> She had no connexion with him. He did not approach her. She was there like a
> wonderful distance. *(PO,* p. 75)

The predominantly monosyllabic language, the repetition of pronouns, and the inversions in word order fix and solidify Alfred's point of view, whilst also mediating his unexpressed yearning for Louisa. The sense of meaning carries the reader through the passage, which is otherwise disrupted by the clipped tone of the sentences. Lawrence further punctuates the longest sentences into discreet units, so that the overall effect is of phrases which are juxtaposed with one another, and through which meaning accumulates rather than emerges. The emphasis is upon literalism, of how Louisa appears to Alfred, and the single use of simile only temporarily resolves the tension in direct treatment. When longing turns to passion, Lawrence captures the significance by concentrating upon the point of view without the sexual fascination of earlier stories:

> Then, gradually, as he held her gripped, and his brain reeled round, and he felt
> himself falling, falling from himself, and whilst she, yielded up, swooned to a kind
> of death of herself, a moment of utter darkness came over him, and they began to
> wake up again as if from a long sleep. He was himself. *(PO,* p. 82)

The apparent simplicity of language, allied to the use of co-ordination, guides the reader through an otherwise complex act of transfiguration. The passage alludes to the ideology of blood-consciousness, which permeates the story, but the shift towards an elemental "self" evades the class distinctions between Alfred (a miner) and Louisa (a clergyman's daughter). The language, by seeming so artless, foregrounds the effect, which the admission of love has upon the characters, rather than the embrace

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[53] Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste' (1913), in ibid, p. 130.

itself. Lawrence's adherence to the point of view can suggest, elsewhere, an understanding of women, for example in Mary's claustrophobic marriage to Mr Massy:

> She *would* not feel, and she *would* not feel. She was a pure will acquiescing to
> him [...] She would be good and purely just, she would live in a higher freedom
> than she had ever known [...] she was a pure will towards right. She had sold
> herself, but she had a new freedom. She had got rid of her body. She had sold a
> lower thing, her body, for a higher thing, her freedom from material things. She
> considered that she paid for all she got from her husband. (*PO*, p. 56)

Lawrence's feminine sensibility, though, is the product of a rhetorical conceit. Mary's character, in contrast with Paula Moest, is at least substantiated, her self-mutilation in order to achieve social status, but it is also constrained by a discourse, which operates through contrasts and juxtapositions. Instead of her character developing through the narrative, Mary is presented to the reader imagistically - directly and intensively, but without elaboration. Neither is it like the impressionistic brush-stroke: that would be too swift and superficial. Instead, the reader's attention is suspended in such a way that meaning accumulates, and an intensity of feeling is achieved. In the process, though, Mary's character becomes fixed, compounded by the sculptured language. The subsequent contrasts between Mary and Louisa further define her.

The text's angularity mediates Lawrence's constant vitalism, but here it is more dynamic than fluid. The style reinforces the theme of cultural degeneration, which supplants class, and is embodied in the differences between Alfred and Massy. The former's physicality is balanced by his reading, especially the Fabians (propagandists of national efficiency), and playing music. Though "naturally cheerful", "happy at work" and "admired by the men", Alfred's dissatisfaction at feeling "less a man" ironically singles him out. His sensitivity, the "canker of shame and incompleteness" (*PO*, p. 68), infers that he still has the potential to develop, to become complete, unlike the other miners, who have already peaked. Alfred's character appropriates feminine stereotypes of introspection, thoughtfulness and growth, but his final act of self-creation, his marriage to Louisa, can only come at the expense of his mother: "he had been centralized, polarized in his mother" (*PO*, p. 78). Her death begets her son's fruition as, unconsciously, he claims her powers of reproduction. Massy, by contrast, is "obsessed by the idea of his child" (*PO*, p. 57), but does "nothing for it"

(*PO*, p. 58). Instead, he continues to be "blindly male, like a cold machine" (*PO*, p. 57), absorbing both Mary and the baby into his solipsistic "little world" (*PO*, p. 49), in much the same way as "he had accepted the Christian tenets as axioms", "a kind of mathematical working out [...] a calculated well-doing" (*PO*, p. 50). Over-intellectual and retentive, "he had to defend himself and his own insufficiency" (*PO*, p. 49), his body reminds Mary "of an abortion" (*PO*, p. 56). Massy is a composite figure. He is the logical patriarch, against whom Lawrence reacts by fetishising feminine attributes; a rational Christian (an oxymoron in Lawrence's terms); and the product of a degenerate culture. But Massy also embodies a critique of egoism. Quasi-scientism and mechanical aridity, common metaphors in the work of Pound and Lewis, here emphasise Massy's sterility.

"Daughters of the Vicar" was the closest Lawrence came to an imagist text in prose form. Though its style anticipates the more rhapsodic passages in novels like *The Rainbow,* the story is best seen as an experiment rather than a prescription. Its innovations liberated Lawrence by enabling him to reassess his ideas, and see how best they could be structured. In refining his own agenda, Lawrence began to discard the egoisms associated with the imagist and *Egoist* circles. In a late poem, Lawrence highlighted not only the hypocrisy but also the narcissism, which he felt was endemic to them:

> So now I want, above all things
> to preserve my nakedness
> from the gibe and finger-clutch of image-making love. (Lines 13-5)[54]

The Great War and "England, My England"

The outbreak of war in 1914 had a decisive effect upon Lawrence's writing. The War formed a context which heightened the increasing disturbances in Lawrence's private and professional lives, and which eventually resulted in the "savage pilgrimage" that began in 1919.[55] Two stories written on the eve of war, "The Prussian Officer" and "The Thorn in the Flesh", offer insights into the sense of impending conflict. Both analyse the nature of militarism as well as earlier themes - the fight for individuality, the duality of sex and violence, and the hostilities in quasi-

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[54] Lawrence, 'Image-Making Love' (1930), in Jones, op cit, p. 118.
[55] For further details, see Paul Delany, *D.H. Lawrence's Nightmare: The Writer and His Circle in the Years of the Great War* (New York: Basic, 1978).

familial structures. The latter, though, projects a passionate union into its militaristic setting:

> They loved each other, and all was whole. She loved him, he had taken her, she
> was given to him. It was right. He was given to her, and they were one, complete.
> (*PO*, p. 34)

The mutual giving and sharing presages the ideas of sexual union further explored in Lawrence's study of Hardy; conceived "out of sheer rage" against the War's "colossal idiocy".[56] John Worthen associates both texts in tracing the story's development from its original 1913 version, especially in the reintroduction of class differences between the lovers, which are then transcended by the sexual act.[57] Cushman finds it curious that Lawrence should have reasserted class[58], but his description of Emilie, she "needed to be in subjection, because she was primitive and had no grasp on civilized forms of living" (*PO*, p. 32), is instead encoded in a degenerationist rather than class-based discourse. In the analysis of Hardy, as various critics have emphasised, the balancing and merger of the sexes is founded upon a sexual hierarchy, which mimics the categorisations employed by sexology.[59] In "The Thorn in the Flesh", for example, it is Bachmann who instigates the sexual act, and Emilie who passively submits. Intercourse counterpoints Bachmann's escape from the army, in that both forms of release grant him self-knowledge. By contrast, the father-figure of the Baron exists pragmatically, but isolated from the "something eternal" (*PO*, p. 38) experienced by Bachmann. Emilie's stolidity, "the dark, deep nakedness of her eyes" (*PO*, p. 39), affronts the Baron, but her inward suffering relegates her as a conduit for the patriarchal struggle.

Like many feminists, Lawrence viewed the War as a crisis in patriarchy, in which young men were committed to fight a war begun by their fathers. In the 1915 version of "England, My England", it is Evelyn's "father-in-law who finally overcame the young man's inertia and despatched him to the war" (*EME*, p. 224). Evelyn feels no patriotic sentiment, "at best it was a case of kill or be killed" (*EME*, p. 226), but believes that "as a potential destructive force he now had his being" (*EME*, p. 225). Evelyn's self-discovery through endangering himself mediates Lawrence's own

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[56] Lawrence, letter to J.B. Pinker (5th September 1914), in *Letters, vol. 2*, p. 212.
[57] John Worthen, *D.H. Lawrence* (London: Edward Arnold, 1991), pp. 38-9.
[58] Cushman, op cit, p. 183.
[59] See, for example, Simpson, op cit, pp. 82-90. The influence of Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter upon Lawrence is debated by Rose, op cit, pp. 88-9.

paradoxical view on the War. On the one hand, Lawrence asks, "does not the war show us how little [...] we count human life and human suffering?" Lives are discarded in order "to prove that we are not altogether sealed in our own self-preservation"[60], which in "England, My England" is represented by Winifred's puritanism and Evelyn's impotence. But, Lawrence also describes the War as "a fight to regain ourselves out of the grip of our own caution", to "realize once more that self-preservation is not the final goal of life [...] that we can still squander life and property and inflict suffering wholesale". The wilful act of devastation may therefore "free us [...] from the cowardice that will not let us *be*". For this reason, Lawrence refuses to condemn German aggression, and it serves also to justify Evelyn's actions: "if you die or I die, it will not matter, so long as there is alive in the land some new sense of what is and what is not".[61] Lawrence's argument is clearly immersed within a vitalist rhetoric, which may explain his appropriation of the title, "England, My England", from the work of the influential, nationalistic poet and editor, W.E. Henley.[62] The irony which Cushman detects in the 1921 version stems, instead, from Lawrence's reaction against the post-war world.[63] Even in 1914, however, Lawrence ominously attributes the contemporary malaise to "the heart of man" rather than socio-political problems[64], which is in turn why Lawrence restates his opposition to the suffrage for merely adding to the state's "clumsy machinery".[65] To some extent, Lawrence anticipates Eliot's conclusion that "it is better [...] to do evil than to do nothing: at least we exist"[66], in which the accumulation of reforms amount to little more than inactivity.

As the War persisted, though, Lawrence's hopes for immediate renewal diminished. Instead, he now saw himself as living through inexorable decline. Writing from Garsington Manor in Oxford, the home of society hostess Lady Ottoline Morrell, Lawrence compares the estate to England:

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[60] Lawrence, 'Study of Thomas Hardy', p. 406.

[61] ibid, pp. 407-8.

[62] On Henley's influence upon Edwardian literature, see Rose, op cit, pp. 97-8.

[63] Cushman, 'The Achievement of *England, My England and Other Stories'*, in *D.H. Lawrence: Critical Assessments, vol. 3,* ed. by David Ellis and Ornella De Zordo (Mountfield, East Sussex: Helm Information, 1992), p. 492.

[64] Lawrence, 'Study of Thomas Hardy', p. 406.

[65] ibid, p. 405.

[66] Eliot, 'Baudelaire' (1930), in *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot,* ed. by Frank Kermode (London: Faber, 1975), p. 236.

> So much beauty and pathos of old things passing away and no new things coming:
> this house - it is England - my God, it breaks my soul - their England, these
> shafted windows, the elm-trees, the blue distance - the past, the great past,
> crumbling down, breaking down [...] no, I can't bear it. For the winter stretches
> ahead, where all vision is lost and all memory dies out.[67]

Lawrence's apocalyptic vision, redolent of Max Nordau, grounds his organicism not only within the landscape, but also the man-made incursions into the countryside: the planting of the estate, the architecture of the manor. Lawrence sees himself as outside this tradition, it is "their England", but it frames his understanding of what it means to be English. Nature, tradition, aristocracy - these are the basic ingredients, but their reinvention constitutes, in place of an unknown past, a mythology of Englishness designed to make sense of Lawrence's present.

In the 1921 version of "England, My England", the Marshalls are "strong-limbed, thick-blooded people, true English" (*EME*, p. 7). The father's cottage, his gift to Winifred, belongs "to the old England of hamlets and yeomen", "the spirit of place lingering on primeval, as when the Saxons came" (*EME*, pp. 5-6). Into their midst enters Egbert, the rechristened version of Evelyn, but with him all is surface: "the intonation of his voice [...] the fine texture of his flesh [..] the quickness of his blue eyes" (*EME*, p. 8). Egbert concocts a *bricolage* of "merrie England": "he had a passion for old folk-music, collecting folk-songs and folk-dances, studying the Morris-dance and the old customs" (*EME*, p. 7). Though he yearns for the past, he is disconnected from it: "in town Egbert had plenty of friends, of the same ineffectual sort as himself" (*EME*, p. 10). But Lawrence's projection of a true Englishness on to the Marshalls is no less artificial than Egbert's mythologising. Though Winifred is "town-bred" (*EME*, p. 9), "culture was grafted on to" the Marshalls: "it did not alter their blood". Egbert, conversely, is the product of "age-long breeding" (*EME*, p.7): a moribund gentry. Admittedly, Lawrence criticises Winifred as a "modern mother" whose "sense of duty towards her child" excludes her husband (*EME*, p. 11), but Joyce's injury and disability are blamed upon Egbert's disinterest, and the child takes sides with Winifred against him: "she would stand by her mother for ever" (*EME*, p. 25). Over them all, though, stands Winifred's father, Godfrey, the family's financial mainstay, and her true infatuation: "he was the pillar, the source of life, the everlasting support" (*EME*, p. 11). Godfrey symbolises Lawrence's patriarchal ideal:

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[67] Lawrence, letter to Lady Cynthia Asquith (9th November 1915), in *Letters, vol. 2*, pp. 431-2.

> Here was a man who had kept alive the old red flame of fatherhood, fatherhood
> that had even the right to sacrifice the child to God, like Isaac. Fatherhood that
> had life-and-death authority over the children: a great natural power. And till his
> children could be brought under some other great authority as girls; or could arrive
> at manhood and become themselves centres of the same power, continuing the
> same male mystery as men; until such time, willy-nilly, Godfrey Marshall would
> keep his children. (*EME*, p. 16)

In terms similar to his own brand of psychoanalytic theory[68], and in an inversion of pre-war feminism, Lawrence invests masculinity with an ancient, occult and, most importantly, enigmatic quality. Unable to compete with Godfrey, Egbert enlists, "giving himself over [...] into the power of the mob-spirit of a democratic army" (*EME*, p. 28). The fighting itself is described in terms of its "mechanism, the pure mechanical action of obedience at the guns", whilst "the soul is alone", left "brooding on the face of the uncreated flux" (*EME*, p. 31). Unlike Kipling, who is intrigued by the metamorphoses of war, Lawrence views the subsumption of "self" as a scattering of manhood. Egbert's willingness to accept death symbolises what Lawrence would see as a failure of those "who really know better [...] to keep up a standard, to hold control of authority".[69] Even Godfrey's preference for industrialism over militarism is a pyrrhic victory, since Lawrence views technology and capitalism as enabling the War's emasculation. The undercutting of Godfrey's father-figure status, at this point, indicates the division between Lawrence's ideal and the actuality of material pressures. What is being critiqued is that a choice, which in effect is no choice, has to be made at all. At his most vituperative, Lawrence would describe post-war England as a "democratic-industrial-lovey-dovey-darling-take-me-to-mamma state"[70], which is not to invalidate Lawrence's critique of capitalism, but merely the terms in which it is expressed, so that authors such as Joyce and Dorothy Richardson are dismissed as "absorbedly self-conscious [...] childishly concerned with *what I am*".[71] Both political and literary culture are viewed as introspective and collusive, and though Lawrence attacks his contemporaries as end-products of a fetid egoism, the War stimulates the growth of Lawrence's own singular beliefs.

Central to Lawrence's post-war analysis is his depiction of the home front, which was synonymous, in the sub-genre of novels typified by Rebecca West's *The Return*

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[68] See Simpson, op cit, pp. 105-7.

[69] Lawrence, *Kangaroo* (London: Penguin, 1950, orig. pub. 1923), pp. 240-1.

[70] Lawrence, 'Surgery for the Novel - or a Bomb' (1923), in *Phoenix*, p. 520.

[71] ibid, p. 518.

of the Soldier (1918), with the domestic realm. As Gail Braybon has noted, the War was seen to have liberated women[72], but as she proceeds to show, its transformative effect varied widely according to age, class or income, whilst for many working class women, the War had little effect upon their conditions.[73] Popular legislation, though, such as the enfranchisement of middle class women aged over thirty, and the 1919 Sexual Disqualification (Removal) Act, allowing for women's greater professionalisation, reaffirmed the myth of emancipation. The Armistice also saw the rise of younger feminists, such as Eleanor Rathbone and Marie Stopes, who discarded the pre-war politics of egoism and sexual purity for more practical measures: housing, birth control, child-care.[74] The politicisation of domestic and sexual matters, alongside a state emphasis upon social reform, suggested to men like Lawrence that the public arena had been domesticated, whilst men's more traditional roles had been marginalised. Furthermore, a fresh wave of "surplus women" had been produced by the War's carnage, to every 1000 men there were 1095 women[75], with many men also unemployed or being nursed by women.

Lawrence had registered his unease with the loosening of sexual mores during the War: "it's no use the men looking to the women for salvation, nor the women looking to sensuous satisfaction for their fulfilment".[76] Lawrence had previously celebrated women's spiritual creativity:

> That she bear children is not a woman's significance. But that she bear herself,
> that is her supreme and risky fate.[77]

Lawrence's pro-feminism forms only part, however, of his popular appeal: "I would say to every decent man [...] your business is to produce your own real life, no matter what the nations do"[78]; in which woman's role is to act as "an axle" that allows man to "leap into the unknown".[79] Lawrence's criticism is, as has already been stated, hierarchical, but it presumes women's co-operation for the betterment of both sexes. Female emancipation during the War upset that presumption, so that in a story like

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[72] Gail Braybon, 'Women and the War', in *The First World War in British History,* ed. by Stephen Constantine et al (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), p. 143.
[73] ibid, pp. 145-66.
[74] See, for example, Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain: 1914-1959* (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 236-40 and 254-7.
[75] Quoted by Simpson, op cit, p. 100.
[76] Lawrence, letter to Lady Cynthia Aquith (7th February 1916), in *Letters, vol. 2,* p. 526.
[77] Lawrence, 'Study of Thomas Hardy', p. 441.
[78] ibid, p. 429.
[79] ibid, pp. 446-7.

"The Thimble" (1917), the damaged Mr Hepburn, a military casualty, must impose himself upon his marriage. His wife, waiting for his return, is caricatured as frivolous: "how she hated [...] the thought of disfigurement" (*EME,* p. 193). She is first persuaded, and then informed by Hepburn that they will be reborn as lovers. His disposal of the thimble, symbolising tradition, materialism and domesticity, confirms the new start. Though she does not quietly acquiesce, Hepburn's wife accepts her place in the resurrection. In doing so, she anticipates the polarisation of the sexes subsequently outlined by Lawrence:

> I do think men must go ahead absolutely in front of their women, without turning
> round to ask for permission or approval [...] Consequently the women must follow
> as it were unquestioning.[80]

Lawrence's post-war criticism attacks "the exaltation of motherhood"[81], and its incursion into civic society: "the triumph of the productive and domestic activities of man [...] is a triumph of woman in the home".[82] Lawrence assails woman's spiritual debasement, her acquiescence to her maternal function, which merely replicates and recodifies the soulless, capitalist ethos of productivity.

Conversely, Lawrence celebrates in men the intuitive, spontaneous and self-creative. An exemplary story is "The Horse Dealer's Daughter" (1922), which disguises its cultural agenda within a romantic, regenerationist discourse. Joseph Pervin is another father-figure who has abdicated responsibility. He "married a second time, to retrieve his fortunes", but only alienated his daughter, Mabel, who "had kept house for ten years". Joseph's death plunges the family into debt, whilst his sons are "ineffectual" (*EME,* p. 142), since they have lacked a figurehead. Mabel has endured, which is vital because she remains spiritually pure, but she has failed to prevent their home from being sold. Domestic management does not, in Lawrence's scheme, amount to a qualification for financial success. The lack of self-control exhibited by Joseph and his sons "unmans" them, but Mabel's stoicism distinguishes her as "wifely" material. She decides, however, to drown herself, to rejoin her mother who died thirteen years earlier. Mabel is rescued by the young doctor, Sam Fergusson, "a mere hired assistant" and "slave to the countryside" (*EME,* p. 143),

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[80] Lawrence, letter to Katherine Mansfield (5th December 1918), in *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence, vol. 3,* ed. by James T. Boulton and Andrew Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 302.

[81] Lawrence, 'Education of the People' (1918), in *Phoenix,* p. 621.

[82] Lawrence, 'The Real Thing' (1930), in ibid, p. 196.

who hates "the alien, ugly little town", but is stimulated by its "rough, strongly-feeling people". Lawrence reintroduces class and cultural barriers in order for them to be bridged by his sexual theories. Mabel and Sam mirror each other in their subjection, respectively, to domesticity and professionalism. Mabel unwittingly mesmerises Sam, "there was a heavy power in her eyes which laid hold of his whole being [...] Now the life came back into him" (*EME*, p. 144), which inspires him into rescuing her. Submerging into the lake suggests parallels with the womb-fixation described in 1918 by Lawrence[83], except that, importantly, Sam re-emerges, and revives Mabel. The experience, though, has a rebirthing effect insofar as Mabel falls in love with Sam, and he gradually submits to "a violation of his professional honour" (*EME*, p. 148), and takes "to kissing her, not knowing what he was doing". Mabel fulfils Lawrence's earlier role for women, "he had crossed over the gulf to her", but she also accepts her position in the union: she "drooped into a muse" (*EME*, p. 150). As Harris observes, the story anticipates the later visionary tales[84], but the characters' resurrection into marriage means that Mabel effectively functions as a conduit for Sam's self-renewal, since she moves between one father-figure and another.

Most of the other stories, though, in *England, My England* (1922) mediate Lawrence's contemporaneous view that there must be a breach between the sexes; that though their social roles might be reversed, their sexual identities remain fixed.[85] Both "Tickets, Please" (1919) and "Monkey Nuts" (1922) dramatise sexual antagonism, but a melancholic tone undercuts them both, suggesting that something has been lost in the War's aftermath. The former depicts a sisterhood of tram conductresses, who exact revenge upon their seducer, the obviously phallic John Thomas. Lawrence's description of the drivers, "cripples and hunchbacks", and the tram ride, "with a shriek and a trail of sparks we are clear again" (*EME*, p. 34), symbolises the sense of estrangement in wartime, whilst outside, in the blackout, "the nights are howlingly cold, black, and wind-swept". The women's portrayal as sexless, "ugly blue uniforms, skirts up to their knees, shapeless old peaked caps" (*EME*, p. 35), confirms the feeling of topsyturvydom. Lawrence evocatively describes the intimacy of male-female relations, and the sexual tensions which counterpoint "the darkness and lawlessness" of battlefields elsewhere (*EME*, p. 40).

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[83] Lawrence, letter to Katherine Mansfield, pp. 301-2.
[84] Harris, op cit, p. 125.
[85] See, for example, Lawrence, 'Education of the People', p. 664.

Lawrence appropriately uses a carnival as the backdrop for John's seduction of Annie, whose subsequent rejection, she is too "possessive" whilst he insists on remaining "a nocturnal presence" (*EME*, p. 39), instigates the assault. Analysing the language employed in the fairground scene, Kiernan Ryan has suggestively shown how John and Annie perform their social roles[86], but he omits Lawrence's coda in which the reader is informed that Annie "kept her own boy dangling in the distance", but "prided herself" that John would not desert her. In making love, though, "she could flow into a fellow, as if she melted into his very bones", which "was something rare and good" (*EME*, pp. 38-9). Though social behaviour is shown to be artificial, a double standard is reintroduced. Annie is criticised for her duplicity, whereas John is consistent in his promiscuity. Lawrence indicates, though, that she is redeemable in the way that she dissolves her social self, and merges into, and reinforces, the "oneness" of John. Annie's injured pride mobilises the attack upon him:

> But immediately the other girls rushed upon him, pulling and tearing and beating him. Their blood was now thoroughly up. He was their sport now. They were going to have their own back, out of him. Strange, wild creatures, they hung on him and rushed at him to bear him down. (*EME*, pp. 42-3)

Lawrence deliberately plays upon the Grecian myth of the "maenads", female followers of Dionysus, who in Euripides' drama, *The Bacchae*, ripped to pieces King Pentheus, who dared to observe their rituals. The women are "filled with supernatural strength" (*EME*, p. 43), whilst Annie speaks with "terrifying lust" (*EME*, p. 44). Their actions, though, are stimulated by the Dionysiac figure of John Thomas, so that instead of overturning his power, their ecstatic release of pent-up emotion confirms his authority over them. When forced to choose between them, his choice of Annie breaks their spell. Equally, Lawrence's obvious relish in describing the sado-masochism contains the women's transgressiveness. Instead, they are "all anxious to be off [...] tidying themselves hurriedly, with mute, stupefied faces", whilst John is a still, silent centre, "his face closed, his head dropped" (*EME*, p. 45). Annie is left confused and tormented, "her face quivered with a kind of agony" (*EME*, p. 44), and herein lies the story's melancholy. Though a breach has been successfully drawn between the sexes, Annie is unsure how to place herself within the new sexual hierarchy. The War has disconnected Annie from her feminine nature, indicated by

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[86] Kiernan Ryan, 'The Revenge of the Women: Lawrence's 'Tickets, Please", in Ellis and De Zordo, op cit, pp. 505-8.

her anxiety to resume her public role, and she is shocked by her recognition of John's vitalistic power. The acceptance of the irrational, which is central to Euripides' play, is reversed by Lawrence, so that it is the latter-day maenads, not sceptical men, who are forced into awareness. Lawrence, however, is uncertain whether the women can achieve a reconciliation with their menfolk.

"Monkey Nuts" mirrors "Tickets, Please" in that a female antagonist is repelled by male comradeship. The introduction offers a tranquil picture of Joe, "a tallish, quiet youth" of "slightly better class", hay-making alongside the fatherly Albert. Both are soldiers: "after Flanders, it was heaven itself" (*EME*, p. 64). Into their midst arrives a land-girl, Miss Stokes, whose appearance is again sexually ambiguous: "buxom" and "pretty", but dressed "in linen overalls and gaiters" (*EME*, pp. 64-5). Unlike the men, Miss Stokes' first name is never revealed, distancing her from the reader. Whereas the men's characters are exposed through their interaction, hers is never fully comprehended, so that her forwardness and objectification of Joe, "she glanced him over - save for his slender succulent tenderness she would have despised him" (*EME*, p. 68), are foregrounded. Equally, though, the modern reader may wonder what, apart from her sexual provocation, is Miss Stokes' crime: "she drew him closely to her with a soft pressure that made all his bones rotten" (*EME*, p. 71). Instead, the tale is more of a study in masculinity than sexual antagonism - Joe's shame and insecurity, Albert's pique at Joe's betrayal. A reconciliation between the men is achieved first through talking, an appropriation of feminine openness, and finally Miss Stokes' humiliation. Following her departure, Joe feels "more relieved even than he had felt when he heard the firing cease" (*EME*, p. 76). As a kind of pioneer, Joe takes from the older, more proletarian Albert a stolidity and good-humouredness: he inherits a patriarchal mystique. But, as Cushman also suggests, there is a sterility in the story's closure.[87] The men have each other, but sexual consummation and personal growth have been deferred. Even as Lawrence effects sexual boundaries, incompleteness runs as a recurring theme throughout the collection. Though Judith Ruderman locates the stories within Lawrence's other patriarchal fantasies[88], it is more accurate to view them as unresolved texts in which the emergent patriarchal ideal juxtaposes more residual, organic beliefs.

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[87] Cushman, 'The Achievement of *England, My England*', p. 499.
[88] Judith Ruderman, *D.H. Lawrence and the Devouring Mother: The Search for a Patriarchal Ideal of Leadership* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1984), p.88.

Conclusion

Unlike his contemporary, Wyndham Lewis, who continued to dissect the "sex war" as part of his materialist critique[89], Lawrence reasserts a version of the conflict as part of a cultural renovation, which would transcend post-war society. Whereas Lewis persists in describing capitalism's decomposition of the subject, Lawrence proposes a neo-romantic conviction in the "self", which forms the basis for his visionary texts during the 1920s. Lawrence's reaffirmation presupposes a turning-away from the early modernism, which characterised both his writing up until 1922, and of the literary period after 1890.

I have argued that early modernism was generated by socio-cultural fissures in late Victorian society, during which modernity, symbolised by new political and economic institutions, new modes of behaviour, and new means of communication and of representing the world, splintered traditional notions of social coherence: the vitalistic and phallocentric unity of the "body politic". As has been shown, degenerationist fears manifested themselves due to the gap between the internalised ideology of organicism, and the impact of "lived" reality. By the same token, palingenetic desires also emerged in those who had received the traditional belief-system, and who sought to bridge the gap. Neither realism nor romance could effectively depict the disorientation of modernity, whilst decadence merely indulged in a sensuous deregulation. Only modernism offered strategies, such as symbolism, impressionism and imagism (all of which occur in Lawrence's work), that explored the feelings of estrangement, whilst maintaining a critical distance. As has been argued, the form of the modernist short story implicitly replicates this ethos by framing narratives around silences in the text, which mediate the dissonances in historical dynamics, whilst demanding a critical participation from the reader.

Lawrence's fiction, like the other writings discussed so far, is in dialogue with residual organicism, and the need to construct new patterns of understanding. Like his fellow Edwardians, Lawrence's work is immersed in vitalistic beliefs, but unlike his contemporaries and his modernist predecessors, Lawrence centres sexual identity and sexual metaphors at the heart of his ideology. Stories such as "The Thorn in the Flesh" or "England, My England" indicate that Lawrence's project is stimulated by a patriarchal struggle, and the need for the male initiate to find himself. In excavating

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[89] See Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1926), pp. 215-27.

masculinity, Lawrence appropriates feminist theory and "new woman" fiction to formulate his own style of impersonal narration, which sustains an exploration of personality without descending into unfocused, uncritical self-indulgence. Regeneration is synonymous with self-creation, which reclaims ideas of reproduction from the female. Though Lawrence is equally concerned with women finding themselves, he insists upon their spiritual development as complements to his revitalised men. Sexual vitality is divested to men, or to masculine behaviour, whilst women's acquiescence to maternity is seen as an abasement to a domesticated society: Lawrence's gendered caricature of a liberal, capitalist, democratic culture.

By the time of stories such as "Monkey Nuts", Lawrence has begun to redirect his sexual critique, so that older and younger men bond together against the invasive female. Lawrence is still conducting a renovation, but his increasingly prescriptive tone presages the later turn of writers such as Eliot, Pound and Lewis. Lawrence's own brand of egoism remains rooted in the body politic, so that his desire is to construct a revivified social identity that transcends contemporary society. In doing so, Lawrence is no longer exploring the complexity of everyday existence, but instituting an abstraction in its place. The early modernist project, as I have conceived it, therefore comes to an end in Lawrence's later writing. If Lawrence reveals the limits of early modernism, then to turn, finally, to Katherine Mansfield is to raise questions about the nature of modernism itself.

6) WRITING IN THE MARGINS: KATHERINE MANSFIELD

To describe Katherine Mansfield's work as revolutionary might appear, at first sight, inappropriate. Whereas her more celebrated contemporary, D.H. Lawrence, exposed the limits of early modernism, and by doing so transformed his own literary style, Mansfield was a modernist who never fitted into modernism. Her stories mediate that sense of exclusion, though Mansfield's preference for the short story also expresses her own awareness of her marginality. Instead of seeking entry into the modernist circles, despite flirting with Bloomsbury, Mansfield sought to convert her alienation into her own particular aesthetic. Underlining her single-mindedness was her scepticism that there was a self to which one could return. Instead, throughout her criticism, the self is portrayed as a discursive concept, in which language divides the subject from an otherwise mysterious being. To confuse consciousness with self is to accept as natural the historical conditions of one's alienation; to realise the inescapability of self-estrangement is to deflect, though not overturn, the defining gaze. This ambivalence forms the basis for all of Mansfield's fiction from the earlier pieces, which rework generic conventions, through to the later texts, which crystallise the modernist short story. Mansfield's literary revolution reclaims and re-evaluates its marginality, but it must also be distinguished from the cultural revolution dreamt-of by contemporaries such as Ezra Pound. That kind of palingenetic desire is predicated upon a notion of selfhood, which for Mansfield, seriously disables modernism by colluding with a dominant discourse, which privileges spectacle and display. Mansfield's writing pastiches and ironises modernism, and in so doing, anticipates the loss of self in both "high" and later modernist fiction. Yet, unlike more recent uses of pastiche and irony, Mansfield's work never descends into either relativism or defeatism.

Mansfield's Artistic and Cultural Critique

Unlike her contemporaries, such as E.M. Forster, Wyndham Lewis or Virginia Woolf, Mansfield did not publish a theoretical statement of her work. However, as various critics have shown, it is possible to construct a coherent methodology from Mansfield's letters, notebooks and occasional criticism.[1] Underpinning what she has

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[1] See, for example, Eileen Baldeshwiler, 'Katherine Mansfield's Theory of Fiction', *Studies in Short Fiction,* vol. 7 (1970), pp. 421-32; and Clare Hanson, introduction to *The Critical Writings of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 4-20.

to say about fiction is her conception of the self, which openly contradicts the hegemonic emphasis upon organicism.

THE ROLE OF THE SUBJECT

Mansfield's most oft-quoted account of the human subject was, ironically, retitled by her widower, John Middleton Murry, as part of his assemblage of her notebooks into a coherent journal. The new title, "The Flowering of the Self", was designed presumably to bring Mansfield's ideas into line with organic thought, even though the passage casts doubt upon the Shakespearean notion of "to thine own self be true":

> True to oneself! which self? Which of my many - well really, that's what it looks like coming to - hundreds of selves? For what with complexes and repressions and reactions and vibrations and reflections, there are moments when I feel I am nothing but the small clerk of some hotel without a proprietor [...] Is it not possible that the rage for confession, autobiography, especially for memories of earliest childhood, is explained by our persistent yet mysterious belief in a self which is continuous and permanent; which [...] thrusts a scaled bud through years of darkness until, one day, the light discovers it and shakes the flower free and - we are alive [...] This is the moment [...] of direct feeling when we are most ourselves and least personal.[2]

The passage's meaning, like much of Mansfield's criticism, is dependent not so much on what she writes, but on how it is written. Firstly, there is the use of rhetorical questions by which Mansfield does not advance an argument, but only an hypothesis. The final sentence, instead of being affirmative, merely terminates an extended piece of speculation. Whether the sentiment can be ascribed to Mansfield herself is debatable: it makes sense only in relation to its own rhetoric. The rhetorical question implicitly denies linear thought - the reader does not progress towards some prescriptive position - but instead it folds back upon itself, foregrounding its own artifice. However, it is not simply an empty linguistic gesture. In its circumlocution, the rhetorical question registers a thought process, which turns upon itself, but refuses to come to rest. The sense of evasion is reinforced by two instances of Mansfield's habitual use of metaphor. Beginning with the second example, its organic imagery sustains the thought contained within the opening question, but like the flower itself, it grows away from the question's initial starting-point, "the rage for

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[2] Katherine Mansfield, 'The Flowering of the Self' (April 1920), in *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield,* ed. by J. Middleton Murry, 2nd edn (London: Constable, 1954), p. 205.

confession", and into something more metaphysical and indistinct. The change of register, and the inconclusiveness of the sentence, draw attention to the metaphor itself. The organic imagery is divested of its ethos, of physical soundness and spiritual wholeness, since it functions only as a rhetorical device. The previous metaphor is suggestive by comparing the subject with an absentee hotelier, but the characterisation of the hapless clerk is more absurd than anything else. The uncertain tone undercuts the meaning, since the reader is unsure whether Mansfield literally feels like that, or if the "I" in the sentence is simply a linguistic conceit. Complicating matters further is that the metaphor follows what seems to be an exercise in satire.

The opening evocation of self-division appears to allude to Henri Bergson, whose ideas Mansfield would have been familiar with, first, from T.E. Hulme's 1909 articles in *The New Age,* and secondly, from both Murry himself, who was strongly influenced by Bergson, and the subsequent translations. The French philosopher's impact upon British modernism is both significant and contentious. Writers such as Lewis, Pound and T.S. Eliot attacked Bergson's thesis of "duration", which argued that the subject should be understood in temporal rather than spatial terms: a heterogeneity of overlapping or superimposed memories, experiences and half-remembered recollections; in which past and present, conscious and unconscious selves, blend and intertwine. The trio's attempts to reassert an integrated, autonomous or geometric subject ironically re-present Bergson's ideas by being framed by them.[3] Mansfield, though, does not repudiate Bergson, but neither does she condone him, due to her own highly discursive style. Instead, she plays upon the topicality of his ideas: there is therefore no need to cite Bergson by name. Furthermore, Mansfield equates the "vibrations and reflections" of Bergson with the equally fashionable "complexes and repressions" of Sigmund Freud, so that the confession of nothingness mediates her exasperation with society's compulsive need for self-analysis. Irony serves as another means through which Mansfield can cite contemporary thought, whilst critiquing its currency, and distancing herself from its prevalence. She resists aligning herself with a theoretical position either of her own or another's invention, and thereby being absorbed into the emptiness, or interchangability, of cultural discourse.

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[3] See David Ayers, *Wyndham Lewis and Western Man* (London: Macmillan, 1992), esp. pp. 18-23; and Maud Ellmann, *The Poetics of Impersonality: T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987), esp. pp. 23-8.

Instead of offering a cogent critique of contemporary society, Mansfield infers that theories, such as duration or psychoanalysis, are assimilated into a culture which is obsessed with the spectacle of private space:

> People to-day are simply cursed by what I call the *personal* [...] What is happening to ME. Look at ME. This is what has been done to ME. It's just as though you tried to run and all the while an enormous black serpent fastened on to you.[4]

Increasingly, the private is annexed into the public, so that the idea of the self becomes a product of the external world, for example in the commercial demand for confessions and memoirs. Mansfield acknowledges her own involvement in this industry through her fictional accounts of childhood. Her self-awareness, however, both of her implication, and of the process of manufacture, resists the insidiousness of the hegemony. In this sense, Mansfield simultaneously proves Theodor Adorno's thesis concerning the commodification of culture (and which, as has been argued, Henry James anticipated), whilst also disproving Adorno's conclusion that resistance is futile by refusing to be blinded to the industry's existence. The question that Mansfield asks is to what extent can an individual compose their own identity outside of culture now that the self is a figment of public discourse.

One strategy deployed by Mansfield in her criticism is that of the mask. Mansfield's source were the decadent writers such as Oscar Wilde and Arthur Symons, her original and life-long inspiration[5], in whose work, the mask serves a dual purpose. It conceals the private self, whilst also constructing a pose through which the individual can both savour the delights of commercial society, and ironise its need for spectacle and conspicuous consumption. Mansfield's contemporaries, Eliot and Pound, received an alternate version of the mask through the symbolism of W.B. Yeats, who as a member of the Rhymers' Club in the 1890s, associated with decadent poets such as Ernest Dowson and Lionel Johnson. Yeats, however, viewed the mask as a device through which the self could be reunited with what he termed the "anti-self".[6] The cultivation of the disinterested artist in the work of Eliot and Pound, as opposed to the decadent dandy, owes something to the Yeatsian masquerade, though

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[4] Mansfield, letter to Richard Murry (February 1920), in *The Letters of Katherine Mansfield, vol. 2*, ed. by J. Middleton Murry (London: Constable, 1928), p. 12.

[5] See, for example, Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 19-35 and 53-66.

[6] W.B. Yeats, 'Ego Dominus Tuus' (1919), in *Selected Poetry*, ed. by A. Norman Jeffares (London: Pan, 1974), p. 79.

Eliot is also uncertain of psychological union, for example in the melancholic invocation, "to prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet".[7] Mansfield shares a similar sense of alienation, but not the latent yearning for some past unity. Her attitude is instead summed-up by her warning to Murry: "don't lower your mask until you have another mask prepared beneath".[8] The logical conclusion is that the self is endlessly deferred until it is no more than a succession of masks. The thought, however, of being defined in terms not of one's own making appals Mansfield even more. Since decadent irony can only function if there is a self which can be masked, and since the desire for reunion presupposes the naturalness of the self, Mansfield rejects both responses, and accepts the inevitability of alienation:

> I used to fancy one knew all but some kind of mysterious core (or one could). But now I believe just the opposite. The unknown is far, far greater than the known. The known is only a mere shadow. This is a fearful thing and terribly hard to face. But it must be faced.[9]

The unsentimentality of Mansfield's prose, its lack of nostalgia, is instead affirmative rather than pessimistic; exemplifying her beliefs that "the artist who denies his Time, who turns away from it [...] is false [...] he must accept Life, he must submit"[10], and that "good work takes upon itself a Life - bad work has death in it".[11] Mansfield's residual organicism is again divested of its ethos since, in the aesthetic sense, the text stands in place of life, which also functions as a dialectic with external reality: "there is *this* world, and there is the world that the artist creates in this world, which is nevertheless *his* world, and subject to *his* laws".[12] Here, in this highly mediated relationship between the implied author, the text and "lived" reality, lies the problem for Mansfield critics, who have insisted upon reading her fiction in biographical terms.

In formulating a dialectic which is dependent upon a sequence of masked positions, Mansfield not only ironises the role of the subject as a fabrication within public discourse, she also infers that something approaching a non-self, a greater unknown, exists outside of language. This is an important distinction, since in

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[7] T.S. Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1917), in *Collected Poems: 1909-1962,* 2nd edn (London: Faber, 1974), p. 14.
[8] Mansfield, letter to J.M. Murry (late July 1917), in *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield, vol. 1,* ed. by Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 318.
[9] Mansfield, letter to Richard Murry (17th January 1921), in *Letters, vol. 2,* p. 89.
[10] Mansfield, letter to Sydney Schiff (February 1921), in ibid, p. 94.
[11] Mansfield, letter to Richard Murry (3rd February 1921), in ibid, p. 92.
[12] Mansfield, letter to Richard Murry (20th June 1921), in ibid, p. 119.

refusing to reduce human consciousness to a set of rhetorical gestures, Mansfield refuses also to locate identity purely within the deferrals, which are provoked by the act of enunciation. To do so, would be to concede to the relativism to which Bergsonism or psychoanalysis descend in their unwitting collusion with capitalism's valorisation of the self. To absolutely deny the subject's existence is to replicate the same kind of binary thinking, which otherwise promotes the self as an autonomous being. Instead, as in the following notebook entry, Mansfield is still drawn to some form of mysterious unity precisely because it is beyond expression:

> And yet one has these "glimpses", before which all that one ever has written [...] that one ever has read, pales....The waves, as I drove home this afternoon, and the high foam, how it was suspended in the air before it fell...What is it that happens in that moment of suspension? It is timeless. In that moment (what *do* I mean?) the whole life of the soul is contained. One is flung up - out of life - one is "held", and then - down, bright, broken, glittering on to the rocks, tossed back, part of the ebb and flow [...] But while one hangs [...] I was conscious [...] of a huge cavern where my selves (who were like ancient sea-weed gatherers) mumbled, indifferent and intimate...and this other self apart in the carriage, grasping the cold knob of her umbrella [...] Shall one ever be at peace with oneself?[13]

The mixture of memory and metaphor circles the "moment of suspension", but without defining what happens within. The despairing tone of the conclusion is undercut by being presented as a rhetorical question, since in her use of interrogation and self-doubt, Mansfield seems to want to postpone the point of definition. The ellipses within Mansfield's text, another feature of her speculative writing, mediate the absence which she pursues, but without ultimately wishing to express. Her equivocation resists the cultural imperative to define or reveal, whilst in predicating an identity which is irreducible in language, she critiques discursive constructs of the self. Instead, Mansfield's fiction is characterised by the evasion or deflection of the defining gaze.

MANSFIELD'S LITERARY THEORY

Mansfield's resistance to definition necessarily colours her few comments on literary form. Her opposition turns upon the relationship between subject and object, so that in her evasive strategy, she attempts to rework their separation. Like the decadents,

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[13] Mansfield, 'The Glimpse' (February 1920), in *Journal*, pp. 202-3.

Mansfield is in negotiation with the Romantics, a group whom she much admired.[14]
In a frequently quoted passage, Mansfield suggests an almost Romantic convergence
between self and other:

> What can one do, faced with this wonderful tumble of round bright fruits, but
> gather them and play with them - and *become them* [...] There follows the
> moment when you are *more* [...] than any of these objects could ever possibly be,
> and so you *create* them anew [...] I don't see how art is going to make that divine
> *spring* into the bounding outlines of things if it hasn't passed through the process
> of trying to *become* these things before recreating them.[15]

Mansfield's analysis differs, though, from the romanticism of Wordsworth or
Coleridge, since in their writing the object is essentially passive: it exists in order to
unveil itself before the poet's gaze, and to inspire a spiritual experience, which
reaffirms the poet's being. In Mansfield's example, the subject's authority is less
secure. It is drawn to the object, and though the subject's imagination is central to
the artistic process, the direction is towards the object rather than the artist's
contentment. As Mansfield's language use indicates - "follows", "anew", "going to",
"spring", "bounding", "trying to", "recreating" - this process is inconclusive, since as
she also suggests, the act of observation transforms the perceived object. The
divinity, which Mansfield desires, is strictly secular; equivalent to the "infinite
delight", which she finds in technique[16], "infinite" since the object's meaning is
endlessly deferred. The observer circles the object, so that like Mansfield's "moment
of suspension", it mediates the viewer's own incoherence. Like the Romantics,
Mansfield is concerned with selfhood, but she destabilises the relationship between
subject and object, so that in dispensing with one kind of hierarchy, she foregrounds
the author's becoming rather than any eventual being. In this sense, perhaps
unwittingly, Mansfield replicates the co-mingling between self and other central to
Vernon Lee's theory of empathy, and which, as has been shown, surfaces in Lee's
supernatural tales. For Mansfield, though, self-dissolution involves a flight from
definition, so that instead of an uncritical play of identity, her response is motivated
both by a critique of the self and the need to suggest an identity which lies outside

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[14] See Mansfield, letter to J.M. Murry (4th and 5th March 1918), in *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield, vol. 2,* ed. by Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 107-8.
[15] Mansfield, letter to Dorothy Brett (11th October 1917), in *Collected Letters, vol. 1,* p. 330.
[16] Mansfield, letter to S.S. Koteliansky (17th May 1915), in ibid, p. 192.

of culture. The role of the object remains central, but in terms of how it exposes the instability of the subject.

Mansfield illuminates her artistic theory further in another oft-quoted account. Reacting to a number of ideas drawn from German philosophy, principally Hegel, Nietzsche and Hans Vaihinger, Mansfield distinguishes between dogma, "absolute and unquestionable truth", and fiction, which "is impossible but enables us to reach what is relatively truth".[17] The distinction is important, since truth or being exists beyond language, itself implicitly a fiction, which serves to organise what passes for reality. However, as Mansfield indicates, fiction is motivated by a quest for truth, even though it is finally inexpressible. The aim is not to confuse reality with "the ideal, the dream", nor "to impose (a) vision of life upon the existing world". Instead, the artist is moved by "the *unlikeness* to what we accept as reality", so that "we single out - we bring into the light - we put up higher".[18] These few fragments trace out the subject's becoming, and so imply the spectre of being, only to be displaced within common-sensical reality. In another well-known phrase, Mansfield's "cry against corruption" can be read as a complaint against when fictions, including established ideologies or the latest paradigms, are passed off as truth.[19]

Mansfield's only comment upon the short story encapsulates a number of her literary and cultural responses:

> Suppose we put it in the form of a riddle: "I am neither a short story, nor a sketch, nor an impression, nor a tale. I am written in prose. I am a great deal shorter than a novel; I may be only one page long, but [...] there is no reason why I should not be thirty. I have a special quality [...] which is immediately, perfectly recognisable. It belongs to me; it is of my essence. In fact I am often given away in the first sentence [...] Those who know me feel: "Yes, that is it" [...] What am I?"[20]

The riddle, like the rhetorical question, foregrounds its own circularity. It is strictly speculative and interrogative. It presupposes, however, that there is an addressee to whom the puzzle can be transferred. Any possible answer, though, can only be extracted from the riddle itself rather than its compiler. Consequently, the riddle is concerned with concealment, and in this example, the masquerade is intensified by the

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[17] Mansfield (26th November 1921), in *Journal,* p. 272.
[18] ibid, p. 273.
[19] Mansfield, letter to J.M. Murry (3rd February 1918), in *Collected Letters, vol. 2,* p. 54.
[20] Mansfield, extract from 'Wanted, a New World' (1920), in *Critical Writings,* p. 99.

uses of negativity and ambiguity. The playfulness of non-definition is contradicted, though, by the reassurance that there is an "essence". However, the suggestion that it is felt, rather than known, denies the deductive reasoning upon which the riddle rests. The final question takes the riddle full circle, and closes its frame of reference, but in much the same way as the short story sustains itself through omissions within the text. The reader, though, is made aware of their dissimilarities, since the riddle can only be understood self-referentially, and not in relation to another form. The "I" of the riddle, therefore, is not synonymous with any potential "I" of the short story. Instead, the process of definition compounds the short story's elusiveness, a fact which probably appealed to Mansfield's own resistance to identification. She supplies no answer to the riddle, but in its inception deploys the royal "we", which is clearly ironic in relation to the riddle's splintering of identity. But to view the complication of identity as the short story's "special quality" would be inaccurate: the riddle is only, as the reader is informed, a supposition. The passage outlines Mansfield's elliptical strategies, which complement the episodic short story: interrogation, irony, circularity, deferral.

MANSFIELD: MODERNISM AND FEMINISM

Various critics have highlighted key factors within Mansfield's subsequent marginalisation - class, gender, colonialism.[21] To these may be added the roles of periodisation (Mansfield, though slightly younger than her contemporaries, was one of the first to publish), her association with equally peripheral figures, including her posthumous iconification by Murry, and her decision to specialise in a marginal form. During her career, Mansfield moved between the circles that emerged around Bloomsbury and A.R. Orage's journal, *The New Age* (1907), without ever identifying herself with them. Similarly, in the often turbulent relationships that Mansfield had with Murry, Lawrence and Woolf, there is the desire not to be defined in relation to them. Her remark that "Joyce is (if only Pound didn't think so, too) immensely important" indicates her fear of contamination by association.[22] Mansfield's slipping and sliding between colleagues and contemporaries, as a result of her resistance to definition, must be seen as a predeterminant for her exclusion from the modernist

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[21] See, respectively, Kaplan, op cit, pp. 12-3; Kate Fullbrook, *Katherine Mansfield* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1986), pp. 2-9; and Andrew Gurr, *Writers in Exile: The Identity of Home in Modern Literature* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1981), pp. 33-64.

[22] Mansfield, letter to Sydney Schiff (28th December 1921), in *Letters, vol. 2*, p. 171.

canon, as well as a comment upon the role of marginality within Mansfield's art and persona.

Throughout this study, the evolution of modernism, and of the short story's role in that development, has been seen in terms of how socio-economic conditions enabled authors to write and be published, and of how ideology is mediated through their work. The collapse of the three-volume novel, the interrogation of genre (principally realism and romance), and the rise of the "little magazines" and their literary networks are all symptomatic of modernist culture. The need for individuals to organise around journals, artistic groupings or labels belies their internalisation of the residual organicist ideology. As has been shown, modernism was stimulated by the disparity between the idealisation and the actuality of English society, and the desire to construct a new cultural synthesis. The movement from one outmoded idea of the self to another, which would acknowledge social or psychological change, is indicated not only, for example, in the work of Lawrence, but also in Pound's argument that writing was a "search for the real".[23] Mansfield's equivocation concerning either the existence or the desirability of the self, reinforced by her vacillations in identifying with any camp, dissociates her from early modernism. Mansfield's lack of organic belief helps to explain her ex-centricity, though her dissociation also underpins what is most striking about her fiction.

Personal and artistic alienation provoked Mansfield into dividing opponents from allies. Eliot, of whom she wrote that "I liked him very much and did not feel he was an enemy"[24], was subsequently reassessed by his association with "that unspeakable Ezra Pound and the rest of em"[25], "these dark young men - so proud of their plumes and their black and silver cloaks and ever so expensive pompes funebres". Mansfield derides *The Egoist* group of Eliot, Pound, Lewis and Joyce by comparing them with the dandified aesthetes, whom they opposed. In so doing, Mansfield suggests that their egoism is no different from the narcissism of the 1890s, and that since the self has been appropriated by public discourse, their writing is as ultimately redundant as decadence. Eliot's cultivated analyses of disaffection and ennui, with the exception

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[23] Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (Hessle, East Yorkshire: Marvell Press, 1960), p. 85. It must be noted that Pound goes on to describe a process of "casting off [...] complete masks of the self", which would be nearer Mansfield's position. Mansfield, though, is not so ambivalent in her attitude towards Pound.

[24] Mansfield, letter to Ottoline Morrell (?24th June 1917), in *Collected Letters, vol. 1*, p. 312.

[25] Mansfield, letter to Ottoline Morrell (19th and 26th July 1919), in *Collected Letters, vol. 2*, p. 343.

of "Prufrock", are themselves "unspeakably dreary".[26] In associating four of the major male modernists in this way, Mansfield performs two actions, one wittingly, one unwittingly. Firstly, she inverts the organicist discourse by depicting four very different writers as part of a greater whole, but one which is unhealthy rather than pure. Secondly, Mansfield anticipates later critical maps of modernism with Pound at their centre. Unlike more recent critics, though, she does not advocate an alternate, woman-centred model. Instead, Mansfield also criticises writers like Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Gertrude Stein. Of Richardson's writing, Mansfield complains that "things just 'happen' one after another"[27], and since that all is "of equal importance to her, it is impossible that everything should not be of equal unimportance".[28] Mansfield contends that Richardson "has no memory"[29], so that she catalogues experience, but without discernment. Consequently, her writing descends into relativism, whilst the only foregrounded element is that of the perceiving "I". As with her male contemporaries, Richardson places an undue emphasis upon the self as the fulcrum for her fiction: it is to the self, which her writing is ultimately directed. Even Woolf, who also contested Richardson's egoism, treads precariously when complimenting Richardson upon her "woman's sentence", a comment which reveals the residual organic beliefs, which Woolf herself needed to negotiate.[30] Like Eliot though, Woolf was tainted, in Mansfield's mind, by association: in her case, with the Bloomsbury group, whom Mansfield attacked as "a set of *cowards*" for failing to appreciate the War's legacy, "nothing can ever be the same [...] we are traitors if we feel otherwise".[31] To sum-up: Mansfield slips between a canonical, male-dominated reading of modernism, and a more contemporary, feminist re-reading specifically because of her denial of the self.

Mansfield's self-questioning also helps to explain her anti-suffragism. Like other thinkers, such as Dora Marsden or Mansfield's associate from *The New Age,* Beatrice Hastings, Mansfield criticised the movement's presupposition of what a woman was, or of what she wanted. Her response, though, is oblique, for example in her desire to

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[26] Mansfield, letter to Virginia Woolf (c. 12th May 1919), in ibid, p. 318.

[27] Mansfield, extract from 'Three Women Novelists' (1919), in *Critical Writings,* p. 50.

[28] Mansfield, extract from 'Dragonflies' (1920), in ibid, p. 64.

[29] Mansfield, 'Three Women Novelists', p. 50.

[30] For a sensitive discussion of the ambiguities within Woolf's critique, see Lyn Pykett, *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), pp. 99-110.

[31] Mansfield, letter to J.M. Murry (10th November 1919), quoted in *Critical Writings,* p. 59.

bring suffragettes "home and show them my babies and make their hair soft and fluffy, and put them in teagowns and then cuddle them".[32] Mansfield's nauseous reaction re-presents a ludicrous version of the "domestic angel", which is also highly ironic bearing in mind Mansfield's abortion and miscarriage. Two diametrically opposed accounts of "Woman" are therefore contrasted and discredited, but nothing is put in their place except the elusiveness of the concept. For that reason, Mansfield could not align herself with Marsden's egoism, though she shares her demystification of womanhood[33], nor with Hastings' purely materialistic concerns.[34] For that reason also, Mansfield's critique highlights the limitations within feminist accounts, which valorise either the self or women's social behaviour, but without analysing their discursive and ideological bases, or their relationship to a dominant culture dependent upon public display.[35]

In this respect, again perhaps unwittingly, Mansfield begins from where George Egerton leaves off in the orgasmic conclusion to her protagonist's dance from "A Cross Line" (1893). "Poised on one slender foot, asking a supreme note to finish her dream of motion" (K, p. 20), the fusion of activity does not so much unite as disperse the self. Mansfield omits, though, Egerton's eugenicism, whilst her own ambiguous sexuality, like Vernon Lee's lesbianism, places her outside a dominant heterosexual culture. By suggesting these comparisons, the aim is not to propose a hidden female tradition, which would only replicate the implied emphasis upon identity-formation within canon-building, and therefore incompatible with writers who question the idea of selfhood. The legacy, though, of decadent and "new woman" fiction pinpoints another set of factors in Mansfield's marginalisation, whilst also highlighting the complex influences upon her writing. Critics who reiterate her debt to Anton Chekhov[36], despite the well-reasoned objections of Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr[37], should bear in mind that Mansfield's idealisation of Chekhov did not flourish until 1918 (that is, after major stories such as "Prelude"), or that she realised from early on

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[32] Quoted in ibid, p. 19.

[33] See Andrew Thacker, 'Dora Marsden and *The Egoist:* 'Our War is with Words", *English Literature in Transition: 1880 - 1920,* vol. 36, no. 2 (1993), pp. 179-96.

[34] On Hastings' feminism, see Kaplan, op cit, p. 142.

[35] This is precisely the error, which Pamela Dunbar falls foul of in *Radical Mansfield: Double Discourse in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories* (London: Macmillan, 1997). The "radicalism", which Dunbar detects, is undercut by her non-consideration of language and ideology.

[36] A standard account is David W. Martin's 'Chekhov and the Modern Short Story in English', *Neophilologus,* vol. 71 (1987), esp. pp. 135-40.

[37] Clare Hanson and Andrew Gurr, *Katherine Mansfield* (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 19 and 32-4.

that her fiction was an endless "tapestry" of influences[38], similar in that respect to Lawrence's voracious reading. Chekhov was assimilated along with other writers, including those who have comprised this study. His importance was to remind Mansfield that "what the writer does is not so much to *solve* the question but to *put* the question"[39]; that question being, "is there a Me?"[40]

TWO CASE-STUDIES: "JE NE PARLE PAS FRANCAIS" AND "THE ESCAPE"

In order to illustrate Mansfield's cultural critique, I have chosen to examine two of her stories (both published 1920). "Je ne parle pas Français" is narrated by Raoul Duquette, a French poet and would-be aesthete, who funds his artistic career by acting as a pimp. Critics have been becalmed by dwelling upon the story's biographical and sexual content[41], whilst Perry Meisel has attacked Mansfield's ironic portrayal of the bohemian as an ultimately conservative response.[42] A more fruitful approach might be to consider Duquette as a composite figure of writers such as Pound and Lewis, and to a lesser extent, Eliot and Joyce. The other details of Duquette's life, including his childhood, criminality and bisexuality, serve to disguise his satirical purpose. Mansfield assembles a series of incidentals in order to contextualise her modernist satire. The Parisian setting places Duquette at the heart of Anglo-European modernism, whilst the title of his collection, *False Coins*, resembles a text by one of the Left Bank's most famous residents - Stein's *Tender Buttons* (1914). Duquette sees himself as a *flâneur*, the dandified loner in Baudelaire's poetry, which Pound initially aspired to, whilst he also alludes to Dostoevsky in his desire to write "about the submerged world" (*SKM*, p. 282). Duquette's posing in his kimono as Madam Butterfly, besides commenting upon his sexual ambiguity and final desertion by Dick, refers also to the modernist fascination with Oriental culture, for example Pound's Chinese translations. There are also allusions to post-impressionist and cubist art, which recall the contemporaneous impact of avant-garde exhibitions in London. Formally, the text plays with, and is

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[38] Mansfield (May 1908), in *Journal*, p. 37.
[39] Mansfield, letter to Virginia Woolf (c. 27th May 1919), in *Collected Letters, vol. 2*, p. 320.
[40] Mansfield, letter to J.M. Murry (26th December 1922), in *Letters, vol. 2*, p. 266.
[41] See Kaplan, op cit, pp. 43-4 and 187; and Dunbar, op cit, pp. 76-82.
[42] Perry Meisel, 'What the Reader Knows; or, The French One', in *Katherine Mansfield: In From the Margin*, ed. by Roger Robinson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), pp. 112-8. The title of Robinson's collection, which is representative of recent Mansfield criticism, obscures the nature and significance of Mansfield's aesthetic.

composed out of, various modernist devices: the unreliable narrator, discontinuities within time and space, self-reflexivity, and lastly, one which is raised frequently in connection with the short story, the *geste* or epiphany. Duquette's discovery of the eponymous phrase inspires his recollection of his affair with the English couple, Dick and Mouse.[43] However, the *geste* is itself a product of Duquette's discourse, so that it is impossible to infer an external meaning which lends unity to the text other than Duquette's own untrustworthy narration. By introducing this paradox, Mansfield avoids prejudging Duquette, so that the reader is forced into evaluating the text on its own terms. Consequently, while satirising the modernist discourse, Mansfield valorises its guiding principles: an ambivalence that can hardly be described as conservative.

Turning to Duquette himself, his views and behaviour comment upon the attitudes of Mansfield's contemporaries. The equation between artistic creativity and sexual power recalls Pound's desire to revive "the great passive vulva of London" through the "phallic direction" of his poetry.[44] Duquette's cultivation of his artistic persona, which serves to conceal his criminal life, seems to be derived, in part, from the self-absorbed narrator(s) of Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"[45], which Mansfield had earlier parodied in her poem, "Night Scented Stock" (both 1917). Duquette's subsequent loathing for the "Life" that he describes, "I had the old bitch by the throat for once and did what I pleased with her", anticipates Pound's contention that civilisation is like "an old bitch gone in the teeth".[46] The conclusion, drawn by Duquette, that cultural degeneration is "the direct result of the American cinema acting upon a weak mind" (*SKM*, p. 278) can be compared suggestively with Lewis' analyses of cinema, and its role in producing an infantile mass.[47] Mansfield therefore ironises a number of widely-held beliefs, though her effect is also playful as well as satirical. The composition of Duquette's character from a set of rhetorical gestures, thereby confirming Duquette's view that there is no such thing as the self

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[43] Duquette's response, "I was Agony, Agony, Agony" (*SKM*, p. 280), might allude to Stephen Dedalus' reaction to the word "foetus" in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). See Kaplan, op cit, p. 186.

[44] Quoted by Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 104 and 256.

[45] See J.F. Kobler, *Katherine Mansfield: A Study of the Short Fiction* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), pp. 86-8.

[46] Pound, 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley' (1920), in *Selected Poems: 1908-1959* (London: Faber, 1975), p. 101.

[47] See, for example, Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man,* ed. by Paul Edwards (Santa Rosa, California: Black Sparrow Press, 1993, orig. pub. 1927), pp. 64-6.

except a hollow pretence, comments more upon Duquette than his sources. The reader is always aware that, compared to aesthetes such as Eliot or Pound, Duquette is a travesty; what Lewis might have called a "pseudo-Enemy". That distinction prevents Duquette from just being viewed as an allegorical figure, and instead, while Mansfield plays with modernist tropes, he acts as a cautionary warning against accepting the dogma of one's own theories.

Duquette's failure emerges early on in his attempt to construct a coherent theory of character, "people are like portmanteaux - packed with certain things, started going, thrown about, tossed away", but which is also subject to Duquette's discursive style: "what I meant to say quite simply was that there are no portmanteaux to be examined here because the clientele of this café, ladies and gentlemen, does not sit down. No, it stands at the counter" (*SKM*, p. 277). His prejudgement of the self's non-existence results in his constant feeling that he is being observed, and of playing to a mythical audience. In effect, Duquette's self-referential style, where the autobiographical "I" is itself a product of its own discourse, affirms his original premise that the self is absent. In other words, Duquette implicitly solves without first asking the question of selfhood, so that any speculation upon the self is immediately pre-empted. Duquette's discourse lacks critical distance, and without that a dialectic is unsustainable, as he unwittingly acknowledges:

> How can one look the part and not be the part? Or be the part and not look it?
> Isn't looking - being? Or being - looking? At any rate who is to say that it is not?
> (*SKM*, p. 288)

Duquette's torturous circumlocutions, and descent into relativism, mediate the agony of estrangement by a discourse of his own invention. Instead of self, there remains "will", but it never transcends the level of mere imposition, and even that is subject to Duquette's mindless discourse. Having "made it a rule [...] never to look back" (*SKM*, p. 280), Duquette obsessively recounts his past, though his self-preening indicates his failure to combine experience with intuition, a primary step in Mansfield's artistic theory. Instead of being "master of the situation" (*SKM*, p. 278), Duquette lacks control over his writing, and for Mansfield that is truly unforgivable, since without precision, Duquette can neither test hypotheses nor build ambiguity into his argument. Presuppositions are accepted as first principles, but Mansfield's elegant framing of Duquette's formless narrative subtly ironises its depthlessness.

The double negatives and internal contradictions foreground not only the limitations in Duquette's intellectualism, but also in reducing identity, as opposed to self, to the level of discourse. By inference, it exceeds language, so that, like Mansfield's narrative "voice", it is absent and indiscernible. The implication, however, destabilises Duquette's text, since instead of sustaining absences within its structure, as seen before, the entire text is itself an absence. Only generic expectations serve to frame the narrative, so that it acts as a coda to another text, which passes unwritten. When Duquette insists upon the reality of his "moment of anguish" (*SKM,* p. 283), the irony is not just aimed at his egotism, but at something in the act of writing, which he fails to understand.

The cautionary nature of Duquette's relativism is directed also to those female writers whom Mansfield felt lacked memory and discernment. The symbolism and multiple meanings of "The Escape" have been extensively explored[48], but I want to briefly consider its ending. Whilst his wife hunts for her parasol, the unnamed protagonist experiences, first, intense exhaustion, "he felt himself, lying there, a hollow man", and then a moment of self-dispersal, "he became part of the silence". Observing a tree, and beyond it "a whiteness, a softness, an opaque mass, half-hidden - with delicate pillars" (*SKM,* p. 349), he gradually abandons self-control, "a woman was singing [...] floated upon the air, and it was all part of the silence as he was part of it". Finally, he submits to his own internal fluidity: "something dark, something unbearable and dreadful pushed in his bosom [...] deep, deep, he sank into the silence [...] until he felt himself enfolded". In Lee's terms, the spirit of place provokes the protagonist into self-immersion, but not necessarily into the self-revelation, which Hanson argues, unifies both character and text.[49] Mansfield writes in an ellipsis, omitting whatever happens following the protagonist's dissolution, and instead relocates both husband and wife to a railway carriage. Whilst she continues to refer to him in the third person, he grips "with both hands to the brass rail", symbolically holding on to material reality. Internally, he experiences a "heavenly happiness" (*SKM,* p. 350), the nature of which goes unexplained. Outwardly, he appears neurasthenic, so that the escape inwards is not necessarily into anything which might affect his external world. Instead, it highlights the underlying tension of either

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[48] See W.H. New, 'Reading 'The Escape", in Robinson, op cit, esp. pp. 94-101.
[49] Hanson, *Short Stories and Short Fictions, 1880-1980* (London: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 80-1.

accepting a socially-imposed self, and therefore being limited by that, or some form of nebulous, private identity, which is intrinsically estranged.

The act of flight, though, calls into question the subject positions of husband and wife, male and female. Unlike either "social purity" feminists, or modernists such as Richardson, Mansfield does not invest the female with a feminine mystique, which stands outside of patriarchy, and beyond its rules. The relationship between the sexes is always one of power for Mansfield, and in this story where the wife is dominant, symbolised by her claim upon the phallic parasol, power is equally corrupting. Marginality can therefore apply to both men and women, so that oppression is recentred within the social conditions which shape patriarchal thought, including women's participation, instead of within the metaphysics of sex-based differences. Mansfield again denies the self as a potential source of liberation. The dominant wife is obsessed with personality; the husband's retreat is into the impersonal, and therefore expressive of Mansfield's literary method. The story's impersonality erases the self in order to trace out its historical and discursive construction, even though that is at odds with much of contemporaneous feminist thought. At the same time, the escape also symbolises the departure from realism, and traditional notions of plot, revelation and symmetry, which serve to reintegrate the subject with a prescribed social existence. Though the conclusion is ambivalent, even apprehensive, it resists the imposition of a final meaning.

The Early Fiction: Revis(it)ing Genre

Many of Mansfield's early stories are genre pieces, which not only experiment with the form, "The Tiredness of Rosabel" (1908) pastiches the psychological sketches associated with *The Yellow Book*, but also with realism and romance, from whose conflict modernism emerged. Her initial success was through the satirical "Pension Sketches", which ran from 1910 in *The New Age*.[50] The journal had led a precarious existence since 1894, disseminating liberal and socialist thought for an upper working class audience. A.R. Orage and Holbrook Jackson, having founded the Leeds Arts Club together, assumed control in 1907 with backing from George Bernard Shaw and a financier, Lewis Wallace. Having been primarily political, the magazine expanded its artistic content following Jackson's departure. Orage believed that greater

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[50] The following details are from Wallace Martin, *"The New Age" Under Orage: Chapters in English Cultural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967).

cultural awareness could precipitate the spread of social reform. Having initially defended the realist novel (Arnold Bennett and H.G. Wells had been regular contributors), Orage increasingly advocated more innovative writing, including imagism and European philosophy. In 1911, a sequence of parodies by Mansfield and Hastings, of writers such as Bennett and Wells, not only confirmed the break with realism, but also the importance of satire to the journal. Hastings, a South African following in the footsteps of Olive Schreiner, was a talented satirist and a regular feature-writer besides being Orage's mistress. Mansfield was viewed as her protégé, and the sketches were designed to satisfy Orage's satirical need and Hastings' feminist agenda.

Yet, despite their programmatic nature, Mansfield experimented with symbolism, allusion, irony and ellipses within the stories. One of the most disturbing examples is "At 'Lehmann's'" (1910), which centres upon two protagonists: Sabina, the young, naive waitress who works in Herr Lehmann's café, and the almost invisible Frau, who is giving birth upstairs. Mansfield swiftly sketches in Sabina's marginalisation: she is overworked, underpaid, and exploited because of her youth. Romantic idealisation of the Young Man, "she had never seen anybody who looked so strong", and of motherhood, "it would be very sweet to have a little baby to dress and jump up and down" (*SKM*, p. 39), ameliorates Sabina's existence, whilst also disguising from herself her exploitation. (The equally unsettling "The Child Who-Was-Tired", also 1910, offers a more thorough critique of domestic ideology.) Sabina's sexual innocence, and ignorance of her own subjection, fuels the Young Man's attempts to seduce her: "are you a child, or are you playing at being one?" Her childlikeness, which is itself a product of her alienation, places her in open physical danger. Yet, perhaps because of her innocence, Sabina anticipates one of the story's key themes. Speculating upon the meaning of birth, she considers also the demise of her grandmother, linking sex and death with one another. Their alignment is reproduced during the story's conclusion. As Frau Lehmann screams in giving birth, and the baby wails in being born, Sabina yells whilst resisting the Young Man's assault. The three figures constitute different stages within the maternal cycle; their joint cries symbolise their metaphoric death within a male-dominated existence. Their screams, which are not simultaneous, suggesting some kind of unity, but overlap each other, temporarily disturb the patriarchal order, so that in their self-immolation, the protagonists evade the objectifying gaze. The corollary, though, is that the satire's

moral centre is displaced, it can only be suggested rather than inferred, so that their screams are stylistically disruptive. An ellipsis follows the Frau's shriek, and the final sentences are presented in isolation:

> In the silence the thin wailing of a baby.
>
> "Achk!" shrieked Sabina, rushing from the room. (*SKM*, p. 42)

Their minimal presentation results in the last paragraphs assuming a starkly, imagistic quality. One image is superimposed upon the other: the context provides their connection. No further commentary is supplied, so that the attribution of meaning is transferred to the reader. By being set apart, the paragraphs also acquire a symbolic emphasis and poetic appearance, which is underlined by their metrical rhythm. Generic dysfunction complements the story's disruptions within patriarchy, so that both formally and thematically, the text resists closure. Mansfield anticipates the journal's direction towards greater formal innovation, whilst departing from the narrow materialistic bracket in which she had been placed by Orage and Hastings.

The magazine to which Mansfield turned was *Rhythm* (1911), an earnest, if perhaps naive, celebration of modern artistic movements, which appealed to a small, but enthusiastic audience. Besides marrying its editor, Murry, Mansfield became his assistant, and in 1914 when financial difficulties set in, helped to transform the journal into the short-lived *Blue Review*. Her first story to be accepted, "The Woman at the Store" (1912), was inspired by the magazine's slogan, a paraphrase from J.M. Synge, "before art can be human again it must learn to be brutal". Mansfield had also written that New Zealand required "a purifying influence", to "become almost decadent [...] and then find balance and proportion".[51] She therefore turned to her homeland to satisfy Murry's editorial needs and to undercut the bourgeoisification of her native country.

The story has been variously read in terms of women's oppression, its narrative and sexual ambiguities, or its mediation of colonial discourse.[52] Less emphasis, though, has been placed upon the story's adaptation of the imperial Gothic, even though it inspired, at Murry's request, two further examples ("Millie" and "Ole

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[51] Mansfield, letter to Vera Beauchamp (?April - May 1908), in *Collected Letters, vol. 1*, p. 44.

[52] See, respectively, Susan Gubar, 'The Birth of the Artist as Heroine: (Re)production, the 'Kunstleroman' Tradition, and the Fiction of Katherine Mansfield', in *The Representation of Women in Fiction*, ed. by Carolyn G. Heilbrun and Margaret R. Higonnet (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983), pp. 27-9; Dunbar, op cit, pp. 46-9; and Lydia Wevers, 'How Kathleen Beauchamp was Kidnapped', in *Critical Essays on Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by Rhoda B. Nathan (New York: G.K. Hall, 1993), pp. 43-5.

Underwood"). Though Rhoda Nathan has referred to the text's naturalism[53],
Mansfield's description of the New Zealand wilderness, and its remnants from the
colonial drive, is expressed through the symbolism of mood and atmosphere. The
opening is of stasis - the oppressive heat, the wind "close to the ground", the sky a
"slate colour". The narrator comments that "there was nothing to be seen" (*SKM*, p.
109). The illness of the horses, and the dust that settles on the humans like a second
skin, contribute to the sense of stagnation. Accusations of madness abound as do
pathetic fallacies, the wind "slithers", so that the environment not only influences the
individual, but also externalises a mental state: "there is no twilight in our New
Zealand days, but a curious half-hour when everything appears grotesque - it
frightens - as though the savage spirit of the country walked abroad and sneered at
what it saw" (*SKM*, p. 112).

Like many imperial Gothic narratives, the riders are involved in some kind of
quest, though where they are eventually headed is unmentioned. Their immediate
destination, however, is a store, owned by a friend and his family, where they can rest
for the night. Like other quest narratives, the journey is inwards and backwards in
time. The narrator's feeling of "not moving forward" (*SKM*, p. 110) precipitates, for
example, a dream inspired by his/her childhood. (The narrator's gender is never
satisfactorily revealed.) When the travellers finally arrive at the store, only the wife
and her child remain. They do not discover an exotic or atavistic figure, as in
conventional imperial Gothic narratives, but an emaciated, battered woman, a vestige
from New Zealand's immediate past. The store does not symbolise comfort, despite
being a kind of oasis, but the harshness of colonisation, and the extent to which
women are both central and extraneous to that history. It forms a space in which the
woman's voice can be heard:

> It's six years since I was married, and four miscarriages. I says to 'im, I says,
> what do you think I'm doin' up 'ere? If you was back at the Coast I'd 'ave you
> lynched for child murder. Over and over I tells 'im - you've broken my spirit and
> spoiled my looks, and wot for... (*SKM*, p. 114)

Without silencing her, the intruders contain her narrative by their incomprehension,
whilst the narrator attempts to invalidate it by emphasising their drunkenness.

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[53] Nathan, *Katherine Mansfield* (New York: Continuum, 1988), pp. 116-20.

Similarly, the child's drawings are dismissed in tones reminiscent of Victorian moral criticism:

> And those drawings of hers were extraordinary and repulsively vulgar. The creations of a lunatic with a lunatic's cleverness. There was no doubt about it, the kid's mind was diseased. (*SKM*, p. 116)

The child's art-work, marginalised in terms of form and content, also comments upon Mansfield's own aesthetic, and more especially, the construction of this story. An artefact which is brief, impersonal and disapproved is valorised by Mansfield for its ability to break taboos. Significantly, following the child's representation of what might be her mother killing the husband, there is hardly any further dialogue, and no further interventions from the narrator. It is as if the drawing has exposed the superficiality of public discourse, and cannot be contained by being interpreted. Instead, after the oppressive opening, the story now moves swiftly to its conclusion with Hin and the narrator silently stealing "out of the whare", whilst Jo, who has spent the night with the woman, motions them "to ride on". The text finishes perfunctorily, so that the closure is only tacit: the emphasis remains upon the art-work, which instead of itself being silenced, has disturbed the complacent, imperial narrative. However, its meaning is ambiguous - the child may just be mad - whilst its cruelty only perpetuates the cycle of violence. Like the store itself, which disappears following "a bend in the road" (*SKM*, p. 117), the text hovers on the margins of explanation.

Throughout her literary career, Mansfield was concerned with the idea of childhood as either somewhere to escape to, or the embodiment of social exclusion. "How Pearl Button was Kidnapped" (1912) successfully combines both these elements. The intentionally simplistic language, and dream-like quality in which events follow one another without explanation, effectively pastiche the fairy story. But the text also plays with other genres from the prehistory of short fiction: the tale or anecdote, indicated by the title and colloquial register, and the parable in terms of the allegorical usage of names and motifs. However, whereas these traditional forms have discernible meanings, which are consolidated during the act of closure, Mansfield wrong-foots the reader right from the start: Pearl is *not* kidnapped, but goes voluntarily with the two "dark women". The text mimics the end-directed narrative, but the restoration of order is ambivalent, whilst the abrupt finish and

impersonal narration suspend moral judgement. What could appear to be a sentimental story is undercut by the ironisation of both genre and narrative form. The text's self-reflexivity prevents it from being read as an allegory about the relationship between colonial settlers and indigenous people[54], whilst critics who see something empowering in the description of the Maoris (if that's what they are) further romanticise the text.[55] As Bridget Orr has noted[56], the mediations within Mansfield's identification with native culture seriously complicate such literal readings.

The text's rejection of realism disturbs the hegemony symbolised by "the House of Boxes", and the routine of Pearl's mother "ironing-because-it's-Tuesday" (*SC*, p. 11). The play of imagination allows Pearl to temporarily escape the standardisation of urban society:

> "Haven't you got any Houses of Boxes?" she said. "Don't you all live in a row? Don't the men go to offices? Aren't there any nasty things?"

In the idyll, Pearl is allowed to run free, to eat fruit and remove her clothes, her symbols of constraint. Though men are also present, the symbolism of nurturing, fertility and nature construct the idyll as maternal and feminine. Sexual differences dissolve: Pearl is snatched the moment she flings "her little thin arms round the woman's neck, hugging her, kissing". However, the sudden ending in which the police, "little blue men [...] with shouts and whistlings", "carry her back to the House of Boxes" (*SC*, p. 14), indicates that this idyll cannot be revisited, since it exists in order to compensate for the alienation of urban culture. Its romanticism, rather than being truly subversive, is only escapist and infantile. Pearl's kidnap presages Mansfield's own return to the domestic domain, to expose it from within through methods originally developed through her early fiction.

"Prelude" and the Later Fiction

After a series of miscellaneous and experimental pieces, such as "The Wind Blows" (1915), Mansfield published in 1917 what is widely regarded as her masterpiece, and a landmark in the history of the short story. Originally conceived as a novella, "Prelude"'s distillation of its themes and style exemplifies Mansfield's fastidiousness,

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[54] See ibid, pp. 121-2.
[55] See Dunbar, op cit, p. 41.
[56] Bridget Orr, 'Reading with the Taint of the Pioneer: Katherine Mansfield and Settler Criticism', in Nathan (ed), *Critical Essays*, pp. 53-6.

"as though I wrote with acid"[57], as well as the principles of impressionism and selection developed by writers like Conrad and Kipling. However, though the style is more refined - pastiche gives way to the contouring of family life - the concerns, especially symbolism and identity, remain the same. As Hanson has observed, the story's realistic detail only conceals an intricate symbolic narrative[58], whilst as Dominic Head has shown, the mimicry of received discourses acts out the characters' integration within the family unit.[59]

The fragmented and episodic text mediates the formation of consciousness, for example, when Kezia takes turns looking through a different coloured window-pane. Each pane offers an alternate view of the world, so that Kezia becomes unsure which is true. Yet, each impression influences Kezia as she attempts to formulate her own sense of self in relation to her environment. For instance, Kezia evaluates stimuli, "she liked the feeling [...] she liked to watch", but these sensory perceptions convey an intensity that cannot be easily translated into words. As John Berger has emphasised, seeing comes before speech[60]: the placing of oneself within a world of sense impressions as distinct from the enunciation, which attempts to rationalise the experience. Not only is there a division between what subjects sense and what they know, the act of experience also involves recognising the relationship between subjects and objects. Consciousness forms both attuned to the arbitrariness of that relationship and potentially resistant to ideologies, which try and convince us otherwise. For example, Kezia sees the winds metaphorically, "snuffling and howling" like an animal. She senses the "IT", which lies "just behind her, waiting at the door". Her fantasy evokes the feeling of estrangement within apparent normality, which language, embodied by Lottie's cry of "Kezia!" (*SKM*, p. 226), attempts to dispel. Kezia's role throughout "Prelude" is to experience and to question.

Kezia's play with language, her affected adult register of "I'm not an atom bit sleepy" (*SKM*, p. 228), complements her childhood games of initiation. Lottie refuses to play "hospitals", however, "because last time Pip had squeezed something down her throat and it hurt awfully" (*SKM*, p. 246), an early association between masculinity and sexual violence. Kezia, though, detests playing "ladies", because of

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[57] Mansfield, letter to J.M. Murry (19th May 1913), in *Collected Letters, vol. 1*, p. 124.

[58] Hanson, 'Katherine Mansfield and Symbolism: the 'artist's method' in *Prelude*', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 16, no. 1 (1981), pp. 30-8.

[59] Dominic Head, *The Modernist Short Story: A Study of Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 117-22.

[60] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: B.B.C. and Penguin, 1972), pp. 7-9.

its structure: "you always make us go to church hand in hand and come home and go to bed" (*SKM*, p. 247). The children, apart from Kezia, enjoy themselves most, however, when Pat decapitates the duck, "the first of the home products". Their response is atavistic, rejecting the adult roles of their games, and instead exposes the latent barbarism within the grown-ups: Stanley's "pride [...] in dividing a chicken or a duck with nice precision" (*SKM*, p. 252). Kezia, though, who is appalled by the headless, walking duck, supplicates herself before Pat, and appeals to him to "put head back". In a motif, however, which recalls the ending to "The Little Girl" (1912), Kezia becomes fascinated by Pat's ear-rings, which "she never knew men wore", and asks him whether "they come on and off" (*SKM*, p. 249), similar to the duck's decapitation. The male killer is reinvented through his likeness to women, whilst Kezia converts her supplication into a form of equality by suggesting a commonality between herself and Pat. The decapitation, and Kezia's response to it, symbolise Mansfield's defamiliarisation of social norms by playing with the distinctions between self and other.

The duck's beheading also illustrates how Mansfield symbolically unites her female protagonists. Linda earlier describes her husband, Stanley, as "a big fat turkey", whilst her dream features a "tiny bird", which grows into a baby with "a gaping bird-mouth, opening and shutting" (*SKM*, p. 233), so that the duck's demise and consumption can be read as a castration fantasy directed against Stanley, and Linda's pregnancy. Sexual symbolism is also present in Kezia's dream, where animals "rush at me [...] and while they are rushing, their heads swell e-enormous" (*SKM*, p. 228), so that the fear of male sexuality, expressed in Pip's behaviour, is reinforced. However, whereas Kezia's elisions between herself and her environment help to form her own subjectivity, Linda's transformations of her material world, such as tassels which become "a funny procession of dancers with priests attending", only ensnare her further within her already-prescribed social role. The imaginary figures turn into a monstrous "THEY", who reassert her oppression:

> THEY knew how frightened she was; THEY saw how she turned her head away as
> she passed the mirror. What Linda always felt was that THEY wanted something
> of her... (*SKM*, p. 235)

The "THEY" are projections of Linda's own sense of self-division, her terror of conformity, and her internalisation of feeling under constant scrutiny. The use of the

mirror as a metaphor for the patriarchal gaze returns later in the story as it does elsewhere in Mansfield's work, for example in "The Garden Party" (1922). Beryl, Linda's sister, desires to express herself freely in her letter, but she is forced into using another's (man-made) language: "she felt all those things, but she didn't really feel them like that" (*SKM*, p. 256). Unable to complete her writing, Beryl examines herself in her looking-glass, "you really are a lovely little thing" (*SKM*, p. 257). However, she immediately recoils: "false - false as ever". Beryl desires to be her "real self", but she experiences it only as "a shadow", "faint and unsubstantial". She is therefore caught between her marginalisation within patriarchy, of "always acting a part", and the incoherence of her personal shade. Underlining Beryl's self-division is the nagging doubt that "was there ever a time when I did not have a false self?" (*SKM*, p. 258). The pursuit for selfhood might itself be illusory. Only the sisters' mother, Mrs Fairfield, seems content. Freed from childbirth, she has turned house-work into an art-form, "everything in the kitchen had become part of a series of patterns" (*SKM*, p. 236), though her domestication aligns her with dominant notions of femininity.

Central to the text is the aloe, though its symbolism is ambiguous, since its meaning alters according to different observers. Though phallic on first appearance, "out of the middle there sprang up a tall stout stem", the aloe is also "fat", "swelling" and "fleshy". It appropriates male sexual metaphors for its own pregnant imagery. The "broken" and "withered" leaves suggest the pain of reproduction, but also the aloe's regenerative powers, hidden by "the curling leaves" (*SKM*, p. 240). In the moonlight, Mrs Fairfield believes that "it is going to flower" (*SKM*, p. 253), and she also sees what she thinks "are buds". Linda, though, prefers "the long sharp thorns" (*SKM*, p. 254), reclaiming the phallus for herself following its metaphorical consumption by Stanley. Whereas the post-menopausal Mrs Fairfield can dwell upon the spirituality of sexual reproduction, Linda needs to be protected by appropriating the aloe's masculine attributes. Beryl, though, who does not gaze upon the aloe, highlights the dilemma of a woman trying to be herself, whilst also satisfying her patriarchal role. The fact that Beryl's narrative remains unresolved, and instead becomes one of the main strands in "At the Bay" (1922), indicates that the aloe does not act as an epiphany, which closes the text. Instead, it is more like Bertha Young's pear tree in "Bliss" (1918): ambivalent and undefined, pregnant with possibility. The sense of apprehension and expectancy underpins the change of title from the original,

"The Aloe", presupposing some idea of definition and closure, to the more open-ended "Prelude".

Stanley, as the only major male character, refers back to the caricatured patriarchs of stories such as "New Dresses" (1912). One of the lessons of "Prelude", for Mansfield, was to concentrate more upon thought processes and behaviour patterns rather than originating them within specific characters. In "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" (1921), for example, the father-figure is already dead, so that instead of using a physical representation of patriarchy, Mansfield foregrounds the interiority of her protagonists; thereby revealing how far they have internalised patriarchal ideology. An early instance is when Constantia almost giggles. Her laughter would fracture the social role of grieving daughter imposed upon her by her father's death. Constantia recalls laughing with her sister when, suggestively, their beds "simply heaved" (*GP*, p. 52). To repress her giggle is to deny this pre-Oedipal union, and to accept her place within the patriarchal order. The father's burial in turn buries his daughters' freedom.

Their dependency is signified by their inability to sack Kate, the servant whose presence reminds them of their father, or to sort out his room where his spirit permeates the very furniture. Constantia begs, "let's be weak - be weak, Jug. It's much nicer to be weak than to be strong" (*GP*, p. 60). The acceptance of passivity as a living death is reinforced when Constantia dreams about being crucified. The sisters' diminutive nicknames for each other, Con and Jug, indicate their immersion into an infantile kind of femininity, and into their own objectification. Josephine comments, at one point, that "the jug's not at all necessary" (*GP*, p. 61), unconsciously suggesting her own irrelevance. Their attempt at independence is accompanied by guilt, "what would father say when he found out?", and self-loathing, "the entire blame for it all would fall on her and Constantia". Reinforcing their subordination is the remembrance of his phallic "stick thumping" (*GP*, p. 57), whilst Josephine recalls telling Constantia that "a snake had killed their mother" (*GP*, p. 69). Another destructive symbol, the father's "roaring fire" (*GP*, p. 64), which contrasts with Constantia's "cold hands" (*GP*, p. 68), suggests that the cruelty of the earlier stories lies just beneath the surface.

The use of chronology, which has often been highlighted[61], can also be read in gendered terms. Cyril and Colonel Pinner, like many of Mansfield's men, such as Hammond in "The Stranger" (1921), are obsessive about timepieces and linearity. For the sisters, though, past and present converge. Their minds move in "tangents" (*GP*, p. 62), which is replicated by the non-linear narrative. Despite their confinement, both potentially have access to an alternate point of view, exemplified by Constantia:

> There had been this other life, running out, bringing things home in bags [...] arranging father's trays and trying not to annoy father. But it all seemed to have happened in a kind of tunnel. It wasn't real. It was only when she came out of the tunnel into the moonlight or by the sea or into a thunderstorm that she really felt herself.

Her self-discovery through elemental imagery echoes similar moments in "Prelude" and "Bliss", but when the sisters try to speak openly to each other, they cannot, for like Beryl Fairfield's attempts at writing, they are forced into using another's over-differentiated language. They falter, "a big cloud" obscures the sun, and they conclude that they have "forgotten" (*GP*, p. 70). On the other hand, Cyril, who is also intimidated by the Colonel, experiences not even this level of insight. Though he is materially better-off, by virtue of being a man within a male-dominated society, Cyril's exclusion from the narrative symbolises his isolation from any understanding about his own alienation. Though only a minor character, Cyril reinforces the insidious influence of patriarchy within the text, and anticipates the victimisation of men, for example Jonathan Trout in "At the Bay", or even the Boss in "The Fly" (1922), who ironically is unable to manage either his grief or latent violence, due to his immersion within patriarchal ideology.

Before commencing her final stories, Mansfield completed a commission of five for the *Sphere,* an upper class society magazine. One of her contributions, "Her First Ball" (1921), provides a suitable study with which to conclude. The *Sphere* was a mainstream journal, which specialised in the attractive presentation of lowbrow tastes for an upmarket audience. Its economic position and niche marketing disseminated the dominant values of bourgeois ideology. "Her First Ball" mimics the journal's social milieu by centring upon a young country girl's presentation to high society by

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[61] See, for example, Don W. Kleine, 'Mansfield and the Orphans of Time', *Modern Fiction Studies,* vol. 24, no. 3 (1978), pp. 423-38.

her wealthier, more sophisticated urban cousins, the Sheridans. The story therefore incorporates the social and economic values of both the journal and its intended audience. The text displays a self-awareness and ironic detachment, which is absent elsewhere in the magazine. Consequently, by reconstructing the fabric of upper class society within its own discourse, the text disrupts both its own coherence, and that of the journal.

The pretence is reinforced by the uses made of an omniscient narrator, realistic detail as well as the romantic scenario, and of symmetry - the binary oppositions, such as rich/poor, city/country, male/female, age/youth, which appear to unite and close the text. The naive protagonist, Leila, allows the bourgeois reader to feel superior towards her, which is reassured by the ending in which Leila rejoins the dance and dismisses "the fat man", the irritant within the text. All of these devices, however, which mediate the complacency of bourgeois hegemony, are only part of the text's discursiveness, and are ironised as such. For example, despite the omniscient tone, the narrative point of view is ambiguous. The opening appears conventional in its objective detachment, but in expressing Leila's desire, "oh dear, how hard it was to be indifferent like the others" (*GP*, p. 115), first and third persons overlap. Firstly, indifference is itself ironised as a rhetorical gesture, upsetting both neutral objectivity and Mansfield's more typical use of impersonality: the narrator's ability in expressing Leila's emotions presupposes that it, too, has an understanding of subjectivity. Secondly, the hierarchy of discourses is disturbed, so that the reader is constantly reminded of a division between Leila and the narrator, and the difficulty in prioritising their separate discourses. Instead of the closure uniting both protagonist and narrator in a moment of self-fulfilment, there remains a discrepancy between them, which increases the potential for irony. Though Leila rejoins the dance, "a soft, melting, ravishing tune began", and she assumes the Sheridans' indifference, "very stiffly [...] very haughtily", the narrator's final comment, "she didn't even recognise him again" (*GP*, p. 120), undercuts her self-fruition. The ironisation of the narrative "voice" comments upon the self, which Leila acquires, as artificial, whilst also intimating that there is an identity which is outside of public discourse. Consequently, Mansfield's writing is not simply bleak, though neither does it suggest that the social fabric can be wholly subverted.

Mansfield's self-conscious usage of symmetry counterpoints Leila's insertion into the hegemony, though the binary opposition which underlines the text, life/death,

effectively implodes the symmetrical design. Instead of being an irritant which can be excised, the fat man's speech is implicit to the story's structure, since it contrasts with Leila's innocence, though it also questions the social harmony implied by the use of symmetry:

> And these pretty arms will have turned into little short fat ones, and you'll beat time with such a different kind of fan - a black bony one [...] And you'll smile away like the poor old dears up there, and point to your daughter, and tell the elderly lady next to you how some dreadful man tried to kiss her at the club ball. And your heart will ache [...] because no one wants to kiss you now. (*GP*, pp. 119-20)

To "beat time" is an incisive comment on the text, its spinning on solitary phrases or single ideas. The desire to escape mortality, symbolised by the ball's spectacle, carries with it its own corruption: the self-delusion and decline into moribund regimentation. The proffering of myth on the one hand, the disguised ideological gesture, and its displacement by history on the other, the living death envisaged above, is intrinsic to the ball's social organisation, so that the dance, whilst symbolising an eternal transcendence, traces out its own dissolution: "the lights, the azaleas, the dresses, the pink faces, the velvet chairs, all became one beautiful flying wheel" (*GP*, p. 120). The metaphors of circularity and futility are compounded by Leila's use of rhetorical questions, and the ironic final line, both of which suspend closure, and any sense of extrication. "Her First Ball" therefore summarises how Mansfield disrupts the patriarchal frame, symbolised by the *Sphere*, by mimicking and breaking traditional symmetry within the short story. Whilst posing the chimera of transcendence and reconciliation, the text draws the reader back into the irresolution of history and language.

Conclusion

This analysis has argued that Mansfield's rejection of the self, and her emphasis upon writing as erasure, constitute an artistic revolution. Her stress upon language and power, in which the historical and discursive outlines of an absent being are traced-out, resists descending into a vacuous play. Instead, the decentring of the writer from the written, and of self from consciousness, establishes a dialectic rather than a relativistic or defeatist complicity. In part, that involves disturbing the fixed relationship between subject and object, and in this respect, Mansfield's practice is in

dialogue, backwards, with the Romantics and decadents, and contemporaneously, with the emergence of "high" modernism: the short stories, for example, of Lewis and Woolf. Mansfield's personal aesthetic forms part of the more pervasive "revolution of the word", but her special contribution is to recognise that the short story is perfectly suited to that revolution. Instead of being a minor tributary, the short story is in the great tide of innovation, and feeds into the development of high modernism. Its imposition of an artistic frame, whilst breaking the symmetry which underlines its structure, introduces archetypal elements of self-reflexivity, paradox, impersonality and ironic detachment. Mansfield's desire for non-definition, however, both complicates and concentrates her own methodology. Not simply being content with symmetry-breaking, Mansfield's foregrounding of ambiguity, hypothesis and speculation results in an imploded, multi-layered and inconclusive form. Her writing sits proudly on the margins, probing but without partaking, so that the reader's own position is decentred, forcing them back into the text, and into recognising their own subjectivity.

There are a number of implications. Firstly, Mansfield discards the dream of a cultural revolution advocated by, amongst others, Pound, since it remains tied to residual beliefs in selfhood and linearity. Mansfield's constant interrogation of culture and orthodoxy, including her own motivations, anticipates a more wide-ranging critique of language, history and identity, exemplified by Woolf's later novels and political criticism. Secondly, though a notion of the self persists into the 1920s, for example Lawrence's idealisation of non-European culture, Mansfield predates the more sceptical, later modernists. Jean Rhys and Samuel Beckett symbolise two ways of approaching Mansfield's legacy. Rhys, in *The Left Bank* (1927), emphasises the sense of entrapment conveyed by textual disunity. Though her fiction illustrates the historical subjugation of women, it does not in itself subvert the patriarchal hegemony. Alternatively, Beckett (though more clearly indebted to Joyce with whom Mansfield should be seen as one of the major innovators) emphasises, for example in *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934), that the significance of writing lies in its estrangement from the self. The impossibility of self-expression, and therefore of writing itself, deflects the hegemonic need for definition and exposes the ideological imperative to integrate the subject within its discourse. Though dominant, hegemonic rule is revealed to be incomplete. This final point connects Mansfield with her modernist contemporaries and with the writers who have formed this study.

Instead of being politically reactionary or disinterested, Mansfield emphasises that modernism is fundamentally concerned with exposing the artifice of social existence, and its manufacture. Mansfield is the most ambivalent of the early modernists: one could contrast her sometimes cruel indifference with more compensatory or utopian beliefs expressed, for example, in Kipling's investment of magic within the transformed English landscape. Her clarity of vision, however, serves only to restate the enduring importance of modernism, especially in its interrogation of subjectivity, language and ideology.

CONCLUSION

Before offering any specific thoughts on the short story form, a summary of what has been argued.

The transformation of the English short story during the 1890s is explainable by the internecine conflict between realism and romance, and the novel's consequent paralysis. As Maupassant's reception indicates, these formal issues were ideologically conditioned, especially by the internalised picture of England as organic and pastoral. The hegemony's failure to reconcile this idyllic view with the unforeseen consequences of material growth stimulated degenerationist fears. Women, foreigners and the proletariat were amongst those singled-out as sources of degeneration, though the discourse itself highlights the schism between the received impression of England, around which social identity was constituted, and the reality of modern English society. Neither realism nor romance could resolve this paradox since both, in their acceptance of the lifelike attachment between word and object, were implicated within organicism. The novel was equally crippled by being associated with both genres, whilst the end of its three-volume format suggested that human evolution could no longer be rationalised, but was mindless and unknowable. Whereas the novel was viewed organically, the short story was often derided as artificial, formulaic or mass-produced: descriptions which aligned the form with the scientific and technological forces which were dismembering the body politic. In addition to its lack of historical baggage, and innate emphasis upon absence and ambiguity, the short story appealed directly to modernists, who were seeking to reintegrate society through a critical engagement with the products and disruptions of mass culture. Consequently, the short story forms, at the very least, a crucial phase within the literary careers which have been discussed. Two authors, Henry James and D.H. Lawrence, particularly reveal the contradictions within the residual vitalism of early modernism. Both writers begin from a vaguely democratic position, in that the disturbance of the reader's subject position is designed to encourage greater self-awareness. The failure of that strategy in the face of socio-economic realities, indicated by James' retreat into interior consciousness and Lawrence's gradual prescriptiveness, presages a more abstract view of society, in which cultural reformation disregards the citizenry as appendages to an homogenised and routinised culture. Maupassant's elevation of the essences of things over the objects themselves

therefore remains relevant to the totalising vision of high modernism. However, the dialogic nature of Lawrence's stories from 1921-2 also foregrounds the practical constraints of contingency. Katherine Mansfield, meanwhile, exposes the organicist roots to English modernism, and instead anticipates a greater scepticism towards identity and language.

The short story therefore played a central role within the growth of modernist aesthetics, in the development from early to high modernism, and in the transformation of the novel. It has also been shown, however, that these formal changes were governed by historical contexts, and that whether we accept its conclusions, the modernist "revolution of the word" was motivated by a cultural dialectic which remains relevant today. The self-recognition of writers such as James or Joseph Conrad (neither of whom were comfortable with the truly short story) that capitalism's invasiveness had prompted them into using fresh methods, and that by necessity these devices had to be concerned with the disruption of signification which capitalism left in its wake, remains pertinent in an era of rebranding, product placement and consumer choice. All of these writers find in what might appear to be a restricting form an astonishing diversity, which constantly undercuts the totalising vision of another kind: the market-based nation-state. Rudyard Kipling emerges as an exemplar, though the diffusion of identity in George Egerton and Vernon Lee would be equally pertinent. At once so Victorian in his structured plots and narrative schemes, Kipling's symmetrical design simultaneously dissolves into paradox and plurality in such a way as to illuminate the metamorphoses of England itself. His rapprochement between science and art reinvests the English landscape with a magic, which is at the same time quintessentially modern.

The Poetics of Broken Symmetry

Kipling's fiction leads usefully into a more discursive analysis of the short story form. As the introduction made clear, short story criticism has begun to examine how formal design sustains gaps and silences, whilst foregrounding the arbitrariness of the frame itself. The mechanism remains vague, though, since the recourse to post-structuralist theory not only obfuscates, but also re-emphasises form at the expense of historical context. There therefore remains a bias towards a symmetric understanding of the short story in terms of how formal unity balances textual disunity. Yet, the present study has shown that the interrogation of symmetry, both

therefore remains relevant to the totalising vision of high modernism. However, the dialogic nature of Lawrence's stories from 1921-2 also foregrounds the practical constraints of contingency. Katherine Mansfield, meanwhile, exposes the organicist roots to English modernism, and instead anticipates a greater scepticism towards identity and language.

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in an artistic and an ideological sense, was central to the rise of the modernist short story. A reappraisal of what is meant by symmetry will therefore clarify present theory, and pave the way for further research.

Current criticism retains an understanding of symmetry, which is tied to the residual ideology of organicism, as meaning balance or proportion. In mathematics though, such a definition of symmetry, in which each feature of an object would be interchangeable, is an idealisation. In the actual world, however, symmetries may break due to the randomness of chance and evolution. Instead, what observers see as patterns within nature are in fact the remains of earlier symmetries, for example ripples on a lake. Calm and undisturbed, the lake would be highly symmetrical: every part identical to every other part. During a rainstorm, however, the ripples which occur would be far less symmetrical. In that sense, the lake's original symmetry is broken, but it is not totally lost since it enables the pattern to be observed. This model is also useful, because the process of precipitation is itself symmetrical. As the mathematician Ian Stewart states, "symmetric causes often produce less symmetric effects".[1] In other words, though rainfall is reducible to a simple, symmetrical operation, its effect upon hitting a lake results in less elegant and more unpredictable patterns. The other benefit of this model is that the production of ripples reminds the observer that the lake is itself a pattern rather than a uniform surface.

How, though, does broken symmetry aid short story criticism? In the first instance, the reader can discard preconceptions of symmetry as beautiful or exact, and the pursuit of formal unity. Broken symmetry emphasises the messiness of actual phenomena from which patterns can be deduced. The reader is similarly redirected to the interplay of signs within the text, and the historical conditions of its manufacture. The idea of formal unity can be compared to the still lake; textual disruption with the rain that causes ripples. The pattern, or artistic effect, which emerges is dependent upon the process of decay. It would be false, though, to see in this corruption some kind of absolute meaning, since the short story does not merely transcribe a mathematical formulation. Just as the process of symmetry-breaking involves the unravelling of complex systems from simple rules in ways which are unpredictable from their root cause, so the short story's translation of physical rules into literary form magnifies and extends that process. The difficulties in composition, which many

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[1] Ian Stewart, *Nature's Numbers: Discovering Order and Pattern in the Universe* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1995), p. 85.

short storywriters have attested to, stem I think from precisely the surprising range which emerges from an apparently simple structure. As Antonia Byatt has remarked, "what appears to be one kind of story mutates into another".[2] That is not to say that there are no guidelines, or that they have been entirely broken, but just as all symmetries are transformations, so the modernist short story is concerned with mirror-images and alterity. It is therefore impossible to infer from the pattern a definitive meaning, since it exists as the trace for something which has already passed. The pattern, though, is only detectable in terms of how the previous symmetry breaks, or in a literary sense, is defamiliarised. By implication, there is therefore a dialectic: one which reminds the reader that all symmetries are just patterns, so that consequently, since fiction is innately mimetic, the arbitrariness of symmetry assumes a political significance.

Broken symmetry therefore illustrates, but does not explain away the modernist short story, since the narrative framing emphasises both its mutability and elusiveness. By focusing upon a common element, mathematics helps to illuminate the short story's sustenance of gaps and silences as well as modernism's resistance to historical transcendence. In a useful essay on the cultural impact of thermodynamics, Gillian Beer has argued that modernism responded by foregrounding "the rhetorical figure of zeugma [...] the acceptance of multiple, incommensurable outcomes driven by a single verb".[3] There are close comparisons here with the short story's production of complexity from a simple starting-point. Though English modernists would have been unaware of the mathematicians who were problematising symmetry, such as Henri Poincaré, the accidental discoverer in 1890 of the related phenomenon of chaos[4], broken symmetry has nonetheless similarities with entropy, which was widely known. As discussed in chapter one, entropy contributed to the fears of closure and termination by arguing that all energy, which had been invested with a paramount importance by vitalism, would finally disappear. These fears, though, depended upon viewing the universe as a closed system. Unable to be dispersed, the increasing heat caused by the dissipation of energy would eventually consume the entire system. If,

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[2] A.S. Byatt, preface to *The Oxford Book of English Short Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. xvi.

[3] Gillian Beer, 'Wave Theory and the Rise of Literary Modernism', in *Realism and Representation: Essays on the Problem of Realism in Relation to Science, Literature and Culture*, ed. by George Levine (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), pp. 195-6.

[4] See Stewart, *Does God Play Dice?: The Mathematics of Chaos* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), esp. pp. 66-72.

alternatively, the universe was an open system with limitless space for heat to be expended, then entropy would instead act to sustain the universe. In that sense, the symmetrical form of the modernist short story is also entropic. What appears to be a closed, tightly-knit structure decomposes into an interplay of signification, which is more than the sum of its parts. The same effect is visible in the work of the Dutch artist M.C. Escher (1902-72), whose endlessly repeated series, visual paradoxes and metamorphoses disturb the containing influence of the artistic frame (see over). In the case of literary modernism, though, the implosion and pluralisation of seemingly fixed structures indicate its regenerationist desires, for example in Ford Madox Ford's "hope of discovering whether there exists in these islands any trace of a sober, sincere, conscientious, and *scientific* body of artists, crystallising, as it were, modern life in its several aspects" (my emphasis).[5]

The model which has been proposed, which largely clarifies existing definitions, unites formal and historical analysis. It concentrates upon the tensions between ideological and material forces from which emerged a self-reflexive literary practice, which was pioneered by the short story due to its association with the economic base. The disruption of symmetry, both at a formal and an ideological level, has been highlighted within the modernist short story, though the resultant unpredictability resists a monolithic definition. The use of symmetry to expose the transparency of formal coherence is apposite, since science and technology had precipitated the unexpected rifts within modern society, which in turn questioned the appropriation of Enlightenment discourses by the grand narrative of the nation-state. The broken form of the modernist short story mimics, and in so doing criticises, the implosion of those discourses. For the writer, the paradoxes inherent within the story structure exposes the fixity of ideology, and anticipates greater self-awareness. This would seem especially appropriate, since contemporary writers have increasingly turned to scientific theory, often spuriously or ill-advisedly, for their inspiration: a literary fetish which modernism could still dissect. For the critic, the elusiveness of the form implicitly sustains debates concerning art and representation. The model, by not being prescriptive, should have cross-cultural or trans-historical appeal. It would be interesting to see how it might open-up the work of other writers, periods and countries. At the same time, the study has hopefully reminded the reader of the

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[5] Ford Madox Ford (Hueffer), *The Critical Attitude* (London: Duckworth, 1911), p. 29.
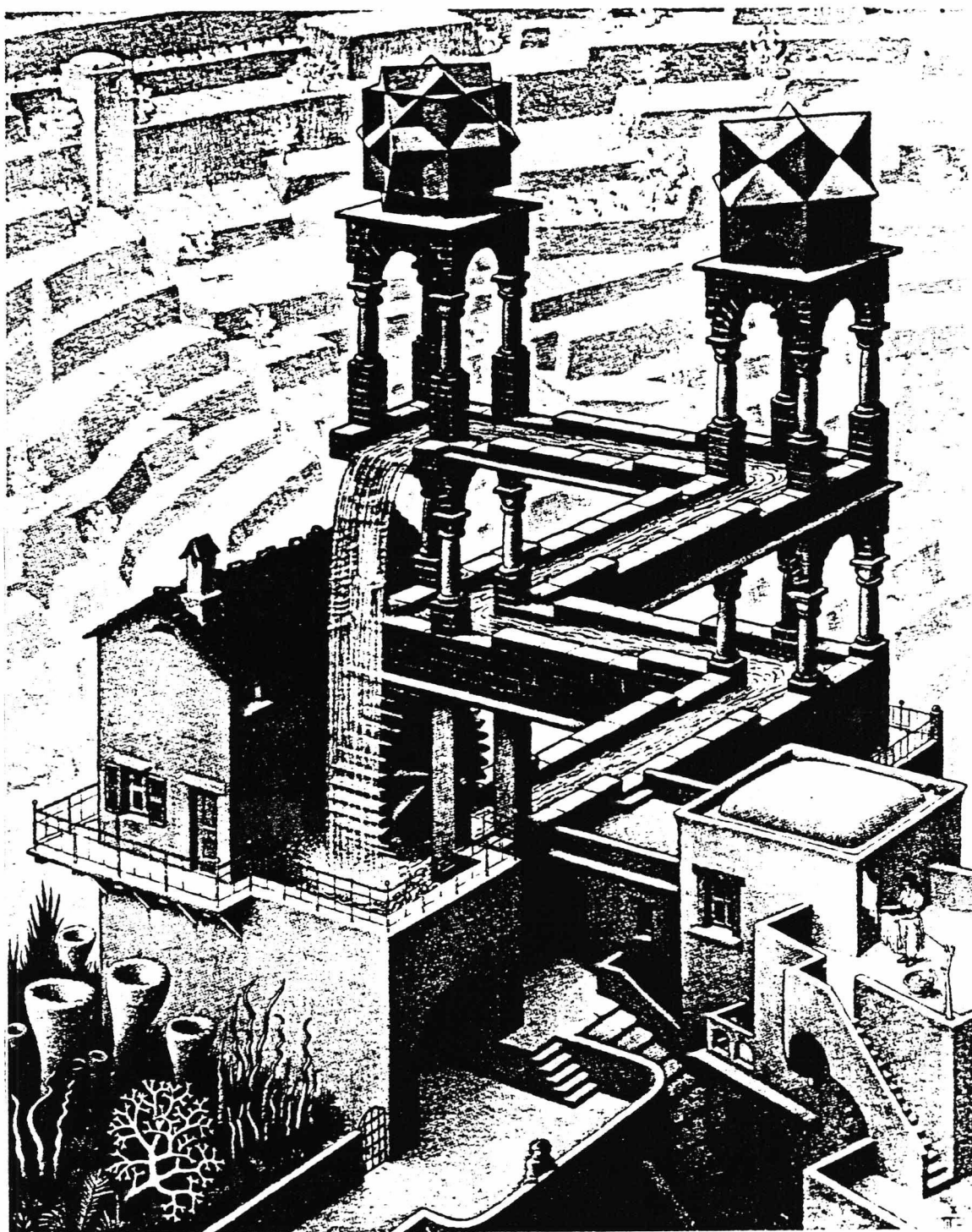
M.C. Escher, Waterfall (1962)

artistic and political progressiveness of modernism, after years of denigration, which may be of more general benefit in a period of cultural relativism. As the character, Valentine Coverly, comments in Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* (one of the more successful, recent adaptations of science and mathematics): "it's the best possible time to be alive, when almost everything you thought you knew is wrong".[6]

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[6] Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia* (London: Faber, 1993), p. 48.

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